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HEGELIAN METAPHYSICS

ROBERT STERN

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations for frequently cited primary texts are given below; details for less frequently cited texts are given in full in the notes.

WORKS BY KANT

- Ak* *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1902–)
- CPR* *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1933). References to the *Critique* will be given in the standard form, relating to the pagination of the A (first) and B (second) editions
- Prol* *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. and ed. Gary Hatfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

WORKS BY HEGEL

- EL* *Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, translated by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991); references to the student notes are marked by a 'Z' after the section number
- EM* *Philosophy of Mind: Part III of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. William Wallace and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971); references to the student notes are marked by a 'Z' after the section number
- EN* *Philosophy of Nature: Part II of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. M. J. Petry, 3 vols (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1970); references to the student notes are marked by a 'Z' after the section number
- EPR* *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, edited by Allen Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); references to the student notes are marked by a 'Z' after the section number

- FK* *Faith and Knowledge*, trans. Walter Cerf and H. S. Harris (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977)
- ILHP* *Hegel's Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. T. M. Knox and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985)
- LA* *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975)
- LHP* *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson, 3 vols (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1892–1896; reissued Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995)
- PS* *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977)
- SL* *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969)
- Werke* *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols and index (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1969–71)

WORKS BY PEIRCE

- CP* *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vols 1–6 ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, 1931–35, vols 7 and 8 ed. A. W. Burks, 1958 (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press); references to volume and paragraph number
- EP* *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, 2 vols, ed. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); references to volume and page number
- MS* *The Charles S. Peirce Papers*, microfilm edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Photograph Service, 1966); reference numbers are those used by Richard Robin, *Annotated Catalogue of the Papers of Charles S. Peirce* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1967)
- WP* *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition*, ed. Max Fisch, Edward Moore, Christian Kloesel et al., currently 6 vols (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982–); references to volume and page number

Introduction: How is Hegelian Metaphysics Possible?

If it is remarkable when a nation has become indifferent to its constitutional theory, to its national sentiments, its ethical customs and virtues, it is certainly no less remarkable when a nation loses its metaphysics, when the spirit which contemplates its own pure essence is no longer a present reality in the life of the nation.¹

In every philosopher, there is a part that cries, ‘This enterprise [of metaphysics] is vain, frivolous, crazy—we must say, “Stop!”’, and a part that cries, ‘This enterprise is simply reflection at the most general and abstract level; to put a stop to it would be a crime against reason’.²

I The title of this collection will appear unobjectionable to some readers; others will take it as a provocation. This may seem unfortunate enough. But matters are even worse for someone who, like me, counts themselves as sympathetic to Hegel; for at least until very recently, those who have seen Hegel as a metaphysician have largely been his critics and detractors, who have then denounced him as a result; while it has generally been his friends who then question this attribution, in an attempt to save Hegel from his enemies, and to deprive them of this stick with which to beat him. If my book is to present a positive view of Hegel, therefore, it might seem best if I were to side with his friends and frustrate his enemies, by arguing that their scorn for his metaphysical theorizing is misplaced, as in fact there is no such theorizing to be found in his work.³

In good conscience, however, this is not an option available to me, as I do believe that Hegel is a metaphysical thinker, and in many respects an undervalued one. But I do not underestimate the obstacles that stand in the way of any attempt to establish this. Broadly speaking, these obstacles take two forms, one conceptual and philosophical, the other interpretative and stemming

¹ Hegel, *SL*, 26 [*Werke*, V: 13].

² Hilary Putnam, ‘After Metaphysics, What?’, in Dieter Henrich and Rolf-Peter Horstmann (eds.), *Metaphysik nach Kant?* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1988), 457–66, at 457.

³ For a helpful overview of this controversy, with references to the main protagonists, see James Kreines, ‘Hegel’s Metaphysics: Changing the Debate’, *Philosophy Compass*, 1 (2006), 466–80.

from the history of ideas. The first of these obstacles concerns the viability of metaphysics as a branch of philosophy. Whilst many philosophers still engage in metaphysical speculation, the suspicion remains in other quarters that this form of inquiry is hopelessly flawed, and that viewed as a metaphysician, Hegel did no better than anyone else has in achieving its traditional goals. Within modern philosophy, doubts of this sort concerning metaphysics are strongly associated with Locke and Hume,⁴ and often taken to have received their most sophisticated articulation in Kant, Hegel's illustrious predecessor. This then raises the second major obstacle to the metaphysical reading of Hegel: namely, if we are to see Hegel as relating to Kant in an intelligent and interesting way, we must see him as taking on board Kant's critique of metaphysics.⁵ This then means that while we might read him as indulging in some sort of transcendental theorizing perhaps freed somehow from Kant's notorious distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves, we should still differentiate Hegel's position from that of most traditional metaphysicians, either those who came before Kant, or those who have come after him but who persist in behaving as if he never existed.

While feeling the full force of these concerns, however, I have come to believe that in the end both kinds of worry are spurious—and that Hegel's most fundamental contribution to metaphysics, perhaps, is to help us see why.

On the very general question, of whether seeing Hegel as a metaphysician is to associate him with a discredited research programme, it might actually be argued that the very opposite is the case: in fact, it could be said, metaphysics is going through a period of conspicuous revival after the dark days of verificationism had consigned it to the oblivion of meaninglessness, so that to see Hegel in metaphysical terms is nowadays to put him in the vanguard of philosophical fashion and progress. Of course, there are those of various persuasions (Kantians, Wittgensteinians, positivists, and so on) who may not want to see things

⁴ For a remarkably Kantian-sounding discussion of metaphysics in Hume, see *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 3rd edn., ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* sect. I, 12, where Hume counsels us 'to enquire seriously into the nature of human understanding', and 'its powers and capacities', as a way of breaking with the fruitless metaphysical speculations of the past, and inaugurating a different kind of 'true metaphysics', which will be correspondingly more modest.

⁵ The exact extent of that critique, and what its final upshot was intended by Kant to be, is of course a complex issue in itself, and a matter of considerable scholarly debate, which cannot be entered into fully here. For discussions that bring out these complexities, see Karl Ameriks, 'The Critique of Metaphysics: Kant and Traditional Ontology', in Paul Guyer (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 249–79, repr. in Karl Ameriks, *Interpreting Kant's Critiques* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 112–34; and Karl Ameriks, 'The Critique of Metaphysics: The Structure and Fate of Kant's Dialectic', in Paul Guyer (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 269–302; repr. in Karl Ameriks, *Kant and the Historical Turn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 134–60. Several aspects of Kant's legacy in this area are discussed in Henrich and Horstmann (eds.), *Metaphysik nach Kant?*

this way, and who will persist in questioning the credentials of metaphysical inquiry; but it could plausibly be argued that the tide of history has turned against them, at least for now. Thus, unless Hegel's metaphysics turns out to be somehow radically different in its aim and methods from that of our contemporaries (a possibility we will discuss further below), there may seem to be nothing particularly threatening to Hegel's reputation in viewing his thought in metaphysical terms.

Now, in fact, I do think that putting Hegel's metaphysical speculation in a more contemporary context can be extremely enlightening, particularly because of the way in which several contemporary philosophers have revived aspects of Aristotelian metaphysics (and especially his ontological category theory),⁶ which I believe itself provides the context for much of Hegel's thought,⁷ so that there is a prospect for useful dialogue here. Nonetheless, it could be argued, while it is indeed true that metaphysics as a philosophical discipline is going through something of a revival, it is doing so without addressing the central concerns raised by its earlier critics, but instead by largely ignoring them (except, perhaps, the critique of the verificationists, which was rather quickly dismissed as self-undermining).⁸ Whilst to some, no such critical engagement may be called for, to a historically self-conscious philosopher like Hegel, anxious to avoid dogmatism at all costs, this insouciant attitude may not be considered enough. What, then, might be the Hegelian answer to the concerns raised above against metaphysics?

⁶ I am thinking in particular of E. J. Lowe and Michael Loux. See, for example, Lowe's *The Possibility of Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) and his *The Four-Category Ontology* (Oxford: Oxford, 2006), and Loux's *Substance and Attribute* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1978) and *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1998). I used aspects of Loux's ontology to shed light on Hegel's thought in my earlier book *Hegel, Kant and the Structure of the Object* (London: Routledge, 1990), where papers in this collection further develop that approach.

⁷ Hegel's admiration for Aristotle, perhaps above all other philosophers, is well known, where he comments in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* that 'he was one of the richest and deepest of all the scientific geniuses that have as yet appeared—a man whose like no later age has ever yet produced' (*LHP* II, 117 [*Werke*, XIX: 132]). For further discussion of the relation between the two thinkers, see Alfredo Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). See also André Doz, *La Logique de Hegel et les Problèmes Traditionnelles de l'Ontologie* (Paris: Vrin, 1987); Klaus Brinkmann, *Aristoteles' allgemeine und spezielle Metaphysik* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1979); and Klaus Düsing, *Hegel und die Geschichte der Philosophie: Ontologie und Dialektik in Antike und Neuzeit* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983).

⁸ It is, I think, notable that there has been no particular development in discussion of the *epistemology* and methodology of metaphysics as such, to go with the revival of the discipline itself, although there has been some discussion of relevant issues, such as a priori knowledge: see, for example, Paul Boghossian and Christopher Peacocke (eds.), *New Essays on the A Priori* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), and Laurence Bonjour, *In Defense of Pure Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). For some brief but helpful remarks in defence of metaphysics as a form of inquiry in the contemporary context, see E. J. Lowe, *A Survey of Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1–22, and Loux, *Metaphysics*, 3–18. For a more recent contribution, see Timothy Williamson, *The Philosophy of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008).

Put very briefly, I take Hegel's response to the demand that metaphysics should be set aside, to be that in a very real sense, metaphysics is unavoidable:⁹ that is, we cannot escape making metaphysical assumptions in everything we believe, in how we act, and in how we live our lives and relate to the things around us. Thus, if we take metaphysics to be concerned with our fundamental view of ourselves and the world of which we are part, of its basic nature and structure, we cannot help subscribing to some such metaphysics, so that speculation on this matter is inescapable, and anyone who thinks he does not have a metaphysical position, or can opt out of having one, is deluding himself.¹⁰

One way of trying to avoid this conclusion might be to claim that we can form views about the world within the natural sciences in a way that is somehow distinct from metaphysics, in the spirit of Newton's 'hypotheses non fingo'. Hegel, however, is scornful of such manoeuvres:

It is true that Newton expressly warned physics to beware of metaphysics; but to his honour, let it be said that he did not conduct himself in accordance with this warning at all. Only the animals are true blue physicists by this standard, since they do not think; whereas humans, in contrast, are thinking beings, and born metaphysicians.¹¹

Another response might be to just stick to 'common sense', treating this as a form of thinking somehow prior to and independent of metaphysical speculations and assumptions. But again, Hegel denies that there can be any such standpoint, even though our preoccupation with our daily affairs may lead us to overlook or ignore the metaphysical dimension and take it for granted:

[E]veryone possesses and uses the wholly abstract category of *being*. The sun *is* in the sky; these grapes *are* ripe, and so on *ad infinitum*. Or, in a higher sphere of education, we proceed to the relation of cause and effect, force and its manifestation, etc. All our knowledge and ideas are entwined with metaphysics like this and governed by it; it is the

⁹ In a way, of course, Kant thought something similar: but as we shall see, Hegel's take on the unavoidability of metaphysics is importantly different from—and more optimistic than—Kant's. Cf. Kant's remarks about what he calls 'indifferentism', *CPR* Ax–xi.

¹⁰ For a similar view in the contemporary literature, see E. J. Lowe, *The Possibility of Metaphysics: Substance, Identity, and Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), v: 'In my view, all other forms of inquiry rest upon metaphysical presuppositions—thus making metaphysics unavoidable—so that we should at least endeavour to do metaphysics with our eyes open, rather than allowing it to exercise its influence upon us at the level of uncritical assumption'.

¹¹ *EL*, §98Z, 156 [*Werke*, VIII: 207]. Hegel makes a similar comment with reference to Newton in a letter to Goethe, 24 February 1821: see *Hegel: The Letters*, trans. Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 700. Cf. also *EL*, §38, 77–8: 'The fundamental illusion in scientific empiricism is always that it uses the metaphysical categories of matter, force, as well as those of one, many, universality, and the infinite, etc., and it goes on to draw conclusions, guided by categories of this sort, presupposing and applying the forms of syllogising in the process. It does all this without knowing that it thereby itself contains a metaphysics and is engaged in it, and that it is using those categories and their connections in a totally uncritical and unconscious manner'. Again, Hegel's view here chimes with that of contemporary positions, such as Lowe's: 'Scientists inevitably make metaphysical assumptions, whether explicitly or implicitly, in proposing and testing their theories—assumptions which go beyond anything that science itself can legitimate' (Lowe, *The Possibility of Metaphysics*, 5).

net which holds together all the concrete material which occupies us in our action and endeavour. But this net and its knots are sunk in our ordinary consciousness beneath numerous layers of stuff. This stuff comprises our known interests and the objects that are before our minds, while the universal threads of the net remain out of sight and are not explicitly made the subject of our reflection.¹²

Equally, Hegel argues, we cannot make an appeal to some sort of basic ‘experience’ that can be had without involving such categories and thus without metaphysical assumptions, as a way of trying to escape from the philosophical enterprise.¹³

For Hegel, therefore, we need to stop fooling ourselves into believing that metaphysical commitments are something we can somehow avoid, and thus pretending that we can remain neutral on metaphysical questions: on the contrary, the world view of every thinking being is shaped by metaphysical assumptions, as thought requires the use of categories and all categories involve metaphysical implications of one sort or another.

Still, it might be said, even Hegel is right to claim that in some ways metaphysical commitments are unavoidable—so that, for example, when I say ‘tomorrow is my birthday’, I am assuming that there are events, or when I say ‘John is taller than me’, I am assuming that there are relations—it is unclear what is to be gained from looking at these assumptions more deeply, and thus what reason we have for making these categories (or, as Hegel often calls them, ‘thought determinations’) the explicit object of our investigations. As Hegel himself puts it, why should we bother to do these categories ‘the honour of being contemplated for their own sakes’?¹⁴

On some accounts, the answer is that Hegel believed that a truly consistent project of critical philosophy, of the sort put forward by Kant, *must* involve such an investigation, because otherwise we would be failing to think in a fully reflective manner, and thus failing to be truly autonomous intellects, by simply

¹² *ILHP*, 27–8 [*Werke*, XVIII: 77]. Cf. also *EL*, §3, 27 [*Werke*, VIII: 45]: ‘Categories, like *being*, or *singularity*, are already mingled into every proposition, even when it has a completely sensible content: “This leaf is green.”’ I therefore believe that Hegel would agree with David Oderberg when he writes against a Wittgensteinian ‘ordinary language’ alternative to metaphysical theorizing: ‘Natural language is permeated and saturated by metaphysics, and has been so ever since philosophy began with the pre-Socratics. . . . The problem is in thinking that there is a vantage point from which we can spy language in its “ordinary”, pre-metaphysical state. There is no such vantage point because there is no such language to be observed in the first place’ (David S. Oderberg, *Real Essentialism* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2007), 43).

¹³ Cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit*, trans. Robert R. Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 63 [*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Geistes (1827–8)*, transcribed by Johann Erdmann and Ferdinand Walter, ed. Franz Hesse and Burkhard Tuschling (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1994), 9]: ‘The other aspect in which philosophy contradicts empiricism is that the latter is by no means without metaphysics. Experience contains general thought-determinations and everything depends on whether these empiricist thought-determinations are true’.

¹⁴ *SL*, 34 [*Werke*, V: 24].

taking these categories for granted without inquiring into their validity.¹⁵ My own view, however, is slightly different; it is that Hegel expects the motivation for this investigation to come from the recognition that by simply taking our categories for granted, we have found ourselves faced with a range of difficulties within our view of ourselves and the world, which require us to think more carefully about these categories if they are to be resolved. Hegel articulates these difficulties in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in a way that is designed to reveal the deep metaphysical assumptions underlying them—for example, we struggle to see how one thing can have many properties, or how our freedom can be compatible with the existence of other people, or how agents can be motivated to act morally.¹⁶

However, someone might allow that of course our thinking involves categories, and that of course if we have not properly reflected on these categories we may find ourselves thinking in problematic ways about issues such as freedom, the identity of objects, the relation between mind and body, and so on, so that in this rather thin sense, as a reflection on our general assumptions about the world, perhaps metaphysics is unavoidable. But, our objector might go on, it is wrong to think that through such reflection one is thereby engaged in an inquiry into how reality itself works at some deep and fundamental level, or how things are as such; for all one is doing, or all one *can* do here, is grasp how things appear to us to work in our experience of them, rather than limning the structure of what Aristotle called ‘being qua being’ or how reality is ‘in itself’. So, for example, Michael Dummett has written that:

[A]lthough we [contemporary analytic philosophers] no longer regard the traditional questions of philosophy as pseudo-questions to which no meaningful answer can be given, we have not returned to the belief that a priori reasoning can afford us substantive knowledge of fundamental features of the world. Philosophy can take us no further than enabling us to command a clear view of the concepts by means of which we think about the world, and by doing so, to attain a firmer grasp of the way we represent the world in our thought. It is for this reason and in this sense that philosophy is about the world.¹⁷

¹⁵ Accounts of Hegel’s position along these lines are offered by commentators such as Richard Winfield, William Maker, and Stephen Houlgate: see, in particular, Houlgate’s *The Opening of Hegel’s ‘Logic’: From Being to Infinity* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2006). I criticize this sort of approach in my ‘Hegel and Pragmatism’, Ch. 7 below.

¹⁶ For more on this way of taking Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, see my *Hegel and the ‘Phenomenology of Spirit’* (London: Routledge, 2002), especially 21–9.

¹⁷ Michael Dummett, *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 1. Cf. also P. M. S. Hacker, *Human Nature: The Categorical Framework* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 7–17, and ‘On Strawson’s Rehabilitation of Metaphysics’, in Hans-Johann Glock (ed.), *Strawson and Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 43–66, at 55: ‘Where traditional metaphysicians conceived of themselves as limning the ultimate structure of the world, the descriptive metaphysician will conceive of himself as sketching the basic structure of our conceptual scheme—of the language we use to describe the world and our experience of it. Or, more ambitiously, of delineating the structure of *any* conceptual scheme which can be employed to describe a world and a subject’s experience of it. Hence descriptive metaphysics does not aim to

On this sort of view, the ambitions of philosophy in the traditional manner have been abandoned, where rather than giving us direct rational insight into the ‘fundamental features of the world’, metaphysics is seen as involving an investigation of our conceptual scheme, and *its* fundamental features, which then shape reality as we see it.

The inspiration for this sort of move away from traditional rationalistic metaphysics is often taken to be Kant, who is viewed as adopting a ‘critical metaphysics’ or a ‘metaphysics of experience’ instead, along the following lines:

Kant replaces appeals to a speculative realm of transcendent objects with claims about the conditions which enable us to read appearances as experience, that is, to treat categories immanently as ‘mere keys to possible experience.’¹⁸ Kant’s transcendental metaphysics of experience as a whole still refers to the immanent ‘fruitful bathos of experience’ rather than to the supposed transcendent objects of a ‘windy metaphysics.’¹⁹ It encourages him to replace a tradition of ‘proud ontology’ with a more modest ‘analytic of concepts’ (B303).²⁰

It may seem, then, that if we are to take this Kantian turn seriously, and to place Hegel in a properly post-Kantian context, we can do so only if we also take Hegel’s categorical investigation to be a metaphysics of experience of this sort; namely, one that does not set out to make claims about transcendent entities or reality *an sich*, but which accepts that ‘the most the understanding can achieve a priori is to anticipate the forms of a possible experience in general’,²¹ and so talk about the necessary structure of how things will appear to us in that experience, rather than about things beyond that experience or about being qua being. In so

describe the necessary, superphysical, structure of reality—about which it may well remain altogether sceptical’. Cf. also R. G. Collingwood’s distinction between ‘ontology’ and ‘metaphysics’ in *An Essay on Metaphysics*, rev. edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); the Kantian background to Collingwood’s position is explored in Guiseppina D’Oro, *Collingwood and the Metaphysics of Experience* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), esp. chs. 1 and 2.

¹⁸ Cf. CPR B370. Cf. also Kant, ‘What Real Progress Has Metaphysics Made in Germany Since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?’, trans. Peter Heath in Immanuel Kant, *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, ed. Henry Allison and Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 354 [Ak 20:260]: ‘Ontology is that science (as part of metaphysics) which consists in a system of all concepts of the understanding, and principles, but only so far as they refer to objects that can be given to the senses, and thus confirmed by experience. It makes no allusion to the super-sensible, which is nevertheless the final aim of metaphysics, and thus belongs to the latter only as a propaedeutic, as the hallway or vestibule of metaphysics proper, and is called transcendental philosophy, because it contains the conditions and first elements of all our *knowledge a priori*’.

¹⁹ Cf. *Prol.*, 128, n. [Ak 4:373 n.].

²⁰ Graham Bird, *The Revolutionary Kant: A Commentary on the ‘Critique of Pure Reason’* (Chicago and LaSalle: Open Court, 2006), 96. Although Kant himself does not actually use the phrase ‘metaphysics of experience’, its appropriateness comes from passages such as CPR A156–8/B195–7; A93–4/B126; and A217/B264, as well as the one cited by Bird above. As far as I know, the first to apply this label to Kant’s project was H. J. Paton, in his commentary of that name (*Kant’s Metaphysics of Experience*, 2 vols (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1936)); but for criticisms of Paton’s own way of taking this idea, see D. B. Dryer, *Kant’s Solution for Verification in Metaphysics* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1966), 25–7.

²¹ CPR A246/B303.

far as this still gives us synthetic a priori knowledge of the world as we experience it, Kant holds, we are entitled to continue to think of this as amounting to a metaphysics; but Kant also holds that in so far as it does not go further than telling us about the conditions that things must meet in order to be experienced by us, and fall into speculating about objects that lie outside that experience or how things must be tout court, it differs fundamentally from metaphysics of a more rationalistic, traditional kind.²²

Now, I think it is often this issue that is used as the test of responsibility for the post-Kantian metaphysician, and that unless we see Hegel himself as endorsing something like this move, it will look as if he is proceeding in utter ignorance of the fundamental questions that Kant raised concerning the possibility of such metaphysical insights. On the other hand, if we do allow that Hegel accepted these Kantian strictures, it would appear that he must be engaging in something more like Kant's 'metaphysics of experience', or the enterprise sketched by Dummett above,²³ of investigating our concepts; Hegel's distinctive contribution is then said to come from the way in which he did better than Kant in finessing the sceptical concerns about things-in-themselves that have seemed to cast a shadow over Kant's own way of carrying out that investigation.²⁴

²² Cf. Arthur Collins, *Possible Experience: Understanding Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason'* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 89–90: 'Synthetic a priori findings are presented in the *Critique* which are broadly *philosophical* and that cannot be relegated to any other field. It seems that only verbal pedantry can resist the thought that these ideas formulate a Kantian metaphysics. The very concept of a *critical philosophy*, however, stands against the temptation to regard these claims as akin to traditional metaphysics. No synthetic principle that Kant is officially willing to defend in the Aesthetic or the Analytic goes beyond the context of determinations concerning the possibility of experience. These doctrines do not introduce a further subject matter other than and beyond the spatiotemporal system of things that Kant calls "nature" and that are studied by science. The positive philosophical claims of the *Critique of Pure Reason* jointly amount to the confinement of rationally defensible assertions to a setting of experience and possible experience. To the extent that metaphysics pretends to transcend this context, Kant makes no metaphysical assertions.'

²³ Very roughly, Dummett suggests that we abandon 'the reflective insight of the metaphysician' (*The Logical Basis of Metaphysics*, 15) that tries to settle metaphysical issues first, and then aims to arrive at an account of meaning, in a way that is 'top down'; instead, Dummett urges that we should adopt a 'bottom up' strategy (cf. p. 12), that takes us from meaning to some settlement of the metaphysical dispute—but not one that takes us back to the full-blown metaphysics of the top down strategy: 'Once resolved in favour of a particular doctrine, the picture of reality that goes with the doctrine and that gives it its metaphysical expression will automatically force itself upon us; but it has no additional content of its own. Its non-metaphysical content consists in the model of meaning which it suggests; however powerfully the picture impresses itself on us, we have to bear in mind that its content is a thesis in the theory of meaning, and that, beyond that, it is no more than a picture'. It is not clear, however, why a metaphysician should not adopt Dummett's 'bottom up' approach, but still think that in the end he has got some metaphysical insight into the structure of reality, and hence got considerably more than 'a picture'. Cf. Dummett's own comments on pp. 338–9, where he himself seems to urge that his method is enough to establish the falsity of realism as a metaphysical position, in what sounds like a pretty full-blooded sense.

²⁴ This is the approach favoured by Robert Pippin in his influential *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); cf. e.g. p. 250: 'for Hegel, the issue of the "determinations of any possible object" (the classical Aristotelian category issue) has been critically transformed into the issue of the "determinations of any object

A worry for this sort of account, however, is that Hegel can write as if he has much greater sympathy for the traditional approach than the Kantian one, which he often presents as a kind of modern faint-heartedness, a falling back from the admirable confidence in the power of thought and reason to take us to the heart of things that the metaphysical tradition, particularly as represented by the ancients, was able to display:

Ancient metaphysics had in this respect a higher conception of thinking than is current today. For it based itself on the fact that the knowledge of things obtained through thinking is alone what is really true in them, that is, things not in their immediacy but as first raised into the form of thought, as things *thought*. Thus this metaphysics believed that thinking (and its determinations) is not anything alien to the object, but rather is its essential nature, or that things and the thinking of them—our language too expresses their kinship—are explicitly in full agreement, thinking in its immanent determinations and the true nature of things forming one and the same content.

But *reflective* understanding took possession of philosophy. We must know exactly what is meant by this expression which moreover is often used as a slogan; in general it stands for the understanding as abstracting, and hence as separating and remaining fixed in its separations. Directed against reason, it behaves as ordinary common sense and imposes its view that truth rests on sensuous reality, that thoughts are *only* thoughts, meaning that it is sense perception which first gives them filling and reality and that reason left to its own resources engenders only figments of the brain. In this self-renunciation on the part of reason, the Notion of truth is lost; it is limited to knowing only subjective truth, only phenomena, appearances, only something to which the nature of the object itself does not correspond: knowing has lapsed into opinion.²⁵

of a possibly self-conscious judgment.” Notions shown to play a necessary role in the possibility of such judgments thus constitute “what there is, in truth,” and cannot be revised on the basis of any experience’, and pp. 7–8: “To a large extent, [Kant and Hegel’s] common theme involves the argument that any subject must be able to make certain basic discriminations in any experience in order for there to be experience at all. Accordingly, such basic conceptual discriminations cannot be derived from experience and, if it can be shown that such discriminations are constitutive of experience, cannot be refuted by experience. They thus agree that, contrary to the rationalist tradition, human reason can obtain nonempirical knowledge only *about itself*, about what has come to be called recently our “conceptual scheme”, and the concepts required for a scheme to count as one at all’. Pippin’s approach is considered in more detail in ‘Hegel’s Idealism’, Ch. 1 below. Cf. also Béatrice Longuenesse, *Hegel’s Critique of Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), xvii: ‘In the Introduction to the *Science of Logic*, Hegel proclaims his debt to Kant’s idea that metaphysics should now be *logic*. What Hegel means by this, I proposed in my study of Hegel’s Doctrine of Essence, is that rather than the empty endeavour to come up with a science of being *qua* being or a science of the universal determinations of things as they are in themselves, metaphysics after Kant is a science of being as *being thought*. In other words, metaphysics is an investigation of the universal determinations of thought at work in any attempt to think what is.’ Longuenesse is here speaking about her earlier French book which is translated in the first four chapters of *Hegel’s Critique of Metaphysics*. In the final two chapters of this English edition which were written more recently, she admits to feeling that perhaps this sort of approach is rather ‘one-sided’, and does not fully reflect Hegel’s actual position.

²⁵ *SL*, 45–6 [*Werke*, V: 38]. Cf. also *SL*, 50–1 [*Werke*, V: 44–5]: ‘Anaxagoras is praised as the man who first declared that *Nous*, thought, is the principle of the world, that the essence of the world is to be defined as thought. In so doing he laid the foundation for an intellectual view of the universe,

Placing interpretative weight on passages such as these, however, may just seem to confirm the suspicions of Hegel's harshest critics:²⁶ namely, that he simply regressed back into a form of pre-Kantian rationalism on these matters, going on with his a priori theorizing as if Kant had never existed.

My own view, however, is that Hegel came to find his way out of the Kantian problematic, in a way that in a sense does indeed enable him to return to the traditional metaphysical project of investigating 'being qua being', but not by simply reverting to something pre-Kantian, because on the one hand he *answers and addresses* Kant's concerns, and on the other *learns something from them*. We can therefore explain the clear admiration Hegel expresses for rationalistic metaphysics, while at the same time recognizing the need for this tradition to acknowledge the impact Kant's critical philosophy must have on the way in which that tradition is to be continued.

II How, then, might Hegel find a response to Kantian arguments that in the end, once the problems of traditional metaphysics are properly understood, only his more modest-looking metaphysics of experience is achievable? We can distinguish these arguments and responses as follows:

(1) A first Kantian argument, familiar from the Prefaces and the 'Transcendental Doctrine of Method' in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and also from the

the pure form of which must be logic. What we are dealing with in logic is not a thinking *about* something which exists independently as a base for our thinking and apart from it, nor forms which are supposed to provide mere signs or distinguishing marks of truth; on the contrary, the necessary forms and self-determinations of thought are the content and the ultimate truth itself. . . . *Thought* is an expression which attributes the determination contained therein primarily to consciousness. But inasmuch as it is said that understanding, reason, is in the objective world, that mind and nature have universal laws to which their life and changes conform, then it is conceded that the determinations of thought equally have objective value and existence'; and *EL*, §28Z, 66 [*Werke*, VIII: 94]: 'The presupposition of the older metaphysics was that of naïve belief generally, namely, that thinking grasps what things are *in-themselves*, that things only are what they genuinely are when they are [captured] in thought. Nature and the mind and heart of man are protean, constantly in a process of transformation, and the reflection that things as they immediately present themselves are not the things in themselves is an obvious one.—The standpoint of the older metaphysics referred to here is the opposite of the one that resulted from the Critical Philosophy. We can fairly say that this latter standpoint sends man to feed upon husks and chaff'.

²⁶ They also show why Dummett makes things too easy for himself when he writes that '[t]o a large extent, the philosophy of thought has always been acknowledged as the starting point of philosophy. Aristotle began with the *Categories*; even Hegel wrote a *Logic* to serve as the foundation of his system' (*Logical Basis*, 2), as if there is no great discontinuity here between himself and the tradition; for, as Hegel is always keen to emphasize, the tradition would have seen *its* 'philosophy of thought' as *also* providing us with 'substantive knowledge of fundamental features of the world' in a way that Dummett does not. Hacker is more open to the difference here when he writes: 'Aristotle was hunting a different quarry from ours. What we are concerned with [when thinking about substance] is isolating a category of nouns and noun phrases that play an important and distinctive role in our thinking—not with identifying the ultimate structure and constituents of reality, as was Aristotle. But precisely because Aristotle typically began his reflections with meticulous observations on "what is said", his ideas shed valuable light on *our* present concerns, and provide a convenient point of departure for my purposes' (*Human Nature*, 30).

Prolegomena and elsewhere, is that a successor subject to traditional metaphysics must be found, in so far as the latter has turned out to be a monumental failure, a battlefield of endless controversies that achieve nothing. However, as Kant himself recognizes, to get the metaphysician to give up his quest, it is not enough to heap the discouraging lessons of history on him, as he may continue to feel that progress is nonetheless still possible, or view that history itself more progressively than Kant chooses to do, unless some demonstration and explanation is forthcoming of how and why the struggle for enlightenment has been futile.²⁷

(2) A second strategy for the Kantian to adopt, therefore, might be to argue that the problem here is not just that as a matter of fact we have not got very far in traditional metaphysics, but that it is deeper than that: namely, when it comes to these issues, we really have no idea what ‘success’ or ‘failure’ are, or how to tell the one from the other, and it is *this* that explains why the back-and-forth of metaphysical argument is potentially endless, as what can be claimed as victory by the one side can just as well be claimed as defeat by the other, where what is missing is any sure grasp or criterion of what counts as resolving the issues in dispute.²⁸ Again, however, without further substantiation and explanation, this worry can seem overblown, where it is not clear yet why the metaphysician cannot appeal to just the same criteria in settling his disputes as are available to any investigator engaged in a theoretical form of inquiry, such as inference to the best explanation, simplicity, coherence and so on—and where a particular danger for the Kantian here might be, that it is unclear what *other* criteria they themselves are using in their own investigations, so that if these are dismissed as somehow ineffective as criteria for success as such, then the same doubts may be turned against the Kantian project itself.

(3) It might be said, however, that precisely the lesson of Kant’s Antinomies is supposed to be that all the criteria we might normally use to settle a dispute are indeed ineffective when it comes to the metaphysical issues under discussion there, because *both* conflicting answers fulfil our criteria equally well. Again, however, as Kant himself recognizes, we still need some further diagnosis of why this has happened and will always continue, which also might then apply to other

²⁷ Cf. *CPR* A764/B792, trans. modified: ‘All unsuccessful dogmatic attempts of reason are facts [*Fakta*], and it is always of advantage to subject them to censure. But this can decide nothing regarding those expectations of reason which lead it to hope for better success in its future attempts, and to build claims on this foundation; and consequently no mere censorship can put an end to the dispute concerning the rights of human reason’. For some further discussion of this issue, see my ‘Metaphysical Dogmatism, Humean Scepticism, Kantian Criticism’, *Kantian Review*, 11 (2006), 102–16.

²⁸ This point is emphasized by Bird, who relates Kant to Carnap, Austin and Wittgenstein on this issue, where Bird contends that all four believed that when it comes to metaphysics as a kind of ‘external’ or ‘extra-ordinary’ form of inquiry, we lack any criterion for determining whether our questions have been properly answered or not: cf. Bird, *The Revolutionary Kant*, 92–6, 618–21. Cf. also Dummett, *Logical Basis*, 12–13.

kinds of metaphysical debate where such antinomies are less clear.²⁹ Moreover, as Hegel's own reaction to the Antinomies testifies,³⁰ the metaphysician may well still feel that our alleged powerlessness to pick between the two sides is exaggerated, not least when some synthesis between them can be found, which is the approach Hegel himself recommends.³¹

(4) In moving to a more diagnostic level, therefore, in order to explain the futility of metaphysics and not simply to assert it, a first strategy for the Kantian to adopt, and one that is suggested clearly in the Transcendental Dialectic section of the *Critique*, is to argue for a kind of error theory: namely, that the objects which the metaphysician inquires into are not genuine objects at all, so that of course our investigations will turn out to be futile. Thus, the Kantian might argue, the topics of traditional metaphysics, such as God and the soul, are illusory, and come to seem real to us only because of the misuse of our reason.³²

There are two difficulties with this Kantian argument taken as an objection to traditional metaphysics, however. The first is that, even if it deprives metaphysics of some of its subject-matter, it is not clear that it deprives it of all of it; for, from all that has been said so far, taken as an inquiry into being qua being it remains untouched, even if the Kantian is right to say that God and the soul do not form part of that reality.³³ It would therefore seem that the Kantian still

²⁹ Some of Kant's earlier writings suggest that at a previous stage he may have thought that more antinomies could be identified, so that the problem could perhaps be applied to all metaphysical disputes: see Norbert Hinske, *Kants Weg zur Transzendentalphilosophie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970), 95–6.

³⁰ For Hegel's main discussions of Kant's Antinomies, see *SL*, 190–9 [*Werke*, V: 216–17]; *EL*, §48, 91–4 [*Werke*, VIII: 126–9]; and *LHP* III, 448–51 [*Werke*, XX: 356–9].

³¹ Cf. Hegel, *SL*, 191–2 [*Werke*, V: 217–18]: 'The Kantian solution, namely, through the so-called transcendental ideality of the world of perception, has no other result than to make the so-called conflict into something *subjective*, on which of course it remains still the same illusion, that is, is as unresolved, as before. Its genuine solution can only be this: two opposed determinations which belong necessarily to one and the same Notion cannot be valid each on its own in its one-sidedness; on the contrary, they are true only as sublated, only in the unity of their Notion'.

³² Cf. Kant, *CPR* A339/B397: 'The transcendental (subjective) reality of the pure concepts of reason depends on our having been led to such ideas by a necessary syllogism. There will therefore be syllogisms which contain no empirical premises, and by means of which we conclude from something which we know to something else of which we have no concept, and to which, owing to an inevitable illusion, we yet ascribe objective reality. These conclusions are, then, rather to be called *pseudo-rational* than rational, although in view of their origin they may well lay claim to the latter title, since they are not fictitious and have not arisen fortuitously, but have sprung from the very nature of reason. They are sophistications not of men but of pure reason itself. Even the wisest of men cannot free himself from them. After long effort he perhaps succeeds in guarding himself against actual error; but he will never be able to free himself from the illusion, which unceasingly mocks and torments him.' Needless to say, this is an extremely complex issue in Kant: for further discussion, see e.g. Michelle Grier, *Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

³³ Kant himself, of course, would not want to go that far as he thinks some positive arguments here can be given, but on the grounds of practical rather than theoretical reason, and so not in a

needs an argument against ontology or *metaphysica generalis*, even if this counts against *metaphysica specialis* by depriving this form of metaphysics of its objects of investigation.³⁴ However, this then leads to a second objection: namely, if we do take the Kantian to be proposing an error theory here, why isn't this a *contribution* to metaphysics qua ontology, by denying that God and the soul have any real existence and so do not form part of being qua being—just as, in a case which seems analogous, an error theory in ethics would normally be taken to be a contribution to the metaphysics of value, in so far as it denies that moral properties are real. It is not clear, then, how the Kantian can offer an error theory as his diagnosis of the pitfalls of a *metaphysica specialis*, without at the same time making a contribution to *metaphysica generalis*, albeit of a negative rather than positive kind. Once again, therefore, we would seem to have another instance of the unavoidability of metaphysics.

(5) In order to escape an objection of this sort, therefore, it would seem that a different kind of argument needs to be found in Kant, which might be effective against *metaphysica generalis* or ontology. This can perhaps be uncovered not in the Transcendental Dialectic section, but more in the Transcendental Analytic, and particularly in The Amphiboly of Concepts of Reflection, which forms the Appendix to the Analytic of Principles.

This section of the *Critique* is important in this context, because it is here that Kant offers a diagnosis of how traditional metaphysics can go wrong, as exemplified in the theories of Leibniz.³⁵ The details of Kant's argument are complex, but the general idea here is reasonably straightforward, namely that Leibniz thought he could indulge in metaphysical speculations because he

traditional metaphysical way (such as the ontological and cosmological arguments, for example). Cf. Kant, 'Proclamation of the Imminent Conclusion of a Treaty of Perpetual Peace in Philosophy', trans. Peter Heath, in *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, 457 [Ak 8:418], where Kant argues that God, freedom and immortality should be granted reality 'only in a practical respect, as *postulates* of morally-practical reason', even though 'no reality can be attached to them in a theoretical respect'. Hegel, of course, is then critical of this Kantian use of the postulates, as being of dubious coherence: cf. *PS*, 374–83 [*Werke*, III: 453–64].

³⁴ Though Kant does not himself use this Wolffian distinction in the *Critique* in structuring his discussion, it was of course thoroughly familiar to him and is implicit in that discussion; it much more obviously structures Kant's lectures in metaphysics, as these are shaped by Baumgarten, who was himself following Wolff.

³⁵ Similar criticisms of Leibniz and his followers (particularly Wolff and Baumgarten) can be found in substantial parts of Kant's lectures in metaphysics. Cf. also Kant's polemical response to Johann August Eberhard's Leibnizian position, in 'On a Discovery According to Which Any New Critique of Pure Reason Has Been Made Superfluous by an Earlier One', which is translated with an extensive commentary in Henry E. Allison, *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973); and see also 'What Real Progress?', 368–76 [Ak 20:277–87]. Jacobi then went on to make related criticisms, particularly of Spinoza: cf. F. H. Jacobi, *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza*, 2nd edn. (1789), supp VII, translated in *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel 'Allwilt'*, trans. George di Giovanni (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 371–2.

believed that such speculations could be grounded in principles derived from logic; but Kant thinks he can show that the metaphysical doctrines that Leibniz comes up with are highly dubious, thereby suggesting that this procedure involves something fallacious, which is what Kant then goes on to diagnose. Thus, if Kant is able to argue that adopting this Leibnizian procedure is the only way to conduct something more ambitious than a Kantian metaphysics of experience, this would seem sufficient to show that the latter is the only form metaphysics can properly take, and adventures into *metaphysics generalis* of the more traditional Leibnizian kind should therefore be abandoned.

To see how this Kantian strategy might work in a little more detail, we can consider as an example just one part of the Leibnizian project which Kant criticizes, namely Leibniz's principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles. Kant argues that Leibniz thought that he could defend this principle in a strong form as a metaphysically necessary truth, namely that there cannot be two substances that share all their non-relational or intrinsic properties, on the basis that there would then be two substances that shared the same concept, which he took to be impossible on logical grounds. However, Kant argues, while this may be true at a conceptual level, operating at this level provides a poor metaphysical guide, as can be shown by the fact that two drops of water may fall under the same concept, but be made different by their spatial locations, thus violating the principle: these drops of water *do* share all their non-relational properties, but are made distinct by their spatial relations to one another.³⁶

However, it might perhaps be asked: assuming that we find Kant's counter-example of the water drops convincing as a refutation of Leibniz's principle in its strong form, why can't we say that Kant has simply taken our metaphysical project further forward, rather than showing that it must be made more modest—for why hasn't he just established that things can be made different by their relational properties after all, as a claim about the metaphysics of identity?

The answer, of course, is that Kant thinks what he has achieved is more modest than this, because he thinks all he has done is to establish something about things as they exist in space and time, where these things are therefore appearances, where therefore nothing has hereby been established about the identity conditions of noumena, but only phenomena; so this cannot count as a metaphysical truth in the traditional sense, on a par with Leibniz's attempts to tell us something about things in themselves.

³⁶ Cf. *CPR* A263–4/B319: '[E]ven if there is no difference whatever as regards the concepts, difference of spatial position at one and the same time is still an adequate ground for the *numerical difference* of the object, that is, of the object of the senses. Thus in the case of two drops of water we can abstract altogether from internal difference (of quality and quantity), and the mere fact that they have been intuited simultaneously in different spatial positions is sufficient justification for holding them to be numerically different.' Cf. also P. F. Strawson, *Analysis and Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 55–6.

Kant may therefore be seen as proposing a dilemma to the traditional ontologist: Either he can proceed by abstracting from the spatio-temporal appearances of things in an attempt to speculate about things as they are in themselves, where principles of logic will be his only guide—but then he will come to see that those principles will lead him astray with respect to objects of experience, and get him nowhere with things in themselves; or he can attempt to work with less formal principles, that take into account the spatio-temporal features of things—but then he must accept that he is no longer inquiring into being qua being, and so needs to adopt a more modest, Kantian, attitude to his inquiries.³⁷

If this is Kant's strategy, however, on its own it is perhaps less than compelling. Firstly, it can be criticized for having a rather narrow focus. For, while it is perhaps plausible to say that Leibniz and his followers did take logic to be the key to metaphysics, and so did try to conduct the latter on the basis of the former³⁸ (as in some ways did Kant himself, in his earliest writings),³⁹ Kant has still not

³⁷ Thus, the passage quoted in the previous footnote goes on: 'Leibniz took the appearances for things-in-themselves, and so for intelligibilia, *i.e.* objects of the pure understanding (although, on account of the confused character of our representations of them, he still gave them the name of phenomena), and on that assumption his principle of the identity of indiscernibles (*principium identitatis indiscernibilium*) certainly could not be disputed. But since they are objects of sensibility, in relation to which the employment of the understanding is not pure but only empirical, plurality and numerical difference are already given by space itself, the condition of outer appearances. For one part of space, although completely similar and equal to another part, is still outside the other, and for this very reason is a different part, which when added to it constitutes with it a greater space. The same must be true of all things which exist simultaneously in the different spatial positions, however similar and equal they may otherwise be.' Cf. also A272–3/B327–8; A280–9/B337–46; 'Metaphysik L₂', in *Lectures on Metaphysics*, trans. and ed. Karl Ameriks and Steve Naragon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 333–4 [Ak 28:569–70]; and 'Metaphysik Mrongovius', in *Lectures on Metaphysics*, 186–7 [Ak 29:828]: 'To speak of simple beings we must go beyond the world of the senses, but then we have no proof for that objective reality of our concept, for we can give no example; but that applies for all appearances. Composites <*composita*> of which I can give examples are substantiated phenomena <*phaenomena substantiata*>. But what is valid for noumena <*noumenis*> is not valid for them. Have we comprehended anything new through this doctrine? No, for through the category of substance we are acquainted with no things. Experience can give us examples—and these are appearances. Just as little can we comprehend how substances are supposed to constitute a whole—[we can,] to be sure, of appearances that are in space—but not how substances themselves do, for here we have to leave space aside, because it is the form of sensible intuition.' For further discussion of Kant's position here, see Grier, *Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion*, 69–100.

³⁸ For a defence of this sort of reading of Leibniz himself, see Louis Couturat, *La Logique de Leibniz* (Paris: Alcan, 1901), and 'On Leibniz's Metaphysics', in H. G. Frankfurt (ed.), *Leibniz: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York: Doubleday, 1972), 19–45. See also Bertrand Russell, *Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*, 2nd edn. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1937). For a more sceptical assessment, see G. H. R. Parkinson, *Logic and Reality in Leibniz's Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965) and Nicholas Jolley, *Leibniz* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 214–17. For some assessment of the accuracy of Kant's critique of Leibniz, see G. H. R. Parkinson, 'Kant as a Critic of Leibniz: The Amphiboly of the Concepts of Reflection', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 136–7 (1981), 302–14.

³⁹ Thus, though this is not uncontroversial, one commentator has written on Kant's 1755 dissertation *Principiorum Primorum Cognitionis Metaphysicae Nova Dilucidatio*: 'The *Dilucidatio* is

shown that this is the *only* way to proceed in metaphysics, or that the tradition as a whole has proceeded in this way.⁴⁰ For example, another option might be to proceed in a more foundationalist manner, and simply claim that some metaphysical principles are simply self-evident in themselves, and so do not need any further grounding in logic; or one might argue in a more coherentist way, by showing that such principles seem plausible in the light of other things we know about the world. Against the first strategy, Kant might complain (as he does in relation to the Principle of Sufficient Reason, for example)⁴¹ that simply to treat these claims as self-evident is to leave them without adequate proof—but that is to beg the question against the metaphysician, who is treating self-evidence as proof enough. And against the more coherentist strategy, Kant might say that we cannot use claims about the world to substantiate any metaphysical principles, because these claims relate only to phenomena not noumena—but this response may just lead us into a second objection to Kant.

For, a second worry here might be that the Kantian position is itself internally incoherent, in so far as the dilemma sketched above would seem to turn on his distinction between phenomena and noumena, and the suggestion that while the structure of space and time can determine how things can be qua appearances, this tells us nothing substantive about ‘things in themselves’. But, the objection will run, in making this claim, isn’t Kant himself adopting a metaphysical standpoint, by making a claim (albeit a negative one)⁴² about being qua being—namely that

a treatise devoted to the principle of sufficient reason and Crusius is the dominating influence. Like Crusius, Kant distinguishes two senses of sufficient reason, the reason of being, which determines the existence of something and the reason of knowing, which determines our knowledge of it. Sufficient reason, understood in the sense of logical necessity, leads to the principle of identity. Its objectifying role therefore scarcely goes farther than that of the formal principles of identity and contradiction. If the relation in question is the relation between existing things the discussion turns quite naturally to the problem of causality, but Kant does not resolve it in the way we might well anticipate from him. In spite of his assertions that the *ratio fiendi* and the cause are identical, and that they are both different from the *ratio cognoscendi*, he blunts the point of this distinction when he claims to know causal relations by means of identity. In this manner we must accept the fact that Kant has a very long way to go before he masters this important problem’ (Herman-J. de Vleeschauer, *The Development of Kantian Thought: The History of a Doctrine*, trans A. R. C. Duncan (London: Thomas Nelson, 1962), 22–3).

⁴⁰ Hegel, therefore, is happy to endorse Kant’s concerns here, and is himself critical of ontological claims that proceed from purely logical principles, arguing that the latter can frequently be a poor guide to the former. For a comparison between Kant and Hegel on this issue, see Longuenesse, *Hegel’s Critique of Metaphysics*, 39–51. Cf. Hegel, *PS*, 180–1 [*Werke*, III: 226–8], *SL*, 409–43 [*Werke*, VI: 35–79], *EL*, §§115–22, 179–92 [*Werke*, VIII: 236–53], for his discussion of how the ‘laws of thought’ are metaphysically misleading and problematic. For some discussion of how Hegel himself deals with these Leibnizian issues concerning identity and difference, see ‘Hegel, British Idealism and the Curious Case of the Concrete Universal’, and ‘Individual Existence and the Philosophy of Difference’, Chs. 5 and 12 below.

⁴¹ Cf. *CPR* A783/B811, and ‘Metaphysik Mrongovius’, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, 168–71 [*Ak* 29:814–17].

⁴² A possible Kantian response, which I cannot go into fully here, might be that this makes his position seem too strong: namely, Kant didn’t want to definitely say that noumena are not

space and time are not transcendently real? Thus, while once one is *within* the framework of transcendental idealism, one might say that one is not proceeding metaphysically but just mapping the structure of our way of experiencing the world, to say that this *is* all one is doing, and thus to articulate that framework in the first place, it would seem one must be doing *more* than just carrying out any such mapping, for one needs to say what makes being qua being and our experience of it different in the first place. Moreover, if this is so, and Kant himself can be seen to be indulging in something more substantive than a ‘metaphysics of experience’ in order to provide that modest project with its rationale, then it also suggests a deepening of the previous objection: for it now looks as if Kant himself has found a way to conduct metaphysics of a more traditional sort that does not itself depend on logic, thereby escaping from the very constraints that he had attempted to impose on others. Once more, therefore, we see the force of Hegelian suggestions about the inescapability of metaphysics playing themselves out.

(6) To answer these difficulties, it would therefore seem, the Kantian needs a way of objecting to metaphysics that, on the one hand, does not just attack the Leibnizian approach of arguing from logic to ontology, but tells against the metaphysical method more broadly conceived; and also, does not rely on any distinction between phenomena and noumena, appearances and things-in-themselves, and so on, that could itself be construed in a metaphysical way, as only this, it would appear, can enable Kant to conduct his project without violating the limits he wants to place on the traditional metaphysical enterprise.

Now, the basis for such a critique of metaphysics, that perhaps answers the objections we have just raised, can be found in the concerns that Kant famously expressed in relation to synthetic a priori knowledge, and which he frequently insisted was the really fundamental issue here.⁴³ For, the Kantian can argue, the

spatio-temporal, but just to say that we have no way of knowing whether or not they are, so this becomes a ‘problematic’ issue. A related attempt to make Kant’s project turn on epistemological and not substantive metaphysical claims will be discussed in what follows, under (6), where the fundamental difficulty there I think would also apply here: namely, whether such epistemological modesty can really be substantiated unless one adopts some metaphysical position on what one is being modest about, to explain our cognitive limitations in this area. For a discussion of Kant that attempts to bring out the metaphysical claims underlying his modesty, which also tries to show why such claims are needed, see Rae Langton, *Kantian Humility: Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). For a reading of Kant that is sensitive to these issues, and tries to respond to them, see Henry E. Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*, rev. and enlarged edn. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), esp. 120–1.

⁴³ See, for example, Kant’s irritated response to Christian Garve in the appendix to the *Prolegomena*, where Kant insists that this is the crucial question that Garve has simply ducked: see *Pröl.*, 133 [Ak 4:378–9]. Kant’s reply to Eberhard also focuses on the latter’s inadequate treatment of this issue: see ‘On a Discovery’, 139–56 [Ak 8:226–46].

metaphysician claims to provide knowledge about the world that is not merely analytic on the one hand, but which is of necessary truths and hence a priori on the other. However, they can go on, whilst it is feasible to see how such knowledge might be explained as part of a metaphysics of experience, by telling us how things must appear to us, it is mysterious how such a priori reasoning could give us access to the necessary structure of a mind-independent reality; the only explanation the rationalist metaphysician would seem to be able to provide, is to appeal to some sort of ‘pre-established harmony’, whereby a benign God ensures that our rational speculations and the world somehow match up.⁴⁴ But once this kind of view is rejected as really offering no proper explanation at all, it would appear that some form of Kantian modification to the ambitions of traditional metaphysics is required.

This sort of strategy may seem to have the advantage of avoiding the problems raised against Kant’s strategy in the *Amphiboly*. For, first of all, it does not depend on the suggestion that metaphysicians always base their metaphysical claims in logic and so go wrong in that way: for, this new approach doesn’t need to commit itself to any suggestion about the method used by metaphysics, as it can just rely on the classification of its claims as synthetic a priori to raise its difficulties, *whatever* the methodology appealed to by the metaphysician in making these claims. And secondly, this approach doesn’t seem to require the Kantian to rely on the distinction between phenomena and noumena etc., because it may appear to turn on more epistemological issues—namely, how can knowledge that seems to come from thought alone tell us about the world, if that world is conceived of in the way that the transcendental realist takes it to be?

Now, for many recent commentators on Hegel, I think that it is this issue of synthetic a priori knowledge that has persuaded them that he must be seen as taking some sort of Kantian turn, albeit one that avoids the apparently sceptical difficulties that beset Kant himself, when it comes to knowledge of ‘things in themselves’.⁴⁵ For, it can seem, the only alternative is to see Hegel taking a regressive step, and failing to appreciate the force of Kant’s critique of traditional metaphysics in this area.

Whilst it undoubtedly has its attractions, however, it might reasonably be wondered whether this way of conceiving of an Hegelian metaphysics is coherent or stable, so that we should be wary of attributing this approach to Hegel,

⁴⁴ Cf. Kant’s letter to Marcus Herz of 21 February 1772, in *Correspondence*, translated by Arnulf Zweig (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 132–37 [*Ak* 10:129–35].

⁴⁵ Cf. Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, trans. Leonard Lawlor and Amit Sen (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), 58: ‘[T]he transcendental logic is already the seed of Hegel’s speculative logic, which no longer recognizes the limit of the thing-in-itself. The logic of being replaces the old metaphysics that opened out upon a transcendent world. Hegel does not return to the prior dogmatism; he extends transcendental logic into speculative logic. The categories become the very categories of the Absolute’.

particularly if we think interpretative charity is what compels us to do so. For, it could be argued, if we have somehow escaped Kant's suggestion that in knowing about the necessary structure of our thought and experience, we do not thereby know about things in themselves, because this distinction is in the end eliminated by Hegel, then why aren't we precisely back where we started before the Kantian turn, where 'the modest title of a mere Analytic of pure understanding' is hereby replaced with 'the proud name of an Ontology' once more? Or, to put it the other way, isn't the only way to prevent Hegel's project becoming a full-blown ontological one again, to bring back the Kantian distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves?⁴⁶

It could be replied to this worry, however, that we have not in fact gone back here to the status quo antebellum. For, this approach still differs from traditional metaphysics, because when it seeks to conduct its investigation, it does not go *directly* into speculating about the fundamental nature of being, and what its necessary structures might be, but instead turns to an investigation of the fundamental nature of our thought and experience, using this as a key to any claims about being it might subsequently make—so that it is the structure of thought and experience around which our inquiries turn, thereby avoiding problematic claims about a priori insight into being as such, which are then only made at the second stage, when any sceptical doubts about the gap between our conceptual framework and the world are erased. *In the end*, therefore, on this view Hegel is indeed seen as giving us an ontology rather than a 'mere Analytic of pure understanding', but in a way that still respects the fundamentally Kantian proviso that the former can only proceed via the latter.

However, even if all this is correct, this sort of position does face a further difficulty, which is to explain how and why the structure of our thought and experience is unproblematically accessible to us in a way that the structure of reality as such is not, so that we are obliged to use the former as our route to the latter; for, it can be hard to see where its supposed epistemological advantages lie.⁴⁷ This sort of knowledge looks no more empirical than our knowledge of

⁴⁶ This, I think, is essentially the line taken by Stephen Houlgate in response to what he sees as Robert Pippin's attempts to offer Hegel a more Kantian approach to ontological issues: 'In Pippin's view, [Hegel's logic] sets out "all that 'being' could *intelligibly* be," but it does not set out "all that 'being' could intelligibly *be*." It determines the categorial structure that things must be understood to have if they are to be picked out as intelligible, determinate objects of thought, but it does not show us the structure they must have in order to *be* at all. To my mind, however, Pippin misses the essential lesson of transcendental logic as Hegel conceives it: namely, that *being* can no longer be distinguished at all from what it is *understood* to be. The whole point of Hegel's radicalized "transcendental turn" is to do away with the very distinction between the structure of being or existence and the structure of intelligibility on which Pippin continues to insist' (Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's 'Logic'*, 141). For related criticisms of Pippin, see also Ludwig Siep, 'Hegel's Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', *Inquiry*, 34 (1991), 63–76.

⁴⁷ Thus, for example, Strawson writes: 'By talking about our conceptual structure, the structure of our thought about the world, rather than, as it were, directly about the world, we keep a firmer grasp of our own philosophical procedure, a clearer understanding of what we are about'—but

being qua being might be supposed to be, particularly given that the claims are still about the *necessary* structure of thought and experience, where it is this sort of modal insight that the Kantian uses as his touchstone for a priori knowledge. And it also seems implausible to say that just because we are talking about the structures of *our* thought and experience, this somehow makes those structures accessible to us in a way that makes the a priori status of this knowledge less problematic; for nothing about it being our thought and experience seems in itself to explain why this should be so.⁴⁸ Thus, Kant had hoped to put metaphysics on the ‘secure path of a science’,⁴⁹ and bring an end to its hopeless controversies by basing its knowledge claims around the necessary conditions for experience or thought rather than being tout court;⁵⁰ but in fact, as subsequent disputes show (concerning what Kant has and has not established in the Analogies, for example), debates about the former turn out to be no less intractable than the latter. We therefore seem to have no particularly compelling reason to take a Kantian route into engaging in metaphysics by going via an inquiry into the structure of our thought and experience, if it is still the case that ultimately our destination is to engage in ontology—for it seems from what has been said so far, that we have just as much chance of success with this if we begin with speculation into being qua being at the outset.

It seems, then, that there is no stable middle way here, that on the one hand tries to overcome Kantian distinctions between phenomena and noumena, or appearances and things-in-themselves, while on the other claims to be proceeding in a quasi-transcendental manner by investigating the necessary structure of our cognitive framework in the style of a Kantian ‘metaphysics of experience’; for, without the former distinction, it is not clear that the rationale for the latter investigation makes much sense. If this is right, then we are led back to

without explaining *why* our ‘grasp’ might be thought to be ‘firmer’ here than elsewhere (see *Analysis and Metaphysics*, 33). For further discussion of this issue, in a related context, see my ‘Transcendental Arguments: A Plea for Modesty’, *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 74 (2007), 143–61; repr. in Christian Beyer and Alex Burri (eds.), *Philosophical Knowledge: Its Possibility and Scope* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 143–62.

⁴⁸ Kant himself, however, seems to have just taken this for granted: cf. ‘Metaphysik Mrongovius’, 138 [*Ak* 29:783]: ‘[Metaphysics as a science] is not research into a thing, but rather into an understanding, whose basic propositions and concepts must be open to study, for it all lies within me’; and *CPR* Axiv: ‘I have to deal with nothing save reason itself and its pure thinking; and to obtain complete knowledge of these, there is no need to go far afield, since I come upon them in my own self’. More substantively (as he goes on to remark (also at *CPR* Axiv), and as the derivation of the categories in the *Metaphysical Deduction* suggests), Kant also held that he could use logic as a guide here in a way that (as we have seen) he thought the traditional metaphysician could not; but, as is well known, Hegel (along with many contemporary commentators) was highly dubious about Kant’s methodology in this respect: see, for example, Hegel, *SL*, 51 ff [*Werke*, V: 45 ff].

⁴⁹ Kant, *CPR* Bxxiii.

⁵⁰ Cf. Dryer, *Kant’s Solution for Verification in Metaphysics*, 217: ‘Kant argues that if any metaphysical knowledge is to be got, it can only be got by making out what holds true of any possible object of empirical knowledge. For if any is to be got, it can only be got by ascribing properties to things that they must have to enable empirical knowledge to be got of them’.

having to decide between the options as Kant himself presented them, namely a metaphysics of experience that eschews the ‘proud name of an Ontology’, or a more traditional metaphysics that embraces it; and we are therefore also led back to Kant’s objection to the latter that we have been focusing on here, namely that it leaves the problem of synthetic a priori knowledge unresolved, in a way that Kant’s metaphysics of experience does not. If in the end we must see Hegel as attempting to restore the proud name of ontology in some form, while also coming to terms with Kant’s critique, we must therefore consider what response he gives to Kant on this central issue.

In order to understand that response, it will help if we briefly set out the structure of what the Kantian argument concerning synthetic a priori knowledge is supposed to be, so that we can more clearly identify those parts of the argument that Hegel would want to reject. I think it can be summarized as follows:

1. Metaphysical knowledge qua ontology is knowledge that involves necessity and universality, e.g. ‘every change must have a cause’.
2. The knowledge of the world we get from experience just gives us knowledge of how the world has been, not of how it must be.⁵¹
3. Therefore, in order for us to get knowledge of its metaphysical structure from the world, we would have to get knowledge of it in a way that does not come from what experience tells us about it.
4. If our knowledge is not based on experience, it cannot come from the world as such.
5. So, we must get this knowledge not from the world directly, but indirectly, based on the conditions that necessarily govern our experience of things, to which everything that appears to us must conform.⁵²

⁵¹ Cf. *CPR* B3–5, A91–2, A112–14, A195–6/B240–1; *Prol.*, 28–9 [*Ak* 4:276–8], 69 [*Ak* 4:315–16].

⁵² This, of course, is the crux of Kant’s famous ‘Copernican hypothesis’: ‘Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects. But all attempts to extend our knowledge of objects by establishing something in regard to them *a priori*, by means of concepts, have, on this assumption, ended in failure. We must therefore make trial whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge. This would agree better with what is desired, namely, that it should be possible to have knowledge of objects *a priori*, determining something in regard to them prior to their being given’ (*CPR* Bxvi). Cf. also *Prol.*, 65–6 [*Ak* 4:312]: ‘For having a try at *Hume’s* problematic concept (this, his *crux metaphysicorum*), namely the concept of cause. . . I therefore have quite good insight into the concept of cause, as a concept that necessarily belongs to the mere form of experience, and into its possibility as a synthetic unification of perceptions in a consciousness in general; but I have no insight into the possibility of a thing in general as a cause, and indeed for this reason: because the concept of cause does not allude to any condition whatsoever that attaches to things but only to a condition that attaches to experience, namely, that experience can be an objectively valid cognition of appearances and their sequence in time only insofar as the antecedent cognition can be connected with the subsequent one according to the rule of hypothetical judgments.’ Cf. also *CPR* B146–8, and ‘Metaphysik Mrongovius’, 152 [*Ak* 29:798]: ‘We can make concepts of things in general only through the understanding, even if no object is

To see how Hegel came to think that it might be possible to go beyond Kantian strictures concerning metaphysics, we must see how he came to offer a different account of how the sort of knowledge characterized in (1) is possible.

Before presenting that account, however, let us first see why Hegel might have thought that a different story was needed, as it is this dissatisfaction, I think, which helps to shape the sort of story that Hegel himself then provides.

Now, it is often said by commentators that the source of Hegel's dissatisfaction came from what he saw as the unsatisfactory *implications* of the Kantian position, as seeming to confine our knowledge to how things appear and hence cutting us off from how they really are; but on the one hand this looks like an unfortunate concession to scepticism, while on the other it generates problematic commitments to 'things in themselves' as lying beyond appearances, commitments that regardless of sceptical issues, are anyway of dubious coherence. I think it is perfectly correct to say that Hegel had these concerns.⁵³ However, Kantians have then reasonably countered that they rest on exaggeratedly strong readings of the Kantian distinction between 'appearances' and 'things-in-themselves',⁵⁴ and that if this is all that Hegel is worried about in the Kantian story, then these worries can easily be soothed away, leaving the latter intact. Of course, the Hegelian may then reply that the Kantian is overly sanguine here, and so the debate can go on; but there are certainly enough resources on the Kantian side to raise a question over Hegelian dissatisfactions on this score.

However, it is less frequently remarked that in addition to these worries, Hegel has other concerns with the Kantian picture, which are perhaps less easy for the Kantian to address, and which arguably have a greater bearing on his own position.

given, because we are representing to ourselves *only* the manner in which we can think an object' [my emphasis].

⁵³ On Kant's sceptical result, cf. *EL*, §41Z, 83 [*Werke*, VIII: 116]: 'Moreover, even the objectivity of thinking in Kant's sense is itself again only subjective in its form, because, according to Kant, thoughts, although they are universal and necessary determinations, are still *only our* thoughts, and are cut off from what the thing is *in-itself* by an impassable gulf'. And on the incoherence of Kant's notion of the 'thing-in-itself', cf. *EL*, §44, 87 [*Werke*, VIII: 120–1]. Both sorts of misgivings were of course commonplace in the response of the later German Idealists to Kant.

⁵⁴ Thus, it is frequently claimed that Hegel is here relying on the so-called 'two-object' rather than 'two-aspect' account of this distinction, where the latter is said to have no such problematic implications. For the contrast, see Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 3–7, and also Gerold Prauss, *Kant und das Problem der Dinge an sich* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1974), ch. 2. For a response to Hegel using this contrast, see Stephen Priest, 'Subjectivity and Objectivity in Kant and Hegel', in Stephen Priest (ed.), *Hegel's Critique of Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 103–18, esp. 110–11. Aspects of this debate have spilled over into the discussion of John McDowell's work, whose Hegelian critique of Kant is accused by Kantians of suffering from the same lack of nuance; for references and some further discussion, see my 'Going Beyond the Kantian Philosophy: On McDowell's Hegelian Critique of Kant', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 7 (1999), 247–69, 255–9.

The first of these concerns relate to aspects of our previous discussion, because it raises again the question of the status of Kant's own inquiry: namely, Kant's claims to be able to explain the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge by saying that it flows from the knowledge we have of the conditions that necessarily govern our experience; but to do so, it seems, he owes us an explanation of the latter knowledge, which if (2) is correct cannot be acquired empirically, and so must itself be synthetic a priori. The danger for Kant, is that whatever explanation he gives for *this* knowledge, can then be co-opted by the metaphysician to explain the synthetic a priori knowledge *he* claims to possess, rendering Kant's own explanation of the latter redundant. Even readers sympathetic to Kant have seen this as a difficulty:

[W]hat of the basic proposition that the human intelligence is discursive [which is used as a fundamental part of Kant's account of how we come to have synthetic a priori knowledge]: how are we supposed to know that? Is it by some sort of insight into the nature of our own minds? When Kant says that 'our intuition *can* never be other than sensible', and again when he adds that 'these two powers or capacities *cannot* exchange their functions', it looks as if he must be claiming more than empirical knowledge of the essential knowing self. Experience will establish that things are so or so, but hardly that they can never be other than they are. But if Kant *is* claiming insight here, it will be intellectual insight into the necessary structure of fact, precisely the thing whose possibility he denies in other parts of the *Critique*.⁵⁵

Now, Hegel is also sensitive to this issue, which was in fact widely discussed in debates that followed the publication of Kant's first *Critique*.⁵⁶ Thus, for example, as early in his philosophical career as the 1802 essay 'Faith and Knowledge', Hegel takes Kant's objection against Hume, and then turns it against Kant: 'Kant reproaches Hume for thinking of this task of philosophy with far too little

⁵⁵ W. H. Walsh, *Kant's Criticism of Metaphysics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975), 253. Cf. also G. E. Moore, *Some Main Problems of Philosophy* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1953), 171: '[T]his proposition, that our minds are so constituted as always to produce the same appearances, is itself a universal synthetic proposition . . . But how can any of us know this? Obviously, it is a question which requires an answer just as much as any of those which Kant set out to answer; and yet he never even attempts to answer it: it never seems to have occurred to him to ask how we can know that *all* men's minds are so constituted as *always* to act in a certain way. And once this question is raised, I think the whole plausibility of his argument disappears'. Cf. also Michael N. Forster, *Kant and Skepticism* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 63–75.

⁵⁶ One source of this sort of objection to Kant is G. E. Schulze, but where the objection is used in the service of Hume rather than metaphysics: see his *Aenesidemus*, ed. Arthur Liebert (Berlin: Reuther and Reichard, 1912), partially trans. in George di Giovanni and H. S. Harris (eds.), *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), 104–35. For further discussion of the significance of Schulz 'meta-critique' on the development of German Idealism, see Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 266–84, and *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781–1801* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 240–8.

definiteness and universality. This is exactly what happened to Kant himself.⁵⁷ Thus, just as Kant accuses Hume of insufficient ‘universality’ or generality by dismissing synthetic a priori knowledge in metaphysics but failing to see that the same problem arises in mathematics and the sciences,⁵⁸ so Hegel accuses Kant of insufficient ‘universality’ by failing to see that the same problem arises with respect to his own transcendental claims about the structure of the experiencing mind. In fact, Hegel suggests, Kant tries to avoid this problem by dressing up what in fact are merely empirical claims as if they told us something about this necessary transcendental structure, where he writes: ‘Kant has simply no grounds except experience and empirical psychology for holding that the human cognitive faculty essentially consists in the way it appears, namely in this process from the universal to the particular or back again from the particular to the universal’.⁵⁹ The dilemma Hegel poses here is this: if this structure *is* essential to human cognition, Kant’s epistemic principles would seem to mean that he cannot treat our knowledge of that structure as empirical; but, if it is not grounded in anything empirical, and so is synthetic a priori, how can Kant’s explanation of such knowledge apply at this second-order level? How can our knowledge of the necessary structure of our cognitive structures *itself* be explained in a Kantian manner, by *further* appeal to such structures, where at this level it is hard to see how the explanation could work? Thus, while the Kantian needs to make some modal claims about our cognitive structures in order to explain how we have synthetic a priori knowledge of the world, it would seem that he cannot account for those modal claims using the same manoeuvre, so that in the end, the Kantian story is explanatorily inadequate in this crucial respect.⁶⁰

A second area of concern is also recognized by Kant scholars themselves, namely the difficulty Kant has in accounting on his model for the necessity of specific causal laws. How exactly this problem arises in Kant is a complex issue,⁶¹ and there is no space to consider all the details here, but the basic difficulty can again be sketched as a dilemma as follows: either Kant must deny that we do know that specific causal laws are necessary, or he must offer a comparable account to the one he gave for our knowledge of necessary truths in metaphysics, namely that they somehow relate to the conditions for our experience of the world. But

⁵⁷ *FK*, 69 [*Werke*, II: 304].

⁵⁸ Cf. *CPR* B19–20 and *Prolog.*, 10–11 [*Ak* 4:260–1].

⁵⁹ *FK*, 89 [*Werke*, II: 325–6].

⁶⁰ This sort of objection is discussed further in James Van Cleve, *Problems from Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 37–43, and in Forster, *Kant and Skepticism*, 63–75.

⁶¹ See, for example, Gerd Buchdahl, *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Science* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969), and ‘The Conception of Lawlikeness in Kant’s Philosophy of Science’, in Lewis White Beck (ed.), *Kant’s Theory of Knowledge* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1974), 128–50; Paul Guyer and Ralph Walker, ‘Kant’s Conception of Empirical Law’, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supp. vol. 64 (1990), 221–42, 243–58; Michael Friedman, *Kant and the Exact Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), and ‘Causal Laws and the Foundations of Natural Science’, in Paul Guyer (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 161–99; Bernhard Thöle, *Kant und das Problem der Gestzmäßigkeit der Natur* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991).

both horns are problematic. To take the second horn seems problematic, for it is extremely hard to see the laws in the natural sciences as relating in any way to the conditions for experience as such, even if Kant can manage to make this plausible when it comes to the much more basic and fundamental claims made in metaphysics. The first horn may seem more tempting, particularly to those with Humean sensibilities on such matters. But it can also be argued that such a response is damagingly revisionary, and certainly seems to have given Kant himself considerable unease.⁶²

A third, and related, worry concerns the question of natural kinds. For, it is reasonable to hold that a natural kind differs from a collection of similar entities on modal grounds, namely, that to be a member of a kind, as opposed to a mere collection, there are properties the individual *must* have; while, conversely, being a member of a kind is often felt to be more significant to the individual than just being a member of a collection, because the property that makes them a member is *essential* to them, so that to be the thing they are, they *must* possess it. As previously, however, this seems to leave the Kantian with a difficulty: either he must deny that we ever know that things form natural kinds, because this sort of modal knowledge is unavailable to us; or he must allow that we do have such knowledge and so can put things into kinds, but account for it in a transcendental manner, as relating to the necessary conditions for experience. But once again, both horns are unpalatable, the second because the transcendental story seems implausible at this level, and the first because it seems revisionary.

Now, faced with these last two worries concerning natural laws and natural kinds, many contemporary metaphysicians have adopted a different position that involves some appeal to the idea of *universals*. So, it is argued, natural laws should be viewed as second-order relations between first-order properties or relations, where because these are universals, we then have an explanation for why the relation between the individuals exemplifying them should be exceptionless, so that knowledge concerning the former gives us knowledge of necessary facts about the latter.⁶³ Similarly, when it comes to natural kinds, the unity between these individuals can be made more fundamental, if members of the kind can be treated as having a distinct essence, seen as a universal that is common to each of them, which is itself treated as characterizing the individual as such,

⁶² For further discussion of this issue, how Kant himself tried to deal with it, and how it influenced subsequent German Idealists, see Michael Friedman, 'Kant, Skepticism, and Idealism', *Inquiry*, 49 (2006), 26–43, and James Kreines, 'Between the Bounds of Experience and Divine Intuition: Kant's Epistemic Limits and Hegel's Ambitions', *Inquiry* 50 (2007), 306–34. See also Kenneth R. Westphal, 'On Hegel's Early Critique of Kant's *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*', in Stephen Houlgate (ed.), *Hegel and the Philosophy of Nature* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), 137–66, and *Kant's Transcendental Proof of Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁶³ An influential expression of this view can be found in David Armstrong, *What is a Law of Nature?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

rather than belonging to it accidentally.⁶⁴ The sort of worries we have raised against the Kantian position, therefore, are precisely those that have drawn many contemporary metaphysicians into a realism about universals, as ultimately providing a better way of handling the kind of modal knowledge that was central to Kant's concern with the synthetic a priori.⁶⁵

Hegel, I believe, takes a similar path, where he also argues that it is when we consider the cases of natural laws and natural kinds, that realism about universals becomes compelling as a metaphysical position:

Even the *child* is enjoined to think about things . . . We find the same thing, too, in our behaviour with regard to *natural phenomena*. For example, we take note of thunder and lightning. We are acquainted with this phenomenon and we often observe it. But man is not satisfied with this mere acquaintance, with the simple sensible phenomenon; he wants to look behind it; he wants to know what it is, wants to comprehend it. We think about it, therefore; we want to know the cause as something distinct from the phenomenon as such; we want to know what is inward as distinct from what is merely outward. So we reduplicate the phenomenon; we break it into two, the inward and the outward, force and its utterance, cause and effect. Here again, the inner side, or force, is the universal, that which persists; it is not this or that lightning, this or that plant, but what remains the same in all. What is sensible is something singular and transitory; it is by thinking about it that we get to know what persists in it. Nature offers us an infinite mass of singular shapes and appearances. We feel the need to bring unity to this manifold; therefore, we compare them and seek to [re]cognise what is universal in each of them. Individuals are born and pass away; in them their kind is what abides, what recurs in all of them; and it is only present for us when we think about them. This is where laws, e.g., the laws of the motion of heavenly bodies, belong too. We see the stars in one place today and in another tomorrow; this disorder is for the spirit something incongruous, and not to be trusted, since the spirit believes in an order, a simple, constant, and universal determination [of things]. This is the faith in which the spirit has directed its [reflective] thinking upon the phenomena, and has come to know their laws, establishing the motion of the heavenly bodies in a universal manner, so that every change of position can be determined and [re]cognised on the basis of this law.—It is the same with regard to the powers that govern human action in its infinite diversity. Here, too, man believes in a ruling universal.—From all these examples we may gather how, in thinking about things, we always seek what is fixed, persisting, and inwardly determined, and what governs the particular. This universal cannot be grasped by means of the sense, and it counts as what is essential and true.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Cf. E. J. Lowe, *Kinds of Being: A Study of Individuation, Identity and the Logic of Sortal Terms* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), and *The Possibility of Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 174–89; David Wiggins, *Sameness and Substance Renewed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Brian Ellis, *Scientific Essentialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Oderberg, *Real Essentialism*.

⁶⁵ A similar trajectory was taken by Bertrand Russell: cf. *The Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 46–51 and 58–63.

⁶⁶ *EL*, §21Z, 52–3 [*Werke*, VIII: 77–8]. Cf. also *EL*, §12, 37 [*Werke*, VIII: 57]: '[T]he empirical sciences do not stop at the perception of *single instances* of appearance; but through thinking they have prepared the material for philosophy by finding universal determinations, genera, and laws';

Thus, here once again we see how Hegel may be viewed as turning Kant's strategy against Hume on Kant himself: namely, just as Kant argued that in the end Hume's position is unsatisfactory because it cannot take into account our knowledge in geometry, mathematics, and the empirical sciences, and that when we do properly take this into account, this leaves room for a 'metaphysics of experience', so Hegel can be seen as arguing that Kant himself did not properly take into account the knowledge we possess in the sciences either, which when we do, requires us to accept a realism about universals, that will then take us beyond Kant's 'metaphysics of experience' in turn. If, moreover, we add to these concerns about laws and kinds the worry that the Kantian story cannot explain the kind of modal knowledge it itself relies on to give its own account of how that knowledge is possible, then one can begin to see how a compelling case against Kant's transcendental idealism can emerge for Hegel, and one that opens the door to a more traditional metaphysical position: for, if in the end the Kantian himself is compelled to invoke a knowledge of universals to block these worries, then the claim to have offered a wholly new approach to understanding our metaphysical claims collapses; rather than being the stopping point on our journey, therefore, Kant's 'Copernican revolution' looks like a rather unsatisfactory half-way house.

Now, of course, defending this Hegelian alternative to the Kantian position will itself be far from easy, and will involve at least two familiar difficulties. The first, is that while it may seem to offer more explanatory power by invoking a richer metaphysical theory, it does so at the price of needing a much more ambitious epistemology, so that the trade-off for the former is the implausibility of the latter. However, as we have already discussed, in the end it may be that Kant's own epistemological commitments are not much more modest, but

EL, §24Z, 56 [*Werke*, VIII: 82]: 'This meaning of thinking and of its determinations is more precisely expressed by the Ancients when they say that *nous* governs the world, or by our own saying that there is reason in the world, by which we mean that reason is the soul of the world, inhabits it, and is immanent in it, as its own, innermost nature, its universal. An example closer to hand is that, in speaking of a definite animal, we can say that it is [an] "animal." "Animal as such" cannot be pointed out; only a definite animal can be pointed at. "The animal" does not exist; on the contrary, this expression refers to the universal nature of single animals, and each existing animal is something that is much more concretely determinate, something particularised. But "to be animal," the kind considered as universal, pertains to the determinate animal and constitutes its determinate essentiality'; and *EL*, §177Z, 254 [*Werke*, VIII: 329]: 'Everything is a categorical judgment: i.e., things have their substantial nature, which forms their firm and unchangeable foundation. It is only when we consider things from the point of view of their kind, and as necessarily determined by it, that the judgement begins to be a genuine one. To regard judgments such as "Gold is expensive" and "Gold is a metal" as being on the same level has to be called a defect in logical training. Gold's being expensive is a matter of its external relation to our inclinations and wants, to the cost of obtaining it, and so on; and gold remains what it is even if that external relation changes or disappears. Being a metal, by contrast, constitutes the substantial nature of gold, without which whatever else there may be in it, or whatever else may be asserted about it, could not subsist. The situation is the same when we say "Caius is a man"; by means of this we assert here that whatever else he may be has value and significance only insofar as it corresponds to his substantial nature, that of being a man'.

merely shift the difficulty from grasping the necessary structure of reality to the necessary structure of our experience. Moreover, as we shall see in more detail in the papers that follow, while I believe Hegel's response to Kant does commit him to a realism about universals and thus to a form of conceptual realism, defined as 'the belief that concepts are part of the structure of reality',⁶⁷ different varieties of such realism are possible; Hegel, I argue, tries to avoid the sort of extreme Platonism that might force him to adopt an excessively rationalistic epistemology,⁶⁸ and instead adopts a more broadly Aristotelian approach, which allows him to work within an epistemology that can accommodate elements of empiricism as well as rationalism,⁶⁹ just as Kant himself claimed to do.

A second difficulty facing the Hegelian project is not the epistemological price that it might have to pay, but in the end whether it does any better than the Kantian story in explaining the puzzling phenomena with which both are concerned. For, just as it has been argued against realist accounts of natural

⁶⁷ Michael Rosen, 'From *Vorstellung* to Thought: Is a "Non-Metaphysical" View of Hegel Possible?', in Dieter Henrich and Rolf-Peter Horstmann (eds.), *Metaphysik nach Kant?* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1988), 248–62, at 262; repr. in Robert Stern (ed.), *G. W. F. Hegel: Critical Assessments*, 4 vols (London: Routledge, 1993), III, 329–44, at 343.

⁶⁸ Cf. *LHP* II, 29 [*Werke*, XIX: 39]: 'Through his presentation of his Ideas, Plato opened up the intellectual world, which, however, is not beyond reality, in heaven, in another place, but is the real world'. Cf. *EL*, §12, 37 [*Werke*, VIII, 57]: 'When thinking stops at the *universality* of the ideas—as was necessarily the case with the first philosophies (for instance, with the *Being* of the Eleatic school, the *Becoming* of Heraclitus, and so on)—then it is rightly accused of *formalism*. It can happen, even in a developed philosophy [where of course Hegel has Schelling in mind], that only abstract principles or determinations are apprehended (for instance, "That in the Absolute all is one," "The identity of the subjective and the objective"), and that with regard to what is particular these same determinations are simply repeated. With reference to the first abstract universality of thinking, there is a correct and more fundamental sense in which the *development* of philosophy is due to experience'. These passages, along with many others, show why it is too simplistic to accuse Hegel of simply adopting a form of 'intellectual intuition' as the basis for his epistemology, in the way that Kantians are inclined to do, and thus to argue that Hegel rejected 'the need for reception of information about the particulars of nature as well as conceptualization' (Paul Guyer, 'Thought and Being: Hegel's Critique of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy', in Frederick C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 171–210, at 203)—the question, rather, is exactly what this 'information' contains, and how much we can get from it. Cf. Oderberg, *Real Essentialism*, 23–5.

⁶⁹ So, for example, while he disputes the empiricists' limited account of what can be known through experience, Hegel does not deny the significance of experience itself as giving us the capacity to grasp the more general principles governing the behaviour of the phenomena. Cf. *EL*, §24Z, 60 [*Werke*, VIII: 87]: 'A great mind has great experiences, and in the motley play of appearance spots the crucial point. The Idea is present and actual, not something over the hills and far away. A great mind, the mind of a Goethe, for instance, when it looks into nature and history; it sees what is rational and expresses it. Furthermore, we can also become cognizant of what is true through reflection; we are then determining it through relationships to thought'; and *LHP* III, 444–5 [*Werke*, XX: 352], where Hegel claims that 'experience and observation of the world mean nothing else for Kant than a candlestick standing here, and a snuff-box standing there', where he makes plain that he considers Kant to thereby have an inadequate conception of what experience can amount to, which in turn makes the problem of grasping general principles and laws more intractable. Hegel discusses the relation between experience and thought extensively in the Introduction to *EL*, §§1–18, 24–42 [*Werke*, VIII: 41–64].

laws and kinds that the universals postulated to help us explain what is involved do not really do so, because the same questions just arise at a different level, so Hegel's similar manoeuvres need to show that they can avoid suspicions of this sort. Thus, for example, regarding the realist conception of natural laws, it has been argued that this still leaves something unexplained, namely what the relations between individuals and universals are, such that the former must always obey the laws governing the latter. Putting it figuratively, how universals get this power over individuals seems just as mysterious as how individuals get power over one another, so that the realist is no better off than the nominalist in this respect.⁷⁰ In response, therefore, the realist must show that there *is* some gain in understanding here, and that the latter issue is less opaque than the former; and this, as we shall also see in the papers that follow, is precisely the kind of thing that Hegel himself tries to propose.

Given the complexity of the issues, it would be absurd to say that anything in this dialectic with the Kantian is easy, or that in the end Hegel can be vindicated outright; but this is not what I have tried to do so far. All I have wanted to suggest, is that if we do think of Hegel as engaging in 'proud ontology' once more, we do not have to see him doing so forgetfully, as it were, as if deaf to all Kant's concerns and ignorant of the Kantian position; but we don't therefore have to think of him as in some sense taking Kant's transcendental alternative either. Rather, we can see him as engaging with it seriously, but finding it wanting in crucial respects, which in turn led him to see ways in which the traditional picture remains of value. At the same time, however, Hegel's engagement with that picture is more cautious and measured than it might have been had he simply ignored Kantian concerns, so that in the end we may perhaps present Hegel as he so often liked to present himself, as containing elements of both ancient and modern thinking in his philosophical outlook, in which both are 'aufgehoben'.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Cf. Bas C. Van Fraassen, *Laws and Symmetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), esp. 131–50.

⁷¹ For a valuable discussion that, like mine, stresses Aristotelian themes in Hegel, but which attempts to reconcile them to Kantian considerations in a different way, see Paul Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Redding summarizes his outlook as follows: 'All this in turn gives to Hegel's approach the seemingly paradoxical result that features of Aristotle's "realism" are reintroduced to counter Kantian subjectivism. For Hegel the categories do not simply reveal the *form* of thought that is able to be conceived apart from and opposed to the world, they must also reveal features of the world *itself*, and in this way the Hegelian "extension" of Kant's critical approach is meant to restore substantive *content* to philosophy by undermining that residually dogmatically metaphysical assumption responsible for Kant's apparent denial of it. But of course the type of "ontology" restored here could not be that original type susceptible to Kant's critique. Rather, this post-Kantian, post-epistemological analogue to Aristotelian ontology should be understood from a logico-semantic point of view' (222–3). As I have discussed, however, I do not think that Hegel *did* see Aristotelian ontology as succumbing to Kant's critique, as that critique was seriously blunted in Hegel's own time, and nor am I clear what a 'post-epistemological analogue to Aristotelian ontology' could amount to. Redding points to Aristotle's doctrine of 'thought thinking itself' (*noesis noeseos*) as providing a link that Hegel exploits in moving in a more Kantian direction; but for a different

III So far, then, I have suggested that the idea of an Hegelian metaphysical project can be defended, as an investigation into the structure of reality at a fundamental level, concerning the nature of cause, substance, relations, universals, individuals, and so on, where this is motivated by the idea that because our beliefs about such things shape so much of our thinking, that we need to ensure that we are conceiving of them correctly; and I have claimed that the Kantian is in no position to outlaw any such speculations, in large part because to do so would involve making metaphysical claims of his own.

However, it could now be argued (from the other side, so to speak) that this amounts to a rather half-hearted vindication of Hegelian metaphysics, which if it is to be genuine must present Hegel as aiming at much more than just this. For, all I have attributed to Hegel so far is a *metaphysica generalis*, an attempt to develop some sort of fundamental ontology, and to this extent have defended him against Kantian criticisms; but in fact, it could be said, his position is a *metaphysica specialis*, an attempt to characterize those supersensible entities or unconditioned objects that form its basic subject-matter, such as God, the soul, and the world as it came to be in space and time. Hegel, it seems, sees in our concern with such entities a desire to get beyond the ordinary, empirical world, and to cognize 'the absolute',⁷² where Kant rejected this ambition as delusory; and while Hegel is prepared to accept that '[t]his thinking itself in the philosophical mode of cognition needs to be . . . justified in respect of its ability to become cognizant of the absolute objects',⁷³ he nonetheless seems to think that this is an ability we actually possess. It may appear, then, that until I have vindicated Hegel as a metaphysician in *this* sense, I have still not achieved what is required of a full rehabilitation of Hegel's position.

Now, it is certainly true that others who have recently written in defence of what they see as Hegel's metaphysics may have given the impression of meaning thereby something much more extravagant than anything I have so far discussed. A prominent recent example is Frederick Beiser, who writes in an essay entitled 'Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics':

[Hegel] had a conception of philosophy that can only be described as 'metaphysical'. In his early Jena years, and indeed throughout his career, Hegel saw the purpose of philosophy as the rational knowledge of the absolute. This conforms to one of the classical senses of the term 'metaphysics,' a sense given to it by Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: the attempt to know the unconditioned through pure reason.⁷⁴

account of Hegel's view of this doctrine, more in line with my approach, see my *Hegel, Kant and the Structure of the Object*, esp. 114–19.

⁷² Cf. *EL*, §8, 32 [*Werke*, VIII: 51–2].

⁷³ *EL*, §10, 33 [*Werke*, VIII: 53].

⁷⁴ Frederick C. Beiser, 'Introduction: Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics', in Frederick C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1–24, at 4. Cf. also Frederick C. Beiser, 'Hegel, A Non-Metaphysician? A Polemic', *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*, 32 (Autum/Winter 1995), 1–13.

It may seem that it is one thing for Hegel to make the fundamental nature of the world around us into an object of his investigation, and so to conduct an inquiry into 'being qua being'; but it is quite another to claim to make 'the absolute' into such an object, where the latter project seems to be more powerfully at odds with Kantian strictures concerning rationalistic metaphysics, as Kant may have appeared to put such transcendent entities beyond our knowledge in a much more radical way. For, the problem here may seem to be not just that we are overstepping the bounds of our cognitive capacities in seeking to know about what lies beyond appearances (where Hegel challenges the Kantian account of those bounds); the worry is rather that we are using the capacities in a fruitless manner, by inquiring into an object that is itself nothing more than an illusion created by the misuse of our reason. Our intellectual labours here are therefore not only futile but entirely misdirected, as misdirected as the efforts of rational psychology to come up with a science of that non-object, the soul.

However, it is perhaps the case that the picture of Hegelian metaphysics presented by someone like Beiser is not so much more extreme than the one I have offered and sought to defend, so that it does not slide into an objectionable *metaphysica specialis* in this way. For, as Beiser is quick to make clear, it is central to this Hegelian notion of 'the absolute' that it can be no more than 'the universe as a whole',⁷⁵ and thus a view of the universe that makes *it* unconditioned, rather than the postulation of some entity outside or beyond the universe as the unconditioned on which the world is grounded. Beiser uses this idea to defend Hegel against the Kantian objection just mentioned, that in engaging in metaphysics we are being led to claim theoretical knowledge of the existence and nature of transcendent objects, because reason arrives at the idea of something unconditioned corresponding to each of its syllogistic forms, which then tempts us to speculate beyond the world around us in a deluded manner. Beiser's response to this worry is as follows:

Kant saw metaphysics as speculation about *transcendent* entities, as a priori reasoning about objects lying beyond the sphere of experience. In this sense Hegel cannot be a metaphysician at all, and for a very simple and compelling reason: he denied the existence of the transcendent, the pure noumenal or supernatural. If metaphysics consists in speculation about such a realm, then Hegel would be the first to condemn it as a pseudo-science. It is necessary to stress that Hegel's own concept of the infinite or unconditioned is entirely immanent: the infinite does not exist beyond the finite world but only within it. . . . [Nonetheless] If Hegel still abjured metaphysics as a science of the transcendent, he still pursued it as a science of the immanent. Whether the unconditioned is beyond this world or the world as a whole, it still remains the unconditioned. For Hegel, the problem with traditional metaphysics is not that it attempted to know the

⁷⁵ Beiser, 'Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics', 4.

infinite, but that it has a *false interpretation* of the infinite as something transcending the finite world of ordinary experience.⁷⁶

Thus, once we view Hegel's conception of 'the absolute' as immanent and not transcendent, it can be said that his aim is to get us to see the world around us differently rather than to somehow get beyond it, where to do so will mean revising our conception of what we take the fundamental nature of that world to be; but this is to engage once more in *metaphysica generalis* and the investigation of 'being qua being' as before, rather than revising the *metaphysica specialis* that Kant's diagnosis of the illusions of pure reason was designed to undermine.⁷⁷ So, even though Hegel's talk of 'the absolute' may encourage the thought that Hegel's metaphysics is really something more than an inquiry into ontology or 'being qua being', and has its own esoteric object, in fact once Hegel's conception of the absolute is understood, the investigation of the latter is really no more than the investigation of the former.⁷⁸

IV However, it could now be argued that even if we take Hegel's project to be a *metaphysica generalis*, this still requires us to treat that project in an implausibly ambitious way. For, if the claim is that this can enable us to somehow see the world as absolute, as unconditioned, then this means that we must treat it in the manner of God within traditional metaphysics, as something necessarily existent, or self-caused, or eternal, as otherwise we would be forced to take its existence as grounded on something else, thereby making it conditioned and so less than absolute. Hegel's critics have argued, however, that in attempting to carry out this project, Hegel committed a crucial blunder: for he did not see that while a *metaphysica generalis* might perhaps establish that the world has to have certain fundamental features in order to exist at all, this is not the same as establishing

⁷⁶ Frederick Beiser, *Hegel* (London: Routledge, 2005), 55. Cf. Ameriks, 'The Critique of Metaphysics: The Structure and Fate of Kant's Dialectic', 295, where speaking of the absolute idealists like Schelling and Hegel, Ameriks writes: '... their unconditioned, unlike Kant's, cannot be a particular thing in itself, or group of them, but must be an all-inclusive whole, an absolutely unconditioned structure that allows us to determine it, that is, to know and fulfill it. An advantage of their position is that it blocks all transcendent mysteries and fits more closely with the now-common unrestricted understanding of the term "unconditioned."'

⁷⁷ It does not follow from this that Hegel was particularly impressed by that diagnosis, however, which in general he seemed to think was flawed: see e.g. *EL*, §46–52, 89–100 [*Werke*, VIII: 123–37], and *LHP* III, 443–57 [*Werke*, XX: 351–65]. Hegel's own reasons for denying that the unconditioned could be transcendent come more from his reading of Spinoza and his understanding of the significance of the Christian conception of the incarnate God, than from the influence of Kant.

⁷⁸ Cf. *SL*, 63–4 [*Werke*, V: 61–2]. And cf. also *EL*, §38Z, 78 [*Werke*, VIII: 109], where on *this* point Hegel expresses himself in great sympathy with the empiricism which he thinks then inspired Kant: 'From Empiricism the call went out: "Stop chasing about among empty abstractions, look at what is there for the taking, grasp *the here and now*, human and natural, just as it is *here* before us, and enjoy it!" And there is no denying that this all contains an essentially justified moment. This world, the *here and now*, the present, was to be substituted for the empty Beyond, for the spiderwebs and cloudy shapes of the abstract understanding.'

that those features have to be exemplified and thus that a world containing those features exists necessarily and so is absolute.⁷⁹ It is claimed, however, that this is the mistake Hegel makes in moving from his *Logic* to his *Philosophy of Nature*, as if he could first establish the categorical framework in the former, and then deduce its existence in the latter.

It might well seem, therefore, that the Hegelian attempt to grasp the unconditioned cannot be made innocuous after all, for although Hegel may have hoped to show that this could be achieved without the appeal to anything transcendent, what he does instead is to claim to deduce the necessary existence of the world in a Platonic manner, by treating the *Logic* as showing how the conceptual structures embodied in the world have brought it into being, leading him to make his notorious claim that the *Logic* 'is the expression of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and a finite mind'.⁸⁰ Against this, Hegel's critics have argued that he simply repeats here the mistakes of the ontological argument, in the attempt to deduce being from thought, while failing to recognize that the world cannot be treated as absolute in this manner, as being must always be contingent, leaving open the fundamental question 'Why is there anything at all? Why not nothing?'⁸¹

This may seem to leave the Hegelian metaphysician with a trilemma: Either he can abandon the attempt to offer any kind of absolute theory within his metaphysics; or he can return to making the absolute transcendent, in the manner of traditional treatments of God; or he can insist that the world is absolute, and so face up to the seeming absurdity of treating its existence as necessary. Faced with the obvious unpalatability of the last two options, it may seem preferable to accept the first, even if this might entail some revisionism with respect to Hegel's own position.

However, before embracing this way out, it is important to acknowledge a fourth option here, which is to consider whether the absolute theorist needs to be committed to thinking of what is absolute in a traditional metaphysical manner, as what is necessary, eternal, self-caused, and so on, and thus whether Hegel must conceive of what is absolute in this way. For, another approach would be to argue that on Hegel's view, to cognize reality in absolute terms, is

⁷⁹ A central source for this objection is Schelling, whose critique of Hegel in his later work is summarized by one commentator as follows: 'Reason can legislate what must be the case *if* something exists, but not whether something really *does* exist, which was the point of Schelling's refutation of the ontological proof' (Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1993), 163).

⁸⁰ Hegel, *SL*, 51.

⁸¹ Cf. F. W. J. Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke* ed., K. F. A. Schelling, 14 vols (Stuttgart and Augsburg: J. G. Cotta, 1856–61; repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1974–76), II Abteilung, vol. 3, p. 242: 'if I want to go to the limits of all thought, then I must also recognise that it is possible that there might be nothing at all. The last question is always: why is there anything at all, why is there not nothing? I cannot answer this question with mere abstractions from real being. . . . I must always first of all admit some reality or other before I can come to that abstract being'.

just to see that while concepts like ‘cause’, or ‘ground’, or ‘essence’, and so on make sense when applied to matters within it, they do not make sense when applied to it as a totality—so that in this way, the question of why there is being and not nothing drops away, without requiring us to give ‘what is’ the status of a necessary existent. But to recognize this as an option here, is once again to engage in the sort of metaphysics recommended by Hegel, as requiring careful reflection on what it takes to be a ‘cause’, or ‘ground’, or ‘essence’ at all, and how we should properly think about such notions at this level. If this is right, then we can retain a picture of Hegel as some sort of absolute theorist, while avoiding attributing to him the kind of extravagant metaphysical views that were rejected by his subsequent critics.⁸²

V When writing the papers included in this collection, it was issues of this kind that were my main concern, so that in what follows they are taken up in more detail, both philosophically and interpretatively.

The collection begins with a discussion of Hegel’s idealism, and its continuities with and difference from the Kantian position. I consider in some detail Robert Pippin’s influential Kantian reading of Hegel, which sees him as an idealist in the Kantian sense of taking the ‘Copernican turn’, and so moving from an investigation of being qua being to an investigation of the categories required for determinate thought, while trying to avoid the sceptical worry that this will only show how we must think about being, and not what being is in itself. However, as outlined above, I argue that Hegel shows little sympathy for the Kantian arguments that might motivate this Copernican turn, and thus that this is not the best way to conceive of Hegel’s idealism. Instead, I suggest, Hegel’s idealism involves a claim about what fundamentally exists, where finite things are treated as ‘ideal’ because not self-subsistent. It is argued that this leads Hegel to a notion of the ‘real’ as the unconditioned, but not in a way that treats this as transcendent; but it does require Hegel to criticize what he sees as Kant’s empiricist arguments against such speculations, and some of the nominalist assumptions on which he thinks those arguments are grounded. In questioning those assumptions, therefore, Hegel’s position can also be seen as idealist in a different sense, as involving an anti-nominalist realism about universals, in a way that is distinctive of his metaphysics and which is considered more closely in several of the subsequent papers.

One aspect of this issue is taken up in the next paper, on Hegel’s theory of truth, where it is argued that it is Hegel’s realism about universals that forms the crucial background to his distinction between ‘truth’ and ‘correctness’, and to his claim that ‘[t]ruth in the deeper sense means that objectivity is identical with the Concept [Begriff]’.⁸³ For, this implies that things have a nature that

⁸² This idea is explored further in ‘British Hegelianism: A Non-Metaphysical View?’, Ch. 4 below.

⁸³ Hegel, *EL*, §213Z, 287 [*Werke*, VIII: 369].

corresponds to the concept they exemplify, and that they are 'true' for Hegel in so far as they properly realize that concept, where this idea of what can be called 'material' truth only makes sense against the backdrop of his conceptual realism.

The paper on the *Doppelsatz* then shows how consideration of Hegel as a rationalistic metaphysician can shed new light on his notorious saying in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*: 'What is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational'.⁸⁴ This is usually read in normative terms, as either saying that the political world as it exists is good (as on conservative readings of Hegel), or that it will become good when fully 'actualized' and hence reformed (as on progressive readings). By contrast to both these accounts, I argue that the *Doppelsatz* is rather a slogan intended to capture Hegel's commitment to a philosophical approach based on reason, as the proper method to be used in the sort of political inquiry conducted in the main text to which this is a preface; the *Doppelsatz* itself, therefore, is normatively neutral.

In adopting the view of Hegel that is presented in these papers, I have often found myself in sympathy with aspects of the tradition of Hegel interpretation offered by the British Idealists, particularly F. H. Bradley and J. M. E. McTaggart. However, just as it is unfashionable to see Hegel as a metaphysician, so it is unfashionable to take this strand in Hegel's *Rezeptionsgeschichte* very seriously, to a large extent because this tradition is seen as excessively and blithely metaphysical, both in its own commitments and in its approach to Hegel.⁸⁵

In the first paper of this section on the British Idealists, however, I argue that at least as readers of Hegel, figures like Bradley and McTaggart were much more sensitive than is generally supposed to the issues surrounding a metaphysics presented in Hegel's name, and were fully aware of the challenges posed to it that we have outlined previously, particularly as presented by critics like Schelling in his later work. I explore the way in which that Schellingian critique was transmitted into the British context by figures such as Andrew Seth, where that critique led Bradley and McTaggart to question the assumption that idealism must involve the deduction of being from thought; instead, I argue, McTaggart in particular put forward a theory of categories which cast doubt on the need for any such deduction, as no fundamental question is left unanswered without it. In one sense, this remains a metaphysical reading of Hegel, because the category theory in question is not merely transcendental and concerned with our conceptual scheme;⁸⁶ but in other respects it is more modest than traditionally

⁸⁴ Hegel, *EPR*, 20 [*Werke*, VII: 24].

⁸⁵ Cf. Dieter Henrich's suggestion that only once it had got out from the shadow of 'an anachronistic Victorian Hegelianism' could the *Science of Logic* be properly and more positively assessed ('Vorwort', in Dieter Henrich (ed.), *Die Wissenschaft der Logik und die Logik der Reflexion*, Hegel-Studien 18 (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1978), vii–viii, at vii).

⁸⁶ In retrospect, I would now say that the paper does not draw out the relevance of this distinction clearly enough—but it is elaborated further in what I have said above in this Introduction. Note

assumed, in not attempting to offer any sort of neo-Platonic deduction of being from thought, or of Nature from the Idea. This modesty is also said to be a virtue of more standard ‘non-metaphysical’ readings; so that the gap between the British Idealists and ‘post Kantian’ accounts is less than is often assumed.

In the next paper, I also argue that their willingness to engage with metaphysical issues posed by Hegel’s thought, and by his *Logic* in particular, meant that the British Idealists were able to shed light on the idea that lies at the heart of his conceptual realism, namely his doctrine of the ‘concrete universal’. At first sight, however, this seems an implausible claim to make, as some ways in which the British Idealists take this notion are apparently philosophically bankrupt and interpretatively misguided. However, I argue that there is a core to their thinking here that is both valuable and authentically Hegelian, which concerns the relation between individuals on the one side and universals on the other, where the aim is to resolve this central metaphysical question. As I think both Hegel and some of the British Idealists saw, the key here is to avoid the extremes of nominalism (which focuses on individuals and denies the existence of universals) and Platonism (which focuses on universals as somehow prior to and independent of individuals), and hold instead that each requires the other; but to grasp this, we must also get away from conceiving of universals in abstract terms, as merely the accidental properties that individuals have in common. This in turn leads to a conception of thought that rejects the view that our awareness of individual things comes from our sensible experience alone, from which thought then abstracts, where it is this revised conception of thought that underlies the anti-empiricism of Hegel’s response to Kant, and to the British Idealists’ response to Hume and Locke.

The final paper in this section then considers a position also associated with the British Idealists, with Hegel as a possible source of inspiration, namely their coherentism. It is argued here that this coherentism is best viewed as an account not of the *nature* of truth, or of the *structure of justification*, but as a *test* for truth. As such, it is claimed, it can avoid some of the standard objections to it, and also be distinguished from more contemporary forms of coherentism.⁸⁷

also that when I argue in the paper that Hegel need not be seen as an essentialist, I mean that in the specific sense of someone who believed that the *existence* of a thing can be deduced from its essence, where this denial does not contradict the form of Aristotelian view attributed to Hegel above, and that treats the nature or kind to which a thing belongs *as* its essence.

⁸⁷ This paper was originally published before Erik Olsson’s book on coherentism appeared, which raises significant questions about the claim that coherence is truth-conducive, and thus that it can serve as a test for truth (Erik J. Olsson, *Against Coherence: Truth, Probability, and Justification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)). However, while the details are complex and cannot be discussed fully here, many of Olsson’s strongest arguments relate to ‘pure’ coherentism that treats coherence *by itself* as truth-conducive, where I argue in my paper that this criticism is something the coherentists I discuss would have endorsed themselves, and as consistent with their other concerns (see especially §v, on the role of experience).

The third section of papers shifts from a focus on Hegel's relation to the British Idealists, to Hegel's relation to the pragmatist tradition. It begins with a paper that presents pragmatism's anti-Cartesian epistemology as central to this school of thought, and then considers whether Hegel's commitment to a presuppositionless system renders his own approach Cartesian, and thus fundamentally at odds with that of the pragmatists. It is argued, however, that Hegel's talk of presuppositionlessness should not be construed in this way, and that his attitude to scepticism is indeed close to theirs.

The papers that follow then consider Hegel's relation to one of the central classical pragmatists: C. S. Peirce. In ways that resemble the reception of Hegel, commentators on Peirce are divided on how to handle the metaphysical dimension of his thought, where again this is seen as being at odds with the Kantian aspects of his position, as well as the apparently anti-metaphysical aspects of pragmatism more generally.⁸⁸ It is striking, in this context, that Peirce seems to have agreed with the view that I attributed previously to Hegel, that in a fundamental sense metaphysics is unavoidable:

Find a scientific man who proposes to get along without any metaphysics—not by any means every man who holds the ordinary reasonings of metaphysicians to scorn—and you have found one whose doctrines are thoroughly vitiated by the crude and uncriticized metaphysics with which they are packed. We must philosophize, said the great naturalist Aristotle—if only to avoid philosophizing. Every man of us has a metaphysics, and has to have one; and it will influence his life greatly. Far better, then, that that metaphysics should be criticized and not be allowed to run loose. A man may say 'I will content myself with common sense.' I, for one, am with him there, in the main. I shall show why I do not think that there can be any *direct* profit in going behind common sense—meaning by common sense those ideas and beliefs that man's situation absolutely forces upon him. We shall later see more definitely what is meant. I agree, for example, that it is better to recognize that some things are red and some others blue, in the teeth of what optical philosophers say, that it is merely that some things are resonant to shorter ether waves and some to longer ones. But the difficulty is to determine what really is and what is not the authoritative decision of common sense and what is merely *obiter dictum*. In short, there is no escape from the need of a critical examination of "first principles".⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Rorty expresses himself with characteristic forthrightness on this issue: 'The pragmatist . . . does not think of himself as *any* kind of metaphysician' (Richard Rorty, *The Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), xxviii. For a classic commentary on Peirce that makes much of the supposed tension between the metaphysical and non-metaphysical aspects of his thought, see Thomas A. Goudge, *The Thought of C. S. Peirce* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950).

⁸⁹ Peirce *CP* 1.129. Cf. also *CP* 1.229: 'Although I am an ignoramus in biology, I ought by this time to recognize metaphysics when I meet with it; and it is apparent to me that those biologists whose views of classification are most opposite to those of Agassiz are saturated with metaphysics in its most dangerous form—i.e. the unconscious form—to such an extent that what they say upon this subject is rather the expression of a traditionally absorbed fourteenth century metaphysics than of scientific observation'; and *CP* 7.579: 'Those who neglect philosophy have metaphysical theories as much as others—only they [have] rude, false, and wordy theories. Some think to avoid the

It should now be clear that in my view, there is much in what Peirce says here that ought to remind us of Hegel.

Moreover, in a way that also resembles Hegel's, Peirce believes that once we do take up the task of reflecting on what our metaphysical position should be, we will be led to endorse a form of conceptual realism, as no other view can avoid falling victim to sceptical aporias. Peirce thus excoriates the implicit nominalistic tendencies which he thinks have infected metaphysics,⁹⁰ as this has led us to feel that thought is somehow cut off from reality,⁹¹ while also licensing a simple-minded empiricist positivism, much in the way Hegel also feared;⁹² he also shares with Hegel a sense that this nominalism will have an unfortunate impact on our ethical and social thought.⁹³ In arguing for realism in this manner, Peirce will

influence of metaphysical errors, by paying no attention to metaphysics; but experience shows that these men beyond all others are held in an iron vice of metaphysical theory, because by theories that they have never called into question. No man is so enthralled by metaphysics as the totally uneducated; no man is so free from its dominion as the metaphysician himself. Since, then, everyone must have conceptions of things in general, it is most important that they should be carefully constructed'.

⁹⁰ For an extended historical account by Peirce of the nominalism/realism debate (though his conception of realism was to change somewhat in his later writings), see 'Fraser's *The Works of George Berkeley*', *EP* I, 83–105 (*CP* 8.7–38).

⁹¹ Cf. *EP* I, 100 (*CP* 8.30): 'The nominalist, by isolating his reality so entirely from mental influence as he has done, has made it something which the mind cannot conceive; he has created the so often talked of "improportion between the mind and the thing in itself"'; and *EP* I, 53 (*CP* 5.312): 'The nominalist must admit that man is truly applicable to something; but he believes that there is beneath this a thing in itself, an incognizable reality. His is the metaphysical figment'; and *EP* II, 223: '[The nominalistic reasoner] would persuade us that the mind, that is to say our opinions,—are filled with notions wholly unlike anything in the real world'.

⁹² Cf. *EP* I, 104 (*CP* 8.38): 'The realistic philosophy of the last century has now lost all its popularity, except with the most conservative minds. And science as well as philosophy is nominalistic. The doctrine of the correlation of forces, the discoveries of Helmholtz, the hypotheses of Liebig and Darwin, have all that character of explaining familiar phenomena apparently of a peculiar kind by extending the operation of simple mechanical principles, which belongs to nominalism. Or if the nominalistic character of these doctrines cannot be detected, it will at least be admitted that they are observed to carry along with them those daughters of nominalism,—sensationalism, phenomenalism, individualism, and materialism. . . . On the other hand, it is allowable to suppose that science has no essential affinity with the philosophical views with which it seems every year more associated. History cannot be held to exclude this supposition; and science as it exists is certainly much less nominalistic than the nominalists think it should be. Whewell represents it quite as well as Mill'. Cf. also *CP* 7.485: 'But let me say a word here about the attempt of Ernst Mach to show that all motion, even rotation, is merely relative. Mach belongs to that school of *soi disant* experiential philosophers whose aim is to emancipate themselves from all metaphysics and go straight to the facts. This attempt would be highly laudable,—were it possible to carry it out. But experience shows that the experientialists are just as metaphysical as any other philosophers, with this difference, however, that their pre-conceived ideas not being recognized by them as such, are much more insidious and much more apt to fly in the face of all the facts of observation'.

⁹³ Cf. *EP* I, 105 (*CP* 8.38): 'But though the question of realism and nominalism has its roots in the technicalities of logic, its branches reach about our life. The question whether the *genus homo* has any existence except as individuals, is the question whether there is anything of any more dignity, worth, and importance than individual happiness, individual aspirations, and individual life. Whether men really have anything in common, so that the *community* is to be considered as an

not allow the nominalist to claim that his position is somehow innocuous or less problematic because devoid of metaphysical commitments and implications;⁹⁴ the question is which theory best fits with the world as we find it to be, and so can account for such phenomena as natural laws⁹⁵ and the validity of our abductive generalizations concerning individuals of the same type.⁹⁶

Armed with these arguments for conceptual realism, Peirce like Hegel sees no need to qualify his metaphysical theorizing with Kantian limitations (what Peirce calls, 'these chaste ornaments of things in themselves'),⁹⁷ for those limitations are themselves fuelled by the nominalistic assumption that thought cannot take us to the heart of being.⁹⁸ To say this is not to say that a priori reflection by itself can act as the source of metaphysical insight, or that metaphysics can somehow be more

end in itself, and if so, what the relative value of the two factors is, is the most fundamental practical question in regard to every public institution the constitution of which we have it in our power to influence'.

⁹⁴ Cf. Peirce's remarks on the overzealous use of Ockham's razor: *CP* 4.1 and 6.274.

⁹⁵ Cf. *EP* II, 183 (*CP* 5.100): 'With overwhelming uniformity, in our past experience, direct and indirect, stones left free to fall have fallen. Thereupon two hypotheses only are open to us. Either: first, the uniformity with which those stones have fallen has been due to mere chance and affords no ground whatever, not the slightest, for any expectation that the next stone that shall be let go will fall; or, second, the uniformity with which stones have fallen has been due to *some active general principle*, in which case it would be a strange coincidence that it should cease to act at the moment my prediction was based upon it. . . . Of course, every sane man will adopt the latter hypothesis. If he could doubt it in the case of the stone,—which he can't,—and I may as well drop the stone once for all,—I told you so!—if anyone doubts this still, a thousand other such inductive predictions are getting verified every day, and he will have to suppose every one of them to be merely fortuitous in order to reasonably escape the conclusion that **general principles are really operative in nature**. That is the doctrine of scholastic realism'. Cf. also *CP* 6.590: 'The famed puzzle of causation is peculiarly understood by Dr. Carus. The difficulties which the perusal of Hume suggested to the mind of Kant, were such as belonged to all categories, or general conceptions of the understanding. The precritical Kant inherited a very decided nominalism from Leibnitz and Wolf; and the puzzle for him was simply the usual difficulty that plagues nominalism when it finds itself confronted with an element of generality. Necessity is, I need hardly say, but a particular variety of universality. But Dr. Carus (§24) passes over this. . .'

⁹⁶ Cf. *EP* II, 223–4 and *CP* 1.422: 'A similar answer may be made to the other nominalists. It is impossible to hold consistently that a quality only exists when it actually inheres in a body. If that were so, nothing but individual facts would be true. Laws would be fictions; and in fact, the nominalist does object to the word "law," and prefers "uniformity" to express his conviction that so far as the law expresses what *might* happen, but does not, it is nugatory. If, however, no law subsists other than expression of actual facts, the future is entirely indeterminate and so is general to the highest degree. Indeed, nothing would exist but the instantaneous state; whereas it is easy to show that if we are going to be free in calling elements fictions an instant is the first thing to be called fictitious. But I confess I do not take pains accurately to answer a doctrine so monstrous, and just at present out of vogue'. We have already seen how Hegel offers a similarly realist account of laws: see above, p. 26.

⁹⁷ *EP* II, 63 (*CP* 8.145).

⁹⁸ Cf. *CP* 6.593: 'Now, upon the nominalistic theory, there is not only no absolute or numerical identity, but there are not even any real agreements or likenesses between individuals; for likeness consists merely in the calling of several individuals by one name, or (in some systems) in their exciting one idea. On the other hand, upon the realistic theory, the fact that identity is a relation of reason does not in the least prevent it from being real'. For claims that Kant was a nominalist, see *CP* 1.19 and 4.50.

certain than other forms of inquiry; but it is to say that once we have conducted our metaphysical reflections, there is no need to add the rider that all we have accomplished is to establish something about our conceptual scheme or linguistic framework, for such modesty is false, and grounded in a nominalistic separation of thought from reality, which metaphysics itself is entitled to question.⁹⁹

However, while I therefore think it makes good sense to align the projects put forward by Hegel and Peirce in these respects, as both representing a return to a *metaphysica generalis* based on a theory of categories, it is nonetheless the case that Peirce himself saw a fundamental difference between his metaphysical position and that of Hegel—most curiously, perhaps, precisely when it came to this question of realism vs nominalism, where Peirce classified Hegel as a nominalist rather than a realist, and so as an opponent rather than an ally. It is this issue that I discuss in the first of the essays on Peirce, where I seek to diagnose the source of Peirce's reading of Hegel, and to show that it is mistaken, and thus that his misgivings of Hegel on this score are false. In a similar way, I then go on to consider Peirce's critique of Hegel in relation to the categories of Firstness and Secondness, as having neglected these aspects of reality, where I argue once again that Peirce's position is in the end closer to Hegel's than he may perhaps have seen, reflecting Hegel's own treatment of the concrete universal as involving elements of individuality (or what Peirce called Firstness), particularity (Secondness) and universality (Thirdness).

In the final paper in this section, I consider the respects in which William James's development of pragmatism on the one hand, and Bradley's development of Hegelianism on the other, can be seen to push these two thinkers apart; but again I claim that, somewhat surprisingly,¹⁰⁰ there is nonetheless a lot of common ground between them. Thus, I argue that both Bradley (consciously) and James (unconsciously) share an Hegelian rejection of Kant's atomistic conception of sensations, and thus his picture of synthesis, but where both differ from Hegel is on the issue of how far conceptual thought can take us in our knowledge

⁹⁹ For a similar repudiation of such modesty in a Peircean vein, see Susan Haack, 'The Legitimacy of Metaphysics: Kant's Legacy to Peirce, and Peirce's to Philosophy Today', *Polish Journal of Philosophy*, 1 (2007), 29–43, at 42: 'The fundamental questions of metaphysics are about the world, the one real world; albeit questions characterized by a peculiar kind of abstraction and generality . . . To be sure, answering metaphysical questions often requires strenuous efforts at conceptual clarification; as, for example, Peirce's articulation of his realism led to his adoption, and pragmatist adaptation, of Scotus' conception of reality. Nevertheless, metaphysical theories are about the world, not just about conceptual schemes or linguistic frameworks or the-world-as-it-appears-to-be'.

¹⁰⁰ I say this in the light of the common perception of James's attitude to Hegel, such as the following: 'There was no philosopher (Schopenhauer was a possible exception) for whom James felt a deeper loathing than Hegel. (Herbert Spencer he regarded as a writer for people who did not have a philosopher.) James had not actually read very much Hegel, but he took the view that the sort of philosopher one is drawn to is a reflection of one's own personality; his colleague George Herbert Palmer (the man who had killed Peirce's chances at Chicago) was a Hegelian, and James considered Palmer an insufferable prig' (Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (London: Harper Collins, 2001), 358). Menand does not mention James's rather extensive correspondence with Bradley.

of the world, and what makes that knowledge problematic for us. I claim, however, that while James incorporates this limitation fairly comfortably within his pragmatism, Bradley remains committed to a more rationalistic outlook, which makes this limitation much harder to accommodate, where it remains a permanent restriction on our intellectual fulfilment.

In a way that I also consider in other discussions of Bradley in this collection, a central source of the difference between his idealism and Hegel's concerns an issue that runs through many of these papers—namely, the relation between thought as conceptual and general on the one hand, and the particularity and uniqueness of what exists on the other, a contrast that Bradley characterizes as the distinction between 'the what' and 'the that'. In the discussion of Peirce on Firstness and Secondness, a similar issue arises, concerning Peirce's attempts to make room for immediacy and reference to the individual, in a way that does not reduce this immediacy to ineffability and the individual to a bare particular or haecceity. In the final paper in this collection, I consider this issue in detail, and relate it again to Hegel's doctrine of 'the concrete universal', but this time in connection to thinkers in the 'continental' tradition, particularly to Feuerbach, Kierkegaard, and in most detail to Deleuze. This paper therefore addresses the question of *individuality*—of what makes something distinct from other things—from an Hegelian perspective, and suggests that Hegel's metaphysics of the concrete universal has a distinctive solution to offer, where this solution is then tested against the objections of continental thinkers from Schelling onwards, that in the end Hegel does not do justice to individuality at all. I claim, however, that their more radical notion of individuality is really superfluous and of dubious coherence, and that in the end even Deleuze comes back to something very like Hegel's solution to the problem. By seeing Hegel as a metaphysical thinker, and thus as part of this tradition of inquiry into such fundamental issues, I believe we can fruitfully connect his work to these long-standing debates; and it is in the value of Hegel's contribution to these debates that I hope the worth of a book on Hegelian metaphysics will be seen to lie.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ I am grateful to the following people for very helpful comments on earlier versions of this introduction: Karl Ameriks, Graham Bird, Karin de Boer, Jens Brockmeier, Paul Franks, Paul Guyer, Bob Hale, Chris Hookway, Rob Hopkins, James Kreines, E. J. Lowe, Adrian Moore, Eric Olson, Paul Redding, Ulrich Schlösser, and Alison Stone.

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PART I

HEGEL'S IDEALIST METAPHYSICS

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1

Hegel's Idealism

In an influential article on this topic, Karl Ameriks posed the question: 'But can an interesting form of Hegelian idealism be found that is true to the text, that is not clearly extravagant, and that is not subject to the [charge] of triviality . . .?',¹ and concluded by answering the question in the negative: 'In sum, we have yet to find a simultaneously accurate, substantive, and appealing sense in which Hegel should be regarded as an idealist'.² Other commentators on this issue have tended to be more positive; but then the fact that these commentators have differed sharply between themselves may suggest that another concern is over the coherence of Hegel's position, and whether a consistent account is possible of it at all.

In this paper, I will consider the charges of inaccuracy, triviality and extravagance that Ameriks and others have raised. Of these charges, the first two are obviously damaging; but it might reasonably be felt that that last is less clearly so (why shouldn't a philosophical theory be extravagant?), and also that it is open to different readings (for example, does it mean 'not consistent with "common sense"', or 'not consistent with the findings of the sciences'—but what do these include?). The context for a concern of this sort, however, might well be whether Hegel's position can be made consistent with Kantian objections against the pretensions of metaphysics, either by respecting those objections, or at least by satisfactorily addressing them. The interpretative issue here is thus one of charity: Hegel's position will seem reactionary and ill-informed if it appears to be conceived in ignorance of the work of his great predecessor. One prominent recent interpreter has put the worry as follows:

More to the general and more obvious point, however, much of the standard view of how Hegel passes beyond Kant into speculative philosophy makes very puzzling, to the point of unintelligibility, how Hegel could have been the post-Kantian philosopher he understood himself to be; that is, how he could have accepted, as he did, Kant's revelations about the fundamental inadequacies of the metaphysical tradition, could have enthusiastically agreed with Kant that the metaphysics of the 'beyond,' of substance, and of traditional views of God and infinity were forever discredited, and then could have promptly created a systematic metaphysics as if he had never heard of Kant's critical epistemology. Just

¹ Karl Ameriks, 'Hegel and Idealism', *The Monist*, 74 (1991), 386–402, at 397.

² *Ibid.*, 398.

attributing moderate philosophic intelligence to Hegel should at least make one hesitate before construing him as a post-Kantian philosopher with a precritical metaphysics.³

In considering the issue of extravagance, then, I shall conceive it primarily in this manner, as concerning the relation between Hegel's position and Kant's 'critical turn' in metaphysics. I will argue that a view of Hegel's idealism emerges from Ameriks's criticisms, which is defensible against his three charges; however, to make sense of it we have to see that Hegel's conception of idealism has aspects that are unusual in terms of the contemporary debate, while nonetheless his position still has a direct bearing on it.

I HEGEL AS A KANTIAN IDEALIST

The account of Hegel's idealism which Ameriks charges with textual inaccuracy is the one put forward by Robert Pippin in his book on this topic,⁴ which has been widely discussed.⁵

Pippin argues that Hegel's idealism should be seen in the light of Kant's turn from traditional metaphysics to critical metaphysics, a turn which Hegel followed and which led both him and Kant towards idealism. Simply put, Kant believed that metaphysics could not be carried out in the traditional rationalist manner, of claiming insight into the fundamental features of reality on the basis of a priori speculation; rather, we must direct our inquiry to the concepts we use to think about the world and which are necessary for us to have experience of it as self-conscious subjects, so that (as Pippin puts it) '[t]hereafter, instead of an *a priori* science of substance, a science of "how the world must be" . . . a putative philosophical science was directed to the topic of how any subject must "for itself" take or construe or *judge the world to be*'.⁶ The hope was that this critical

³ Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 7.

⁴ Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*.

⁵ As well as the paper by Ameriks mentioned above, see also: Terry Pinkard, 'The Categorical Satisfaction of Self-Reflexive Reason', *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*, 19 (1989), 5–17; H. S. Harris, 'The Problem of Kant', *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*, 19 (1989), 18–27; Terry Pinkard, 'How Kantian Was Hegel?', *Review of Metaphysics*, 43 (1990), 831–8; Ludwig Siep, 'Hegel's Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', *Inquiry*, 34 (1991), 63–76; Karl Ameriks, 'Recent Work on Hegel: The Rehabilitation of an Epistemologist?', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 52 (1992), 177–202; Kenneth R. Westphal, 'Hegel, Idealism, and Robert Pippin', *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 33 (1993), 263–72; Sally Sedgwick, 'Pippin on Hegel's Critique of Kant', *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 33 (1993), 273–83; Frank B. Farrell, *Subjectivity, Realism and Post-modernism: The Recovery of the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 20–9. Replies by Robert Pippin to some of these pieces can be found in 'Hegel's Idealism: Prospects', *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*, 19 (1989), 28–41, and 'Hegel's Original Insight', *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 33 (1993), 285–95.

⁶ Robert B. Pippin, 'Hegel and Category Theory', *Review of Metaphysics*, 43 (1990), 839–48, at 839.

turn would make metaphysics more tractable and less vainglorious: we would now be proceeding by investigating the necessary conditions of our experience, rather than things in general.⁷ However, an obvious difficulty with this enterprise is the scope it leaves open for scepticism: why should we think that the concepts which are necessary to enable us to have experience actually correspond to the world? Surely, it might be objected, '[a]n inquiry into the structure of human thought is . . . something quite different from an inquiry into the structure of the world thought is about',⁸ so how can the Kantian approach claim to be doing metaphysics in any sense at all? Now, one Kantian response to this worry is to reject the realist assumption on which it is based, namely that such a gap between mind and world could arise, and thus that there is any coherent notion of 'world' on the basis of which the problem could be posed; rather, it is argued, notions like 'object', 'representation', 'truth', 'knowledge', and so on only apply *within* the conceptual scheme we are considering. This outlook is often characterized as 'anti-realism' or 'internal realism', in so far as it rejects the realist 'external' standpoint that appears to make scepticism about conceptual schemes of genuine concern, but without the more strongly idealist commitment to the claim that things in the world are 'mental' or 'mind dependent' in any phenomenalist sense.⁹

Now, according to Pippin, Hegel followed Kant in taking this critical turn, and thus in attempting to determine the categories necessary for a conceptual scheme, based on the conditions for unified self-conscious (what Kant called 'apperception'). However, where Kant had undermined his own position by allowing room for the realist notion of 'things-in-themselves' as possibly lying outside our conceptual framework, Pippin takes Hegel's project to be that of developing a more thoroughgoing anti-realism, which would close off any such possibility. Thus, for Pippin, Hegel follows Kant in so far as 'the issue of the "determinations of any possible object" (the classical Aristotelian category issue) has been critically transformed into the issue of "the determinations of any object of a possibly self-conscious judgment"'; but he goes beyond Kant in so far as 'he has, contra Kant, his own reasons for arguing that any skepticism about such results (about their holding only for "our" world, for self-conscious judgers "like us") is, although logically coherent, epistemically idle'.¹⁰ Pippin thus gives

⁷ Cf. Pippin, 'Hegel's Original Insight', 286. Cf. also P. M. S. Hacker's characterization of the motivation of P. F. Strawson's turn from metaphysics as 'limning the ultimate structure of the world' to 'sketching the structure of our conceptual scheme': 'The conception of a form of necessity that is not logical, but no less adamant than logical necessity, that is an objective, language-independent form of necessity that can nevertheless be apprehended a priori by reason alone is, surely rightly, dismissed as a fiction' (P. M. S. Hacker, 'On Strawson's Rehabilitation of Metaphysics', in Hans-Johann Glock (ed.), *Strawson and Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 43–66, at 55).

⁸ Michael J. Loux, *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1998), 9.

⁹ Pippin characterizes Hegel's position as a form of anti-realism at several places, for example, *Hegel's Idealism*, 99, 262 n. 15, and 267 n. 23.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 250.

Hegel's idealism a strikingly Kantian interpretation and rationale: accepting the lesson of Kant's critical turn that 'contrary to the rationalist tradition, human reason can attain nonempirical knowledge only *about itself*, about what has come to be called recently our "conceptual scheme"',¹¹ Hegel nonetheless claims also to be investigating the nature of reality itself in so far as no content can be given to the realist or sceptical thought that reality might in fact lie 'outside' the scheme altogether, by showing that there can be no such 'external' standpoint: '[W]hat Hegel is after is a way of demonstrating the "ultimate" or absolute objectivity of the Notion not by some demonstration that being as it is in itself can be known to be as we conceive it to be, but that a Notionally conditional actuality is all that "being" could intelligibly be, even for the most committed realist skeptic. Or, if you like, Hegel's skeptic is co-opted into the idealist program, not simply "refuted"'.¹²

There are undoubtedly many aspects of Pippin's account of Hegel's idealism that make it profound and attractive. By placing such emphasis on its Kantian background, and how much Hegel shared in the Kantian critique of traditional metaphysics, Pippin offers a reading that shows Hegel to be in tune with the progressive intellectual forces of his time, rather than the reactionary philosophical figure of some standard interpretations. Pippin also argues that Hegel's position follows 'immanently' from Kant's own, suggesting that in the second edition version of the transcendental deduction in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant himself took back his earlier strict distinction between intuition and understanding, so that he now argues that no representation could be given to us in sensuous intuition unless it were subject to the categories;¹³ this, according to Pippin, opens up the way for Hegel's own radicalization of Kant's transcendental approach, so that 'it is with the denial that a firm distinction can ever be usefully drawn between intuitional and conceptual elements in knowledge that distinctly Hegelian idealism begins, and Hegel begins to take his peculiar flight, with language about the complete autonomy, even freedom of "thought's self-determination" and "self-actualization"'.¹⁴ By linking Hegel to Kant in this way, Pippin shows how contemporary developments from Kant have every reason to take Hegel seriously. Pippin's reading also casts fresh light on many of the darker aspects of Hegel's texts, particularly his introductory remarks to Book III of the *Science of Logic*, where Hegel identifies his own account of the Concept or Notion (*Begriff*) with Kant's doctrine of apperception, and in terms that seem to fit Pippin's transcendental interpretation.¹⁵ Moreover, Pippin is able to offer

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8. ¹² *Ibid.*, 98.

¹³ Cf. *ibid.*, 29–32. For doubts about Pippin's reading of Kant, see Sedgwick, 'Pippin on Hegel's Critique of Kant', with a reply from Pippin in his 'Hegel's Original Insight'.

¹⁴ Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, 9.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 18, 232. Pippin has the following sort of remark from Hegel in mind: 'It is one of the profoundest and truest insights to be found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the *unity* which

a challenging account of how Hegel's system works in general, particularly how the *Phenomenology* relates to the *Logic*.

Nonetheless, Pippin's reading remains controversial with Hegel scholars, where Ameriks and others have questioned its textual accuracy, and how far it does justice to Hegel's actual position and procedures. It is not possible to go into all the details here, but one issue is fundamental, namely whether Pippin is right to claim that Hegel followed Kant in attempting to deduce the categories from the conditions of self-consciousness, to "ground" them in the "I".¹⁶ For Pippin, as we have seen, such 'grounding' is essential to the critical turn in metaphysics, as no other basis for metaphysics as the non-empirical inquiry into 'how the world must be' can be taken seriously after Kant. Nonetheless, as Pippin recognizes, in presenting his account of the categories in the *Logic*, Hegel seems to go further than this, in framing his argument in more straightforwardly ontological terms, and so 'slips frequently from a "logical" to a material mode, going far beyond a claim about thought or thinkability, and making a *direct* claim about the necessary nature of things, direct in the sense that no reference is made to a "deduced" relation between thought and thing'.¹⁷ Now, Pippin argues that these 'slips' are merely apparent.¹⁸ However, critics of Pippin's approach are

constitutes the nature of the *Notion* is recognized as the *original synthetic* unity of *apperception*, as unity of the *I think*, or of self-consciousness' (Hegel, *SL*, 584 [*Werke*, VI: 254]). However, Pinkard has argued that comments such as these should not be taken to imply that Hegel is taking the transcendental turn, but rather that he is drawing attention to the way in which the structure of the Notion resembles the structure of the unity of apperception, so that it is the structural similarity between the Notion and the 'I think' that is here being highlighted: 'Thus, in Hegel's eyes, what is important in the Kantian philosophy is *not* its attempt to derive everything from the conditions of self-consciousness, but its attempt to construct a self-subsuming, self-reflexive explanation of the categories. Self-consciousness is only an *instance* of such a reflexive structure' (Pinkard, 'The Categorical Satisfaction of Self-Reflexive Reason', 8). Cf. Hegel, *SL*, 583 [*Werke*, VI: 253], where Hegel says that 'the *I* is the pure Notion itself which, as Notion, has come into *existence*' because the *I* is like the Notion, in combining the moments of universality and individuality, and thus of being a unity that contains difference within it: 'This absolute *universality* which is also immediately an absolute *individualization*, and an absolutely determined being, which is a pure positedness and is this *absolutely determined* being only through its unity with the *positedness*, this constitutes the nature of the *I* as well as the Notion; neither the one nor the other [i.e. the *I* and the Notion] can be truly comprehended unless the two indicated moments [of universality and individuality] are grasped at the same time both in their abstraction and also in their perfect unity'. Henrich explains what Hegel is getting at here as follows: 'By saying "I think," the self asserts its distinctive existence; but the self also knows, with respect to the structure of this act, that it does not differ from other selves. . . . For reasons that now may well be evident, Hegel says that the ontological constitution of the self is the structure of the Notion' (Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, ed. David S. Pacini (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 323).

¹⁶ Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, 33.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 187.

¹⁸ See, for example, *ibid.*, 193: 'Thus, if there is a logical problem in Hegel's introduction of finitude, it does not lie in carelessly confusing the conceptual with the real order. I have tried to show that the issues are conceptual throughout and determined by the overall conceptual strategy of the *Logic*'.

unconvinced, and argue instead that Hegel's position is *non*-transcendental, in that he rejects any Kantian restriction of metaphysics to a method based around the conditions of self-consciousness, rather than of 'being as such'.¹⁹

Of course, Pippin might well reply that from a properly Kantian perspective, the whole idea is that there is no such distinction, which is why Hegel could be happy conducting his metaphysics in a transcendental manner, by arguing from the necessary conditions of self-consciousness. But, it would seem that Pippin's critics could respond by saying that if there really is no sense to a radical mind–world dichotomy, why think of an investigation into the categories as an investigation into the conditions of *self-consciousness* at all, and so why treat the 'I' (rather than 'being') as the 'ground' of the inquiry? According to Pippin, as we have seen, Kant himself made his critical turn to the 'I' because he believed he had reason to think that here we could establish genuinely necessary claims: but why is this so obviously so? Why is there any reason to think that the necessary conditions for apperception are any easier to establish than the necessary conditions for reality as such? Or even, if one has naturalistic or sceptical doubts about the intelligibility of necessary conditions for the latter, that these doubts can be removed concerning necessary conditions for the former? In fact, doesn't any such expectation reveal a Cartesian privileging of the 'inner' over the 'outer', or 'self-knowledge' over 'worldly knowledge', of the kind that Hegel himself seems to have rejected as suspect.²⁰ Thus, critics of Pippin's transcendental reading of Hegel can agree that Hegel is a post-Kantian in accepting important elements of Kant's critique of traditional metaphysics, particularly as a *metaphysica specialis* with its focus on transcendent entities like God and the soul, while still arguing that Hegel is closer to Aristotle than Kant in conducting his inquiry ontologically, as a *metaphysica generalis*, for which '[t]he categories analysed in the *Logic* are all forms or ways of being . . .; they are not merely concepts in terms of which we have to understand what is'.²¹

Nonetheless, even if it is accepted that Pippin is wrong to claim that Hegel followed Kant in attempting to 'ground' the categories in the 'I' as conditions

¹⁹ Cf. Pinkard, 'The Categorical Satisfaction of Self-Reflexive Reason', 7–10; Pinkard, 'How Kantian Was Hegel?', 832–4; Ameriks, 'Hegel and Idealism', 391; Siep, 'Hegel's Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', 71–2; Stephen Houlgate, 'G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831)', in Steven M. Emmanuel (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to the Modern Philosophers: From Descartes to Nietzsche* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 278–305, at 282; Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's 'Logic'* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2006), esp. 137–43.

²⁰ Hegel, *LHP* III, 486 [*Werke*, XX: 392]: '[For Descartes and Fichte] The ego is certain, it cannot be doubted; but Philosophy desires to reach the truth. The certainty is subjective, and because it is made to remain the basis, all else remains subjective also without there being any possibility of this form being removed'.

²¹ Houlgate, 'G. W. F. Hegel', 282. On the move from a *metaphysic specialis* to a *metaphysica generalis*, cf. Hegel, *SL*, 63–4 [*Werke*, V: 61], where Hegel notes that the *Logic* will not concern itself with 'particular substrata taken primarily from figurate conception [*aus der Vorstellung genommenen Substrate*], namely the soul, the world and God', but consider the 'forms of pure thought' (i.e. the categories) 'free from those substrata, from the subjects of figurate conception'.

for self-consciousness, it is still possible that he is right to treat Hegel's idealism as a form of anti-realism, for the two positions are logically distinct. However, much of the *motivation* for the latter comes from the former, as it is anti-realism that gives the transcendental inquiry metaphysical teeth. And yet, without anti-realism as a block to realist scepticism, how can Hegel claim that his *Logic* is a metaphysics?²² On what basis can he show that he is establishing the fundamental nature of being, in a way that will silence sceptical doubts? Here it might be tempting to reintroduce a form of anti-realism, and thus to return to something like Pippin's view of Hegel's idealism, as a way of enabling Hegel to see off the sceptic.

It is of course the case that Hegel had every confidence in his inquiries, that the *Logic* shows that it is possible to arrive at a metaphysical picture of the world that has a legitimate claim to truth: but is that confidence based on a commitment to anti-realism, or the more traditional grounds that this picture has been thoroughly tested against all alternatives and shown to be the most comprehensive, cohesive, and coherent? Of course, the anti-realist strategy is more radical than this because it makes (or tries to make) sceptical doubt *senseless* or *unassertible*, by closing any *possible* gap between how we think about the world and how it is:²³ but what is wrong with the less radical but also less demanding strategy, of asking the sceptic to come up with some *grounds* for thinking that the gap really exists, by showing that we have reason to think our world-view is flawed in some way, where the aim would be to show the sceptic that no such flaw can be found, so that in this more modest sense the sceptic has no place to stand? Wouldn't this render scepticism 'epistemically idle', but without any commitment to anti-realism, as the view that any such 'external' questioning is unintelligible simply *because* it is 'external'? On this view, Hegel has no conceptual argument to rule out scepticism *in advance*, but on the other hand the sceptic must do more than raise just the abstract *possibility* of error: grounds for doubt must be given by showing how the picture being put forward of reality is mistaken, where the inquiry is successfully concluded if and when any such grounds have been dealt with and excluded. Seen from this perspective, both anti-realism and sceptical realism make the same mistake, as both attempt to establish the necessity or impossibility of knowledge too *early*, by claiming to show prior to starting that we can or cannot succeed in coming to know how things are: in the face of a priori realist scepticism, the anti-realist provides a

²² Cf. Hegel, *SL*, 27 and 63 [*Werke*, V: 16 and 61]; Hegel, *EL*, §24, 56 [*Werke*, VIII: 80–1].

²³ Cf. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, 98–9: '... what Hegel is after is a way of demonstrating the "ultimate" or absolute objectivity of the Notion not by some demonstration that being as it is in itself can be known as we conceive it to be, but that a Notionally conditional actuality is all that "being" could intelligibly be, even for the most committed realist skeptic. . . . Hegel's resolution of the objectivity and skepticism problems raised by his idealism must involve a way of arguing *that* such a self-knowledge by Spirit, although not "metaphysically identical" with "what there is, in truth," nevertheless in some way defines or transcendentially constitutes the possibility of "objects".'

priori reassurance. It might be argued, however, that Hegel simply sets out on the path of inquiry aiming to establish how things are (for why should we believe in advance that we cannot?), but without seeking any sort of guarantee (for why is this needed, unless we have some reason for such a doubt?).

I would therefore question Pippin's claim that Hegel could not possibly be a realist, but must be committed to some form of anti-realism, because he is a 'modern philosopher' who feels compelled to make the 'critical turn' as a response to scepticism: 'This all leads Hegel into a wholly new way of resolving the great problem of post-Cartesian philosophy—how can we reassure ourselves that what initially can only be *our* way of taking up, discriminating, categorizing the world, and our criteria for evaluating deeds, can also ultimately be critically and reflectively transformed, secured from realist skepticism, and somehow pass from "ours" to "Absolute" status'.²⁴ What Pippin ignores, I believe, is Hegel's insight that it is fatal (and quite uncalled for) to *begin* with anything like the Kantian 'instrument' model of cognition, and thus with the presupposition that the categories are 'only *our* way of taking things up, discriminating, categorizing the world': for this approach 'presupposes that the Absolute stands on one side and cognition on the other',²⁵ while vainly struggling to close the gap. To make this anything *more* than a presupposition, we must be shown where it is that there is something wrong with our way of thinking, which raises the real (and not just abstract) doubt that it is merely 'ours', and so not related to the world: but to do that, we need to be shown a genuine case where that thinking breaks down, otherwise scepticism is just a form of paranoia, 'whereby what calls itself fear of error reveals itself rather as fear of the truth'.²⁶ The *Phenomenology* thus justifies the project of the *Logic* by showing that a series of *particular* arguments a sceptic might give to suggest that the world is unknowable are based on questionable epistemological and metaphysical assumptions—from the 'supersensible beyond' of the Understanding to the transcendent God of certain forms of religious consciousness—so that in removing these sceptical grounds for doubt, 'pure science [i.e. the *Logic*] presupposes liberation from the opposition of consciousness',²⁷ and thus liberation from the worry that if for example we find 'pure being' incoherent as an idea (because it seems indistinguishable from nothing) this just tells us something about *us*, and not the nature of the world (namely, that if anything *is*, it must be determinate): but there is nothing in this 'liberation' that commits Hegel to anti-realism.

But, it might be said, even if Hegel sees no need to turn to anti-realism at the *outset* of his inquiry, surely the nature of that inquiry shows that we need to be anti-realists *at the end*, because how do we otherwise explain the success of our metaphysical investigations into the fundamental nature of reality? After all, hadn't Kant been brought to see that there was something deeply mysterious

²⁴ Pippin, 'Hegel's Original Insight', 287.

²⁵ Hegel, *PS*, 47 [*Werke*, III: 70].

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Hegel, *SL*, 49 [*Werke*, V: 43].

about metaphysical knowledge, a mystery he encapsulated in the question 'how is synthetic a priori knowledge possible?' Kant's concern was that when we reach a metaphysical conclusion (such as 'every event must have a cause'), we cannot do so either by knowing the meaning of the concepts in question (because these metaphysical propositions are not analytic), or 'reading it off' the world in any direct sense (because our only direct confrontation with the world is in sensible experience: and this experience tells us just that things are thus and so, not that they could not be otherwise).²⁸ The metaphysical rationalist might argue that we reach our metaphysical conclusions by finding that we cannot contemplate how things could be any other way (e.g. an event occurring without a cause). But, if our metaphysical conclusions are reached on the basis of what *we* find conceivable, what *we* can envisage, what account can we give of how these conclusions come to conform to *the world*? Kant argued that it is unsatisfactory to offer as an explanation some sort of pre-established harmony between the limits of what we find conceivable and the limits of how things can be, as if God or some 'third thing' ensured that the former correspond to the latter, because this leaves open the question of why God should have arranged things this way, and why we should expect him to continue to do so.²⁹ Rather, Kant argued, we must make the 'Copernican turn', and accept that it is because things must conform to our conceptual structures that the limits of the latter can tell us about the limits of the former (although this knowledge only extends as far as things as they appear within those structures, not to things as they are in themselves). So, if Hegel is to claim that his *Logic* is a metaphysics, doesn't he have to explain this in anti-realist terms?

However, it is not clear that the metaphysician need feel obliged to accept this Kantian way out, because he may not feel compelled to accept the terms in which the problem is posed in the first place. For, this rests on the assumption that when we accept a metaphysical proposition on the basis of our inability to conceive of its negation, there is some *special* difficulty, which is that we are moving from the limits of our thought to the limits of the world. But this assumes, Hegel would argue, that in metaphysical thinking we are limning the limits of what we can conceive, rather than what is conceivable *as such*. But can we accept this restriction, unless we can make more sense of there being *other*

²⁸ Cf. Kant, *CPR* B3.

²⁹ The seeds of this dissatisfaction can be found in the famous letter to Marcus Herz on 21 February 1772; and for later expressions of the point see e.g. *CPR* B167, and *Prolegomena*, §36. Cf. also John Stuart Mill, *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, ed. John M. Robson (London and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), IX, 68: 'even assuming that inconceivability is not solely the result of limited experience, but that some incapacities of conceiving are inherent in the mind, and inseparable from it; this would not entitle us to infer, that what we are thus incapable of conceiving cannot exist. Such an inference would only be warrantable, if we could know *a priori* that we must have been created capable of conceiving whatever is capable of existing: that the universe of thought and that of reality, the Microcosm and the Macrocosm (as once they were called) must have been framed in complete correspondence with one another . . .'

ways of conceiving things than Kant can properly allow? For, there is a dilemma here for the Kantian: Either he argues that it is because of the limits on what we can conceive that we find some ways of being to be unthinkable, where he convinces us that this is really down to some fact about us—but then why would we stick to the modal claim and not rather abandon it? Or he convinces us to stay with the modal claim, by arguing that it is impossible *in general* (not just *for us*) to conceive of things any other way: but then if all minds must think in this way, and there is no way of conceiving the world differently, isn't *this* now an extraordinary fact, the best explanation for which lies in the impossibility of things being any other way, thereby providing an argument for realism rather than anti-realism? As a result, we can now see why Hegel might say that '*logic*', as 'the science of *things* grasped in *thought*', coincides with '*metaphysics*', which has been 'taken to express the *essentialities* of the *things*'.³⁰

We have found, therefore, that there are interpretative and philosophical reasons to be doubtful about Pippin's account of Hegel's idealism: Hegel's texts suggest he did not feel compelled by Kant's arguments to take an anti-realist turn in metaphysics, and the arguments that the Kantian might give to make this seem necessary can be reasonably resisted. We can now proceed by looking at other ways of understanding Hegel's idealism.

II HEGEL AS A MENTALISTIC IDEALIST

As we have seen, Pippin's treatment of Hegel's idealism was in part a reaction against other accounts that he takes to raise Ameriks's concern of 'extravagance', which treat Hegel as an idealist in the sense of a 'spirit monist', 'who believed that finite objects did not "really" exist (only the Absolute Idea exists), [and] that this One was not a "substance" but a "subject," or mental'.³¹ To Pippin and others, this kind of idealism appears to be a return to the 'metaphysics of the "beyond"', which treats the absolute mind as the transcendent cause or ground of the world, in a thoroughly precritical manner; they argue we should therefore hesitate before attributing this position to Hegel.

Now, one way to respond to this charge of precritical 'extravagance' might be to try to license Hegel's position as a natural extension of Kant's, and thus to claim that this interpretation (like Pippin's) also builds on Hegel's Kantian heritage, but in a way that is closer to full-blooded mentalistic or Berkeleyan idealism than anti-realism. Thus, according to these interpretations of Hegel's idealism, Kant held that the empirical world—everything in space and time—is mind-dependent, so that the world as we know it is nothing but an appearance. However, Kant retained a residual element of realism in his conception of things-in-themselves or noumena, which exist independent of our minds and outside

³⁰ Hegel, *EL*, §24, 56 [*Werke*, VIII: 81].

³¹ Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, 4.

the boundaries of our knowledge. It is argued that Hegel then came to reject this realism as incoherent, and so radicalized Kant's mentalistic idealism, thereby arriving at the doctrine of an *absolute* mind, in which all reality is contained as the experience of a supra-individual subject. On this account, then, Hegel is an idealist in the sense that he treats the world as thoroughly mind-dependent, a transformation of Kant's merely 'subjective' idealism into a form of *absolute* idealism.³²

However, one difficulty with this approach, is that in order to claim that this kind of Hegelian idealism is an extension of Kant's, it is necessary to begin with a mentalistic account of Kant's idealism, which is itself problematic, and ignores the full complexity of Kant's talk of 'appearances' and 'things-in-themselves', and his distinction between empirical realism and transcendental idealism. Thus, if it is claimed that Hegel derived his idealism from a Berkeleyan reading of Kant, it will seem to many that this position is founded on a simplistic misunderstanding of Kantianism, and one that we no longer have any reason to take seriously.³³

As well as the issue of 'extravagance', there are, moreover, textual reasons to resist this account as a reading of Hegel. For, this account seems to misunderstand Hegel's notion of 'absolute mind', which is mind that is able to 'free *itself*' from the connection with something which is for it an Other', where '[t]o attain this, mind must liberate the intrinsically rational object from the form of contingency, singleness, and externality which at first clings to it'.³⁴ Thus, mind for Hegel

³² For interpretations of Hegel along these lines, see the following: Robert C. Solomon, *Continental Philosophy Since 1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 57: 'The dialectic is not so much a method as it is the central idea of Hegel's philosophy, and its purpose, in each of his works, is to demonstrate the ultimate necessity of an all-encompassing acceptance of the self as absolute—what Hegel calls 'Spirit' (*Geist*) . . . [Hegel] accepted the general move of Kant's first Critique, regarding objects as being constituted by consciousness, but he also saw the manifest absurdity of making this an individual matter, as if each of us creates his or her own world; it is consciousness in general that does this, collectively and not individually, through the shared aspects of a culture, a society, and above all through a shared language'; Peter Singer, *Hegel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 72–3: 'Hegel rejects the view that there are countless different "realities" corresponding to the countless different minds that exist. He calls this form of idealism *absolute idealism* to distinguish it from subjective idealism. For Hegel there is only one reality, because, ultimately, there is only one mind . . . [Hegel] needs the conception of a collective or universal mind not only to avoid a subjective form of idealism, but also to make good his vision of mind coming to see all of reality as its own creation'; William H. Walsh, 'Subjective and Objective Idealism', in Dieter Henrich (ed.), *Kant oder Hegel* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1983), 83–98, at 95: '[Hegel] wanted to argue that things are not just coloured or informed by mind, but penetrated and constituted by it . . . To put it crudely, mind could know the world because the world was mind writ large'.

³³ Cf. Arthur W. Collins, *Possible Experience: Understanding Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason'* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 25: 'The things that Kant says prominently and repeatedly about space and time and appearances . . . make it easy to understand how his principal German successors could have taken his transcendental idealism to be an idealist philosophy like their own. But they are nonetheless mistaken. Thus the German idealists are among those who, in an essentially Cartesian spirit, equate Kant's subjectivism with idealism and imagine that he ascribes a mental status to objects in so far as he says that they are, as appearances, irreducibly subjective'.

³⁴ Hegel, *EM*, §441Z, 182 [*Werke*, X: 233].

becomes absolute when it finds itself 'at home in the world', and thus is able to make the world intelligible to itself; but this conception in no way entails that as absolute, mind somehow 'contains' or constitutes the world, and so involves treating the latter as dependent on the former in any mentalistic sense. Hegel would seem to reject just this position, when at one point in his lectures he characterizes as 'spiritualism' the view which holds that 'spirit is what is independent, true, that nature is only an appearance of spirit, not in and for itself, not truly real', and comments of this view that it would be 'utter foolishness to deny its [nature's] reality'.³⁵ And of course, in systematic terms, the fact that Nature comes before Spirit creates difficulties for the mentalistic reading.

But surely, it might be argued, how can Hegel be so confident that the Kantian (or the sceptical realist) is wrong to talk of things-in-themselves as outside our cognitive capacities, unless he has brought the world 'within' the mind and so collapsed the distinction? To exclude talk of 'things-in-themselves', doesn't Hegel have to believe he has some sort of guarantee that the mind will conform to the world, and isn't the only way to provide that guarantee some sort of mentalistic idealism?³⁶

It is not clear, however, that this kind of guarantee is something that Hegel needed or sought, and thus that he felt this kind of motivation towards mentalistic idealism. For, Hegel's objection to Kant's conception of 'things-in-themselves' is that it sets up an absolute limit to our cognitive capacities, telling us that the gap between mind and world cannot be bridged; but how can such a positive claim be made, unless something is already known about the world on the other side of the gap? The difficulty is that this looks like a form of scepticism that is nonetheless based on a metaphysical claim about what is supposed to be unknowable, and which can be answered by pointing out this incoherence. Or, if Kant refuses to make any such metaphysical claim, how can his block on our inquiries be motivated, as nothing can now be said about what it is we do not know?³⁷

³⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Geistes. Berlin 1827/1828, Nachgeschrieben von Johann Eduard Erdmann und Ferdinand Walter*, ed. Franz Hespe and Burkhard Tuschling (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1994), 17. It should be said, however, that passages can be found which are closer to the traditional reading: cf. Hegel, *EM*, §448Z, 198 [*Werke*, X: 253]: 'But when we said that what is sensed receives from the intuiting mind the form of the spatial and temporal, this statement must not be understood to mean that space and time are only subjective forms. This is what Kant wanted to make them. But things are in truth themselves spatial and temporal; this double form of assunderness is not one-sidedly given them by our intuition, but has been originally imparted to them by the intrinsically infinite mind, by the creative eternal Idea'.

³⁶ Cf. Singer, *Hegel*, 70–1.

³⁷ Cf. Hegel, *SL*, 36 [*Werke*, V: 25–6]: 'The way in which the critical philosophy understands the relationship of these three terms is that we place our thoughts as a medium between ourselves and the objects, and that this medium instead of connecting us with the objects rather cuts us off from them. But this view can be countered by the simple observation that these very things which are supposed to stand beyond us and, at the other extreme, beyond the thoughts referring to them, are themselves figments of subjective thought, and as wholly indeterminate they are only a single thought-thing—the so-called thing-in-itself of empty abstraction.' Cf. also Hegel, *EL*, §44, 87 [*Werke*, VIII: 120–1], and Hegel, *PS*, 46–8 [*Werke*, III: 68–70].

However, in removing the sceptical worry here, Hegel is not thereby committing himself to the opposite view, that knowledge of the world is guaranteed, and that before we set out in our inquiries we can be sure they will succeed; he is just objecting to any attempt to set an absolute barrier to that inquiry at the outset.³⁸ Our response here thus parallels the response we offered to the similar worry in the previous section: just as we found there no reason to think Hegel's epistemic optimism requires a commitment to anti-realism, so here we have found it also doesn't require any commitment to mentalistic idealism.

We have thus found reason to accept Ameriks's critical claims regarding this kind of idealism as a reading of Hegel: not only is it 'extravagant' and so objectionable on that score, but it is also textually unwarranted, as Ameriks also recognizes.³⁹

III HEGEL AND THE IDEALISM OF THE FINITE

In the face of these exegetical difficulties, it is tempting to return to Hegel's own writings, and look there at what Hegel says about idealism as a philosophical doctrine, and see how this relates to his own position. This is a strategy Ameriks also tries, but which he thinks either leads us back into 'extravagance', or into the third of his interpretative vices, namely 'triviality'.

If one looks at the way in which Hegel himself characterizes idealism, the results are certainly striking. Here is one passage where the characterization seems clear:⁴⁰

The proposition that the finite is ideal [*ideell*] constitutes idealism. The idealism of philosophy consists in nothing else than in recognizing that the finite has no veritable

³⁸ It might be argued on Kant's behalf that it mischaracterizes the Kantian position to describe it in these terms, as the limits Kant claims to discern are not set in advance, but through a recognition of the intractable difficulties faced by our inquiries into certain metaphysical questions; but here, of course, Hegel is more optimistic than Kant over our capacity to resolve these questions, and so would also reject this Kantian motivation for scepticism as ungrounded and premature. For further discussion of this issue, see Robert Stern, *Hegel and the 'Phenomenology of Spirit'* (London: Routledge, 2002), 36–41.

³⁹ Karl Ameriks, 'Introduction: Interpreting German Idealism', in Karl Ameriks (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1–17, at 7–10. For a more detailed discussion that counters any mentalistic conception of German Idealism generally, but which does not include any extended discussion of Hegel himself, see Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism 1781–1801* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁴⁰ Pippin has argued that we should not read too much into this passage, because its context is a limited one, in so far as here 'Hegel is . . . quite self-consciously appropriating the language of a pre-critical metaphysics and making his point in passing within the assumptions of such a framework. . . . In general, dipping onto Book One of the *Logic* for "definitions" of what Hegel means by "idealism" . . . and so forth is very unwise' (Pippin, 'Hegel's Original Insight', 289, n. 6). However, as we shall see, this is by no means the only place within the system where Hegel uses 'idealism', 'ideal', and so on in the way suggested in this passage, and in fact this use turns out to be fairly typical throughout Hegel's works; so Pippin's warning seems misplaced.

being [*wahrhaft Seiendes*]. Every philosophy is essentially an idealism, or at least has idealism for its principle, and the question then is how far this principle is actually carried out. This is as true of philosophy as of religion; for religion equally does not recognize finitude as a veritable being [*ein wahrhaftes Sein*], as something ultimate and absolute or as something underived, uncreated, eternal. Consequently the opposition of idealistic and realistic philosophy has no significance. A philosophy which ascribed veritable, ultimate, absolute being to finite existences as such, would not deserve the name of philosophy; the principles of ancient or modern philosophies, water, or matter, or atoms are *thoughts*, universals, ideal entities, not things as they immediately present themselves to us, that is, in their sensuous individuality—not even the water of Thales. For although this is also empirical water, it is at the same time also the *in-itself* or *essence* of all other things, too, and these other things are not self-subsistent or grounded in themselves, but are *posited* by, are *derived* from, an *other*, from water, that is they are ideal entities.⁴¹

Can anything be gained in our understanding of Hegel's idealism by considering passages such as these?

Ameriks cautions against optimism here, because he thinks that by taking this passage at face value, we will end up making Hegel's idealism merely trivial, as Hegel seems to be saying only that 'immediate appearances point to something else, some non-immediate things or relations': 'The alternative to idealism [in this sense] is such a straw man that here the real issue becomes simply what specific variety of idealism one should develop'.⁴² The charge of triviality arises if by idealism, Hegel merely means that the world as it presents itself immediately to the senses is not how the world actually is, so that the former cannot be ascribed any ultimate truth—the 'booming, buzzing confusion' of mere sensible experience is not a veridical representation of reality (assuming, indeed, that this notion of experience is even coherent).

Now, it would certainly seem right that if this is all that Hegel is saying here, Ameriks can justifiably argue that he is not saying very much. But, in claiming that 'finite existences' lack 'veritable, ultimate, absolute being', Hegel would appear to be talking not about the ephemeral phenomena presented to us in sensation, but ordinary concrete objects, such as this table, this tree, and so on;⁴³ Ameriks is therefore wrong to identify 'immediate appearances' with the former and not the latter. There is thus enough in Hegel's position here to overcome the charge of triviality, if we take his 'finite existences' to be concrete individual objects and not just sensory appearances.

⁴¹ Hegel, *SL*, 154–5 [*Werke*, V: 172]. For an equivalent passage in the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, see §95, 152 [*Werke*, VIII: 203]: '[F]initude . . . is under the determination of reality at first. But the truth of the finite is rather its *ideality* . . . This ideality of the finite is the most important proposition of philosophy, and for that reason every genuine philosophy is *Idealism*'.

⁴² Ameriks, 'Hegel and Idealism', 387–8.

⁴³ Cf. Hegel, *EPR*, §44Z, 76 [*Werke*, VIII: 107]: 'The free will is consequently that idealism which does not consider things [*Dinge*], as they are, to be in and for themselves, whereas realism declares them to be absolute, even if they are found only in the form of finitude. Even the animal has gone beyond this realist philosophy, for it consumes things [*Dinge*] and thereby proves that they are not absolutely self-sufficient'. Cf. also Hegel, *PS*, 65 [*Werke*, III: 91].

However, Ameriks argues that if we try to escape triviality in this way, we expose Hegel to the opposite danger, which is extravagance. It is the threat of this danger that I now wish to explore, as it arises from different readings of this passage.

One reading of the passage, which would return us to the kind of extravagant position discussed in the previous section, would be to take Hegel here to be characterizing idealism in mentalistic terms, as claiming that 'the finite has no veritable being' because finite existences qua individual objects are dependent on an absolute mind. But, in fact this charge of extravagance is obviously misplaced, as in reality this passage counts *against* a mentalistic conception of Hegel's idealism. For, we can see here that Hegel did not mean anything mentalistic by idealism, because if he did, it would surely have been an absurd exaggeration to say that '[e]very philosophy is essentially an idealism', as mentalistic idealism is a position held by few philosophers, and not by those classical philosophers directly and indirectly referred to here, such as Thales, Leucippus, Democritus, and Empedocles, not to mention Plato and Aristotle. Hegel clearly recognized this,⁴⁴ and so is hardly likely to have claimed that '[e]very philosophy is essentially an idealism' if this is what he meant by the position.

Another reading of the passage sees Hegel as offering a picture of idealism here not as mentalistic, but as *holistic*.⁴⁵ On this account, Hegel claims that finite entities do not have 'veritable, ultimate, absolute being' because they are dependent on other entities for their existence in the way that parts are dependent on other parts within a whole; and idealism consists in recognizing this relatedness between things, in a way that ordinary consciousness fails to do.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Hegel, *LHP* II, 43–4 [*Werke*, XIX: 54–5]: '[T]he idealism of Plato must not be thought of as being subjective idealism, and as that false idealism which has made its appearance in modern times, and which maintains that we do not learn anything, are not influenced from without, but that all conceptions are derived from out of the subject. It is often said that idealism means that the individual produces from himself all his ideas, even the most immediate. But this is an unhistoric, and quite false conception; if we take this rude definition of idealism, there have been no idealists amongst the philosophers, and Platonic idealism is certainly far removed from anything of this kind'.

⁴⁵ Cf. Kenneth R. Westphal, *Hegel's Epistemological Realism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), 143: 'Hegel's idealism is thus an ontological thesis, a thesis concerning the interdependence of everything there is, and thus is quite rightly contrasted with epistemologically based subjective idealism', and his 'Hegel's Attitude Toward Jacobi in "The Third Attitude of Thought Toward Objectivity"', *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 27 (1989), 135–56, at 146: 'The basic model of Hegel's ontology is a radical ontological holism'. Cf. also Thomas E. Wartenberg, 'Hegel's Idealism: The Logic of Conceptuality', in Frederick C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 102–29: '[Hegel's] manner of characterizing his idealism emphasizes that it is a form of holism. According to this view, individuals are mere parts and thus are not fully real or independent'.

⁴⁶ Cf. Hegel, *EL*, §45Z, 88 [*Werke*, VIII: 122]: 'For our ordinary consciousness (i.e., the consciousness at the level of sense-perception and understanding) the objects that it knows count as self-standing and as self-founded in their isolation from one another; and when they prove to be related to each other, and conditioned by one another, their mutual dependence upon one another is regarded as something external to the object, and not as belonging to their nature. It

The idealist thus sees the world differently from the realist, not as a plurality of separate entities that are 'self-subsistent or grounded in themselves', but as parts of an interconnected totality in which these entities are dependent on their place within the whole. It turns out, then, that idealism for Hegel is primarily an ontological position, which holds that the things of ordinary experience are ideal in the sense that they have no being in their own right, and so lack the self-sufficiency and self-subsistence required to be fully real.

Now, this is an account of Hegel's idealism that Ameriks also considers, but dismisses on the grounds of extravagance. For, if Hegel is taken to be suggesting that finite existences lack 'veritable, ultimate, absolute being', it may seem he is basing this on the claim to have found a candidate for absolute status elsewhere—in the 'world-whole', which as 'a self-standing, self-realizing structure' constitutes a limit to explanation in the way no finite entity can, because as a totality 'there is nothing else it could depend on'.⁴⁷ But if it involves theorizing about the world-whole in this way, it may appear that Hegel's idealism is guilty of just the kind of pre-Kantian metaphysical irresponsibility that Pippin and others have sought to escape.⁴⁸ As contemporary philosophers, it could be argued, we should treat this project with caution.⁴⁹

It is not clear, however, that this account of Hegel's idealism should be dismissed on these grounds, because not all forms of holism of this kind need be seen as extravagant, at least from a Kantian perspective. For, while such a theory will require the abandonment of a purely naturalistic explanatory framework, which is suspicious of explanations that have global scope and have a reflexive or 'free-standing' structure, this abandonment is arguably already a feature of Kant's transcendental turn, where the aim is (as David Bell has put it), to provide a 'genuinely self-subsistent, self-warranting framework of explanation'.⁵⁰ Where

must certainly be maintained against this that the objects of which we have immediate knowledge are mere appearances, i.e., they do not have the ground of their being within themselves, but within something else.' Cf. also *EM*, §420Z, 161–2 [*Werke*, X: 209]; trans. modified: 'Although perception starts from the observation of sensuous materials it does not stop at these, does not confine itself simply to smelling, tasting, seeing, hearing, and feeling (touching), but necessarily goes on to relate the sensuous to the universal which is not observable in an immediate manner, to cognize each thing as in itself a connectedness: in force, for example, to comprehend all its manifestations; and to seek out the connections and mediations that exist between separate individual things. While therefore the merely sensuous consciousness merely *shows* things, that is to say, exhibits them in their immediacy, perception, on the other hand, apprehends the connectedness of things, demonstrates that when such and such circumstances are present such and such a thing follows, and thus begins to demonstrate the truth of things'.

⁴⁷ Willem A. deVries, *Hegel's Theory of Mental Activity* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), 15 and 13.

⁴⁸ Cf. Ameriks, 'Hegel and Idealism', 397.

⁴⁹ Cf. deVries, *Hegel's Theory of Mental Activity*, 13: 'We have to be extremely suspicious of Hegel's rather dogmatic belief that the world-whole does form a unitary totality'.

⁵⁰ David Bell, 'Transcendental Arguments and Non-Naturalistic Anti-Realism', in Robert Stern (ed.), *Transcendental Arguments: Problems and Prospects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 189–210, at 199; see also David Bell, 'Is Empirical Realism Compatible With Transcendental

the theory would become objectionable in Kantian terms, would be if it led to a *transcendent* claim, and so to a form of explanation based on appeal to some metaphysical ground *outside* or *beyond* the empirical world—for example, a self-positing infinite Absolute that gives rise to finite existents as their creator. But it seems clear that a proponent of Hegel as an holistic absolute-theorist could plausibly claim that Hegel's aim was to *avoid* any transcendence of this kind,⁵¹ while nonetheless holding that the world-whole constitutes a satisfactory limit to explanation; so proponents of this reading will characteristically argue that Hegel's position was designed to show that the world is a kind of totality that makes notions of 'cause' and 'ground' inapplicable at this level, rather than to bring the regress of explanation to an end by positing a transcendent starting-point.⁵² Thus, the holistic strategy is arguably to claim that the pressure towards transcendence only arises because we are operating with an incomplete picture of the world, which drives us into a regress of explanations which this transcendent first cause is then designed to block; but once we see the world as a totality in itself, no such transcendent answer to the question of explanation will be needed. The aim of this approach, then, is 'to articulate an alternative vision of reality—and not a vision of some alternative reality',⁵³ so that far from being a form of preKantian metaphysics that tries to claim access to some extramundane absolute, Hegel's idealism is a form of absolute-theory that can be treated as in line with the transcendental turn, of giving us a conception of the world that will show how the need for explanation can be satisfied without going *beyond* it.

However, even if it is right to say that holism can be thought of as an option that follows not just from metaphysical extravagance on Hegel's part, but from a concern with the limits of naturalistic explanation that was also shared by Kant, the suspicion may nonetheless be raised that Hegel goes further here than Kant would allow, in that Kant did not want his 'alternative vision of reality' to undercut our ordinary, 'empirical', conception of the world,⁵⁴ while Hegel's

Idealism?', in Ralph Schumacher (ed), *Idealismus als Theorie der Repräsentation?* (Paderborn: Mentis, 2001), 167–80.

⁵¹ Cf. Hegel, *EL*, §94Z, 150 [*Werke*, VIII: 200]: 'Philosophy does not waste time with such empty and otherworldly stuff. What philosophy has to do with is always something concrete and strictly present'.

⁵² Cf. Hegel, *EN*, §247Z, I, 208 [*Werke*, IX: 26–7]: 'To our ordinary thinking [*Vorstellung*], the world is merely a collection of finitudes [*Endlichkeiten*], but if it is grasped as universal, as a totality, the question of a beginning at once disappears'. For further discussion of this 'negative' strategy, which (I claim) can also be found in the work of some of the British Idealists who commented on Hegel, see Robert Stern, 'British Hegelianism: A Non-Metaphysical View?', reprinted below.

⁵³ Bell, 'Is Empirical Realism Compatible With Transcendental Idealism?', 177.

⁵⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 177: 'If the goal of a transcendental theory is to articulate an alternative vision of reality—and not a vision of some alternative reality—then clearly it is a condition of success that there must be some sense in which the notion of reality remains constant throughout. There must, that is, be a sense in which "philosophy leaves everything as it is," in which it "leaves the world alone" and refrains, say, from contesting the findings of natural science as if those findings were simply *false*'.

form of holism by contrast threatens to undermine it completely. For, it is often held that Hegel's holism is Spinozistic, and based around the principle that '*omnis determinatio est negatio*' ['all determination is negation'],⁵⁵ understood as the idea that everything depends on its difference from other things to be itself. If this is so, it may appear that the status of individuals within this holism is lost: for a consequence seems to be that nothing has any *intrinsic* properties as each is what it is through its relation to others, so there are only relational properties, and in such a purely relational system, the *relata* cannot be said to be entities in their own right, even to the extent of being parts—so that in the end, the whole becomes the One.⁵⁶ By posing a threat to the status of individuals in this way, Hegel's holism may appear to be revisionary in a way that Kant claimed his idealism was not (as well as having troubling ethical consequences, of the sort also sometimes attributed to him, concerning the low moral value of individuality within Hegel's system).

Now, there are possible replies that might be given to this kind of concern from the perspective of a holistic reading of Hegel, such as questioning whether this can indeed be derived from the idea of determination through negation, or the assumption that even if this means there are relations 'all the way down', this leaves no room for individuals. However, another response is to question the holistic reading as an accurate account of Hegel's position. For, in fact this reading suffers from a textual difficulty, which can be explained as follows. The passage we are discussing comes as part of a 'Remark' appended to the second chapter of Book I of the *Science of Logic*, where this chapter is divided into an account of 'Determinate Being (*Dasein*) as such', 'Finitude' and 'Infinity', so that the passage forms part of a sequel to Hegel's discussion of the relation between the finite and the infinite. This is important, because it strongly suggests that when Hegel writes that finite things lack 'veritable being' and so are ideal because not 'self-sufficient or grounded in themselves', he does not mean that

⁵⁵ Cf. Hegel, *EL*, §91 and *Z*, 147 [*Werke*, VIII: 196–7]. As was his wont, Hegel was slightly misquoting Spinoza here; in his Letter 50 (to Jarig Jelles, 2 June 1674), Spinoza writes 'determinatio negatio est'. See '*On The Improvement of the Understanding*', *The Ethics*, *Correspondence*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), §70: 'This determination [i.e. figure] therefore does not appertain to the thing according to its being, but, on the contrary, is its non-being. As then figure is nothing else than determination, and determination is negation, figure, as has been said, can be nothing but negation'. Whether Hegel is right to interpret Spinoza's remarks in the way he does can be questioned: see Pierre Macherey, *Hegel ou Spinoza*, 2nd edn. (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1990), ch. 4.

⁵⁶ This concern was raised by Jacobi, in his critical discussion of Spinoza that (inadvertently) did so much to introduce Spinoza into the thinking of the period. See F. H. Jacobi, *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn*, in *The Main Philosophical Writings*, trans. George di Giovanni (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 220, where Jacobi glosses Spinoza's remark in Letter 50 as follows: 'Individual things, therefore, so far as they only exist in a certain determinate mode, are *non-entia* [non-entities]; the indeterminate infinite being is the one single true *ens reale, hoc est, est omne esse, & praeter quod nullum datur esse* [real being; it is the all of being, and apart from it there is no being]'. The quotation in the last part of Jacobi's remark comes from Spinoza's *On The Improvement of the Understanding*, 29.

they are related to other finite things (as on the holistic reading), but rather that they are related to the *infinite*, which is the conclusion he has been trying to establish in the part of the chapter to which this Remark is appended. Immediately before the Remark, Hegel makes this clear by saying: 'ideal being [*das Ideelle*] is the finite as it is in the true infinite—as a determination, a content, which is distinct but is not an *independent, self-subsistent* being, but only a *moment*'.⁵⁷

That this context is important to understanding Hegel's conception of idealism is equally clear in the equivalent discussion in the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, where again Hegel's striking claim that 'every genuine philosophy is *idealism*' is made in the course of his discussion of the connection between the finite and the infinite. Here he argues that while 'finitude . . . is under the determination of reality at first' because finite things are seen to have the reality of 'being-there' or *Dasein*, it now becomes clear that they are not merely self-related but contain their 'other', where this other is the infinite, which is likewise essentially related to the finite in a relation Hegel calls 'being-for-itself' [*Fürsichsein*], whereby the one is 'sublated' [*aufgehoben*] in the other:

In being-for-itself the determination of *ideality* has entered. *Being-there*, taken at first only according to its being or its affirmation, has *reality* (§91); and hence finitude, too, is under the determination of reality at first. But the truth of the finite is rather its *ideality*. . . . This ideality of the finite is the most important proposition of philosophy, and for that reason every genuine philosophy is *Idealism*. Everything depends on not mistaking for the Infinite that which is at once reduced in its determination to what is particular and finite.⁵⁸

The details of Hegel's position and terminology here are difficult, but the basic idea is fairly straightforward: the infinite cannot be 'beyond' the finite as something external to it, as this would be to limit the infinite and thus make it finite; the infinite must therefore be incorporated within the finite in some way, so that the finite is not to be viewed as simply 'being-there', but as related to its 'other' while preserving its difference from its other and remaining finite, so that the distinction between the one side and the other is 'sublated', in Hegel's sense of being both 'cancelled' and 'preserved'.⁵⁹ It would appear from this, then, that what Hegel means by claiming that the finite is ideal, is not that finite things depend on one another as parts of a whole (as on the holistic reading), but that these things stand in a complex dialectical relation to the infinite.

⁵⁷ Hegel, *SL*, 149–50 [*Werke*, V: 165]. Cf. also *ibid.*, 151 [*Werke*, V: 168]: 'The resolution of this contradiction [that finite and infinite are both the same and different] is not the recognition of the equal correctness and equal incorrectness of the two assertions—this is only another form of the abiding contradiction—but the *ideality* of both, in which as distinct, reciprocal negations, they are only *moments*. . . . In this being which is thus the *ideality* of the distinct moments [of finite and infinite], the contradiction has not vanished abstractly, but is resolved and reconciled, and the thoughts are not only complete, but they are also *brought together*'.

⁵⁸ Hegel, *EL*, §95, 152 [*Werke*, VIII: 202–3].

⁵⁹ Cf. Hegel, *EL*, §96Z, 154 [*Werke*, VIII: 204–5] and *SL*, 106–7 [*Werke*, V: 113–14].

Now, at first sight, none of this may appear to help us much with the worry that Hegel's idealism poses a threat to the status of individuals and so does not 'leave the world alone' in a properly Kantian manner; for it may now seem that we are obliged to move from holism to *monism* as an account of Hegel's system, and while the former can at least in principle allow for the status of individuals (even if in Hegel's hands it seems it might not), monism cannot do so even in principle. For, while holism stresses the dependence of finite things on one another, in its *modest* form it can still respect the individuality of finite things in so far as parts can be individuals, to the extent of having identity conditions that make it intelligible to treat a part as the *same*, and so as persisting over time; but monism denies the individuality of finite things in these respects, treating them as 'accidents' or 'modifications' or 'appearances' of a unified substance or ground or underlying reality that takes on these forms, in the way that a single piece of paper may have many wrinkles, or a face may have many expressions, where the paper or the face constitute individuals of which the wrinkles and the expressions are modifications, lacking in any of the continuity or identity conditions that make them individuals (e.g., it doesn't make sense to ask 'is the smile you have got today the same as the one you had yesterday?', whereas it does make sense to ask of a limb that has been sown back onto a body 'is that the arm you had before, or someone else's?').⁶⁰ While of course monism has had its philosophical defenders, it is clearly more revisionary of our common-sense ontology than a modest holism, and so would make Hegel's idealism problematic in the same way as it was on the earlier holistic reading, if this is what it has turned out to involve.

The question is, then, if we take Hegel's idealism to amount to the claim that the finite and infinite are dialectically related, does this commit us to giving a monistic reading of this position? In fact, I do not believe this is so, for this would be to overlook the complexity of Hegel's thinking here. As Hegel's discussion later in the *Logic* shows, he holds that categories like substance and accident or ground and existence can be misleading in the kind of metaphysical picture they give rise to: but this is what happens on the monistic reading, where the infinite is treated as if it itself must be a self-standing individual or substance, and because it cannot be one individual amongst others, this means that the individuality of finite existents is thereby lost. Hegel's preferred model, by contrast, is to think of finite existents as embodiments of the infinite, but not in a way that robs them of their individuality⁶¹—just as Thales took the principle of everything

⁶⁰ This way of characterizing monism is to treat it as an answer to the question of how many individuals there are (sometimes called *substance monism*), rather than as an answer to the question of how many types or varieties of things there are (sometimes called *kind monism*).

⁶¹ Thus, while commenting that 'to be a follower of Spinoza is the essential commencement of all Philosophy' (Hegel, *LHP* III, 257 [*Werke*, XX: 165]), Hegel makes it very clear that he found Spinoza's monism to be too extreme: 'As all differences and determinations of things and of consciousness simply go back into the One substance, one may say that in the system of Spinoza all

to be water, which is permanent and eternal, but which has its existence in *individual* things, while Democritus thought the same of atoms and Empedocles of the four material elements. From Hegel's perspective, therefore, the picture of the infinite/finite relation that might lead to a monistic worry is really based on a simplistic model of that relation, and one that he believed we ought not to take up.⁶²

We can now see why for Hegel, a position like Thales' is idealistic in his sense, with his doctrine that 'the principle of all is water'. On the one hand (at least following Aristotle's account), Thales treated the world as containing ordinary finite objects, while on the other hand, he recognized in these objects an eternal and imperishable material substance—water—which constitutes these objects through a process of change, as it takes on new forms. Objects are thus transient and perishable, but in this transience water remains as permanent and unchanging, so that the finite contains the infinite within it. At the same time, water is required to take on these changing manifestations as part of its nature: it has no being simply as water, so that in this sense the infinite also requires the finite. Similarly, atoms or matter are the infinite contained within the finite, as a law within its instances, or a universal within its instantiations. All such positions are idealistic in Hegel's sense; and once we see this, we can also see that Hegel's idealism is neither straightforwardly a form of monism or holism, though it is related to both. His idealism is not monistic in the sense we have discussed, because the finite entities retain their status as individuals, and are not mere attributes of a single substance. And his idealism is not holistic, because the fact that a finite thing is constituted by something 'ultimate and absolute' like water or atoms does not make it a part of a whole with other such things, any more than two houses that are both made from bricks are so related. However, while this shows that idealism for Hegel does not entail holism, it is no accident that Hegel will talk of the parts of a whole as 'ideal':⁶³ for Hegel believed that a proper

things are merely cast down into this abyss of annihilation. But from this abyss nothing comes out' (ibid., 288 [Werke, XX: 166]).

⁶² Another route from holism to monism, adopted after Hegel by F. H. Bradley, is to argue from the unreality of relations to the non-existence of any kind of plurality of individual things, even as parts within a whole: but there is no reason to think that Hegel would have endorsed this argument either. For further discussion, see Rolf-Peter Horstmann, *Ontologie und Relationen: Hegel, Bradley, Russell und die Kontroverse über interne und externe Beziehungen* (Königstein: Athenäum, 1984).

⁶³ See for example Hegel, *LA I*, 120 [Werke, XIII: 162–3]: 'The process of life comprises a double activity: on the one hand, that of bringing steadily into existence perceptibly the real differences of all the members and specific characteristics of the organism, but, on the other hand, that of asserting in them their universal ideality (which is their animation) if they try to persist in independent severance from one another and isolate themselves in fixed differences from one another. This is the idealism of life. For philosophy is not at all the only example of idealism; nature, as life, already makes a matter of fact what idealist philosophy brings to completion in its own spiritual field'; and Hegel, *EPR*, §276Z, 314 [Werke, VII: 441–2]: 'This ideality of the moments [in the state] is like life in an organic body: it is present at every point, there is only one life in all of them, and there is no resistance to it. Separated from it, each point must die. The same applies to the ideality of

part must be seen as a limited reflection of the totality to which it belongs, where this relation makes the whole 'infinite' in relation to the parts as 'finite'. Thus, for example, Hegel describes the state as 'infinite within itself' because it can be viewed holistically in this way: 'this divided whole exhibits a fixed and enduring determinacy which is not dead and unchanging but continues to produce itself in its dissolution'.⁶⁴ We can therefore see that while idealism in Hegel's sense may not entail holism (cf. Thales and the ancient atomists), nonetheless holism may entail idealism for Hegel, in that to be a part is to be a limited aspect of a totality, as when the parts of a body manifest the life of the whole, or the state as a unity is manifested in its different constitutional elements, much in the way matter is realized through different finite individuals.

Of course, a metaphysical position of this kind is not without its difficulties; and Hegel does not attempt to work them through here, at the stage of the *Logic* which we have been discussing: rather, he goes on to do so in the third book of the *Logic*, in his 'Doctrine of the Concept'. There, we are introduced to the dialectically interrelated structure of universality, particularity, and individuality, whereby each category is seen to imply the others, so that the Concept as such forms a self-contained system that abolishes the problem of an external 'ground': for, an individual is no more than a particularized universal (I [individual] am a human being [universal] of such and such a height, weight, and so on [particular]); particularization is no more than the individualization of the universal (my height, weight etc pertain to me as an individual human being, and not as a 'bare individual'); and the universal is distinguished from other universals by the way it is particularized into individuals ('human being' differs from 'lion' qua universal, by the way in which it belongs to one group of determinate individuals, and not others). This can be seen as Hegel's own attempt to complete the project, which he thought began with Thales and which he takes to be distinctive of philosophy itself, of finding a way of thinking that will articulate the kind of self-reflexive structure needed to understand the relation between the conditioned and the unconditioned, which recognizes the limited nature of the former without making the latter transcendent—just as each of the categories of the Concept require the others in order to be explained and understood, without any having priority *over* the others as an 'external' ground.⁶⁵

all the individual estates, powers, and corporations, however much their impulse may be to subsist and have being for themselves. In this respect, they resemble the stomach of an organism which also posits itself as independent [*für sich*] but is at the same time superseded and sacrificed and passes over into the whole'.

⁶⁴ Hegel, *EPR*, §270Z, 302–3 [*Werke*, VII: 429].

⁶⁵ It is of course profoundly difficult to assess whether this distinctive Hegelian conception of the Absolute is ultimately cogent, as it forms the basis for the critique of Hegel from late Schelling onwards: it is impossible to consider this debate in any further detail here, but in different ways the work of Dieter Henrich, Michael Theunissen, Manfred Frank, Rolf-Peter Horstmann, and Vittorio Hösle would all be relevant. Among authors working in English, the contributions of J. N. Findlay, Stanley Rosen and Andrew Bowie also bear on this issue.

IV HEGEL'S IDEALISM AS A CONCEPTUAL REALISM

We have seen, then, that an account of Hegel's idealism which treats it primarily as a metaphysical position—as the claim that finite existents should not be treated as 'ultimate and absolute'—need not necessarily lead into absurd extravagance, whilst avoiding triviality and having some claim to textual accuracy. However, this account may seem to suffer from a fourth vice: namely, a kind of *irrelevance*, because to be told that this is what Hegel's idealism amounts to is to be presented with a form of idealism that is rather *sui generis*, and hard to connect to contemporary debates that surround the idealism/realism issue, which essentially concern how the mind relates to things outside the mind, and what these things (if any) are. Of course, it would be wrong to criticize Hegel himself on this score alone: but it would nonetheless suggest that there is less to be gained from considering Hegel's idealism than we might at first have hoped. Hegel may seem merely to be claiming the following: Finite things are not themselves infinite, but are limited forms in which the infinite is realized; they therefore lack 'veritable being', because they are not in themselves 'ultimate and absolute or . . . underived, uncreated, eternal'; they are therefore ideal, while 'it is not the finite which is real, but the infinite'.⁶⁶ Even if we grant Hegel this conclusion, it is hard to see how this would establish 'idealism' in a way that relates to current concerns.

However, though I think we should take the way Hegel characterizes 'idealism' seriously, and take note of the ontological use he gives it, it is also clear that Hegel takes his position here to have wider implications, which may make what he says of greater contemporary relevance and interest. To see what these implications might be, we should focus on Hegel's claim that '[e]very philosophy is essentially an idealism', where here Hegel is suggesting that any properly philosophical position must endorse idealism as he conceives it. His implied contrast here, I think, is not just with 'common sense' or 'ordinary consciousness', which recognizes that objects are 'not self-subsistent or grounded in themselves', but cannot reconcile this with its stronger sense that objects are individuals and thus (it supposes) 'self-standing and self-founded', and so cannot grasp the complex philosophical outlook Hegel is proposing which is supposed to accommodate both insights;⁶⁷ an additional contrast, I believe, is also with *non-philosophy*, which for Hegel is a position associated with the empiricist tradition as it existed in Germany, particularly in the work of F. H. Jacobi.⁶⁸ For Hegel, Jacobi counts as a follower of 'those radical arch-empiricists, Hume and Locke' because like

⁶⁶ Hegel, *SL*, 149 [*Werke*, V: 164].

⁶⁷ Cf. Hegel, *EL*, §45Z, 88 [*Werke*, VIII: 122]. Hegel of course believed that this kind of difficulty is characteristic of 'ordinary consciousness', which oscillates between 'one-sided' views that it is unable to reconcile.

⁶⁸ Jacobi himself characterized his own position as a 'non-philosophy': see Jacobi, *Jacobi to Fichte*, in the *Main Philosophical Writings*, 501, 505, 519. Cf. Hegel's remark that 'the only philosophy

them, he has 'posited the particular as such as the Absolute',⁶⁹ rather than seeing that finite particulars lack 'veritable being' in Hegel's sense, that is, that they are 'not self-subsistent or grounded in themselves'; Jacobi has thus ended up with a position in which 'the *finite* is posited as absolute',⁷⁰ and so with a position that counts as an example of *realism*, in Hegel's use of this term. Thus, while Hegel believes that as far as *philosophy* is concerned 'the opposition of idealistic and realistic philosophy has no significance', he does not expect it to have no significance for ordinary consciousness or (more importantly) non-philosophy, of the sort propounded (Hegel thinks) by Jacobi. In tracing out this issue further, we will see that Hegel's idealism is relevant to contemporary issues after all, because of the wider questions this raises.

What this dispute with Jacobi brings out, is that for Hegel his idealism requires a repudiation of empiricism, and thus a richer conception of the relation between thought and world. Idealism for Hegel, as we have seen, is a position that does not treat finite things as 'ultimate and absolute' in themselves, but relates them to an enduring and infinite 'ground' of some kind, of which these finite things are limited realizations; but what idealism in this sense requires, Hegel thinks, is that we move beyond 'empirical cognition'. This is because this infinite ground is not something that is apparent to us in experience, but can only be something we arrive at through reflection.⁷¹ The idealist must therefore be prepared to treat this non-observable form of being as *real* in the way that the empiricist refuses to do, because the empiricist cannot allow such 'ideal entities' into his ontology. Now, Hegel takes it to be characteristic of the philosopher that he *is* prepared to take this step and to take such 'ideal entities' to be real, because he is prepared to trust in those capacities of thought that go beyond the direct evidence of our senses through a process of theorizing and intellectual reflection that arrives at a deeper level of explanation and understanding. This is why, then, Hegel believes he can claim that '[e]very philosophy is essentially an idealism' in his sense: for in his view the philosopher is characteristically driven to seek more satisfactory forms of explanation than can be given at the level of the observable phenomena, while being a realist about the entities such explanations require, whether these are Thales' water, Democritus' atoms, or the laws and genera of natural science,

acknowledged [by Jacobi and his followers] is not a philosophy at all!' (Hegel, *LHP* III, 477 [*Werke*, XX: 384]).

⁶⁹ Hegel, *FK*, 137 [*Werke*, II: 376–7].

⁷⁰ Hegel, *EL*, §74, 120–1 [*Werke*, VIII: 163]: 'The form of immediacy gives to the *particular* the determination of *being*, or of relating *itself to itself*. But the particular is precisely the relating of itself to *another* outside it; [but] through that form [of immediacy] the *finite* is posited as absolute'.

⁷¹ Cf. Hegel, *LHP* III, 445 [*Werke*, XX: 352–3]: 'It is certainly correct to say that the infinite is not given in the world of sensuous perception; and supposing that what we know is experience, a synthesis of what is thought and what is felt, the infinite certainly cannot be known in the sense that we have a sensuous perception of it. But no one wishes to demand a sensuous proof in verification of the infinite; spirit is for spirit alone'.

in which 'things as they immediately present themselves to us' have a more stable grounding:

Nature offers us an infinite mass of singular shapes and appearances. We feel the need to bring unity to this manifold; therefore, we compare them and seek to [re]cognize what is universal in each of them. Individuals are born and pass away; in them their kind is what abides, what recurs in all of them; and it is only present for us when we think about them. This is where laws, e.g., the laws of the motion of the heavenly bodies, belong too. We see the stars in one place today and in another tomorrow; this disorder is for the spirit something incongruous, and not to be trusted, since the spirit believes in an order, a simple, constant, and universal determination [of things]. This is the faith in which the spirit has directed its [reflective] thinking upon phenomena, and has come to know their laws, establishing the motion of the heavenly bodies in a universal manner, so that every change of position can be determined and [re]cognised on the basis of this law. . . . From all these examples we may gather how, in thinking about things, we always seek what is fixed, persisting, and inwardly determined, and what governs the particular. This universal cannot be grasped by means of the senses, and it counts as what is essential and true.⁷²

This, then, explains Hegel's incongruous-looking claim in the main passage we have been considering, that 'the principles of ancient or modern philosophies, water, or matter, or atoms are *thoughts*, universals, ideal entities', when this may seem hard to square with the sort of *materialism* that Hegel is here referring to. The explanation for this claim, we can now see, is that even a materialist like Thales as well as a more modern materialist must agree that their conception of matter is not matter as it is given to us in experience (not just *empirical* water), and thus that 'there is no truth in the sensible as such',⁷³ because 'matter is itself already something abstract, something which cannot be perceived as such'.⁷⁴ It is for this reason that Hegel believes that '[w]ith Thales we, properly speaking, first begin the history of Philosophy',⁷⁵ because Thales starts the process of looking for an explanation for the nature of finite existents while at the same time seeing that this explanation must go further than our 'sensuous perception' in whatever 'first principle' it comes up with, as nothing revealed to us by the senses can be 'ultimate and absolute' in a way that is required to make this explanation satisfactory: 'The simple proposition of Thales [that the principle of all things is water] therefore, is Philosophy, because in it water, though

⁷² Hegel, *EL*, §21Z, 53 [*Werke*, VIII: 77–8]. Cf. Hegel, *LHP* III, 440 [*Werke*, XX: 347]: 'The question of whether a completed sensuousness or the Notion is the higher may . . . be easily decided. For the laws of the heavens are not immediately perceived, but merely the change in position on the part of the stars. It is only when this object of immediate perception is laid hold of and brought under universal thought determinations that experience arises therefrom, which has a claim to validity for all time. The category which brings the unity of thought into the content of feeling is thus the objective element in experience, which receives thereby universality and necessity, while that which is perceived is rather the subjective and contingent'.

⁷³ Hegel, *EL*, §76, 122 [*Werke*, VIII: 166].

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, §38, 79 [*Werke*, VIII: 111].

⁷⁵ Hegel, *LHP* I, 171 [*Werke*, XVIII: 195].

sensuous, is not looked at in its particularity as opposed to other natural things, but as Thought in which everything is resolved and comprehended'.⁷⁶ Thales is therefore responsible for allowing 'the world of Thought [*die Gedankenwelt*]' to be found, without which 'there is as yet no pure unity'.⁷⁷

Now, while Hegel takes it to be characteristic of a classical philosopher like Thales to accept that his non-empirical conception of water is valid on purely theoretical grounds (because it provides a unifying form of explanation), he recognizes that in modern philosophy 'the presupposition of the older metaphysics, namely, that what is true in things lies in thought'⁷⁸ has been radically questioned; in its place has come a kind of empiricist positivism, which trusts only experience to tell us about the world, and so treats as real only what is observable:

Ancient metaphysics had in this respect a higher conception of thinking than is current today. For it based itself on the fact that the knowledge of things obtained through thinking is alone what is really true in them, that is, things not in their immediacy but as first raised into the form of thought, as things *thought*. Thus this metaphysics believed that thinking (and its determinations) is not anything alien to the object, but rather is its essential nature, or that things and the thinking of them—our language too expresses their kinship—are explicitly in full agreement, thinking in its immanent determinations and the true nature of things forming one and the same content.

But *reflective* understanding took possession of philosophy. . . . Directed against reason, it behaves as ordinary common sense and imposes its view that truth rests on sensuous reality, that thoughts are *only* thoughts, meaning that it is sense perception which first gives them filling and reality and that reason left to its own resources engenders only figments of the brain. In this self-renunciation on the part of reason, the Notion of truth is lost; it is limited to knowing only subjective truth, phenomena, appearances, only something to which the nature of the object itself does not correspond: knowing has lapsed into opinion.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Hegel, *LHP* I, 179 [*Werke*, XVIII: 202].

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 178 [*Werke*, XVIII: 203]. Adorno may have had this passage from Hegel in mind when he wrote: '[I]n the thought of such early so-called anti-metaphysicians and materialists as Leucippus and Democritus, the *structure* of the metaphysical, of the absolute and final ground of explanation, is nevertheless preserved within their materialistic thought. If one calls these materialists *metaphysical* materialists, because matter for them is the ultimate ground of being, one does not entirely miss the mark' (Theodore W. Adorno, *Metaphysics: Concepts and Problems*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 9).

⁷⁸ Hegel, *EL*, §38Z, 79 [*Werke*, VIII: 110]; trans. modified.

⁷⁹ Hegel, *SL*, 45–6 [*Werke*, V: 38]. Cf. also *ibid.*, 160 [*Werke*, V: 178]: 'However, to call thought, spirit, God, *only* an ideal being, presupposes the standpoint from which finite being counts as real, and the ideal being of being-for-one has only a one-sided meaning'; *ibid.*, 590 [*Werke* VI: 262]: 'Would one ever have thought that philosophy would deny truth to intelligible entities because they lack the spatial and temporal material of the sensuous world?'; *ibid.*, 707 [*Werke*, VI: 404]: 'A philosophizing that in its view of being does not rise above sense, naturally stops short at merely abstract thought, too, in its view of the Notion; such thought stands opposed to being'; *EL*, §21, 52 [*Werke*, VIII: 76]: 'In §5 we mentioned the old belief that what is genuine in objects, [their] constitutions, or what happens to them, [i.e.,] what is inner, what is essential, and the matter that counts, is not to be found in consciousness immediately; that it cannot be what the first look or impression already offers us, but that we must first *think it over* in order to arrive at

In his work, Hegel treats Jacobi as a typical product of this modern turn, and uses him to illustrate its consequences. The basis on which Jacobi takes this turn is a hostility to any search for explanation of the sort that philosophy goes in for, which he fears leads into empty abstractions: as Jacobi famously puts it, 'In my judgment the greatest service of the scientist is to unveil *existence*, and to reveal it . . . Obsession with explanation makes us seek what is common to all things so passionately that we pay no attention to diversity in the process; we only want always to join together, whereas it would often be much more to our advantage to separate . . . Moreover, in *joining* and *hanging* together only what is explainable in things, there also arises in the soul a certain lustre that blinds more than it illuminates'.⁸⁰ As a result of this fear of abstractionism, Hegel argues, Jacobi no longer treats our intellectual capacities as a source of knowledge, and instead prioritizes the '*faculty of perception*' over the '*faculty of reflection*'.⁸¹ The consequence of this position, Hegel claims, is that Jacobi cannot do anything other than treat finite entities as 'self-subsistent and grounded in themselves', because to offer any deeper explanation of them would require violating the 'immediacy' of perception and going beyond 'sensuous reality'. Hegel therefore writes: 'In this declaration . . . Jacobi explicitly restricts faith and eternal verities to what is temporal and corporeal'.⁸²

the genuine constitution of the object, and that by thinking it over this [goal] is indeed achieved'; *ibid.*, §22Z, 54 [*Werke*, VIII: 79]: ' . . . it has been the conviction of every age that what is substantial is only reached through the reworking of the immediate by our thinking about it. It has most notably been only in modern times, on the other hand, that doubts have been raised and the distinction between the products of our thinking and what things are in themselves has been insisted on . . . The sickness of our time, which has arrived at the point of despair, is the assumption that that our cognition is only subjective and that this is the last word about it'; Hegel, *EM*, §465Z, 224 [*Werke*, X: 286]: 'Those who have no conception of philosophy become speechless, it is true, when they hear the proposition that *Thought is Being*. Nonetheless, underlying all our actions is the presupposition of the unity of Thought and Being. It is as rational, thinking beings that we make this presupposition . . . Pure thinking knows that it alone, and not feeling or representation, is capable of grasping the truth in things, and that the assertion of Epicurus that the true is what is sensed, must be pronounced a complete perversion of the nature of mind'; Hegel, 'Aphorisms from the Wastebook', in Jon Stewart (ed), *Miscellaneous Writings of G. W. F. Hegel* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 246 [*Werke*, II: 542]: 'The peasant woman lives within the circle of her Lisa, who is her best cow; then the black one, then the spotted one, and so on; also of Martin, her boy, and Ursula, her girl, etc. To the philosopher, infinity, knowledge, movement, empirical laws, etc. are things just as familiar'.

⁸⁰ F. H. Jacobi, *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn*, in *The Main Philosophical Writings*, 194–5.

⁸¹ F. H. Jacobi, *Preface to David Hume on Faith*, in *The Main Philosophical Writings*, 541. Cf. also *David Hume on Faith*, in *The Main Philosophical Writings*, 303: 'It follows that, with respect to all created beings, their rational cognition would have to be tested, ultimately, against their sensible one; the former must borrow its *validity* from the latter'.

⁸² Hegel, *FK*, 139 [*Werke*, II: 379]. Cf. also *ibid.*, 169 [*Werke*, II: 410]: 'Jacobi reproaches the Kantian system for being a mishmash of idealism and empiricism. Of these two ingredients, however, it is not the empiricism, but the idealistic side, the side of infinity, which incurs his reproach. Although the side of infinity cannot win through to the perfection of the true nothing, still Jacobi cannot bear it because it endangers the absoluteness of the empirical . . .'; and *ibid.*, 125

We can see, then, how Hegel might reasonably associate philosophy as he conceives it with idealism in his sense, and why he might think of Jacobi as illustrating the link between the abandonment of this idealism and the turn to non-philosophy.⁸³

Now, as a matter of interpretation, it might be said that Hegel's view of Jacobi here is rather curious: for, if one considers the *theological* side of Jacobi's position, Jacobi was no straightforward empiricist, as he recognized a *higher* faculty that gives us access to God as a supernatural entity—a faculty which Jacobi came to call 'reason'.⁸⁴ His claim was that to get to an awareness of God, we could not use the *understanding*, which merely 'hovers above the intuitions of the senses'⁸⁵ by looking for causal explanations in a way that cannot lead us to the unconditioned, but only to an infinite regress: so while reason is akin to the senses in being immediate, it gives us access to a very different kind of being, one that is infinite rather than finite; and, in view of this, how can Hegel's characterization of Jacobi as positing 'the *finite* . . . as absolute' be considered appropriate?

It could be replied, however, that if there is a difficulty here, it is Jacobi's and not Hegel's. For, of course, Hegel was fully aware of this theological side to Jacobi's thinking, and was critical of it in its turn, in ways that need not concern us here. But the fact that this side of Jacobi's position is in tension with his attempt to give experience of ordinary objects priority over the 'abstractions' of philosophy (for doesn't Jacobi's 'reason' also threaten the store we set by that experience?)⁸⁶ does not show that Hegel is wrong to identify elements of empiricist 'commonsensism' in Jacobi's thinking, even if these may seem to conflict with aspects of his theological position.⁸⁷

[*Werke*, II: 363]: 'Jacobi becomes as abusive about the nullification of this empirical truth and of faith in sense-cognition [by Kant] as if it were an act of sacrilege or a temple robbery'.

⁸³ A related diagnosis informs Hegel's discussion of scepticism, and in particular his contrast between ancient and modern scepticism: for whereas he saw the former as a prelude to philosophy in its *questioning* of experience as a source for knowledge, he saw the latter as a form of non-philosophy, because it leaves experience *unquestioned*, and so abandons all attempts to go beyond it. See G. W. F. Hegel, 'Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy: Exposition of its Different Modifications and Comparison to the Latest Form with the Ancient One', trans. H. S. Harris, in George di Giovanni and H. S. Harris (eds.), *Between Kant and Hegel* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985) [*Werke*, II: 213–72]. Cf. also Hegel, *EL*, §39, 80 [*Werke*, VIII: 112]: 'In Humean scepticism, the *truth* of the empirical, the truth of feeling and intuition, is taken as basic; and, on that basis, he attacks all universal determinations and laws, precisely because they have no justification by way of sense-perception. The old scepticism was so far removed from making feeling, or intuition, into the principle of truth that it turned itself against the sensible in the very first place instead.'

⁸⁴ Jacobi, *Preface to David Hume on Faith, Main Philosophical Writings*, 569.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 568.

⁸⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 569, where Jacobi talks of reason as a 'different faculty of perception' from ordinary experience, which is a 'spiritual eye' that gives us access to 'spiritual objects'; but this does not tell us how it is these 'spiritual objects' stand in relation to the 'visible and tangible' ones, and thus how our faith in the latter can remain 'immediate', once our 'spiritual eye' is opened.

⁸⁷ Hegel himself seems to remark on this conflict when he notes that Jacobi speaks of faith (*Glaube*) in relation to God, but also in relation to our awareness of our bodies and outer objects (cf. Jacobi, *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza*, in *Main Philosophical Writings*, 231), and comments: 'Hence the expression faith, which had a deep significance in religion, is made use of for different

We can now also understand the way in which Hegel compares his idealism to Kant's. On the one hand, Kant is an idealist in Hegel's sense, because he treats 'things . . . in their sensuous individuality' as less than the full story about reality, and so goes beyond empiricism, which takes these things to be all that is real: 'Critical Philosophy has in common with Empiricism that it accepts experience as the *only* basis for our cognitions; but it will not let them count as truths, but only as cognitions of appearances'.⁸⁸ While this goes against 'ordinary consciousness', which holds that what exists 'can be perceived by the senses (e.g., this animal, this star)' because 'this appears to it as what subsists on its own account, or as what is independent', Hegel endorses Kant's position here, agreeing with what he takes to be the Kantian point, that 'what can be perceived by the senses is really secondary and not self-standing'. Now, against this view held by 'ordinary consciousness', as we have seen, Hegel wants to argue that reality does not fully reveal itself to us in perception, but also requires us to use thought, which is able to arrive at a grasp of the 'ideal entities' which constitute the 'enduring and inwardly stable' basis of reality. According to Hegel, Kant was unable to take this second step of granting objective truth to such 'ideal entities', because he held that 'thoughts, although they are universal and necessary determinations, are still only *our* thoughts, and are cut off from what the thing is *in-itself* by an impassable gulf'. Thus, while Kant recognized that thought was required in order to grasp the world as more than the 'fleeting and transient' objects of experience, he did not accept that this thought gave us access to the world as such; he therefore did not recognize 'the true objectivity of thinking . . . : that thoughts are not merely our thoughts, but at the same time the *in-itself* of things and of whatever else is objective'.⁸⁹ To Hegel, therefore, Kant remains a merely

contents of every kind; this in our time is the point of view most commonly adopted' (Hegel, *LHP* III, 419 [*Werke*, XX: 324]).

⁸⁸ Hegel, *EL*, §40, 80 [*Werke*, VIII: 112]. Cf. also Hegel, *FK*, 103 [*Werke*, II: 341]: ' . . . Kant's most important result [as against Jacobi] will always remain this: these relations of the finite (whether they are relations within the sphere of the subject alone, or relations of things as well) are nothing in themselves, and cognition in accordance with them is only a cognition of appearances, (even though it becomes absolute because it is not to be transcended).'

⁸⁹ Hegel, *EL*, §41Z, 82–3 [*Werke*, VIII: 115–16]. Cf. also Hegel, *EN*, §246Z, I, 200–1 [*Werke*, IX: 19], trans. modified: 'Intelligence does not of course familiarize itself with things in their sensuous existence. In that it thinks them, it sets their content within itself, and to practical ideality, which for itself is mere negativity, it adds form, universality so to speak, and so gives affirmative determination to the negative particularity. This universality of things is not something subjective and belonging to us; it is, rather, the noumenon as opposed to the transient phenomenon, the truth, objectivity, and actual being of the things themselves. It resembles the platonic ideas, which do not have their being somewhere in the beyond, but which exist in individual things as substantial genera. Proteus will only be compelled into telling the truth if he is roughly handled, and we are not content with sensuous appearance. The inscription on the veil of Isis, "I am what was, is, and shall be, and my veil has been lifted by no mortal", melts before thought'; Hegel, *ILHP*, 90 (*Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamberg: Meiner, 1940), 121): 'A thought is the universal as such; even in nature we find thoughts present as its species and laws, and thus they are not merely present in the form of consciousness,

subjective idealist, in contrast to his own objective idealism, because Kant is not prepared to treat 'what is universal and necessary' as really anything more than 'what is only thought by us', and so not as ultimately real.

If this is the view that Hegel's idealism leads to, however, isn't it still guilty of precritical extravagance, when set against the kind of epistemological and metaphysical outlook (of which Kant is part) which abandons 'the presupposition of the older metaphysics, namely, that what is true in things lies in thought',⁹⁰ and so tries to go no further than the empirical phenomena?⁹¹ In fact, however, Hegel would claim that in finding something in the classical tradition that still needs to be taken seriously, he was building on the real lesson to be learned from Kant (even if it was not learned by Kant himself). This is that there can be no workable distinction between 'immediate' experience and 'mediated' thought, as conceptualization runs through *all* cognitively relevant levels, making it impossible for the empiricist to question our faith in thinking without ending up in total scepticism.⁹² For to claim that we should not trust our conceptual capacities when it comes to theorizing about the world is to imply that we should not trust our experience of it either, as Kant showed that these capacities are involved in the latter as much as in the former.⁹³ This interpretation, then, draws on the

but absolutely and therefore objectively. The reason of the world is not subjective reason. Thought is what is substantive and true, in comparison with the singular which is momentary, passing, and transient. Knowledge of the nature of thought removes the subjective mode of its appearance, and then this means that thought is not something particular, subjective, belonging to our consciousness merely, but is the universal, objective absolutely'.

⁹⁰ Cf. Pippin, 'Hegel's Original Insight', 288, n. 5: '... such an interpretation [of Hegel as a concept realist] still makes Hegel a fundamentally pre-critical philosopher, committed to the basic rationalist dream shattered by Kant. Hegel's many remarks about "completing" the Kantian revolution, or celebrating the modern "principles of subjectivity," are very hard to understand on such a reading. It is as if Hegel simply missed the point, the massive, unavoidable point, of the *Critique of Pure Reason*'.

⁹¹ There is little indication that Hegel had any patience for appeals to modesty of this kind. Cf. Hegel, *LHP I*, 277 [*Werke*, XVIII: 318]: 'It shows excessive humility of mind to believe that knowledge [*das Erkennen*] has no value; but Christ says, "Are ye not better than the sparrows?", and we are so inasmuch as we are thinking; as sensuous we are as good or bad as sparrows'; and *LHP I*, xliii [*Werke*, XVIII: 13–14]: 'The love of truth, faith in the power of mind, is the first condition in Philosophy. Man, because he is Mind, should and must deem himself worthy of the highest; he cannot think too highly of the greatness and the power of his mind, 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'.

⁹² Cf. Hegel's claim against Jacobi, that the latter sets up an unworkable antithesis between immediacy and mediation: cf. *EL*, §§65–67, 114–16 [*Werke*, VIII: 155–8], and *LHP III*, 421 [*Werke*, XX: 328]: 'This opposition between immediacy and mediacy is thus a very barren and quite empty determination; it is a platitude of the extremest type to consider anything like this to be a true opposition; it proceeds from a most modern understanding, which thinks that an immediacy can be something on its own account, without a mediation within itself'.

⁹³ Cf. *EL*, §47, 90: '... Kant himself makes cognition in general, and even *experience*, consist in the fact that our *perceptions* are thought, i.e. that the determinations which first belong to perception are *transformed* into thought-determinations' [*Werke*, VIII: 125]. Cf. also *EL*, §20 and §21Z, 51 and 57–8 [*Werke*, VIII: 74 and 83]: 'Kant employed the awkward expression,

same line of argument as Pippin's Kantian one, which also recognizes (as we have seen) that 'it is with the denial that a firm distinction can ever be usefully drawn between intuitional and conceptual elements in knowledge that distinctively Hegelian idealism begins'; but it takes this argument in a different direction, that attempts to do greater justice to the other important influence on Hegel, which is the classical tradition. In so far as Kant himself points *beyond* empiricism, therefore, Hegel can claim not to have made a merely regressive move.⁹⁴

Ameriks himself offers two objections to the kind of account of Hegel's idealism that I have offered. The first is that the implied difference from Kant is misleading,⁹⁵ a point that we cannot consider in the detail it requires here; and the second is that '[this] notion of idealism does not mark a contrast with traditional realism',⁹⁶ for while it holds that 'what is true in things lies in thought', this does not mean that things are mind-dependent, but that they are fundamentally constituted in a way that is accessible to thought rather than sense, by 'universals, ideal entities, not things as they immediately present themselves to us'. I do not see this second point as a difficulty, however: for why should any contrast be expected or required? To think that there must be a contrast between idealism and realism is to see idealism as having only its modern sense, according to which the former treats things as mind-dependent and the latter as mind-independent. But once it is recognized that idealism can also be understood in a more classical manner, where the disagreement is whether the world contains 'ideal entities' (and thus with positivism and nominalism) and not whether the subject constitutes the world (and thus not with realism), we can see how Hegel could have quite properly called himself an idealist whilst remaining a realist, so no contrast needs to be drawn here to make sense of his position in the way we have done.⁹⁷

that I "accompany" all my representations—and my sensations, desires, actions, etc., too . . . "I" is the existence of the entirely *abstract* universality, the abstractly *free*. Therefore "I" is *thinking* as the *subject*, and since at the same time I am in all my sensations, notions, states, etc., thought is present everywhere and pervades all these determinations as [their] category . . . In the "I" there is a manifold inner and outer content, and, according to the way in which this content is constituted, we behave as sensing, representing, remembering, [beings], etc. But the "I" is there in all of these, or, in other words, thinking is present everywhere. Thus man is always thinking, even when he simply intuits'. This is arguably also the moral of Hegel's discussion of sense-certainty in the *Phenomenology*, where once again the target may plausibly be taken to be Jacobi's empiricism, which *per impossibile* tries to avoid all *comprehension* in favour of sheer *apprehension*: see Hegel, *PS*, 58–66 [*Werke*, III: 82–92].

⁹⁴ Cf. Hegel, *LHP* III, 176 [*Werke*, XX: 79]; trans. modified: 'The empirical is not merely an observing, hearing, feeling, etc., a perception of the individual; for it really sets to work to find the species, the universal, to discover laws. Now because it does this, it comes within the territory of the Notion—it begets what pertains to the region of the Idea . . . The demand of *a priori* knowledge, which seems to imply that the Idea should construct from itself, is thus a reconstruction only'.

⁹⁵ Ameriks, 'Hegel and Idealism', 394–5.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 395.

⁹⁷ In his later article, 'Introduction: Interpreting German Idealism', 8, Ameriks himself seems to recognize the legitimacy of thinking of idealism in this way. For further discussion see my *Hegel, Kant and the Structure of the Object* (London: Routledge, 1990), ch. 5.

We have thus found two (related) senses in which Hegel is an idealist, and one in which he is a realist, and shown how these positions are compatible: he is an idealist in his special sense, of holding that the 'finite is ideal', and (therefore) an idealist in the more classical (anti-nominalist) sense of holding that taken as mere finite individuals, things in the world cannot provide a satisfactory terminus for explanation, but only when they are seen to exemplify 'universals, ideal entities' (in the manner of Thales' water onwards) which are not given in immediate experience, but only in '[reflective] thinking upon phenomena'. Hegel's idealism, in other words, amounts to a form of *conceptual realism*, understood as 'the belief that concepts are part of the structure of reality'.⁹⁸ However, none of this implies that Hegel is an idealist in the modern (subjectivist) sense of claiming that the world is mind-dependent, for individuals can be understood as instantiations of such 'universals, ideal entities', which then in turn explains how such individuals are accessible to minds, without the need for this subjectivist turn.⁹⁹ And I have also tried to suggest that this can be presented as more than just a reversion to a precritical outlook, in so far as the Kantian objection to the cogency of empiricism plays a vital role at a crucial point, albeit it in a way that Kant did not envisage and would no doubt have tried to resist—so this is a case of 'reculer pour mieux sauter', where the intention is not *just* to go back, but to go back *in order* also to get further, and go 'beyond Kant' as well. In the end, therefore, we have arguably reached an account of Hegel's idealism that meets Ameriks's original desiderata, of being textually accurate, philosophically interesting, and not dubiously extravagant.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Michael Rosen, 'From *Vorstellung* to Thought: Is a "Non-Metaphysical" View of Hegel Possible?', in Dieter Henrich and Rolf-Peter Horstmann (eds.), *Metaphysik nach Kant?* (Stuttgart: Klett: Cotta, 1988), 248–62, at 262; repr. in Robert Stern (ed.), *G. W. F. Hegel: Critical Assessments*, 4 vols. (London: Routledge, 1993), III, 329–44, at 343. For further discussion of this way of taking Hegel's idealism, see Robert Stern, *Hegel, Kant and the Structure of the Object*, esp. ch. V.

⁹⁹ Cf. Hegel, *SL*, 51 [*Werke*, V: 45]: 'Thought is an expression which attributes the determinations contained therein primarily to consciousness. But inasmuch as it is said that understanding, reason, is in the objective world, that mind and nature have universal laws to which their life and changes conform, then it is conceded that the determinations of thought equally have objective value and existence'; Hegel, *EL*, §24Z, 57 [*Werke*, VIII: 82]: 'Just as thinking constitutes the substance of external things, so it is also the universal substance of what is spiritual If we regard thinking as what is genuinely universal in everything natural and everything spiritual, too, then it overgrasps all of them and is the foundation of them all'.

¹⁰⁰ I am grateful to Fred Beiser, David Bell, Paul Franks, Sebastian Gardner, Rolf-Peter Horstmann and James Kreines for very helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper. I would also like to acknowledge the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, for funding the research leave during which this paper was written.

2

Did Hegel Hold an Identity Theory of Truth?

In his paper ‘The Identity Theory of Truth’, Thomas Baldwin has discussed the role of this theory of truth in the writings of Bradley, Moore, and Russell. In the course of that discussion, he strongly suggests that in defending this theory, Bradley was following Hegel; and, in so far as Moore and Russell developed it further, Baldwin claims that the identity theory might even constitute ‘a Hegelian origin of analytic philosophy’.¹

While applauding this attempt to find points of influence and continuity between Hegel’s thought and that of the ‘analytic’ tradition, and accepting that many such points do indeed exist, doubts must nonetheless be raised regarding Baldwin’s specific thesis. It will be argued that Baldwin has misunderstood Hegel’s conception of truth, and so is mistaken in the historical claim that he makes for Hegel’s influence in this matter.

According to Baldwin, the identity theory of truth is ‘the thesis that the truth of a judgement consists in the *identity* of the judgement’s content with a fact’.² He attributes this theory to Hegel in the following passage:

On the issue of the identity theory, I think, we can definitely say that Bradley ‘followed’ Hegel, at least to the extent of developing a line of thought that is present in Hegel’s *Logic*. . . . This is not the place to explore Hegel’s position, but it will suffice for now to cite one characteristic passage. ‘Truth in the deeper sense’, Hegel writes, ‘consists in the identity between objectivity and the notion’.³

The sentence quoted comes from the *Zusatz* (lecture note) to §213 of Hegel’s *Logic* (Part 1 of the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*).⁴

Why is it wrong to interpret this sentence as endorsing an identity theory of truth? In order to see the mistake, let me first introduce a distinction used by Heidegger between *propositional* truth and *material* truth.⁵ Truth is *propositional*

¹ Thomas Baldwin, ‘The Identity Theory of Truth’, *Mind*, 100 (1991), 35–52, at 49.

² *Ibid.*, 35. ³ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁴ Baldwin is using the William Wallace translation of *EL*, 3rd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), where this comes from p. 276 [*Werke*, VIII: 369]. In the Gereats, Suchting, and Harris translation, it comes from p. 287, where they render it as ‘truth in the deeper sense means that objectivity is identical with the Concept’. In subsequent quotations from *EL*, I will use and refer to the Gereats, Suchting, and Harris translation, rather than the one by Wallace.

⁵ Martin Heidegger, ‘On the Essence of Truth’, translated by John Sallis in Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 117–41, 118–22.

when it is attributed to statements, judgements, or propositions on the basis of their accordance with the way things are. Truth is *material* when it is attributed to something on the basis of the accordance of the thing with its essence. Thus, whereas propositional truth applies to our judgements or statements, material truth applies to things and their natures. The latter conception of truth is one that has almost been lost sight of in contemporary discussions of the concept, but is echoed in such locutions as ‘God is truth’, or ‘He was a true gentleman’.

My claim is that while the identity theory of truth is essentially a theory of propositional truth, Hegel’s remark concerns *material* truth, and that it is a mistake to equate the two. That this is so can be seen clearly when the passage from which Baldwin derives his quotation is looked at in full:

Truth is understood first to mean that I *know* how something *is*. But this is truth only in relation to consciousness; it is formal truth, mere correctness. In contrast with this, truth in the deeper sense means that objectivity is identical with the Concept [*Begriff*]. It is this deeper sense of truth that is at issue when we speak, for example, of a ‘true’ State or a ‘true’ work of art. These objects are ‘true’ when they are what they *ought* to be, i.e., when their reality corresponds to their concept. Interpreted in this way, the ‘untrue’ is the same as what is sometimes also called the ‘bad’. A bad man is one who is ‘untrue’, i.e., one who does not behave in accord with his concept or his vocation [*Bestimmung*]. But without any identity at all between Concept and reality nothing can subsist. Even what is bad and untrue can only *be* because its reality conforms to some extent with its Concept. Precisely for this reason, what is thoroughly bad or contrary disintegrates inwardly. It is by virtue of the Concept alone that things in the world have their own standing—or, to use the language of religious representation, things are what they are only because of the divine and hence creative thought that dwells within them.⁶

There are several points to be noted about this passage. As the opening few sentences suggest, Hegel is largely unconcerned with the question of truth as ‘correctness’, that is, truth as consisting in some relation between our judgements and the world (whether or not the relation is one of identity). Rather, Hegel’s interest is in *material* truth: in how far an object can be said to be true, in the sense of conforming to its ‘concept’ (*Begriff*), where by this he means its nature

⁶ *EL*, §213Z, 287–8, translation modified [*Werke*, VIII: 369]. Cf. also *EL*, §24Z, 60 [*Werke*, VIII: 86]: ‘In the ordinary way, what we call “truth” is the agreement of an object with our representation of it. We are then presupposing an object to which our representation is supposed to conform. In the philosophical sense, on the contrary, “truth,” expressed abstractly and in general, means the agreement of content with itself. This is therefore a meaning of “truth” quite different from the one mentioned above. Besides, the deeper (philosophical) meaning of “truth” is also partly found in ordinary linguistic usage already. We speak, for instance, of a “true” friend, and by that we understand one whose way of acting conforms with the concept of friendship; and in the same way we speak also of a “true” work of art. To say of something that it is “untrue” is as much as to say that it is bad, that it involves an inner inadequacy. A bad State, in this sense, is an “untrue” State; and what is bad and untrue consists always in a contradiction between the object’s determination or concept and its existence. We can form a correct representation of a bad object of this sort, but the content of this representation is something inwardly “untrue.” We may have many examples of such things in our heads, examples that are correct and at the same time “untrue.”’

or essence. As Heidegger observes, this conception of truth ‘implies the Christian theological belief that, with respect to what it is and whether it is, a matter, as created (*ens creatum*), is only in so far as it corresponds to the idea preconceived in the *intellectus divinus*, i.e., in the mind of God, and thus measures up to the idea (is correct) and in this sense is “true”’.⁷ Hegel himself is quite explicit about this theological background to his account of truth at the end of the passage.

Thus, whereas Baldwin might be right in attributing an identity theory of truth to Bradley, he seems to be mistaken in reading such a theory back into Hegel: for, while Bradley is focusing on the issue of ‘correctness’ and propositional truth, Hegel is interested in the question of *material* truth, and it is with this alone that Hegel’s talk of identity is concerned. By ‘identity between objectivity and the notion [*Begriff*]’ he means that what exists is true only if it realizes its nature properly and to the fullest extent. Clearly, this is a view of truth that takes us in a very different direction, one from which the identity theory of truth in Baldwin’s sense can hardly be said to have derived.

⁷ Heidegger, ‘On the Essence of Truth’, 120.

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3

Hegel's *Doppelsatz*: A Neutral Reading

In the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel makes one of his most well-known and frequently discussed remarks:

What is rational is actual;
and what is actual is rational.

This conviction is shared by every ingenuous consciousness as well as by philosophy, and the latter takes it as its point of departure in considering both the *spiritual* and the *natural* universe. (*EPR*, 20 [*Werke*, VII: 24–5])

Sometimes known as the *Doppelsatz* (or ‘double dictum’),¹ this saying has been seized on by Hegel’s critics as a summation of his conservatism and quietism, whilst his defenders have argued that this is not so, and that read correctly it in fact harbours a critical dimension, that allows the *Philosophy of Right* as a whole to be read in a progressive way.

It is perhaps a sign of the growing respect for Hegel and his thought that the conservative reading of the *Doppelsatz* has lost virtually all support (at least among Hegel scholars), while the critical or progressive reading holds sway.² My aim in this paper is not to return to the conservative reading; but I want to argue that the *Doppelsatz* should not be given a critical reading either, so that the position I offer is neutral between the two. My claim will be that when Hegel identifies what is actual with what is rational in the *Doppelsatz*, his intention is not to offer a normative assessment of what is actual (as both the conservative and progressive readings assume, differing only over what exactly is being normatively endorsed); rather, it is to suggest that genuine philosophy must be committed to reason in its methods of inquiry, if it is to properly undertake an investigation into the ‘spiritual universe’ as well as the ‘natural’ one. On my view, then, Hegel identifies what is actual and what is rational in the *Doppelsatz* not in order to say that the actual is right or good (to ‘legitimate’ or ‘sanctify’ the actual, as it is sometimes

¹ The term was introduced by Dieter Henrich in his ‘Einleitung des Herausgebers: Vernunft in Verwirklichung’, in Dieter Henrich (ed.), *Hegel: Philosophie des Rechts: Die Vorlesung von 1819–20 in einer Nachschrift* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983). See also Michael O. Hardimon, *Hegel’s Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 52.

² For a fairly exhaustive list of references to the conservative reading, see M. W. Jackson, ‘Hegel: The Real and the Rational’, in Jon Stewart (ed.), *The Hegel Myths and Legends* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 19–21. References to some of the main progressive readings are given below, esp. n. 7.

put³), but to remind his readers that philosophy has a basic commitment to reason as the proper way to engage with the world at a fundamental level (the level of what is actual); it is this that makes the identity of what is actual with what is rational a 'point of departure' for philosophy. The *Doppelsatz* is thus a defence of philosophical rationalism, rather than a normative claim about '*was ist wirklich*' in either a conservative sense (as simply what is) or a progressive sense (as what is when properly realized).

I will begin (in §I) by briefly outlining the way in which the debate concerning the *Doppelsatz* has been conducted, and will then (in §§II–III) contrast this with the neutral reading I propose; and in §IV I will defend that reading against possible objections.

I

The conservative reading to which contemporary critical or progressive readings of the *Doppelsatz* are opposed is exemplified by Karl Popper in his *Open Society and Its Enemies*, where he claims that according to Hegel 'what is, is good',⁴ and where he takes the *Doppelsatz* as a summary of that Hegelian view:

Hegel [maintains] that everything that is reasonable must be real, and everything that is real must be reasonable, and that the development of reality is the same as that of reason. And since there can be no higher standard in existence than the latest development of Reason and of the Idea, everything that is now real or actual exists by necessity, and must be reasonable as well as good. (Particularly good, as we shall see, is the actually existing Prussian state.)⁵

Thus, on Popper's reading, Hegel's *Doppelsatz* is taken to be conservative, in the sense that it claims that whatever exists (such as the Prussian state of Hegel's time)

³ See Rudolf Haym, *Hegel und seine Zeit*, repr. edn. (Georg Olms: Hildesheim, 1962), 367–8; translated by Julius Kraft in Robert Stern (ed.), *G. W. F. Hegel: Critical Assessments*, 4 vols (London: Routledge, 1993), I, 221–2: 'The theory of the divine right of kings and the theory of the *obedientia absoluta* are innocent and innocuous compared with the terrible doctrine which *sanctifies the existing because it exists*'. Cf. also Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach und der Ausgang der klassischen deutschen Philosophie*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, 39 vols (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1964–68), XXI, 266; *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, 2 vols (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1962), II, 361, where Engels notoriously misquotes the *Doppelsatz*: 'No philosophical proposition has earned more gratitude from narrow-minded governments and wrath from equally narrow-minded liberals than Hegel's famous statement: "All that is real is rational: and all that is rational is real"'. That was tangibly a sanctification of things that be, a philosophical benediction bestowed upon despotism, police-government, Star Chamber proceedings, and censorship.'

⁴ Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies, Volume II: The High Tide of Prophecy: Hegel, Marx, and the Aftermath*, 5th edn. (London: Routledge, 1966), 41. See also Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, 2nd edn. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1961), 702: '... the identification of the real and the rational leads unavoidably to some of the complacency inseparable from the belief that "whatever is, is right".'

⁵ Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 41.

is rational and therefore good, and to be quietistic, in the sense that it claims that everything that is rational and good already exists: the *Doppelsatz* therefore rules out the possibility of normative criticism of current social arrangements (and hence is conservative), and the need to do anything to make them better since the good is already realized (and hence is quietistic). Conservative readings of this sort then characteristically link the *Doppelsatz* to Hegel's wider philosophical position (so, in Popper's case, he ties it to Hegel's supposed historicism, where Hegel is said to hold that 'there can be no higher standard in existence than the latest development of Reason and of the Idea'), and to the historical background to the *Philosophy of Right* (where Hegel is seen as a spokesman for the Prussian restoration).

In response to this conservative reading of the *Doppelsatz*, defenders of Hegel have argued that it is based on a fundamental misconception of what he is saying.⁶ In particular, it is emphasized that in the *Doppelsatz*, Hegel uses the term 'actuality' (*Wirklichkeit*), and this is seen as having a technical sense for Hegel: to be 'actual', something must not just exist, but must conform to its essential nature.⁷ It is argued, therefore, that Hegel is not simply claiming here that 'what is, is good', if that is taken to mean 'whatever happens to be, is good'. For, it is only what is *actual* (in Hegel's sense) that is good, which will exclude many *existing* states, which exist but which do not properly exemplify what an actual state should be. Given this distinction, therefore, it is argued that Hegel's *Doppelsatz* is neither conservative, nor quietistic. It is not conservative, because Hegel's notion of 'actuality' leaves room for a critical gap between a thing as it is (as it exists) and its essence (as it should be), in those cases where states are not actual, and therefore not rational. And the *Doppelsatz* is not quietistic, because we may intelligibly act to make an existing state more '*wirklich*', by using Hegel's essentialist conception of 'actuality' to make sense of the idea of working to draw the existence of things closer to their essence, for example through social

⁶ Another response, which I will not consider in this paper, is to argue that while the *Doppelsatz* can be read conservatively, this was added (along with other material, such as the attack on Fries) in order to deceive the censor, and is in fact at odds with the real progressive intentions buried in the main body of the book. (See Karl-Heinz Ilting, 'Der exoterische und der esoterische Hegel (1824–1831)', introduction to G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie (1818–1831)*, Karl-Heinz Ilting (ed.), 4 vols (Stuttgart-Bad-Canstatt: Friedrich Frommann, 1973), IV, 45–66.) On this account, it is the earlier variants on the *Doppelsatz* (which I will discuss below) that express its critical potential, rather than the *Doppelsatz* itself.

⁷ Cf. Walter A. Kaufmann, 'The Hegel Myth and Its Method', *Philosophical Review* 60 (1951): 469; T. M. Knox, 'Translator's Notes', in G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, T. M. Knox, trans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 302; Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 127; Paul Owen Johnson, *The Critique of Thought: A Re-examination of Hegel's Science of Logic* (Aldeshot: Avebury, 1988), 139–40; Steven B. Smith, *Hegel's Critique of Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 223–4; Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy*, 53–4; Paul Franco, *Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 132.

reform.⁸ Progressive readings of this sort will then characteristically go on to question conservative readings of Hegel's wider philosophical position, and the conservative account of Hegel's political allegiances at the time when the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* came to be written.

I think that most would now agree that the proponents of the progressive reading of the *Doppelsatz* are right to claim that as it stands the conservative reading is misguided, and that it is a mistake to interpret it as saying that 'what is, is good'. It is then natural to think, if the conservative reading is false in this way, then this in itself establishes the truth of the progressive reading, so that precisely in drawing on the '*Existenz*'/'*Wirklichkeit*' distinction here, Hegel's aim was in fact to signal the critical implications of the *Doppelsatz*, in the way that the progressive reading suggests. However, I want to argue that if we look closely at the context of the *Doppelsatz* within the Preface of the *Philosophy of Right*, this is not so clear. That is, I will argue in the next two sections that while the proponents of the progressive reading are right to claim that the *Doppelsatz* is not saying that 'what is, is good', they are wrong to suggest that instead it is saying 'only what is actual, is good, and much that merely exists is bad'. I will argue, rather, that the *Doppelsatz* is neutral on such normative questions, so neither the conservative *nor* the progressive reading is correct.

II

One assumption concerning the *Doppelsatz* that both the conservative and the progressive readings of it share, is that in using the term '*vernünftig*' here, Hegel is (in part at least) expressing a positive normative assessment of it. As Michael Hardimon puts it: "Rational", as Hegel uses the term, has both an epistemic and a normative aspect; roughly speaking, it means both rationally intelligible and reasonable or good'.⁹ This assumption concerning Hegel's use of the term 'rational' in the *Doppelsatz* is of course what gets the whole dispute between conservative and progressive readings going in the first place: Hegel is assumed to be endorsing something as right or good, so the question is, is he endorsing

⁸ Cf. Frederick Neuhouser, *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 257: 'Despite Hegel's reputation as an apologist for the Prussian state, the institutions he endorses are obviously not identical to those of nineteenth-century Prussia. It is precisely here—in the disparity between real (existing) institutions and those that are actual in Hegel's technical sense—that the possibility of social criticism is to be found. For the theory of *Sittlichkeit*'s idealized account of modern social institutions provides us with the resources for seeing where existing institutions do not fully measure up to what they should be and for thinking about how they can be made to conform to their own (immanent) rational principles.'

⁹ Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy*, 53. See also M. J. Inwood, *Hegel* (London: Routledge, 1983), 497, who Hardimon cites in support of his view. Cf. also Emil L. Fackenheim, 'On the Actuality of the Rational and the Rationality of the Actual', in Jon Stewart (ed.), *The Hegel Myths and Legends* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 42–3.

things as they happen to be (as on the conservative reading), or things as they would be if fully 'actual' (as on the progressive reading)?

Now, the question of Hegel's understanding of the term 'rational' is of course a complex one, as it too is a technical term for Hegel, and to explain it fully would involve a detailed account of his whole philosophical position. However, the narrower suggestion I want to make here, is that when Hegel comes to use the term 'rational' in the *Doppelsatz* in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, it may be wrong to assume he is using it normatively; rather, he may be using the term purely *methodologically*. On this account, that is, in stating that the actual is rational and the rational is actual, Hegel is telling us that what is actual can be investigated by reason and what reason investigates is the actual, rather than that some state of affairs is right or good. In other words, the *Doppelsatz* is simply part of his argument for having 'faith in reason' as the central method of philosophical inquiry, rather than an assessment of the normative status of 'the actual', however that term is understood.¹⁰

To see that this is so, it is necessary to look in more detail than is usually done at the context of the *Doppelsatz* in the Preface.¹¹ I will begin by first exploring the kind of thing Hegel characteristically tries to achieve in the introductory remarks to his works, and then in the next section will use this to help me offer a detailed reading of the Preface itself along the lines I have suggested.

As is well known, Hegel had a rather contemptuous view of the place of prefaces and introductions in philosophical works, holding that they were too often used by lazy readers to avoid getting to grips with the works themselves,¹² while if a philosophical system could be summed up in a preface, it was surely of little value. He therefore does not use the introductory sections of his writings to attempt any real exposition of the book as a whole, or any defence of its conclusions; instead, he mainly uses them to deal with meta-level issues, concerning the nature of the work as a work of *philosophy*, and therefore with the question of what philosophy (in Hegel's view) is.

¹⁰ See the famous passage from Hegel's inaugural address in Berlin: '... To begin with, however, I can demand nothing but that you bring with you a confidence in *science, faith in reason, confidence and faith in yourself*. The *courage of truth, faith in the power of spirit* is the first condition of *philosophical study*; man must honour himself and *consider himself worthy of what is highest*. He cannot think highly enough of the greatness and power of the spirit; the self-contained essence of the universe *has no strength in itself* which could resist the courage of knowledge; it must open itself to knowledge, laying its riches and depth before its eyes and allowing its enjoyment', G. W. F. Hegel, *Berliner Schriften 1818–1831*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, Johannes Hoffmeister (ed.) (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1956), XI, 8–9).

¹¹ One work that provides a helpful discussion of the Preface as a whole, though without hereby arriving at any particularly new insights into the *Doppelsatz*, is Adriaan Th. Peperzak, *Philosophy and Politics: A Commentary on the Preface to Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1987).

¹² See G. W. F. Hegel, 'Aphorismen aus Hegels Wastebook', in *Werke*, II, 556–7; 'Aphorisms from Hegel's Wastebook', S. Klein, D. L. Roochnik and G. E. Tucker, trans., *Independent Journal of Philosophy*, 3, (1979): 4: 'The usual royal road in philosophy is to read prefaces and book reviews, in order to get an approximate idea of things'. See also *PS*, 1–2 [*Werke*, III: 11–12].

In Hegel's discussions of the nature of philosophy, he characteristically presents it as a discipline in crisis, held in deserved disrepute in many quarters, given the failure of contemporary philosophers to find a proper way of doing the subject; he then warns against the dangers of this disrespect for philosophy, as tantamount to a disrespect for reason and thought itself, and offers his own philosophical approach as a way of reviving the philosophical tradition, and thus as enabling us to return to a kind of rationalism that is in grave danger of being lost. So, for example, in the Preface to the first edition of the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel comments on the contemporary 'indifference' to and 'contempt' for philosophy 'as a science (*Wissenschaft*)', such that philosophy has become shallow and empty, and thereby deserves to have fallen from its cultural pre-eminence. Nonetheless, he suggests that it is impossible for us to lose respect for 'the *higher cognition*' of philosophy proper, as 'the inner drive of rational insight' is what 'alone gives man his dignity'. Once philosophy returns to this '*higher cognition*'—which with his own work he clearly thinks it will—philosophy will then naturally regain its place as the pinnacle of human culture, while at the same time putting that culture on the right path.¹³ Then, in the Preface to the second edition, Hegel focuses more on those who see philosophy as a threat to other ways of thinking, particularly religion and morality, where again he is concerned to stress the need these ways of thinking have of philosophy, if they are to retain their rational core and proper justification. Likewise, in the Introduction to the *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel considers his philosophical treatment of nature in relation to the empirical sciences, and attempts to show that there is a distinctive place for the former as a particular sort of inquiry, different from but related to the latter. Similar reflections on the nature of philosophy can be found in the introductory sections to several other works, such as the *Phenomenology of Spirit*,¹⁴ and Hegel's lectures.¹⁵ Thus, in general, Hegel takes the opportunity of his prefaces and introductions not to summarize his position, or to outline his argument for it, but to 'declare myself about the external bearing of my philosophical activity on

¹³ *EL*, 2–3 [*Werke*, VIII: 12–13].

¹⁴ For further discussion, see Robert Stern, *Hegel and the 'Phenomenology of Spirit'* (London: Routledge, 2002), 30–6.

¹⁵ See Hegel's inaugural address at Heidelberg, delivered in 1816: 'But the distress of our time, already mentioned, and the interest of great events in the world [i.e. the Napoleonic wars and their consequences], has repressed, even among ourselves, a profound and serious preoccupation with philosophy and frightened away more general attention to it. Thus what has happened is that, since sterling characters have turned to practical matters, superficiality and shallowness have managed to hold the floor in philosophy and make themselves at home there. We may well say that ever since philosophy began to raise its head in Germany, the outlook for this science has never been so poor as at just this present time; never have Vacuity and Conceit so endowed it with superficiality, never have they thought and acted in philosophy with such arrogance as if they ruled the roost there. To work against this superficiality, to work together in German seriousness and honesty, and to rescue philosophy from the cul-de-sac into which it is sliding—this is our task, firmly believing that we are called to it by the deeper spirit of the age' (*ILHP*, 2 [*Werke*, XVIII: 12–13]).

the cultural concerns of our time',¹⁶ where this means to stake out his view of what philosophy should be, and what role it should serve within that culture.

Now, as we have already seen, Hegel thinks that philosophy can only take up its proper cultural place if it satisfies 'the continuing inner drive of rational insight, which alone gives man his dignity'.¹⁷ Hegel believes that true philosophy can be contrasted to other ways of thinking in the way it satisfies that drive, and thus a culture without a philosophy that gives us rational insight in this way is an impoverished culture. He therefore criticizes those who think philosophy cannot give us rational insight; those who think rational insight can be provided by other ways of thinking, such as the empirical sciences, or religion; and those who think we would be better off without aspiring to rational insight at all. Against the first position, he argues that while the inadequate philosophical positions of his contemporaries may indeed fail to provide us with rational insight, the classical tradition in its own terms did, and it is this tradition that he claims he can renew. Against the second position, he argues that other intellectual disciplines are not adequate in themselves to provide the kind of rational insight provided by philosophy. And against the third position, he argues that no acceptable substitute can be found for reason, in enabling human beings to make sense of the world and reach proper conclusions in their inquiries.

Thus, in general, the prefaces and introductions of Hegel's works serve as a kind of manifesto for the rationalistic programme that the works themselves are designed to fulfil. In these prefaces and introductions, Hegel can frequently be found attempting to diagnose the current lack of respect for philosophy, where that diagnosis is based on methodological issues: philosophers no longer care about conducting their inquiries in a properly 'scientific' manner, as they no longer have any faith in the *more geometrico* of the early modern rationalists, so that instead they turn to less rational methods. Hegel agrees that this mathematical method had its limitations; but by turning away from any sort of 'scientific' method completely, contemporary philosophers have reduced the significance of philosophy, because their conclusions are seen to be purely subjective, arbitrary, and ungrounded, a matter of empty speculation. Hegel clearly believes, therefore, that by offering a new kind of rational method, he can show how philosophy can be conducted in a manner that will not lead it to becoming marginalized in this way, but which will return it to its proper place at the centre of our thought.¹⁸

¹⁶ *EL*, 4 [*Werke*, VIII: 14].

¹⁷ *EL*, 3 [*Werke*, VIII: 13].

¹⁸ See *PS*, 28–9 [*Werke*, III: 47–8]: '[C]urrent opinion itself has already come to view the scientific regime bequeathed by mathematics as quite *old-fashioned*—with its explanations, divisions, axioms, sets of theorems, its proofs, principles, deductions, and conclusions from them . . . But we have already pointed out that, once the necessity of the Notion has banished the slipshod style of conversational discussion, and along with it the pedantry and pomposity of science, they are not to be replaced by the sort of non-method of presentiment and inspiration, or by the arbitrariness of prophetic utterance, both of which despise not only scientific pomposity, but scientific procedures of all kinds.' As Walter Kaufmann has pointed out (in his *Hegel: Reinterpretation, Texts and Commentary* [London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1966], 426), this passage contains an allusion to

Now, seen in this context, I believe it can be shown that the Preface of the *Philosophy of Right* sets out to argue along similar lines, and to claim that philosophy must be conceived of as a rational enterprise if it is to carry conviction, this time in its speculations about the social world. I will therefore suggest that Hegel's references to 'what is rational' in the *Doppelsatz* should be seen in this light. If this is correct, then in the *Doppelsatz* Hegel should not be understood as making any normative claim about 'the actual', but rather as making a claim about the relation between 'the actual' and philosophy as a rationalistic discipline; hence my suggestion that the *Doppelsatz* is neutral on the normative issue that divides the conservative and progressive readings.

III

In this section, I will look in some detail at the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, and argue that it very much conforms to the pattern we have already identified, concerning what Hegel sets out to establish in his prefaces and introductions.

At the end of the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel makes his usual disparaging comments on what its role has been: 'But it is time to conclude this foreword; as a foreword, its function was in any case merely to make external and subjective comments on the points of view of the work to which it is prefaced' (*EPR*, 23 [*Werke*, VII: 28]). We are warned, therefore, that the Preface is designed merely to orientate the reader in general terms about the approach Hegel is taking, and is not itself part of the 'scientific and objective treatment' (*EPR*, 23 [*Werke*, VII: 28]) that will follow. As we have seen, Hegel's preferred way of orientating the reader in this manner is to offer some reflections on the current state of philosophy, and of how his work stands in relation to it.

As we should now expect, therefore, Hegel starts the Preface by remarking on 'the shameful decline into which [philosophy] has fallen in our times' (*EPR*, 10 [*Werke*, VII: 12]). Characteristically, Hegel accepts that part of the blame lies with philosophy itself, for philosophy has abandoned some of its previous methods, 'of definition, classification, and inference' (*EPR*, 10 [*Werke*, VII: 12]), and as a result has lost its intellectual rigour, 'to make way for the arbitrary pronouncements of the heart, of fantasy, and of contingent intuition' (*EPR*, 10 [*Werke*, VII: 12]). Hegel emphasizes that his 'outline' of 'natural law and political science' (the subtitle of the *Philosophy of Right*) will be conducted in a properly thought-out manner, using a more advanced philosophical method: this will show how the subject under discussion can be apprehended in a 'logical spirit', as we find that there is a 'logical progression' from one part of the inquiry to the

Fries in its talk of 'presentiment' (*Abnens*), with its reference to Fries' *Wissen, Glaube und Abndung* of 1805 (Fries was deliberately using an archaic spelling in his title). As we shall see, Fries comes in for similar criticism on methodological grounds in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*.

next (*EPR*, 10 [*Werke*, VII: 13]). Hegel is of course advertising here his method of immanent or dialectical critique, which examines the nature and limits of various positions by beginning with the most elementary, and so works up to more sophisticated positions in which the simpler ones are integrated and their problems resolved, until a stable outlook is attained. Hegel thus argues that the proper way to proceed is not to begin with any presuppositions about what right is, but to 'observe the proper immanent development of the thing [*Sache*] itself' (*EPR*, §2, 26 [*Werke*, VII: 30]), as conceptions of the right and freedom become more complex and less inadequate through the process of internal critique. This is Hegel's 'philosophical manner of progressing from one topic to another and of conducting a scientific proof' (*EPR*, 10 [*Werke*, VII: 12]) which he says he will be following as far as possible in the *Philosophy of Right*, 'which arranges and orders the essential elements' (*EPR*, 9 [*Werke*, VII: 11]) of the social world into an integrated hierarchy, and so reveals their conceptual development and interconnection.¹⁹

Now, Hegel acknowledges that in the intellectual climate of his time, where 'it is imagined that what philosophy puts forward is as ephemeral a product as Penelope's weaving, which is begun afresh every day' (*EPR*, 10 [*Werke*, VII: 12]), to make such claims about the 'scientific' nature of his inquiry may seem rather unwonted; moreover, to take such methodological issues seriously may be dismissed as inconsequential, where what is taken to matter much more is the novelty of a work's *content*. So, while Hegel asks that his 'treatise' should be 'understood and judged' in terms of whether it is properly 'logical' and 'scientific' (*EPR*, 10 [*Werke*, VII: 13]), he recognizes that contemporary thinkers may not think this is of much significance, where more weight is placed on whether or not the philosopher has something new to say: 'It is true that we may hear it said by those who seem to adopt the most thorough approach that form is a purely external quality, indifferent to the matter [*Sache*] itself, which is alone of consequence; furthermore, the task of the writer, especially the philosophical writer, may be said to consist in the discovery of *truths*, the statement of *truths*, and the dissemination of *truths* and correct concepts' (*EPR*, 10–11 [*Werke*, VII: 13]). As we shall see, Hegel believes that philosophy which focuses on 'content' at the expense of 'form' does so at its peril, in so far as 'in science, the content is essentially inseparable from the *form*' (*EPR*, 10 [*Werke*, VII: 13]).²⁰

First, he argues that in practice, these philosophers seldom do manage to offer any new 'discoveries', so that it is rather empty to claim that what matters about

¹⁹ See also Hegel's draft letter to Hardenberg of October 1820, in which he writes that the central aim of the *Philosophy of Right* 'is scientific treatment and theoretical form' (*Briefe von und an Hegel*, Johannes Hoffmeister (ed.), 4 vols (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1953), II, 241; *Hegel: The Letters*, Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler, trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 459).

²⁰ See also *EPR*, 22 [*Werke*, VII: 27]: 'For *form* in its concrete significance is reason as conceptual cognition [*begreifendes Erkennen*], and *content* is reason as the substantial essence of both ethical and natural actuality; the conscious identity of the two is the philosophical Idea.'

their philosophy is its 'content', as what we actually come to learn from them is rarely much different from what we knew already: 'the same old brew is reheated again and again and served up to all and sundry' (*EPR*, 11 [*Werke*, VII: 13]). The danger here, Hegel thinks, is that philosophers will be tempted to treat this 'reheated brew' as if it really contained 'new and unheard-of truths', and so claim for themselves qua philosophers a special kind of epistemic authority and importance 'as if all that the world had hitherto lacked was these zealous disseminators of truths' (*EPR*, 11 [*Werke*, VII: 13]). Second, Hegel argues that in the rush to present us with these fresh discoveries, such philosophers just add to the cacophony of competing views, while leaving us unable to settle on which of these views is really valid, because they lack a proper method: 'And if, amidst this jumble of truths, there is something that is neither old nor new but enduring, how can it be extracted from these formlessly fluctuating reflections—how can it be distinguished and verified other than by *scientific* means?' (*EPR*, 11 [*Werke*, VII: 13]).

Hegel observes, moreover, that if philosophy claims that what is distinctive about it is its content, rather than its method, it will face the difficulty of finding that there may not be anything very new for it to propose that is not already part of our ordinary social and ethical thinking, and hence it will make itself appear redundant: 'The *truth* concerning *right, ethics, and the state* is at any rate *as old* as its *exposition and promulgation in public law and in public morality and religion*' (*EPR*, 11 [*Werke*, VII: 13–4]).²¹ Hegel thinks that this redundancy can only be avoided by once again accepting the importance of 'form' or method, for then we need no longer present philosophy as if its value lies solely in the novelty of its content regarding truth in moral matters, as it is still possible for philosophy to make a significant contribution, 'in as much as the thinking mind [*Geist*] is not content to possess it [i.e. this truth] in this proximate manner' (*EPR*, 11 [*Werke*, VII: 14]). The difficulty the 'thinking mind' faces, Hegel suggests, is that the truths of ordinary morality lack any proper methodological framework: what is needed is that they be given a philosophical treatment, 'so that the content which is already rational in itself may also be given a rational form and thereby appear justified to free thinking' (*EPR*, 11 [*Werke*, VII: 14]). How is it that this philosophical treatment will enable the truths of ordinary morality to appear justified to 'free thinking'? Because according to Hegel, 'free thinking' demands that thought can *derive* those truths in a way that shows they are grounded within a self-supporting system,²² rather than based on any sort of

²¹ See also Hegel, *EL*, §22Z, 55 [*Werke*, VIII: 79]: 'The business of philosophy consists only in bringing into consciousness explicitly what people have held to be valid about thought from time immemorial. Thus, philosophy establishes nothing new; what we have brought forth by our reflection here is what everyone already takes for granted without reflection'.

²² See also *EPR*, §2Z, 26 [*Werke*, VII: 30–1]: 'Philosophy forms a circle. It has an initial or immediate point—for it must begin somewhere—a point which is not demonstrated and is not a result. But the starting point of philosophy is immediately relative, for it must appear at another

extra-systematic *given*, for only then can reason be satisfied and 'know itself as united in its innermost being with the truth' (*EPR*, 11 [*Werke*, VII: 14]).²³ Thus, Hegel argues, reason cannot be content with any treatment of these moral truths which attempts to base them on 'the external positive authority of the state or of mutual agreement among human beings, or by the authority of inner feeling and the heart and by the testimony of the spirit which immediately concurs with this' (*EPR*, 11 [*Werke*, VII: 14]), because all these modes of grounding are inadequate, as the further question remains of *why* the state supports this practice rather than that, or *why* people happen to agree on this rather than that, and so on. Using his method, Hegel suggests, such questions will not arise, as no such ungrounded presuppositions remain,²⁴ so that in this respect 'free thinking' can be satisfied. This, for Hegel, is the distinctive contribution philosophy can make in this area. Against his critics, therefore, Hegel suggests that the form of a philosophical inquiry is not somehow irrelevant compared to its content, as even if philosophy does not go beyond ordinary morality in terms of its content, it is precisely by presenting its content in a 'scientific' manner that philosophy can make its contribution to our ethical thinking, in showing that the content is not arbitrary, but can be given a systematic treatment that reveals its inner necessity; philosophy can therefore deepen our understanding of what makes certain positions valid, and thereby satisfy our need for rational insight, even where it cannot claim to be a special source of moral truths.

Now, it might be felt that my reading of this paragraph plays into the hands of the conservative interpretation of Hegel, and as such leaves his position open to criticism. In particular, it may seem to treat public morality as too static and homogeneous, and to give philosophy too passive a role in relation to that public morality, where philosophy ought not to give the latter any independent authority. However, with regard to the first point, nothing I have said about Hegel's position requires him to hold that public morality is completely unchanging and uncontested: indeed, Hegel himself frequently emphasized (in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and elsewhere) that public morality can alter in different ways, and can be deeply contested. All Hegel is denying, in my view, is that the philosopher qua philosopher should take it as his primary

end-point as a result. Philosophy is a sequence which is not suspended in mid-air; it does not begin immediately, but is rounded off within itself.' See also Hegel, *EL*, §15.

²³ For further helpful discussion of this aspect of Hegel's methodological position, and its rationale, see Stephen Houlgate, *Freedom, Truth and History: An Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1991), 41–68. See also Richard Dien Winfield, *Reason and Justice* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988) and *Overcoming Foundations: Studies in Systematic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); and William Maker, *Philosophy Without Foundations: Rethinking Hegel* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994). See also 'Hegel and Pragmatism', Ch. 7 below.

²⁴ Hegel allows, however, that the *Philosophy of Right itself* is not totally presuppositionless, as it takes for granted the preceding phases of the system of which it is part; but, he claims, taken in the context of that system, those presuppositions themselves are sufficiently grounded: cf. *EPR*, §2, 26 [*Werke*, VII: 30].

role to guide this process.²⁵ Thus, his position is that while ethical change and development can occur, this can quite properly be brought about by changes in public morality *at large*, and not by the special inquiries of the philosopher. The danger in prioritizing 'content' over 'form' is that this will not be acknowledged, as the philosopher's only role is then to tell us how to think on these issues in a potentially disastrous way, based on a claim to authority that is spurious because it has no real methodological grounding, where without this '[o]ne bare assurance is worth just as much as another'.²⁶ But, it might be felt (and this is the second objection), if the primary role of the philosopher is not to provide new 'content' to our moral thinking, hasn't Hegel abandoned its essentially critical role, and so revealed the inherent conservatism of his position?²⁷ And, given that Hegel himself does seem to offer proposals for the reforms of at least some institutions in the *Philosophy of Right*, and so to that extent himself seems to allow himself qua philosopher to offer something by way of new 'content', how can my reading of Hegel be correct? I am not sure these criticisms are as forceful as they seem. For, although Hegel as I read him objects to any purely 'content' driven philosophy that lacks any concern for the rationalistic demands of a *Wissenschaft*, nothing we have seen so far in the Preface (nor, I will argue, in what is to come) suggests that philosophy cannot propose any institutional reforms at all—it just must do so based on a proper method, otherwise it will have the problematic status of merely subjective opinion.

Hegel now goes on to consider arguments designed to show that subjective opinions are all we can hope for in ethical and social matters, so there is nothing wrong with philosophy proceeding in this way. The first is that because opinions on moral matters are deeply divided, there is no 'publicly recognized truth' here for us to follow; instead, we are faced by 'the *infinite variety of opinions*', so that we must abandon the attempt to arrive at anything that is 'universally acknowledged and valid', where 'this perplexity may easily be taken for a just and genuine concern with the matter [*Sache*] itself' (*EPR*, 11–12 [*Werke*, VII: 14]).

²⁵ As Dudley Knowles has suggested recently (*Hegel and the Philosophy of Right* (London: Routledge, 2002), 70 and 346, n. 3), when Hegel famously says at the end of the Preface that 'philosophy paints its grey in grey', he means that it gives us a kind of theoretical reflection on the essential elements of the social world, where this can only be done after the dust of day-to-day debate and social change has settled and 'actuality has reached maturity', when 'a shape of life has grown old, and it cannot be rejuvenated, but only recognized, by the grey in grey of philosophy; the owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk' (*EPR*, 23 [*Werke*, VII: 28]). Philosophy is therefore necessarily limited in how far it can go in claiming to be able to change the world by 'issuing instructions on how the world ought to be', because it cannot reflect on the social world from 'outside', so that in this sense philosophy 'comes too late' to tell us what we ought to do (*EPR*, 23 [*Werke*, VII: 28]).

²⁶ Hegel, *PS*, 49 [*Werke*, III: 71].

²⁷ See Haym, *Hegel und seine Zeit*, 366 (trans., 221): 'Kant had once taught this science [of philosophical ethics] to fly higher; now returning from heaven to earth, it bears the mark of a more petty and fearful time. Face to face with reality [*Wirklichkeit*], temporal-human reality, idealism lays down its arms, believing itself able to maintain its honour and its name only in subordination to this reality'.

Hegel responds, however, by arguing that this stress on the variety of moral thought is exaggerated and in bad faith: 'But in fact, those who pride themselves on this perplexity are in the position of not being able to see the wood for the trees, and the only perplexity and difficulty that is present is one they themselves have created; indeed, this perplexity and difficulty is rather a proof that they want something other than what is universally acknowledged and valid, something other than the substance of the right and the ethical' (*EPR*, 12 [*Werke*, VII: 14]).

The second objection Hegel considers at this point centres on the idea that freedom consists in thinking for oneself about moral and political matters, where it is claimed that this means that 'the only criterion of thought and the only way in which thought can know itself to be free is the extent to which it *diverges from what is universally acknowledged and valid* and manages to invent something *particular* for itself' (*EPR*, 12 [*Werke*, VII: 15]). The result of this approach, Hegel argues, is that 'it might seem to be the essential task of a philosophy of the state to invent and propound *yet another theory*, and specifically a new and particular theory', in so far as 'freedom of thought, and of spirit in general, can be demonstrated only by divergence from, and even hostility towards, what is publicly acknowledged' (*EPR*, 12 [*Werke*, VII: 15]). The position Hegel is considering, then, argues from 'the freedom of thought', to the claim that a work is not genuinely philosophical unless its conclusions differ from all existing practices. Now, Hegel responds to this objection by arguing that it rests on a misconception regarding the nature of 'the freedom of thought'. On the one hand, Hegel happily accepts that the right to think for oneself is 'exalted' and 'divine' (*EPR*, 12 [*Werke*, VII: 15]; cf. *EPR*, 22 [*Werke*, VII: 26–7]), and that in the modern world 'in laws of right. . . the thing [*Sache*] is not valid because it exists; on the contrary, everyone demands that it should match his own criterion' (*EPR*, 13 Addition [*Werke*, VII: 16 *Zusatz*]). On the other hand, however, Hegel holds that this does *not* entail that thinking for oneself requires that we 'imagine that no state or constitution had ever previously existed or were in existence today, but that we had *now* (and this "now" is of indefinite duration) to start right from the beginning, and that the ethical world had been waiting only for such intellectual constructions, discoveries, and proofs as are *now* available' (*EPR*, 12 [*Werke*, VII: 15]). Hegel points out that no one would think that this is the right procedure with respect to the natural world, and yet no one thinks that here our 'freedom of thought' is compromised. This is because, Hegel suggests, in the case of the natural world we expect to find some convergence on some objective truth, but '[t]he spiritual universe is supposed rather to be at the mercy of contingency and arbitrariness, to be *god-forsaken*, so that, according to this atheism of the ethical world, *truth* lies *outside* it, and at the same time, since reason is nevertheless *also* supposed to be present in it, truth is nothing but a problem' (*EPR*, 14 [*Werke*, VII: 15–16]). The result, then, is that 'freedom of thought' in moral and political issues is seen as a purely subjective matter, so that

on this view no common ground on these issues is expected or required: 'But, we are told, this very circumstance justifies, indeed obliges, every thinker to take his own initiative, though not *in search of* the philosopher's stone, for this search is made superfluous by the philosophizing of our times and everyone, whatever his condition, can be assured that he has this stone in his grasp' (*EPR*, 14 [*Werke*, VII: 16]).

Hegel argues that the danger in the model he is criticizing, is that the general public will be suspicious of philosophers who thereby attempt to radically alter our practices, because those people who are broadly happy with the current arrangements will 'laugh at such initiatives and assurances and regard them as an empty game, now more amusing, now more serious, now pleasing, now dangerous' (*EPR*, 14 [*Werke*, VII: 16–17]). Hegel says that the 'restless activity of vain reflection' adopted by philosophy, 'along with the reception and response it encounters' from the general public would not matter very much 'were it not that *philosophy* in general has incurred all kinds of contempt and discredit as a result of such behaviour'; and, whereas previously philosophizing involved the difficult intellectual challenge of making us think about things in a rational manner, it now just involves a kind of empty moralizing, in such a way that everyone can claim to be 'a philosopher', as this is something that involves no great difficulty: 'No other art or science is treated with this ultimate degree of contempt, namely the assumption that one can master it straightaway' (*EPR*, 14–15 [*Werke*, VII: 17], translation modified).

Hegel therefore argues that, because of the view of philosophy he is criticizing, it has become subjectivist, as philosophers turn to inward feeling to justify the view of the state they are putting forward: 'In any case, this self-styled philosophy has expressly stated that *truth cannot be arrived at by cognition* [*erkannt*], but that truth consists in what *wells up from each individual's heart, emotion, and enthusiasm* in relation to ethical subjects, particularly in relation to the state, government, and constitution' (*EPR*, 15 [*Werke*, VII: 18], translation modified). Hegel argues (attacking Fries in particular) that the result has been various unworkable political proposals (which 'reduce this refined [*gebildeten*] structure [of the state] to a mush of "heart, friendship, and enthusiasm"' (*EPR*, 16 [*Werke*, VII: 19])). For Hegel, therefore, this mistaken conception of philosophy has come to betray the rationalistic principles that must underlie all responsible forms of inquiry, and thus the fundamental method of philosophy itself, so that in the end it becomes a form of anti-philosophy, in which 'all the trouble involved in rational insight and cognition, guided by the thinking concept' is avoided (*EPR*, 16 [*Werke*, VII: 19])). Hegel argues that this anti-rationalism leads contemporary philosophy to oppose the very idea of *laws* in ethics and social life at all, in so far as laws are universal and therefore have the form of rationality: 'That right and ethics, and the actual world of right and the ethical, are grasped by means of *thoughts* and give themselves the form of rationality—namely universality and determinacy—by means of thoughts, is what constitutes *the law*; and it is this

which is justifiably regarded as the main enemy by that feeling which reserves the right to do as it pleases, by that conscience which identifies right with subjective conviction' (EPR, 17 [Werke, VII: 20]).

Given his view that 'arbitrary sophistry has usurped the name of *philosophy*' (EPR, 17 [Werke, VII: 20]), Hegel expresses himself in sympathy with those who 'grow impatient as soon as they hear talk of a philosophical science of the state' (EPR, 17 [Werke, VII: 20–1]), for as it is currently practised, such a science could only lead to 'superficiality [*Seichtigkeit*]' (EPR, 16 [Werke, VII: 20]). He also says he can see why political authorities have become concerned by such philosophizing, in so far as it sets itself up in judgement on all existing values, in a way that can 'lead to the destruction of inner ethics and the upright conscience, of love and right among private persons, as well as the destruction of public order and the laws of the state' (EPR, 18 [Werke, VII: 22]). Moreover, Hegel accepts that it is understandable why other academic disciplines therefore think they have no need to take philosophy seriously, so that 'in so many publications in the field of the positive sciences, as well as in works of religious edification and vague literature of other kinds, the reader encounters . . . contempt for philosophy' (EPR, 18 [Werke, VII: 22], translation modified). But, Hegel warns, although '[t]he declamations and presumptuous outbursts against philosophy which are so common in our time' are 'in the right, by virtue of that superficiality to which philosophical science has been degraded' (EPR, 19 [Werke, VII: 23]), the result is that by forsaking philosophy, these other academic disciplines have lost their intellectual direction, so that 'all objects, however barren and particular [*partikular*], and all materials, however arid, are accorded the same status as what constitutes the interest of all thinking people and the bonds of the ethical world' (EPR, 19 [Werke, VII: 23]).

Faced with this highly regrettable state of affairs, Hegel sees it as a 'stroke of *good fortune* for science' (EPR, 19 [Werke, VII: 23]) that the '*public split*' (EPR, 20 [Werke, VII: 24]) between the philosophers he is criticizing and the political authorities who see them as socially dangerous has brought to a head the question: what is the proper nature of philosophy as a form of inquiry? Hegel clearly has considerable sympathy with those who have come to doubt the value of philosophy as it is currently practised, because philosophy of this sort seems to have nothing to do with the real world, in coming up with empty utopian proposals for reform. Hegel wants to claim, however, that this is not the fault of philosophy *per se*, but of philosophy that is anti-rationalistic in its methods. Hegel insists that once this rationalism is restored to its rightful place, then philosophy will no longer be emptily utopian, and so will no longer be subject to this criticism:

It is *this very relation of philosophy to actuality* which is the subject of misunderstandings, and I accordingly come back to my earlier observation that, since philosophy is the *exploration of the rational*, it is for that very reason the *comprehension of the present and the actual*, not the setting up of a *world beyond* which exists God knows where—or rather,

of which we can very well say that we know where it exists, namely in the errors of a one-sided and empty ratiocination. (*EPR*, 20 [*Werke*, VII: 24])

Hegel thinks it is as ‘the *comprehension of the present and the actual*’ that philosophy will regain its relevance to contemporary political thought, rather than through utopian speculation about ‘a *world beyond*’; and, as we have seen, he believes it has fallen into the latter because it has abandoned reason as its method of inquiry, in favour of ‘the subjective contingency of opinion and arbitrariness’ (*EPR*, 16 [*Werke*, VII: 19]). By returning to ‘the *exploration of the rational*’, therefore, Hegel hopes to show that philosophy can make a relevant contribution to the political world as it really is, not to what many people would see as merely idle theorizing. In a dense passage (*EPR*, 20 [*Werke*, VII: 24]) he claims that even Plato—who may seem in his *Republic* to have offered a merely ‘*empty ideal*’ not unlike that of the philosophers Hegel is criticizing, while clearly being a philosopher who Hegel would want to classify as a rationalist—was in fact concretely related to the ethical life of his time, so that his rationalism was not a form of utopianism, and so is not a counterexample to Hegel’s position.

It is at this point in the Preface that Hegel introduces his *Doppelsatz*.²⁸ We should therefore briefly recall the context in which it occurs. As we have seen, a central feature of that context is Hegel’s concern for philosophy as an intellectual discipline, and the low regard in which it is currently held. His explanation for this crisis is that philosophy no longer takes systematic inquiry to be important, because the rules of such inquiry ‘have been cast aside, as if they were simply fetters, to make way for the arbitrary pronouncements of the heart, of fantasy, and of contingent intuition’ (*EPR*, 10 [*Werke*, VII: 12]).²⁹ The result, Hegel thinks, is that philosophers now hold forth on ethical and social issues, but without

²⁸ In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel also makes the remark that ‘what is actual, is rational’ in the context of a discussion of Plato, where as in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel proposes that he should be seen, not as a utopian idealist, but as a rational inquirer into Greek ethical life who ‘shows how traditional morality [*das Sittliche*] has a living movement in itself; he demonstrates its function, its inward organism’ (*LHP* II, 95 and 100 [*Werke*, XIX: 110 and 115]). Plato thus gives rational form to traditional morality, and so ‘portrays the substance of ethical life in its ideal *beauty and truth*’ (*EPR*, §185, 222 [*Werke*, VII: 342]). In this sense (Hegel thinks) Plato recognizes that ‘what is actual, is rational’, and can be given philosophical treatment, even though to *us* that treatment may appear utopian because *we* cannot see how the state he proposes could be realized *now*, given modern sensibilities concerning individual freedom. However, at the time it was written, Hegel suggests, the *Republic* was not a ‘chimera’, but a philosophical investigation into the fundamental nature of Greek ethical life, and ‘the truth of the world [Plato] lived in’ (*LHP* II, 96 [*Werke*, XIX: 96]).

²⁹ See also *EPR*, §2, 27 [*Werke*, VII: 32]: ‘But if, on the other hand, the former manner of cognition with its formal definitions, inferences, proofs, and the like has now virtually disappeared, the other mode which has replaced it is a bad substitute: that is, Ideas in general, and hence also the Idea of right and its further determinations, are taken up and asserted in immediate fashion as *facts of consciousness*, and our natural and intensified feelings, our *own heart* and *enthusiasm*, are made the source of right. If this is the most convenient method of all, it is also the least philosophical.’

having earned the right to do so, by thinking about these issues systematically. This is because such philosophers do not think 'scientific study' of the ethical world is possible, because they think that here (as against the natural world) 'all the trouble involved in rational insight and cognition, guided by the thinking concept, can . . . be avoided' (EPR, 16 [Werke, VII: 19]).³⁰

Thus, when Hegel comes to write, in the *Doppelsatz*, that

Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich;
und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig

the context in which it is said I think shows it should be read in a certain way, as claiming that as a *rational* enterprise, philosophy can and will engage with 'the actual' and 'the present', rather than some 'beyond'. As we have seen, Hegel's purpose in making this claim is to answer those critics of philosophy who see it as little more than empty theorizing, while attacking those who think this is what philosophy *should* be. Against the latter, as we have discussed, he argues that this puts philosophy in a 'vain position' (EPR, 20 [Werke, VII: 25]), in the sense both of being futile, and of claiming unwarranted superiority to ordinary moral thinking. Against the former, he argues that there are no grounds to think that the results of a rational inquiry will be empty in this way, in so far as inquiry into both the natural and spiritual universe tell us about structures inherent in the world, and not just ideas in our heads: 'Conversely, if the *Idea* is seen as "only an idea", a representation [*Vorstellung*] in the realm of opinion, philosophy affords the opposite insight that nothing is actual except the *Idea*' (EPR, 20 [Werke, VII: 25]).³¹ Conducted in the right rationalistic manner, therefore, there is nothing utopian about philosophy, and so nothing idle about it either.

In the remainder of the Preface, Hegel goes on to underline the way in which '[a]s a philosophical composition', the *Philosophy of Right* 'must distance itself as far as possible from the obligation to construct a state *as it ought to be*' (EPR, 21 [Werke, VII: 26]), for if a theory allows itself to become utopian and so 'builds itself a world *as it ought to be*, then it certainly has an existence, but only within [a person's] opinion—a pliant medium in which the imagination can construct anything it pleases' (EPR, 22 [Werke, VII: 26]). Hegel suggests that because it

³⁰ Hegel makes clear the dangers he sees in such irrationalism by (mis)quoting Goethe's *Faust* (EPR, 16 [Werke, VII: 19]): 'Do but despise reason and science/The highest of all human gifts—/Then you have surrendered to the devil/And must surely perish.'

³¹ See Hegel, *EL*, §41Z, 83 [Werke, VIII: 116]: 'thoughts are not merely our thoughts, but at the same time the *In-itself* of things and whatever else is objective'. And see G. W. F. Hegel, *Die Philosophie des Rechts: Vorlesung von 1821/22*, (ed.), Hansgeorg Hoppe (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005), 37: '[Philosophie] hat nicht die äußere Existenz der Gegenstände zu betrachten . . . sondern nur die ewige, innere Idee der Sache an und für sich selbst. Diese Idee verdient allein den Namen der Wirklichkeit; sie ist nicht so etwas, wie man zu sagen pflegt, das bloße Idee sei. Sie ist nicht Theorie, so etwas, das nur sein soll, nicht etwas Ohnmächtiges, sie *ist* im intensivsten Sinne des Seins.'

attempts 'to comprehend and portray the state' in rational terms, this will be avoided in what follows. Philosophy therefore brings us back to the real world, rather than taking us beyond it, as critics have supposed on the evidence of those who have philosophized without recognizing the inner call 'to comprehend' (*zu begreifen*), or to think in properly conceptual terms (*EPR*, 22 [*Werke*, VII: 27]); on my reading, this is what the *Doppelsatz* also claims.

It might be wondered what grounds Hegel has for thinking this will be so: what grounds does Hegel have for believing that if it is rationally conducted, philosophy will avoid empty utopianism? This is a large question, and only a brief suggestion can be made here of how to answer it. First, Hegel has *epistemic* grounds: rational inquiry involves *convergence*, rather than merely subjective opinion, so others will share its conclusions in a way that makes it realizable. Second, Hegel has *historical* grounds, in the sense that he believes that reason has already shaped the ways in which we have come to live, so that in following reason, philosophy will be going with the grain of social institutions as they have arisen.³² Thirdly, he has *metaphysical* grounds, in that he believes that the world is structured in a way that is fundamentally intelligible to reason.³³ And fourthly, as we have seen, Hegel believes that once philosophers see that the best contribution philosophy can make to 'free thinking' comes through its systematic method, they will be less inclined to think philosophy is only worth taking seriously if it 'manages to invent something *particular* for itself' (*EPR*, 12 [*Werke*, VII: 15]).

I have argued that Hegel's aim in the *Doppelsatz*, then, was to offer a slogan designed to answer those disillusioned by the perceived emptiness of much of the social philosophy of his time, by underlining that Hegel's return to *reason* is also meant to be a return to a form of philosophizing that is engaged with 'the actual'. Hegel is thus offering us a polemical defence of his rationalistic method, where the defence is that this will enable philosophy to avoid empty utopianism, and thus regain the respect in which it deserves to be held. The *Doppelsatz* can therefore be seen as an expression of Hegel's faith in a rationalistic conception of philosophy, rather than a claim about the normative status of 'the actual', *however* 'the actual' is understood. On this account, then, both the conservative *and* the progressive readings are mistaken, because in linking the 'rational' and the 'actual' in this way, Hegel was not meaning to say anything about whether the 'actual' is 'right' or 'good'.

³² See *EPR*, 16 [*Werke*, VII: 19], where Hegel argues against 'attributing to *feeling* what reason and its understanding have laboured to produce over several thousand years'.

³³ See *EL*, §24Z, 56–7 [*Werke*, VIII: 81–2]: 'This meaning of thinking and of its determinations is more precisely expressed by the Ancients when they say that *nous* governs the world, or by our own saying that there is reason in the world, by which we mean that reason is the soul of the world, inhabits it, and is immanent in it, as its own, innermost nature, its universal. . . . Just as thinking constitutes the substance of external things, so it is also the universal substance of what is spiritual.'

IV

Having outlined my neutral reading of the *Doppelsatz*, I now turn to consider certain objections to that reading.

(1) A first objection my reading must face, is that I have focused exclusively on Hegel's use of the *Doppelsatz* in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*; but Hegel uses the *Doppelsatz* and variants of it elsewhere, and (it could be claimed) the ways in which it is employed elsewhere show that it is *not* meant to be neutral, but rather to support the progressive reading. Four such other uses might be mentioned: Hegel's comment on the *Doppelsatz* in the Introduction to the *Encyclopaedia Logic*; the variants he gives of it in the lectures on the *Philosophy of Right* from 1817–18 and 1819; and the variant offered in conversation with Heinrich Heine.³⁴ Let me consider each in turn.

Of these four cases, it is the first that has been most discussed by proponents of the progressive reading. For, it is here that Hegel underlines that for him 'actuality' is a technical term, and that this should be remembered in reading the *Doppelsatz*; and, as we have seen, proponents of the progressive reading criticize proponents of the conservative readings for neglecting this fact. But, although Hegel does indeed here emphasize that 'when I speak of actuality, one should, of course, think about the sense in which I use this expression',³⁵ the question still remains from my point of view, whether in distinguishing 'the actual' from 'the existent', and identifying the former and not the latter with the rational, Hegel in so doing wants to draw a *normative* distinction between them, by claiming that the former is 'right' or 'good' in the way the latter is not. In fact, I will argue, Hegel's aim in drawing this distinction is still methodological, to suggest that while reason may make the 'actual' intelligible and explicable, it may not be able to incorporate everything that is merely 'existent' into a rational science; thus, on this account, Hegel's position remains normatively neutral.

In the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, Hegel's reference to the *Doppelsatz* again occurs in introductory material, and as we have learned to expect, a central concern of that material is with the status of philosophy, and what is special about it as a form of inquiry. So, for example, Hegel claims that some think that philosophy is too hard and esoteric, because it seems unintelligible to them, while others think it is too easy, because they treat it as superficial;³⁶ and, in

³⁴ Other variants and discussions that could be mentioned can be found in Hegel, *Die Philosophie des Rechts: Vorlesung von 1821/22*, e.g. 37 and 234. But I do not believe these raise any new difficulties, and can be handled in a way that is similar to the cases I deal with in what follows; I have therefore not given any extended separate discussion to this text.

³⁵ *EL*, §6, 29 [*Werke*, VIII: 48].

³⁶ *EL*, §5, 28 [*Werke*, VIII: 46].

general, philosophy has a difficult time 'placing' itself as distinctive with respect to other ways of thinking. Then, in §6, he turns to consider the *content* of philosophical knowledge, what it is philosophy enquires into; and his answer is 'the *world*, the outer and inner world of consciousness', immediately going on to say 'in other words, the content of philosophy is *actuality*'.³⁷ At first, Hegel observes, we come to know about the world through experience; but we then come to recognize that experience does not really get to the bottom of things, but is confined to the level of '*appearance*, [the] transient and insignificant [*bedeutungslos*]',³⁸ which we learn to distinguish from 'that which truly and in itself merits the name of *actuality*',³⁹ because (presumably) it is *not so* 'transient and insignificant'. Now, philosophy, Hegel argues, must be in accord with the world as 'appearance' and as 'actuality', so that its 'universal touchstone' is how well it 'fits the phenomena at the level of givenness', while its 'supreme and ultimate purpose' is 'to bring about the reconciliation of the reason that is conscious of itself with the reason that *is*, or actuality, through the cognition of this accord'.⁴⁰

Hegel thus seems to be claiming that philosophy can find reason in the world by taking us further than the 'transient and insignificant', and putting us in touch with 'actuality', but not in a way that takes us into any sort of transcendent 'beyond', as this 'actuality' must also be part of the world as it first appears in experience; but whereas that world seemed chaotic and structureless, it now is shown to have a rational order, so that reconciliation between us qua rational subjects ('the reason that is conscious of itself') and the world qua rational entity ('the reason that *is*') can be achieved. So far, therefore, the text of this paragraph reads like a fairly straightforward statement of Hegel's epistemological rationalism, according to which the world may initially present itself to us as a confused array of phenomena, which we then make intelligible using reason, to gain a sense of how the world contains certain necessary structures which give it order.⁴¹ For Hegel, it is this kind of rational insight which gives us as inquirers a particular kind of satisfaction in relation to the world, a sense of reconciliation

³⁷ *EL*, §6, 29 [*Werke*, VIII: 47].

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ See Hegel, *EL*, §21Z, 53 [*Werke*, VIII: 77–8], where Hegel suggests that this is the sort of insight we acquire when we find that nature behaves in a law-governed way, or when individuals fall under universal genera: 'Nature offers us an infinite mass of singular shapes and appearances. We feel the need to bring unity into this manifold; therefore, we compare them and seek to [re]cognize what is universal in each of them. Individuals are born and pass away; in them their kind is what abides, what recurs in all of them; and it is only present for us when we think about them. This is where laws, e.g., the laws of the motion of heavenly bodies, belong too. We see the stars in one place today and in another tomorrow; this disorder is for the spirit something incongruous, and not to be trusted, since the spirit believes in an order, a simple, constant, and universal determination [of things]. This is the faith in which the spirit has directed its [reflective] thinking upon the phenomena, and has come to know their laws, establishing the motion of the heavenly bodies in a universal manner, so that every change of position can be determined and [re]cognised on the basis of this law.'

with it, as it now no longer appears to be a disorderly mass of contingencies, but a well-ordered system.⁴²

It is at this point that Hegel makes reference to the *Doppelsatz*, in his 'remark' to the main paragraph we have just considered. The normal function of these 'remarks' is not to take the argument further forward, but to broaden out the discussion of the main paragraph somewhat, and in a slightly less compressed way. It is therefore natural, having introduced the idea of 'actuality' in the main paragraph, and offered his rationalistic conception of it in relation to philosophy, that Hegel should mention the *Doppelsatz*; but again, I think, this shows that the *Doppelsatz* itself should be understood in this rationalistic way.

Hegel observes that the 'simple propositions' that make up the *Doppelsatz* 'have seemed shocking to many and they have been attacked'.⁴³ Hegel does not tell us whom he has in mind here, but it is reasonable to assume that he has in view those who took him to be a political reactionary on the strength of the *Doppelsatz*.⁴⁴ But of course, even if this is the case, it does not follow (as the progressive reading claims) that Hegel is here responding to those critics by emphasizing that it offers a normative endorsement not of the status quo, but of something more ideal. For, another way to respond to those who take it to be normatively conservative, is just to show it is simply a philosophical platitude, rather than some sort of normative assessment of 'the actual'. And this, I would argue, is the strategy Hegel does in fact adopt. For, Hegel expresses himself surprised that people have reacted to the *Doppelsatz* in a hostile way, and seen it as somehow outrageous, even though they think of themselves as committed to religion or philosophy: 'These simple propositions . . . have been attacked, even by those who are not ready to renounce the possession of philosophy, and certainly not of religion'.⁴⁵ This suggests that the critics he has in mind are those who think of themselves as philosophers or religious people, but who think the *Doppelsatz* is problematic; but for Hegel, this position is incoherent, because he thinks that the *Doppelsatz* in fact forms the fundamental presupposition for religion and philosophy, and it is remarkable that those who attack it do not see that in fact they themselves must be committed to it. What is that presupposition to which these critics must be committed? In religious terms, it is that there is 'divine governance of the world', and in philosophical terms it is 'what is there is partly *appearance* and partly actuality'.⁴⁶ In other words, Hegel thinks that

⁴² See *LHP*, 439 (trans. modified) [*Werke*, XII: 521]: 'The human being is not free when he does not think, for then he relates himself to an other. This comprehension, the grasping of the other with the most inward self-certainty directly contains the reconciliation: the unity of thinking with the other is present *in itself*, since reason is just as much the substantial basis of consciousness as of what is external and natural. Thus the object is no longer a beyond with a different substantial nature.'

⁴³ *EL*, §6, 29 [*Werke*, VIII: 47].

⁴⁴ See Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 458–9.

⁴⁵ *EL*, §6, 29 [*Werke*, VIII: 47].

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

what is distinctive of any philosophical or religious way of thinking is a move he outlined in the main paragraph, which does not just accept that the world is nothing but contingency and appearance, but sees in it some sort of deeper explanation and grounding; so, Hegel thinks, to anyone with a religious or philosophical outlook, his 'simple propositions' should seem unproblematic, as all they are claiming is that we can come to find that 'actuality' is in accord with reason, in the sense of being open to systematic inquiry, in a way that 'appearance' is not. Hegel therefore suggests that as long as the religious person thinks that behind the world there is a divine order, or the philosopher accepts that there is more to the world than transient phenomena, he or she should find nothing outrageous in the 'simple propositions' of the *Doppelsatz*; but this is not because these propositions are in fact meant progressively rather than conservatively, but because they summarize a basic metaphysical assumption common to all religious and philosophical thought (as Hegel conceives them).

Hegel then goes on to suggest that this religious or philosophical way of drawing a distinction between 'appearance' and 'actuality', and treating the latter only as 'rational' is in fact also a part of ordinary thinking. For, although '[i]n common life' people may not seem to draw this distinction, because they 'call every brain wave, error, evil, and suchlike "actuality" as well as every existence, however wilted [*verkümmerte*] and transient it may be', after a little thought 'even for our ordinary feeling, a contingent existence does not deserve to be called something-actual in the emphatic sense of the word; what contingently exists has no greater value than that which something-possible has; it is an existence itself which (although it is) can just as well *not be*'.⁴⁷ Now, Hegel does here mention one normative category, that of evil, in relation to what is not actual. But I believe the overwhelming force of the full statement is not to mark a normative distinction, between 'things that "live up to their own underlying norm or end"',⁴⁸ and thus that are as they ought to be (the actual) and those that do not, and hence are not as they ought to be (the existent); rather, it is to make a more purely metaphysical distinction, between the contingency and transitoriness of the merely existent on the one hand, and the more necessary and permanent qua actual on the other (where Hegel seems just to mention evil here as one example of what is contingent and transitory in this way, in the sense that it could have not existed).⁴⁹ So, in saying that 'what is rational, is actual, and what is actual, is rational', Hegel does not seem to be claiming rationality of what is 'as it ought to be' as against what merely exists, but of what is in some sense fundamental as against what is merely apparent; he therefore seems

⁴⁷ *EL*, §6, 29 [*Werke*, VIII: 47].

⁴⁸ Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy*, 56.

⁴⁹ See *LHP* II, 95–6 [*Werke*, XIX: 111], where Hegel mentions 'evil' alongside 'an external existence [*Dasein*], which displays arbitrariness and contingency, such as a tree, a house, a plant', where he observes 'in common life all is real [*wirklich*]', but there is a difference between the phenomenal world and reality', on the grounds that the former is 'arbitrary and contingent' and the latter is not.

to be making an epistemological rather than a normative point, that rational comprehension is to be found in the actual, rather than in appearances, where these are too contingent and transitory to be incorporated fully within a rational system of inquiry.⁵⁰

In the next sentence, Hegel stresses that understanding the proper meaning of the *Doppelsatz* requires grasping the notion of 'actuality' he has developed elsewhere, in the *Science of Logic*: 'But when I speak of actuality, one should, of course, think about the sense in which I use this expression, given the fact that I dealt with actuality too in a quite elaborate *Logic*, and I distinguish it quite clearly and directly, not just from what is contingent, even though it has existence too, but also, more precisely, from being there [*Dasein*], from existence, and from other determinations'.⁵¹ As we have seen, proponents of the progressive reading have followed Hegel's lead, which has taken them to remarks of this sort: 'Actuality is the *unity of essence and Existence*'.⁵² They have then put this sort of remark together with comments by Hegel that suggest that something is good only if it properly realizes its nature,⁵³ and have concluded from this that Hegel's aim here was to circumscribe the normative force of the *Doppelsatz*, in making clear that he only meant to endorse 'the actual', not the merely existent.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ In relation to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel makes this point about some of the questions that might arise about some of the less significant aspects of social life: 'For what matters is to recognize in the semblance of the temporal and transient the substance which is immanent and the eternal which is present. For since the rational, which is synonymous with the Idea, becomes actual by entering into external existence [*Existenz*], it emerges in an infinite wealth of forms, appearances, and shapes and surrounds its core with a brightly coloured covering in which consciousness at first resides, but which only the concept can penetrate in order to find the inner pulse, and detect its continued beat even within external shapes. But the infinitely varied circumstances which take shape within this externality as the essence manifests itself within it, this infinite material and its organization, are not the subject-matter of philosophy. To deal with them would be to interfere in things [*Dinge*] with which philosophy has no concern, and it can save itself the trouble of giving good advice on the subject. Plato could well have refrained from recommending nurses never to stand still with children but to keep rocking them in their arms; and Fichte likewise need not have perfected his *passport regulations* to the point of "constructing", as the expression ran, the requirement that the passports of suspect persons should carry not only their personal description but also their painted likeness. In deliberations of this kind, no trace of philosophy remains' (*EPR*, 20–1 [*Werke*, VII: 25]). See also *LA I*, 6 [*Werke*, XIII: 19], where Hegel considers the objection (which he rejects) that art is not a suitable topic for scientific inquiry, because it is nothing more than a 'mass of details', lacking in any necessary principles: 'science is occupied with what is inherently *necessary*. . . . But in the sphere of the spirit in general, especially in the imagination, what seems, in comparison with nature, to be peculiarly at home is caprice and the absence of law, and this is automatically incapable of any scientific explanation'.

⁵¹ *EL*, §6, 29–30 [*Werke*, VIII: 48].

⁵² *SL*, 529 [*Werke*, VI: 186].

⁵³ See *EL*, §171Z, 249 [*Werke*, VIII: 322]: '[T]o say of a work of art that it is beautiful, or an action that it is good, the objects in question must be compared to what they ought to be, i.e., with their concept.'

⁵⁴ See, for example, Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*, 127: 'Hegel became aware quite clearly that by its sheer force, his epigram was apt to lead him into being very clearly misrepresented. Hence in a lengthy footnote in the 1830 edition of his *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, he makes it a point to emphasize that actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) is not identical with all that exists. Hegel distinguishes here between *Dasein* (Existence) and *Wirklichkeit*. *Dasein* encompasses everything

Now, two things should perhaps give us pause straightaway. The first is that in reminding us here that he has discussed 'actuality' as a category in the *Logic*, Hegel contrasts it not *just* with 'existence', but with all the other 'determinations' discussed in the *Logic* up to that point. It thus seems too narrow to suggest that the contrast he wants to draw is based merely on how these two categories correspond to the category of essence. The second worry is that when Hegel does want to draw a contrast between something that properly realizes its nature and something that does not, he normally characterizes the former as 'true' rather than 'actual', as in the following passage:

In the philosophical sense . . . 'truth', expressed abstractly and in general, means the agreement of a content with itself. . . . [This] (philosophical) meaning of 'truth' is also partly found in ordinary linguistic usage already. We speak, for instance, of a 'true' friend, and by that we understand one whose way of acting conforms with the concept of friendship; and in the same way we speak also of a 'true' work of art. To say of something that it is 'untrue' is as much as to say that it is bad, that it involves an inner inadequacy. A bad State, in this sense, is an 'untrue' State; and what is bad and untrue consists always in a contradiction between an object's determination or concept and its existence.⁵⁵

Thus, if Hegel is saying what the progressive reading thinks he is in the *Doppelsatz*, he should have perhaps more properly have said 'what is rational, is true; and what is true, is rational'.⁵⁶

More significantly, perhaps, when one looks at the way proponents of progressive readings of the *Doppelsatz* have taken Hegel's account of 'actuality' in the *Logic*, it seems that they have misunderstood what he means by saying that 'Actuality is the unity of essence and Existence'. As we have seen, they take Hegel to be saying that something is actual when it is an existent thing

which exists, whereas *Wirklichkeit* is only that part of *Dasein* in which essence and existence coincide, and it is because of this that one can say that it is rational. Whatever the philosophical difficulties which arise out of this explanation (they seem to make the couplet into something like a tautology), it clearly indicates that Hegel himself did not intend in any way whatsoever to mean it as an overall legitimization of everything which exists.' Other commentators, who are rightly more careful than Avineri at distinguishing *Dasein* from *Existenz* usually make the latter the central contrast with *Wirklichkeit*: but the overall strategy is the same.

⁵⁵ *EL*, §24Z, 60 [*Werke*, VIII: 86]. Cf. also *EL*, §172Z, 249–50 [*Werke*, VIII: 323–4]; and *EL* §213Z, 287–8 [*Werke*, VIII: 369–70]; and *Werke*, VII: §21Z 73–4; *EPR*, 53. For further discussion see Robert Stern, 'Did Hegel Hold an Identity Theory of Truth?', *Mind* 102 (1993): 645–7 [Ch. 2 above].

⁵⁶ I have found only two examples where Hegel uses a term other than 'true' to characterize something that properly realizes its nature. The first is Hegel, *EL*, §91Z, 147–8 [*Werke*, VIII: 196]; but even here Hegel does not characterize it as 'actual' (*wirklich*), but as 'real' (*reelle*): '[W]e often speak of "reality" in still another sense, understanding by it that which behaves in accordance with its essential determination or its concept. For example, someone may say: "This is a real occupation", or: "This is a real person". Here it is not a question of what is immediately and externally there, but rather the correspondence between what is there and its concept.' The second example is *LA*, I, 111 [*Werke*, XIII: 151], where again Hegel uses the terminology of *Realität* rather than *Wirklichkeit*: 'Thus it is only the reality which is adequate to the Concept which is the true reality [*Realität*], true indeed because in it the Idea brings itself into existence.'

which properly realizes its essence, and so is a 'unity of essence and Existence' in this sense. But, when Hegel says in the *Logic* that a category is the unity of two preceding categories, he simply means that we have reached a category that combines elements of each. So, for example, he says that 'measure' is 'the unity of quality and quantity',⁵⁷ by which he means that it involves aspects of both qualitative and quantitative determination, whereby quantity effects quality (for example, losing a certain number of hairs makes someone bald who was previously hirsute). Likewise, I would argue, when Hegel says that 'Actuality is the unity of essence and Existence', he means that it is the kind of category which involves aspects of 'essence' and 'existence'. What might Hegel mean by this? The category of existence, Hegel has argued, characterizes things which have their grounding in other things, and so need to be explained through the determination of what is outside them; with the category of essence, by contrast, entities are seen as determined by a nature that belongs to them, but which is hidden and mysterious. So, to say that the category of actuality is the unity of these preceding categories, is to say that something is actual in so far as we have an explanation for it (as with what exists), but where what does the explaining is the nature of the entity itself (as when we think in terms of essences), *not* some external thing which determines it, although here the determination is transparent rather than hidden (as with existence but not essence). Thus, something is 'actual' for Hegel if it is a self-maintaining system which can be understood in its own terms, without being seen as grounded on something else:

Real actuality *as such* is in the first instance the thing of many properties, the existent world; but it is not the Existence that resolves itself into Appearance, but, as actuality, it is at the same time the in-itself and reflection-into-self; it preserves itself in the manifoldness of mere Existence; its externality is an inner relationship *to itself* alone. What is actual *can act*; something manifests its actuality through that which it produces. Its relationship to another something is the manifestation *of itself*; neither a transition—the relation between something and an other in the sphere of being—nor an appearing—where the thing is only in relation to others and, though a self-subsistent, has its reflection-into-self, its determinate essentiality, in another self-subsistent.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *EL*, §107Z, 170 [*Werke*, VIII: 224]. See also *SL*, 327 [*Werke*, V: 387]: 'Abstractly expressed, in measure quality and quantity are united'.

⁵⁸ *SL*, 546–7 [*Werke*, VI: 208]. See also *EL*, §142, 213–14 [*Werke*, VIII: 279–80], where Hegel says that 'The actual . . . is exempted from *passing-over* and its *externality* is its energy; in that externality it is inwardly reflected; its being-there is only the *manifestation of itself*, not of an other'. Josiah Royce provides a helpful gloss on Hegel's conception of 'actuality' along these lines in his article 'Hegel's Terminology', in J. M. Baldwin (ed.), *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, 3 vols (New York: Macmillan, 1925), I, 462: '*Wirklichkeit* is a still higher category [than *Existenz*]. What has *Existenz* is a relatively immediate fact, but appears as the result of conditions, and as related to an environment. But what has *Wirklichkeit* not only has a basis, or is explicitly the expression of a principle, but contains this basis within itself, so that it is relatively (in the complete case wholly) independent of any environment. It is, then, a higher instance both of *Fürsichsein* [being-for-itself] and of *An-und-fürsichsein* [being-in-and-for-itself]. If a physical thing with qualities has *Existenz*,

It seems, then, that Hegel characterizes 'actuality' as 'the unity of essence and Existence' because he thinks it involves elements of both categories, not because 'the actual' is an existent thing that is as it ought to be, which is what the normative reading of the *Doppelsatz* assumes.

As evidence that the normative reading of Hegel's view of 'actuality' goes awry, consider the following passage from the *Philosophy of Right*:

The state is actual, and its actuality consists in the fact that the interest of the whole realizes itself through the particular ends. Actuality is always the unity of universality and particularity, the resolution of universality into particularity; the latter then appears to be self-sufficient, although it is sustained and supported only by the whole. If this unity is not present, nothing can be *actual*, even if it may be assumed to have *existence* [*Existenz*]. A bad state is one that merely exists; a sick body also exists, but it has no true reality. A hand which has been cut off still looks like a hand and exists, but it has no actuality. True actuality is necessity: what is actual is necessary in itself. Necessity consists [*besteht*] in the division of the whole into the distinctions within the concept, and in the fact that this divided whole exhibits a fixed and enduring determinacy which is not dead and unchanging but continues to produce itself in its dissolution. (*EPR*, §270Z, 302 [*Werke*, VII: 428–9])

Hegel is here telling us why as an institution, the state deserves to be called 'actual', where the answer is that it is a self-maintaining and complex system, a coincidence of parts with the whole that enables it to persist through change; and a state is no longer actual but merely exists when it loses this capacity to 'produce itself in its dissolution', through the breakdown of the whole into merely externally related parts (as when a body becomes sick and can no longer maintain itself, or a hand is removed from an arm). Thus, when Hegel says in the *Encyclopedia Logic* §6 that it is only the actual that is rational, and not what is merely existent, he would appear to be differentiating certain kinds of entities (such as states and bodies) from others (such as tables and pens), rather than differentiating 'things that are as they ought to be' from 'things that are not'.

However, if Hegel thinks that 'Actuality is the unity of essence and Existence' in the sense I have suggested, what is the connection between this and reason, as laid down in the *Doppelsatz*? As we have seen, proponents of the progressive reading argue that something is actual if it properly realizes its essence; if it properly realizes its essence it is good; and if it is good it is rational (in this normative sense). But I have argued that this is based on a mistaken view of Hegel's conception of 'actuality'; and yet, it might be felt, my preferred view leaves the link with 'reason' obscure.

an organism, a commonwealth, a solar system, or any such relative *totality* (*Totalität*), possesses *Wirklichkeit*. In the most genuine sense, only the absolute would be *wirklich*, but the term is often employed for finite but relatively organic beings.'

To see that this is not so, consider another passage from the *Philosophy of Right* that comes shortly after the one we have just discussed:

The constitution [of a state] is rational in so far as the state *differentiates* and determines its activity within itself *in accordance with the nature of the concept*. It does so in such a way that *each* of the *powers* in question is in itself the *totality*, since each contains the other moments and has them active within it, and since all of them, as expressions of the differentiation [*Unterschied*] of the concept, remain wholly within its ideality and constitute nothing but a *single individual* whole.

In recent times, we have heard an endless amount of empty talk both about the constitution and about reason itself. The most vapid of this has come from those in Germany who have persuaded themselves that they have a better understanding than anyone else—especially governments—of what a constitution is, and who believe that all their superficialities are irrefutably justified because they are allegedly based on religion and piety. It is no wonder that such talk has made reasonable men [*Männer*] sick of the words ‘reason’, ‘enlightenment’, ‘right’, etc., and likewise of the words ‘constitution’ and ‘freedom’, and that one is almost ashamed to enter into further discussion of political constitutions. But it may at least be hoped that such excesses will lead to a more widespread conviction that philosophical *cognition* of such subjects cannot come from ratiocination or from [the consideration of] ends, grounds, and utilities—let alone from emotionality, love, and enthusiasm—but only from the concept; and it is also to be hoped that those who believe that the divine is incomprehensible and that cognition of the truth is a futile [*nichtiges*] enterprise will take no further part in the discussion. At any rate, neither the undigested chatter nor the edifying sentiments which their emotions and enthusiasm generate can claim to merit the attention of philosophy. (*EPR*, §272, 305–6 [*Werke*, VII: 432–3])

Here, clearly, Hegel is returning to some of the themes and targets of the Preface, arguing again that reason is required in order to determine the nature of the constitution of a state, and not ‘emotionality, love, and enthusiasm’, where because the latter have taken over in philosophy ‘reasonable men’ have despaired of the subject (cf. *EPR*, 15–16 [*Werke*, VII: 17–19]). But now Hegel can be seen as providing grounds for holding that because the state is something ‘actual’, this anti-rationalism is such a mistake: for, in so far as it is actual, the state is a unified system of elements, which can only be properly understood in terms of ‘the concept’ (*der Begriff*) which reason alone is capable of grasping. The state, then, is suitable for rational investigation, in so far as it is actual; and it is actual in so far as it is open to rational investigation, in precisely the way the *Doppelsatz* claims. Thus, I would argue, Hegel’s aim in this section of the *Encyclopedia* is not to circumscribe his normative endorsement of things to what is ‘actual’ rather than merely ‘existent’, but to circumscribe the range of rational philosophical inquiry (of ‘science’) to what has the self-determining unity of the ‘actual’, as opposed to what has the structure of merely ‘determinate being’, ‘existence’ and the other determinations discussed earlier in the *Logic*.

Finally, then, on my account it is no surprise that in the final paragraph of §6, Hegel makes clear that the target of the *Doppelsatz* is those who have a certain view of philosophical inquiry, who either criticize it as no more than empty theorizing, or who argue that this is what it should be: for, as we saw on my account of the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, this is Hegel's main target there too: 'The notion that ideas and ideals are nothing but chimeras, and that philosophy is a system of pure phantasms, sets itself at once against the *actuality of what is rational*; but, conversely, the notion that ideas and ideals are something far too excellent to have actuality, or equally something far too impotent to achieve actuality, is opposed to it as well.'⁵⁹ Hegel accepts that one may quite properly feel that we may never be philosophically satisfied with how things are at a certain level, the level of 'trivial, external, and perishable objects, institutions, etc.:' but philosophy does not deal with things at this level, but with 'an actuality of which these objects, institutions and structures are only the superficial outer rind'—and at *that* level, Hegel claims, 'science deals only with the Idea—which is not so impotent that it merely ought to be'.⁶⁰ As in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, therefore, Hegel's principal aim is to identify what is rational and what is actual in order to show that 'the content of philosophy is *actuality*' as its object of investigation,⁶¹ not to claim anything about the normative status of 'the actual' as what is 'right' or 'good'.

Having looked at some length at how the reference to the *Doppelsatz* in §6 of the *Encyclopaedia Logic* can be fitted into my account of its meaning in the Preface of the *Philosophy of Right*, let me now look rather more briefly at the other three cases, where Hegel offers variants of it. From my point of view, the difficulty with these variants is that Hegel may seem to be bringing out the latent critical potential of the *Doppelsatz* by using 'rational' in a normative sense, and so they may seem to show that the progressive reading is correct.⁶²

The first of these variants is from the Heidelberg lectures of 1817–18, where Hegel says that 'What is rational must happen'. Defenders of the progressive reading of the *Doppelsatz* have argued that this shows that he wanted to use the *Doppelsatz*, not in order to say that the existing political order is for the best, but that this political order must inevitably evolve into one that is ideal, so that this remark should be seen in line with Hegel's providential philosophy of history.⁶³ However, I would argue that this again takes Hegel's remark out of context. When Hegel comments that 'What is rational must happen', he is not talking about any preferred constitutional arrangement, which he is claiming will come to pass, and so is not making a providential point about history; rather, he is

⁵⁹ *EL*, §6, 30 [*Werke*, VIII: 48].

⁶⁰ *EL*, §6, 30 [*Werke*, VIII: 48–9].

⁶¹ *EL*, §6, 29 [*Werke*, VIII: 47].

⁶² See Shlomo Avineri, 'The Discovery of Hegel's Early Lectures on the Philosophy of Right', *The Owl of Minerva*, 16 (1985), 202–3; Henrich, 'Vernunft in Verwirklichung', 13–17; Allen Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 13.

⁶³ See Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, 13.

talking about constitutions *in general*, where his focus is on the question: 'Who is to make the constitution—the people or someone else?'⁶⁴ Hegel, however, thinks that this is 'a wholly abstract, empty question', because the constitution is nothing other than the reflection of the national spirit of the people, and so cannot be 'made' by anyone, for it already belongs to them: 'The constitution is the foundation, the basis on which everything transpires. It must therefore be viewed as an eternal foundation, not as an artifact'.⁶⁵ It is with reference to this national spirit and its relation to the constitution that Hegel makes his remark about the rational: 'The national spirit [*Volksgeist*] is the substance. What is rational must happen, since on the whole the constitution is its development'.⁶⁶ Taken in context, this would appear to mean that Hegel is claiming that the constitution is rational in the sense that it does not arise arbitrarily, since its relation to the national spirit means it must be realized, and so can be explained as more than just the contingent product of any individual (such as a legislator), or individuals (as on the social contract model).⁶⁷ Once again, therefore, nothing here seems to imply that we should interpret the *Doppelsatz* in either a progressive or a conservative manner.

Now, against this interpretation, it could be pointed out that at the end of this paragraph, the text reads: 'But the rational must always find a way, for it possesses truth, and we must cease to fear that bad constitutions can be made'.⁶⁸ It could then be argued that when Hegel says 'What is rational must happen', he must be talking about some preferred constitutional arrangement; otherwise, how can he say that once we see that 'the rational must always find a way',

⁶⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft*, C. Becker et al. (eds.) (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1983), §134, 189; *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science: The First Philosophy of Right: Heidelberg 1817–1818*, J. Michael Stewart and Peter C. Hodgson, trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 239.

⁶⁵ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft*, §134, 190; *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science*, 240. Cf. *EPR* §273, 311–12 [*Werke*, VII: 439].

⁶⁶ The two recent German editions of these lecture notes in fact give different versions of the text. The version given here is from *Die Philosophie des Rechts: Die Mitschriften Wannenmann (Heidelberg 1817/18) und Homeyer (Berlin 1818/19)*, Karl-Heinz Ilting, ed. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1983), 157. In the edition edited by C. Becker et al., which forms the basis for the *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science* translation, the text is given as follows: 'The national spirit is the substance; what is rational must happen. Since in principle the constitution is a development, the individual moments acquire the form of something won by struggle, either by one side or the other, people or prince, by contractual means or force' (Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft* §134, 192; *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science*, 242). By reading 'seine' as 'eine' before 'Entwicklung', this version makes it even less clear that Hegel took the constitution to be the development of reason, as the progressive reading has it.

⁶⁷ See Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft*, §134, 190–1; *Lectures on Natural Right*, 240–1, where Hegel argues that in the cases of Moses, Solon, and Louis XVIII, these figures merely made the national spirit concrete and explicit in the form of their respective constitutions, but did not devise them as individuals (where Hegel suggests that this is reflected in the fact that Moses thought of his constitution as coming from God, and Solon as coming from an oracle).

⁶⁸ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft*, §134, 192; *Lectures on Natural Right*, 242.

then 'we must cease to fear that bad constitutions can be made'? However, this again misunderstands the context of Hegel's remark concerning our fear of bad constitutions. For, his claim is that we should lose this fear, not because the good or rational constitution must come about and so surpass any bad ones, but because we have seen that constitutions are the expression of the national spirit, and as such '[e]ach nation accordingly has the constitution appropriate and proper to it',⁶⁹ and so a good constitution in *this* sense. When Hegel claims that 'What is rational must happen', therefore, he does not seem to be talking about 'the right' or 'the good', and so is not using 'rational' here in a normative sense.

The second of these variants on the *Doppelsatz* is from the Berlin lectures of 1819, where Hegel says that, 'What is actual becomes rational, and the rational becomes actual'.⁷⁰ This variant has in fact caused difficulties for those who propose a progressive reading of the *Doppelsatz*; for, if Hegel means by 'the actual' whatever properly realizes its essence, then it is not clear he can speak of it as *becoming* rational, as if it is 'actual' in this sense then it presumably already *is* rational, and it is odd to speak of it as becoming so. In the face of this difficulty, Hardimon suggests that here Hegel 'is using the word "actual" to mean "existent", and hence violating his self-imposed linguistic strictures, but he is *not* identifying the existent with the actual'.⁷¹ As a solution, however, this seems rather awkward; and I would suggest that my neutral reading offers a better way of taking this variant.

As with the first variant, the immediate context of this second variant is a reference to the constitution of the state, which Hegel says is 'the arrangement of [the] inner spirit' of an age, and so 'certainly happens and is necessary', because against this inner spirit 'there is no power in heaven or earth'.⁷² Now, as we have seen, Hegel holds that something can be determined by reason if it is necessary or must obtain. He therefore says that 'the right of spirit' of which the constitution is the arrangement is not a product of 'reflection and imagination, which one can bring forth at will out of abstract thinking or out of the goodness of one's heart'; rather, it is something rational in so far as 'what is rational becomes actual, and what is actual becomes rational', whereas the products of 'reflection and imagination' do not relate to actuality in this way, but may or may not

⁶⁹ *EPR*, §274, 312 [*Werke*, VII: 440].

⁷⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts: Die Vorlesung von 1819/20 in einer Nachschrift*, Dieter Henrich (ed.) (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983), 50. It is perhaps also worth remarking that in the notes of the lectures taken by Johann Ringier from the same period, a version equivalent to the standard form of the *Doppelsatz* is given: 'was vernünftig ist, ist wirklich und umgekehrt'; see G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts: Berlin 1819/20, Nachgeschrieben von Johann Rudolf Ringier*, Emil Anghern, Martin Bondeli, and Hoo Nam Seelmann (eds.) (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2000), 8; and see also the editors comments in *ibid.*, xx–xxiii.

⁷¹ Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy*, 64. Cf. also Joseph McCarney, *Hegel on History* (London: Routledge, 2000), 98.

⁷² Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts: Die Vorlesung von 1819/20*, 51.

obtain. So, once again, Hegel is not talking about some particular ideal (rational) constitution that must be realized, but about what gives 'the right of spirit' the status of being rational (as something that 'certainly happens and is necessary'), in contrast to the products of 'reflection and imagination'.

The third variant on the *Doppelsatz* which has been discussed is one Hegel reportedly offered in conversation to the poet and philosopher Heinrich Heine, in an incident which Heine recounts as follows:

At times I saw him [Hegel] looking around anxiously as if in fear he might be understood. He was very fond of me, for he was sure I would never betray him. At that time, I actually thought that he was very obsequious. Once when I complained about the phrase: 'All that is, is rational', he smiled strangely and remarked, 'It could also be formulated as all that is rational must be.' Then he looked about him hastily; but he was quickly reassured, for only Heinrich Beer had heard his words.⁷³

In this exchange, it could be argued, Hegel is clearly using the term 'rational' in a normative sense (and so by implication is doing so in the *Doppelsatz*), for he seems to be saying to Heine that he believes not that the world as it *is* is right or good, but the world as it *will be*. Thus, the exchange with Heine would seem to lend support to the progressive reading of the *Doppelsatz*, that here Hegel is not endorsing the existing political order by calling it rational, but one that is yet to come. This is Hegel's response to Heine's challenge of 'obsequiousness', while the reformist outlook it implies explains his fear of being 'understood'.

Now, clearly, Hegel in this exchange is addressing a worry about his apparent conservatism and quietism. The question is, however, whether this is a worry raised by the *Doppelsatz* as a normative endorsement of what is (as on the standard reading), or the *Doppelsatz* as a statement of Hegel's anti-utopian rationalism (as on my reading)? The latter seems to me as plausible as the former, where the worry would be this. I have argued that the aim of the *Doppelsatz* is to make a methodological point: that in so far as it is rational, philosophy is not an inquiry into what merely ought to be as some unrealizable ideal, but that it reaches conclusions which engage with the real world. It is therefore a statement of Hegel's anti-utopianism, rather than a normative claim about 'the actual'. On my account, therefore, the concern Hegel is addressing in his reply to Heine is the worry that this anti-utopianism means that philosophy can only theorize about the state in line with how things are, with the result that the philosopher's position becomes 'obsequious'. In response to this worry, Hegel tries to suggest to Heine that his anti-utopianism is also consistent with a rather more radical position: for the results of his inquiry can avoid being merely ideal if they engage not just with how the world *is* but also with how it *will be*, as a matter of

⁷³ Hegel in *Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen*, Günther Nicolin (ed.) (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1970), §363, 235; Heinrich Heine, *Self-Portrait and Other Prose Writings*, F. Ewen, trans. (Secaucus: Citadel Press, 1948), 254–5 (trans. modified).

necessity. So, once again, I would argue that we can interpret Hegel's use of the term 'rational' here in a neutral sense, while explaining the exchange with Heine.

(2) I now turn to a second objection to my reading of the *Doppelsatz*, which is that I have failed to recognize its full normative weight, because I have failed to set it in the context of his 'social theodicy' or 'project of reconciliation', but instead have set it in the context of his defence of philosophical rationalism. The aim of Hegel's social theodicy, it is argued, is 'to reconcile people to the social world' by 'showing that the social world is ultimately good'.⁷⁴ Once this context is recognized, it could be argued, it becomes obvious that when Hegel uses the term 'rational' in the *Doppelsatz*, he is doing so in a normative sense, because he is hereby expressing his conviction that the social world qua actual is good in this way. So, once 'the large themes of theodicy and of the actuality of the rational'⁷⁵ are put together, it may seem indisputable that the *Doppelsatz* should be understood normatively, as asserting the fundamental goodness of the actual. Moreover, it could be argued that Hegel himself clearly makes this link between his social theodicy and the *Doppelsatz* in subsequent parts of the Preface, for example when he talks about 'the reconciliation with actuality' which comes once one is able to 'recognize the rose in the cross of the present' (*EPR*, 22 [*Werke*, VII: 26]), where this suggests that by finding that the rational is actual and the actual is rational, one will come to see goodness where before the world appeared to contain only what was wrong.

Now, clearly, my account of the *Doppelsatz* must give some explanation of this talk of 'reconciliation' in the later part of the Preface, and how this links with the *Doppelsatz*. However, I think this can be done without reading the *Doppelsatz* itself in normative terms. For, as we have seen, on my more methodological reading, Hegel's claim is that philosophy as a rational inquiry will avoid 'the setting up of a *world beyond*', so that in this sense it will prevent us yearning after some unrealizable ideal, and so will overcome our social alienation in this sense. Hegel holds that by relying on reason, rather than 'his opinion—a pliant medium in which the imagination can construct anything he pleases' (*EPR*, 22 [*Werke*, VII: 26]), the theorist will arrive at an account of the social world that relates to the here and now. So, it is by receiving the 'inner call to comprehend'—to think rationally, in accordance with the concept—that philosophy brings about 'reconciliation with actuality'; this avoids the empty utopianism which comes to those who fail to philosophize properly, where 'reason is arraigned, belittled, and condemned' (*EPR*, 18 [*Werke*, VII: 22]). Hence, Hegel confidently claims that when properly conducted, when free of 'the fetter of some abstraction or other which has not been liberated into [the form of] the concept [*zum Begriffe*]'

⁷⁴ Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy*, 20. See also Raymond Geuss, 'Art and Theodicy', in his *Morality, Culture, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 78–115.

⁷⁵ McCarney, *Hegel on History*, 214.

(*EPR*, 22 [*Werke*, VII: 26]), philosophy becomes properly this-worldly, and so can take as its motto 'Here is the rose, dance here' (*EPR*, 22 [*Werke*, VII: 26]). It is in the sense of being 'this-worldly' that Hegel speaks of philosophy as a rational exercise reconciling us to the present and leading us to 'delight' in it—not in the sense of accepting whatever political institutions we happen to have got.

To explain Hegel's talk of reconciliation in the later part of the Preface, therefore, it is not necessary to take the *Doppelsatz* itself as a statement of his social theodicy, in a way that would make it clearly normative: my methodological reading can also explain this talk of reconciliation. Moreover, I would argue that my methodological reading better fits elements that are awkward for the social theodicy reading to explain. To take a general example: On the social theodicy account, the aim is to show people through philosophy that the world is fundamentally good, where it is said that this is what the *Doppelsatz* is claiming through its identification of the rational and the actual. But Hegel himself says in the Preface that most people 'who live within the actuality of the state' recognize that they 'are able to satisfy their knowledge and volition within it' (*EPR*, 14 [*Werke*, VII: 16]), so this makes it hard to see how philosophy can help bring about reconciliation to people in general, where for Hegel they would appear to be reconciled already. It would seem, then, that it is the misguided *philosophical theorist* (and those who follow him) who suffers from alienation, where the cure is to adopt reason as his method (as on my methodological account), rather than to see what is 'actual' as 'good' rather than 'bad' (as on the social theodicy account), for it is with respect to the former rather than the latter that he makes his mistake *qua* philosopher. Secondly, to take a more specific example: Hegel says of the *Doppelsatz* that "This conviction is shared by every ingenuous consciousness as well as by philosophy" (*EPR*, 20 [*Werke*, VII: 25]). Now, here Hegel seems to be commenting on philosophy as such; but it seems curious to say that philosophy as such has a commitment to social theodicy, but much more natural to think that philosophy has a commitment to reason and rational methods, and that these methods must be used if we are to uncover the truth about the world at its most fundamental level.⁷⁶ Here again, then, what Hegel says seems to fit my methodological reading better than the social theodicy account does, and thus lends support to my neutral interpretation of the *Doppelsatz*.

⁷⁶ See *SL*, 50–1 [*Werke*, V: 44–5]: 'Anaxagoras is praised as the man who first declared that *Nous*, thought, is the principle of the world, that the essence of the world is to be defined as thought. . . . *Thought* is an expression which attributes the determination contained therein primarily to consciousness. But inasmuch as it is said that understanding, reason, is in the objective world, that mind and nature have universal laws to which their life and changes conform, then it is conceded that the determinations of thought equally have objective value and existence.'

V

For generations of commentators, the *Doppelsatz* has acted as a focus for contrasting interpretations of Hegel's position on ethical and social issues. As such, it has been treated as a one-sentence summary of Hegel's political philosophy, which is the way both the conservative and progressive readings take it. In contrast to both these accounts, my reading treats the *Doppelsatz* as more of a prefatory remark than as a summary of the political outlook propounded in the *Philosophy of Right* as a whole. That is, on my view it is simply designed to tell the reader that Hegel's approach in that work will involve a certain sort of rationalism with respect to its inquiry, where Hegel's main aim in the Preface is to defend the importance of being committed to such rationalism as a method in philosophy in general, and in political theory in particular. On my account, then, the *Doppelsatz* should no longer be seen as a summary of the political conclusions of the *Philosophy of Right*, but rather as a comment on the rationalistic spirit in which it is written, where its investigations are based on 'the development of thought and the concept', and not on 'immediate perception and contingent imagination' (*EPR*, 15 [*Werke*, VII: 18–19]), which can only take us to a superficial level, and not to a proper grasp of what is 'actual'. Hegel was perhaps correct to be puzzled by the *furor* surrounding his 'simple sentences', once (as I recommend) they come to be understood in this light.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Earlier versions of this paper were given at departmental seminars at Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Sussex; I am grateful to those who provided helpful criticisms on those occasions. I am also grateful to the following people for comments on earlier drafts: Henk de Berg, Thom Brooks, Andrew Chitty, Gordon Finlayson, Fabian Freyenhagen, Raymond Geuss, Joseph McCarney, Kristina Mussgnug-Barratt, Robert Pippin, Leif Wenar, and two anonymous referees for the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*. I would also like to acknowledge the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, for funding the research leave during which this paper was written.

PART II

HEGEL AND THE BRITISH
IDEALISTS

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4

British Hegelianism: A Non-Metaphysical View?

Of all the major episodes in Hegel's *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, British Hegelianism¹ can seem the most foreign and outmoded, and to have the least relevance to our current understanding of his thought. Even today, we are led back to the Young Hegelians for the problems they pose in reading his work; we can sympathize with the concerns of Peirce, Royce, and Dewey that drew them to Hegel, and the interpretative picture they developed; we can take seriously the attempts by Croce and Gentile to bring about their 'reforms', given our contemporary ambivalence to his project; and we can see how in different ways the influence of Hegel on Kojève, Sartre, Lukács, and the Frankfurt School have made some of his ideas central to our times. But few feel this sense of identification and illumination on encountering the work of Hegel's British interpreters from the turn of the century; rather, in their writings we seem to find a Hegel that is darker, more distant, more difficult for us to relate to contemporary concerns.

This is not true in every respect, of course. In particular, several recent commentators have stressed how far it is possible to find here a reading and assessment of Hegel's political thought that does connect directly with many current issues, and that in this respect the thought of T. H. Green, Bernard Bosanquet, and Henry Jones is not dead, either as a tradition within political philosophy, or as an interpretative approach to Hegel's theory of the state.² Nonetheless, even those who seek to defend the importance of British Hegelianism in this regard clearly recognize that this is a fairly modest claim: for it fails to resurrect and revitalize the more fundamental aspect of their encounter with Hegel, which was with his *metaphysics*—on which, as for Hegel, their political theories were based, rather than being primary in themselves. Those

¹ There is of course always some difficulty in using labels like 'British Hegelianism' (and 'British Idealism') when such groupings are inevitably ill-defined and retrospectively imposed. Nonetheless, in this paper I will leave such difficulties of classification to one side. For a general account of British Hegelianism as a 'school', see Peter Robbins, *The British Hegelians 1875–1925* (New York and London: Garland, 1982).

² See, for example, Andrew Vincent and Raymond Plant, *Philosophy, Politics and Citizenship* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), and Peter P. Nicholson, *The Political Philosophy of the British Idealists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

concerned with the political thought of the British Hegelians have not tried to take on this wider issue, leaving unchallenged the assumption that, in their appropriation of his metaphysics, they have little to offer us either interpretatively or philosophically.

On the face of it, this assumption is a natural one to make. Given what is generally known of the British Hegelians' metaphysical views—Bradley's monism, McTaggart's conception of reality as a community of selves, Green's spiritualism, Bosanquet's infinite Absolute—they seem rooted in a form of idealism that from the current perspective seems too extravagantly speculative, and which many of Hegel's more sympathetic interpreters would now dismiss as a crude simplification of his position, understood in a very limited way. In its essential outlines, this crudely simplified position is the one attributed to Hegel by Bertrand Russell in his *History of Western Philosophy*, but which today can be seen as something of a caricature, marked by the influence of Bradley, McTaggart et al. on Hegel's reception in British thought:

From his early interest in mysticism [Hegel] retained a belief in the unreality of separateness: the world, in his view, was not a collection of hard units, whether atoms or souls, each completely self-subsistent. The apparent self-subsistence of finite things appeared to him to be an illusion; nothing, he held, is ultimately and completely real except the whole. But he differed from Parmenides and Spinoza in conceiving the whole, not as a simple substance, but as a complex system, of the sort that we should call an organism. The apparently separate things of which the world seems to be composed are not simply an illusion; each has a greater or lesser degree of reality, and its reality consists in an aspect of the whole, which is what it is seen to be when viewed truly. With this view goes naturally a disbelief in the reality of time and space as such, for these, if taken as completely real, involve separateness and multiplicity. All this must have come to him first as a mystic 'insight'; its intellectual elaboration, which is given in his books, must have come later.

Hegel asserts that the real is rational, and that the rational is real. But when he says this he does not mean by 'the real' what an empiricist would mean. He admits, and even urges, that what to the empiricist appear to be facts are, and must be, irrational; it is only after their apparent character has been transformed by viewing them as aspects of the whole that they are seen to be rational. Nevertheless, the identification of the real and the rational leads unavoidably to some of the complacency inseparable from the belief that 'whatever is, is right'.

The whole, in all its complexity, is called by Hegel 'the Absolute'. The Absolute is spiritual; Spinoza's view, that it has the attribute of extension as well as that of thought, is rejected.³

³ Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, 2nd edn. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1961), 701–2. Russell's encounter with Hegel was strongly marked by the influence of several of the most important British Hegelians, who for a time even won him over to the idealist cause: see Peter Hylton, *Russell, Idealism and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), and Nicholas Griffin, *Russell's Idealist Apprenticeship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

In the interpretation that Russell offers here, it is clear that many of the views which currently would be dismissed as misreadings of Hegel may in fact be better attributed to the British Hegelians, so that their attempt to appropriate his metaphysics seems just to have had a distorting effect, and a detrimental impact on the proper understanding of his work. In claiming that Hegel was a mystic, who believed that all of reality formed a complex system, who did not believe in the actuality of space and time, who thought that ‘whatever is, is right’, and that there is a spiritual Absolute, many would now argue that Russell was mistaken—in fact, only the British Hegelians held these views, and such was their impact on the reception of Hegel in Britain, that only recently has a picture of his thought developed here that is free of their pernicious influence.

In view of this, it therefore seems clear that there is unlikely to be much in common between the more progressive contemporary views of Hegel, and those of the British Hegelians, so there can be little hope of relating their conception of Hegel to our own. For, whereas they are generally associated with one of the most speculative episodes in Hegel’s *Wirkungsgeschichte*, an important strand of contemporary scholarship has tried to distance Hegel himself from any such metaphysical extravagances, offering instead a *non-metaphysical* reading of his thought that is consciously critical of this sort of approach. This non-metaphysical reading is not without its ambiguities, but its central claims have been helpfully summarized by Michael Rosen as follows:

As I see it, ‘non-metaphysical’ interpretations of Hegel share two essential features. First, as regards the content of Hegel’s system, the ‘non-metaphysical’ interpretation claims that Hegel does not attempt to deal with objects beyond the range of sensible experience. Second, as regards its method, the ‘non-metaphysical’ interpretation denies that Hegel’s philosophy is a prioristic in the sense that Kant attacks dogmatic metaphysics for being a prioristic.⁴

Thus, leaving aside complications of emphasis and detail, the main aim of the non-metaphysical conception (to be found in the work of J. N. Findlay, Klaus Hartmann, Alan White, Terry Pinkard, and others)⁵ is to get away from

⁴ Michael Rosen, ‘From *Vorstellung* to Thought: Is a “Non-Metaphysical” View of Hegel Possible?’, in Dieter Henrich and Rolf-Peter Horstmann (eds.), *Metaphysik nach Kant?* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1988), 248–62, at 255; reprinted in Robert Stern (ed.), *G. W. F. Hegel: Critical Assessments*, 4 vols. (London: Routledge, 1993), III, 329–44, at 335.

⁵ J. N. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-examination* (New York: Collier Books, 1962); Klaus Hartmann, ‘Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View’, in Alasdair MacIntyre (ed.), *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972), 101–24; Alan White, *Absolute Knowledge: Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1983); Terry Pinkard, *Hegel’s Dialectic: The Explanation of Possibility* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988). For a useful overview of the place of this non-metaphysical conception in the tradition of Hegel-interpretation, see Thomas E. Wartenberg, ‘Hegel’s Idealism: The Logic of Conceptuality’, in Frederick C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 102–29.

the sort of Absolute-theory associated with British Hegelianism and found in the view attributed to Hegel by Russell: namely, that by a priori reasoning it is possible to show that the empirical world is in fact constituted by a higher-level spiritual absolute which is unified, self-caused and all-embracing. Instead, it is argued, Hegel's real focus was not this sort of metaphysics, but *ontology*: that is, his goal was to delimit those categories that can provide us with a coherent conception of the world (including ourselves), whilst thereby avoiding any Kantian strictures against rationalistic metaphysics. On this view, therefore, Hegel's project was to show that there are certain fundamental categories that must be used to gain a fully coherent conception of what is, as otherwise it is impossible to provide a proper characterization of reality without generating unresolvable dialectical *aporiai*: but nothing in this project is meant to lead to the sort of metaphysical Absolute-theory indulged in by the British Hegelians.

Of all the partisans of this more recent approach, J. N. Findlay is the clearest in contrasting the position of the British Hegelians with that of the non-metaphysical interpretation:

That any other impression of Hegel's doctrine should be current is due, in part, to Hegel's studied conciliation of religion, whose basic principles he regarded (without absurdity) as one with those of his own philosophy. It is due also, particularly in our Anglo-Saxon world, to a confusion between the doctrines of those who learnt much from Hegel, and those who were often called 'Hegelians', and the doctrine of Hegel himself. It was Bradley, and not Hegel, who believed in some Absolute Experience within which the objects of our ordinary human experience would be unbelievably fused and transformed, in which ordinary categories would be done away with without being replaced by anything *we* can hope to understand, and concerning which we certainly do not have the 'Absolute Knowing' which Hegel thinks that we have of the Absolute, and which is, in fact, for him, identical with the Absolute's own knowledge of itself. And it was McTaggart, not Hegel, who made the Absolute into a timeless fellowship of spirits, curiously but not incorrigibly deceived into seeing themselves and their own activities as in time. The un-Hegelian character of these systems is shown too, by their imperfect use of Hegel's dialectical methods: they make use of contradictions to abolish the world of appearance and the notions of ordinary life, and then pass to a realm of truth and reality in which 'all this is altered': in Hegel, however, the apparent and false are *retained* in his final result, whose content is, in fact, no more than the clearer understanding of the process which has led up to the result itself. These systems are likewise differentiated from Hegel's by their doctrine of an unlimited 'coherence', of 'internal relations' between everything and everything else: as opposed to this Hegel accords a dishonourable place to unresolved *contingency* 'on the surface of nature', and to *indeterminacy* in the caprices of the will. References to the 'Universe', the 'Whole', are likewise as rare in Hegel as they are frequent in the philosophers just mentioned. What we have said must not be construed as casting scorn on the metaphysicians in question or on transcendent metaphysicians in general. Hegel, however, is not to be numbered

among them, and must be praised or condemned for his own doctrines and not for those of others.⁶

Here, then, we have the case put against the British Hegelians at its most stark: that once it is seen that they were wrong to claim to be following Hegel in proposing their own metaphysical systems (in both of Rosen's senses), then it is possible to uncover a proper non-metaphysical conception of Hegel's works, which will render their reading redundant, an aberration to which it would now be folly to return.

Of all Hegel's works, the one that has been most fruitfully reassessed in the light of this new approach is his *Logic*, which is now no longer read Platonistically, as according metaphysical priority to some rational order of concepts, but rather as providing a critical conceptual analysis of the categories that are used in thinking about reality. Thus, faced with the widespread and prima facie plausible view that the British Hegelians were wholly metaphysical in their outlook, it may seem perverse to claim that in fact they came to hold perhaps the first and most sophisticated *non*-metaphysical reading of the *Logic* to be found in the history of Hegel's interpretation: but this is the claim I wish to make. I will argue that while it may be true that in their own work, the British Hegelians were often inclined to adopt a strongly metaphysical conception of certain central Hegelian notions (such as Spirit), nonetheless for important historical reasons to do with Hegel's *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, they came to view the *Logic* as a kind of category-theory, thereby anticipating the non-metaphysical approach to this work that is so much in vogue. Thus, in the reception of Hegel by the British Hegelians—and here I will primarily focus on F. H. Bradley and J. M. E. McTaggart—there developed a reading of the *Logic* that takes an approach very close to the one many contemporary interpreters would now adopt, so that instead of treating their view of Hegel as wholly outmoded and defunct, we should perhaps acknowledge that in this respect it is an important precursor of our own.

In order to make my claim here plausible, it is necessary to begin by setting out the background to the reception of Hegel by the British Hegelians. I will argue that in reaction to the dominant nineteenth-century reading of Hegel's *Logic*, which took a thoroughly metaphysical line, by the turn of the century in Britain a strongly non-metaphysical interpretation had begun to emerge, and

⁶ Findlay, *Hegel*, 17–18. In general, recent Hegel scholarship has followed Findlay in seeing little value in the interpretative efforts of the British Hegelians; the attitude to McTaggart (for example) has been summarized as follows:

His acquaintance with Hegel's writings was like the chapter-and-verse knowledge of the Bible that out-of-the-way Protestant sectarians often have; the unanimous judgement of Hegelian experts appears to be that McTaggart's interpretations of Hegel were as perverse as these sectarians' interpretation of the Bible. (P. T. Geach, *Truth, Love and Immortality: An Introduction to McTaggart's Philosophy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), 17)

that this was most fully elaborated in the work of McTaggart. I will try to show that the pressure that led McTaggart and others to push for this more moderate interpretation was in fact remarkably similar to the pressure that has led to the rise of non-metaphysical approaches in our own time: namely, a desire to save Hegel from a kind of pre-Kantian conception of the Idea as an absolute, that can act as a self-determining ground for being. Thus, instead of representing a thoroughly obsolete approach to his work (as Findlay and others believe), I claim that the British Hegelians' conception of Hegel may be seen to parallel our contemporary developments in a remarkable and significant way: far from being alien, they are here closer to current interpretative thinking than has previously been imagined.

I

Writing in 1882, William James, like many subsequent commentators, had come to marvel at the growing influence of Hegel within Anglo-American philosophy in this period. To James, it seemed quite remarkable that at a time when 'Hegelianism' was 'entirely defunct on its native soil', nonetheless 'it has found among us so zealous and able a set of propagandists that today it may really be reckoned one of the most potent influences of the time in the higher walks of thought'.⁷ Like many observers, James accounts for this turn to Hegel by interpreting it as a reaction against empiricism, based on the growing need for a rationalist, transcendent metaphysics, as 'a sword wherewith to smite the three-headed monster of anarchy in politics, traditionalism in religion and naturalism in science'.⁸ Thus, James' observations appear to give credence to a widespread and popular view: that because Hegel's disciples in Britain (and America) at the turn of the century were largely oblivious to the sustained critique of his thought that had taken place in Germany, they found it possible to resurrect a form of Right Hegelianism at just the time when this critique had made such a position 'defunct' on the Continent.

Now, as a first step in my revisionary account of the British Hegelians' position on Hegel, I want to begin by challenging the assumption behind this view. That

⁷ William James, 'On Some Hegelisms', *Mind*, os 7 (1882), 186–208, at 186. More recently (and more soberly) Anthony Quinton has drawn the same contrast:

In Germany by the 1840s the Hegelian school had disintegrated. By the mid 1860s it was alive only as a style in the history of philosophy, as practiced by Erdmann, Zeller and Kuno Fischer. In 1865, the year of Stirling's excited welcome to Hegel, Liebmann was issuing the call of 'back to Kant' which was to be the slogan of academic philosophizing in Germany until well after the end of the century. (Anthony Quinton, 'Absolute Idealism', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 57 (1971), 303–29, at 318)

⁸ J. H. Muirhead, *The Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin/New York: Macmillan, 1931), 322.

is, I want to argue that they did not come to Hegel naively, unaware of the sharp divisions and controversies that had surrounded the discussion of Hegel's project from the 1830s onwards. Rather, I will claim, they were fully aware that Hegelianism had been under sustained critical attack in Germany, and that his ideas had been repudiated on many fronts, but particularly as a form of precritical theological idealism. It is this awareness, and the need to rethink Hegel's position in the light of these attacks, which in fact *saved* British Hegelianism from any kind of simple-minded Right Hegelianism as it developed, and which gives the lie to James's suggestion that they must have been unaware that this orthodoxy had been challenged, in order to embrace Hegel so warmly.

That the British Hegelians were far from cut off from the critique of Hegelianism in Germany can be seen by the speed with which this critique was echoed in Britain, once Hegel began to have any impact in this country at all. Although his work had received some attention in the writings of William Hamilton, J. F. Ferrier, G. H. Lewes, and others, it was not until J. H. Stirling's *The Secret of Hegel* (1865) that Hegel's thought began to have any influence in Britain.⁹ In this first major British study, Stirling was prepared to defend Hegel as a metaphysical idealist and panlogist, for whom 'organic Reason [is] a self-supported, self-maintained, self-moved life, which is the all of things, the ultimate principle, the Absolute'.¹⁰ 'Reason, then, is evidently the principle of the whole, the Absolute, for it is Itself and the Other'—this is proclaimed as Hegel's 'secret'.¹¹ What is remarkable, however, is that the unquestioning acceptance of such 'rational mysticism' (to use Feuerbach's phrase)¹² did not last long; in fact, it was quickly subject to criticisms that echoed those that were put forward by Hegel's opponents in Germany from the 1830s onwards.

In outline, the main focus of these criticisms was Hegel's idealistic rationalism, according to which 'thought constitutes the substance of external things', and the world is structured by reason.¹³ Against what they perceived as a return to Platonism, the Left Hegelians (like Feuerbach and Marx) reasserted a form of nominalistic materialism, by arguing that the universe is not grounded in thought, and that universals and ideas are merely concepts we employ, without any independent or more fundamental reality. This nominalistic critique of Hegel's idealism is significant not just because it signals a return to materialism in metaphysics, but also because it is part of the broader revolt against Hegel's

⁹ For a helpful outline of Hegel's reception in Britain, see James Bradley, 'Hegel in Britain: A Brief History of British Commentary and Attitudes', *Heythrop Journal*, 20 (1979), 1–24, 163–82.

¹⁰ J. H. Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel*, 2 vols, 2nd edn. (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1898), I, 96; partially reprinted in Stern (ed.), *Critical Assessments* (1993), I, 298–314, at 312.

¹¹ Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel*, I, 95; reprinted in Stern (ed.), *Critical Assessments*, I, 311.

¹² Ludwig Feuerbach 'Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy', trans. Zavar Hanfi in Lawrence S. Stepelevich (ed.), *The Young Hegelians: An Anthology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 95–128, at 121.

¹³ Hegel *EL*, §24Z, 57 [*Werke*, VIII: 82]; trans. modified.

alleged panlogism which marks the origins of existentialism: for in denying that thought and being could be identified, Hegel's critics sought to reassert the traditional distinction between essence and existence, and to claim that because reason deals in the latter *qua* universals or concepts, the 'immemorial That' of being cannot be deduced in thought.

The origins of this position, and with it the existentialist critique of Hegel, can be traced back to the later thought of Schelling, whose work (along with the related criticisms of F. A. Trendelenburg, Rudolph Haym, and others) had a much more immediate impact than the Left Hegelians on the decline in Hegel's standing in academic circles.¹⁴ From around 1809 onwards, Schelling began to turn against the kind of speculative idealism with which he, as well as Fichte and Hegel, had previously been associated.¹⁵ He described this idealism as 'negative philosophy', which is confined to concepts or essences, but unable to explain being or existence; it is precisely this question of existence that his own 'positive philosophy' set out to raise, by showing how Hegel's rationalistic metaphysics had failed to answer it. Schelling's central claim is that Hegel's idealism fails to explain being or existence, because it is unable to show how thought gives rise to being, how the universe comes to be created out of the Absolute Idea. He argues that Hegel tried to get over this difficulty in making the transition from Logic to Nature in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, but Schelling dismisses this as an implausible piece of speculative cosmology whose failure simply serves to highlight the gap between essence and existence which idealism cannot bridge.

In stressing Hegel's inability to derive the existence of nature from the Idea, Schelling was in part returning to the traditional Christian doctrine, that far from being necessary, the creation of the world is the result of a mysterious exercise of will on the part of God. Thus Schelling's critique also raises doubts about Hegel's rationalism: for, he claims, Hegel is mistaken in believing that the question 'why does anything exist at all? why is there not rather nothing?' can be answered by human reason.¹⁶ Schelling argues that once the gap between essence and existence is acknowledged, then it will be seen that no explanation for being has actually been given in Hegel's system, so that it remains a sheer contingency for us, a fact which reason cannot explain:

¹⁴ For a discussion of how German academic philosophy moved away from Hegel in the 1830s, cf. Klaus Christian Köhnke, *The Rise of Neo-Kantianism: German Academic Philosophy Between Idealism and Positivism*, trans. R. G. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹⁵ For a more detailed account of Schelling's critique of Hegel, see Manfred Frank, *Der unendliche Mangel an Sein: Schellings Hegelkritik und die Anfänge der Marxischen Dialektik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1975); Walter Schulz, *Die Vollendung des Deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1975); White, *Absolute Knowledge*; and Andrew Bowie, 'The Actuality of Schelling's Hegel-critique', *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*, 21/22 (1990), 19–29, and *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1993), 127–77.

¹⁶ F. W. J. Schelling, *Die Philosophie der Offenbarung*, in *Schellings Werke*, ed. Manfred Schröter, 13 vols (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1927–59), 6th supp. vol., 242.

As far as this constantly repeated conception is concerned, it might be admitted that everything is in the logical Idea, and indeed in *such* a way that it could not be outside it, because what is senseless really cannot ever exist anywhere. But in this way what is logical also presents itself as the merely negative aspect of existence, as that *without* which nothing could exist, from which, however, it by no means follows that everything only exists *via* what is logical. Everything can be in the logical Idea without anything being *explained* thereby, as, for example, everything in the sensuous world is grasped in number and measure, which does not therefore mean that geometry or arithmetic explain the sensuous world. The whole world lies, so to speak, in the nets of the understanding or of reason, but the question is *how* exactly it got into those nets, as there is obviously something other and something *more* than mere reason in the world, indeed there is something which strives beyond these barriers.¹⁷

Schelling's claim here is that whether a thing is real or not is not implied in its essence: we therefore cannot deduce its existence from thought alone, not even in the case of an absolute being like God. Thus, whereas Hegel defends the ontological argument,¹⁸ Schelling attacks it, as showing nothing more than that *if* God exists, then he exists necessarily, 'but it does not at all follow *that* he exists'.¹⁹

To Schelling, and those who shared his views on the Hegelian Left,²⁰ the question of existence therefore appeared to mark the limits of Hegel's rationalistic

¹⁷ F. W. J. Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, trans. Andrew Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 147; partially repr. in Stern (ed.), *Critical Assessments*, I, 40–67, at 52.

¹⁸ 'God has to be expressly that which can only be "thought as existing", where the Concept includes *being* within itself. It is the unity of the Concept and of being that constitutes the concept of God' (Hegel *EL*, §51, 99 [*Werke*, VIII: 136]). Hegel gives a more extended discussion of this issue in *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, trans. E. B. Speirs and J. Burdon Sanderson, 3 vols., repr. edn. (New York: Humanities Press, 1974), vol. 3, 155–367 [*Werke*, XVI: 347–535].

¹⁹ Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, 50. This hostility to the ontological argument is also shared by Kierkegaard, and for similar reasons: see Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments or a Fragment of Philosophy*, trans. D. F. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), 29–39. For a discussion of Schelling's influence on Kierkegaard, see Niels Thulstrup, *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel*, trans. George L. Stengren (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 267–74.

²⁰ Cf. Ludwig Feuerbach, *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Manfred Voegel (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), 38–9:

The identity of thought and being that is the central point of the philosophy of identity is nothing other than the necessary consequence and elaboration of the notion of God as the being whose notion or essence contains existence. Speculative philosophy has only generalized and made into an attribute of thought or of the notion in general what theology made into an exclusive attribute of the notion of God. The identity of thought and being is therefore only the expression of the divinity of reason—that thought or reason is the absolute being, the total of all truth and reality, that there is nothing in contrast to reason, rather that reason is everything just as God is, in strict theology, everything, that is, all essential and true being. But a being that is not distinguished from thought and that is only a predicate or determination of reason is only an ideated and abstracted being; but in truth it is not being. The identity of thought and being expresses, therefore, only the identity of thought with itself; that means that absolute thought never extricates itself from itself to become being. Being remains in another world. Absolute philosophy has indeed transformed for us

idealism. Hegel was understood to have shared the dream of seventeenth-century rationalism, of finding an adequate explanation for the existence of the world, by returning to some form of Neoplatonic idealism, which treats the Idea as a first cause.²¹ Hegel was accused of supposing that we can treat our concepts as forming an unconditioned originating source for being itself, as if these concepts (the categories) were metaphysically absolute and could somehow posit their own instantiation. However, Hegel's critics argued that once the distinction between understanding and intuition, thought and being, is recognized, then it is clear that as discursive intellects we cannot assume that from the concepts we use in thinking about the universe, we can somehow account for its existence.

The primary source for this view was Kant, whose distinction between the discursive and intuitive intellects is elaborated in the *Critique of Judgment*, and is based on his general picture of how the human mind operates, as presented in the First Critique. There, Kant had famously insisted that for us, knowledge requires both conceptual thought (the understanding) *and* a sensible given (intuition).²² On this basis he argues that the human mind is discursive, in that it must rely on the presentations of experience before it can apply concepts in the determination of particulars. By contrast, for an intuitive intellect, the understanding and sensuous intuition are not distinct, so that for such an intellect 'all objects that [it knows] would *be* (exist), and the possibility of some that did not exist, i.e. their contingency if they did exist, as well as the necessity that is to be distinguished from that, would not enter into the representation of such a being at all'.²³ Thus, it seems, only by confusing our position with that of an intuitive intellect could Hegel have believed that being could be determined by thought or that the Idea could be absolute.²⁴ No concept can be formed by us (not even the Idea, or the concept of 'something than which nothing greater can be conceived') which can possibly be such as to determine its actual embodiment: we therefore cannot find a rationally satisfying terminus to explain existence in thought, and Hegel's Neoplatonic project must fail.

Now, this existentialist and Left Hegelian critique dominated the interpretation of Hegel's metaphysics in Germany from the 1830s onwards; and its influence

the other world of theology into this world, but in turn it has transformed for us this side of the real world into the other world.

²¹ Cf. Hegel's notorious remark that 'It can therefore be said that this content [of the Logic] is the expression of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and a finite mind' (Hegel, *SL*, 50 [*Werke*, V: 4]).

²² 'Without sensibility no object could be given to us, without understanding no object could be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind' (Kant *CPR* A51/B75).

²³ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), §76, 273 [*Ak* 5: 403].

²⁴ For a recent interpretation of Hegel that endorses this critique, see Paul Guyer, 'Thought and Being: Hegel's Critique of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy', in Frederick C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 171–210.

meant that by 1865, it would have been difficult for anyone there to have shared Stirling's apparently unquestioning and exuberant enthusiasm for Hegel, particularly his full and unreserved endorsement of Hegel's 'literal' and 'serious' idealism, which for Stirling consisted in the doctrine that 'if thought is what is, then all is reducible to thought, and logic is the name of the whole'.²⁵ Thus, at a time when Hegel's remaining sympathizers in Germany (such as Karl Rosenkranz) were seeking to make his position appear more moderate, and less open to the accusation of panlogistic idealism,²⁶ the seemingly backward-looking nature of Hegelianism in Britain is revealed by Stirling's naive approval for all that was elsewhere viewed as so questionable in Hegel's thought.

However, if it is true to say that Stirling's work on Hegel remained largely untouched by such anxieties,²⁷ and if in this first phase of Hegel's reception in Britain a strongly metaphysical approach was adopted as unproblematic, this uncritical calm was very quickly disturbed. Indeed, it is remarkable that despite being received into an intellectual climate that was increasingly hostile to materialism, positivism, and empiricism, Hegel's idealism was nonetheless quickly subject to attack in Britain, on grounds very similar to those put forward in the middle of the nineteenth century by Schelling and the Left Hegelians. As a result, by the time British Hegelianism proper had begun to emerge, it was not possible for Bradley, McTaggart et al. to ignore the critique that Hegel's thought had undergone in Germany, and instead (unlike Stirling) their reception of Hegel was shaped by it; and in this way (I shall argue) McTaggart and others came to see that a *non*-metaphysical (category) reading of Hegel's position was possible.

The person perhaps most responsible for making the British Hegelians aware of the Schellingian and Left Hegelian critique was Andrew Seth,²⁸ who held the chair of logic and philosophy at Cardiff (1883–7), then of logic, rhetoric and metaphysics at St Andrews (1887–91) and finally of logic and metaphysics at Edinburgh (1891–1919). Although in his earlier writings Seth had spoken approvingly of Hegel, from the mid-1880s onwards he became more

²⁵ Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel*, vol. 2, 599, 678.

²⁶ Cf. Karl Rosenkranz, *Hegel als deutscher Nationalphilosoph* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1870), 119–42; partially translated in Stern (ed.), *Critical Assessment*, vol. 1, 279–98. Rosenkranz's position can be gauged from the following remark: 'Hegelians misunderstand Hegel when they behave as if in all philosophy only logic were ultimately concerned, of which nature and mind properly are only superfluous translations' (Stern (ed.), *Critical Assessments*, vol. 1, 281–2).

²⁷ In fact, Stirling (who had studied in Germany for a year in 1856) was not unaware of the critique of Hegel mounted by Schelling, Haym, and Trendelenburg, and addresses them in *The Secret*. In general, he seems to have felt that although the Hegelian cause had been set back in Germany as a result of these criticisms, it was due for a revival there, as the rise of Kantianism would inevitably lead German thought to make the transition from subjective to objective idealism, and thus to Hegel. See Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel*, vol. 1, xxviii–xxx. Later, in view of Schelling's growing influence, Stirling clearly felt obliged to respond to this critique at greater length, in J. H. Stirling, *What is Thought?* (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1900).

²⁸ In 1898, Seth changed his name to Pringle-Pattison, as a condition for succeeding to an estate.

hostile, making his misgivings most clear in 1887 with the publication of the second series of Balfour Philosophical Lectures, under the title *Hegelianism and Personality*. In this critical discussion of Hegel's work, he was clearly influenced by Schelling, as well as by Trendelenburg, Haym, and R. H. Lotze.²⁹ His central objection was to Hegel's idealistic rationalism, which he condemned in a now familiar manner: Hegel wrongly begins by treating the Idea as ontologically primary, and so tries 'to construct the world out of abstract thought or mere universals', whereas in fact 'thought cannot make [the real]; thought only describes what it finds'.³⁰ Seth therefore agrees with Schelling³¹ that Hegel fails to bring off the transition from Logic to Nature, which Seth interprets in creationist terms, arguing that 'Hegel's whole account of nature is that it is a reflection or realization of the abstract categories of the Logic. If the reality of natural things consists only in this, then creative agency must be attributed, more or less explicitly, to the thought determinations'.³² Echoing the Left Hegelian critique, Seth insists that this deduction of existence from essence cannot be achieved, and that 'real things are not the shadows of intellectual conceptions, but intellectual conceptions are themselves shadows of a real world'.³³

It has been observed that 'no subsequent Hegel commentator of the period could ignore the doubts to which Seth had first given voice'.³⁴ The main and most important effect of *Hegelianism and Personality* was that it became impossible to treat the views of Hegel's critics with any complacency, as Stirling had done; and as a result, it became necessary to find an alternative way of reading his work, which did not leave Hegel open to these attacks. In this way, the British Hegelians moved away from the dominant nineteenth-century reading of Hegel as a Neoplatonic idealist, and towards a position that greatly resembles the form of category-theory made popular today by Findlay, Hartmann, Pinkard, and others: that is, they moved towards a non-metaphysical view.

In an article of 1894, Seth himself remarked on the 'change of front' that had taken place amongst Hegel's supporters, in that now they sought to distance Hegel from the kind of panlogistic idealism with which he had previously been associated by Stirling and others.³⁵ Thus, for example, writing in response to Seth, Henry Jones says that while he 'would be loath to assert that Idealists have at no time given colour to the charge that they have confused the distinction

²⁹ For some comments on Lotze's influence on British Hegel-reception, see my introduction to Stern (ed.), *Critical Assessments*, vol. 2, 2–3.

³⁰ Andrew Seth, *Hegelianism and Personality* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1887), 111, 118; partially repr. in Stern (ed.), *Critical Assessments*, vol. II, 20–40, at 24 and 26.

³¹ Seth refers approvingly to Schelling on p. 107 of Seth, *Hegelianism and Personality*; reprinted in Stern (ed.), *Critical Assessments*, vol. 2, 22.

³² Seth, *Hegelianism and Personality*, 115; repr. in Stern (ed.), *Critical Assessments*, vol. 2, 25.

³³ Seth, *Hegelianism and Personality*, 147; repr. in Stern (ed.), *Critical Assessments*, vol. 2, 38.

³⁴ James Bradley, 'Hegel in Britain', 166.

³⁵ Andrew Seth, 'Hegelianism and Its Critics', *Mind*, ns.3 (1894), 1–25, at 14.

between knowledge and reality in one or other of its various aspects',³⁶ he nonetheless declares:

For Hegelians and Neo-Hegelians there are no general ideas which do not perish in the making. There are no categories in this sense, no thoughts which bind other thoughts to one another. There is no world of knowledge in the heavens above, or on the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Their universe is mind, not thoughts. Their categories are laws of the operations of intelligence, not connecting ideas. Their problem is to understand reality, to discover the nature of the fundamental principle of which all existences are revelations, not to constitute a theory of a world of abstract notions.³⁷

Similarly, in an influential article written a few years earlier, D. G. Ritchie also argued against Seth's critical interpretation, claiming that it overemphasized Hegel's apparent anti-materialism and anti-empiricism, leading to a crude and distorted view of his idealism. In fact, Ritchie claimed, although Hegel 'was influenced . . . by the Neoplatonic idea of Emanation', it is wrong to read him exclusively in this light; in fact, we should 'read Hegel backwards', taking nature and mind as given, rather than attempting to deduce them from the Idea. Viewed in this way, Ritchie suggests, it can be seen that Hegel does not have to be treated as a speculative cosmologist; rather, 'we [will] find that his logic and the whole of his philosophy consist in this perpetual "criticism of categories", i.e. in an analysis of the terms and concepts which ordinary thinking and the various special sciences use as current coin without testing their real value'.³⁸

Now, in fact, although greater impetus was given to this form of category-theorist interpretation by Seth's criticisms, and although only after *Hegelianism and Personality* did this approach distinguish itself clearly from the more orthodox idealist view, nevertheless even prior to 1887 there were those who sought to downplay the apparently aprioristic and Neoplatonic intentions of Hegel's metaphysics, and of his *Logic* in particular. Thus, for example, we find Edward Caird writing in 1883:

This doctrine, that we need only cast aside all presuppositions, and take the world as it is, to find intelligence in it, is what Hegel attempts to prove in his 'Logic'. Commonly that 'Logic' is supposed to be the groundwork of something quite different,—for an attempt to construct nature *a priori*, and without reference to facts and experience. Now it is true

³⁶ Henry Jones, 'Idealism and Epistemology', *Mind*, ns2 (1893), 289–306, 457–72, at 294.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 302. For a recent discussion of Jones's dispute with Seth, and of Jones's philosophy as a whole, see David Boucher and Andrew Vincent, *A Radical Hegelian: The Political and Social Philosophy of Henry Jones* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993), especially ch. 2.

³⁸ D. G. Ritchie, 'Darwin and Hegel', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1 (1890–91), 55–74, at 61; repr. in Stern (ed.), *Critical Assessments*, vol. 2, 41–59, at 46. Cf. Hegel *SL*, 37 [*Werke*, V: 27]: As impulses [*als Triebe*] the categories are only instinctively active. At first they enter consciousness separately and so are variable and mutually confusing; consequently they afford to mind only a fragmentary and uncertain actuality; the loftier business of logic therefore is to clarify [*zu reinigen*] these categories and in them raise mind to freedom and truth.

that Hegel does there treat of the categories by which nature is made intelligible apart from the process of their application. This, however, is not because he is unaware that it is in the struggle to interpret experience that the intelligence is made conscious of its own forms.³⁹

Perhaps under Caird's influence, and prior to his conversion into a critic, and his acceptance of the traditional portrayal of Hegel as a Neoplatonic idealist, it is striking to find that Seth also took this more moderate line, both in his article 'Hegel: An Exposition and Criticism' (1881) and his essay 'Philosophy as Criticism of Categories' (1883). In the former, he explicitly tries to offer a reading that will avoid the accusation that Hegel wanted to deduce the existence of nature *a priori*, as Seth was later to claim himself:

The transition from logic to the realm of nature has always been a favourite point with assailants of Hegelianism. This is partly owing to Hegel's own phraseology and the appearance of *a priori* deduction which he gives to everything he touches; partly to the misconceptions of others as to what his system, or philosophy in general, could yield them. . . . In reality the necessity for such a transition is purely factitious, because the notions never existed otherwise than in Nature and Spirit. They are the Absolute, because they form the common basis of Nature and Spirit, and their treatment apart was a merely ideal separation. They were got by abstraction from the concrete, not out of the air by any *a priori* method. We owe, therefore, no apology for a return to the reality from which we took them.⁴⁰

In 'Philosophy as Criticism of Categories', although Seth does not mention Hegel by name, he takes a distinctively Hegelian line in criticizing Kant for never subjecting his list of categories to sufficient analysis, and echoes Hegel in arguing that philosophy should examine the concepts used by ordinary understanding and empirical science, to test their adequacy and coherence as forms of thought, and check against their misuse.⁴¹ He suggests that this,

³⁹ Edward Caird, *Hegel* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1883), 157–8.

⁴⁰ Andrew Seth, 'Hegel: An Exposition and Criticism', *Mind*, os. 6 (1881), 513–30, at 522.

⁴¹ Knowledge is not a collection of facts known as such once for all, and to which we afterwards add other facts, extending our knowledge as we might extend an estate by adding acre to acre. This is not a true picture of the march of knowledge. On the contrary, every advance of science is a partial refutation of what we supposed we knew; we undertake in every new scientific theory a criticism and rectification of the conceptions on which the old was constructed. On the largest scale the advance of knowledge is neither more nor less than a progressive criticism of its own conceptions. And, as we have seen, this is not all. Besides the continual self-criticism carried on by the individual sciences, there is the criticism which one science or department of inquiry passes upon another. The science of life cannot move hand or foot without the category of development, which in its biological acceptance is foreign to the inorganic world; and the science of conduct is founded upon the notion of duty, of which the whole world of nature knows nothing. But so long as this mutual criticism is left in the hands of the separate sciences themselves, it tends to degenerate into a strife in which there is no umpire. Philosophy, as theory of knowledge, can alone arbitrate between the combatants, by showing the relation of the different points of view to one another, and allowing to each a sphere of relative justification. When physical science, for example, begins to formulate its own results and to put them forward as an adequate theory of the universe, it is for philosophy to

rather than the 'elaboration of transcendent entities' is the real goal and task of philosophy; he therefore envisages a form of category-theory which would be very close to the current non-metaphysical approach, and which seems clearly inspired by his reading of Hegel. However, by the time of *Hegelianism and Personality*, his view of Hegel had clearly changed: although he still acknowledges that 'Hegel's analysis and systematisation of the categories is therefore of the highest importance both for science and for a sound philosophy', Hegel was led astray into a more 'extravagant' panlogicism by aiming at presuppositionlessness, with the result that 'in the exposition of his system, Hegel has suppressed the reference to experience', and so becomes an aprioristic idealist.⁴²

Once Seth himself had come round to this critical position, however, some of the British Hegelians clearly felt it necessary to show how in fact his earlier approach could be defended, and that it remained possible to interpret Hegel as a non-metaphysical category-theorist. Now, it would be puzzling to find the British Hegelians mounting this defence, if they themselves had been inclined to treat the Idea as absolute on Neoplatonic lines; but, as we shall now see, it was in fact one of the defining features of their position that this option was rejected, so that any positive acceptance of Hegel required them to reinterpret this aspect of his idealism in non-metaphysical terms. This important feature of Hegel's reception in Britain is reflected clearly in the work of Bradley and McTaggart.

II

That Bradley and McTaggart found it impossible simply to accept the Idea as absolute, and with it any form of panlogicistic Hegelianism, can be explained by the fact that they clearly accepted the truth of an important element in the Schellingian critique as presented here: namely, they rejected the claim that being could be deduced from thought as something in itself wholly self-explanatory, as they acknowledged that while it might possibly be different for an intuitive

step in and show how these results depend entirely upon preconceptions drawn from a certain stage of knowledge and found to be refuted in the further progress of thought. Philosophy in the capacity of a science of thought should possess a complete survey of its categories and of their dialectical connection; but this 'Wissenschaft der Logik' will probably never be completely written. In the meantime it is perhaps better if philosophy, as critic of the sciences, is content to derive its matter from them and to prophesy in part. (Andrew Seth, 'Philosophy as Criticism of Categories', in Andrew Seth and R. B. Haldane (eds.), *Essays in Philosophical Criticism* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1883), 8–40, at 38–9)

This passage echoes several central claims made by Hegel, and ones that are often taken to be particularly important for the category-theory interpretation: cf. Hegel *EL*, §§9–12, and Hegel *EN*, §246.

⁴² Seth, *Hegelianism and Personality*, 88–90.

intellect, the separation of intuition and thought is a basic feature of our discursive minds. Bradley emphasizes this latter fact quite explicitly:

For the sake of clearness let me begin by mentioning some things in which I do *not* believe. I do not believe in any knowledge which is independent of feeling and sensation. On sensation and feeling I am sure that we depend for the material of our knowledge. And as to the facts of perception, I am convinced that (to speak broadly) we cannot anticipate them or even become independent of that which they give to us. And these facts of perception, I further agree, are at least in part irrational, so far as in detail is visible. I do not believe that we can make ourselves independent of these non-rational data Our intelligence cannot construct the world of perceptions and feelings, and it depends on what is given—to so much I assent.⁴³

Likewise, McTaggart acknowledges that for us, thought alone cannot determine being, but must rely on perception to relate its concepts to the world:

. . . thought is only mediation, and must therefore exist in conjunction with something immediate on which to act. If nothing existed but thought itself, still the fact of its existence must be in the long run immediately given, and one for which thought alone cannot account. This immediacy is the mark of the element which is essential to experience and irreducible to thought.⁴⁴

Thus, both Bradley and McTaggart insist that we must take the ‘What’ and the ‘That’ to be independent, and that unless something is given to us in experience, we cannot in any way deduce its existence from a concept we may form of it, so that no concept can be absolute in this sense. As a result, neither Bradley nor McTaggart were able to endorse the essentialist paradigm that is rightly said to lie behind the Neoplatonic reading of Hegel.

However, it is important to notice a significant difference in emphasis between them, despite this similarity. In Bradley’s case, he seems to have believed

⁴³ F. H. Bradley, ‘On Truth and Coherence’, in his *Essays on Truth and Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914), 202–18, at 203.

⁴⁴ J. T. E. McTaggart, ‘The Changes of Method in Hegel’s Dialectic’, *Mind*, ns.1 (1892), 56–71, 188–205, 199–200; repr. in Stern (ed.) *Critical Assessments*, vol. 2, 60–88, at 83. A corresponding passage can also be found in McTaggart *Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 207–8. See also *ibid.*, 17:

The consideration of pure thought, without any reference to experience, would be absolutely sterile, or rather impossible. For we are as unable to employ ‘empty’ pure thought (to borrow Kant’s phrase) as to employ ‘blind’ intuition. Thought is a process of mediation and relation, and implies something immediate to be related, which cannot be found in thought. Even if a stage of thought could be conceived as existing, in which it was self-subsistent, and in which it had no reference to any *data*—and it is impossible to imagine such a state, or to give any reason for supposing thought thus to change its essential nature—at any rate this is not the ordinary thought of common life. And as the dialectic process professes to start from a basis common to every one, so as to enable it to claim universal validity for its conclusions, it is certain that it will be necessary for thought, in the dialectic process, to have some relation to *data* given immediately, and independent of that thought itself. Even if the dialectic should finally transcend this condition it would have at the start to take thought as we use it in every-day life—as merely mediating, and not self-subsistent. And I shall try to show later on that it never does transcend, or try to transcend that limitation.

that in stressing the role of intuition, he was breaking from Hegel—and his commentators have usually agreed,⁴⁵ arguing that there emerges here an essential strand of empiricism, an emphasis on the non-conceptual nature of reality, that is at odds with Hegel's essentialism and Platonic rationalism. This can be seen clearly in the well-known passage at the end of Bradley's *Principles of Logic*, where Bradley can be shown to be distancing himself from orthodox Hegelianism on these grounds:

But what is it guarantees this presumed identity of truth and fact? We have an instinct, no doubt, that leads us to believe in it, but our instincts, if they can not be in error, may at least be mistranslated and misunderstood. And here we seem placed between rival promptings, that contend for mastery over our reason. It is an old preconception that reality and truth must contain that same movement of a single content that, by itself not intellectual, then doubles itself in the glass of reflection. On the other hand, it is a certain result that our intellect and the movement of our intellect's content is abstract and discursive, a mere essence distilled from our senses' abundance. And this certainty has inspired the opposite conclusion . . .

In the face of these promptings, I must venture to doubt whether *both* have not branched from one stem of deceit, whether truth, if that stands for the work of the intellect, is ever precisely identical with fact, or claims in the end to possess such identity . . . Unless thought stands for something that falls beyond mere intelligence, if 'thinking' is not used with some strange implication that never was part of the meaning of the word, a lingering scruple still forbids us to believe that reality can ever be purely rational. It may come from a failure in my metaphysics, or from a weakness of flesh which continues to bind me, but the notion that existence could be the same as understanding strikes as cold and ghost-like as the dreariest materialism. That the glory of this world in the end is appearance leaves the world more glorious, if we feel it is a show of some fuller splendour; but the sensuous curtain is a deception and a cheat, if it hides some colourless movement of atoms, some spectral woof of impalpable abstractions, or unearthly ballet of bloodless categories. Though dragged to such conclusions, we can not embrace them. Our principles may be true, but they are not reality. They no more *make* that Whole which commands our devotion, than some shredded dissection of human tatters *is* that warm and breathing beauty of flesh which our hearts found delightful.⁴⁶

Here, then, we find that in accepting a more moderate, non-Platonistic position, Bradley takes himself to be breaking with Hegel.⁴⁷ Thus, while this shows that as a British Hegelian he was nonetheless opposed to any sort of conception of the Idea as absolute, it does not show that Bradley had a non-metaphysical view

⁴⁵ Cf. Gary Bedell, 'Bradley and Hegel', *Idealistic Studies*, 7 (1977), 262–90, at 283–4.

⁴⁶ F. H. Bradley, *Principles of Logic*, 2nd edn. corrected, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928), vol. 2, 590–1.

⁴⁷ As a result of this, in his attacks on Hegel's apparent panlogicism, Seth took Bradley to be an ally. See, for example, Seth, *Hegelianism and Personality*, 130; *Scottish Philosophy*, 2nd edn. (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1890), 203; and 'A New Theory of the Absolute' (1894), repr. in Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison, *Man's Place in the Cosmos and Other Essays*, 2nd edn. (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1902), 92–158, at 143–4.

of *Hegel*; indeed, it implies that he accepted the orthodox nineteenth-century interpretation, which explains his desire not to be associated with any sort of Hegelian school.⁴⁸

McTaggart, however, is rather more positive in his attitude to Hegel, because unlike Bradley, he does not go along with the orthodox interpretation of Hegel as some sort of Neoplatonic idealist, who wanted to treat thought as prior to being. Instead, McTaggart argues, Hegel always recognized that thought is essentially mediated by intuition, and so it is a mistake to assume (as Bradley does) that this is a view that Hegel would have rejected, or which marks a departure from the outlook of Hegelian idealism:

In the stage immediately before the Absolute Idea—that of ordinary cognition and volition—it is evident that the idea is not self-sufficing, since it is certain that we can neither think nor resolve in every-day life without some immediate *data* . . . Again, in the idea of Life, thought is certainly not self-sufficing, since one of the essential characteristics of this category is that the soul is in relation to a body, which involves, of course, sensation. Now the Absolute Idea is a synthesis of this category and the category of Cognition. Thought is mediate in both of these. How then can it be immediate in the synthesis? . . . [T]hought remains, for Hegel, in the Absolute Idea, what it has been in all the finite categories. Although the content of all experience contains, in such a case, nothing which is not a manifestation of the pure Absolute Idea, yet to every subject in whom that idea is realised, the idea is presented in the form of immediate *data*, which are mediated by the subject's own action. The fundamental nature of subject and object is the same, but the distinction between them remains in their relation to one another.⁴⁹

In adopting this position, McTaggart was consciously seeking to overturn the orthodox nineteenth-century interpretation of Hegel, by denying that he ever meant to suggest that general concepts are prior to particulars, as they might be for the intuitive intellect. In this respect, McTaggart's view foreshadows the non-metaphysical approach—for it enables McTaggart to reject the dominant picture of Hegel as an essentialist, as trying to deduce being from thought.

This comes out clearly in chapters 1 and 2 of his *Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic*, where McTaggart responds explicitly to the Schellingian critique of Hegel offered by Trendelenburg and Seth. Fundamentally, McTaggart argues that his critics have interpreted the notorious transition from Logic to Nature too extravagantly: Hegel was not seeking to deduce existence from essence, but was simply assuming the former as a *prius* for thought (and this, of course, is

⁴⁸ Cf. Bradley's well-known comments in the Preface to the 1st edn. of *The Principles of Logic*:

I fear that, to avoid worse misunderstandings, I must say something as to what is called 'Hegelianism'. For Hegel himself, assuredly I think him a great philosopher; but I never could have called myself an Hegelian, partly because I can not say that I have mastered his system, and partly because I could not accept what seems his main principle, or at least part of that principle. (Bradley, *The Principles of Logic*, x)

⁴⁹ McTaggart, *Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic*, 52–4.

precisely what the existentialists themselves had urged). McTaggart summarizes his position as follows:

If this explanation be correct, it will follow that Hegel never endeavoured to claim ontological validity for his *Logic* in the second sense mentioned above—by attempting, that is, to deduce all the contents of experience from the nature of pure thought only. The deduction which does take place is not dependent merely on the premise from which it starts, which is certainly to be found in the nature of pure thought, but also on the whole to which it is working up, and which is implicit in our thought. If we can proceed in this way from *Logic* to *Nature* and *Spirit*, it proves that *Logic* without the additional elements which occur in *Nature* and *Spirit* is a mere abstraction. And an abstraction cannot possibly be the cause of the reality from which it is an abstraction. There can be no place here, therefore, for the attempt to construct the world out of abstract thought, of which Hegel's philosophy is sometimes supposed to have consisted.⁵⁰

McTaggart's strategy is therefore to turn the tables on Hegel's critics, by offering a revisionary reading of the latter's idealism: those critics are mistaken in the objections they direct at him, because they misunderstand his true position, which in fact is much closer to their own.

Thus, perhaps surprisingly, McTaggart turns out to have a view of Hegel that shares both the essential attributes of the non-metaphysical interpretation specified by Rosen above: namely, that Hegel does not hold that the categories discussed in the *Logic* are anything like Platonic Forms, existing beyond the realm of sensible experience, or that as such they can somehow be known by reason working alone. As we have seen, McTaggart emphasizes that for Hegel, human knowledge is based on sensation and the given in experience, and he denies that Hegel attempted any kind of a priori deduction of nature or spirit, by somehow deriving them from the *Logic*. In this way, therefore, it is clear that McTaggart—like Ritchie, Caird, and the early Seth—had a more sophisticated and differentiated view of Hegel than that of many of their predecessors in the nineteenth century, so that perhaps the current non-metaphysical reading of Hegel is not so novel or path-breaking as has previously been thought.

Moreover, in a way that also foreshadows an important element in the current non-metaphysical reading,⁵¹ McTaggart clearly wanted to defend this interpretative approach by showing that once this reading is adopted, we can find in Hegel's treatment of the categories in his *Logic* a way of solving the most intransigent-seeming philosophical puzzles, so that this position still constitutes a form of rationalism in the broadest sense: namely, it shows how 'the world can present no problem which we cannot some day solve; it is therefore

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 29–30.

⁵¹ Cf. White, *Absolute Knowledge* and Pinkard, *Hegel's Dialectic*. White in particular offers a defence of Hegel against Schelling's question of existence that echoes McTaggart's position: see *op. cit.*, ch. 6.

rational'.⁵² We can see most clearly how McTaggart hoped this category-theory might work—and how close his position is to contemporary defenders of this strategy—by seeing how he responds to Schelling's puzzle 'Why is there anything at all? Why is there not nothing?'

III

According to Schelling and the Left Hegelians, this question could be answered—and rationalism thereby vindicated—only if the 'nasty broad ditch' between thought and being could be crossed, and existence deduced from essence. Of course, as we have seen, they believed that this ditch was uncrossable, and therefore that Hegel's rationalistic project must ultimately fail;⁵³ but, because they assumed that this project could not hope to succeed in any other way, they took Hegel's commitment to panlogistic idealism for granted. It was therefore necessary for McTaggart to show that once this commitment is abandoned, and Hegel is read as a category-theorist, it is still possible to settle Schelling's 'last despairing question', in such a way as to uphold Hegel's faith in the ability of reason to resolve all *aporiai*, including the puzzle of existence.⁵⁴

McTaggart's strategy—like that of a contemporary category-theorist such as Alan White—is to show how Hegel's *Logic* enables this question to be disposed of, not by offering some extravagantly metaphysical solution along panlogistic lines, but by showing how his analysis in the *Logic* of the categories of cause and effect, necessity and contingency, whole and part, can be used to dissolve

⁵² 'The Further Determination of the Absolute', in J. T. E. McTaggart, *Philosophical Studies*, edited with an introduction by S. V. Keeling (London: Edward Arnold, 1934), 210–72, at 211.

⁵³ It is, I think, significant in this respect that Seth accepted that once his metaphysical idealism was abandoned, it was also then necessary to abandon Hegel's rationalism:

In truth, this golden age of philosophy, with its absolute knowledge and its rational state, strikes at last upon the spirit with a sense of intolerable *ennui*. We feel instinctively with Lessing that the search for truth is a nobler thing, and better for our spirits' health, than the truth here offered for our acceptance. It might be otherwise if *the truth* were really ours, but that, we may well believe, is reserved for God alone. The perfect knowledge and the perfect State of Hegelianism ring alike hollow, when brought face to face with the riddle of the painful earth—with the always solemn and often terrible mystery that environs us. Let us be honest with ourselves, and let us be shy of demonstrations which prove too much. We are men and not gods; the ultimate synthesis is not ours. (Seth, *Hegelianism and Personality*, 212–13)

⁵⁴ Cf. Hegel's well-known expression of this faith in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*:

The love of truth, faith in the power of mind, is the first condition in Philosophy. Man, because he is Mind, should and must deem himself worthy of the highest; he cannot think too highly of the greatness and power of his mind, and, with this belief, nothing will be so difficult and hard that it will not reveal itself to him. The Essence 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. (Hegel, *LHP* I, xiii (trans. modified) [*Werke*, XVIII: 13–14])

it. McTaggart's approach is therefore essentially deflationary: he allows that Schelling's question cannot be positively answered, but argues that this tells us nothing about the limits of the human intellect; rather, it is unanswerable because it is ill-posed in so far as it rests in a misapplication of certain categories, and this is therefore a matter of logic, rather than our ignorance. Thus, McTaggart aims to show that Hegel's rationalistic optimism is not ultimately threatened on this issue, but in such a way as to establish this as a victory for the non-metaphysical view.

According to McTaggart, the question of existence is ill-posed because it is based on the misconception that it makes sense to ask for an explanation of the entire universe; for, while anything *within* the universe can have something other than itself through which it can be explained, this cannot be true of the universe *as a whole*, so that no account can be given for the totality. Explanation can work only by explaining some things in terms of others: but when we are dealing with the question of existence, there is nothing left over (so to speak) in terms of which it can be answered, because in this case everything must be included in the *explanandum*. Conversely, McTaggart argues, as there cannot be anything beyond itself to act as an *explanans*, we can legitimately treat the universe as self-subsistent, as existing without a cause,⁵⁵ which those who raise the question of existence assume to be impossible:

Explanation essentially consists of arguments from premises; and it would seem therefore that such perfection could never be attained, since each argument which explained anything must rest upon an unexplained foundation, and so on, *ad infinitum*. And it is true that we can never reach a point where the question 'Why?' can no longer be asked. But we can reach a point where it becomes unmeaning, and at this point knowledge reaches the highest perfection of which, as knowledge, it is susceptible. . . .

If knowledge reached this point, the only question which could remain unanswered would be the question, 'Why is the universe as a whole what it is, and not something else?' And this question could not be answered. We must not, however, conclude from this the existence of any want of rationality in the universe. The truth is that the question ought never to have been asked, for it is the application of a category, which has only meaning within the universe, to the universe as a whole. Of any part we are entitled and bound to ask 'why', for, by the very fact that it is a part, it cannot be self-subsistent, and must depend on other things. But when we come to an all-embracing totality, then, with the possibility of finding a cause, there disappears also a necessity of finding one. Self-subsistence is not in itself a contradictory or impossible idea. It *is* contradictory if applied to anything in the universe, for whatever is in the universe must be connected with other things. But this can of course be no reason for suspecting a fallacy when we find ourselves obliged to apply the idea to something which has nothing outside it with which it could stand in connection.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ It is important to remember that this is *not* equivalent to saying that the universe is its *own* cause.

⁵⁶ J. McT. E. McTaggart, *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901), 256–8. Cf. also McTaggart, *Philosophical Studies*, 219–20. A similar deflationary

McTaggart's argument here is this: There are some categories that it is legitimate to employ in thinking about things *within* the universe, that we cannot legitimately employ in thinking about the universe as a whole. Thus, although everything *within* the universe can be thought to have a cause, this concept cannot be applied to the universe as a totality: for, in order for something to have a cause, there must be something outside it, of which it is the effect, but this cannot be true of the totality of things, which cannot (*ex hypothesi*) have anything beyond itself to act as a cause. It can therefore be meaningful to ask only of events or things *within* the universe why they have occurred or why they exist: it cannot be meaningful to ask this of the universe as a whole.⁵⁷ In this way, it appears, the question of existence is unanswerable because it goes beyond the point at which the search for reasons makes sense, and as such the rationalist is in no way obliged to respond to it.

Now, in adopting this approach, McTaggart can once again be seen to have turned the tables on Hegel's nineteenth-century critics. As we have seen, they had argued that in a vain effort to overcome the question of existence, Hegel had sought to derive the being of the universe from its essence, and so to treat the *Logic* as a kind of first cause. On McTaggart's reading, however, Hegel's position is no longer taken to involve any such claim: instead, McTaggart argues that it was through *categorical analysis* alone that Hegel had wanted to show that the question lacks any real content, 'for it is the application of a category, which has only meaning within the universe, to the universe as a whole'.⁵⁸

This attempt by McTaggart to defuse the question of existence could of course be challenged. Perhaps the main difficulty is that while it might show that it is wrong to ask for a *causal* explanation for the existence of the universe,

strategy is used by both Ritchie and Seth (in one of his earlier, pro-Hegelian writings): see D. G. Ritchie, 'What is Reality?', *Philosophical Review*, 1 (1892), 265–83, at 277–8, and Seth, 'Philosophy as Criticism of Categories', 39–40.

⁵⁷ Versions of this position are often used to attack the Cosmological Argument, which argues from the existence of the universe to a transcendent cause. Cf. Ronald Hepburn, *Christianity and Paradox* (London: Watts, 1958), 167–8 and William Rowe, *The Cosmological Argument* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 132 ff.

⁵⁸ Cf. McTaggart, 'The Changes of Method in Hegel's Dialectic', 205; repr. in Stern (ed.), *Critical Assessments*, vol. 2, 88:

The dialectical system is not so wonderful or mystic as it has been represented to be. It makes no attempt to deduce existence from essence; it does not even attempt to eliminate the element of immediacy in experience, and to produce a self-sufficient and self-mediating thought. It cannot even, if the view I have taken is right, claim that its course is a perfect mirror of the nature of reality. But although the results which it attains are comparatively commonplace, they go as far as we can for any practical purpose desire. For, if we accept the system, we learn from it that in the universe is realised the whole of reason, and nothing but reason. Contingency, in that sense in which it is baffling and oppressive to our minds, has disappeared. For it would be possible, according to this theory, to prove that the only contingent thing about the universe was its existence as a whole, and this is not contingent in the ordinary sense of the word. Hegel's philosophy is thus capable of satisfying the needs, theoretical and practical, to satisfy which philosophy originally arose, nor is there any reason to suppose that he ever wished it to do more.

not all explanations need be causal, so the question of existence might be answerable some other way.⁵⁹ One possibility is that it could be answered in non-causal terms by giving some sort of metaphysical argument to show that it is *necessary* that there should be a universe of the sort that there actually is. For, if some ground could be given why the universe as it is *must* exist, then this would explain why there is something rather than nothing, without involving any (possibly dubious) causal notions;⁶⁰ and, the sceptic can argue, until we have grasped this metaphysical explanation, we will be left not knowing the reason for the existence of things. Another possibility is that the explanation for the universe's existence need not be causal, but could be axiarchic: that is, the reason why the universe exists is because it is best.⁶¹ Given these possibilities, it is hard to see how McTaggart's argument can succeed, for even if it makes no sense to apply the notion of *cause* to the universe as a totality, he has not shown that *no* notion of explanation is intelligible here.

However, on closer inspection, it becomes clear that from McTaggart's perspective, this challenge is no great worry. For, his central claim is not that there might not conceivably be an explanation for the totality; rather, it is that we feel the question of existence to be unanswerable because our usual methods of explanation have come to an end, but this need not trouble us, because in the case of any totality, we can see that what brings explanation to an end is intrinsic to the thing itself, and not the result of our ignorance or any limit on what we can understand. ('But when we come to an all-embracing totality, then, with the possibility of finding a cause, there disappears also a necessity of finding one.') And, once we thereby come to see that we should not be concerned by the idea of the universe existing without a causal explanation ('self-subsistence is not in itself a contradictory or impossible idea'), then we will no longer feel obliged to posit these other accounts, which have only a dubious plausibility.

McTaggart's strategy, therefore, is to defend the adequacy of Hegelian rationalism by showing that the call for explanatory finality is essentially contradictory at this level, and in this way the question of existence can be undermined. Bradley adopts a similar approach. Central to Bradley's rationalism is his claim that it is possible for the true conception of reality to 'satisfy the intellect'; but, he argues,

⁵⁹ For a general discussion of the possibility of non-causal explanation, see David-Hillel Ruben, *Explaining Explanation* (London: Routledge, 1990), ch. VII.

⁶⁰ Indeed, in the case of Spinoza, for example, it could be argued that it was precisely in order to *avoid* an objection like McTaggart's that 'God or Nature' was said to have a *necessary* existence, because then the explanation can be 'internal' (based on its definition as a substance) and not 'external' (based on some prior state that brings it about), as this latter notion does not make sense when applied to an infinite being like God or Nature.

⁶¹ For two recent attempts to answer the question of existence by providing an axiarchic explanation, see John Leslie, *Value and Existence* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), and Derek Parfit, 'The Puzzle of Reality', in *Times Literary Supplement*, no. 4657 (1992), 3–5.

this cannot be achieved if we assume that this means finding an explanation for every individual thing or state of affairs:

Truth is not satisfied until we have all the facts, and until we understand perfectly what we have. . . . But, when we judge truth by its own standards, truth evidently fails. And it fails in two ways, the connexion between which I will not here discuss. (i) In the first place its contents cannot be made intelligible throughout and entirely. A doubt may indeed be raised whether even in any part they are able wholly to satisfy, but this again is a question on which here it is unnecessary to enter. For in any case obviously a large mass of the facts remain in the end inexplicable. You have perpetually to repeat that things are so, though you do not fully understand how or why, and when on the other hand you cannot perceive that no how or why is wanted. You are left in short with brute conjunctions when you seek for connexions, and when this need for connexions seems part of your nature. [note: You want in other words to answer the question 'What' by and from the object itself, and not by and from something *else*.] (ii) And, failing thus, truth fails again to include all the given facts, and any such complete inclusion seems even to be in principle unattainable.⁶²

Bradley is here characterizing the impasse of explanatory rationalism as he sees it: to him it seemed inevitable that this way of showing the world to be rational or satisfying to the intellect must end in 'bankruptcy'⁶³ and apparent victory for the sceptic, as the final goal of ending the search for explanations cannot be achieved by focusing on the universe as a plurality, but only as a whole:

Truth is the whole Universe realizing itself in one aspect. This way of realization is one-sided, and it is a way not in the end satisfying even its own demands but felt itself to be incomplete. On the other hand the completion of truth itself is seen to lead to an all-inclusive reality, which reality is not outside truth. For it is the whole Universe which, immanent throughout, realizes and seeks itself in truth. This is the end to which truth leads and points and without which it is not satisfied.⁶⁴

However, like McTaggart, Bradley argues that once we come to view the universe as a totality, we must give up the Principle of Sufficient Reason (or what Bradley calls 'the axiom of ground'), which applies only to the parts and not the whole:

Is it true that everything must have a reason, a 'how' and a 'why'? In the end this assertion is not true, as we see at once, of the Universe. The 'axiom' holds only so far as a thing is not complete in itself, and is therefore, on our view, ideally beyond itself. . . . Where you have a felt whole, as felt, or where you have a non-relational unity, as in a work of art, there, so far, you need not ask 'why'. The tendency of the content to pass beyond the limits of the thing is not always forced on your notice. The case is different where, by analysis or otherwise, the self-contained unity has been lost.⁶⁵

⁶² F. H. Bradley, 'On Truth and Copying', *Mind*, ns. 16 (1907), 165–80; repr. in *Essays on Truth and Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914), 107–26, at 114–15.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 115. ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁶⁵ 'On Some Aspects of Truth', *Mind*, 20 (1911), 305–41; repr. in F. H. Bradley *Essays on Truth and Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914), 310–52, at 312–13.

According to Bradley, the apparent regress of why-questions seems to make sense to us, but only because we are thinking of the universe as a plurality, not as a unity: once, however, we see the universe as a totality, it is no longer clear that there is any force behind the question of existence, because here the Principle of Sufficient Reason can no longer be applied.

It is possible to highlight the radical—and distinctively Hegelian—nature of McTaggart's and Bradley's position here, by contrasting it with one sometimes adopted by those within the empiricist tradition on this issue. For, of course, at least since Hume there have been those who have been prepared to question the Principle of Sufficient Reason, and so to challenge the question of existence, by arguing that the universe could exist without a cause. A clear proponent of this view is Bertrand Russell, in his dispute with F. C. Copleston over the Cosmological Argument for God's existence. In response to Copleston's question 'Why shouldn't one raise the question of the cause of the existence of all particular objects?', Russell replied: 'Because I see no reason to think there is any. The whole concept of cause is one we derive from our observation of particular things; I see no reason to suppose that the total has any cause whatsoever.'⁶⁶ Russell defends this position as follows: First, he denies that there is any sound a priori argument to show that the Principle of Sufficient Reason is universally valid and necessarily applicable to the totality, since such arguments are based on the fallacy of supposing that because each individual has a cause, so all these individuals together must have a cause.⁶⁷ Second, he denies that experience could possibly tell us whether or not the universe as a totality has a cause, because the notion of cause with which we operate derives from our observation of particular things, so that the concept of cause 'is not applicable to the total'.⁶⁸ He therefore concludes that it is quite possible that the universe as a whole is uncaused, and that for all we know, the Principle of Sufficient Reason does not obtain here.⁶⁹

Now, although there are some similarities between Russell's position and that of McTaggart and Bradley, the former is much less radical, in so far as it rests on empiricist assumptions, while both the latter employ a method of Hegelian categorical critique. Russell's claim is merely that *it is quite possible* for the universe to exist without an explanation, as a brute fact—so that the question of existence might well have no answer. McTaggart and Bradley, by contrast,

⁶⁶ Bertrand Russell and F. C. Copleston, 'A Debate on the Existence of God', in John Hick (ed.), *The Existence of God* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 167–90, at 175.

⁶⁷ 'I can illustrate what seems to me your fallacy. Every man who exists has a mother, and it seems to me your argument is that therefore the human race must have a mother, but obviously the human race hasn't a mother—that's a different logical sphere' (ibid., 175).

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ '... a physicist looks for causes; that does not necessarily imply that there are causes everywhere. A man may look for gold without assuming that there is gold everywhere; and if he finds gold, well and good, if he doesn't he's had bad luck. The same is true when the physicists look for causes . . . I do think the notion of the world having an explanation is a mistake. I don't see why one should expect it to have' (ibid., 177).

occupy a stronger position than this, for they claim that we can know a priori that the question of existence is unanswerable, not because existence *could be* a brute fact (which would make whether it is or not an empirical issue, not resolvable a priori), but because this is a matter of what can be *conceived* in relation to the universe as a totality: no causal explanation is *possible* of the universe as a whole, because we must abandon certain categories when thinking at this level. Of course, Russell also accuses his opponent of something like a category mistake ('obviously the human race hasn't a mother—that's a different logical sphere'), but he does so only in order to refute the a priori argument *for* the applicability of the Principle of Sufficient Reason to the universe as a whole: McTaggart and Bradley, by contrast, accuse their opponent of making a category mistake in thinking that a causal explanation for the universe as a totality is even *possible*.

IV

We have seen, therefore, how amongst the leading British Hegelians a view of Hegel emerged that bears a significant resemblance to many current non-metaphysical readings, both in content and in motivation. Rather than simply resurrecting a defunct form of Right-Hegelianism, as James and others have implied, the British Hegelians offered a highly revisionary and differentiated conception of Hegel's position, which could have taken Hegelian thought in a new direction. That it did not can perhaps be explained by the fact that Hegel's critics found it easier to return to the earlier, metaphysical view, because this gave them a more obvious and vulnerable target in their revolt against idealism. However, as I hope to have demonstrated, rather than themselves being responsible for making Hegel into such a target, had the British Hegelians been properly understood and interpreted, Hegel's opponents might have seen how their extravagant claims and criticisms were in fact largely misdirected; for they relied on a reading of Hegel that the British Hegelians had shown could be successfully displaced.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Versions of this paper have been read at the Philosophy Seminar, University of Bradford and at conferences of the British Society for the History of Philosophy and the Hegel Society of Great Britain. I am grateful to those who commented on the paper at these occasions.

5

Hegel, British Idealism, and the Curious Case of the Concrete Universal

Like the terms ‘dialectic’, ‘*Aufhebung*’ (or ‘sublation’), and ‘*Geist*’, the term ‘concrete universal’ has a distinctively Hegelian ring to it. But unlike these others, it is particularly associated with the British strand in Hegel’s reception history, as having been brought to prominence by some of the central British Idealists.¹ It is therefore perhaps inevitable that, as their star has waned, so too has any use of the term, while an appreciation of the problematic that lay behind it has seemingly vanished: if the British Idealists get any sort of mention in a contemporary metaphysics book (which is rarely), it will be Bradley’s view of relations or truth that is discussed, not their theory of universals,² so that the term has a rather antique air, buried in the dusty volumes of *Mind* from the turn of the nineteenth century. This is not surprising: the episode known as British Idealism can appear to be a period that is lost to us, in its language, points of historical reference (Lotze, Sigwart, Jevons), and central preoccupations (the Absolute). And even while interest in Hegel continues to grow, interest in his *Logic* has grown more slowly than in the rest of his work, with Book III of the *Logic* remaining as the daunting peak of that challenging text—while it is here that the British Idealists focused their attention and claimed to have

¹ The following remark is typical in this respect: ‘The central idea in nineteenth century Idealist philosophy is the notion of the concrete universal. The English Idealists took it over from Hegel and it played a most important part in all their work’ (A. J. M. Milne, *The Social Philosophy of English Idealism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1962), 15).

² The topic is not only neglected in the current general literature on metaphysics; it is also little discussed in recent specialist studies of Anglo-American Idealism. As far as I know, only the following works give the topic any consideration (and some of these only briefly): Milne, *The Social Philosophy of English Idealism*, esp. 15–55, 165–202; Richard Wollheim, *F. H. Bradley*, 2nd edn. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), esp. 36–9; Lionel Rubinoff, *Collingwood and the Reform of Metaphysics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), esp. 154–60 and 384 n. 6; Stewart Candlish, ‘Bradley On My Station and Its Duties’, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 56 (1978), 155–70; Marcus Clayton, ‘Blanshard’s Theory of Universals’, in *The Philosophy of Brand Blanshard* (LaSalle, 1980), 861–8; Anthony Manser, *Bradley’s Logic* (Oxford, 1983), esp. 79–98; T. L. S. Sprigge, *James and Bradley: American Truth and British Reality* (Chicago and LaSalle, 1993), esp. 382–5; W. J. Mander, ‘Bosanquet and the Concrete Universal’, *The Modern Schoolman*, 77 (2000), 293–308.

uncovered that ‘exotic’ but ‘vanished specimen’, the concrete universal.³ Finally, as the trend of reading Hegel pushes ever further in a non-metaphysical direction, it might be thought that the future of the concrete universal is hardly likely to be brighter than its recent past—for it may seem hard to imagine how a conception championed by the British Idealists, who were apparently shameless in their metaphysical commitments,⁴ can find favour in these more austere and responsible times.

In this paper, however, I want to make a case for holding that there is something enlightening to be found in how some of the British Idealists approached the ‘concrete universal’, both interpretatively and philosophically. At the interpretative level, I will argue that while not everything these Idealists are taken to mean by the term is properly to be found in Hegel, their work nonetheless relates to a crucial and genuine strand in Hegel’s position, so that their discussion of this issue is an important moment in the reception history of his thought. And at a philosophical level, I think that the question that concerned Hegel and these British Idealists retains much of its interest, as does their shared approach to it: namely, how far does our thought involve a mere abstraction from reality, and what are the metaphysical and epistemological implications if it turns out it does not? As such, I will suggest, taking seriously what these British Idealists have to say about how the concrete universal can help us both in our understanding of Hegel, and in our appreciation of the contribution Hegel’s position can make to our thinking on the issues that surround this topic.

I

At first sight, it must be admitted that the doctrine of the concrete universal looks distinctly unpromising as a source of interpretative and philosophical insights, in so far as the central claim generally associated with its leading proponents appears to be both unHegelian and incoherent.

This central claim, that came to be identified as characteristic of the British Idealists, and which was much criticized in their time, was summarized by one of those critics as the view that ‘the individual, *qua* individual, is a universal’.⁵ The thought behind this conception of the universal is taken to be that universals have a ‘one-over-many’ structure in relation to their instances, and so are the same amid diversity, and in so far as individuals also have this structure in relation to their attributes, they should be thoughts of a ‘concrete universals’.

³ Mander, ‘Bosanquet and the Concrete Universal’, 293.

⁴ But for a corrective to this commonly held view, see Robert Stern, ‘British Hegelianism: A Non-Metaphysical View?’, *European Journal of Philosophy*, 2 (1994), 293–321 [repr. above, Ch. 4].

⁵ Norman Kemp Smith, ‘The Nature of Universals’, *Mind*, 36 (1927), 137–57, 265–80, and 393–422, at 144.

Support for this reading of the position occupied by the British Idealists is taken from various comments by leading figures like Bradley and Bosanquet. Thus, Bradley writes that while from one 'point of view' an individual (such as a man) is a particular because it excludes all other individuals, from another 'point of view' a man 'is universal because he is one throughout all his different attributes'⁶; and, he goes on to remark, 'In "Caesar is sick," Caesar is not affirmed to be nothing but sick: he is a common bond of many attributes, and is therefore universal',⁷ so that '[t]he individual is . . . a concrete universal'.⁸ And Bosanquet writes:

Let us take such a judgment as "Caesar crossed the Rubicon" Precisely the point of the judgment is that the same man united in himself or persisted through different relations, say, of being conqueror of Gaul and of marching into Italy. The Identity is the Individual, or the concrete universal, that persists through these relations.⁹

Bosanquet's suggestion that we should '[take] an individual as designated by a proper name for the example of a [concrete] universal'¹⁰ seems to be what is central and distinctive about the British Idealists' position on this issue.

It is also, clearly, what is most problematic, both in itself and as an interpretation of Hegel. The difficulty with the position in itself, is that it appears to involve a confusion: for how can an individual be a universal, concrete or otherwise? There is of course a one/many relation between an individual and its parts, temporal parts, attributes etc, and also between a universal and its instances: but this structural similarity is no reason to confound the two, as these British Idealists seem happy to do. It is hard to disagree with an early critic of this conception, Norman Kemp Smith, when he writes:

It has, of course, been usual to define the universal as 'the one in the many,' meaning by 'the many' numerically distinct particulars. But what, we may well ask, are we being committed to, when required to interpret 'the one in the many' in this other very different sense which renders it applicable to each particular thing or self? If the original meaning of the term 'universal' involves its distinction from the term 'particular,' can this meaning, by any legitimate process of analogy, be so extended as to render the term synonymous with the particular? A term cannot signify its own opposite, not even if

⁶ F. H. Bradley, *Principles of Logic*, 2nd edn., corrected, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928), vol. 1, 188.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 191. ⁸ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁹ Bernard Bosanquet, 'The Philosophical Importance of a True Theory of Identity', reprinted in his *Essays and Addresses*, 2nd edn. (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1891), 162–80, 165–6. Cf. also Bernard Bosanquet, *The Essentials of Logic* (London: Macmillan, 1895), 65: 'So the reference of a proper name is a good example of what we called a universal or an identity. That which is referred to by such a name is a person or thing whose existence is extended in time and its parts bound together by some continuous quality—an *individual* person or thing and the whole of this individuality is referred to in whatever is affirmed about it. Thus the reference of such a name is universal, not as including more than one individual, but as including in the identity of the individual numberless differences—the acts, events, and relations that make up its history and situation'.

¹⁰ Bosanquet, *Essays and Addresses*, 167.

that opposite be a counterpart which it presupposes for its own completion. The term 'husband' does not signify 'wife,' though each term has meaning only in and by reference to the other.¹¹

Here, it may seem, the Idealists' attempt to think dialectically unfortunately got the better of them, and led to the absurdity of treating the individual as a universal, and thus as concrete, simply on the grounds that individuals can resemble universals in standing a 'one-over-many' relation to their attributes just as a universal can stand in a 'one-over-many' relation to their instances, and so both combine identity with a diversity. It may appear the best that can be done at this point is to say that these British Idealists were using the term 'universal' in a *sui generis* manner;¹² but this is to admit that what at first looked like a substantive but dubious doctrine is in the end no more than a terminological shift, with little apparent rationale.

In defence of the British Idealists, however, it might be argued that those who criticized them for holding this seemingly incoherent doctrine misrepresented their position. For, it is notable that in the way that it is presented by Bradley in the discussion from *The Principles of Logic* which we have cited, he says not just that 'The individual is both a concrete particular and a concrete universal', but also that these are 'names of the whole from different *points of view* [my emphasis]', namely when we see the individual as having 'limiting and exclusive relations to other phenomena' on the one hand and when we see it as 'one throughout all [its] different attributes' on the other.¹³ This may then suggest that in calling the individual a concrete universal, Bradley does not mean to collapse the distinction between these ontological categories on the grounds that both involve identity-in-diversity, but rather to say that the individual can be viewed as akin to a universal in this respect, just as it can

¹¹ Kemp Smith, 'The Nature of Universals', 145. Cf. also Michael B. Foster, 'The Concrete Universal: Cook Wilson and Bosanquet', *Mind*, 40 (1931), 1–22, at 7, where he speaks about the 'well-known and paradoxical doctrine, derived from Bradley, that the concrete universal is the individual', and asks whether 'it is not simply an abuse of language to call the individual "universal" at all'. Another contemporary critic of this view is John Cook Wilson: 'A notable example of loose thinking about unity in diversity is the modern representation of the individual as a universal because it is a unity in the diversity of its qualities, &c. This doctrine, which is taken as advanced metaphysics, is nothing but deplorable confusion, due to a mere verbal analogy helped out by the metaphysician's inclination to paradox, and the absurdest results may be developed from it. The unity of the universal *in* its particulars is totally different from the unity of the individual substance as a unity *of* its attributes (or attribute-elements). The particulars of a universal are not elements in its unity' (John Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, ed. A. S. L. Farquharson, 2 vols, corrected edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), vol. 1, 156 n. 1). It is likely that Cook Wilson's later reference to 'the puerilities of certain paradoxical recent authors' on the topic of universals is also a reference to this Bradleyan view (see *ibid.*, 348).

¹² Cf. Mander, 'Bosanquet and the Concrete Universal', 301: 'Bosanquet's understanding of the word "universal" is a very generous one. Any connection which brings together any sort of many under one heading, any union or connection or identity, any mechanism that allows any kind of general talk, for Bosanquet, is a universal'.

¹³ Bradley, *The Principles of Logic*, vol. 1, 188.

also be viewed as akin to a bare particular when considered in isolation from all other things.¹⁴

However, even if a defence of Bradley (and perhaps also of Bosanquet) could be mounted along these lines, it might be argued that the claim that ‘the individual, *qua* individual, is a universal’ because it is the same amid diversity should still be seen as part of the doctrine of the concrete universal, on the grounds that a view of this sort can be traced back to Hegel. For Hegel to be a source of this view, we would have to find a place where Hegel states that an individual is (or can be seen as) a universal, on the grounds that the individual combines unity in diversity; and commentators have claimed to find such places. One example is said to be §175 of the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, and another Hegel’s discussion of sense-certainty in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. However, I think we should not be persuaded by these claims.

The section from the *Encyclopaedia Logic* is cited,¹⁵ presumably on the grounds that Hegel writes here: ‘The subject, the singular *as* singular (in the “*singular*” judgment), is something-universal’.¹⁶ But Hegel’s point here is not to say that the identity-in-difference of the individual (*‘das Einzelne’*)¹⁷ makes it a universal; rather, he is commenting that there are judgements where we predicate attributes not just of the individual as such, but of the individual as a member of a class, and thus as falling under a universal. Hegel makes this clear when he comments in the Addition (*Zusatz*) to this paragraph: ‘When it is determined in the *singular* judgment as a universal, the subject therefore goes beyond itself as this merely single instance. To say “This plant is curative”, implies that it is not merely this single plant that is curative, but that some or many plants are . . .’.¹⁸ I therefore do not think that this can count as a place where Hegel adopted the view with which the British Idealists were later identified.

Another place where textual support for this claim is said to be found, however, is in Hegel’s discussion of sense-certainty (which, along with Book III of the *Logic*, and the *Philosophy of Right*, is one of the three parts of Hegel’s work that had the strongest influence on the British Idealists). In the course of that

¹⁴ A more radical defence of the Bradleyean position, suggested to me by Fraser MacBride, might be to follow Ramsey in attempting to challenge the whole universal/individual distinction: see F. P. Ramsey, ‘Universals’ in *The Foundations of Mathematics and other Logical Essays*, ed. R. B. Braithwaite (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1931), 112–34; but I take Bradley’s more moderate talk of ‘points of view’ to suggest that he would not want to adopt that line (though I would agree that there are some intriguing parallels between the two positions that deserve to be explored further).

¹⁵ Mander, ‘Bosanquet and the Concrete Universal’, 296, n. 8.

¹⁶ Hegel, *EL*, §175, 252 [*Werke*, VIII: 326].

¹⁷ In their translation, Geraets, Suchting, and Harris use ‘singular’ rather than ‘individual’ to translate ‘*Einzelne*’, for reasons they give in the translators’ introduction, xix–xx. While appreciating some of the points they make in favour of this practice, and while I will retain its use when quoting from their translation, in the text I will continue to talk of ‘individual’ rather than ‘singular’, in part because this is the terminology used by the British Idealists I am also discussing.

¹⁸ Hegel, *EL*, §175Z, 252 [*Werke*, VIII: 327].

discussion, Hegel considers the claim of sense-certainty that it can pick out the 'now' and the 'here' as individuals by pointing at an individual moment or an individual place; and he counters it by arguing that every such moment or place is further divisible, where he writes that

The pointing-out of the Now is thus itself the movement which expresses what the Now is in truth, viz. a result, or a plurality of Nows all taken together; and the pointing-out is the experience of learning that the Now is a *universal*,¹⁹

and similarly he says of 'Here':

The Here that is *meant* would be the point; but it *is* not: on the contrary, when it is pointed out as something that *is*, the pointing-out shows itself to be not an immediate knowing [of the point], but a movement from the Here that is *meant* through many Heres into the universal Here which is a simple plurality of Heres, just as the day is a simple plurality of Nows.²⁰

On the basis of these passages, one commentator has argued that Hegel is guilty of just the same conflation between individual and universal that was identified in the work of the British Idealists:

Hegel argues that the here and now, in having extension and duration, and hence an indefinitely large number of subdivisions, are universals and thus not particulars. But unless one conflates the notion of instances of a universal and the parts of a whole (as Hegel seems to have done), all the arguments would show, if they work at all, is that *here* and *now* are divisible *wholes*, not that they are *universals*. It is in no way obvious that a whole having parts cannot be a particular, and Hegel, not having made the distinction between wholes and universals, does not even address himself to this issue.²¹

On this reading of this part of the *Phenomenology*, then, it may seem that Hegel is using 'universal' in a manner similar to that for which the British Idealists were later criticized.

It is not possible to enter here into a detailed interpretative analysis of this highly complex and abstract section of the *Phenomenology*: but it does seem to me that this way of reading Hegel's position here is mistaken. As I would read it, Hegel is arguing at this point that sense-certainty cannot claim to be able to 'apprehend' things without 'comprehending' them, where sense-certainty thinks this is possible because it believes it can have immediate awareness of things in their unique individuality and so has no need for general concepts: if there were only *one* 'now' and only *one* 'here' this might make sense, but the fact that each 'now' and 'here' is always divisible into further 'nows' and 'heres' means that sense-certainty cannot claim access to just such a unique individual in its experience of a temporal or spatial moment. Thus, even when it points and says

¹⁹ Hegel, *PS*, 64 [*Werke*, III: 89].

²⁰ Hegel, *PS*, 64 [*Werke*, III: 90].

²¹ Ivan Soll, 'Charles Taylor's *Hegel*', repr. in *Hegel*, ed. Michael Inwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 54–66, at 63–4. Cf. also Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 303.

'now' or 'here', it is conscious of many instances of the same kind, and thus individuals that share the same property or universal (the property of being 'now' or 'here'). Hegel's claim in talking about temporal and spatial instants in terms of universals is thus not that they are universals because they are complex individuals rather than simple 'atoms' (in the manner of the British Idealists); his claim is rather that even being 'now' and 'here' does not make a temporal or spatial instant unique and thus purely individual, for there are always further instants that are 'now' and 'here' in the same way, so that particular 'nows' and 'heres' have been shown to be instances of universals in this fairly standard sense.²²

II

Thus, whether or not we think it is right to attribute to the British Idealists the view that 'the individual, *qua* individual, is a universal' in any strong sense, we might accept that this view is highly problematic, and also can offer us few interpretative insights into Hegel's position; for it seems we must admit (and that Hegel would agree) that it takes more to be a concrete universal than to be a unified diversity, for the unified diversity of an individual (such as Julius Caesar) surely does not make that individual a universal of *any* type, but merely a substance with attributes, or a whole with parts. On the other hand, if all the doctrine of the concrete universal amounts to is the claim that 'you may call' an individual a universal as a way of 'emphasizing' its unity-in-diversity, then this may suggest it is in fact a rather trivial position.

However, it would be premature to abandon all interest in the doctrine of the concrete universal straightaway, as there is more to the British Idealists's discussion than this, where they came to conceive of the concrete universal as a particular type of universal: 'the universal in the form of a world', as Bosanquet put it,²³ rather than in the form of a class. By 'the universal in the form of a world', Bosanquet meant that individuals which exemplify this universal are thereby related with one another in a system of mutual interdependence, whereas individuals that merely belong to the same class are not. Josiah Royce (not of course, strictly a *British* Idealist, but nonetheless greatly influenced by them) puts this idea as follows:

This universal is no abstraction at all, but a perfectly *concrete* whole, since the facts are, one and all, not mere examples of it, but are embraced in it, are brought forth by it as

²² For a reading that is also critical of Soll's account for claiming that Hegel (like the British Idealists) 'has clumsily conflated universals . . . with complex individuals', but on somewhat different grounds, see Edward Craig, *The Mind of God and the Works of Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 211–12.

²³ Bernard Bosanquet, *The Principle of Individuality and Value* (London: Macmillan, 1912), 38.

its moments, and exist only in relation to one another and to it. It is the vine; they, the individuals, are the branches.²⁴

This conception of the concrete universal has the advantage that it avoids the peculiar conflation of individuality with universality that we saw earlier, associated

²⁴ Josiah Royce, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1892), 224. Cf. also Edward Caird, *Social Philosophy of Auguste Comte* (Glasgow: J. Maclehose & Sons, 1885), 109 (incorrectly cited by Royce, 499, n. 1): 'The universal of science and philosophy is . . . not merely a generic name, *under* which things are brought together, but a principle which unites them and determines their relation to each other'; and also John Caird (Edward Caird's brother), who Royce also cites extensively: 'But thought is capable of another and deeper movement. It can rise to a universality which is not foreign to, but the very inward nature of things in themselves, not the universal of an abstraction from the particular and different, but the unity which is immanent in them and finds in them its own necessary expression; not an arbitrary invention of the observing and classifying mind unifying in its own imagination things which are yet essentially different, but an idea which expresses the inner dialectic, the movement or process towards unity, which exists in and constitutes the being of the objects themselves. This deeper and truer universality is that which may be designated *ideal or organic universality*' (John Caird, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Glasgow: J. Maclehose & Sons, 1904), 217–18). Cf. also Bosanquet, *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, 37: 'A world or cosmos is a system of members, such that every member, being *ex hypothesi* distinct, nevertheless contributes to the unity of the whole in virtue of the peculiarities which constitute its distinctness. And the important point for us at present is the difference of principle between a world and a class. It takes all sorts to make a world; a class is essentially of one sort only. In a word, the difference is that the ultimate principle of unity and community is fully exemplified in the former, but only superficially in the latter. The ultimate principle, we may say, is sameness in the other; generality is sameness in spite of the other; universality is sameness by means of the other'; Bernard Bosanquet, 'Life and Philosophy', in *Contemporary British Philosophy*, ed. J. H. Muirhead, first series (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1924), 51–74, at 62: 'The universal, the very life and spirit of logic, did not mean [to me] a general predicate, but the plastic unity of an inclusive system'; Bernard Bosanquet, *The Distinction Between Mind and its Objects* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1913), 34: 'a universal is a working connection within particulars'; and also cf. Richard Lewis Nettleship, *Philosophical Remains of Richard Lewis Nettleship*, ed. A. C. Bradley, 2nd edn. (London: Macmillan, 1901), 158–9: 'The universal is said to *contain* or *include* its particulars. This, of course, is a spatial metaphor, and we always have to guard against the influence of spatial associations. But the metaphor helps some minds to realize the truth, and it is convenient as bringing out the fact that particulars, while excluding one another, also make up, or are included in, one whole. To say, for example, that humanity includes all men may help one to realize the truth that, though men exclude one another, they still form a unity', and R. G. Collingwood, *Speculum Mentis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), 220–1: 'This absolute whole is the concrete universal; for concrete universality is individuality, the individual being simply the unity of the universal and the particular. The absolute individual is universal in that it is what it is throughout, and every part of it is as individual as itself. On the other hand it is no mere abstraction, the abstract quality of individualness, but an individual which includes all others. It is the system of systems, the world of worlds'. This view of the concrete universal persists in the thinking of later generations of British writers on Hegel, such as T. M. Knox: see e.g. his translator's notes to his translation of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 323–4 [my emphasis]: 'An abstract universal has no organic connexion with its particulars. Mind, or reason, as a concrete universal, particularizes itself into differences *which are interconnected by its universality* in the same way in which parts of the organism are held together by the single life which all things share. The parts depend on the whole for their life, but on the other hand the persistence of life necessitates the differentiation of the part'. Cf. also T. L. S. Sprigge, 'Bradley' in *Routledge History of Philosophy VII: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. C. L. Ten (London: Routledge, 1994), 437–58, at 440: '[P]roponents of the concrete universal usually take the totality of its instances as itself the universal in question, arguing that it is a kind of whole which is present in each of its parts'.

by its critics with the Bradleyean claim that '[a man] is universal because he is one throughout all his different attributes'; instead, universals are here understood in a more usual way, as properties that are instantiated in individuals, but where concrete universals 'embrace' the individuals into a holistic system, and so make these individuals parts of a larger individual entity, whereas abstract universals do not. So, we might say (to use the sort of example employed by the British Idealists) there are certain properties by virtue of which citizens of the state form a community or social whole, while nonetheless the state is an individual. We are therefore preserving here more of the traditional universal/individual distinction (because we are not saying that the state qua individual is a universal), while still giving a distinctive sense to the idea of a concrete universal (as a property that connects individuals into larger wholes, in an inter-individual manner).

This view of the concrete universal of course belongs together with the metaphysical holism (tending towards monism) of some of the British Idealists more generally, so that in the end it is not clear whether they would allow that some universals are 'concrete' in this sense, and others are 'abstract'; rather, they would seem to hold that in fact *all* universals are concrete, although our lack of insight into the full systematic interconnection of individuals may prevent us from recognizing this.²⁵ This appears to be the implication of Bradley's famous example of the red-haired men:

By being red-haired the two men are related really, and their relation is not merely external. . . . 'But I am a red-haired man,' I shall hear, 'and I know what I am, and I am not altered in fact when I am compared with another man, and therefore the relation falls outside.' But no finite individual, I reply, can possibly know what he is, and the idea that all his reality falls within his knowledge is even ridiculous. . . . But, as he really is, to know perfectly his own nature would be, with that nature, to pass in knowledge endlessly beyond himself. For example, a red-haired man who knew himself utterly would and must, starting from within, go on to know everyone else who has red hair, and he would not know himself until he knew them. . . . Nothing in the whole and in the end can be external, and everything less than the Universe is an abstraction from the whole, an abstraction more or less empty, and the more empty the less self-dependent. Relations and qualities are abstractions, and depend for their being always on a whole, a whole which they inadequately express, and which remains always less or more in the background.²⁶

It seems that Bradley is arguing here that a universal like 'red-hairedness' may appear to be an abstract universal, in the sense that no internal relation may

²⁵ Cf. Sprigge, *James and Bradley*, 514: '[T]he doctrine of concrete universals, as propounded by such as Bradley and Bosanquet, does not really concern one special type of universal called "concrete", which they contrast with another called "abstract", but is presented as the correct account of all genuine universals as opposed to the more usual but inadequate account of them as merely abstract'.

²⁶ F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, 2nd edn., 9th impression (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), 520–1.

seem to hold between all the different individuals that have red hair; but then in fact the universal is concrete, because by exemplifying the same universal, each red-haired individual is internally related to each other red-haired individual within a totality.

Clearly, a proper assessment of this conception of the concrete universal would require a much broader analysis of the philosophical position that goes with it, such as Bradley's view of relations; and that cannot be undertaken here. We can however raise the interpretative question: how far does this holistic conception of the concrete universal present a plausible way of understanding the position adopted by Hegel?

A first, and most obvious, difference between Hegel's position and the Bradleyean one, is that Hegel *does* seem to allow that the concrete universal is a *type* of universal, rather than claiming that *all* universals are in fact concrete. For example, Hegel says that the property 'red' is 'an abstract universal' ('ein abstrakt Allgemeines'),²⁷ and he contrasts this with a property like 'good'. So, even if Hegel does believe that some universals can be viewed holistically as 'embracing' individuals into a '*concrete whole*', he would not appear to believe that *all* universals can be so viewed, *contra* Bradley.

More substantively, perhaps, we can also raise doubts about whether Hegel has this holistic conception of the concrete universal *at all*. That this *was* Hegel's conception is widely held, not least by the Idealists themselves. Thus, Royce writes in his exposition of what he takes to be Hegel's view:

The universal of the understanding, applying to a nature which is only exemplified by each individual, and which exists nowhere but in such individual examples (as *animality* exists only in individual animals), tells us nothing about the interrelationship of the individuals themselves, gives us therefore no *Einheit des Begriffes*.²⁸ . . . *Das Wahre ist konkret* means for [Hegel] equally, 'The truth is an organic union of interrelated aspects, characters, qualities', and 'The truth is the Universal in which the particulars and individuals are organically joined.'²⁹

The Anglo-American Idealists therefore saw in Hegel a fellow holist, and treated his doctrine of the concrete universal as central to his holism, as it was to theirs. It seems to me, however, that this puts Hegel's own conception of the concrete universal in the wrong light.

To see why, we need to look more closely at the way in which Hegel himself draws a contrast between universals that are abstract and universals that are concrete. This we will do in the next section, at the end of which we will return to consider the issue we have just raised, concerning the extent to which Hegel's conception of the concrete universal is holistic.

²⁷ Hegel, *EL*, §172Z, 250 (trans. modified) [*Werke*, VIII: 324].

²⁸ Royce, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, 495.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 500.

III

The distinction between the abstract and the concrete universal principally arises in the course of Hegel's discussion of the Concept or Notion (*Begriff*)³⁰ and the different levels of judgement and syllogism that are associated with that discussion, as this occurs in the first part of Book III of the *Logic*. Hegel's central aim here is to demonstrate that

The progression of the Concept is no longer either passing-over or shining into another, but *development*; for the [moments] that are distinguished are immediately posited at the same time as identical with one another and with the whole, and [each] determinacy is as a free being of the whole Concept.³¹

The 'moments' of the Concept are universality, particularity, and individuality; and the claim here is therefore that these categories have a peculiar kind of interrelation (of *development* [*Entwicklung*]) that was not seen either with the categories of Being (where the 'dialectical process' was one of 'passing over into another' [*Übergehen*]) or Essence (where it was 'shining into another' [*Scheinen in Anderes*]): 'in contrast, the movement of the *Concept* is *development*'. Hegel's reasons for wanting to argue for this relation between the moments of the Concept, I would claim, stem from his conviction that many of the problems of philosophy are bound up with the fact that this relation has been misconceived hitherto, where the categories of universality, particularity and individuality have been set apart from one another.³²

Now, Hegel's main aim in drawing the contrast between the 'abstract' and the 'concrete' universal is related to the way in which the relation between the categories of universality, particularity, and individuality should be viewed: for, whereas the 'abstract universal . . . is opposed to the particular and the individual',³³ the concrete universal is not, where it is characteristic of the latter that 'we cannot speak of the universal apart from the determinateness which is more precisely its particularity and individuality, for the universal, in its absolute negativity, contains determinateness in and for itself'.³⁴ Hegel goes on:

As negativity in general or in accordance with the *first, immediate* negation, the universal contains determinateness generally as *particularity*; as the *second* negation, that is, as negation of the negation, it is *absolute determinateness* or *individuality* and *concreteness*.

³⁰ 'Notion' or 'Concept' are the two terms used for the translation of *Begriff*: in quotations, I follow the usage of the translation referred to, although in my text I use 'Concept'.

³¹ Hegel, *EL*, §161, 237 [*Werke*, VIII: 308].

³² For further discussion, see my *Hegel and the 'Phenomenology of Spirit'* (London: Routledge, 2002), 18–21.

³³ Hegel, *SL*, 602 [*Werke*, II: 275].

³⁴ Hegel, *SL*, 603 [*Werke*, II: 277].

The universal is thus the totality of the Notion; it is concrete, and far from being empty, it has through its Notion a *content*, and a content in which it not only maintains itself but one which is its own and immanent in it. We can, indeed, abstract from the content: but in that case we do not obtain a universal of the Notion but only the *abstract* universal, which is an isolated, imperfect moment of the Notion and has no truth.³⁵

Hegel thus conceives of the concrete universal as ‘the universal of the Notion’, in so far as it involves a dialectical relation to particularity and individuality, whereas the abstract universal does not.

What this means can be seen by looking at the examples Hegel gives of each kind of universal, particularly as these are presented in his discussion of the hierarchy of judgements and syllogisms.³⁶ At the most basic level of the qualitative judgement and the qualitative syllogism,³⁷ the universal is an accidental property of an individual, which fails to differentiate it from other individuals:

When we say: ‘This rose is red,’ the copula ‘is’ implies that subject and predicate agree with one another. But of course, the rose, being something concrete, is not merely red; on the contrary, it also has a scent, a definite form, and all manner of other features, which are not contained within the predicate ‘red’. On the other hand, the predicate, being something abstractly universal, does not belong merely to this subject. For there are other flowers, too, and other objects altogether that are also red.³⁸

Thus, with a universal like ‘red’, there is a clear distinction we can draw between the universal and the individual that possesses that property, and that universal and the other properties it possesses, so there is no dialectical unity here between these elements. At the next level, in the judgement and syllogism of reflection, we get a closer interrelation: for here we predicate properties of individuals, which we take to belong to other individuals of the same kind, where being of this kind then comes to be seen as *essential* to the individual, and where some properties are seen as essential to any member of the kind. Thus, in the case of a judgement like ‘All men are mortal’, we treat being a man as an essential property of each individual man, and not a mere feature

³⁵ Hegel, *SL*, 603–4 [*Werke*, II: 277–8]. Cf. Hegel, *EM*, §467Z, 227 [*Werke*, X: 286–7]: ‘Only on the third stage of pure thinking is the Notion as such known. Therefore, this stage represents comprehension in the strict sense of the word. Here the universal is known as self-particularizing, and from the particularization gathering itself together into individuality; or, what is the same thing, the particular loses its self-subsistence to become a moment of the Notion. Accordingly, the universal here is no longer a form external to the content, but the true form which produces the content from itself’.

³⁶ For the sake of simplicity and brevity, I deal with the hierarchy of judgements and syllogisms together, and so have not here explicitly mentioned ‘the judgement of the concept’ [Das Urteil des Begriffs], which has no corresponding syllogism, and forms the transition from the level of judgements to that of syllogisms.

³⁷ Or the judgement and syllogism of existence [Dasein], as they are called in the *Science of Logic*.

³⁸ Hegel, *EL*, §172Z, 250 [*Werke*, VIII: 324] (where the translators use ‘object’ as their rendering of ‘Gegenstand’ as opposed to ‘Objekt’).

that these individuals happen to have in common, such as possessing earlobes.³⁹ Here, then, we get a closer interconnection between the universal and the individual, in so far as the universal is now seen as an essential property of the individual; and we also have a closer connection between the universal and the particular properties that make something an individual, because it is only qua individual of a certain *kind* that the individual has these properties, and not as a 'bare' individual:

[I]t would not make sense to assume that Caius might perhaps be brave, learned, etc., and yet not be a man. The single human is what he is in particular, only insofar as he is, first of all, human as such, and within the universal; and this universal is not just something over and above the other abstract qualities or mere determinations of reflection, but is rather what permeates and includes within itself everything particular.⁴⁰

This then leads to the judgement and syllogism of necessity, where the particular properties that distinguish one individual from another (e.g. this straight line from this curved line) are seen as different manifestations of a shared substance universal (linearity) by virtue of being different particularizations of the way that universal can be (lines are either straight or curved). So, not only do we see how universality is essential to particularity (Caius can only be a particular individual if he is a man); we also see how particularity is essential to universality (Caius cannot be a 'man in general', but must be a determinate example of a man, whose differences from other men nonetheless do not prevent him exemplifying the same universal 'man').⁴¹ At this point, Hegel says, we have arrived at the Concept,⁴² and the universal as it is now envisaged is truly concrete, in the following respects:

1. It is not merely a property, in the sense of being a way an individual may be: rather, it is *what* the individual *is*, in so far as that individual is an instance of

³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, §175Z, 253 [*Werke*, VIII: 327].

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, §175Z, 253 [*Werke*, VIII: 327]. Cf. Hegel, *SL*, 36–7 [*Werke*, V: 26]: '[E]ach human being though infinitely unique is so primarily because he is a *man*, and each individual animal is such an individual primarily because it is an animal: if this is true, then it would be impossible to say what such an individual could still be if its foundation were removed, no matter how richly endowed the individual might be with other predicates, if, that is, this foundation can equally be called a predicate like the others'.

⁴¹ Cf. Hegel, *EL*, §24Z, 56–7 [*Werke*, VIII: 82]: '[I]n speaking of a definite animal, we say that it is [an] "animal." "Animal as such" cannot be pointed out; only a definite animal can ever be pointed at. "The animal" does not exist; on the contrary, this expression refers to the universal nature of single animals, and each existing animal is something that is much more concretely determinate, something particularised. But "to be animal," the kind considered as the universal, pertains to the determinate animal and constitutes its determinate essentiality. If we were to deprive a dog of its animality we could not say what it is. Things as such have a persisting, inner nature, and an external thereness. They live and die, come to be and pass away; their essentiality, their universality, is the kind, and this cannot be interpreted merely as something held in common'.

⁴² Cf. *ibid.*, §177Z, 255 [*Werke*, VIII: 330]: 'it is the Concept that forms the content of the judgement henceforth'.

that kind of thing; it is therefore a substance universal (e.g. 'man' or 'rose') and not a property universal (e.g. 'red' or 'tall').⁴³

2. It supports generic propositions, such as statements of natural law ('human beings are rational agents') and normative statements ('because this person is irrational, he is a poor example of a human being'); these are therefore to be distinguished from universally quantified statements ('all human beings have earlobes', 'all swans are white'), which tell us about the shared characteristics of a group of individuals, rather than the characteristics of the kind to which the individuals belong (men *qua* men are rational).⁴⁴
3. It can be exemplified in individuals which have different properties, so that there need be nothing *further* in common between these individuals than the fact they exemplify the same concrete universal (the way in which one individual is a man may be different from the way in which another individual is a man).⁴⁵

Thus, having begun with a characterization of the Concept as the dialectical interrelation of universality, particularity, and individuality, Hegel has proceeded through a discussion of the types of judgement and syllogism to lead us back to the Concept and this interrelation, by moving from abstract to concrete universality. I take this to be vital to Hegel's conception of the concrete universal: whereas 'the abstract universal . . . is opposed to the particular and the individual', the concrete universal is not. We can now see what Hegel means by this claim: A rose is not an individual rose by virtue of exemplifying the abstract universal 'red', whereas it is an individual rose by virtue of exemplifying the concrete universal 'rose'—so the latter is dialectically related to individuality in the way the former is not; and it exemplifies the abstract universal 'red' in the same way as other red

⁴³ Cf. Hegel, *EM*, §456Z, 209 [*Werke*, X: 266], where Hegel distinguishes the genus as a concrete universal, from the particular properties of the individual: 'This common element is either any one *particular* side of the object raised to the form of *universality*, such as, for example, in the rose, the red colour; or the *concrete universal*, the genus, for example, in the rose, the plant'.

⁴⁴ Cf. Hegel, *SL*, 649–50 [*Werke*, VI: 333–5]: '[With the judgement of necessity] The subject has thus stripped off the form determination of the judgement of reflection which passed from *this* through *some* to *allness*; instead of *all men* we now have to say *man*. . . . *What belongs to all the individuals of a genus belongs to the genus by its nature*, is an immediate consequence and the expression of what we have seen, that the subject, for example *all men*, strips off its form determination, and *man* is to take its place. This intrinsic and explicit connection constitutes the basis of a new judgement, the *judgement of necessity*'.

⁴⁵ Cf. Hegel, *EL*, §163Z, 240 [*Werke*, VIII: 311–12]: 'When people speak of the Concept, they ordinarily have only abstract universality in mind, and consequently the Concept is usually also defined as a general notion. We speak in this way of the "concept" of colour, or of a plant, or of an animal, and so on; and these concepts are supposed to arise by omitting the particularities through which the various colours, plants, animals, etc., are distinguished from one another, and holding fast to what they have in common. This is the way in which the understanding apprehends the Concept, and the feeling that such concepts are hollow and empty, that they are mere schemata and shadows, is justified. What is universal about the Concept is indeed not just something common against which the particular stands on its own; instead the universal is what particularises (specifies) itself, remaining at home with itself in its other, in unclouded clarity'.

things, whereas it exemplifies the concrete universal 'rose' differently from other roses, in so far as some roses are scented and others are not, some are evergreen and others are not, etc.—so the latter is dialectically related to particularity in the way the former is not. Thus, whereas it may appear that we can conceive of 'red' in abstraction from individuality and particularity, we cannot conceive of 'rose' in this manner, so that this kind of universality involves 'the totality of the Concept' (i.e. the other 'moments' of particularity and individuality) in the way that an abstract universal does not.

Taken in this way, Hegel's position can be viewed as a distinctive contribution to the metaphysical discussion concerning universals (though with echoes of other positions in the tradition, particularly Aristotle's). The trouble with abstract universals like 'red', Hegel argues, is that instances of such universals are not individuals in themselves, so that individuals are reduced to 'bundles' of such universals, while difficulties in individuating these bundles leads to the 'substratum' view of objects: but because this substratum is 'bare' (i.e. propertyless), it is hard to see how it can do the individuating job required of it. However, if we recognize that there are also concrete universals like 'man', we will avoid these problems: for, while instances of 'red' are not individuals, instances of substance universals like 'man' are; but for this to be the case, it must be possible to exemplify a universal like 'man' in many different ways, such that each of us can be a man uniquely, in a way that constitutes our individuality. Hegel thus offers a way of solving the problem of individuation, without appealing either to the idea of a 'bare individual' or to trope theory (according to which the universal as it is instantiated in different individuals is not identical between them, but is a distinct particular in each): while there is nothing more to the individual than the universals it exemplifies, those universals are a combination of property and substance universals, so that it is qua man that I have the particular set of properties that make me into an individual, not as a bare 'this'. Unless we recognize Hegel's way of drawing a distinction between abstract and concrete universals, this way of solving the problem is something we will miss.

Hegel's doctrine of the concrete universal may therefore be summarized as follows: The individual is no more than an instantiation of universals (there are no 'bare' individuals). But the universals that constitute the individual are not just property universals, as these just tell us what attributes the individual has, not what the individual *is* (so the 'bundle view' is false). But the substance universals which constitute the nature of the individual qua individual do not exist in the abstract, but only as particularized through property universals, and thus as instantiated in the form of individuals (so Platonism is false).⁴⁶ So,

⁴⁶ In his early work *Ethical Studies*, Bradley seems to have made just this the basis of his conception of the concrete universal, before he came to the more problematic position discussed in Section I: see *Ethical Studies*, rev. 2nd edn., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927), 162, where he

starting from any one of the categories of the Concept (universality, particularity, individuality), this category can only be made intelligible in the light of the other two: individuality is constituted by the particularized substance universal (as an individual, I am a man with a determinate set of properties that distinguish me from other men); the substance universal exists only in individuals, through its particularization (the universal 'man' exists *in rebus*, as instantiated in *different* men); and particularity is the differentiation of a substance universal, whereby it constitutes an individual (it is qua man that I have the properties which distinguish me from other men). It is the dialectical interconnection between the three categories which Hegel characterizes as 'development', and which he thinks we can get only when we conceive of the universal as 'concrete' rather than as merely 'abstract', as only then will we be able to distinguish between substance and property universals in the way that is required.

Now, if the account I have presented here adequately captures the force of Hegel's view of the concrete universal, it should be clear why I earlier denied that this doctrine commits Hegel to any sort of holistic conception, of the kind favoured by the British Idealists. For, while the Concept, as the interrelation of universality, particularity, and individuality, has a holistic structure, in the sense that (as we have seen) each 'moment' is claimed to be only intelligible in relation to the others and through the others, and while the substance universal characterizes the individual as a whole in a way that unifies its particular properties, there is no suggestion here that individuals *as such* are interrelated, in the manner of Bradley's red-haired men. So, when Royce writes that '[the universal "man"] is thus *konkret* in two senses, namely, in so far as in it all men are together, and in so far as through it all *Qualitäten* of each man are united',⁴⁷ I would accept only the second of these senses as being part of Hegel's conception of the concrete universal, and not the first. It would seem, then, that even if previously (in Section I) it was possible to interpret their position in such a way that there was no divergence between Hegel's position on the concrete universal and that of the British Idealists, there is a genuine divergence here.

speaks of 'the will which is above ourselves' as a universal which 'is not abstract, since it belongs to its essence that it should be realized, and it has no real existence except in and through its particulars. The good will (for morality) is meaningless, if, whatever else it be, it be not the will of living finite beings. It is a concrete universal, because it not only is above but is within and throughout its details, and is so far only as they are'. (Cf. Hegel, *EPR*, §260, 282 [*Werke*, VII: 407]: '[In the state] the universal does not attain validity or fulfilment without the interest, knowledge, and volition of the particular, and . . . individuals do not live as private persons merely for these particular interests without at the same time directing their will to a universal end and acting in conscious awareness of this end'.) Even here, however, Bradley's position begins to take a holistic turn, by way of an organicist analogy, where Bradley continues: 'It is the life which can live only in and by them, as they are dead unless within it; it is the whole soul which lives so far as the body lives, which makes the body a living body, and which without the body is as unreal an abstraction as the body without it. It is an organism and a moral organism; and it is conscious self-realization, because only by the will of its self-conscious members can the moral organism give itself reality'.

⁴⁷ Royce, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, 501.

IV

It might be said, however, that my argument in the previous section exaggerates the contrast between Hegel and the British Idealists on this issue, and that this can be seen by looking at the role both gave to the concrete universal in their political philosophies, where it was used by both Hegel and the British Idealists to the same effect—to argue for their organic or holistic view of the state. For it can be argued that this holistic conception of the concrete universal underpins the British Idealist's organic conception of the state, whereby all individuals within the community are said to embody a common universal, which makes them into parts of a whole; and, it might therefore be argued, Hegel's social holism (which he and the British Idealists could be said to share) has a similar basis in this holistic model of the concrete universal.⁴⁸

That the British Idealists based their picture of the unity of the state on something like this holistic conception of the concrete universal is suggested in several of their writings (although perhaps not as explicitly or strongly as some of their critics have generally assumed). So, for example, in his (in)famous discussion of 'the English nation' in Essay V of *Ethical Studies*, Bradley appears to contrast the 'individualism' that he rejects with a more holistic model of a community like England, on the grounds that there is an underlying common nature that unifies its citizens into a whole:

If we suppose then [as Bradley has argued] that the results of the social life of the race are present in a latent and potential form in the child, can we deny that they are common property? Can we assert that they are not an element of sameness in all? Can we say that the individual is this individual, because he is exclusive, when, if we deduct from him what he includes, he loses characteristics which make him himself, and when again he does include what the others include, and therefore does (how can we escape the consequences?) include in some sense the others also, just as they include him? By himself, then, what are we to call him? I confess I do not know, unless we name him a theoretical attempt to isolate what can not be isolated; and that, I suppose, has, out of our heads, no existence. But what he is really, and not in mere theory, can be described only as the specification or particularization of that which is common, which is the same amid

⁴⁸ For a classic account along these lines, which attributes the social holism of the British Idealists to the holistic model of the concrete universal that is said to be found in Hegel, see L. T. Hobhouse, *The Metaphysical Theory of the State* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1918), esp. 62–6, where Hobhouse distinguishes this sort of position from his own: 'We are contending for individuality, for the irreducible distinction between self and others, and we have met some of the arguments directed against that distinction. But now we have admitted a "universal" running through thousands and millions of selves. This admission, according to the idealist, will be fatal to the separateness which we have maintained. The universal for him unites the instances which fall under it just in the manner which we dispute. . . . We come, therefore, to that theory of the universal which, as we said above, underlines the whole question. This theory is due to Hegel' (ibid., 62).

diversity, and without which the ‘individual’ would be so other than he is that we could not call him the same.⁴⁹

Here Bradley seems to be using the idea that each individual exemplifies something common as part of their essential nature (‘the social life of the race’) to underpin his social holism (his view that ‘the “individual” apart from the community is an abstraction’⁵⁰), in a way that could well be taken to be Hegelian; thus, in so far as Bradley’s view expresses the characteristically holistic view of the concrete universal, so it could be argued that Hegel’s position has a similar basis.

Likewise, in *The Philosophical Theory of the State*, Bosanquet argues that ‘the social whole’ has ‘the nature of a continuous self-identical being, pervading a system of differences and realized only in them’,⁵¹ on the grounds that individuals within the state are ‘the true particularisation of the human universal’:⁵² that is, they are each different types of human being (doctors, workmen, architects and so on), which makes them aspects of the more general kind, which cannot be embodied individually but only collectively. Bosanquet uses this idea of ‘the human universal’ to argue that on the one hand individuals or groups of particular types of individuals cannot ultimately be opposed to one another,⁵³ and that individuals cannot ultimately be isolated from each other.⁵⁴

It may thus appear that for British Idealists such as Bradley and Bosanquet, their holistic view of the concrete universal (as being, in Royce’s words, ‘a perfectly concrete whole’ in which individuals are ‘embraced’) provides part of the background to their social holism; and in so far as Hegel is also a social holist,

⁴⁹ Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, 170–1.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 173. Cf. also *ibid.*, 168–9: ‘The “individual” man, the man into whose essence his community with others does not enter, who does not include relations to others in his very being, is, we say, a fiction, and in the lights of facts we have to examine him . . . It is, I believe, a matter of fact that at birth the child of one race is not the same as child of another; that in the children of the one race there is a certain identity, a developed or undeveloped national type, which may be hard to recognize, or which at present may even be unrecognizable, but which nevertheless in some form will appear. If that be the fact, then again we must say that one English child is in some points, though perhaps it does not as yet show itself, the same as another. His being is so far common to him with others; he is not a mere “individual”’. It should perhaps be remarked that when he came to revisit *Ethical Studies* in 1924, Bradley came to see that what is held in common is perhaps not best thought of along racial lines, commenting in his notes on the paragraph we have just quoted: ‘Perhaps, but “race” and “nationality” are not conterminous. This paragraph can hardly stand without large qualification. How far is identity of race an effective bond of union?’

⁵¹ Bernard Bosanquet, *The Philosophical Theory of the State and Related Essays*, repr. edn., ed. Gerald F. Gaus and William Sweet (South Bend, Indiana: St Augustine’s Press, 2001), 174.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 176.

⁵³ Cf. *ibid.*, 169: ‘Assuming, indeed, that all the groupings are organs of a single pervading life, we find it incredible that there should ultimately be irreconcilable opposition between them. That they should contradict one another is not more or less possible than that human nature should be at variance with itself’.

⁵⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 175: ‘[A]ctual individuals are not ultimate or equal embodiments of the true particulars of the social universal. We thus see once more that the given individual is only in making, and that his reality may lie largely outside him’.

can't it also be argued that his social holism incorporates a holistic conception of the concrete universal in a similar manner? If so, this would imply that my analysis of Hegel's position in the previous section is mistaken.

In fact I think that even in the case of the British Idealists, it is less clear that the holistic model of the concrete universal straightforwardly underpins their social holism in the way that this objection assumes; but whatever the rights and wrongs of that interpretative issue (which we cannot go into fully here), I think that in the case of Hegel, no such role for the holistic model of the concrete universal can be found. For, while I think that it is indeed true that Hegel is a social holist in a way that involves his conception of the Concept, and thus his account of universality, particularity and individuality, this is nonetheless *not* a holism based on the idea that individuals form parts of a totality because they share some common nature that holds them together into a whole: there is consequently no place here for this holistic conception of the concrete universal. As I see it, the key to Hegel's holism with regard to the relations of individuals to the state lies in his account of the *will*, where individuals are brought into unity through the structure of the will, rather than any underlying universal nature (such as 'Englishness' or 'humanity'), that holds them together qua individuals of the same kind.⁵⁵

Hegel's crucial discussion of the will can be found in the 'Introduction' to the *Philosophy of Right*, §§5–7:

The will contains (α) the element of *pure indeterminacy* or of the 'I's pure reflection into itself, in which every limitation, every content . . . is dissolved. This is the limitless infinity of *absolute abstraction* or *universality*, the pure thinking of oneself . . . (β) In the same way, 'I' is the transition from undifferentiated indeterminacy to *differentiation*, *determination*, and the *positing* of a determinacy as a content and object . . . Through this positing of itself as something *determinate*, 'I' steps into existence [*Dasein*] in general—the absolute moment of the *finitude* or *particularization* of the 'I' . . . (γ) The will is the unity of both these moments—*particularity* reflected *into itself* and thereby restored to *universality*. It is *individuality* [*Einzelheit*], the *self-determination* of the 'I', in that it posits itself as the negative of itself, that is, as *determinate* and *limited*, and at the same time remains with itself [*bei sich*], that is, in its *identity with itself* and universality; and in this determination, it joins together with itself alone . . . This is the *freedom* of the will, which constitutes the concept or substantiality of the will, its gravity, just as gravity constitutes the substantiality of a body.⁵⁶

In very brief terms, I take Hegel's idea here to be this: as a subject, I may view myself and my will in two ways that are at first apparently opposed to each other: on the one hand, I can abstract from all my particular projects and concerns,

⁵⁵ The case for arguing that the social holism of the British Idealists is also not best seen as being grounded in the holistic model of the concrete universal would also begin here, with the role they give to the *will* in underpinning their holism, in a way that I will now ascribe to Hegel: see, for example, Bosanquet's discussion of the will in ch. IX of *The Philosophical Theory of the State*.

⁵⁶ Hegel, *EPR*, §§5–7, 37–41 [*Werke*, VII: 49–55].

and see myself in purely universal terms, as just an 'I' or universal subject, not tied to anything determinate, but able to view things from an utterly universal point of view; but if I do so, I will lose my will, for to act is always to act in some particular way or other, which thus can never feel like a proper expression of my universality, so that if I *do* act, I must always destroy the product of my action in a cycle of negation—or at least feel that that product is not an expression of the 'real (universal) me'.⁵⁷ On the other hand, I can take myself to be nothing but a set of particular projects and concerns, and so identify myself fully with what makes me not just a pure 'I', but the particular person I am, and the activities of the will that stem from that (I did this because I am a father, a husband, a teacher etc.). However, because I can also go back to the universal standpoint of the 'I', it may always come to seem to me that these particular concerns and projects are merely arbitrary and 'given', and so not worthy expressions of what my will should be as something more universal (why did I do this to help my children, rather than children more generally?). I take it that Hegel is saying in §7 that this oscillation can be brought to a satisfactory end when we see our will as equally expressing *both* universality *and* particularity, such that although my will is expressive of my particular concerns and projects, these are not *merely* mine, but can be recognized as valid from a more universal perspective that is not just mine, although not one that is *so* universal, it regards any particular action by an individual as compromising to that individual (in caring for my children, I am not just following my private interests and desires, but fulfilling a role that fits into a wider framework, whereby a more universal good can also be realized, and which could not be realized without the particular concerns of individuals for their own children).

Now, in my view it is essentially this picture of the will that takes Hegel towards his social holism: for, as the *Philosophy of Right* argues, it is ultimately only within the state that the will can be properly realized in this form, for it is only within the state that there is the right connection between the general and individual interest, in a way that will enable us to balance the pull of universality on the one hand and particularity on the other, into a stable picture of the individual will. Thus, in Hegel's state, individuals are part of an interconnected system of mutual dependence regulated for the general good, so that in acting as a particular will (father, teacher etc.) my will feeds into a system that also realizes the good of society as a whole, which raises my actions beyond 'mere' particularity and adds to them an element of universality, while this universality is not 'abstract' because it can only be realized through each of us taking on a series of determinate projects, thereby harmonizing both

⁵⁷ I have argued elsewhere that this issue is at the heart of Hegel's diagnosis of the way in which the French Revolution became the Terror: see Robert Stern, *Hegel and the 'Phenomenology of Spirit'* (London: Routledge, 2002), 157–68.

'moments' of the will in the way Hegel thinks is required, in a way that is characteristic of the concrete universal.⁵⁸ So, Hegel's social philosophy is indeed holistic, in the sense that for him the structure of the individual's will when rightly constituted has 'moments' of universality and particularity, and these moments must be properly realized for the individual to be free, which is only possible (Hegel believes) within a shared social project;⁵⁹ but this is different from saying that what unifies individuals within the state is some property or universal essence belonging to them all, that as a result ties them together into a social whole. Thus, in stemming from Hegel's social conception of the will, his social holism is not based on any claim that this unity is grounded in some common nature that the individuals share, as on the holistic model of the concrete universal.

It might be argued, however, that in emphasizing the role that Hegel gives to the will, rather than anything like 'Englishness' or 'humanity', I have not yet shown that the holistic model of the concrete universal is not operative in his political philosophy: for (it could be said), doesn't this conception of the will involve attributing to individuals a will they possess in common, where it is this communality that is supposed to underpin their unity, much as the holistic model of the concrete universal suggests?

Now, it is indeed true that the British Idealists have sometimes been interpreted in this way. For example, this is how Hobhouse appears to have understood Bosanquet's social holism, where Hobhouse focuses on Bosanquet's conception of the will, but adopts the holistic model of the concrete universal in doing so.

⁵⁸ Cf. Hegel, *EPR*, §24, 54–5 [*Werke*, VII: 75], where Hegel refers to his account of universality in the *Encyclopaedia Logic* as part of his discussion of the will, where he says that the free will 'permeates its determination and is identical with itself in this determination' — that is, a will that has a particular content or determination, but for which that determination is not a limitation on itself, but an expression of its nature (just as Caius is not a 'limitation' on the universal man, but a proper realization of it).

⁵⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, §260, 282 [*Werke*, VII: 406–7]: 'The state is the actuality of concrete freedom. But *concrete freedom* requires that personal individuality and its particular interests should reach their full *development* and gain *recognition of their right* for itself (within the system of the family and of civil society), and that they should, on the one hand, *pass over* of their own accord into the interest of the universal, and on the other, knowingly and willingly acknowledge this universal interest even as their own *substantial spirit*, and *actively pursue it* as their *ultimate end*. The effect of this is that the universal does not attain validity or fulfilment without the interest, knowledge, and volition of the particular, and that individuals do not live as private persons merely for these particular interests without at the same time directing their will to a universal end and acting in conscious awareness of this end'; and §308, 347 [*Werke*, VII: 477]: 'The concrete state is *the whole, articulated into its particular circles*. Each member of the state is a *member of an estate* of this kind, and only in this objective determination can he be considered in relation to the state. His universal determination in general includes two moments, for he is a *private person* and at the same time a *thinking* being with consciousness and volition of the *universal*. But this consciousness and volition remain empty and lack *fulfilment* and actual *life* until they are filled with particularity, and this is [to be found in] a particular estate and determination. Otherwise, the individual remains a *generic category*, but only within the *next* generic category does he attain his *immanent universal actuality*'.

Thus, he argues that for Bosanquet, because our 'real will' is supposed to be something shared and thus a universal, it makes us parts of a whole:

But when we pass from the conception of like persons or like selves to a corporate person or a common self, there is an inevitable transition from qualitative sameness to the sameness of continuity and numerical unity. The assumptions are (1) There is in me a real self, my real will, which is opposed to what I very often am. (2) This real will is what I ought to be as opposed to what I very often am. (3) There is in you a real will and in every other member of society a real will. All these real wills are what you and every other member of society ought to be. In quality and character these real wills are indistinguishable. They are therefore the same. (4) This sameness constitutes of all the real wills together one self.⁶⁰

It might seem, then, that even if I am right to make the will central to Hegel's political philosophy, this can be conceived of in a way that still involves the holistic model of the concrete universal, just as it does (Hobhouse claims) for an Idealist like Bosanquet.

However, whatever the justice of this reading of Bosanquet,⁶¹ it seems clear that it would involve a misunderstanding of Hegel's position, and what constitutes the 'universality' of the will as he conceives it. For, as we have outlined, for Hegel the will contains a universal moment in so far as each of us can abstract from particular interests, where what underpins his holism is then the claim that we cannot prevent that abstraction becoming vicious except by seeing those interests as forming part of some general social good; this then provides the social context within which my interests and the actions that flow from them have a 'universal' as well as a 'particular' value. This way of moving from the structure of the will to a social holism is clearly very different from the sort of position envisaged by Hobhouse, and would thus seem to do without any appeal to the holistic conception of the concrete universal, of the kind which Hobhouse attributes to Bosanquet.

Even if this much is accepted, however, it might still be said that it cannot do full justice to the way in which Hegel speaks of the state in organic terms: for how can different individuals constitute the state as a kind of organism, unless there is 'an element of sameness in all', akin to the 'single pervading life'⁶² that flows through different organs of the body and makes them one? And doesn't this conception once more suggest that Hegel had a holistic view of the concrete universal, as precisely constituting this 'element of sameness'?

⁶⁰ Hobhouse, *The Metaphysical Theory of the State*, 50.

⁶¹ Hobhouse was of course a hostile witness: for a corrective, see Peter P. Nicholson, *The Political Philosophy of the British Idealists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 205–21.

⁶² Bosanquet, *The Philosophical Theory of the State*, 169.

It is important to note here, however, that the primary focus of Hegel's discussion of the state in organic terms is the *political constitution* of the state. In this context, Hegel talks of the state as an organism not because it is a whole of which its individual citizens are parts,⁶³ but rather that the elements that make up the constitution of the state depend on one another in the way that the categories that comprise the Concept are dependent on one another.⁶⁴ Put very simply, this means that while the monarchy is a manifestation of individuality, the executive is a manifestation of particularity, and the legislature is a manifestation of universality, each also embodies aspects of the other 'moments' (so, for example, the monarch acts as an individual, but in his person represents the universal interest, where that interest involves the interest of a state comprising different particular groups). Thus, the conception of the universal that Hegel is using here is concrete in the sense that it cannot be conceived as something separable from the categories of particularity and individuality, but not in the sense that it somehow ties together individuals into a totality, as might be suggested if we read Hegel as the British Idealists are sometime read, as basing their social holism on the holistic model of the concrete universal.

⁶³ Cf. Dudley Knowles's recent discussion of Hegel's organicism in his *Hegel and the 'Philosophy of Right'* (London: Routledge, 2002), 323, where Knowles writes: 'Citizens are "not parts, but members"', Hegel says (§286), exploiting the primary sense of *Glied* as a bodily member or limb'. But, taken in context, it seems that Hegel is not talking here about individual citizens; for this context is a discussion of feudal monarchies where 'vassals, pashas, etc.' had a role in 'political business' and so formed part of the constitution of the state', but in an atomistic way, because 'each part [of this political structure] maintains *itself alone*, and in so doing, it promotes only itself and not the others along with it, and has within itself the complete set of moments which it requires for independence and self-sufficiency' (Hegel, *EPR*, §286, 328 [*Werke*, VII: 456–7]). In contrasting this structure with an organic one, Hegel is therefore speaking here about an organic view of the *constitutional parts* of the state, rather than of the state in relation to its individual citizens.

The only other place I know of in the *Philosophy of Right* where an organicist view of citizens in relation to the state might be found is the Addition to §270, where Hegel expresses the idea that 'human beings should have respect for the state as a whole of which they are the branches' (ibid., 303 [*Werke*, VII: 430]). However, even here Hegel is not expressing so much his *own* view, but that of a position he is discussing, in the context of a consideration of the relation between the church and the state. The specific issue is the claim that 'the state must be founded on religion', where the proponent of this view may mean by this not that they can thereby be better oppressed by the state, but brought to have respect for it 'as that whole of which they are branches', which Hegel (not surprisingly) thinks is a better way of conceiving of the role of religion.

⁶⁴ Cf. ibid., §272Z, 307 [*Werke*, VII: 434–5]: '[W]hile the powers of the state must certainly be distinguished, each must form a whole in itself and contain the other moments within it. When we speak of the distinct activities of these powers, we must not fall into the monumental error of taking this to mean that each power should exist independently and in abstraction; on the contrary, the powers should be distinguished only as moments of the concept'; and §272, 305 [*Werke*, VII: 432]: 'The constitution is rational in so far as the state *differentiates* and determines its activity within itself *in accordance with the nature of the concept*. It does so in such a way that *each of the powers* in question is in itself the *totality*, since each contains the other moments and has them active within it, and since all of them, as expressions of the differentiation of the concept, remain wholly within itself ideality and constitute nothing but a *single individual whole*'.

V

Looking at the accounts of the concrete universal associated with the British Idealists that we have considered so far, therefore, we have found little reason to take these accounts to be genuinely Hegelian; and while Hegel's position could be said to have philosophical value in offering a potential solution to certain familiar metaphysical problems (concerning the question of individuation, or the relation between substances and their attributes, for example),⁶⁵ the conceptions of the concrete universal taken from the British Idealists that we have discussed up to now may only seem to be of interest to those few with a commitment to their characteristic philosophical views (such as ontological holism or monism). However, if we dig a little deeper, we will find a way to connect Hegel's position as I have outlined it to the thinking of some of the British Idealists, and to see that the questions and issues that drew them to the doctrine of the concrete universal in this properly Hegelian form are not as alien to us as may have appeared hitherto.

Where a doctrine of the concrete universal emerges that is close to the one I have attributed to Hegel, is in the way that some of the British Idealists sought to attack empiricist claims concerning 'the abstractness of thought'. This issue, which was of widespread concern, has several different aspects. The first is epistemological: thought has only a subordinate role to play in knowledge, because our primary engagement with the world comes directly through the senses, from which thought abstracts. The second is psychological: the general ideas through which we think about the world are generated via a process of abstraction from the simple ideas we acquire through sensible experience. The third is logical: logical thought involves ever more abstraction, as we move away from the content of our experience into higher and higher levels of generality. And the fourth might be termed 'existential': thought leads us into a realm of unreal abstractions, away from the concrete reality of lived experience and an immediate grasp of things in their unique individuality. To many of the Idealists, this conception of the abstractness of thought was mistaken; to quote a summary of their position: '[T]hought is essentially a process of concretion, not a process of abstraction from an experience which, as given, is already concrete'.⁶⁶ As we shall show, it is when addressing this issue that a number of the British Idealists⁶⁷

⁶⁵ For further discussion, see my 'Individual Existence and the Philosophy of Difference', in *Oxford Handbook to Continental Philosophy*, ed. Brian Leiter and Michael Rosen (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2007), 379–408 [repr. below, Chapter 12].

⁶⁶ George H. Sabine, 'The Concreteness of Thought', *Philosophical Review* 16 (1907), 154–69, at 154.

⁶⁷ The question of whether Bradley is an exception here is too complex to be dealt with properly in what follows: for on the one hand, while Bradley may seem to be more insistent than other Idealist writers on the abstractive nature of thought, and thus more pessimistic about its capacity to

come closest to adopting the Hegelian doctrine of the concrete universal as characterized above, and in a way that shows that doctrine to have contemporary interest.

We can see most clearly how the attack on the thesis that thought involves abstraction enabled a properly Hegelian doctrine of the concrete universal to emerge by looking in some detail at one of the first British Idealists to launch such an attack, namely T. H. Green. Green outlines the abstractionist picture of thought, with its various problematic dimensions, as follows:

Give sensation this first inch, and it takes an ell. If sense gives a knowledge of properties, nothing remains for thought but to abstract and combine them, and it is vain then to re-assert for the data of thought, for its abstractions and 'mixed modes,' the dignity of the 'things themselves.' Thought has abdicated its proper prerogatives. It has admitted that experience is something given to it from without, not that in which it comes to itself. It inevitably follows that in what it does for itself, when not simply receptive of experience, it is merely draining away in narrower and more remote channels the fulness of the real world. We cannot know by abstraction, for properties must be known before they can be abstracted. If thought, then, is a process of abstraction—as it is according to the Aristotelian logic—we think by other methods than we know. Thought, therefore, cannot give us knowledge, but only lead us away from it.⁶⁸

The main focus of Green's attack on this picture is the 'popular philosophy' of 'Locke and his followers',⁶⁹ where abstraction was seen to play a role both in Locke's epistemology and his psychology. Beginning from a stock of simple ideas delivered by sensory perception, Locke argued that the mind can then form complex ideas by abstraction from more or less resembling simple ideas, where the complex idea lacks features which distinguish the latter from one another. This account thus makes sensory experience a prior and independent source of knowledge, to which thought is subordinate. It also allows Locke to adopt a nominalist or 'particularist' view of properties, kinds, and relations: for Locke holds that at the level of the senses or simple ideas, what we experience is not identity, but merely resemblances; but when the mind comes to form complex ideas, the differences are abstracted away, so we come to believe that properties, kind and relations are the same, and thus come to attribute universality to them to explain this, when in fact what we are explaining is a shadow of our capacity for abstraction, rather than a genuine feature of the world. On this basis, Locke

grasp the unique individuality of reality, he nonetheless also seems to have shared their view that thought is required in order to give experience a particular content, where this once again relies on a non-abstractionist account of our concepts. For an enlightening discussion of these issues, see Phillip Ferreira, *Bradley and the Structure of Knowledge* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), where pp. 41–4 are particularly relevant to the themes of this paper.

⁶⁸ T. H. Green, 'The Philosophy of Aristotle', in *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, ed. R. L. Nettleship, 3 vols (London: Longmans, 1885–1888), vol. 3, 46–91, at 61–2.

⁶⁹ Green, 'The Philosophy of Aristotle', 48.

can conclude that ‘All things, that exist, [are] Particulars’,⁷⁰ and it is only the abstractionist processes of thought that make us believe otherwise.

Now, as is well known, Green believed that everything in this Lockean picture was mistaken, and that if accepted, it led to disastrous philosophical results (illustrated, Green held, in the scepticism of Hume, who carried the Lockean programme through to its logical, but absurd, conclusions). Locke’s essential error, Green argued, was that he took for granted a dualistic conception of feeling and thought, treating the former as a source of knowledge that was independent and prior to the latter, on which we must rely to provide us with direct and immediate access to reality. Green held that this position had seemed intelligible to Locke because he thought our senses could provide us with experience of particular properties in the world and thus provide us with simple ideas corresponding to these properties, prior to thought’s merely abstractive role in forming complex ideas; but, Green argued, without complex ideas, we could not pick out objects and relations, and thus our sense experience would not be of *properties* at all, but of sensations lacking the kind of content which Locke requires to make his abstractionist story intelligible. Thus, according to Green, there is no way Locke can coherently adopt his abstractionist account of thought: either Locke allows thought a role in providing experience with sufficient content from which abstraction might be possible, but then he must allow that thought does more than merely abstract; or he must confine thought’s role to an abstractionist one, but then rob sensory experience of the kind of content needed to make abstraction possible. Green argues, therefore, that ‘where [Locke] speaks of general ideas as formed by abstraction of certain qualities from real things, or of certain ideas from other ideas which accompany them in real existence’, ‘[s]uch a notion of the really existing thing’ cannot be arrived at via abstraction, because this something ‘Locke [already] has before him’ as without this notion, we could not have formed the idea of *qualities* from which the process of abstraction is meant to begin. Green makes this clear in his criticism of Locke’s well-known account of how we form the complex idea of ‘gold’:

[Locke says] ‘When some one first lit on a parcel of that sort of substance we denote by the word *gold*, . . . its peculiar colour, perhaps, and weight were the first he abstracted from it, to make the complex idea of that species . . . another perhaps added to these the ideas of fusibility and fixedness . . . another its ductility and solubility in aqua regia. These, or part of these, put together, usually make the complex idea in men’s minds of that sort of body we call *gold*.’ (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk II. Ch. xxxi. §. 9) Here the supposition is that a thing, multitudinously qualified, is given apart from any action of the understanding, which then proceeds to act in the way of successively detaching (‘abstracting’) these qualities and recombining them as the idea of a species. Such a recombination, indeed, would seem but wasted labour. The qualities

⁷⁰ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), Bk III, ch. III, §1, 409.

are assumed to be already found by the understanding and found as in a thing; otherwise the understanding could not abstract them from it. Why should it then painfully put together in imperfect combination what has been previously given to it complete? Of the complex idea which results from the work of abstraction, nothing can be said but a small part of what is predicable of the known thing which the possibility of such abstraction presupposes.⁷¹

Green thus holds that Locke's position is fundamentally incoherent, where this incoherence stems from the dualistic conception of thought and feeling which it adopts. For Green, thought cannot be conceived as making a separate contribution to our knowledge of the world from that of feeling, because both are equally required in order to have experience, a fact that Locke's abstractionist model obscures:

The 'sensible thing' thus reappears, no longer, however, as a 'sensible' but as a 'cogitable,' not as a complex of attributes, but as the emptiest of abstractions. The antithesis between thought, as that in which we active, and experience, as that in which we are simply receptive, vanishes, for thought appears as a factor in experience even in its remotest germs. Thought again appears as a process of concretion, at least as much as of abstraction.⁷²

Having sketched Green's general argument against abstractionism, how might this have led him to adopt a conception of the concrete universal that is more properly Hegelian than any we have so far discussed? I think we can see how, by looking at his early essay 'The Philosophy of Aristotle' (first published in the *North British Review* in September 1866), which was to lay the groundwork for much of his subsequent thought. Green begins that essay by first criticizing Locke, along the lines we have discussed; but he traces the source of Locke's position to one side of the intellectual legacy left by Plato and Aristotle, while arguing that another side of that legacy could have prevented anything like Lockean empiricism emerging, if it had been properly developed. Green therefore claims that 'we may distinguish two really inconsistent theories of knowledge running through Greek philosophy',⁷³ one with affinities to Locke's, and one antithetical to it and closer to his own; and the source of this inconsistency in their position lies in the fact that Plato and Aristotle saw universality in both abstract and concrete terms.

Thus, on the one hand, Green argues, Plato and Aristotle had a superficial view of universality, because they saw the universal in terms of the property or properties that enable us to group individuals into a class on the basis of their perceptible similarities—so, for example, on this view, 'the essence of an acid will be that it sets the teeth on edge, that being the obvious property by which the sensation is first defined in thought, and which is thus associated with its

⁷¹ T. H. Green, 'Introductions to Hume's "Treatise of Human Nature"', *Works*, vol. 1, 1–371, at 37–8.

⁷² Green, 'The Philosophy of Aristotle', 52.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 53.

name'.⁷⁴ However, Green remarks, '[b]y the identification of the individual with a class, the true view of it is lost as soon as it is gained',⁷⁵ because then the universal can only come to seem accidental to the individual, and as such the latter is treated as ontologically distinct from the former, as a 'bare individual' accessible to the senses alone:

By such a process [the] emptiness [of the universal] becomes yet more empty, and meanwhile the individual thing is asserting its independence. Instead of being regarded as that which becomes universal so soon as it is judged of or known, in virtue of the property under which it is known, it is connected with the universal as a thing with the class to which it belongs. In this position it is vain to deny its [i.e. the individual's] priority and independence. Thus individuals come to be regarded as one set of knowable things, universals another. But the 'sensible,' according to the ideal theory, is the merely individual. It is so because it is in no determinate relation to anything else, and therefore nothing positive. The mere individual, however, having by the wrong path just traced been raised to the position of a real entity, the 'sensible' is so raised likewise. The ideal theory has built again that which it destroyed, and the sensible thing becomes, as such, the determinate subject of properties.⁷⁶

On this account, then, one side of the Platonic and Aristotelian picture of the universal is responsible for leading to the metaphysics of the 'bare individual' and to the priority of sensation over thought, where the argument behind this account is recognizably Hegelian: once our view of universality is 'abstract' and hence allows for the possibility that individuality might be something over and above universality, giving this individuality 'priority and independence', the notion of the 'bare individual' will inevitably emerge, and with it the idea of treating 'apprehension' as prior to and separable from 'comprehension', 'sensation' from 'thought'.⁷⁷ It is this side of the Platonic and Aristotelian position that Green sees as leading to the emergence of full-blown nominalism, and thus eventually to the Lockean position:

The fault of this crude 'realism,' it will be observed, whether Platonic, Aristotelian, or scholastic, is that it is virtually nominalism. It holds the universal to be real, but it finds the universal simply in the meaning of a name. . . . [T]he realism of the ancient logic, taking for its reality the species denoted by a common noun, is doubly at fault. It makes its universal a class instead of a relation, and it takes as the essential attributes of the class those only which are connoted by its name, *i.e.* the most superficial. Having thus begun with a meagre conception as its first reality, it passes on in its process of abstraction to which is more meagre still, ending in that which has no properties at all.⁷⁸

However, Green argues, there is another side to the Platonic and Aristotelian position, which suggests a different picture, and 'a more thorough and therefore

⁷⁴ Green, 'The Philosophy of Aristotle', 57.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Cf. the account of Hegel's argument concerning sense-certainty offered above, in section I.

⁷⁸ Green, 'The Philosophy of Aristotle', 60–1.

truer idealism'.⁷⁹ This can be seen, Green claims, in Aristotle's theory of matter: for, while on the one hand Aristotle treats matter as the 'substratum' underlying the properties and relations of the individual, on the other hand he treats the individual as the particularization of the universal, so that the matter out of which the individual is formed is not inaccessible to thought:

According to [the first view], 'matter' is constituted by the individual things which 'are nearest the sense,' and from which thought abstracts the properties which constitute the 'form' or species. By a further abstraction of properties the 'genus'—ultimately the 'summum genus'—is arrived at, which thus stands at the end of the process farthest from 'matter.' In the 'Metaphysics,' on the other hand, the 'summum genus' itself appears as the 'matter' which is *formed* by successive *differentiae* till the most determinate complex of attributes has been reached. Here we see that matter has changed places.⁸⁰

As a result of this turn-around, Green argues, '[t]he process of thought appears as one not of abstraction but of concretion', for now the individual

is no longer a bare unit, but a unity of differences, a centre of manifold relations, a subject of properties. It is not an 'abstract universal,' but it has an element of universality in virtue of which it can be brought into relation to all things else. Its universality is the condition of its particularisation.⁸¹

Despite what he takes to be the nominalistic tendencies of the Aristotelian position, therefore, Green also sees in it the seeds of something more like the conception we have found in Hegel, where he makes clear that he shares this conception, and that the correct picture is one that views universality and individuality as mutually dependent notions:

'Substance,' as the outward thing. . . is individual or exclusive of all things but itself; otherwise it would be no object of definite knowledge. But it is not *merely* individual. If it were, it would be, as it is sometimes presented to us by Aristotle, an indeterminate, and therefore unknowable 'matter.' . . . It is an individual universalised through its particular relations or qualities. Here again the process may be reversed. If there is no universal element in things known, there can be no unity of knowledge or community of thought. But this universal is not merely such. If it were 'ever the same,' so as to be void of all distinction, like the shadowy goal of the Platonic dialectic, it would be, as it in turn is exhibited by Aristotle, the indeterminate and unknowable. It must be that which is the negation of all particular relations so as to be determined by the sum of them. In virtue of this negative relation, as identical with itself in exclusion of all things, it is individual. It is a universal individualised through its particularity. Thus we see that the *πρώτη οὐσία*, or individual substance, and the *δευτέρα οὐσία*, or essence constituted by general attributes, are not to be placed, as Aristotle placed them, over-against each other, as if one excluded, or even could be present without, the other. They are as necessarily correlative as subject and object, as the self and the world. Each, by its native energy, which is the hidden 'spontaneity' of thought, necessarily creates its opposite. Nor is one, as Aristotle supposed, in any special sense 'matter,' the other 'form.' Each,

⁷⁹ Ibid., 62.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 63.

taken by itself, is matter, as the indeterminate and negation of the knowable. Each, again, so taken, is matter, as the 'subject' (*ὑποκείμενον*), receptive of a form—of a form, however, not imposed from without, but projected from within. Each, lastly, may be regarded either as a void 'substratum,' or as a complex of attributes, according as it is isolated or regarded in the realisation which it only attains by passing into its opposite.⁸²

In a passage such as this, therefore, we have uncovered a conception of the universal employed by one of the British Idealists which I think has a claim to be viewed as genuinely Hegelian,⁸³ where the motivation behind it also connects to a recognizable set of epistemological concerns: for, what leads Green to claim that 'an individual [is] universalised through its particular relations and qualities', while 'a universal [is] individualised through its particularity' is not a commitment to holism or the metaphysics of the Absolute, but a rejection of the kind of metaphysical picture that might make empiricist claims concerning the 'abstractness of thought' in relation to the 'concreteness of sense' seem coherent.

Moreover, seen in the light of this issue, other prominent Idealists can also be viewed as being closer to the Hegelian conception of the concrete universal than was apparent hitherto. In Bosanquet, for example, concern with the 'abstractness of thought' was predominantly a question that involved the status of logic, as Passmore has observed:

The Idealist opponents of logic, Bosanquet argued, did not know what logic is. For them, Ward for example, logical thinking is the process of working towards ever emptier abstractions, departing from the concreteness of everyday life into a world of general formulae which completely fail to convey the richness and diversity of our everyday experiences. But to think of logic thus, Bosanquet protested, is to set up the abstract, rather than the concrete, universal as the logical ideal.⁸⁴

Like Green, Bosanquet therefore opposed '[t]he tradition of the British school', which 'start[s] from a theory for which thought is decaying sense', so that on this view, 'thought is an abstracting and generalising faculty, and science is a departure from our factual experience'.⁸⁵ Against this view, Bosanquet argues that 'it is thought which constructs and sustains the fabric of experience, and . . . it is thought-determinations which invest even sense-perception with its value and

⁸² Green, 'The Philosophy of Aristotle', 70–1.

⁸³ For an account of Green's awareness of Hegel's thought at the time of this essay on Aristotle, and some discussion of how that awareness may have influenced it (though with no mention of Hegel's conception of the concrete universal) see Ben Wempe, *T. H. Green's Theory of Positive Freedom: From Metaphysics to Political Theory* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2004), ch. 1.

⁸⁴ John Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy*, 2nd edn. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 86. Cf. Green, 'The Philosophy of Aristotle', 58–9, where Green is critical of the logical methods of Plato, Aristotle, and the 'scholastic syllogism', for enshrining this view of logic, for example in the 'logical tree' of Porphyry.

⁸⁵ Bosanquet, *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, 54–5.

meaning'.⁸⁶ Thus, although he allows that thought 'presses beyond the given, following the "what" beyond the limits of the "that"', the bare individual is unintelligible as a mere 'something', so that 'in following the "what" [thought] tends always to return to a fuller "that"';⁸⁷ universality of thought is therefore seen to take nothing away from the individuality of the given, but in fact as enabling that individuality to be made determinate:

[A]s constituting a world [thought] tends to return to the full depth and roundness of experience from which its first step was to depart. In a 'world,' a 'concrete universal,' we do not lose directness and significance as we depart from primary experience; on the contrary, every detail has gained incalculably in vividness and meaning, by reason of the intricate interpenetration and interconnection, through which thought has developed its possibilities of 'being.' The watchword of concrete thinking is 'Philosophiren ist dephlegmatisiren, vivificiren.'⁸⁸

Bosanquet thus uses the emptiness of the 'that' in relation to the 'what' to argue against the abstractionist picture of thought in general and of logic in particular: 'It is important that we should dismiss the notion that the higher degrees of knowledge are necessarily and in the nature of intelligence framed out of abstractions that omit whatever has interest and peculiarity in the real world. Nothing has been more fatal to the truth and vitality of ideas than this prejudice. . . . If the present reaction against formal logic should end in establishing a more vital conception of universality than that which sets it down to mere abstraction, a fundamental reform will have been made in philosophical first principles'.⁸⁹

Like Bosanquet, Richard Lewis Nettleship also cites Novalis's dictum to argue against the abstractness of thought, paraphrasing it as follows: 'to philosophise is to get rid of one's phlegm, to acquire a vivid consciousness of some aspect of reality'.⁹⁰ His argument here again relies on the claim that universality and individuality are dialectically interrelated: 'when we say that all concepts are general, we must add that no concept is "general" if this means that it is *not* individual. The most general concept in the world has its own unique individuality'.⁹¹ Nettleship argues that to have a concept such as 'triangle' is not to have a general idea in which all particularity is lost, as having the concept requires us to see that there can be different *types* of triangle, and that these types

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 55–6. The slogan 'Philosophistiren ist dephlegmatisiren—Vivificiren' is taken from Novalis: see 'Logologischen Fragmenten', no. 15; Novalis, *Schriften. Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, ed. Paul Luckhohn and Richard Samuel, 6 vols, 3rd edn. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1977–), vol. II, 526.

⁸⁹ Bernard Bosanquet, *Logic, or the Morphology of Knowledge*, 2 vols, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911), vol. 1, 60–1. Cf. also *Essentials of Logic*, 94–7. For further discussion of this aspect of Bosanquet's view, see Mander, 'Bosanquet and the Concrete Universal', 298–300, 303–7.

⁹⁰ Nettleship, *Philosophical Remains*, 128.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 226.

can all be exemplified in different ways, down to the individual, so that thought can grasp universals like ‘triangle’ without losing sight of individuality:

Taking the generality of a concept in this sense, we cannot properly say that the general concept is ‘got by abstraction,’ for this concept is not *made* general by being abstracted, its generality *means* its capability of being abstracted. Nor can we properly say that it is abstracted from particulars; for its generality does not exclude, but implies, particularity.⁹²

Another related, but more complex case, is that of McTaggart. On the one hand, McTaggart did not use the terminology of the ‘concrete universal’, and so may appear to be uninfluenced by Hegel’s thinking on this issue. On the other hand, in his conception of substances and their individuation, McTaggart adopted something very like what I have characterized as the Hegelian view, offering an account that (like Green’s) follows Hegel in rejecting both bundle and substratum views. Thus, while McTaggart refuses to reduce an individual to a collection of properties (as on the bundle view), he holds that an individual cannot exist in abstraction from its properties (as on the substratum view);⁹³ and as a result (like Hegel) he defends Leibniz’s principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles (which McTaggart re-labels ‘the Dissimilarity of the Diverse’),⁹⁴ as it is on the basis of their divergent properties that substances come to be individuated. In these respects, we can now see, McTaggart’s thought has aspects that related to Hegel’s treatment of the concrete universal; however, he perhaps did not express himself in these terms because he accepted a simpler set of categories than Hegel, and so did not adopt the distinction between property universals and substance universal on which (as we have seen) Hegel’s distinction between abstract and concrete universals is based.⁹⁵

As a final example, we can briefly consider one of the later Idealists, Brand Blanshard.⁹⁶ In chapters XVI and XVII of *The Nature of Thought*, Blanshard also criticizes the abstractionist picture of general ideas, in a way that is now familiar:

It is often said that we reach such ideas by ‘abstracting from particular things what they have in common’. But we have seen that these ‘particular things’ are from the

⁹² Nettleship, *Philosophical Remains*, 222.

⁹³ J. McT. E. McTaggart, *The Nature of Existence*, ed. C. D. Broad, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), vol. 1, ch. 6. For helpful discussion of McTaggart’s position, see P. T. Geach, *Truth, Love and Immortality: An Introduction to McTaggart’s Philosophy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), ch. 3.

⁹⁴ McTaggart, *The Nature of Existence*, vol. 1, ch. X. Cf. Hegel, *SL*, 422–4 [*Werke*, VI: 52–5].

⁹⁵ As Geach observes: ‘McTaggart accepted from the contemporary Cambridge jargon a simple dichotomy of characteristics into qualities and relations: any characteristic expressed by a one-place predicate is a quality. This is a drastic simplification of the Aristotelian categories, cutting the list down by omission of several members’ (*Truth, Love and Immortality*, 48).

⁹⁶ Similar themes are also to be found in Collingwood: cf. his discussion of ‘the point of view of concrete thought’ in Collingwood, *Speculum Mentis*, 159ff.

beginning more than particulars, that even to perceive a thing is to perceive it *as* something, and hence to use the very generality supposed to be reached by later abstraction.⁹⁷

However, if it is only as a thing of a certain type that the individual can be perceived, and that type is a universal, how is this compatible with the individuality of the thing? This problem arises, Blanshard argues, if the universal is treated as ‘an element that remains precisely the same through all its instances, an element that, like a Ford part, can be removed from one context and used in another without the slightest modification’,⁹⁸ in the manner of an abstract universal. Against this, however, Blanshard argues that the universal can be concrete, by which he means that it can retain its identity even while being particularized in one way rather than another, and that nothing more than this is required to constitute the individual:

The universal, far from being a separable element, is thus so sunk in its differentiations that without them it would be nothing. The converse relation is, if anything, clearer still. Take away from the various figures what makes them figures and nothing remains. It may be said that lines might still exist, even if they did not enter into figures. But such lines would not be *these* lines, for these *are* the sides of a figure, and if figure went, they too would go. Thus, just as figure has being only in its differentiations, so these have being only as differentiations of it.⁹⁹

VI

We have found, then, that there is a constant thread running through the thought of the Anglo-American Idealists, and the origins of that thread can be traced back to Hegel.¹⁰⁰ Thus, while not everything these Idealists say about the concrete universal makes sense in Hegelian terms (at least, given my reading of Hegel), a central part of their conception does. Moreover, we have seen that the issues behind that conception are not in fact alien to us, but relate directly to debates concerning the content of experience, and the metaphysical implications

⁹⁷ Brand Blanshard, *The Nature of Thought*, 2 vols (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1939), vol. 1, 571. Cf. also *ibid.*, 613–14: ‘To appropriate means, at the least, to identify, and to identify means to find in something the embodiment of a universal. . . . [I]f the thing did not present itself as the specification of any universal whatever, if it were a thing of no kind at all, I could not so much as perceive it. In all knowledge universals are being realized. And to grow in knowledge is to exchange a more generic grasp for a more specific. It is a movement in which the indefinite defines itself, the potential realizes itself, the relatively formless gains body and outline’.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 576.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 584.

¹⁰⁰ I would not want to claim that the influence of Hegel here is always *direct*: it is doubtless often mediated by other figures who helped to shape Anglo-American Idealism, such as Lotze and Sigwart, for whom the Hegelian conception also played an important role; but that story cannot be explored here.

of the claim that this content is conceptual all the way down: the doctrine of the concrete universal, therefore, perhaps deserves to be seen as a live option in that debate, and not the peculiar piece of exotica it is so often presented as being.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ I have presented versions of this paper at the 2004 conference of the Hegel Society of Great Britain; at departmental seminars at Sheffield and York; and at the History of Political Thought Seminar at Cambridge; I am grateful to those who made helpful comments on these occasions. I am also grateful to Fraser MacBride and Peter Nicholson, and to an anonymous referee for the *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, for a number of suggestions that led to improvements to the text. I would also like to acknowledge the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, for funding the research leave during which this paper was largely written.

6

Coherence as a Test For Truth

Like most contemporary philosophical positions, coherentism is seen as having a historical heritage, complete with founding ancestors (such as Spinoza and Hegel), more immediate forebears (such as the British Idealists, and some thinkers in the Vienna Circle), and contemporary descendants (such as Davidson, Bonjour,¹ Lehrer and others), along with their close relatives (such as Sellars and Quine). This heritage is usually taken to consist in a fairly unbroken lineage, and while of course some scholars will dispute the legitimacy of certain bloodlines (for example, was Spinoza really a coherentist?),² the conceptual position underlying coherentism is usually felt to be fairly constant throughout its history.

My suggestion in this paper, however, is that this assumption is mistaken, and that an important divergence has been overlooked, which has made the history of coherentism appear more continuous than in fact it is. In particular, I will argue that what we *now* think of as coherentism is fundamentally different from the position of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century coherentists, so that we should question the idea that there is any real continuity in this family history. I will suggest that respecting this divergence means that we can no longer take it for granted that contemporary arguments for and against coherentism will apply equally well to the earlier tradition, and that in fact other issues become relevant in this different context.

I will begin by setting out the current conception of coherentism, and will then try to show how that conception does not fit with that held by earlier proponents of coherentism, especially Bradley and Blanshard.³ To put the difference I want

¹ Bonjour has changed his mind on this issue, however, and has now abandoned coherentism in favour of foundationalism: see Laurence Bonjour, 'The Dialectic of Foundationalism and Coherentism', in John Greco and Ernest Sosa (eds.), *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 117–42; and 'Towards a Defense of Empirical Foundationalism' and 'Replies to Pollock and Plantinga', in Michael R. DePaul (ed.), *Resurrecting Old-Fashioned Foundationalism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 21–40, 79–86.

² For contrasting views on this issue, cf. Thomas Carson Mark, *Spinoza's Theory of Truth* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1972), esp. 33–68, and Ralph C. S. Walker, 'Spinoza and the Coherence Theory of Truth', *Mind*, 94 (1985), 1–18.

³ I think that a possible exception to the current conception of coherentism who is nonetheless a contemporary epistemologist is Nicholas Rescher (where it is then no accident that he is more knowledgeable about and sympathetic to the concerns of the earlier coherentists like Bradley and

to highlight in a nutshell: on the current paradigm, the coherentist is offering a distinctive position concerning the structure of justification as being like a ‘raft’ rather than like a ‘pyramid’,⁴ whereas on the earlier paradigm, the coherentist is offering an account of our methods of inquiry, arguing that coherence is a ‘mark’ or ‘arbiter’ that enables us to arrive at the truth—so on this earlier paradigm, coherentism is not a theory of justification, but rather an account of how we do and must decide between truth and falsehood. It is thus a theory of what constitutes our test (or criterion) of truth, rather than a theory of the structure or nature of justification.⁵

I

As it figures in the current literature, coherentism most frequently arises as an answer to an epistemological puzzle: the regress of justification problem. The problem takes the following form. If I make a claim, you are entitled to ask me how I know my claim is true. In reply, I will need to offer some other things I believe as grounds or evidence in support of my claim. But then, you can ask whether I have grounds for these beliefs, as otherwise it looks as if I am merely assuming them. But then, if I offer grounds for these grounds, then your question can be reiterated, leading to an apparently infinite regress of justifications. This is the familiar epistemological puzzle which constitutes the regress of justification problem, and which appears to threaten any hope we might have that our beliefs are or can be justified.

There are two standard responses to the puzzle. The first is to say that there are some beliefs (sometimes called ‘basic beliefs’) that can be justifiably held without requiring further reference to other beliefs. If the regress of justification reaches these beliefs, it is therefore brought to a halt, as it is not necessary to bring in other beliefs to support them. This is the *foundationalist* account of the structure of justification. The second standard response is to say that justification can be holistic, in the sense that a belief can be justified by being part of a coherent system of beliefs, so that if a belief is fundamental to a system of beliefs, this justifies it, without it needing to rest on any *more* fundamental belief, so that again the regress of justification is brought to a halt. This is the *coherentist* account of the structure of justification.

Blanshard than are many current coherentists). However, even Rescher does not seem to *see* himself as exceptional, or to have properly identified the divergent concerns that make him so; and this is even more true of his critics, who try to assimilate his position to the current preoccupations of coherentism, much as they do (I shall argue) with Bradley and Blanshard.

⁴ Cf. Ernest Sosa, ‘The Raft and the Pyramid: Coherence versus Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge’, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 5 (1981), 3–25.

⁵ Of course, coherentism may also be thought of as a theory of truth, but this form of coherentism is of much less significance in the contemporary epistemological context. For some further discussion of how this form of coherentism figures in relation to the positions I am discussing, see below, §3.

On this way of introducing coherentism into epistemology, therefore, coherentism is seen as a response to a sceptical worry about justification, where its main rival is foundationalism. Where coherentism is said to be distinctive, is in the way in which it dispenses with the idea of basic beliefs, and instead blocks the regress by appealing to the place of a belief within a system to justify the belief: this allows a belief to be justified without further inferential grounding, but without that belief being immediately justified (justified without *any* reference to further beliefs), as on the foundationalist picture.

There is then a familiar dialectic between these two positions, in which their respective strengths and weaknesses are brought out. Thus, on the one side foundationalism appears suspect because the class of basic beliefs looks hard to specify convincingly, while it is unclear exactly what epistemic status they must have (for example, infallible, indubitable, or *prima facie* justified), where their epistemic authority comes from, and whether this authority requires some commitment to externalism, which the coherentist will then challenge.⁶ On the other side, coherentism looks problematic because it is questionable exactly what a coherent belief-set must amount to, and why being part of it should in itself confer justification on a belief, particularly if it is not shown how it is that coherence relates to truth.

Now, rather than continue by following how this familiar debate proceeds from here, or attempting to push it in one direction or another, I want to step back and ask a more basic question: namely, does this debate concerning the structure of justification relate to and address the concerns that provides *all* forms of coherentism with their original motivation, and thus is this the context in which the success or failure of earlier forms of coherentism should also properly be judged? I will suggest that the answer to this question is negative, and that in this earlier form coherentism should be assessed in a different light.

II

In order to get at the difference I want to highlight, between coherence as an account of the structure justification and coherence as a test for truth, I am going to proceed indirectly, by looking at an exegetical puzzle. The puzzle occurs in Bradley's essay 'On Truth and Coherence', which first appeared in *Mind* in 1909, and is reprinted in his *Essays on Truth and Reality*.

In the course of that essay, Bradley criticizes foundationalism for being based on a 'misleading metaphor':

My known world is taken to be a construction built upon such and such foundations. It is argued, therefore, to be in principle a superstructure, which rests upon these supports. You

⁶ Cf. Laurence Bonjour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 34–57.

can go on adding to it no doubt, but only so long as the supports remain; and, unless they remain, the whole building comes down. But the doctrine, I have to contend, is untenable, and the metaphor ruinously inapplicable. The foundation in truth is provisional merely. In order to begin my construction I take the foundation as absolute—so much certainly is true. But that my construction continues to rest on the beginnings of my knowledge is a conclusion which does not follow. It does not follow that, if these are allowed to be fallible, the whole building collapses. For it is in another sense that my world rests upon the data of perception.⁷

Bradley's attack here is clearly on an infallibilist form of foundationalism, according to which our belief-system is grounded in basic beliefs, which are infallible. There are several possible motivations for this position, but the one Bradley appears to be focusing on is this: The basic beliefs form the foundation from which all other beliefs are inferred; these basic beliefs therefore cannot be overturned, for if they were ever abandoned this would bring about the collapse of the entire belief-system built around them; so, any sort of doxastic revision of this kind is impossible—while we may add to our basic beliefs, we cannot subtract them. According to this argument, basic beliefs are infallible in the sense that they are *incorrigible*: that is, they cannot be found to be false, or replaced within our belief-system by a contrary belief.

Now, there are many arguments one might give against such infallibilist foundationalism. Bradley's first argument, as we have seen, is that it is mistaken because it uses the metaphor of 'foundations' misleadingly. On the one hand, Bradley says, the foundational metaphor is right in so far as we often do form beliefs (particularly perceptual beliefs) immediately and without inference, and then form other beliefs by inference from them: for example, I form my belief it is raining by just looking out of the window and seeing that it is raining, and from that I infer that my roof will soon start leaking. However, on the other hand Bradley argues that this does not mean that something prevents me from giving up beliefs that are basic in this way, as I might form new immediate beliefs (e.g. that there are midges outside the window), and on the basis of those I can come to reject old ones (e.g. I can decide that what I thought were rain drops were in fact midges). Thus, though these perceptual beliefs are basic in one sense, they are not basic beliefs in the sense the infallibilist foundationalist requires: namely, beliefs that if rejected would bring about a state of complete doxastic collapse, and with this the impossibility of doxastic revision:

[T]here are to-day for me facts such that, if I take them as mistakes, my known world is damaged and, it is possible, ruined. But how does it follow that I cannot to-morrow on the strength of new facts gain a wider order in which these old facts can take a place as errors? The supposition may be improbable, but what you have got to show is that it is in principle impossible. A formulation used at the beginning does not in short mean

⁷ F. H. Bradley, 'On Truth and Coherence', in his *Essays on Truth and Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914), 202–18, at 209–10.

something fundamental at the end, and there is no single 'fact' which in the end can be called fundamental absolutely. It is all a question of relative contributions to my known world-order.⁸

Bradley also offers a second argument, which seems essentially to work by emphasizing that there is a difference between incorrigibility and infallibility proper, and that it is the latter rather than the former which the foundationalist really needs. Thus, Bradley argues that even if the foundationalist was right, that particular beliefs are unrevisable for us, this does not show that they are infallible in an 'absolute' rather than a 'relative' sense, where the former means 'cannot be mistaken as such' and the latter means 'cannot be believed to be mistaken by me'. If all the foundationalist can establish is the latter position, then this is not infallibilism proper:

Conceivably a judgement might be fundamental and infallible for me, in the sense that to modify it or doubt it would entail the loss of my personal identity. . . . [But] I do not see the way by which I am to pass from relative to absolute infallibility, and I do not know how to argue here from an assumed necessary implication in my personal existence to a necessity which is more than relative. Am I to urge that a world in which my personal identity has been ended or suspended has ceased to be a world altogether? Apart from such an argument (which I cannot use) I seem condemned to the result that all sense-judgements are fallible.⁹

We have seen, therefore, that in this essay Bradley presents a critique of infallibilist foundationalism, and, given the dialectic of coherentism and foundationalism that we discussed earlier, there is nothing particularly surprising in that. Here, it may seem, Bradley is deploying a fairly familiar range of arguments to attack one variant in the foundationalist theory, in order to establish coherentism as an alternative to foundationalism as an account of justification: there are no basic beliefs, so that justification must come from being embedded within a coherent belief-system.

Now, of course, if Bradley's position is taken in this way, it is perhaps rather uninteresting. For, many foundationalists would now agree with Bradley that there is something highly problematic in the idea of infallibilist foundationalism; but they would argue that this still leaves foundationalism standing as a theory of justification, because it is possible to be an anti-coherentist with respect to justification, while remaining a *fallibilist* about the basic beliefs that form the terminus of justification. This is the position of so-called *modest* foundationalism.¹⁰ The modest foundationalist can then agree with Bradley's arguments as

⁸ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 216–17.

¹⁰ Cf. Mark Pastin, 'Modest Foundationalism and Self-Warrant', in George Pappas and Marshall Swain (eds.), *Essays on Knowledge and Justification* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 279–88; Mark Pastin, 'C. I. Lewis's Radical Foundationalism', *Noûs*, 9 (1975), 407–20; C. F. Delaney, 'Foundations of Knowledge—Again', *The New Scholasticism*, L (1976), 1–19; William P. Alston, 'Has Foundationalism Been Refuted?', reprinted in his *Epistemic Justification*:

we have presented them, but still hold that (for example) perceptual beliefs are basic in the sense of not being justified by their relation to other beliefs but by their relation to experience, while allowing that these beliefs are fallible.

But this response to Bradley assumes, of course, that the aim of his discussion is to refute foundationalism by refuting infallibilism, where this response then claims that foundationalism is in fact compatible with fallibilism, thereby deflecting the force of Bradley's argument while conceding its conclusion. And it is natural to take Bradley's argument in this way, because the contemporary debate assumes that the goal of any coherentist is to refute the foundationalist regarding the structure of justification, and the role of basic beliefs. So, by refuting infallibilism, it may seem that that is exactly what Bradley is trying to do.

But when we look more closely at Bradley's position in the paper we are analysing, something peculiar appears to be going on: namely, while we might expect Bradley to be trying to refute infallibilism in order to refute foundationalism, in fact he seems to be refuting foundationalism in order to refute infallibilism. That is, he takes it that one argument for infallibilism is the foundationalist one, that some of our beliefs must be infallible in order to act as basic beliefs, and so to overturn infallibilism, he must overturn this foundationalist argument, which he does using the objections we have outlined. At the beginning of the paper, he identifies this foundationalism as one of two arguments for the existence of 'infallible judgements': the first is that we can just point to unproblematic examples of such judgements (to which Bradley's reply is that on inspection, all such examples prove suspect), and the second is the foundationalist claim that 'in any case [infallible judgements] must exist, since without them the intelligence cannot work',¹¹ where he spells this out as follows: 'I pass now to the second reason for accepting infallible data of perception. Even if we cannot show these (it is urged) we are bound to assume them. For in their absence our knowledge has nothing on which to stand, and this want of support results in total scepticism'.¹² Within the dialectic of the paper, then, Bradley's main target is infallibilism, and his attack on foundationalism is merely in order to undermine one possible argument for 'accepting infallible data of perception'.

Now, from the perspective of current debates in epistemology, of the sort with which we began, this is puzzling. For, as we have seen, those debates are framed by a straightforward clash between coherentism and foundationalism, motivated by two different ways of answering the regress problem, and hence of conceiving of the structure of justification; so, within the terms of *this* debate, there is a *direct* confrontation between the coherentist and the foundationalist, within which the question of whether our basic beliefs are or need to be infallible

Essays in the Theory of Knowledge (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 36–56; Robert Audi, *The Structure of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

¹¹ Bradley, 'On Truth and Coherence', 204.

¹² *Ibid.*, 207.

is a further issue. But for Bradley, as we have seen, his main *target* appears to be infallibilism, and he criticizes foundationalism only in order to overturn infallibilism, not for its own sake, in so far as foundationalism concerning the structure of justification can be used as an argument for infallibilism. But if Bradley's coherentism is to be equated with contemporary coherentism, this difference in approach is surprising, as the contemporary coherentist would normally attack infallibilism in order to overturn foundationalism, not the other way round; so the contrast between the dialectic running through these debates suggests that they are perhaps framed by different concerns, and that Bradley's coherentism is not *our* coherentism.

What, then, might make Bradley's perspective distinct from our own? How might his form of coherentism differ in form from that of our contemporaries, in such a way as to explain this apparent contrast? The answer, I think, lies in the way in which he takes coherence to be a 'test' or 'criterion' of truth.

III

What does it mean to treat coherence as a test of truth, and how does this differ from coherence as a theory of justification?

Let me begin with a more familiar distinction, between coherentism as a theory of truth, and as a theory of justification. Coherence as a theory of truth claims that truth consists in, or can be defined as, coherence: that is, a belief is true if and only if it coheres with other beliefs. Coherence as a theory of justification claims that a belief is justified if and only if it forms part of a coherent belief-system. As is often pointed out, these two positions are distinct and separable: for example, one could be a coherentist about justification, while adopting a correspondence theory of truth, and many coherentists have taken this path.¹³ That is, one could hold that what makes a belief true is its correspondence with reality, while what makes it justified is that it forms part of a coherent belief-system.

Now, while one can reject a coherence theory of truth, while still being a coherentist in this sense, it seems to me one can reject the coherence theory of truth, while being a coherentist in *another* sense: namely, by holding that coherence is a *test* or *criterion* of truth, that is, a way in which we *discover* truth, rather than what truth *consists in*. So, the coherentist in this sense will claim that coherence is a 'mark of truth': in order to tell whether something is the case, we can and must consider how far believing it to be the case would make our

¹³ Cf. Laurence Bonjour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 88. Cf. also A. C. Ewing, *Idealism: A Critical Survey* (London: Methuen, 1934), 250: 'I am inclined to accept the coherence theory or something very like it as an account of our criterion of truth, and therefore as an account of the nature of the world . . . But I am not able to accept the theory as an account of the nature of truth.'

belief-system or view of the world more or less coherent (where by 'coherent' the theorist usually means 'consistent, comprehensive and cohesive').¹⁴

Taken in this third way, the position of the coherentist may be usefully compared to the theorist who treats certain explanatory virtues, such as simplicity, as constituting a test or criterion of truth. According to the theorist of the latter kind, we can and even must use simplicity as a guide to truth, and this forms an important and perhaps indispensable element of our method of inquiry. I would claim that just as the question of whether simplicity is a criterion of truth raises different issues from whether the structure of justification rests on basic beliefs, and so is orthogonal to the debate between justificatory foundationalists and justificatory coherentists, so the question of whether coherence is a criterion of truth is equally distinguishable from the latter debate: coherentism of the one sort is distinct from coherentism of the other. That is, for someone who holds that simplicity is a criterion of truth, their concern is with what tests we can and do use to decide whether a particular theory is true given certain features of our cognitive position as they understand it (such as underdetermination of theory by data); but to hold that simplicity is a criterion in this way is not to engage with the regress of justification problem, and so not to engage with the debate between the justificatory foundationalist and the justificatory coherentist. Similarly, I would suggest, if one holds that coherence is a criterion of truth, one is likewise arguing for a position that treats coherence as method of inquiry, rather than as an account of the structure of justification; this form of coherentism should therefore be seen as distinct from coherentism of the justificatory kind, which of course *is* such an account. As Mackie has put it, 'philosophers have wanted . . . not just to say in a broad way what it is for a statement to be true and what we are saying when we call a statement (or sentence or belief or utterance and so on) true, but to provide a criterion of truth, a set of rules or a standard procedure by the application of which we can decide, in each particular case, whether a statement (or sentence etc.) is true or not'.¹⁵

Now, once this distinction between coherence as a theory of justification and as a test of truth is introduced, I think it is easier to see what Bradley was trying

¹⁴ It is of course an important part of the coherentist's position to get clear on what exactly the criterion of coherence amounts to, and coherentists have differed on this point. For a further discussion of this issue, see e.g. Nicholas Rescher, *The Coherence Theory of Truth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973) and Paul Thagard, *Coherence in Thought and Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000). For reasons of space, I cannot go into this question any further here.

¹⁵ J. L. Mackie, *Truth, Probability and Paradox* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 22. Cf. also Michael R. DePaul, 'Reflective Equilibrium and Foundationalism', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 23 (1986), 59–69, at 68:

I see the [coherence] method of reflective equilibrium as being first and foremost a method. It is a heuristic device for organizing our moral beliefs, a manner of conducting our moral inquiries. Foundationalism, on the other hand, is primarily a type of account of the epistemic status of our beliefs. Hence, foundationalism and reflective equilibrium are not really positions on the same topic, although they are surely positions on related topics.

to do in the paper we have discussed, and why it differs from current approaches. For, Bradley was trying to defend coherence as a test of truth, *not* as a theory of truth,¹⁶ *nor* as an account of justification. That is, he was claiming that there must be a role for coherence as a test in determining how things are, and that it is an indispensable part of our cognitive method: 'What I maintain is that in the case of facts of perception and memory the test which we do apply, and which we must apply, is that of system'.¹⁷ Bradley argues that if perception and memory provided us with information about the world that was infallible, then we would not need to rely on any other method but these, so that with respect to beliefs formed using these methods, coherence as a test would be redundant. But, as we have seen, he takes himself to have shown that perception and memory *are* fallible with respect to what they tell us about the world,¹⁸ and in that case, he thinks we *also* have to use coherence as a test, to help us decide when what perception and memory tell us really is the case. For, he argues, the fallibility of perception and memory mean that they will tell us things that cannot *all* be true, because they are incompatible;¹⁹ we therefore need a further test to tell us which of these incompatible things is actually true, and this is the test of coherence—if by accepting one putative 'fact' as true your belief-system or world-picture is made more coherent than accepting the putative 'fact' with which it is in competition, then coherence as a method of inquiry works by telling you that you should accept the former as true and the latter as false, as better meeting the test of coherence:

Now it is agreed that, if I am to have an orderly world, I cannot possibly accept all 'facts'. Some of these must be relegated, as they are, to the world of error, whether we succeed

¹⁶ That Bradley did not have a coherence theory of truth is now the standard view in the specialist literature: see e.g. Rescher, *The Coherence Theory of Truth*, 23–4; T. L. S. Sprigge, *James and Bradley: American Truth and British Reality* (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1993), 345; W. J. Mander, *An Introduction to Bradley's Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 37–8. However, although there is agreement that this *wasn't* his theory of truth, there is less agreement over what it *was*.

¹⁷ Bradley, 'On Truth and Coherence', 202.

¹⁸ Like many coherentists, Bradley accepts that if the relevant beliefs are sufficiently stripped of worldly commitments, then perception *may* be enough to establish these beliefs infallibly: but then perception loses its status as a method of inquiry about the *world*. Cf. 'On Truth and Coherence', 206:

[B]anish the chance of error, and with what are you left? You then have something which (as we have seen) goes no further than to warrant the assertion that such and such elements can and do co-exist—somehow and somewhere, or again that such and such a judgement happens—without any regard to its truth and without any specification of its psychical context. And no one surely will contend that with this we have particular fact.

¹⁹ As a referee has pointed out, strictly speaking this may not be true, since fallibility does not entail incompatibility, as a set of beliefs that contains false beliefs can be consistent, so that if perception and memory produced false beliefs in this way, the need for coherence as a further test would not arise. But I think it is still reasonable for Bradley to argue that in fact perception and memory do not operate in that way, and that they do in fact produce beliefs that are incompatible with one another (as when memories conflict, or when one sense tells us one thing, and another sense tells us another and so on).

or fail in modifying and correcting them.²⁰ And the view which I advocate takes them all as in principle fallible. On the other hand, the view denies that there is any necessity for absolute facts of sense. Facts for it are true, we may say, just so far as they work, just so far as they contribute to the order of experience. If by taking certain judgements of perception as true, I can get more system into my world, then these 'facts' are so far true, and if by taking certain 'facts' as errors I can order my experience better, then so far these 'facts' are errors. And there is no fact which possesses an absolute right.²¹

It is now clearer, I hope, why Bradley focuses on the question of infallibility, and seeks to undermine the foundationalist argument for infallibilism, and why from his perspective, this infallibilism is his main rather than subsidiary target. For, if the infallibilist were right concerning our cognitive methods like perception and memory, then this would make them error-proof, and if they were error-proof, then there would be no *need* for coherence as a test (at least at this level) to help us determine which 'facts' to believe and which to reject: we could just rely on perception and memory to tell us that directly (and hence consistently), and coherentism would be redundant. It is because Bradley does not think such infallibility attaches to any of our belief-forming methods, that he thinks that coherence as a criterion will be needed to play a role at *every* level; and in this context, the commitment of his opponent to infallibilism is fundamental to the debate, while undermining this infallibilism is crucial to Bradley's own argument, in a way it wouldn't be if the debate concerned justification, rather than our criterion of truth.

Here, again, a comparison with the theorist who adopts simplicity as a criterion of truth may be helpful. One way to motivate acceptance of simplicity as a criterion is via fallibilism: if our observational data were infallible, then it might make sense to claim that simplicity need not play a role in assessing whether a theory is true, as all that would matter would be empirical adequacy; but we know that the observational data are fallible, so we use simplicity as a guide, where this means accepting a theory because it is simple, although the theory we accept does not fit all the data (which we may then regard as misleading), or fits the data less well than another theory. As with coherence, fallibilism therefore

²⁰ Cf. 'On Memory and Judgement', in his *Essays on Truth and Reality*, 381–408, at 387 (my emphasis):

I am unable to understand how an infallible memory can possibly correct itself. It is to me on the other hand intelligible that diverse memories can and do radically conflict, and that such a collision, *if we have no higher criterion*, leads inevitably to scepticism.

Cf. also Rescher, *The Coherence Theory of Truth*, 57:

We in general *know* that data cannot be identified with truths—that some of them must indeed be falsehoods—because they are generally incompatible with one another. Truth-candidates—like rival candidates for public office—can work to exclude one another: they are mutually exclusive and victory for one spells defeat for the others. Candidate-truths are not truths pure and simple because it is of the very nature of the case that matters must so eventuate that some of them are falsehoods.

²¹ Bradley, 'On Truth and Coherence', 210.

plays an important role in underpinning the case for simplicity as a criterion of truth: without fallibilism, other tests of truth (such as observation) would have a priority that would make simplicity redundant.

The position opposed to Bradley's, then, is not the justificatory foundationalist's view that some beliefs are basic to the structure of justification, but the *critical* foundationalist's view that coherentism can be undermined as follows: coherence as a test would not work (would not get us to the truth) unless some of our belief-forming methods were infallible, because otherwise the gap between how things appear to us and how things are would be too great to allow coherence to guide us to the truth; but if our belief-forming methods are infallible, then the test we should adopt is how well our higher-level beliefs fit beliefs formed using these methods, as a *critical* foundation or independent yardstick, that themselves do not need the test of coherence to determine whether these infallible foundational beliefs are true or false. This is Stout's foundationalist argument in the article Bradley is responding to in 'On Truth and Coherence':

This being so, when we have to determine whether a certain doubtful proposition is true or false, we may assume that if we can acquire a knowledge of certain other propositions which are true, our problem will be solved. But the essential presupposition of this procedure is that there must be a way of ascertaining truth otherwise than through mere coherence. In the end, truth cannot be recognised merely through its coherence with other truth. In the absence of immediate cognition, the principle of coherence would be like a lever without a fulcrum.²²

A similar view is expressed by Schlick as part of his defence of foundationalism²³ against the coherentist position of Neurath, and the dispute between them over Carnapian protocol statements:

For us it is self-evident that the problem of the basis of knowledge is nothing other than the question of the criterion of truth. Surely the reason for bringing in the term 'protocol statement' in the first place was that it should serve to mark out certain statements by the truth of which the truth of all other statements comes to be measured, as by a measuring rod. But according to the viewpoint just described this measuring rod would have shown itself to be as relative as, say, all the measuring rods of physics. And it is this view with its consequences that has been commended as the banishing of the last remnant of 'absolutism' from philosophy.

But what then remains at all as a criterion of truth? Since the proposal is not that all scientific assertions must accord with certain definite protocol statements, but rather that all statements shall accord with one another, with the result that every single one

²² G. F. Stout, 'Immediacy, Mediacy and Coherence', *Mind*, 17 (1908), 20–47, 32–3.

²³ Some scholars have recently questioned whether Schlick should be seen as a foundationalist in the justificatory sense: but that is not how I am using foundationalism here. On this see Thomas E. Uebel, 'Anti-Foundationalism and the Vienna Circle's Revolution in Philosophy', *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 47 (1996), 415–39.

is considered as, in principle, corrigible, truth can consist only in a *mutual agreement of statements*.²⁴

Here, then, we have foundationalism not about the structure of justification, but concerning the test of truth: in order for us to arrive at truth, we must be able to begin with some beliefs that are certain, in the light of which others can be tested.²⁵ Against this, the coherentist like Bradley or Neurath argues that there are no such infallible beliefs, so that our test for truth must involve coherence.²⁶ On this account, then, it is clear why Bradley has infallibilism as his target.

Turning now to Blanshard, similar considerations apply. For Blanshard too, the focus of his coherentism is on verification, and coherence as a test for truth. In order to establish this, he considers and argues against four other alternatives: authority, mystical insight, self-evidence, and what Blanshard calls 'correspondence', but which is more like immediate perceptual experience. Of these alternatives, the last two are the most important, and Blanshard therefore devotes the greater part of his discussion to them. Let me briefly summarize what he says about each.

On 'correspondence', he makes several points. First, he argues that for many things we believe, verifying them by appeal to perceptual experience is impossible, because they relate to past facts, and so in reality the test we actually use is how well embedded these beliefs are within a coherent system of beliefs: 'What really tests the judgement is the extent of our accepted world that is implicated with it and would be carried down with it if it fell. And that is the test of coherence'.²⁷ Second, even with respect to judgements concerning how things are in our present environment, he argues that there is still room for error here, and that as a result (as scientific practice shows) 'observation of this kind is never taken by *itself* as conclusive, as it ought to be if correspondence with perceived fact is to be our test. In case of conflict it is accepted only if the consequences of rejecting generally the sort of evidence here presented would be

²⁴ Moritz Schlick, 'The Foundations of Knowledge', trans. David Rynin, in A. J. Ayer (ed.), *Logical Positivism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1959), 209–27, at 213–14.

²⁵ This is also C. I. Lewis' position: cf. *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1946), 186: 'If what is to confirm the objective belief and thus show it probable, were itself an objective belief and hence no more than probable, then the objective belief to be confirmed would only probably be rendered probable . . . If anything is to be probable, something must be certain.' Contrast this with Bradley: '“Then no judgement of perception will be more than probable?” Certainly that is my contention' ('On Truth and Coherence', 211).

²⁶ Cf. Otto Neurath, 'The Lost Wanderers and the Auxiliary Motive (On the Psychology of Decision)', in his *Philosophical Papers 1913–1946*, ed. and trans. Robert S. Cohen and Marie Neurath (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983), 1–12, at 3:

Whoever wants to create a world-picture or a scientific system must operate with doubtful premisses. Each attempt to create a world-picture by starting from a *tabula rasa* and making series of statements starting with ones recognized as definitely true is necessarily full of trickeries.

²⁷ Brand Blanshard, *The Nature of Thought*, 2 vols (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1939), 2, 227.

intellectually more disastrous than those of accepting it. And this is the appeal to coherence'.²⁸

On self-evidence, Blanshard's main argument is that in fact, where we often seem to be using self-evidence as a test, we are in reality using coherence:

Ask the plain man how he knows that a straight line is the shortest line between two points or, what seems to him equally axiomatic, that $2 + 2 = 4$, and he will probably answer that such things wear their truth on their face. But if this were challenged, would he not naturally say something like this: 'So you doubt, do you, that a straight line is the shortest line? But you can't really live up to such a doubt. If a straight line isn't shortest, why do you cut across a field? Why are roads built straight? For that matter, is there anything we have been taught to believe about space and motion that wouldn't have to be given up if we gave up belief in the axiom? As for the $2 + 2$ example, it is really the same thing again. Try making the sum anything but four, and see where it takes you. If $2 + 2$ were 5, $1 + 1$ would not be 2, and then 1 would not be 1; in fact not a single number, or relation between numbers, would remain what it is; all arithmetic would go.' That is the sort of defence, I think, that the plain man would offer; or at any rate he would recognize it as reasonable if offered by someone else. And that means that his certainty does not rest on self-evidence merely. He is appealing to the coherence of his proposition with an enormous mass of others which he sees must stand or fall with it.²⁹

Blanshard is thus arguing that while it may appear that 'the plain man' uses the test of self-evidence to certify the truth of some propositions, in fact the test he is really using is coherence, so that here as elsewhere Blanshard is concerned with coherence as a *criterion*, not as an account of justification.

IV

So far, then, I hope to have provided some textual support for my claim, that the earlier coherentists were coherentists about truth-testing, rather than coherentists about justification. Now, however, I want to consider an objection to that view, which is that I have exaggerated the distinction between contemporary coherentism and this earlier tradition, in so far as some contemporary coherentists do end up treating coherence as a test for truth, much like these earlier coherentists.

This objection might run as follows. For contemporary coherentists, justification is not *sui generis*, but is tied to the notion of truth: for, it is widely accepted that nothing can be a standard of justification unless it is truth-conducive, that is, unless conforming to that standard means one is likely to arrive at truth (or, more

²⁸ Ibid, 236–7. For more on how Blanshard thought that scientific practice was coherentist in nature, see 'Interrogation of Brand Blanshard', in Sydney and Beatrice Rome (eds.), *Philosophical Interrogations* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), 201–57, at 214–16.

²⁹ Ibid, 244. Cf. also 430–1.

weakly, unless in conforming to that standard one has *some reason to think* one is likely to arrive at truth). Thus, contemporary coherentists like Davidson and BonJour go out of their way to argue that 'coherence yields correspondence',³⁰ in order to establish that coherence as a standard of justification is truth-conducive. But then, coherence on this view *does* end up being a test for truth, and not *merely* a theory of justification, as I have tried to claim.

Now, my response to this objection is not to deny that in the end, contemporary coherentists like Davidson and BonJour do end up proposing coherence as a test for truth, for the reason given in the objection.³¹ Nonetheless, I do not think this makes 'early' and contemporary coherentists indistinguishable, because there is still an important difference in the route each takes to this conclusion, and thus in the dialectic of their respective positions.

The difference in route is this: While the contemporary coherentist comes to treat coherence as a test of truth, he does so *indirectly*, having started with the question of justification, whereas the 'early' coherentist comes to it directly. Why does this make a difference? Well, because the contemporary coherentist bases his claim that coherence is a test for truth on a *prior* argument for coherence as the structure of justification, plus the claim that justification involves truth-conducivity. This indirectness means that the contemporary coherentist arrives at criterial coherentism via two further contentious steps, which introduce complexities into the debate, which the 'early' coherentists avoid. Thus, first of all, the contemporary coherentist must defend coherence as the structure of justification, along the lines familiar in the current debate, which largely hinges on whether experience can serve as a reason for belief on its own, or whether it requires further reason for its support. To put this issue in the kind of Sellarsian terminology that has characterized this controversy: If perceptual experiences are sufficiently distinguished from beliefs and judgements, then they can serve only a

³⁰ Cf. Laurence BonJour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*, 158: 'a satisfactory metajustification of our envisaged coherentist theory of empirical justification must involve showing in some way that achieving coherence in one's system of beliefs is also at least likely to yield correspondence'. For Davidson's argument that 'coherence yields truth', see his 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge', repr. in his *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 137–58.

³¹ It may be worth noting, nonetheless, that not *all* contemporary coherentists make this move. A prominent counterexample would be Rorty, who seems happy to dissent from the consensus that justification must be truth-conducive, because he is suspicious of the kind of 'inflated' and 'realist' view of truth this would involve. As ever, he tries to enlist Davidson in his support here, whereas I think Davidson is more properly seen as part of the consensus Rorty is opposing:

Passages such as this [from 'The Structure and Content of Truth'] suggest that Davidson would categorically repudiate the suggestion that philosophers need to explain why an increase in justification leads to an increased likelihood of truth, as opposed to acceptability to more and more audiences.

(Richard Rorty, 'Is Truth a Goal of Inquiry? Donald Davidson versus Crispin Wright', in his *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers, Volume 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 19–42, at 24).

causal role in relation to beliefs, and so fall outside the 'space of reasons' and fail to confer justification;³² on the other hand, if we give experiences enough conceptual content to locate them within the 'space of reasons', they constitute just another doxastic state, and so are no more basic than other beliefs, and hence require their own kind of justification. Secondly, if the contemporary coherentist can settle this debate in his favour, he must then show how justification is linked with truth, such that coherence as a theory of justification leads to coherence as a criterion of truth. For some, this step must involve engagement with the sceptic, because they take seriously the demand that we *establish* that our standards of justification are truth-conducive. Thus, as a result, both Davidson and Bonjour try to offer a priori arguments to establish that coherence leads to truth, and so that coherence is truth-conducive as a test for our beliefs. For other coherentists, however, that our standards of justification are truth-conducive is *not* something we have to establish, as they arrive at coherentism as a theory of justification by internal investigation of our doxastic practices, having taken it for granted that those practices are in order and that the sceptic is in error.³³ Such coherentists might therefore claim that because coherentism is the proper account of justification, and because we are not required to *argue against* scepticism, we can just assume that our (coherentist) standards of justification are also truth-conducive. Thus, some coherentists see this step from justificatory coherentism to coherence as a test for truth as something that needs to be argued for *in addition* to the first step regarding coherentism as a theory of justification, while others might see it as a step that just follows from the first without the need for further argument (although, of course, this *in itself* requires some argument, regarding the relative significance of scepticism, for example).

Now, as I see it, the dialectical situation of the earlier coherentists is very different. They come to the claim that coherence is a test of truth *directly*, based on the argument against infallibilism, rather than *indirectly*, via the question of justification, and of how justification yields truth: their claim is independent of debates on these issues, and thus they are not required to engage in them. In my view, this puts them in a different, and stronger, dialectical position in respect of the question concerning coherence as a test of truth, than contemporary coherentists. So, while I would allow that contemporary coherentists can find

³² Cf. Davidson, 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge', 143:

The relation between a sensation and a belief cannot be logical, since sensations are not beliefs or other propositional attitudes. What then is the relation? The answer, I think, is obvious: the relation is causal. Sensations cause some beliefs and in *this* sense are the basis or ground of those beliefs. But a causal explanation for a belief does not show how or why the belief is justified.

³³ Cf. Gilbert Harman, *Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), esp. 3–19. For an acknowledgement of the difference I am highlighting here between types of coherentism, cf. Bonjour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*, 249, n. 1: 'Harman's position, although having a number of interesting features of its own, quite deliberately begs the question regarding skepticism and thus has little to say to the main issues under consideration here.'

their own way to engage with the question of whether or not coherence is a test of truth, the earlier coherentists had a different (and dialectically stronger) way of doing so, in a manner that once again brings out the contrast between these two strands in coherentist thought.

It might be said, however, that this claim is itself exaggerated, as it overstates the difference in focus between the earlier and contemporary coherentists; it could be argued that in fact, these earlier coherentists address many of the same issues as contemporary coherentists, so I am wrong to suggest that there is any dialectical difference between the two positions. I will briefly consider two examples that raise objections of this sort.

First, a critic might point out that Bradley is as much an enemy of ‘the given’ as any contemporary coherentist, and so it might appear that he is merely foreshadowing the contemporary concern with whether or not perceptual experience can serve *on its own* as a source of justification (which is what the justificatory foundationalist claims and the justificatory coherentist denies). Bradley is then here taken to be arguing that because human experience is judgemental, then our experience cannot be basic—and so, arguing much as a contemporary coherentist would do.³⁴ But, I would contend, to interpret Bradley in this way is to see him through the perspective of the contemporary debate, and that in fact his position is not the one attributed to him, but rather one which fits with his main focus of interest, which is in directly establishing coherence as a test for truth. As we have seen, his strategy for doing so is to attack infallibilism; and, his attack on ‘the given’ is part of *this* attack, rather than on the suitability of perceptual experience to serve as a basis for justification. For, his argument is that because all experience involves an element of judgement, it involves the possibility of *error*, and hence fallibility, in our perceptual experience of the world, and so cannot be used by the criterial foundationalist, to make perceptual awareness a privileged test for truth:

And why, I ask, for the intelligence must there be datum without interpretation any more than interpretation without datum? To me the opposite holds good, and I therefore conclude that no given fact is sacrosanct. With every fact of perception and memory a modified interpretation is in principle possible, and no such fact is therefore given free from all possibility of error.³⁵

³⁴ Cf. David J. Crossley, ‘Justification and the Foundations of Empirical Knowledge’, in James Bradley (ed.), *Philosophy After F. H. Bradley* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996), 307–29, at 308–9:

... if the foundationalist’s basic experiences occur ‘below’ the level of judgement, how, Bradley asks, could they be *used*; how could they be or express facts (*ETR [Essays on Truth and Reality]* 204)? This is similar to BonJour’s worry about how non-cognitive mental states lacking propositional content could ever justify other beliefs in one’s belief system, and thereby presents one horn of the foundationalist dilemma.

Cf. also Michael Williams, *Groundless Belief: An Essay on the Possibility of Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), 29–30.

³⁵ Bradley, ‘On Truth and Coherence’, 204.

I would claim, then, that what is striking here is that although Bradley denies that experience ever involves a pure ‘datum’, he does so *not* in order to question the justificatory role of experience (as the contemporary coherentist does), but to emphasize the consequent *fallibility* of experience, in order to defeat *critical* foundationalism; and this shows, I think, that the dialectic of ‘early’ and contemporary coherentism is distinct on this issue, as I have claimed.

A second example that might be used to criticize my position is that of Blanshard. For, it could be argued, Blanshard’s position is rather like those contemporary coherentists (such as Bonjour and Davidson) who try to move from coherence as a theory of justification to coherence as a test of truth via an a priori argument to show that coherence is truth-conducive—so, once again (the objection would run) my emphasis on the difference between the dialectical positions of early and contemporary coherentism must be exaggerated. The claim here is that, after all, Blanshard takes coherence to be the *nature* of truth, and he does so in order to guarantee that coherence is truth-conducive in a way that is designed to answer scepticism, and so move *from* coherence as a theory of justification *to* coherence as a test for truth—so on this view, it would seem that there is no difference between Blanshard on the one side, and Bonjour and Davidson (for example) on the other. This is how Bonjour sees Blanshard’s position, though he himself thinks it is not necessary to adopt a coherence theory of truth in order to establish that coherence is truth-conducive, and that this can be established in another way:

Having concluded on this basis that ‘coherence is our sole criterion of truth’ ([Blanshard, *The Nature of Thought*, II] 259), that is, the sole standard of epistemic justification, Blanshard proceeds to consider the problem of how this standard is related to truth itself. The basic idea here is that a correct test of truth (or standard of justification) must somehow be capable of being shown to be intelligibly connected with that of which it is to be the test, with truth itself. Now it is obvious that substantially this same idea, construed as a *challenge* to any proposed account of epistemic justification, has shaped [Bonjour’s] discussion above . . . The problem is that Blanshard concludes far too quickly that the only way to solve the problem of connecting a coherence *test* of truth with truth itself is to adopt the view that coherence, rather than correspondence, is also the *nature* of truth . . . Since Blanshard’s sole argument in favor of a coherence theory of justification is that it is the only alternative to skepticism, it is obviously question-begging to respond to skeptical doubts about the truth-conduciveness of coherentist justification by appealing to a coherentist conception of truth whose only rationale is that it is appropriately related to the very standard of justification in question. Thus Blanshard’s response . . . is quite inadequate.³⁶

According to Bonjour, therefore, Blanshard comes to adopt a coherence theory of truth in order to offer a ‘metajustification’ of the kind Bonjour thinks is needed: ‘such a metajustification of one’s proposed standard of justification constitutes the only cogent response to the sceptic who, while perhaps conceding that the

³⁶ Bonjour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*, 214–15.

standards in question are those we actually follow in our cognitive practice, questions whether following them is really epistemically rational, whether the beliefs we regard as justified really are justified in an epistemically relevant sense'.³⁷

However, as BonJour himself notes in the discussion of Blanshard just cited, taken in this way Blanshard's arguments look particularly unpromising in relation to scepticism. For, Blanshard's argument for adopting the coherence theory of truth is to *assume* coherence as test for truth, and to argue that because our belief-system would be *less* coherent if we held a correspondence theory rather than a coherence theory of truth, then the coherence theory of truth is correct:

Now, if we accept coherence as a test of truth, does that commit us to any conclusions about the *nature* of truth . . . ? [T]here [does not] seem to be any direct path from the acceptance of coherence as the test of truth to its acceptance as the nature of truth. Nevertheless there is an indirect path. If we accept coherence as a test, we must use it everywhere. We must therefore use it to test the suggestion that truth *is* other than coherence. But if we do, we shall find that we must reject the suggestion as leading to *incoherence*. Coherence is a pertinacious concept and, like the well-known camel, if one lets it get its nose under the edge of the tent, it will shortly walk off with the whole . . .

[T]he attempt to combine coherence as the test of truth with correspondence as the nature of truth will not pass muster by its own test. The result is *incoherence*. We believe that an application of the test to other theories of truth would lead to a like result. The argument is this: assume coherence as the test, and you will be driven by the incoherence of your alternatives to the conclusion that it is also the nature of truth.³⁸

Now of course, if we take it (as BonJour does) that Blanshard is here trying to offer a 'metajustification' of coherence as a test of truth, by arguing for coherence as the nature of truth, using coherence as a test, then his response to the sceptic on this score is indeed peculiarly 'question-begging' and 'inadequate'. But, in my view, this is precisely to misconstrue the dialectics of the situation in the way I have suggested. Blanshard is *not* trying to move *from* coherence as a theory of justification *to* coherence as the test for truth, and so is not trying to answer the sceptical regress of justification problem. Rather, he takes himself to have already shown how in our practices of inquiry, we generally use coherence as a test for truth,³⁹ and assuming the reliability of those practices (which he seems entitled to

³⁷ BonJour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*, 157. For another commentator who takes it that Blanshard comes to defend his coherence theory of truth in order to have a better response to the sceptic, see Michael Williams, *Unnatural Doubts: Epistemological Realism and the Basis of Scepticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 231–6.

³⁸ Blanshard, *The Nature of Thought*, vol. 2, 266–9.

³⁹ For evidence that a coherentist like Blanshard is simply trying to provide an accurate account of our practices of inquiry, cf. *The Nature of Thought*, vol. 2, 219:

If an opponent is to be convinced [that something is a criterion of truth], then, it must be by a process, not of proving one's own criterion or of refuting his, but of showing him that what he thinks he holds he does not really hold, since the supposition that he does is inconsistent with the facts of his intellectual practice.

do in this *non-sceptical* context),⁴⁰ he can take it that coherence is a reliable truth indicator; that being so, he then applies the test to the question ‘what is truth?’, to see what answer delivers the most coherent result, and claims that the test favours the coherence theory of truth as an answer, because it gives us the most satisfying explanation of why coherence is reliable as a test for truth.⁴¹ Unlike Bonjour, therefore, Blanshard is not trying to establish against the sceptic that coherence *is* reliable as a test of truth; he is trying to show that coherence as the nature of truth best helps us understand *why* it is, and so in terms of this criterion, should be accepted as our account of truth, as well as its test. The difference in the dialectic of Bonjour’s coherentism and Blanshard highlights the distinction I have wanted to draw attention to, superficial similarities notwithstanding.⁴²

V

We have therefore seen how assimilating early coherentists like Bradley and Blanshard too closely to contemporary coherentism can lead to a misunderstanding of their position. I will now argue in conclusion that respecting this

⁴⁰ In a later article, Blanshard refers to it as a ‘postulate’, which ‘is progressively confirmed in experience’, while there are also some metaphysical arguments in its favour: see Brand Blanshard, ‘Reply to Nicholas Rescher’, in Paul Arthur Schlipp (ed.), *The Philosophy of Brand Blanshard* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1980), 589–600, at 592.

⁴¹ It would seem that later reflection led Blanshard to change his mind on this, where he came round to thinking that all that is necessary for this explanation is that reality form a coherent system, rather than truth itself consisting in coherence. This allows Blanshard to go back to adopting something very like a correspondence theory of truth: see ‘Reply to Nicholas Rescher’, 590. He had discussed this more modest kind of coherentism in *The Nature of Thought*, but there had argued that the coherentist needed to go further: see *The Nature of Thought*, II, 267.

⁴² This also suggests a way of taking Rescher’s position, that would enable him to escape Bonjour’s charge that this position involves circularity. Bonjour argues that Rescher cannot use pragmatic success as grounds for thinking coherence as a standard of justification is truth-conducive, as this is an empirical claim about the adoption of that standard, which then is itself either (1) unjustified; (2) justified by a circular appeal to coherence as a standard of justification; (3) justified by appeal to some other standard of justification (see Bonjour, *The Structure of Knowledge*, 10, 222–9; ‘Rescher’s Epistemological System’, in Ernest Sosa (ed.), *The Philosophy of Nicholas Rescher* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1979), 157–72; ‘Rescher’s Idealistic Pragmatism’, *Review of Metaphysics* 29 (1976), 702–26). If Rescher is seen as trying to resolve the regress of justification problem (as he sometimes presents himself as doing), then this may indeed be a real difficulty. But if, rather, Rescher is seen as simply trying to identify coherence as a criterion that is fundamental to our method of inquiry (as he also sometimes presents himself as doing), then I see nothing circular in going on to claim that in so far as these inquiries seem to be pragmatically successful we have every reason to think that this method is reliable. Cf. Rescher, *The Coherence Theory of Truth*, 256–7:

Our strategy is this: to show that a great part of scientific method, of information processing theory, and of the general theory of knowledge, can be successfully accommodated within the framework of the coherence criterion. Hence the successful record of these disciplines in their established routines can be invoked on behalf of the coherence theory itself. In so far as these cognitive disciplines have proved themselves successful in the governance of our conduct of affairs and in so far as they can be incorporated within the province of the coherence criterion of factual truth, an appeal to successful experience can be made on behalf of our coherence theory itself.

distinction also means that current debates concerning coherentism do not carry over straightforwardly to the position of these coherentists, so that arguments against the former are not necessarily so strong when applied to the latter. I will focus on two points.

V.1 A first, and obvious, way in which the distinction I have drawn makes a difference concerns the issue of ‘moderate foundationalism’, and how this provides an attractive alternative to justificatory coherentism. The moderate foundationalist, as we have seen, denies that foundationalism needs to be committed to infallible (or incorrigible, or indubitable) basic beliefs as constituting the block to the regress of justification: for example, a moderate foundationalist might take these basic beliefs to be intrinsically credible beliefs, or reliably caused beliefs, while accepting that beliefs of these sorts are fallible.⁴³ This allows the moderate foundationalist to claim that one of the coherentist’s best arguments against foundationalism—that to be a foundationalist one must be an infallibilist—is misdirected, as in fact the former does not require the latter.⁴⁴

Now, this foundationalist strategy is persuasive as a response to *justificatory* coherentism, for it does indeed seem plausible to say that justification does not require certainty, and that perhaps there is a class of (say) intrinsically credible beliefs which a person is warranted in believing without further support, provided he has no grounds on which to doubt them. An ‘innocent until proven guilty’ strategy of this kind would seem to leave the way open for a moderate foundationalist response to the justificatory regress problem, which provides a distinctively foundationalist response to it, while avoiding the problematic appeal to infallible beliefs, which gives impetus to the justificatory coherentist.

But of course, while the foundationalist can respond to the *justificatory* coherentist in this way, he is not able to reply to the *critical* coherentist so easily. For, in this context, in allowing for the possibility of fallibilism, the foundationalist is in effect conceding their position to the coherentist: for, this is to admit that there are no certain beliefs that can be used as a test for the truth of other beliefs, so that any belief may have to be revised in the light of the overall coherence of our belief-system, which serves as the ultimate criterion. Thus, in the contemporary (justificatory) context, the moderate foundationalist

⁴³ It should be noted, therefore, that I am using the term ‘moderate foundationalist’ in the narrow sense of someone who holds that fallible beliefs can be foundational; I am not using it in the broader sense, of someone who is prepared to accept coherentism as an aspect of justification *alongside* foundationalism.

⁴⁴ Cf. Mark Pastin, ‘C. I. Lewis’s Radical Foundationalism’, 418–19:

No question is of more importance in evaluating foundationalism than the question of whether or not a foundationalist must be a radical foundationalist. For the main objection raised to foundationalist views is that there are no absolutely certain propositions, or at least not a sufficient supply of them, to support all empirical knowledge . . . But this objection applies only to radical foundationalism and not to modest foundationalism.

can accept fallibilism while still being a foundationalist, because he can still argue that these fallible basic beliefs are justified even though they do not get their justification from their inferential relation to other beliefs, so that coherence is not necessary for justification; but in the earlier (criterial) context, if the foundationalist endorses fallibilism, then it seems he can no longer claim that coherence is redundant as a test for truth, as it will now be needed to sort accurate from inaccurate input, in a way that is not required if that input is infallible (or if it can be tested against some other infallible input). It seems, then, that moderate (or fallibilist) foundationalism leaves the justificatory foundationalist with a position that is still recognizably distinct from foundationalism, whereas this is not true of the criterial foundationalist.

This, I think, also suggests an historical point concerning foundationalism. Contemporary moderate foundationalists have often been puzzled as to why more traditional foundationalists have felt the need to be committed to infallibilism, usually diagnosing some sort of conceptual confusion or extra assumption as a kind of pathological explanation.⁴⁵ But on my account, a philosophical motivation for this commitment to certainty emerges, as required for *criterial* foundationalism; for if the foundationalist rejects coherence as a 'final test' for truth, then he is required to hold (as we have seen) that there are infallible beliefs that will not require this test, and this makes infallibilism a core commitment of the position, rather than something that arises from a non-foundationalist assumption, or a mistaken implication that could easily be dropped.

A case study of this is C. I. Lewis. In the current literature, Lewis is treated as an archetypal 'immodest' or 'radical' foundationalist, who held that foundationalism requires infallibilism. On the other hand, it has been argued that Lewis goes much further than he needs to with his commitment to certainty, having been misled by his notorious argument from probability: 'unless something is certain in terms of experience, then nothing of empirical import is even probable'.⁴⁶ This argument is now widely felt to be unpersuasive,⁴⁷ so that nothing seems to stand in the way of weakening Lewis's position. Indeed, it is agreed that Lewis

⁴⁵ Cf. Alston, 'Has Foundationalism Been Refuted?', 41: 'Though foundationalists have often taken their foundations to be incorrigible, they need not have done so in order to be distinctive foundationalists'. Cf. also Anthony Quinton, *The Nature of Things* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 142–71, and Mark Pastin, 'Modest Foundationalism and Self-Warrant', 280:

Many foundationalists undoubtedly would hold that core propositions are not only self-warranted, but also absolutely certain, incorrigible, or infallible. I believe that we may regard this as following not from the foundationalism of these philosophers *per se*, but from their accepting some principle such as: If propositions in the empirical core were not absolutely certain (incorrigible, infallible), then no empirical propositions could be probable to any degree.

⁴⁶ Lewis, *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation*, 235.

⁴⁷ Cf. Hans Reichenbach, 'The Experiential Element in Knowledge', *The Philosophical Review*, 61 (1952), 147–59; Nelson Goodman, 'Sense and Certainty', *The Philosophical Review*, 61 (1952), 160–7; Susan Haack, *Evidence and Inquiry: Towards Reconstruction in Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 42–6.

himself came close to a modest foundationalism in places, when he recognized the role of memory in justification, and acknowledged its fallibility.⁴⁸ Taken as a justificatory foundationalist, therefore, it seems easy to dispense with his infallibilism and so weaken his foundationalism, and thus to render his position more plausible to contemporary tastes.⁴⁹

Now, while this reworking of Lewis's position might succeed if he is viewed as merely a justificatory foundationalist, I think it cannot apply so easily to the other side of his foundationalism, which is criterial; but that there are these *two* aspects to Lewis's foundationalism has been overlooked, along with the distinction itself. In fact, however, the distinction is marked quite clearly in Lewis's own terminology, by his talk of *verification* on the one hand, and *justification* on the other.⁵⁰

To understand this distinction, it is important to note that Lewis has a particular view of belief: namely, that to believe something is very much like entertaining a hypothesis or making a prediction about future experience. For example, to believe that 'there is a doorknob in front of me' is to believe that 'if I were to reach out my hand, it would seem to me that I was touching a doorknob'. Now, if entertaining a belief is like forming a hypothesis, we can ask two questions: was it rational to form this hypothesis, and, is the hypothesis true? The first, for Lewis, is the question of justification: does the believer have reasonable grounds on which to form the hypothesis, for example, does it appear to him that there is a doorknob in front of him, is he in good lighting conditions etc.? The second question is the question of verification: does his future action show that the hypothesis is true, for example, when he reaches out, does he indeed seem to touch a doorknob?

Now, given this distinction, the motivation for Lewis's infallibilism can be seen to come not just from his view of justification, but also from his view of verification: namely, that no *confirmation* of a hypothesis (and thus no *verified* belief) would be possible unless our perceptual experience was (at some level) certain. It is notable, I think, that Lewis talks as much about conformation, corroboration, and verification as he does about warrant and justifying evidence, in the well-known passage from *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation* where he insists on certainty:

If what is to confirm the objective belief and thus show it probable, were itself an objective belief and hence no more than probable, then the objective belief to be confirmed would only probably be rendered probable. Thus unless we distinguish the objective truths

⁴⁸ Cf. Lewis, *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation*, ch. XI.

⁴⁹ Cf. Pastin, 'C. I. Lewis's Radical Foundationalism'; Haack, *Evidence and Inquiry*, esp. 34–51; Susan Haack, 'C. I. Lewis', in Marcus G. Singer (ed.), *American Philosophy*, Royal Institute of Philosophy Lecture Series: 19 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 215–38.

⁵⁰ Cf. Lewis, *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation*, 257–8. For a helpful discussion of this distinction in Lewis, see Elizabeth Flower and Murray G. Murphey, *A History of Philosophy in America*, 2 vols (New York: Capricorn Books, 1977), vol. 2, 916–30.

belief in which experience may render probable, from those presentations and passages of experience which provide this warrant, any citation of evidence for a statement about objective reality, and any mentionable corroboration of it, will become involved in an infinite regress of the merely probable—or else it will go round in a circle—and the probability will fail to be genuine. . . . Two propositions which have some *antecedent* probability may, under certain circumstances, become *more* credible because of their congruence with one another. But objective judgements *none* of which could acquire probability by direct confirmations in experience, would gain no support by leaning up against one another in the fashion of the ‘coherence theory of truth’. No empirical statement can become credible without reference to experience.⁵¹

Lewis can be read here as proposing a standard foundationalist response to the question of justification: that in order to be justified, the regress of grounds for a belief must end in certainty. But I think he can *also* be read as proposing a foundationalist response to the question of verification: that in order to test the truth of a belief (which may or may not be *antecedently* justified), then this must at some level be measured against data that is certain, otherwise verification could not occur. Thus, even if the modest foundationalists seeking to revise Lewis’s position here are right with respect to justification, this would not address Lewis’s concern about verification, and about how truth can be established within a fallibilistic framework.⁵²

If I am right about this, it also shows that the way in which Lewis’s critics have used his views on memory to attack his infallibilism is also less effective than it may seem. The difficulty here appears to come from Lewis’s acknowledgement of the epistemological significance of memory, as well as present experience. For Haack, this acknowledgement again betrays a ‘tension’ in Lewis’s position: she argues that Lewis is forced to allow memory a role, because he sees that one’s present experiences are insufficient to justify one’s beliefs, without further evidence from what one remembers; but he is also forced to admit that memory is fallible, and so his infallibilism is fatally compromised: ‘In effect, then, Lewis is being forced to retreat from strong to weak foundationalism by the pressure of something like the swings and roundabouts argument—apprehensions of one’s present experience are, or so Lewis thinks, certain, but they are insufficient to form the basis, and while the addition of memorial judgements about past

⁵¹ Lewis, *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation*, 186–7.

⁵² In this respect, I think Lewis’s position is to be contrasted to the infallibilism of H. H. Price, which was focused only on justification. Cf. H. H. Price, *Belief* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969), 101–2:

We all think that some questions can be conclusively settled by means of sense-perception. . . . If so, it is perfectly proper to speak of observed facts, as we all do in practice, whatever philosophical theories we hold. And this is one way (the most familiar way) in which the regress of beliefs supported by other beliefs comes to an end. This regress—the regress of evidence for our evidence, as I called it—is terminated sometimes by an observed fact, that is by a fact ascertained or discovered by means of sense-perception.

experience might provide a sufficient basis, it is at the price of the sacrifice of certainty'.⁵³

Now, once again, I think the situation is more complex. For, while Lewis may indeed be obliged to move towards a modest foundationalism with respect to justification by his views on memory, this does not compromise his *critical* foundationalism. On the one hand, Lewis's critics may be right to argue that Lewis wants to give memory a role in justifying beliefs, in so far as predictions about one's future experiences (which is what beliefs are for Lewis) are in part grounded on one's memory of past experiences; and if he is a fallibilist about memory (as he appears to be) then this suggests his justificatory foundationalist framework should also be modest or weak. But on the other hand, Lewis does not appear to think that memory needs to play a role in the verification or confirmation of a belief, as this can be done by immediate experience, so that his fallibilism about memory need *not* compromise his infallibilism about verification. Once we are clear about the distinction between justification and verification, therefore, we can be clearer about the role infallibilism plays in Lewis's position, which is more complex than his modest foundationalist critics have seen.

V. 2 Secondly, let me point to another issue where it seems to me that drawing the distinction between the two kinds of coherentism I have identified shows how in fact each raises different questions, this time concerning how what is taken to be a standard problem for coherentism should be treated. The standard problem concerns what role (if any) the coherentist can give to experience or observation within his picture, conceived of as some sort of input by the world into our belief system (so this has come to be known as the 'input objection'), and so how he can prevent our belief system being cut off from the world (so it has also been called the 'isolation objection'). The problem is that unless the coherentist *can* accommodate experience or observation in some way, then it looks as if coherentism must treat empirically grounded belief-systems and belief-systems that are in no experiential contact with reality (e.g. fairy stories) as somehow on a par, as long as both are coherent, which seems problematic; but then, how is it possible for the coherentist to make this accommodation of experience, without compromising his coherentism?

Within the contemporary debate, this problem is seen as an issue concerning justification, where it comes to this: on the one hand, can the coherentist claim that an empirically grounded belief-system is more justified than one that is not, without on the other hand giving experience some intrinsic justificatory force

⁵³ Haack, *Evidence and Inquiry*, 48–9. Lewis's views on memory have been widely felt to create difficulties for his more general epistemological outlook: cf. Pastin, 'C. I. Lewis's Radical Foundationalism', 415: 'Lewis's views concerning memory are notoriously difficult to integrate into his overall position.'

that has nothing to do with coherence? Attempts have been made by various contemporary coherentists to show that the latter difficulty can be avoided, where perhaps the most elaborate strategy is offered by BonJour;⁵⁴ but by his own recent admission attempts of this kind have proved unsatisfactory on closer inspection.⁵⁵

The question here, however, is whether earlier coherentists faced this problem in the same way.⁵⁶ My suggestion is that they did not, in so far as for them the issue was not justification, but truth. For them, then, the problem was this: on the one hand, how can coherence as a test be reliable, unless the system of beliefs is somehow anchored or related to the world via perception; but on the other hand, if it *is* so related, how can just coherence be the test of truth, and not also perceptual experience? Schlick puts this objection as follows:

If one is to take coherence seriously as a general criterion of truth, then one must consider arbitrary fairy stories to be as true as a historical report, or as statements in a textbook of chemistry, provided the story is constructed in such a way that no contradiction ever arises. I can depict by help of fantasy a grotesque world full of bizarre adventures: the coherence philosopher must believe in the truth of my account provided only I take care of the mutual compatibility of my statements, and also take the precaution of avoiding any collision with the usual description of the world, by placing the scene of my story on a distant star, where no observation is possible. Indeed, strictly speaking, I don't even require this precaution; I can just as well demand that the others have to adapt themselves to my description; and not the other way round. They cannot then object that, say, this happening runs counter to the observations, for according to the coherence theory there is no question of observations, but only of the compatibility of statements.

Since no one dreams of holding the statements of a story book true and those of a text of physics false, the coherence view fails utterly. Something more, that is, must be added to coherence, namely, a principle in terms of which the compatibility is to be established, and this would alone then be the actual criterion.⁵⁷

As I read it, Schlick's version of the input (or isolation) objection is directed squarely at the criterial coherentist, rather than at the justificatory coherentist. That is, the question is why, if the coherentist claims that coherence is a test for truth, the coherentist isn't obliged to treat a consistent fairy story as true, just as much as a historical report, where it is assumed that the coherentist cannot appeal to the observational content of the latter over the former, as this would be to introduce observation as a test over and above coherence, and so would

⁵⁴ BonJour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*, esp. 111–38. Cf. also Jonathan Dancy, 'On Coherence Theories of Justification: Can An Empiricist Be A Coherentist?', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 21 (1984), 359–65.

⁵⁵ See Laurence BonJour, 'Haack on Justification and Experience', *Synthese* 112 (1997), 13–23, at 13–15, and 'The Dialectic of Foundationalism and Coherentism', 129–30.

⁵⁶ In standard treatments, it is assumed that they did. For example, on Bradley, see Crossley, 'Justification and the Foundations of Empirical Knowledge'.

⁵⁷ Schlick, 'The Foundation of Knowledge', 215–16.

undermine coherentism. Schlick thinks that coherentists have only failed to see this because they have taken it for granted that the statements being tested are the ones we ordinarily get from experience anyway, and so for which the issue does not arise; but of course (Schlick thinks) the coherentist cannot take this for granted without again treating observation statements as criterial, and so without again compromising his coherentism:

The astounding error of the 'coherence theory' can be explained only by the fact that its defenders and expositors were thinking only of such statements as actually occur in science, and took them as their only examples. Under these conditions the relation of non-contradiction was in fact sufficient, but only because these statements are of a very special character. They have, that is, in a certain sense (to be explained presently) their 'origin' in observation statements, they derive, as one may confidently say in the traditional way of speaking, 'from experience'.⁵⁸

Now, Bradley discusses an objection of this kind in detail in 'On Truth and Coherence':

'But,' it may still be objected, 'my fancy is unlimited. I can therefore invent an imaginary world even more orderly than my known world. And further this fanciful arrangement might possibly be made so wide that the world of perception would become for me in comparison small and inconsiderable. Hence, my perceived world, so far as not supporting my fancied arrangement, might be included within it as error. Such a consequence would or might lead to confusion in theory and to disaster in practice. And yet the result follows from your view inevitably, unless after all you fall back upon the certainty of perception.'⁵⁹

Bradley's first response to this objection is to question the counterexample, by arguing that it is inconceivable that our imagination could construct a world more coherent than the one given to us by perception, because for every imagined feature of the world, we could equally imagine a feature with which it would *not* cohere, so 'these contrary fancies will balance the first',⁶⁰ and so will 'cancel each other out', leaving us no grounds on which to doubt the facts of perception. However, he recognizes that perhaps this reply will not have addressed the fundamental worry here:

Again, if the conclusion and the principle advocated here [i.e. coherentism] are accepted, the whole Universe seems too subject to the individual knower. What is given counts for so little and the arrangement counts for so much, while in fact the arranger, if we are to have real knowledge, seems so dependent on the world.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Schlick, 'The Foundation of Knowledge', 215. Cf. also A. J. Ayer, 'Verification and Experience', in A. J. Ayer (ed.), *Logical Positivism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1959), 228–43, at 234–5: We may conclude then that the attempt to lay down a criterion for determining the truth of empirical propositions which does not contain any reference to 'facts' or 'reality' or 'experience,' has not proved successful. It seems plausible only when it involves a tacit introduction of that very principle of agreement with reality which it is designed to obviate.

⁵⁹ Bradley, 'On Truth and Coherence', 214.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 217–18.

To this deeper worry, Bradley gives the following reply:

But the individual who knows is here wrongly isolated, and then, because of that, is confronted with a mere alien Universe. And the individual, as so isolated, I agree, could do nothing, for indeed he is nothing.⁶²

Bradley's point here, I take it, is this. He is allowing that of course coherence as a criterion of truth could not work, unless the knower had some sort of contact with the world, through experience causing him to have beliefs. But what he is denying, is that this coherence is redundant as a test, because experience does not provide us with infallible beliefs, between which there is no conflict, and using which we can decide what to believe at other levels. Thus, as a coherentist, Bradley does not have confidence in coherence as a test because he has unconsciously or illicitly taken it for granted that the beliefs being tested are perceptual ones (as Schlick accuses coherentists of doing): rather, he applies the test to those beliefs because he recognizes that only when so applied will the test work. But (and this is the crucial point), I think that Bradley can consistently allow that coherence as a test will only work if our beliefs are grounded in experience, while still denying that this gives perceptual beliefs any privileged role in the testing procedure as some sort of infallible yardstick or Schlickean 'measuring rod', and so while still rejecting criterial foundationalism.⁶³

Hence, as Bradley insists at the outset of the article, he can be an empiricist *and* a criterial coherentist:

For the sake of clearness let me begin by mentioning some of the things which I do *not* believe. I do not believe in any knowledge which is independent of feeling and sensation. On sensation and feeling I am sure that we depend for the material of our knowledge . . .

But, if I do not believe all this, does it follow that I have to accept independent facts? Does it follow that perception and memory give me truths which I must take up and keep as they are given me, truths which in principle cannot be erroneous? This surely would be to pass from one false extreme to another.⁶⁴

⁶² *Ibid.*, 218.

⁶³ A comparison with the method of reflective equilibrium in ethics may be helpful here. Taken as a coherence method of inquiry, proponents of this method can consistently allow that the method of reflective equilibrium will only work (that is, lead us to a correct moral outlook) if we begin from considered moral judgements as 'inputs'; but the method is still coherentist, because it is acknowledged that these considered moral judgements are fallible, so that they need to be brought together under a moral theory in order to determine which of them fall into a coherent framework, before we can settle on which to endorse. On this picture, there is no conflict between giving considered moral judgements an important role as inputs, and still taking reflective equilibrium to be a coherentist method of inquiry.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 203. Cf. also 'On Our Knowledge of Immediate Experience', in *Essays on Truth and Reality*, 159–91, at 159–60:

There is an immediate feeling, a knowing and being in one, with which knowledge begins; and though this in a manner is transcended, it nevertheless remains throughout as the present foundation of my known world. And if you remove this direct sense of my momentary contents and being, you bring down the whole of consciousness in one common wreck. For it is in the end ruin to divide

Likewise, Blanshard is happy to admit that there must be some input into our belief system from ‘the data of experience’: ‘Indeed, escape from it would mean the abandonment of any anchorage not only for common sense, but also for speculative thought, the dancing of an “unearthly ballet of bloodless categories”’;⁶⁵ but at the same time, like Bradley, he argues that data of this sort is not infallible, and so foundationalism cannot replace coherentism as a test for truth: ‘Coherence in fact can stand alone only if the fact as given is stable, in the sense of ultimate and incorrigible; for only then do we have a fixed object with which our judgment may be compared. But no such objects are fixed, and no such facts are incorrigible.’⁶⁶

We have therefore seen that as a theory of truth-testing, the coherentist’s opponent is the infallibilist, who claims that truth can be arrived at by working out from a set of infallible beliefs. The coherentist denies any such infallible beliefs, and so argues that coherence must be used as a test for truth. But, I have argued, the coherentist can consistently hold that this test would not work unless our beliefs were anchored in experience, because this does not entail having to make experience *infallible*, and thus does not involve any concession to criterial foundationalism. The criterial coherentist can thus answer the input (or isolation) objection, without compromising his coherentism.

Now, while I think this strategy of acknowledging a role for experience is acceptable for a criterial coherentist, it is more problematic for the justificatory coherentist. As applied by the justificatory coherentist, it would have to go as follows: Coherence confers justification on beliefs within a belief-set, but it only does so if some of those beliefs are based on experience. The problem here, of course, is how the justificatory coherentist can account for this latter clause, consistently with his coherentism: that is, why must some of the beliefs within the belief-system be perceptual? One answer might be an externalist one, i.e. experiential input makes a coherent system of beliefs more likely to be true, and (because justification consists in reliability) therefore justified. But this kind of response would undercut a number of the justificatory coherentist’s other arguments, which are internalist. And yet, without an externalist answer, it looks very much as if the justificatory coherentist who adopts this strategy would be conceding that experience is a factor in conferring justification on beliefs, as well as coherence, thereby undercutting his coherentism. Thus, while it appears that the criterial coherentist can adopt the strategy of acknowledging a role for experience to answer the input (or isolation) objection, it seems that the justificatory coherentist cannot; and this, I take it, underlines again why it is important to observe the distinction I have been making, when we consider the debates surrounding the viability of coherentism as a position.

experience into something on one side experienced as an object and on the other side something not experienced at all.

⁶⁵ Blanshard, ‘Interrogation of Brand Blanshard’, 211.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 209.

VI

My aim in this paper has been modest. I have merely tried to mark out a distinction between coherentism as a test for truth and coherence as a theory of justification, and to relate this to some of the relevant literature, showing how earlier coherentists like Bradley and Blanshard differ from contemporary coherentists like Davidson and Bonjour. There is much I have not done. In particular, I have not shown how this distinction might help the 'early' coherentist avoid all of the standard objections to coherentism (though my discussion of the dialectic with the sceptic touched on aspects of this, and I have discussed the 'input' (or 'isolation') objection); nor have I considered in detail any of the arguments from Bradley and Blanshard in defence of coherence as a test for truth; nor have I explored how far (if at all) their position on this relates to other aspects of their epistemological and metaphysical theories; and nor have I considered objections that might be made against criterial coherentism as a position in its own right. These must be matters for another occasion.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Earlier versions of this paper were given at seminars at the universities of Hertfordshire and Reading, and at a Forum for European Philosophy conference in Sheffield. I am grateful to those who offered comments on those occasions, and also for helpful suggestions from Paul Faulkner, Christopher Hookway, David Owens, Jonathan Dancy, and two anonymous referees for *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*.

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PART III
HEGEL, PRAGMATISM,
AND PEIRCE

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Hegel and Pragmatism

The relation between Hegel and pragmatism is fraught and complex. On the one hand, a number of prominent classical and modern pragmatists have been happy to claim Hegel as an ally (Peirce in some moods; Dewey; Rorty in some respects; and Brandom, for example);¹ on the other hand he has also been identified by pragmatists as an enemy (Peirce in other moods; James; and Rorty in other respects, for example).² Historically, the roots of American Hegelianism and the origins of pragmatism in the late nineteenth century are somewhat intertwined,³ and more recently the revival of interest in Hegel in the Anglo-American philosophical world has benefited from the interest taken in him by figures like Rorty and Brandom. At the same time, however, very few of the central interpreters of Hegel have been pragmatists or have shown much

¹ Cf. Peirce: 'My philosophy resuscitates Hegel, though in a strange costume' (*CP*, 1.42). Dewey: '[Hegelianism] supplied a demand for unification that was doubtless an intense emotional craving, and yet was a hunger that only an intellectualized subject-matter could satisfy. . . . Hegel's synthesis of subject and object, matter and spirit, the divine and human, was, however, no mere intellectual formula; it operated as an immense release, a liberation. Hegel's treatment of human culture, of institutions and the arts, involved the same dissolution of hard-and-fast dividing walls, and had a special attraction for me' ('From Absolutism to Experimentalism', John Dewey, *The Later Works, 1925–1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, 15 vols (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), 2: 153). Rorty: 'Once one starts to look for pragmatism in Hegel, one finds quite a lot to go on' ('Dewey Between Hegel and Darwin', repr. in his *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers Volume 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 290–306, at 302). Brandom: see 'Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel's Idealism', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 7 (1999), 164–89. Other recent writers on pragmatism who are also sympathetic to Hegel would include Frederick L. Will and Richard J. Bernstein.

² Cf. Peirce: 'My whole method will be found to be in profound contrast with that of Hegel: I reject his philosophy in toto' (*CP* 1.368; *EP* I: 255–6). James: 'The more absolutistic philosophers dwell on so high a level of abstraction that they never even try to come down. The absolute mind which they offer us, the mind that makes our universe by thinking it, might, for aught they show us to the contrary, have made any one of a million other universes just as well as this. You can deduce no single actual particular from the notion of it. . . . What you want is a philosophy that will not only exercise your powers of intellectual abstraction, but that will make some positive connexion with this actual world of finite human lives' (*Pragmatism*, in '*Pragmatism*' and '*The Meaning of Truth*' (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1978), 16–17). Rorty: 'In writing about [the history of modern philosophy], I have never been happy with what I have said about Hegel. In particular, I cannot read *The Science of Logic* with interest, or pleasure, or understanding, or to the end' ('Reponse to Allen Hance', in Herman J. Saatkamp (ed.), *Rorty and Pragmatism* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1991), 122–5, at 122).

³ For a lively discussion of this history, see Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (London: HarperCollins, 2001).

interest in this connection,⁴ and I think it is fair to say that this approach has had nothing like the impact of readings of Hegel adopted by (for example) Marxists, existentialists, phenomenologists, deconstructionists, and others.

While there is a fascinating historical story to be told here,⁵ in this paper I want to concentrate more on conceptual issues, and consider if there is some shared philosophical outlook between Hegel and the pragmatists, or whether at some crucial point, these positions are always destined to come apart. This question could be prosecuted at several levels—metaphysical, ethical, and political, for example—but my main focus will be epistemological, because it is here (I will argue) that the heart of the pragmatist outlook lies, and also where it may appear that the greatest disagreement with Hegel is to be found.

I

Like any complex school of thought that has evolved over time and been taken up by a number of different thinkers, it is impossible to reduce the outlook of pragmatism to any simple formula—even a formula proposed by the pragmatists themselves.⁶ Nonetheless, if one tries to trace the web of pragmatist belief back to anything like a centre, then it is arguable that there one finds a distinctively anti-Cartesian epistemology, out of which all of the rest of

⁴ One honourable exception among Hegel commentators is Kenneth R. Westphal, who in some respects adopts a pragmatist reading of Hegel. Cf. *Hegel's Epistemology* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003), 49: 'Hegel was the original pragmatist, and the lessons reviewed here were learned well by Peirce, Dewey, and James'. See also his 'Hegel and Realism', in John Shook and Joseph Margolis (eds.), *A Companion to Pragmatism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 177–83, and 'Can Pragmatic Realists argue Transcendentally?' in John Shook (ed.), *Pragmatic Naturalism and Realism* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2003), 151–75. The issue is also discussed in Terry Pinkard. 'Was Pragmatism the Successor to Idealism?', in Cheryl Misak (ed.), *New Pragmatists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 142–68.

⁵ For some discussion of the historical issues surrounding the reception of Hegel's thought by the classical pragmatists, see Max H. Fisch, 'Hegel and Peirce', in J. T. O'Malley, K. W. Algozin, and F. G. Weiss (eds.), *Hegel and the History of Philosophy* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 172–93; repr. in his *Peirce, Semeiotic and Pragmatism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 261–82; Daniel J. Cook, 'James's "Ether Mysticism" and Hegel', *Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 15 (1977), 309–20; James A. Good, 'John Dewey's "Permanent Hegelian Deposit" and the Exigencies of War', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 44 (2006), 293–313, and *A Search for Unity in Diversity: The Permanent Hegelian Deposit in the Philosophy of Dewey* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005).

⁶ Cf. Peirce, *CP* 5.412, *EP* II, 332, where Peirce tells us the doctrine for which he 'invented the name *pragmatism*' holds that 'a *conception*, that is, the rational purport of a word or other conception, lies exclusively in its conceivable bearing upon the conduct of life; so that, since obviously nothing that might not result from experiment can have any direct bearing upon conduct, if one can define accurately all the conceivable experimental phenomena which the affirmation or denial of a concept could imply, one will have therein a complete definition of the concept, and *there is nothing more to it*'. And cf. James, *Pragmatism*, 28: 'The pragmatic method . . . is to try to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences'.

the pragmatic outlook can be seen to develop. Although this epistemology has its antecedents—most particularly, perhaps, in the ‘constructive scepticism’ of Pierre Gassendi and Marin Mersenne, and in the ‘commonsensism’ of Thomas Reid—the pragmatists were to develop its implications to the widest and furthest degree, while it is in following out those implications in different ways that the divergence between the pragmatist thinkers themselves can best be understood.

The first step in this direction is taken by Peirce, who challenged the Cartesian starting point of modern philosophy, encapsulated in Descartes’s famous ‘method of doubt’. At the heart of this method, as standardly conceived,⁷ is the thought that if philosophy is to reach anything like knowledge, then it must begin by suspending belief in anything that is not certain, where it turns out (Descartes thinks) that this encompasses most but not quite everything we believe: from out of the rubble some beliefs are said to survive (the belief in my own existence and the existence of God), out of which the edifice of knowledge can be rebuilt, this time on secure foundations. Descartes thus makes central a number of the ruling intuitions of epistemology, namely that knowledge requires foundations that are certain; that all our ordinary beliefs can be rendered doubtful by the sceptic; that each individual is required to look for secure foundations working on his own; that before it can be used, any faculty of knowledge must be shown to be reliable; and that the burden of proof on these matters lies with us and not the sceptic.

In a crucial early paper, ‘Some Consequences of Four Incapacities’ of 1868, Peirce contrasts the Cartesian approach with that of the Scholastics, and declares: ‘Now without wishing to return to scholasticism, it seems to me that modern science and modern logic require us to stand upon a very different platform from this’.⁸ Firstly, in contrast to Descartes’s view that ‘philosophy must begin with universal doubt’, Peirce declares:

We cannot begin with complete doubt. We must begin with all the prejudices which we actually have when we enter upon the study of philosophy. These prejudices are not to be dispelled by a maxim, for they are the things which it does not occur to us *can* be questioned. Hence this initial scepticism will be a mere self-deception, and not real doubt; and no one who follows the Cartesian method will ever be satisfied until he has formally recovered all those beliefs which in form he has given up. It is, therefore, as useless a preliminary as going to the North Pole would be in order to get to Constantinople by coming down regularly upon a meridian. A person may, it is true, in the course of his studies, find reason to doubt what he began by believing; but in that case he doubts

⁷ For the sake of the discussion in this paper, I will take this standard reading for granted, and not try to defend it, as I am more interested in how opposition to this view led to the development of pragmatism, than in whether that opposition succeeded in hitting its historical target; but for a very interesting recent reading of Descartes that puts that standard reading in question, see David Owens, ‘Scepticisms: Descartes and Hume’, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 74 (2000), 119–42, and ‘Descartes’s Use of Doubt’, in Janet Broughton and John Carriero (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Descartes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 164–78.

⁸ Peirce, *CP* 5.265, *EP* I, 28.

because he has a positive reason for it, and not on account of the Cartesian maxim. Let us not pretend to doubt in philosophy what we do not doubt in our hearts.⁹

Secondly, Peirce objects to Descartes's claim that the property of being clearly and distinctly conceived can be used as a criterion of truth, because this leads to a kind of rationalistic intuitionism which is perniciously individualistic and immediate: if I claim to see clearly and distinctly that p is true, who are you to challenge me, and why should I provide any reasons for believing p beyond this experience of its clearness and distinctness as an idea? In fact, Peirce thinks, the test of truth that science actually uses is agreement between inquirers, so that we need to see ourselves as part of a community of investigators, within which doubts arise and need to be answered through the challenges of people who see the world in a different way, rather than the abstract 'sceptic', who does not exist in real life at all.

Thirdly, Descartes is also mistaken that a successful inquiry can be conducted in a foundationalist manner, by attempting to start from some unshakeable premiss and arguing from there to further conclusions. In fact, Peirce claims, the sciences do not proceed in this way at all, but reach their conclusions by adopting a more holistic and coherentist approach: 'Its reasoning should not form a chain which is no stronger than its weakest link, but a cable whose fibres may be ever so slender, provided they are sufficiently numerous and intimately connected'.¹⁰ Finally, Peirce argues that the Cartesian principle is inimical to science because certain facts remain unexplained, by being traced back to the inscrutable will of God.

There are, I think, a number of notable and fateful elements to Peirce's discussion here, including: his distinction between real and artificial doubt; his claim that fallibilism is not the same as scepticism, in the sense that I can hold a belief and recognize that I might come to have reason to question it in the

⁹ Peirce, *CP* 5.265, *EP* I, 28–9. Cf. also 'Some philosophers have imagined that to start an inquiry it was only necessary to utter a question or set it down upon paper, and have even recommended us to begin our studies with questioning everything! But the mere putting of a proposition into the interrogative form does not stimulate the mind to any struggle after belief. There must be a real and living doubt, and without this all discussion is idle' (Peirce *CP* 5.376, *EP* I, 115); and 'Philosophers of very diverse stripes propose that philosophy shall take its start from one or another state of mind in which no man, least of all a beginner in philosophy, actually is. One proposes that you shall begin by doubting everything, and says that there is only one thing that you cannot doubt, as if doubting were "as easy as lying." Another proposes that we should begin by observing "the first impressions of sense," forgetting that our very percepts are the results of cognitive elaboration. But in truth, there is but one state of mind from which you can "set out," namely, the very state of mind in which you actually find yourself at the time that you do "set out,"—a state in which you are laden with an immense mass of cognition already formed, of which you cannot divest yourself if you would; and who knows whether, if you could, you would not have made all knowledge impossible to yourself? Do you call it *doubting* to write down on a piece of paper that you doubt? If so, doubt has nothing to do with any serious business. But do not make believe; if pedantry has not eaten all reality out of you, recognize, as you must, that there is much that you do not doubt, in the least' (Peirce *CP* 5.416, *EP* II, 335–6).

¹⁰ Peirce *CP* 5.265, *EP* I, 29.

future as a result of further inquiries, without on that basis being required to doubt that belief now; his claim that while Cartesianism may set out to oppose dogmatism, it in fact invites it, by ending up with an individualistic criterion of truth that rules out reasonable disagreement between inquirers; and his claim that while Cartesianism claims to provide a foundation to the sciences and to therefore legitimate them, it is in fact at odds with the methods of communal and holistic inquiry that those sciences themselves actually employ.

These elements are fateful, because so much of what has come to be associated with pragmatism can be traced back to the central shift in perspective that they embody, where at the centre of this shift lies the distinction between real and artificial doubt. Four strands in pragmatist thinking can be seen to start from here.

Firstly, central to Peirce's doctrine of real doubt is the idea that this only occurs in the context of some inquiry that is ongoing: it is real, precisely because something happens or is said that causes a challenge to what you already believe or take for granted, in a way that brings about a mental 'disturbance'. But then, Peirce holds, it is perfectly legitimate for you to resolve that disturbance by thinking about it in the light of other things you believe, rather than suspending your beliefs altogether, the abstract possibility of global error notwithstanding. This view then leads to a Neurathian picture of inquiry that is at odds with the Cartesian approach: while any belief may be questioned, we are not required to question all our beliefs at once, as a way of testing our belief system from the outside, so we are like the sailor at sea who finds that some planks of his ship are rotten, but can rely on others while he repairs them, without needing to go into port. This idea was developed further by Dewey in his account of inquiry, and lies at the heart of Rorty's more radical historicism and perspectivalism, which it may or may not entail.¹¹

Secondly, the idea of real doubt generates an impatience with abstract and empty theorizing, an impatience that is characteristic of the pragmatist temperament, where this theorizing has no 'cash value' in our lives: faced with Cartesian scepticism, none of us change what we do, carrying on much as we did before. This phenomenon had been noted by philosophers previously, of course; but there had still been the suggestion that our inability to be moved by sceptical doubts betokened a lack of full rationality on our part, a triumph of instinct and habit over reason and self-control.¹² The pragmatists, however, went further, in

¹¹ Cf. Cheryl Misak, 'Introduction', in Cheryl Misak (ed.), *New Pragmatists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1–6, at 4: 'Neurath's image of having to rebuild our boat of knowledge plank by plank while at sea might well be thought of as the insight at the heart of Peirce, James, and Dewey. Peirce's own metaphor is strikingly similar: science "is not standing upon the bedrock of fact. It is walking upon a bog, and can only say, this ground seems to hold for the present. Here I will stay until it begins to give way" (*CP* 5. 589)'.
¹² This can be seen as the moral drawn by Hume, although the sceptical reasoning, which we forget as soon as we leave the study, is for him not Cartesian, which he also views as groundless

arguing against any such dichotomy, and came to see such capacities as central to our epistemic success, in furnishing us with the ability to conduct our inquiries. It is arguable, therefore, that with Peirce's doctrine of real doubt and thus with the conviction that (as Dewey put it) 'uncertainty is primarily a practical matter',¹³ we find the beginning of pragmatism's characteristic emphasis on the need to look at the impact of ideas on our actual behaviour and lives.

Thirdly, this focus on real doubt led Peirce and subsequent pragmatists to look seriously at how inquiry is actually carried out, particularly in the sciences. The suggestion is that philosophers, by entertaining their peculiar kinds of doubt, miss how doubt in fact plays the role it does in our investigations, and the steps that we in fact take to deal with it, which is by cooperating with others, performing tests on the world around us, reflecting on our other beliefs, seeking convergence over time, and remaining open-minded as regards the beliefs we have without at the same time succumbing to scepticism.

Fourthly, Peirce's doctrine of real doubt plays a crucial role in the way in which metaphysics comes to be conceived, where it can no longer be seen as a possible 'first philosophy' that might offer us indubitable truths, known a priori. To some, like Peirce, this meant a liberation for metaphysics, which could now be conducted in the same fallibilistic, open-minded, cooperative spirit as the sciences, and in a way that takes them into account; while for others, like Dewey in some moods and Rorty in all, it meant a liberation *from* metaphysics, as a fruitless and unnecessary search for a transcendent beyond that pragmatism has shown that we can do without. Associated with these issues is the question of how far the goal of truth is also part of the metaphysical quest to leave behind the uncertainties of the ordinary world, so that the kind of truth the sceptic aspires to is inevitably made unattainable. It then becomes a matter of debate within pragmatism whether this means realist notions of truth should be abandoned (as Rorty claims), or whether they can still be retained in a suitably modified form (as pragmatists closer to Peirce will usually claim).

As this brief sketch suggests, there is plenty of room for divergence and disagreement within the pragmatist tradition on issues like the viability of metaphysics, the ambitions of philosophy, and truth as the goal of inquiry.¹⁴

'antecedent' scepticism, but more substantive 'consequent' scepticism, based for example on what philosophy tells us about the indirectness of our sense experience. Cf. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 3rd edn., ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, rev. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), sect. XII, 149–68, and *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2nd edn., ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, rev. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), Pt. IV, 180–274.

¹³ John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty* (New York: Minton, Balch & Co., 1929), 223.

¹⁴ For further discussion of these divergences, see for example H. O. Mounce, *The Two Pragmatisms: From Peirce to Rorty* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997); Nicholas Rescher, 'Perspectives on Pragmatism', in Kenneth R. Westphal (ed.), *Pragmatism, Reason, and Norms* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), 1–16; Mark Migotti, 'Recent Work in Pragmatism: Revolution or Reform in the Theory of Knowledge?', *Philosophical Books*, 29 (1988), 65–73; Susan Haack, "'We Pragmatists . . .': Peirce and Rorty in Conversation', reprinted in her *Manifesto of a*

Nonetheless, I think it should also be clear that these divergences are from a common starting point, which can be traced back to Peirce's anti-Cartesian conception of inquiry; which direction one takes from there is a matter of what one takes the full implications of that conception to be, and thus whether one thinks Peirce himself best understood these implications, or whether they were better grasped by his successors.

II

If we therefore take Peirce's anti-Cartesianism to be the starting point of pragmatism, this gives us a clear way of gauging how far Hegel's position may be thought of in pragmatist terms: namely, did Hegel share this starting point? If he did not, it would seem hard to view the further details of his position in a pragmatist manner, and any similarities would be at best superficial (such as the conceptual realism he shares with Peirce, or the anti-dualism he shares with Dewey, or the focus on historical change he shares with Rorty). At the same time, as we have noted, pragmatists who have shared this starting point have then gone in different directions, so the orientation of Hegel's thought could still be called pragmatist, even if from here his thought differs from that of some of the pragmatists, as could also be said of the way in which the pragmatists diverge amongst themselves. The interpretative issue, then, is not whether Hegel was or was not a metaphysician, or a realist about truth, or a believer in intellectual progress (for example), because as we have seen, these are all matters on which the pragmatists have disagreed; whatever Hegel's views on these questions, the crucial issue is whether Hegel's stance here can be traced back to something resembling Peirce's distinctive response to Cartesian epistemology, and thus whether this Peircean approach is one he can be said to share with the pragmatist tradition as a whole.

It can be argued, however, that if we take Hegel's systematic claims and intentions seriously, and if we view him as the genuine heir to Kant, then it must be accepted that Hegel's position has a fundamentally Cartesian aspect; and it would therefore follow that Hegel should be seen not as an ally of pragmatism, but as one of its enemies, at least as I have presented it. We therefore need to look carefully at this sort of interpretation of Hegel, in order to see whether a case can indeed be made for claiming that his approach is fundamentally at odds with pragmatism's guiding idea.

A reading of this kind, which sees Hegel's position in broadly Cartesian terms, has been presented in recent years by Stephen Houlgate.¹⁵ Central

Passionate Moderate: Unfashionable Essays (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1998), 31–47.

¹⁵ See in particular *An Introduction to Hegel: Freedom, Truth and History*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), and *The Opening of Hegel's 'Logic'* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University

to Houlgate's approach is the importance he attaches to Hegel's claims to *presuppositionlessness* in his philosophical work, where Houlgate understands these claims in a Cartesian manner. Houlgate thus places emphasis on passages such as the following:

All . . . presuppositions or assumptions [*Voraussetzungen oder Vorurteile*] must equally be given up when we enter into the Science, whether they are taken from representation or from thinking; for it is this Science, in which all determinations of this sort must first be investigated, and in which their meaning and validity like that of their antitheses must be [re]cognised . . . Science should be preceded by *universal doubt*, i.e. by total *presuppositionlessness* [*die gänzliche Voraussetzungslosigkeit*].¹⁶

According to Houlgate, what this shows is that Hegel was committed to questioning all assumptions, because like Descartes he holds that in a rational scientific inquiry (which is what Hegel means by 'Science' or *Wissenschaft*), none of these assumptions can be taken for granted where, also like Descartes, Hegel believed that this questioning had a limit; however, this limit is not that of the *cogito*, but of thought having being. Thus, Houlgate writes: "The path of "universal doubt" that leads into Hegel's science of logic is clearly very similar to that taken by Descartes. Hegel's conclusion, however, is not "I think, therefore I am" but rather "thinking, therefore *is*".¹⁷ This Cartesian approach thus takes us, Houlgate argues, to the category of pure being, from which thought itself then proceeds to the further categories of nothing, becoming, determinate being, and all the rest. Such is Hegel's commitment to presuppositionlessness, on Houlgate's account, that Hegel doesn't even assume any particular method (dialectical or otherwise) in moving from one category to the next, as to do so would be to

Press, 2006). For related papers, see 'Response to Professor Horstmann', in *Proceedings of the Eighth International Kant Congress*, ed. H. Robinson, 2 vols (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1995), 1.3: 1017–23; 'Schelling's Critique of Hegel's *Science of Logic*', *The Review of Metaphysics*, 53 (1999), 99–128; 'Substance, Causality, and the Question of Method in Hegel's *Science of Logic*', in Sally Sedgwick (ed.), *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy: Fichte, Schelling and Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 232–52. Other writers who also make the issue of presuppositionlessness central include William Maker (particularly in *Philosophy Without Foundations: Rethinking Hegel* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994)) and Richard Dien Winfield (particularly in *Reason and Justice* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988) and *Overcoming Foundations: Studies in Systematic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989)). There is also an interesting discussion of some of the issues raised here in William F. Bristow, *Hegel and the Transformation of Philosophical Critique* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁶ Hegel, *EL*, §78, 124 [*Werke*, VIII: 167–8]. This passage is discussed by Houlgate in *Introduction to Hegel*, 30, and *Hegel's 'Logic'*, 29. In this connection, Houlgate also cites Hegel, *SL*, 70 (*Werke*, V: 68–9): 'the beginning must be an *absolute*, or what is synonymous here, an *abstract* beginning; and so it *may not presuppose anything*, must not be mediated by anything nor have a ground; rather it is to be itself the ground of the entire science'; and he refers to G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3 vols, ed. Robert F. Brown, trans. Robert F. Brown, J. M. Stewart, and H. S. Harris (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), III: 137–8 (*Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie, Teil 4, Philosophie des Mittelalters und der neueren Zeit*, ed. Pierre Garniron and Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1989), 92).

¹⁷ Houlgate, *Hegel's 'Logic'*, 31–2. See also *ibid.*, 82, 128, and *Introduction to Hegel*, 31–2.

make another unwarranted assumption; rather, his approach is just to ‘look on’ and see what happens.¹⁸

In presenting Hegel as Cartesian in this way, Houlgate also offers an account of Hegel’s motivations, where he argues that Kantian considerations made this Cartesian approach seem necessary to any philosophical outlook that considered itself fully modern: for Houlgate believes that from Hegel’s perspective,¹⁹ it is Kant who held that it is only by engaging in a critical philosophy aimed at rooting out all unquestioned assumptions that we can be free as thinkers and fully self-determining in our view of the world, in a way that is distinctive of a truly modern outlook that takes no tradition, authority, or givens for granted:

What Hegel learns from Descartes and Kant is that human thought frees us from arbitrary authority by subjecting everything to the scrutiny of self-determining reason. The connection between thought—specifically philosophical thought—and freedom was of course made by both Plato and Aristotle, too; but it is in the post-Reformation period that free, *self-grounding* thought comes to be recognised as the highest principle for humanity. It is in the modern period, therefore, when human consciousness at last recognises that it is the essential nature of all humanity to be free, that the demand that thought should make itself as explicitly autonomous and self-grounding as it can becomes most urgent.²⁰

For Houlgate therefore, after Kant, the Cartesian project is seen to be more than just the rather narrow attempt to ‘provide solid foundations for the sciences’; it now becomes part of a much more ambitious agenda, which is to ‘liberate human consciousness’, by developing ‘Descartes’s idea that philosophy may take nothing for granted in its search for truth and that thought is the principle of doubt or criticism that frees us from the authority of habitual but unwarranted belief’.²¹

Seen from this perspective, Houlgate argues, Hegel may be viewed as attempting to complete this Kantian project of radical self-criticism, which Kant himself failed to achieve in so far as he took too much for granted concerning the nature of thought and its categories, with the result that he failed to provide a proper deduction of them (as Fichte and others had also argued):

Kant simply bases his understanding of the categories on the functions of judgment traditionally assumed in formal logic. . . . Kant thus does not subject the categories themselves to critical examination but retains—without proving that it is necessary to do so—what Hegel regards as a quite traditional (Aristotelian) understanding of them.

¹⁸ See Houlgate, *Hegel’s ‘Logic’*, 32–5, 51–3, 60–2.

¹⁹ Houlgate allows that this view of Kant may not quite fit Kant’s own conception of critical philosophy: ‘Critique [for Kant] thus shows how metaphysics is possible; it does not call for anything like a thoroughgoing self-criticism, either explicitly or implicitly’. Nonetheless, Houlgate argues that this approach is still ‘implicit in Kant’s philosophy after all’: ‘It is implicit, however, not in Kant’s own conception of critique as such but in the demand for a rigorous *derivation* of the categories that is itself implicit in Kant’s recognition that they have their source in the intellect’ (*Hegel’s ‘Logic’*, 27).

²⁰ Houlgate, *An Introduction to Hegel*, 27–8.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

In this respect, Kant's critique of pure reason remains, for Hegel—like the thought of the 'older metaphysicians,' Leibniz and Wolff—'an *uncritical* thinking'. . . . A properly critical thinking, by contrast, would suspend the traditional conception of the categories and determine anew how the categories are to be understood.²²

Houlgate argues, therefore, that just as much as Kant, and indeed Descartes, Hegel deserves to be seen as a thoroughly modern philosopher, for whom self-critical thinking is a fundamental requirement not only for certainty and the kind of foundations needed by the sciences, but also for human freedom and dignity; and in so far as he took this project further and more deeply than even his predecessors managed to do, Houlgate believes that Hegel should be thought of as providing '*the* quintessentially modern philosophy'.²³

III

We have therefore explored Houlgate's claim, that '[t]he best way to understand Hegel is to see him as exemplifying a Cartesian willingness to suspend his cherished beliefs and habits of thought, and to accept as true only what reason itself determines to be true';²⁴ and we have also seen in the first section how pragmatism might be defined in terms of its suspicions concerning the need for any such 'Cartesian willingness'. Houlgate's reading of Hegel would therefore seem to render any pragmatist appropriation of Hegelian thought thoroughly misconceived, notwithstanding any superficial similarities that may be found between them.

And yet, on the other hand, there is a crucial place in Hegel's work where he appears to draw something very like the Peircean distinction between real and artificial doubt, which I have claimed is so central to pragmatism. This occurs in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and in a way that I believe makes clear his fundamental opposition to Cartesianism in any narrow epistemological sense, and to that extent at least shows him to be anti-Cartesian. We therefore need to consider this text in some detail.

The Introduction begins by discussing what Hegel says may seem a 'natural assumption', that before we begin our inquiries, we first investigate our cognitive methods and capacities, firstly because some capacities may be better for knowing about some things than others, and secondly because otherwise we may find ourselves being led astray, so that unless we proceed in this manner, 'we might grasp clouds of error instead of the heaven of truth'.²⁵ It is clear, I believe, that here Hegel has the outlook of thinkers like Descartes, Locke and of course Kant

²² Houlgate, *Hegel's 'Logic'*, 26. Cf. also *An Introduction to Hegel*, 31.

²³ Houlgate, *Hegel's 'Logic'*, 39. ²⁴ Houlgate, *An Introduction to Hegel*, 39.

²⁵ Hegel, *PS*, 46 [*Werke*, III: 68].

in mind. In a passage that Hegel cites elsewhere,²⁶ Locke famously recommends this procedure, which requires that we ‘take a Survey of our own Understandings, examine our own Powers, and see to what Things they [are] adapted’;²⁷ and although Locke is cited here, Descartes expresses a similar view when he writes: ‘Now, to prevent our being in a state of permanent uncertainty about the powers of the mind, and to prevent our mental labours being misguided and haphazard, we ought once in our life carefully to inquire as to what sort of knowledge human reason is capable of attaining, before we set about acquiring knowledge of things in particular’.²⁸ Hegel equally sees Kant’s critical project as sharing essentially the same outlook, according to which we must start in philosophy by first examining the scope of our intellectual capacities, so that ‘[t]he very first [task] in the Kantian philosophy, therefore, is for thinking to investigate how far it is capable of cognition’, which meant that for Kant, ‘the faculty of cognition was to be investigated before cognition began’.²⁹

While allowing that there is something intuitive and appealing about this approach, Hegel nonetheless makes clear that he thinks it is potentially disastrous, because in fact it leads inevitably to a focus not on the object of our inquiries, but on our cognitive capacities as a kind of instrument or medium by which we are put in touch with those objects; but once we think of our cognitive capacities in this way, the suspicion then emerges that our cognitive capacities *stand between* us and reality, as an instrument or medium that *distorts* how things are. Thus, starting from the ‘feeling of uneasiness’ that perhaps we should put our cognitive capacities to the test before we begin our investigations, we end up believing that we can never really be confident that those capacities are not leading us astray. Hegel argues that it then becomes impossible to remedy this ‘evil’, for example by trying to dispel the effects of any distortion by trying to adjust for it, as unless we already knew what reality is like, how could any such adjustment be made? On the one hand, the critical philosopher cannot just allow that our cognitive capacities are accurate, as this would render his investigation of these capacities superfluous; on the other hand, if he does not allow this, then there seems to be no prospect of determining what we should do to ensure that our inquiries succeed using those capacities, leading inexorably to a sceptical conclusion.

Hegel claims, therefore, that the worry with which we began—that without this investigation of our cognitive capacities ‘we might grasp clouds of error instead of the heaven of truth’—has in fact ended up seeming to put rational inquiry or ‘science’ out of our reach. But, he argues, in fact rational inquiry never

²⁶ Hegel, *FK*, 68–9 [*Werke* III: 303–4].

²⁷ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), ch. I, §6, 47.

²⁸ René Descartes, ‘Rules for the Direction of the Mind’, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), I: 30.

²⁹ Hegel, *EL*, §41Z, p. 82 [*Werke*, VIII: 114].

does grind to a halt in this way, as in reality we just get on with trying to find out about the world without being much moved by this fear that perhaps we are going astray, which suggests that perhaps it is a worry that we can legitimately ignore:

Meanwhile, if the fear of falling into error sets up a mistrust of Science, which in the absence of such scruples gets on with the work itself, and actually cognizes something, it is hard to see why we should not turn round and mistrust this very mistrust. Should we not be concerned as to whether this fear of error is not just the error itself?³⁰

The point here does appear to be a Peircean one: The Cartesian philosopher insists on placing a burden on the inquirer to reflect on his capacities prior to inquiry (what Hume identified as Descartes's 'antecedent' scepticism),³¹ while in fact it is pointless to feel any such burden: we would do better to just get on with inquiring, and if this goes well we will know our cognitive capacities are in order anyway, and if it goes badly, there is no reason to think this prior investigation would have helped. As the Cartesian cannot really tell us in advance either way, or do anything to improve our prospects of success, it seems fruitless to be moved by his concerns, and better to just 'get on with the work itself'.

However, it might perhaps be argued by the Cartesian philosopher, that we should conduct this scrutiny of our cognitive capacities not in order to prevent us wasting our time or going wrong in our investigations, but in order to avoid the epistemic sin of making unwarranted presuppositions, namely the presupposition that our cognitive capacities are all in order and capable of getting us to the truth—for surely it would be highly presumptuous of us simply to assume this? Hegel argues, however, that to motivate his investigations into our capacities, to make this a rational thing for us to undertake, the Cartesian philosopher *also* makes an assumption about how our capacities stand *between us* and the world in some way, raising the spectre that they could easily cut us off from the way things are, while also assuming that we could have knowledge merely of 'appearances'; so this position also involves some prior commitments, which, until we go ahead and begin our inquiries and see how far they get, cannot be substantiated:

³⁰ Hegel, *PS*, 47 [*Werke* III: 69].

³¹ Cf. Hume, *Enquiry*, sect. XII, 149–50:

'There is a species of scepticism, *antecedent* to all study and philosophy, which is much inculcated by Des Cartes and others, as a sovereign preservative against error and precipitate judgement. It recommends a universal doubt, not only of all our former opinions and principles, but also of our very faculties; of whose veracity, say they, we must assure ourselves by a chain of reasoning, deduced from some original principle, which cannot possibly be fallacious or deceitful. But neither is there any such original principle, which has a prerogative above others, that are self-evident and convincing: or if there were, could we advance a step beyond it, but by the use of those very faculties, of which we are supposed to be already diffident. The Cartesian doubt, therefore, were it ever possible to be attained by any human creature (as it plainly is not) would be entirely incurable; and no reasoning could ever bring it to a state of assurance and conviction upon any subject'.

Again, I am assuming for the sake of this discussion that this sort of reading of Descartes is correct; but for doubts on this score, see Owens, 'Scepticisms: Descartes and Hume', 124–7.

Indeed, this fear [of error] takes something—a great deal in fact—for granted as truth, supporting its scruples and inferences on what is itself in need of prior scrutiny to see if it is true. To be specific, it takes for granted certain ideas about cognition as an *instrument* and as a *medium*, and assumes that there is a *difference between ourselves and this cognition*. Above all, it presupposes that the Absolute stands on one side and cognition on the other, independent and separated from it, and yet is something real; or in other words, it presupposes that cognition which, since it is excluded from the Absolute, is surely outside of the truth as well, is nevertheless true, an assumption whereby what calls itself fear of error reveals itself rather as fear of truth.³²

Thus, while it may claim to be the most rational procedure because it is without presuppositions, Hegel argues that the critical approach is not, and makes no fewer presuppositions than the sort of position that just ‘gets on with the work itself’, rather than tarrying on the brink.³³

³² Hegel, *PS*, 47 [*Werke* III: 69–70].

³³ Houlgate, I think, would want to put the Hegelian position even more strongly than this. On my reading, Hegel’s point is that at the outset of any inquiry, in some ways both he and the critical philosopher are taking something for granted (the Hegelian, that our cognitive capacities are capable of taking us to the truth, so that these inquiries are worth starting; the critical philosopher that our faculties stand between us and the world, so require investigation before we can trust them); but the Hegelian approach is to be preferred because that way we at least stand some chance of actually getting at the truth because we will begin inquiring, whereas on the critical approach we will just get stuck in a paralysing self-doubt. The point about presuppositions, then, is the relatively weak one, that if we thought that the critical approach is nonetheless the one to be preferred because it involves no assumptions, this would be a spurious preference because (Hegel claims) in fact both sides are on a par on this issue. Houlgate, however, thinks that Hegel is not just arguing that neither side can use the point about presuppositions in its support; rather he thinks Hegel is arguing that his position is presuppositionless in a way that the critical position is not, so that this tells in its favour. Houlgate’s grounds for this seem to be that if we attempt to think in an altogether presuppositionless way, we will not only abandon the belief that thought and being are distinct because we will see that this rests on certain assumptions; having let go of any assumptions, we will come to see that if we really want to think presuppositionlessly, we must think that they are one. But, my worry here is that from the fact that accepting one position involves making some assumptions, it does not follow that accepting its opposite involves making none. Cf. Houlgate, *Introduction to Hegel*, 44–5: ‘Hegel’s claim is not that being is a mere postulate of thought [i.e. that we may legitimately assume that thought and being coincide]. On the contrary, he argues that, for the fully self-critical philosopher who suspends all his determinate preconceptions about thought and being, our *thought* of being cannot be anything less than the thought of *being itself*. Thought cannot be assumed necessarily to fall short of what there is—to be confined, for example, to the realm of conceivable possibility—but must be understood to be the awareness and disclosure of being as such. This may seem to some to be presumptuous. How can thought be certain that it is able to bridge the gap between itself and being and disclose the true nature of what there is? From the point of view of the self-critical philosopher, however, this question is illegitimate, for we are not entitled to presuppose that there is such a gap in the first place. The fully self-critical philosopher may not assume that being is anything beyond what thought itself is aware of. Consequently, he or she may not assume that thought is aware of anything less than being itself’. (Cf. also Houlgate, *Hegel’s ‘Logic’*, 130.) Houlgate might be right that the philosopher who is ‘fully self-critical’, and who thus wants to think making no assumptions whatsoever, will not feel entitled to believe that there is a gap between thought and being, because he will see that this requires us to make certain presuppositions about the nature of thought and being; but even if this is so, from this it doesn’t follow that the fully self-critical philosopher who is attempting to think presuppositionlessly will therefore see that he can start without any assumptions if he believes there is *no* such gap; rather,

Moreover, elsewhere he argues that this Cartesian approach is of dubious coherence. For, on the one hand, it motivates its reflective investigation of our capacities with the concern that perhaps they might lead us astray; but on the other hand it, in order to investigate those capacities, it must use these or other cognitive methods,³⁴ which either have their efficacy taken for granted at this second level (in which case why not take their efficacy for granted at the first level?), or themselves require another level of reflective scrutiny (in which case, how will the regress of reflection ever be brought to an end?). So, this approach is either redundant or impossible, and as absurd as someone who tries to learn to swim without getting into the water for fear of drowning, much as the critical philosopher tries to learn how best to acquire knowledge without actually using any of his cognitive capacities, for fear of making mistakes.³⁵

Hegel makes plain in the *Phenomenology* that he sees a kind of bad faith in the Cartesian position, which instead of getting on with actually trying to find things out about the world, and thus accomplish ‘the hard work of Science’ or rational inquiry, just goes about ‘giving the impression of working seriously and zealously’, while really giving us ‘excuses which create the incapacity of Science’. Hegel therefore insists that ‘[w]e could, with better justification, simply spare ourselves the trouble of paying any attention whatever to such ideas and locutions; for they are intended to ward off Science itself, and constitute merely an empty appearance of knowing, which vanishes immediately as soon as Science comes on the scene’.³⁶ Hegel thus seems to think that the doubts raised by the Cartesian sceptic, which motivate his investigation of our cognitive capacities, are fraudulent and empty, and can be brushed aside in favour of actually getting on with the business of inquiry.

However, Hegel makes clear that this does not mean that even ‘Science’ can assume it will simply be able to assert that its view of the world is the right one with no further ado; for, any such position will have real competitors to deal with, which see the world differently, and with which it must engage if it is not to be merely dogmatic and just insist on the correctness of its position without any satisfactory argument:

might he not plausibly think that if one is committed to starting without any presuppositions, given that this is a substantive issue, one should suspend judgement on it altogether?

³⁴ Cf. Hegel, *EL*, §41Z, 82 [*Werke*, VIII: 114]: ‘this process of investigation is itself a process of cognition’; cf. also *ibid.*, §10, 34 [*Werke*, VIII: 54]: ‘the investigation of cognition cannot take place in any other way than *cognitively*’.

³⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, §10, 34 [*Werke*, VIII: 54]; and also *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* III: 263 (*Vorlesungen*, 182): ‘. . . in the Kantian and the other subsequent philosophies, the concern most particularly expressed was that knowledge, cognition, or subjective cognition should be investigated. It appeared plausible that we should first investigate cognitive knowing, the instrument, although there is an old story told of the *σχολαστικὸς* [Scholastic] who would not enter the water until he had learned to swim. To investigate cognitive knowing means to know it cognitively: but how one is to know without knowing is not stated’.

³⁶ Hegel, *PS*, 48 [*Werke*, III: 71].

For, when confronted with a knowledge that is without truth, Science can neither merely reject it as an ordinary way of looking at things, while assuring us that its Science is a quite different sort of cognition for which that ordinary knowledge is of no account whatever By [this] *assurance*, Science would be declaring its power to lie simply in its *being*; but the untrue knowledge likewise appeals to the fact that *it is*; and *assures* us that for it Science is of no account. *One* bare assurance is worth just as much as another.³⁷

Similarly, as Hegel makes clear elsewhere, we may find that our investigations actually do get into difficulties, in which case it will not be the empty Cartesian 'fear of error' that motivates us to look at the way in which we think about the world, but what seem to be genuine problems (such as Kant's antinomies, for example, where these apparently intractable metaphysical questions make it reasonable to examine our ability to conduct inquiries of this sort). In such circumstances, Hegel allows, the critical project makes good sense, by recognizing that traditional forms of philosophizing were unable to make any headway, which is what made 'subjecting the determinations of the older metaphysics to investigation' in the Kantian manner 'a very important step'.³⁸

Hegel fully understands, therefore, that reflection on the way we think and the categories we use can be shown to be necessary in a legitimate way, as we are faced with others who think about the world differently, or as we come up against apparent obstacles to our inquiries, where Hegel's method of 'immanent critique' is offered as a way of handling these challenges: rather than dogmatically asserting that a given view is correct, it must be shown that its competitors have their own internal difficulties that this view can resolve, which is then established in a non-question-begging way.³⁹ For Hegel, therefore, once such an incoherence or aporia shows itself within a position, reflection on its categories must follow, where this process is aimed at arriving at a world view that is fully stable, and is thus to be preferred to any of the alternatives, against which it can lay claim to truth in a non-dogmatic manner.

Now, it is at this point in the Introduction that Hegel contrasts the doubt we feel in these circumstances with the Cartesian doubt dismissed earlier: for the doubt that motivates us to reflect on our cognitive capacities in a critical manner is now motivated by our experience of a *genuine* conflict between world views, and *genuine* breakdowns in our investigations, as opposed to the abstract 'fear of error' that he associates with Descartes, which because of its abstractness

³⁷ Hegel, *PS*, 48–9 [*Werke*, III: 71].

³⁸ Hegel, *EL*, §41Z, 81 [*Werke*, VIII: 114].

³⁹ This is a central part of Hegel's response to the challenge of ancient scepticism, which Hegel always took much more seriously than modern or Cartesian scepticism, because it was based around the equal force or equipollence of genuinely competing views. Cf. Hegel 'Relationship of Scepticism to Philosophy: Exposition of its Different Modifications and Comparison to the Latest Form with the Ancient One', trans. H. S. Harris, in George di Giovanni and H. S. Harris (eds.), *Between Kant and Hegel* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), 311–62. For further helpful discussion of this contrast in Hegel's attitudes see Michael N. Forster, *Hegel and Scepticism* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989) and Westphal, *Hegel's Epistemological Realism*.

has little actual effect on our thinking. Thus, Hegel tells us that the kind of self-questioning our ordinary forms of thinking (or ‘natural consciousness’) will be forced to go in for in the *Phenomenology* is grounded in the real difficulties it is forced to face, in the way that the kind of questioning Descartes goes in for is not:

Natural consciousness will show itself to be only the Notion of knowledge, or in other words, not to be real knowledge. But since it directly takes itself to be real knowledge, this path has a negative significance for it, and what is in fact the realization of the Notion [i.e. the view of the world adopted by philosophy], counts for it as the loss of its own self; for it does lose its truth on this path. The road can be regarded as the pathway of *doubt*, or more precisely as the way of despair. For what happens on it is not what is ordinarily understood when the word ‘doubt’ is used: shilly-shallying about this or that presumed truth, followed by a return to that truth again, after the doubt has been appropriately dispelled—so that at the end of the process the matter is taken to be what it was in the first place. On the contrary, this path is the conscious insight into the untruth of phenomenal knowledge [i.e. the knowledge claimed by our ordinary ways of thinking], for which the supreme reality is what is in truth only the unrealized Notion [i.e. for which what appears to be true is not the final story].⁴⁰

The doubt that Hegel expects to motivate our inquiries, therefore, and to cause consciousness to question its previous certainties, is the doubt that comes about when we are confronted by the fact that what we thought about the world cannot be made to work coherently, thereby forcing us to change our minds; and because the problems we face are determinate, consciousness can also see how they might be resolved, in contrast to Cartesian doubt, which provides no way forward because the doubt it raises is too abstract to be amenable to resolution:

This [Cartesian] scepticism is just the scepticism which only ever sees pure nothingness in its result and abstracts from the fact that this nothingness is specifically the nothingness of that *from which it results*. For it is only when it is taken as the result of that from which it emerges, that it is, in fact, the true result; in that case it is itself a *determinate* nothingness, one which has a *content*. The scepticism that ends up with the bare abstraction of nothingness or emptiness cannot get any further from there, but must wait to see whether something new comes along and what it is, in order to throw it too into the same empty abyss. But when, on the other hand, the result is conceived as it is in truth, namely, as a *determinate* negation, a new form has thereby immediately arisen, and in the negation the transition is made through which the progress through the complete series of forms comes about of itself.⁴¹

Unlike Cartesian doubt, which Hegel believes is inevitably paralysing in its own terms so that the only response is to carry on much as before, the doubt he is interested in is thrown up by seeing that something has gone wrong in what you previously thought, where trying to right this wrong helps determine a direction in which we might move forward, in a way that offers a positive resolution to the

⁴⁰ Hegel, *PS*, 49–50 [*Werke*, III: 72].

⁴¹ Hegel, *PS*, 51 [*Werke*, III: 74]. Cf. also *EL*, §81Z, 131 (*Werke*, VIII: 176).

doubt in question, and a change in outlook rather than just a return to what you thought already.

Now, from what we said previously about Peirce, it should be clear that much of what Hegel says here should be viewed sympathetically by the Peircean. For, as we have seen, Hegel is as keen as Peirce to distinguish between different kinds of doubt, and to reject the sort of apparently groundless questioning of our beliefs that the Cartesian goes in for, which is claimed to be a necessary preliminary to any responsible form of inquiry. Rather, like Peirce, Hegel holds that such questioning can be carried out intelligibly only if we are offered real grounds for doing so, which requires the doubter to provide some evidence of error, which will then leave us able to try to correct it, as normally happens when we are made to realize we have made a mistake. It turns out, therefore, that contrary to the way things seemed to be going in section II, there is considerable common ground between Hegel and pragmatism on these issues after all.

IV

So, while Cartesian doubt can provide a motivation for the rejection of all assumptions, so that it may appear natural to assume that a concern with presuppositionlessness of the sort Houlgate identifies in Hegel then indicates a commitment to Cartesianism in some form, it nonetheless seems wrong to take Hegel's demand for a presuppositionless philosophy to stem from any such Cartesian sympathies in epistemology, and thus to see this demand as driving a wedge between Hegel and pragmatism. For, as we have seen, Hegel like Peirce sees little force in Cartesian 'antecedent' scepticism, so it would be a mistake to think that this was the basis for Hegel's desire to construct a presuppositionless philosophy, as it arguably was in Descartes himself.

However, even if Hegel's focus on presuppositionlessness was not grounded in a distinctively Cartesian concern with sceptical doubt, it could still be argued that this focus sets him at odds with the pragmatist tradition, because it was based instead on a conception of what it is for thought to be *free*, a conception that derives not from sceptical worries but from the way in which Kant developed Descartes's demand that we take nothing for granted, because otherwise we would be following tradition, or authority, or natural habit in a heteronomous manner. This, indeed, is how Houlgate sees Hegel's central concern, rather than identifying it with any more narrowly Cartesian preoccupation with 'antecedent' scepticism.⁴² It is *prima facie* plausible to think that, on the one hand, this too is an anti-pragmatist perspective, but also, on the other, that this must be the motivation behind Hegel's concern with presuppositionlessness, given the apparently obvious link between the two.

⁴² Cf. Houlgate, *An Introduction to Hegel*, 27–8.

In a recent discussion of the idea of 'free thought', both these points have been emphasized by John Skorupski; and in general, his discussion is very illuminating in relation to our concerns here. Skorupski argues that it is characteristic of everyone who adopts this idea to hold that '[f]ree thought is thought ruled by its own principles and by nothing else; in other words, by principles of thinking that it discovers by reflecting on its own activity';⁴³ but there is an important further division along this path: 'Down one route lies the idea of free thought as thought that is *unconstrained* by any authoritative source external to it. Down the other lies the idea of it as radically *presuppositionless*'.⁴⁴ Skorupski identifies the latter idea with Descartes, and argues that it runs through to German Idealism, in a way that resembles the sort of account also given by Houlgate:

the idea that free thought must be presuppositionless is highly plausible. If it rests on some presupposition or assumption, how can it be free? Must it not freely question that assumption? That has been an enormously influential modern conception of what it is to think really freely. Call it the Cartesian idea, after the French philosopher, René Descartes, who expounded it in his *Meditations*. . . . One way of spelling out its shaping influence would be to tell the story of German philosophy from Kant to Nietzsche. This tradition takes the Cartesian idea with utmost seriousness, and then seriously tries to free itself from its clutch. Kant responds to Descartes' failure by a critique of free thought itself (the 'Critique of Pure Reason'). Truly free thought, he says, must investigate the conditions of its own possibility. . . . The story continues with Hegel. He finds fault with Kant's project because it imposes a basic cleavage of subject and object. So he tries to show how free thought itself literally generates everything: a kind of apotheosis of presuppositionless free thought. Nietzsche sees the failure of these high-wire heroics and diagnoses a crisis of Western values.⁴⁵

In contrast with the Cartesian conception of free thought, Skorupski identifies a different approach,

⁴³ John Skorupski, *Why Read Mill Today?* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 6. As Skorupski points out, the contrast here is with 'apologetic thought, in the traditional and respectable sense of that word—thought which seeks to make intelligible, so far as possible, the ways of God to man, without claiming to know those ways by its own principles alone. The apologetic tradition is fideistic, in the sense that it holds that free thought alone cannot tell us what to believe. Natural reason must be a servant of faith, or at best a co-sovereign with it' (*ibid.*). Elsewhere, Skorupski cites Cardinal Newman as representative of this apologetic outlook, when Newman writes: 'Liberty of thought is itself a good; but it gives an opening to false liberty. Now by Liberalism I mean false liberty of thought, or the exercise of thought upon matters, in which, from the constitution of the human mind, thought cannot be brought to any successful issue, and therefore is out of place. Among such matters are first principles of whatever kind; and of these the most sacred and momentous are especially to be reckoned the truths of Revelation. Liberalism then is the mistake of subjecting to human judgement those revealed doctrines which are in their nature beyond and independent of it, and of claiming to determine on intrinsic grounds the truth and value of propositions which rest for their reception simply on the external authority of the Divine Word' (John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, ed. A. Dwight Culler (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1956), 261; cited in John Skorupski, 'Liberalism as Free Thought', unpublished paper, 6).

⁴⁴ Skorupski, *Why Read Mill Today?*, 7.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 7–8.

according to which free thought does not start by refusing to make any assumptions at all, but instead maintains a continuing critical open-mindedness about everything we take ourselves to know, without any exemptions whatever. This ‘constructive empiricism’ also goes back to the seventeenth century. It is naturalistic, in that it takes us to be a part of the world that we scientifically study. It is holistic, in that it works from within our convictions as a whole. It takes the fallibilistic attitude that *any* of the things we think we know, however seemingly certain, could turn out to be wrong in the course of our continuing inquiry. That includes our initial assumptions—but it does not follow that we cannot start from them.⁴⁶

Skorupski calls this approach ‘thinking from within’,⁴⁷ and it should be clear from what we have already said, that pragmatism can be seen as a development of this perspective, rather than the Cartesian one.⁴⁸ And yet, if this is so, and if by contrast it is the Cartesian conception of free thought that drives Hegel into radical presuppositionlessness, doesn’t this show once again that Hegel and pragmatism must be taken to diverge?

However, while at first placing Hegel within the Cartesian camp, Skorupski also notes that ‘Hegel’s method, incidentally, could also be described as thinking from within’,⁴⁹ thereby putting him in the alternative tradition to which the pragmatists belong. Skorupski doesn’t elaborate on this remark any further, but I take it he has in mind the historicist and communitarian side of Hegel’s position, according to which a particular historical time and social place inevitably forms the horizon of our thinking. It is this aspect of Hegel’s outlook that is encapsulated in his well-known comments, that ‘[e]ach individual is the son of his own nation at a specific stage in this nation’s development. No one can escape from the spirit of his nation, any more than he can escape from the earth itself’;⁵⁰ and ‘[a]s far

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 8. Cf. also p. 95, where Skorupski is summarizing John Stuart Mill’s place in this approach: ‘[Mill] is firmly established in the alternative tradition that takes free thought to be unconstrained rather than presuppositionless. Instead of grappling heroically with scepticism, he mildly emphasises fallibilism: taking it for granted that methods of thinking from within—critical reflection on our inherited convictions, free discussion, the appeal to reflectively endorsed dispositions—are available and satisfactory. To use a well-established metaphor, he sees free thought as a ship on an open ocean. Any part can come to need repair, but we always have to rely on other parts to make the repair. So there is no crisis of scepticism, but there is an important task of improving and refining our methods in science and ethics’.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁸ Skorupski identifies Mill as one of the heroes of this tradition, and in this connection it may not be coincidental that James prefaces his book *Pragmatism* with the dedication: ‘To the Memory of John Stuart Mill[,] from whom I first learned the pragmatic openness of mind[,] and whom my fancy likes to picture as our leader were he alive to-day’.

⁴⁹ Skorupski, *Why Read Mill Today?*, 9.

⁵⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 81 (*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, vol 1, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1955), 95). Cf. also G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 52; trans. modified [*Werke*, XII: 72]: ‘[e]ach individual is the son of his people, and at the same time, insofar as his state is in development, the son of his time; no one remains behind it, and no one can leap ahead of it’.

as the individual is concerned, each individual is in any case a *child of his time*; thus philosophy, too, is *its own time comprehended in thoughts*.⁵¹ On this basis, then, it can be argued that Hegel, no less than the pragmatists, understood that inquiry must be conducted ‘from within’.⁵²

We should be careful, therefore, in inferring that just because Hegel says that ‘we must make no presuppositions’ is ‘a very great and important principle’,⁵³ this makes him a Cartesian in a way that would separate him from pragmatism. For, firstly, he makes clear that while the reason Descartes gives for this principle ‘in his own fashion’ is that ‘we must make no presuppositions because it is possible to be mistaken’, this is not the fundamental issue for Hegel, because ‘[i]n the Cartesian form [of this position] the stress is not on the principle of freedom as such, but instead on reasons more popular in tone’, namely the possibility of error and the need for certainty.⁵⁴ But secondly, even if we see ‘the principle of freedom’ as what for Hegel really underlies the concern with presuppositionlessness, this need not mean that this commits him to the idea that free thought must begin with no assumptions and so be presuppositionless in this sense; for, thought can still be free as long as it is always able to reflect further on the presuppositions with which it starts, even though it cannot reflect on them all at once from a position that makes no assumptions whatsoever.

And indeed, when Hegel writes about the way presuppositions might pose a threat to ‘free thought’, he does not seem to be going along with the idea that for Skorupski drives the Cartesian approach here, namely, ‘that if [thought] rests on some presupposition or assumption, how can it be free?’. Rather, the presuppositions Hegel identifies as posing a threat to the ‘principle of freedom’ are those that are posited as prior to thought in a special sense: namely, as something that thought cannot grasp or understand, and so are presupposed in the sense of ‘put before’ (*voraus-gesetzt*) thinking. In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel thus resists presuppositions not because he is concerned by Cartesian doubt, or even because he is unwilling to ‘think from within’, but

⁵¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *EPR*, 21 [*Werke*, VII: 26]. Cf. Robert B. Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 72, who summarizes Hegel’s view as follows: ‘Just as when we attempt to “judge objectively” or “determine the truth,” we inherit an extensive set of rule-governed, historically concrete practices, so when we attempt to “act rightly,” and attempt to determine our action spontaneously, we must see ourselves as situated in a complex collective and historical setting, a dependence very much like that implicitly asserted by the narrative form of the modern novel’. For further discussion of this issue, see Frederick C. Beiser, ‘Hegel’s Historicism’, in Frederick C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 270–300.

⁵² This, of course, is the aspect of Hegel that Rorty likes the most: cf. ‘Cultural Politics and the Question of the Existence of God’, repr. in his *Philosophy as Cultural Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3–26, at 23: ‘Hegel does not think that philosophy can rise above the social practices of its time and judge their desirability to something that is not itself an alternative social practice (past or future, real or imagined)’.

⁵³ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* III: 138 [*Vorlesungen*, 92].

⁵⁴ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* III: 139 [*Vorlesungen*, 93].

because he objects to the idea of ‘something found already there [pre-posit]ed] that thinking has not posited, something other than thinking’, such as (in an example Hegel gives) F. H. Jacobi’s God, which thought is unable to comprehend, and which we can be aware of only through the non-intellectual means of ‘immediate intuition or inward revelation’. In a presupposition of *this* sort, Hegel argues, ‘thinking is not present to itself’, because it clearly has limits imposed on it by this prior positing, much in the way in which it does when told to believe things on an external authority, which it cannot fathom.⁵⁵ Thus, for Hegel, presuppositions of the kind postulated by Jacobi as ‘pre-positings’ violate the freedom of thought by setting up something which is alien to it, where by contrast Hegel holds that freedom for thought requires it to find nothing alien and so to be ‘at home with itself’, a freedom that he believes constitutes the ‘greatness of our time’.⁵⁶ I take it that this is what Hegel is getting at when he writes that ‘[w]hatever is recognized as true must present itself in such a way that our freedom is preserved in the fact that we think’.⁵⁷ It seems, then, that Hegel can take presuppositions as his target here in this sense, without this committing him to a tradition of ‘free thought’ that is at odds with the one followed by the pragmatists, or indeed his own historicist conception of the context of beliefs and assumptions that forms the background to any inquiry.

V

We have seen, then, that while there is indeed a deep concern with the issue of presuppositions in Hegel, of the sort highlighted by Houlgate and others, it would be wrong to think that he should therefore be identified with a Cartesian approach in epistemology, or with a Cartesian (or Kantian) conception of ‘free thought’—for, to the extent that he is committed to free thought, we have seen that Hegel’s idea of ‘free thought’ (like the pragmatist’s) does not take a form that commits him in itself to a demand to think presuppositionlessly; and neither does his rejection of the Jacobian idea that there might be anything that thought cannot grasp. Yet, as Houlgate rightly emphasizes, Hegel nonetheless insists that the *Logic* must proceed *without presuppositions*. This, however, seems to leave us with a puzzle: for if Hegel is not Cartesian in outlook, what motivation for

⁵⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* III: 138–9 [Vorlesungen, 93].

⁵⁶ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* III: 257 [Vorlesungen, 178]. Cf. also Hegel, *EM*, §440, 179–80 [Werke, X: 230]: ‘Free mind . . . is determined as embracing within itself all objectivity, so that the object is not anything externally related to mind or anything mind cannot grasp. Mind or spirit is thus the absolutely universal certainty of itself, free from any opposition whatever. Therefore, it is confident that in the world it will find its own self, that the world must be reconciled with it, that, just as Adam said of Eve that she was flesh of his flesh, so mind has to seek in the world Reason that is its own Reason’.

⁵⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* III: 139 [Vorlesungen, 93].

‘presuppositionlessness’ does he have instead that leads him to insist on such thinking in the *Logic*, and is this also compatible with pragmatism?. In fact, I will now argue, not only is Hegel’s concern with presuppositionlessness compatible with pragmatism; these concerns are ones shared by the pragmatists themselves, so that far from presenting an obstacle to a pragmatist reading of Hegel (as we initially feared), his claims about the need for presuppositionlessness in fact provide support for it. Hegel’s commitment to presuppositionlessness arises, I will show, because of the way he views the nature of his *Logic*; and, I will claim, his reasons for viewing the *Logic* in this way are ones that are based on just the sort of real, non-Cartesian, doubt that the pragmatists also endorse.

Hegel’s *Logic* is the first part of his system (to which the *Phenomenology* is its ‘introduction’ or ‘ladder’),⁵⁸ and has as its aim ‘[t]o exhibit the realm of thought philosophically, that is, in its own immanent activity or what is the same, in its necessary development’.⁵⁹ In so far as it is a philosophical investigation of thought in this manner, Hegel argues that it must be presuppositionless, for a variety of related reasons:

- (a) Unlike other sciences, it cannot assume anything about the methods of thinking, because these are part of what an investigation of thought should inquire into.⁶⁰
- (b) Again unlike other sciences, it cannot start with some experience or representation of the object it is investigating, because thought cannot be experienced or represented.⁶¹ Other inquiries, Hegel suggests, must therefore presuppose their objects (such as space, or numbers, or God), but the *Logic* cannot and need not do so, because it is an investigation of thought, and so produces its objects simply through the process of inquiry itself, which involves thought:

With regard to the *beginning* that philosophy has to make, it seems, like the other sciences, to start in general with a subjective presupposition, i.e., to have to make a particular

⁵⁸ The relationship between the *Phenomenology* and the rest of Hegel’s system is of course a contentious matter: for further discussion of my own view, see Robert Stern, *Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit* (London: Routledge, 2002), ch. 1.

⁵⁹ Hegel, *SL*, 31 [*Werke*, V: 19].

⁶⁰ See Hegel, *SL*, 43 [*Werke*, V: 35]: ‘Logic . . . cannot presuppose any of these forms of reflection and laws of thinking, for these constitute part of its own content and have first to be established within the science’. Cf. also *EL*, §1, 24 [*Werke*, VIII: 41].

⁶¹ Cf. Hegel, *SL*, 74 (*Werke*, V: 74), and *EL*, §1, 24 [*Werke* VIII: 41]. Cf. also *EL*, §§28–31, where Hegel argues that while traditional metaphysics had a properly high estimation of the value of thought, it too often took its conception of the objects of its inquiries (such as the soul, God, and the world) as given representations, instead of allowing thought to determine its conception of these for itself:

The representations of the soul, of the world, of God, seem at first to provide thinking with a *firm hold*. But apart from the fact that the character of a particular subjectivity is mingled with them, and that therefore they can have a most diverse significance, what they need all the more is to receive their firm determination only through thinking. . . . This metaphysics was not a free and objective thinking, for it did not allow the object to determine itself freely from within, but presupposed it as ready-made (*EL*, §31 and §31Z, 68–9) [*Werke*, VIII: 97–8].

object, in this case *thinking*, into the object of thinking, just like space, number, etc., in the other sciences. But what we have here is the free act of thinking putting itself at the standpoint where it is for its own self, and where hereby it produces and gives to itself its object.⁶²

- (c) While an inquiry into other matters can be empirical and so can legitimately involve claims that are contingent, a science of thought such as the *Logic* is not something that can be conducted in this way; rather, it must reveal thought to have a necessary structure, which it cannot do if the claims it makes about thought rest on groundless assumptions, for '[i]f the beginnings are immediate, found, or presupposed . . . the form of necessity fails to get its due'.⁶³
- (d) The *Logic* is concerned with the categories belonging to thought, which Hegel distinguishes from the representations [*Vorstellungen*] which belong to other faculties, which are distinct from but related to the faculty of thought. As a result, the *Logic* cannot use these representations as a basis for determining the nature of the categories of thought, when in fact the two behave in very different ways:

Since the determinacies of feeling, of intuition, of desire, of willing, etc., are generally called *representations*, inasmuch as we have *knowledge* of them, it can be said in general that philosophy puts *thoughts* and *categories*, but more precisely *concepts*, in the place of representations. Representations in general can be regarded as *metaphors* of thoughts and concepts. But that we have these representations does not mean that we are aware of their significance for thinking, i.e., that we have the thoughts and concepts of them. Conversely, it is one thing to have thoughts and concepts, and another to know what the representations, intuitions, and feelings are that correspond to them.⁶⁴

⁶² Hegel, *EL*, §17. 41 [*Werke*, VIII: 62–3]; trans. modified.

⁶³ Hegel, *EL*, §9, 33 [*Werke*, VIII: 52]. Cf. Hegel, *SL*, 40 [*Werke*, V: 30]: 'No subject matter is so absolutely capable of being expounded with a strictly immanent plasticity as is thought in its necessary development; no other brings with it this demand in such a degree; in this respect the Science of Logic must surpass even mathematics, for no subject matter has in its own self this freedom and independence'; and *ibid.*, 58–9 [*Werke*, V: 55], trans. modified:

The system of logic is the realm of shadows, the world of simple essentialities freed from all sensuous concreteness. The study of this science, to dwell and labour in this shadowy realm, is the absolute education [*Bildung*] and discipline of consciousness. In logic, consciousness is busy with something remote from sensuous intuitions and aims, from feelings, from the merely imagined world of representations. Considered from its negative aspect, this business consists in holding off the contingency of ordinary thinking and the arbitrary selection of particular grounds—or their opposites—as valid.

⁶⁴ Hegel, *EL*, §3, 26–7 [*Werke*, VIII: 44], trans. modified. Cf. also *ibid.*, §20, 49–50 [*Werke*, VIII: 72–4], and *SL*, 33 [*Werke*, V: 22], trans. modified:

In the first place, we must regard it as an infinite step forward that the forms of thought have been freed from the material in which they are submerged in self-conscious intuition, representational ideas, and in our desiring and willing, or rather in our representational desiring and willing—and there is no desiring or willing without representational ideas—and that these universalities have been brought into prominence for their own sake and made objects of contemplation as was done

This fundamental contrast between thought and the other faculties means that thought can and must be investigated on its own, without any need to base that investigation into its categories on representations taken from elsewhere; indeed, if the attempt was made to do so, the result would be a distortion of those categories, so that presupposing representations in this way would prove disastrous for the *Logic*.

We can see, therefore, why it is that for Hegel, philosophy can only conduct an investigation into thought in a presuppositionless manner, and thus why the *Logic*, as the 'science of thought' must proceed without presuppositions. It seems, then, that this has nothing to do with Cartesian doubts or Kantian aspirations to 'free thought': it just follows from the fact that the *Logic* has thought as its object, and this object (Hegel believes) can only be investigated presuppositionlessly, or not at all. It can be argued, then, that Hegel's commitment to presuppositionlessness is thus driven by his conception of the *sui generis* nature of thought as the subject-matter of this 'science', rather than the sorts of issues highlighted by Houlgate.

But, it might be asked, why does Hegel think we need to go in for this 'science' at all? Why should we make thought into the object of our investigations? Until we know the answer to this question, the suspicion might remain that Hegel is still Cartesian in his approach after all: for, perhaps he wants to investigate thought in order to avoid the possibility of error, or to show that thought can be rendered free by being rendered presuppositionless.

However, I think this suspicion can easily be allayed, and that in fact when we examine the motivation that Hegel himself provides for the *Logic*, it is thoroughly compatible with pragmatism as we have envisaged it. For, Hegel makes plain that the reasons why we must conduct his 'science of thought' is that we have found that much of our ordinary thinking is prone to error, confusion, and incoherence, which is just the kind of *real* doubt that he contrasts with the Cartesian one. He completely accepts, therefore, that until we have been shown that this is the case, we have no reason to go in for his 'science of thought', where it is the role of the *Phenomenology* to show that without it, we will face the sort of genuine intellectual and practical difficulties that he documents so richly in that text.

Hegel thus allows that while the *Logic* is driven by 'the resolve . . . that we propose to consider thought as such', any such resolution 'can only be regarded as arbitrary' unless we are shown why we must commit ourselves to it.⁶⁵ Hegel clearly holds that the only way to get us to 'consider thought as such' and to

by Plato and after him especially by Aristotle; this constitutes the beginning of the intelligent apprehension of them.

For more on Hegel's distinction between these various faculties, see Hegel, *EM*, §§445–468, 188–228 [*Werke*, X: 240–88].

⁶⁵ Hegel, *SL*, 70 [*Werke*, V: 68].

make 'thoughts themselves, unmixed with anything else, into objects',⁶⁶ as we do in the *Logic*, is by showing how problematic our view of the world will be if we do not, because we will fail to employ the categories of thought properly, and so get into difficulties. Hegel therefore accepts that '[i]n its relation to ordinary consciousness, philosophy would first have to show *the need* for its *peculiar mode of cognition*, or even to awaken this need',⁶⁷ by showing ordinary consciousness that it will face real problems otherwise, where it is these problems for ordinary consciousness that are documented in the *Phenomenology*, after which consciousness is ready to take seriously the *Logic* as a 'science of thought'.

It can therefore be said that the only grounds for the sort of investigation carried out by the *Logic* into thought (which must therefore be carried out presuppositionlessly, in so far as thought is its object) is exactly the kind of 'real doubt' championed by the pragmatists at the expense of the 'artificial doubt' associated with Cartesianism. Hegel emphasizes that it is only when consciousness has been brought to a state of genuine despair that it will be ready for the *Logic*, where this is something the 'shilly-shallying' doubt of Descartes can never achieve, thereby providing no proper motivation for the kind of investigation into thought that Hegel believes must in the end be carried out.⁶⁸ The rationale for Hegel's presuppositionless inquiry is thus one with which the pragmatist can safely sympathize, rather than having an objectionable Cartesian (or Cartesian-cum-Kantian) basis.

Turning, finally, to the passage from the *Encyclopaedia Logic* that perhaps led Houlgate to his Cartesian reading of Hegel, we may now put it in a different light; but the passage requires more extensive quotation if this is to be seen:

All . . . presuppositions or assumptions must equally be given up when we enter into the Science, whether they are taken from representations or from thinking; for it is this Science, in which all determinations of this sort must first be investigated, and in which their meaning and validity like that of their antitheses must be [re]cognised.

I would read this as Hegel saying that the *Logic*, as the science of thought, cannot begin by presupposing anything about how various concepts relate to one another or should be understood, because any investigation into thought is precisely an investigation into such concepts.

Being a negative science that has gone through all forms of cognition, *scepticism* might offer itself as an introduction in which the nullity of such presuppositions would be exposed. But it would not only be a sad way, but also a redundant one, because, as we shall soon see,⁶⁹ the dialectical moment itself is an essential one in the affirmative Science. Besides, scepticism would have to find the finite forms only empirically and unscientifically, and to take them up as given.

⁶⁶ Hegel, *EL*, §3, 27 [*Werke*, VIII: 44].

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, §4, 27 [*Werke*, VIII: 45].

⁶⁸ Cf. Hegel, *PS*, 49–50 [*Werke*, III: 72].

⁶⁹ Hegel is referring here to the subsequent sections of *EL*: see §§79–82.

Given that the *Logic* has to be presuppositionless, it might be felt that the way to proceed here is to adopt a sceptical approach. But this sort of prior scepticism is *not* needed, as the categories themselves will show themselves to be inadequate in various ways through the dialectic, while the sceptical approach cannot ever be really systematic and exhaustive.

To require a consummate scepticism of this kind, is the same as the demand that Science should be preceded by *universal doubt*, i.e., by total *presuppositionlessness*. Strictly speaking, this request is fulfilled by the freedom that abstracts from everything, and grasps its own pure abstraction, the simplicity of thinking—in the resolve of the *will to think purely*.⁷⁰

What the sceptical position represents in its insistence on universal doubt is the requirement for presuppositionlessness; but the science of logic fulfils this requirement without the need for universal doubt, because it sets out to think in a pure manner, which can only be done in a presuppositionless way, so that no sceptical beginning for this project of presuppositionless inquiry is either called for or required—it is just part of the nature of the inquiry into thought itself. To this extent, therefore, Hegel can agree with all the pragmatist objections to scepticism, while basing his project on a different set of considerations in favour of proceeding presuppositionlessly, considerations which (I have argued) should not in themselves trouble the pragmatist.

VI

We have seen, therefore, that when it comes to the motivations underlying Hegel's commitment to presuppositionlessness in the *Logic*, there is no problematic Cartesianism, either relating to some sort of Cartesian doubt, or to the broader Cartesian/Kantian conception of 'free thought'. Is this enough, however, to show that Hegel and pragmatism can be unproblematically aligned with one another when it comes to the issue of presuppositions? For, even if I am right in saying that Hegel's *reasons for thinking* we should proceed presuppositionlessly in the *Logic* are not Cartesian or Kantian, and thus that his position need not raise any qualms with the pragmatist on this score, I am still nonetheless allowing that Hegel does think we are *able* to suspend our presuppositions when it comes to this 'science of thought'; and isn't *this* enough to render Hegel a 'Cartesian' in a broad sense? And isn't this also something the pragmatist would deny, holding instead that we must always make some assumptions in any inquiry, as Peirce seems to claim when he writes: 'We must begin with all the prejudices which we actually have when we enter upon the study of philosophy', as if the having of such 'prejudices' is just a necessary feature of what it is to be a thinking subject at all?

⁷⁰ Hegel, *EL*, §78, 124 [*Werke*, VIII: 167–8], trans. modified.

Now, as Houlgate rightly notes, there *are* some critics of Hegel's approach in the *Logic* who do take this line, and so who claim not merely that presuppositionless inquiry is unwarranted in normative terms (by the 'emptiness' of the Cartesian doubt that drives it, or whatever), but also that it is just an unrealizable project, and so 'an impossible demand to fulfil',⁷¹ or 'preposterous';⁷² and Houlgate works hard to show that in fact, it may not be as unrealizable as critics of this sort suppose.⁷³ The question for us here, therefore, is whether the pragmatist needs to be put among critics of *this* sort, and thus whether there remains a significant point of difference between Hegel and the pragmatist tradition over the *feasibility* of presuppositionlessness inquiry, regardless of whether trying to conduct such an inquiry could ever be *justified* or warranted. Even if the Hegelian could convince the pragmatist that his Hegelian grounds for trying to inquire presuppositionlessly in the *Logic* are not in themselves objectionable, might not the pragmatist still commit himself to insisting, along with other critics of Hegel (such as Heideggerians and hermeneuticists), that it just cannot be done?

Now, one way to raise this kind of criticism of Hegel is to say that the *Logic* project is unrealizable, because we are just unable to think or reason presuppositionlessly, given how thinking works for us; and Peirce may seem to be saying precisely this in insisting that our 'prejudices' are something with which we 'must begin'. However, although this question is too large to be satisfactorily settled with here, I would argue that Peirce's comment should *not* be taken as an attack on presuppositionlessness of this sort, but rather that his position centres squarely on the normative issue, of whether such an inquiry can be justified. That is, on my reading, Peirce is saying that 'when we enter upon the study of philosophy' and thus begin an inquiry in this domain, the sense in which we 'must' begin with the beliefs we find ourselves with at that point is that there is nothing the Cartesian can do to legitimately dislodge those beliefs by appealing to his 'Cartesian maxim' that we should begin with universal doubt, because at the start of this inquiry, no 'real doubt' has been raised over them (though it might be so raised later). In my view, the 'must' here has a normative basis, grounded on the inadequacy of Cartesian doubt to put these beliefs legitimately into question, not a basis in any supposed fact about how the mind must work and what is required to make thinking possible.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Houlgate, *Hegel's 'Logic'*, 28.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 40. For example, Houlgate quotes Gadamer as saying that Hegel's *Logic* 'must' always presuppose and use the categories of reflection when it claims to deduce dialectically' (Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 93, my emphasis; cited by Houlgate, *Hegel's 'Logic'*, 73).

⁷³ See Houlgate, *Hegel's 'Logic'*, esp. ch. 3 and 4.

⁷⁴ Cf. Wittgenstein's remark in *On Certainty*, with which Peirce's position is often compared: 'But what about such a proposition as "I know I have a brain"? Can I doubt it? Grounds for *doubt* are lacking! Everything speaks in its favour, nothing against it' (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, trans. Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969), §4, 2. Wittgenstein is clearly saying here that I cannot doubt 'I have a brain' not because there are some things that

However, a further question may perhaps remain, namely: even if Hegel were able to convince the pragmatist that he can give us good grounds on which to suspend our beliefs when it comes to the project being envisaged in the *Logic*, would the pragmatist not argue that from that sort of presuppositionless position, *no further inquiry is possible*, not because we must always operate with some assumptions that cannot be set aside, but because no inquiry can make progress when all such assumptions are put in abeyance, so that Hegel is bound to find that his 'path of inquiry' in the *Logic* is blocked.⁷⁵

Now, again, this is a large issue, but also harder to gauge, both in terms of where the differences between the pragmatist and Hegel might lie, and how important these differences ultimately are. To concentrate once more on Peirce, it is certainly correct that he believed that such a 'blockage' would be the consequence of the *Cartesian* way of questioning our assumptions, and that this therefore would hinder our investigations when it comes to our everyday inquiries, natural science, and so on. But the *Logic* is rather different from these sorts of investigations, with a different kind of focus, so that there are perhaps reasons to think that the Hegelian could convince Peirce that presuppositionless inquiry could work when it comes to the sort of investigation Hegel envisages here,⁷⁶ particularly when (as Houlgate makes clear) the kind of presuppositionlessness Hegel is after and what he means by it is qualified in some respects.⁷⁷ Arguably, moreover, what Peirce takes to be stultifying about Cartesianism is not so much that it asks us to suspend all our beliefs, but that the abstractness of its doubts makes it impossible for us to resolve them, so that the inquiry cannot continue or get anywhere; but here, as we have seen, Hegel is in agreement with the Peircean, but takes his inquiry *not* to be based on abstract doubt, and so to have a determinate

must be presupposed in thinking and this is one of them, but because the Cartesian does not give us sufficient *grounds* for questioning this belief, even though it could turn out to be false ('Nevertheless it is imaginable that my skull should turn out empty when it was operated on').

⁷⁵ Cf. Peirce *CP* 5.416, *EP* II, 335–6, where Peirce seems to suggest that if you *did* manage to 'divest yourself' of the 'immense mass of cognition already formed', you might well have thereby 'made all knowledge impossible to yourself'.

⁷⁶ For example, Cheryl Misak suggests that one reason Peirce holds that we should not suspend or doubt all our beliefs is that 'if we did, we would not possess a body of stable belief by which to judge new evidence and hypotheses' (Cheryl Misak, 'Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914)', in Cheryl Misak (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Peirce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1–26, at 13). But it is not clear how this sort of worry would apply to an investigation such as Hegel's *Logic*, where inquiry into its object (thought) is not a matter of proceeding in this way. Moreover, as Chris Hookway has pointed out to me, a good case can be made that Peirce himself aimed to proceed in a presuppositionless manner in certain parts of his own philosophical system that are themselves most analogous to Hegel's *Logic*, such as his semeiotic: for discussion of this, see Christopher Hookway, 'Normative Science vs Natural History of Thought: Peirce on Dewey on Logic', forthcoming. Of course, these are precisely the parts of Peirce's enterprise that other pragmatists viewed with suspicion, partly perhaps because they had wider concerns regarding presuppositionlessness than Peirce; but then, if it makes sense to see this as an issue on which the pragmatists themselves disagreed, then at least it shows that Hegel's position does not put him at odds with the pragmatist tradition as a whole.

⁷⁷ See Houlgate, *Hegel's 'Logic'*, esp. ch. 3.

way forward as a result. Thus, just as the pragmatist can perhaps be brought to accept the motivations for Hegel's project in the *Logic*, so too he can be brought to accept that no obstacles stand in the way of Hegel's actually achieving it and bringing that project to completion.

VII

In this paper, we have considered how much common ground can be found between Hegel and pragmatism, where I have argued that there is more than may initially have appeared. As we have seen, when it comes to the normative commitments underlying Hegel's justification for the *Logic*, there is nothing that need force him apart from the pragmatist, once it is seen in the right context. Whether, however, Hegel could convince the pragmatist that his goal of presuppositionless inquiry in the *Logic* is *achievable* is perhaps harder to establish, as much will depend on how that project is conceived in more detail on the one hand, and on the other hand what role in inquiry the pragmatist gives to the having of assumptions, and whether that role would in fact apply to the *Logic*—where it is very likely that the pragmatists would disagree amongst themselves on precisely what their 'Neurathian' outlook really amounts to and how far it should go. Nonetheless, even if in the end this question has to remain open, I hope to have cleared the way for seeing how deeply Hegel's position can be aligned with that of the pragmatist on certain fundamental issues, once that position is understood along the lines that I recommend here.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Earlier versions of this paper were presented at conferences at Warwick and Edinburgh, and I am grateful for those who offered helpful comments on those occasions. I am also particularly grateful for comments from Chris Hookway and Stephen Houlgate, which have led me to a better understanding of these issues.

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8

Peirce on Hegel: Nominalist or Realist?

My aim in this paper is to consider one of Peirce's criticisms of Hegel, namely, that Hegel was a nominalist.¹ Of the various criticisms of Hegel that Peirce offers, this has been little discussed, perhaps because it is puzzling to find Peirce making it at all. For, Peirce also criticizes Hegel for his overzealous enthusiasm for Thirdness, where it is then hard to see how Hegel *can* have both faults: how can anyone who acknowledges the significance of Thirdness in Peirce's sense also fail to be a realist? I will begin by setting out this difficulty and showing how it can be resolved, and will then consider the justice of Peirce's criticism once we have a clear idea of what it amounts to. I will suggest that this criticism is unwarranted, and that in some respects it is curious to find Peirce making it, when he could just as easily have treated Hegel as an ally in the struggle with nominalism. The issue therefore takes us to the heart of Peircean and Hegelian metaphysics, and in a way that relates to questions that are central to contemporary philosophical debates concerning the nature of realism, idealism, and anti-realism.

I

Whereas in the case of Peirce's other criticisms of Hegel,² there is no internal difficulty in seeing how Peirce might have thought (rightly or wrongly) that Hegel

¹ For reasons of space, it is not possible in this paper to consider Peirce's criticisms of Hegel in full. I consider Peirce's related criticisms of Hegel in connection with the other two categories in 'Peirce, Hegel, and the Category of Firstness', *International Yearbook of German Idealism*, 5 (2007), 276–308 (repr. below as Ch. 10), and 'Peirce, Hegel, and the Category of Secondness', *Inquiry* 50 (2007), 123–55 (repr. below as Chapter 9); because these criticisms *are* related, a full discussion of Peirce's treatment of Hegel must take them into account.

² Peirce's response to Hegel was not of course *only* critical, but also contained positive elements: see e.g. 'My philosophy resuscitates Hegel, though in a strange costume' (*CP* 1.42 [c.1892]), and 'In the more metaphysical part of logic the philosophy of Hegel, though it cannot be accepted on the whole, was the work of a great man' (*Selected Writings*, ed. Philip P. Wiener (New York: Dover, 1966), 271 [1901]). For further general discussion of Peirce's relation to Hegel, see Joseph Anthony Petrick, 'Peirce on Hegel', unpublished PhD dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1972, and Max H. Fisch, 'Hegel and Peirce', in J. T. O'Malley, K. W. Algozin and F. G. Weiss (eds.), *Hegel and the History of Philosophy* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 172–93; repr. in his *Peirce, Semeiotic and Pragmatism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 261–82. In the Appendix to his dissertation, Petrick provides an almost complete list of Peirce's references to Hegel, classified into 'positive' and 'negative': see, 181–2.

could have been guilty of the mistake of which he is accused, in the case of his criticism of Hegel as a nominalist, there is an apparent tension to be overcome, between this criticism and Peirce's claim that Hegel was also overcommitted to Thirdness:³ how *can* Peirce make *both* these claims about Hegel, when on his understanding of each position, it would seem that each excludes the other?⁴ I will begin by exploring the context in which Peirce makes both of these criticisms, and why their juxtaposition is *prima facie* surprising, before offering a solution to the puzzle.

The criticism of Hegel as a nominalist that I am concerned with is made at its clearest in the paper 'On Phenomenology', which forms the text of his second Harvard lecture delivered on 2 April 1903; and it is here where the juxtaposition of the criticism with claims about Hegel's commitment to Thirdness is also at its sharpest. In this text, Peirce offers a phenomenological approach to the investigation of the categories as 'an element of phenomena of the first rank of generality': 'The business of phenomenology is to draw up a catalogue and prove its sufficiency and freedom from redundancies, to make out the characteristics of each category, and to show the relations of each to the others'.⁵ Peirce says

³ Cf. *EP* II, 177 (*CP* 5.90 [1903]):

Not only does Thirdness suppose and involve the ideas of Secondness and Firstness, but never will it be possible to find any Secondness or Firstness in the phenomenon that is not accompanied by Thirdness. If the Hegelians confined themselves to that position, they would find a hearty friend in my doctrine. But they do not. Hegel is possessed with the idea that the Absolute is One. Three absolutes he would regard as a ludicrous contradiction *in adjecto*. Consequently, he wishes to make out that the three categories have not their several independent and irrefutable standings in thought. *Firstness* and *Secondness* must somehow be *aufgehoben*. But it is not true;

and *EP* II, 345 (*CP* 5.436 [1905]):

The truth is that pragmatism is closely allied to the Hegelian absolute idealism, from which, however, it is sundered by its vigorous denial that the third category . . . suffices to make the world, or is even so much as self-sufficient. Had Hegel, instead of regarding the first two stages with his smile of contempt, held on to them as independent or distinct elements of the triune Reality, pragmatists might have looked up to him as the great vindicator of their truth . . . For pragmatism belongs essentially to the triadic class of philosophical doctrines, and is much more essentially so than Hegelianism is.

Cf. also *CP* 4.318 [1902]: 'To recognize the triad is a step out of the bounds of mere dualism; but to attempt [to deny] independent being to the dyad and monad, Hegel-wise, is only another one-sidedness'; *CP* 8.268 [1903]: '[T]he one fatal disease of [Hegel's] philosophy is that, seeing that the Begriff in a sense implies Secondness and Firstness, he failed to see that nevertheless they are elements of the phenomenon not to be *aufgehoben*, but as real and able to stand their ground as the Begriff itself'; and *MS* L75 Version 2 Draft A, 28 [Carnegie Institution Application 1902]:

In my view, there are seven conceivable types of philosophy. Three greatly exaggerate the importance of some one of my three categories and more or less underrate the others. Three more somewhat overrate two and almost utterly neglect the third. The seventh type does nearly equal justice to all three. Hegelianism is one of the first three. But the category which it exaggerates [i.e. Thirdness] is the one most commonly overlooked; and for that reason there is a relative wholesomeness in it.

⁴ Cf. Petrick, 'Peirce on Hegel', 73, n. 18: 'The questions of Peirce's nominalism and Peirce's reaction to what he regarded as Hegel's nominalism are admittedly hazy'.

⁵ *EP* II, 148 (*CP* 5.43).

he will focus on the 'universal order' of the categories, which form a 'short list', and notes the similarity between his list and Hegel's, while denying any direct influence:

My intention this evening is to limit myself to the Universal, or Short List of Categories, and I may say, at once, that I consider Hegel's three stages [of thought] as being, roughly speaking, the correct list of Universal Categories.⁶ I regard the fact that I reached the same result as he did by a process as unlike his as possible, at a time when my attitude toward him was rather one of contempt than of awe,⁷ and without being influenced by him in any discernible way however slightly, as being a not inconsiderable argument in favor of the correctness of the list. For if I am mistaken in thinking that my thought was uninfluenced by his, it would seem to follow that that thought was of a quality which gave it a secret power, that would in itself argue pretty strongly for its truth.⁸

In Peirce's terminology, the 'short list' comprises the categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness, although he does not introduce that terminology until the next lecture. Here, he offers a characterization of the first two categories

⁶ Cf. also *CP* 8.213 [c.1905]: 'My three categories are nothing but Hegel's three grades of thinking', and *CP* 8.267 [1903]: 'Anything familiar gains a peculiar positive quality of feeling of its own; and that I think is the connection between Firstness and Hegel's first stage of thought. The second stage agrees better with Secondness'. It is not immediately clear what Peirce meant by Hegel's 'stages of thought', and thus what in Hegel he took to correspond to Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. The editors of *EP* suggest in one note (*EP* II, 517, n. 13), that 'Hegel's "three stages of thought" consist of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis'; but as Hegel scholars often point out (e.g. G. E. Mueller, 'The Hegel Legend of "Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis"', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 19 (1958), 411–14), this terminology is not Hegel's. In connection with the passage we are discussing here, the editors refer to §79 of Hegel's *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, where Hegel distinguishes between three 'sides' of the logical: the understanding which treats each category as distinct (e.g. freedom *or* determinism); the dialectical side where the need for *both* categories is seen to lead to contradiction (e.g. freedom without determinism is mere arbitrariness); and the overcoming of these contradictions where reason sees that categories can form a differentiated unity (e.g. freedom is compatible with determinism). In other contexts, it does seem that it is understanding, dialectic, and reason that Peirce has in mind, e.g. *EP* I, 237 (*CP* 8.45/*WP* 5:230 [1885]): 'When Hegel tells me that thought has three stages, that of naïve acceptance, that of reaction and criticism, and that of rational conviction; in a general sense, I agree to it'. But the difficulty is to see how understanding, dialectic, and reason can correspond to Peirce's list of categories, when they seem more to be different ways of *conceiving* the categories. A better match would seem to be §83 of the *Encyclopaedia*, where Hegel himself talks about the *Logic* as the 'doctrine of thought' having three parts, in terms of the categories of Being, Essence, and Concept, or immediacy, mediation, and mediated immediacy; and this is the terminology Peirce himself uses in making the comparison (see e.g. *EP* II, 149 (*CP* 5.44 [1903])). But for further discussion of some of the complexities here, see Martin Suhr, 'On the Relation of Peirce's "Universal Categories" to Hegel's "Stages of Thought"', *Graduate Studies Texas Tech University*, 23 (1981), 275–9.

⁷ Peirce's attempt to draw up a list of categories is a feature of his thought from the beginning, and in his early works he was hostile to the Hegelian way of dealing with this issue, partly because Peirce wanted to use formal logic in this enterprise in a way he thought Hegel did not: cf. *MS* 895/*WP* 5: 237 [1885]: 'Hegel thought there was no need of studying the categories through the medium of formal logic and preferred to evoke them by means of their own organic connections. . . . But there is nothing in Hegel's method to guard against mistakes, confusions, misconceptions; and the list of categories given by him has the coherence of a dream'.

⁸ *EP* II, 148 (*CP* 5.43). Cf. also *CP* 8.329 [1904].

in phenomenological terms, beginning with Firstness, which he identifies with *presentness*:

Go out under the blue dome of heaven and look at what is present as it appears to the artist's eye. The poetic mood approaches the state in which the present appears as it is present. Is poetry so abstract and colorless? The present is just what it is regardless of the absent, regardless of past and future. It is such as it is, utterly ignoring anything else. . . . Qualities of feeling show myriad-fold variety, far beyond what the psychologists admit. This variety however is in them only in so far as they are compared and gathered together into collections. But as they are in their presentness, each is sole and unique; and all the others are absolute nothingness to it,—or rather much less than nothingness, for not even recognition as absent things or as fictions is accorded to them. The first category, then, is Quality of Feeling, or whatever is such as it is positively and regardless of what else.⁹

Peirce then turns to Secondness, which he characterizes in terms of '*Struggle*', by which he means the resistance of the world to the self and vice versa, illustrating this with the examples of pushing against a door; being hit on the back of the head by a ladder someone is carrying; and seeing a flash of lightning in pitch darkness.¹⁰ He also argues that this resistance can be felt in the case of images drawn in the imagination, and other 'inner objects', though this is felt less strongly. Then, at the beginning of the next section of the text,¹¹ Peirce comes to the category of Thirdness; but here we do not get any phenomenological analysis of the category, but an account of why 'no modern writer of any stripe, unless it be some obscure student like myself, has ever done [it] anything approaching justice'.¹²

Now, Hegel has already been brought into the discussion several times by Peirce prior to this point. Thus, in relation to Firstness (or 'presentness'), we have been told that Hegel was right to begin with 'immediacy' or 'Pure Being', but wrong to treat this as an 'abstraction', as if such presentness could not be a genuine aspect of experience in itself, but only something arrived at by the 'negation' of something more complex: '[Presentness] cannot be *abstracted* (which is what Hegel means by the abstract) for the abstracted is what the concrete, which gives it whatever being it has, makes it to be. The present, being such as it is while utterly ignoring everything else, is *positively* such as it is'.¹³ Peirce here offers an example of immediate 'apprehension' without 'comprehension', of 'immediacy'

⁹ *EP* II, 149–50 (*CP* 5.44).

¹⁰ *EP* II, 150–1 (*CP* 5.45).

¹¹ Because it is made up from different unpublished manuscripts (which do not form a final draft), this section actually marks a break between manuscripts: see the editors' explanation in *EP* II, 517 n. 1. For more on the provenance of the text, see Charles Sanders Peirce, *Pragmatism as a Principle and Method of Right Thinking: The 1903 Harvard Lectures on Pragmatism*, ed. Patricia Ann Turrisi (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997).

¹² *EP* II, 155–6 (*CP* 5.59).

¹³ *EP* II, 150 (*CP* 5.44).

without ‘mediation’ of just the kind that he thinks Hegel (in his discussion of sense-certainty and elsewhere)¹⁴ denied was coherent:

Imagine, if you please, a consciousness in which there is no comparison, no relation, no recognized multiplicity (since parts would be other than the whole), no change, no imagination of any modification of what is positively there, no reflexion,—nothing but a simple positive character. Such a consciousness might be just an odor, say a smell of attar; or it might be one infinite dead ache; it might be the hearing of [*a*]¹⁵ piercing eternal whistle. In short, any simple and positive quality of feeling would be something which our description fits,—that it is such as it is quite regardless of anything else. The quality of feeling is the true psychical representation of the first category of the immediate as it is in immediacy, of the present in its direct positive presentness.¹⁶

Taking himself to be arguing against the Hegelian (and Spinozistic)¹⁷ dictum that ‘all determination is negation’,¹⁸ Peirce is claiming here that Firstness is determination *without* negation, just as Pure Being is distinct from Nothing even though it isn’t yet *Dasein*.

Hegel also figures in Peirce’s discussion of Secondness (or ‘struggle’), in connection with one of two objections that Peirce considers to his position. This objection (the other is ‘anthropomorphism’), is that struggle is reducible, either to feeling or Firstness on the one hand, or to a lawlike relation and hence something general on the other. Peirce associates the latter position with Hegelianism, and because his own position allows for realism about laws, acknowledges that there is an affinity here too with pragmatism (or ‘pragmaticism’):

The other doubt is whether the idea of Struggle is a simple and irresolvable element of the phenomenon; and in opposition to its being so, two contrary parties will enter

¹⁴ Cf. Hegel, *PS*, 58–66 [*Werke*, III: 82–92]. Hegel’s characterization of sense-certainty, which Peirce seems to consciously echo in his characterization of ‘presentness’, is given on pp. 58–9 [*Werke*, III: 82–3]. Peirce’s way of arguing against Hegel here may be compared to Bradley’s similar injunction of a preconceptual ‘feeling’ as also involving the kind of direct and unanalysable immediacy that Bradley also takes Hegel to reject: see e.g. F. H. Bradley, ‘On Our Knowledge of Immediate Experience’, *Mind*, 18 (1909), 40–64, repr. in his *Essays on Truth and Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914), 159–91, at 174–6. For further discussion of Bradley’s position, see James Bradley, ‘F. H. Bradley’s Metaphysics of Feeling and its Place in the History of Philosophy’, in Anthony Manser and Guy Stock (eds.), *The Metaphysics of F. H. Bradley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 227–42.

¹⁵ Words appearing in italic brackets have been supplied or reconstructed by the editors of *EP*.

¹⁶ *EP* II, 150 (*CP* 5.44).

¹⁷ At least, this is how Hegel thought of it, taking the doctrine from Spinoza’s *Epistola 50* (to Jarig Jelles, 2 June 1674), and misquoting it: Spinoza writes ‘determinatio negatio est’, whereas Hegel rephrases this as ‘omnis determinatio est negatio’. See ‘*On the Improvement of the Understanding*’, *The Ethics*, *Correspondence*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), 370: ‘This determination [i.e. figure] therefore does not appertain to the thing according to its being, but, on the contrary, is its non-being. As then figure is nothing else than determination, and determination is negation, figure, as has been said, can be nothing but negation’.

¹⁸ Cf. *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §91 and Addition, 147 [*Werke*, VIII: 196–7].

into a sort of [alliance] without remarking how deeply they are at variance with one another. . . . The [second] party will be composed of those philosophers who say that there can be only one absolute and only one irreducible element [i.e. the Hegelians], and since *Novús* is such an element, *Novús* is really the only thoroughly clear idea there is. These philosophers will take a sort of pragmatistic stand. They will maintain that to say that one thing acts upon another, absolutely the only thing that can be meant is that there is a *law* according to which under all circumstances of a certain general description certain phenomena will result; and therefore to speak of one thing acting upon another *hic et nunc* regardless of uniformity, regardless of what will happen on all occasions, is simple nonsense.¹⁹

Perhaps because he recognizes here ‘a sort of pragmatistic stand’, Peirce seems to have some difficulty in refuting this position; for while he wants to resist the reduction of the direct and immediate sense of ‘otherness’ experienced in ‘struggle’, which draws us into relation with the individual as such, he also believes in the laws governing these individuals, making the relation general and so an instance of Thirdness rather than Secondness. Nonetheless, just as Peirce had argued against Royce in his review of Royce’s *Religious Aspect of Philosophy* of 1885, to reduce Secondness to Thirdness in this way would be to fail to take into account the experience of ‘the Outward Clash’: ‘Besides the lower consciousness of feeling and the higher consciousness of nutrition, this direct consciousness of hitting and getting hit enters into all cognition and serves to make it mean something real’, where ‘[t]he capital error of Hegel which permeates his whole system in every part of it’, is that it is something ‘he almost altogether ignores’.²⁰ In the Harvard lecture, therefore, Peirce argues that the element of *surprise* involved in experience shows that it is not as an instance of a general law that we recognize an individual that resists us, but as something unique, so Secondness cannot be eliminated in favour of Thirdness: ‘I ask you whether at that instant of surprise there is not a double consciousness, on the one hand of an Ego, which is simply the expected idea suddenly broken off, on the other of the Non-Ego, which is the Strange Intruder, in his abrupt entrance’.²¹ This emphasis on the ‘Outward Clash’ is vital to Peirce in the development of his notion of indexical representations, which stands opposed to Royce’s view that the subject of a proposition is picked out by a general description,²² where Peirce may well

¹⁹ EP II, 151–2 (CP 5.46). ²⁰ EP I, 233 (CP 8.41/WP 5: 225 [1885]).

²¹ EP II, 154 (CP 5.53). Cf. also EP II, 177–8 (CP 5.92): ‘Let the Universe be an evolution of Pure Reason if you will. Yet if while you are walking in the street reflecting upon how everything is the pure distillate of Reason, a man carrying a heavy pole suddenly pokes you in the small of the back, you may think there is something in the Universe that Pure Reason fails to account for; and when you look at the color *red* and ask yourself how Pure Reason could make *red* to have that utterly inexpressible and irrational positive quality it has, you will be perhaps disposed to think that Quality and Reaction have their independent standings in the Universe’.

²² For an excellent discussion of this issue, see Christopher Hookway, ‘Truth and Reference: Peirce versus Royce’, in his *Truth, Rationality, and Pragmatism: Themes from Peirce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 108–34.

have thought that this was a lesson Royce had learnt from Hegel's discussion of sense-certainty.

Now, given that the discussion thus far has treated Hegel and Hegelianism as a potential opponent of both Firstness (or 'presentness') and Secondness (or 'struggle'),²³ it is no surprise that when Peirce moves to introduce the category of Thirdness, it is this category that Peirce sees as the one which is central to Hegel, rather than the other two: 'Thus far, gentlemen, I have been insisting very strenuously upon what most vulgar common sense has every disposition to assent to and only ingenious philosophers have been able to deceive themselves about. But now I come to a category which only a more refined form of common sense is prepared willingly to allow, the category which of the three is the chief burden of Hegel's song . . .'²⁴ There is nothing at all surprising in finding that Peirce makes this claim: as we have seen, in the Harvard lecture itself it has already been implicit, and it is a claim Peirce makes frequently and clearly elsewhere.²⁵

What *is* surprising, perhaps, is that having made it, Peirce goes on to explain why 'no modern writer of any stripe, unless it be some obscure student like myself, has ever done [Thirdness] anything approaching to justice', by arguing that a misguided use of Ockham's razor has led philosophy into nominalism, and it is just such a position we find in Hegel. As Peirce puts it: 'all modern philosophy is built upon Ockhamism, by which I mean it is all nominalistic and that it adopts nominalism because of Ockham's razor. And there is no form of modern philosophy of which this is more essentially true than the philosophy of Hegel'.²⁶ But, if Peirce thinks Hegel is a nominalist, how can he *also* think that Thirdness is 'the chief burden of Hegel's song', where Thirdness is predominantly associated with realism about 'generals' (such as laws and universals), and hence would seem to be essentially an *anti*-nominalist position—as Peirce himself would seem to recognize not only elsewhere,²⁷ but also just a little earlier in the lecture, where he took 'scholastic realism' about laws to be part of the Hegelian argument for the priority of Thirdness over Secondness?²⁸ This, then, is a puzzle that needs to be resolved, in understanding Peirce's reading of Hegel as a nominalist.

²³ For the purposes of this paper, I will accept this characterization, although in fact I think it is open to challenge. For further critical discussion of Peirce's position, see my 'Peirce, Hegel, and the Category of Firstness' and 'Peirce, Hegel, and the Category of Secondness' [reprinted below].

²⁴ *EP* II, 155 (*CP* 5.59).

²⁵ See the references in n. 3 above.

²⁶ *EP* II, 156–7 (*CP* 5.61).

²⁷ Cf. *EP* II, 197 (*CP* 5.121 [1903]): 'To be a nominalist consists in the undeveloped state in one's mind of the apprehension of Thirdness as Thirdness'. Moreover, although the issue is too complex to deal with satisfactorily here, Peirce also seems to have felt that Hegel was on his side when it came to the treatment of continuity (albeit with an insufficient respect for the importance of mathematics), where Peirce links this with the issue of Thirdness and realism—so again it is surprising to see that Peirce also comes to accuse Hegel of nominalism, despite this common ground. (For remarks on the relation between Hegel and Hegelianism and continuity, see *CP* 1.41 [c.1892]; *EP* I, 296 (*CP* 6.31 [1891]); *EP* II, 520 n. 5 (*CP* 5.71 n., 49 [1903]); *CP* 8.109 [1900].)

²⁸ Cf. *EP* II, 153 (*CP* 5.97).

II

A first, and most obvious, way out of the puzzle, is to say that perhaps Peirce didn't really say what the text contains, as the text may be misleading or corrupted in some way, based as it is on an amalgam of documents that were only drafts, and that were probably superseded by a further, final, version which has since been lost.²⁹ However, Peirce's remarks concerning Hegel's nominalism here are not unique, and similar remarks can be found elsewhere; these only differ from Peirce's comments in the Harvard lecture in signalling that Peirce recognized the somewhat surprising nature of the claim. So, for example, in a letter of 1908, Peirce writes that 'all the intelligible philosophers, *even* Hegel, have been more or less nominalistic';³⁰ and in characterizing modern philosophy as swept up in 'a tidal wave of nominalism', Peirce speaks of Hegel as 'a nominalist of realistic yearnings';³¹ and in a letter of 1904 he observes that 'Notwithstanding what Royce says, Hegel appears to me to be on the whole a nominalist with patches of realism rather than a real realist'.³² He also writes that Hegel 'gave [phenomenology] the nominalistic . . . character in which the worst of the Hegelian errors have their origin'.³³ Moreover, Peirce elsewhere also attributes to Hegel the kind of Ockhamism that in the Harvard lecture he uses to explain the source of nominalism: 'Aristotelianism admitted two modes of being. This position was attacked by William Ockham, on the ground that one kind sufficed to account for all the phenomena. The host of modern philosophers, to the very Hegels, have sided with Ockham in this matter'.³⁴

A second response to the puzzle might be to admit that Peirce did actually say that Hegel was a nominalist, but that he didn't really mean it. After all, Peirce does also say that 'Hegel first advocated realism';³⁵ so perhaps in the passages we have been considering, Peirce was simply carried away by his determination to stress his own historical uniqueness, when in more restrained and critical moments he would have acknowledged that Hegel was as much of a realist as himself. This seems unlikely, however: for while the Harvard lecture is unusual in not seeking to qualify Peirce's claim that Hegel was a nominalist in any way, the most that Peirce would seem inclined to allow is that Hegel might be a forerunner to realism in some degree, just as were Duns Scotus and Kant

²⁹ See above, n. 12.

³⁰ Peirce to Cassius J. Keyser, 10 April 1908, Cassius Jackson Keyser papers, Columbia University; cited in Joseph Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life* (Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1993), 71. My emphasis.

³¹ *CP* 1.19 [1903].

³² *CP* 8.258.

³³ *EP* II, 143 (*CP* 5.37) [1903].

³⁴ *CP* 2.116 [1902–3]. Cf also *EP* II, 70 [1901]: 'all modern philosophy is more or less tainted with this malady [of Ockhamism]'.

³⁵ *CP* 4.50 [1893].

(according to Peirce).³⁶ In their case, however, we are given some explanation of where ultimately their realism fell short; so to resolve the puzzle in relation to Hegel, this explanation is something we must also find. To do this, we need to do two things: explain how it is conceptually possible to privilege Thirdness while still being a nominalist, and explain how Peirce could have taken Hegel to occupy this position. We will consider answers Peirce might give to the conceptual question first, and then consider if the answers to that question fit Peirce's reading of Hegel.

I think we can find three possible answers in Peirce's writings to the question of how someone might recognize Thirdness, and yet remain a nominalist: (i) one can recognize Thirdness, but in a rather inadequate or limited form; (ii) one can have limited grounds for recognizing Thirdness; (iii) one can recognize Thirdness as a category of thought, but not as something real. Let me consider each in turn.

The first idea is suggested by the fourth of the Harvard lectures, immediately after Peirce's enumeration of his 'seven systems of metaphysics', where once again 'Hegelianism of all shades' is classified under Thirdness. Here, Peirce famously labels himself as 'an Aristotelian of the scholastic wing, approaching Scotism, but going much further in the direction of scholastic realism'; but he also draws a contrast between Hegel and the Aristotelian position which suggests why Hegel might not be a fully-fledged realist, in so far as Hegel's Thirdness does not encompass as much as Aristotle's:

The doctrine of Aristotle is distinguished from substantially all modern philosophy by its recognition of at least two grades of being. That is, besides *active reactive existence*, Aristotle recognizes a germinal being, an *esse in potentia* or I like to call it an *esse in futuro*. In places Aristotle has glimpses of a distinction between *εὐέργεια* and *εὐτελέχεια*.

Hegel's whole doctrine of *Wesen*, the most labored and the most unsuccessful part of his work, is an attempt to work out something similar. But the truth is that Hegel agrees with all other modern philosophers in recognizing no other mode of being than being *in actu*.³⁷

This may be read as suggesting that while Hegel approximated to an Aristotelian realism in parts ('on the strength of special agreements'),³⁸ he remained a

³⁶ Cf. *CP* 1.19 [1903] and *EP* I, 90–1 (*CP* 8.15/*WP* 2: 470–1 [1871]).

³⁷ *EP* II, 180. Cf also *CP* 8, 292 [1901–2]: 'Nominalism, up to that of Hegel, looks at reality retrospectively. What all modern philosophy does is to deny that there is any *esse in futuro*'; and *CP* 2.157 [1902–3]: 'If Peirce's exposition of the English doctrine is to be accepted,' they might say, "and it is perhaps the only one which goes to the bottom of its philosophy, then that doctrine requires us to go back to the Aristotelian nonsense of *esse in futuro*, a conception too metaphysical for Hegel himself, which only such clouded intellects as the James HARRISES and Monboddos have put up with. Something smacking very strongly of the extravagances of Wilhemus Campallensis, who endowed abstract ideas with life, will have to be resuscitated in order to hold the parts of this doctrine together. . . ."; and *CP* 8.126 [1902]: 'This makes an apparent difficulty for [Hegel's] idealism. For if all reality is of the nature of an actual idea, there seems to be no room for possibility or for any lower mode than actuality, among the categories of being. (Hegel includes modality only in his Subjective Logic).'

³⁸ *EP* II, 180 (*CP* n. to 5.77).

nominalist in other respects, in failing to recognize potentiality as well as actuality as being real. Peirce, by contrast, can think of himself as a complete realist in this respect, as he is prepared to say that ‘the true idealism, the pragmatistic idealism, is that reality consists in the *future*’.³⁹

A second way to be a nominalist while still acknowledging Thirdness, on Peirce’s view of these matters, is suggested by Peirce’s theory of perception: for, it seems clear that Peirce held that (along with Firstness and Secondness), Thirdness is present in perceptual experience, and that formed an important part of his realism. Thus, in the seventh Harvard lecture, Peirce distinguishes between three positions on the relation between Thirdness and perception: first, that Thirdness is not perceptible, and so is not real; second, that it is not perceptible, but can be admitted on inductive grounds; and third that it is directly perceived—where Peirce makes it clear that he holds to the last position,⁴⁰ and that only those who adopt it ‘will have no difficulty with Thirdness’.⁴¹ Anything less than this, it could be argued, amounts to a slide towards nominalism, as the epistemological basis for believing in Thirdness becomes more inferential and indirect, and correspondingly weaker. Peirce seems to have held that because of this neglect of Secondness, and thus the ‘Outward Clash’, an Hegelian such as Royce lacked a proper conception of experience,⁴² so might be supposed to lack a perceptual awareness of Thirdness in this way.

A final way in which a recognition of Thirdness might still leave room for nominalism, is if Thirdness is treated as a category of thought, but not as a

³⁹ *CP* 8.284 [1902]. Cf. also *EP* II, 354 (*CP* 5.453 [1905]): ‘Another doctrine which is involved in Pragmaticism as an essential consequence of it . . . is the scholastic doctrine of realism. This is usually defined as the opinion that there are real objects that are general, among the number being the modes of determination of existent singulars, if, indeed, these be not the only such objects. But the belief in this can hardly escape being accompanied by the acknowledgement that there are, besides, real *vagues*, and especially real *possibilities*. . . . Indeed, it is the reality of some possibilities that pragmaticism is most concerned to insist upon’, and *CP* 8.208 [c.1905]: ‘[A] nominalist . . . must say that all future events are the total of all that will have happened and therefore that the future is not endless; and therefore, that there will be an event not followed by any event. This *may* be, inconceivable as it is; but the nominalist must say that it *will* be, else he will make the future to be endless, that is, to have a mode of being consisting in the truth of a general law’. This aspect of Peirce’s critique of Hegel’s nominalism is noted by Petrick, ‘Peirce on Hegel’, 12: ‘Peirce’s rejection of Hegel’s nominalism [is] evidenced in what Peirce saw as Hegel’s stress on the sole reality of the actual present rather than Peirce’s stress on the additional reality of the potential future’; cf. also *ibid.*, 14, 56–7, 73 n. 18, 169–70, 174–6.

⁴⁰ *EP* II, 240 (*CP* 5.209–212 [1903]). Cf. also *EP* II, 211 (*CP* 5.150 [1903]): ‘Thirdness pours in upon us through every avenue of sense’, and *CP* 1.23 [1903]: ‘My view is that there are three modes of being. I hold that we can directly observe them in elements of whatever is at any time before the mind in any way. They are the being of positive qualitative possibility, the being of actual fact, and the being of law that will govern facts in the future’.

⁴¹ *EP* II, 241 (*CP* 5.212).

⁴² Cf. *EP* I, 234 (*CP* 8.43/*WP* 5:226 [1885]): ‘Dr Royce and his school . . . say they rest entirely on experience. This is because they so overlook the Outward Clash, that they do not know what experience is. They are like Roger Bacon, who after stating in eloquent terms that all knowledge comes from experience, goes on to mention spiritual illumination from on high as one of the most valuable kinds of experiences’.

feature of the world. Peirce himself makes clear his commitment to a form of realism that goes against the latter position in the fifth Harvard lecture:

Now Reality is an affair of Thirdness as Thirdness, that is, in its mediation between Secondness and Firstness. Most, if not all [of] you, are, I doubt not, Nominalists; and I beg that you will not take offense at a truth which is just as plain and undeniable to me as is the truth that children do not understand human life. To be a nominalist consists in the undeveloped state in one's mind of the apprehension of Thirdness as Thirdness. The remedy for it consists in allowing ideas of human life to play a greater part in one's philosophy. Metaphysics is the science of Reality. Reality consists in regularity. Real regularity is active law. Active law is efficient reasonableness, or in other words is truly reasonable reasonableness. Reasonable reasonableness is Thirdness as Thirdness.⁴³

Peirce takes himself to have argued for this realism in the previous lecture,⁴⁴ where he claims to have shown that '*Thirdness* is operative in Nature' in an 'experimental' fashion, on the grounds that we can predict what will happen, and these predictions are made true by the fact that general principles or laws hold in the world.⁴⁵ Peirce noted at the end of the third lecture that such an argument was needed, because a philosopher might say "'Oh, *Thirdness* merely exists in thought. There is no such thing in reality'", and he (reluctantly) admits that such a philosopher needs an answer, which he provides in the fourth lecture: 'You do know I am enough of a sceptic to be unwilling to believe in the miraculous power he attributes to the mind of originating a category the like of which God could not put into the realities, and which the Divine Mind would seem not to have been able to conceive. Still those philosophers will reply that this may be fine talk but it certainly is not argument; and I must confess that it is not. So in the next lecture [i.e. the fourth] the categories must be defended as realities'.⁴⁶ Thus, until the arguments of lecture four, Peirce takes himself merely to have established that Thirdness 'exists in thought', but not that there is any 'such thing in reality'; and he comes back to a brief consideration of such a position in lecture seven: 'I shall take it for granted that, as far as *thought* goes, I have sufficiently shown that Thirdness is an element not reducible to Secondness and Firstness. But even if so much be granted [it might be said] that Thirdness, though an element of the mental phenomenon, ought not to be admitted into a theory of the real, because it is not experimentally verifiable'.⁴⁷ Peirce's response here reflects the arguments of lecture four: 'The man who takes [this] position ought to admit no general law as really operative. Above all, therefore, he ought not to admit the law of laws, the law of the uniformity of nature. He ought to

⁴³ EP II, 197 (CP 5.121).

⁴⁴ EP II, 181–6 (CP 5.93–107).

⁴⁵ Cf. also EP II, 269: 'Nobody can doubt that we know laws upon which we can base predictions to which actual events still in the womb of the future will conform to a marked extent, if not perfectly. To deny reality to such laws is to quibble about words. Many philosophers say they are "mere symbols." Take away the word *mere* and this is true. They are symbols; and symbols being the only things in the universe that have any importance, the word "mere" is a great impertinence'.

⁴⁶ EP II, 178.

⁴⁷ EP II, 240 (CP 5.209).

abstain from all prediction, however qualified by a confession of fallibility. But the position can practically not be maintained'.⁴⁸ Thus, we can see how Peirce may have considered that it was possible for a philosopher to acknowledge the significance of Thirdness, and yet still be a nominalist: namely, by allowing that Thirdness as a category is as necessary to our experience of the world as Firstness and Secondness, while at the same time holding (in a Kantian fashion) that this does not correspond to anything in the world independently of our experience or thought of it.⁴⁹ We can therefore understand what Peirce might mean when he says in lecture three of the Harvard series that 'The third category of which I come now to speak is precisely that whose reality is denied by nominalism': he does not mean that the nominalist recognizes only Firstness and Secondness, but rather that the nominalist has such an 'extraordinarily lofty appreciation of the powers of the human soul' that 'it attributes to it a power of originating a kind of ideas the like of which Omnipotence has failed to create as objects',⁵⁰ by confining Thirdness to a category we use in experiencing the world, without it being inherent in reality as such.

Now, in arguing against this position, there is a sense in which Peirce was arguing against his former self. For, although from his early writings onwards (such as 'On a New List of Categories' (1867)), Peirce had a triadic categorial system, in later work he moved away from thinking of Thirdness as merely one of the categories, towards the view that there was real Thirdness in the external world. As is well known, Peirce's encounter with the work of F. E. Abbot had a major influence in changing his outlook, where Abbot saw the idealist turn of Kantian philosophy as just the latest expression of the nominalism that had dominated philosophical thought since the fifteenth century.⁵¹ This no doubt made Peirce sensitive to the gap that might exist between a Kantian conception

⁴⁸ *EP* II, 240 (*CP* 5.210). (I here follow *CP* in not putting a comma after 'qualified' in the third sentence; adding this comma as the editors of *EP* have done distorts the sense from 'he should abstain from all prediction, no matter how much he qualifies his prediction with claims about its fallibility' to 'a confession of fallibility ought to get him to abstain from all prediction'. I think the first sense is to be preferred, as otherwise it is hard to see how Peirce could allow that a realist who was also a fallibilist (such as Peirce himself) could make any predictions. In the original ms, the sentence has no punctuation, and is given none in the edition of the lectures produced by Patricia Ann Turrisi (*Pragmatism as a Principle and Method of Right Thinking*, 255).)

⁴⁹ Cf. *EP* II, 143 (*CP* 5.37), where Peirce writes that in contrast to the nominalist, he will not restrict phenomenology 'to the observation and analysis of *experience* but extend it to describing all the features that are common to whatever is *experienced* or might conceivably be experienced or become an object of study in any way direct or indirect'.

⁵⁰ *EP* II, 157 (*CP* 5.62).

⁵¹ Cf. Peirce's letter to *The Nation* on Abbot's death in 1903, where he describes Abbot's *Scientific Theism* as the text 'wherein he puts his finger unerringly (as the present writer thinks) upon the one great blunder of all modern philosophy' ('Charles Sanders Peirce: Contributions to *The Nation*, Part Three: 1901–08', compiled and annotated by Kenneth Laine Ketner and James Edward Cook, *Graduate Studies Texas Tech University*, 19 (1979), 148). Helpful discussions of the influence of Abbot on Peirce in relation to this issue can be found in Daniel D. O'Connor, 'Peirce's Debt to F. E. Abbot', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 25 (1964), 543–64; Max H. Fisch, 'Peirce's Progress from Nominalism Toward Realism', *Monist* 51 (1967), 159–77; Christopher Hookway,

of the categories on the one hand, in which Thirdness might be given a central place, and the realism espoused by Abbot on the other, for whom this merely categorial story would have been inadequate, as a sign of residual nominalism.

We have seen, therefore, that there are three ways in which Peirce might have thought of a philosopher as a nominalist, despite their commitment to Thirdness. And there are of course connections between them. Thus, for example, the more one thinks of Thirdness as not directly perceptible, the more one may be inclined to think it is a category we use to think about the world, rather than having reality in itself. Likewise, the less one's metaphysical picture leaves room for potentialities, the more one will be inclined to see this aspect of Thirdness as merely a function of our way of viewing reality. It is thus possible to see how Peirce may have come to believe that there is room on the conceptual map for someone to be committed to Thirdness in some sense, while still being a nominalist.

III

Having identified this conceptual space, our next question is therefore to ask why Peirce thought that Hegel occupied it, and how far he was right to do so.

It is certainly easy to see why Peirce might have come to understand Hegel's position as having each of the features of nominalism that we have discussed. Thus, on the question of Thirdness as involving potentiality, Peirce's position is that this requires a recognition that possibilities may be unactualized: 'A quality is a mere abstract potentiality; and the error of those [nominalist] schools lies in holding that the potential, or possible, is nothing but what the actual makes it be. . . . You forget perhaps that a realist fully admits that a sense-quality is only a possibility of sensation; but he thinks a possibility remains possible when it is not actual'.⁵² Peirce clearly felt, however, that while Hegel adopted something of the Aristotelian framework of actuality as a realization of potentiality, he could not ultimately accept this idea of unactualized potentiality, of possibilities that

Peirce (London: Routledge, 1985), 113–16. For biographical details on Peirce's connections with Abbot, see Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce*.

⁵² *CP* 1.422 [c.1896]. Cf also *CP* 1.420:

No collection of facts can constitute a law; for the law goes beyond any accomplished facts and determines how facts that *may be*, but *all* of which never can have happened, shall be characterised. There is no objection to saying that a law is a general fact, provided it be understood that the general has an admixture of potentiality in it, so that no congeries of actions here and now can ever make a general fact. As *general*, the law, or general fact, concerns the potential world of quality, while as *fact*, it concerns the actual world of actuality;

and *CP* 2.148 [1902–3]: 'Whatever is truly general refers to the indefinite future; for the past contains only a certain collection of such cases that have occurred. The past is actual fact. But a general (fact) cannot be realized. It is a potentiality; and its mode of being is *esse in futuro*. The future is potential, not actual'.

could remain unrealized. Thus, in the discussion of possibility in the Doctrine of Essence in the *Logic* to which Peirce refers, Hegel does write as if he thinks a *real* possibility is one that will be actualized: ‘The notion of possibility appears initially to be the richer and more comprehensive determination, and actuality, in contrast, as the poorer and more restricted one. So we say, “Everything is possible, but not everything that is possible is on that account actual too.” But, in fact, i.e., in thought, actuality is what is more comprehensive, because, being the concrete thought, it contains possibility within itself as an abstract moment’.⁵³ There is also a more general issue here, which has been identified by some commentators on Peirce: namely, that Peirce’s emphasis on the openness of the future as a realm of possibility is meant to be contrasted with the ‘closure’ implicit in Hegel’s conception of an end to history, where contingency will be overcome and potentialities fully actualized. Apel adopts this way of contrasting Peirce’s position with Hegel when he writes: ‘Peirce . . . wants to rescue possible experience as experience of *esse in futuro* from Hegel’s standpoint, in which such being is *aufgehoben* at the end of world history’.⁵⁴ Such a view of Hegel is hardly uncommon, so it would not be surprising if it were to inform Peirce’s position.

It is also perfectly comprehensible why Peirce might have taken Hegel to be a nominalist in the second manner we identified: namely, as a result of holding that Thirdness is not perceptible. There are many places where it could appear that Hegel prioritizes thought over experience as the basis for our knowledge of natural kinds and laws, such as the following passage:

Nature offers us an infinite mass of singular shapes and appearances. We feel the need to bring unity into this manifold; therefore, we compare them and seek to [re]cognize what is universal in each of them. Individuals are born and pass away; in them their kind is what abides, what recurs in all of them; and it is only present for us when we think about them. This is where laws, e.g., the laws of the motion of the heavenly bodies, belong too. We see the stars in one place today and in another tomorrow; this disorder is for the spirit something incongruous, and not to be trusted, since the spirit believes in an order, a simple, constant, and universal determination [of things]. This is the faith in which the spirit has directed its [reflective] thinking upon the phenomena, and has come to know their laws, establishing the motion of the heavenly bodies in a universal manner, so that every change of position can be determined and [re]cognised on the basis of this law. . . . From all these examples we may gather how, in thinking about things, we always seek what is fixed, persisting, and inwardly determined, and what governs the particular.

⁵³ Hegel, *EL*, §143Z, 216 [*Werke*, VIII: 282]. According to the editors of the Chronological Edition (*WP*, II, 558), Peirce owned the 2nd edn. of the *Encyclopaedia* (1827), and also the edition of Hegel’s *Werke* put together by ‘an association of friends’ after Hegel’s death (1832–40, 2nd edn. 1840–44), which first included the student notes that form the Additions (*Zusätze*) to the text of the sort quoted from here.

⁵⁴ Karl-Otto Apel, *Charles S. Peirce: From Pragmatism to Pragmaticism*, trans. John Michael Krois (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1995), 120. Cf. *EP* I, 310 (*CP* 6.63 [1892]), *CP* 6.218 [1898] and *CP* 6.305 [1893], where Peirce objects to Hegel’s perceived necessitarianism.

This universal cannot be grasped by means of the senses, and it counts as what is essential and true.⁵⁵

In passages such as this, it might appear that Hegel's way of accounting for our grasp of laws or kinds as forms of Thirdness is somehow less direct than Peirce's, in so far as he claims that laws or kinds 'cannot be grasped by the senses'; so although Peirce does not mention Hegel explicitly in the seventh Harvard lecture, this might nonetheless suggest that we could treat this as a reason Peirce might give for thinking that in the end, Hegel must succumb to nominalism.

Finally, it is also intelligible why Peirce might have thought Hegel was a nominalist in the third way, whereby (as Peirce puts it) 'Hegel degrades [Thirdness] to a mere stage of thinking',⁵⁶ and treats it as a mere category, rather than as present in the world. In doing so, Peirce would have been following a familiar tradition of Hegel interpretation, which treats Hegel as the most radical proponent of post-Kantian idealism: taking our concepts to be responsible for structuring our experience and thus as not themselves part of the mind-independent world, Hegel attempts to save us from Kantian scepticism regarding 'things in themselves' by denying that there is any reality beyond our awareness of it. It is this view of Hegel that Peirce would have found in Abbot's *Scientific Theism*, where Abbot had no difficulty in labelling Hegel as a nominalist:

By Kant's masterly development of Nominalism into a great philosophical system, it has exercised upon subsequent speculation a constantly increasing power. In truth, all modern philosophy, by tacit agreement, rests upon the Nominalistic theory of universals. . . . Nominalism logically reduces all experience, actual or possible, to a mere subjective affection of the individual Ego, and does not permit even the Ego to know itself as a noumenon. The historical development of the Critical Philosophy into the subjective idealism of Fichte, the objective idealism of Schelling, and the absolute idealism of Hegel, only shows how impossible it is for that philosophy to overstep the magic circle of Egoism with which Nominalism logically environed itself.⁵⁷

Though Peirce occasionally in his early work spoke of Kant as a realist,⁵⁸ he also came to share Abbot's view of him as an idealist, remarking for example that 'I believe Time to be a reality, and not the figment which Kant's nominalism proposes to explain it as being';⁵⁹ and he also said the same of Hegel and

⁵⁵ Hegel, *EL*, §21Z, 53 [*Werke*, VIII: 77–8]. Cf. also *ibid.*, §42Z, 85–6 [*Werke*, VIII: 118–19], where Hegel defends the reality of causal relations, but also says 'that one [event] is the cause and the other the effect (the causal nexus between them) is not perceived; on the contrary, it is present merely for our thinking'.

⁵⁶ *EP* II, 345 (*CP* 5.436).

⁵⁷ Francis Ellingwood Abbot, *Scientific Theism* (London: Macmillan, 1885; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1979), 5.

⁵⁸ Cf. *EP* I, 90–1 (*CP* 8.15), from the review of 'Fraser's *The Works of George Berkeley*' of 1871: 'Indeed, what Kant called his Copernican step was precisely the passage from the nominalistic to the realistic view of reality'.

⁵⁹ *CP* 6.590 ('Reply to the Necessitarians: Rejoinder to Dr Carus', 1893).

Hegelianism, commenting that '[Hegel] has committed the trifling oversight of forgetting that there is a real world with real actions and reactions',⁶⁰ and writing in a review of Royce's *The World and the Individual*, 'The truth is, that Professor Royce is blind to the fact which ordinary people see plainly enough; that the essence of the realist's opinion is that it is one thing to *be* and other thing to *be represented*; and the cause of this cecity is that the Professor is completely immersed in his absolute idealism, which precisely consists in denying that distinction'.⁶¹ Given this view of Hegel's idealism, it is therefore not surprising that Peirce may have felt that Hegel's treatment of Thirdness was in the end nominalistic.

Moreover, it could be argued that in his critique of Hegel's nominalism, Peirce saw a conceptual link between this nominalism and the priority he takes Hegel to give to Thirdness over Firstness and Secondness. Thus, regarding the first form of nominalism, Carl Hausman has argued that Peirce's 'futurism' arises out of his objection to this Hegelian emphasis on Thirdness at the expense of the other two categories: '[Peirce] differentiates himself from Hegel by pointing out his own conviction that freshness (under the category of Firstness) and resistance (under the category of Secondness) will not be overcome in some final end. The universe will always have some irregularity—will inevitably bear the mark of freshness and brute fact'.⁶² Secondly, in giving priority to Thirdness, Peirce holds that Hegel is led into an overly intellectualist epistemology.⁶³ Finally, Peirce believes

⁶⁰ *EP* I, 256 (*CP* 1.368/*WP* 6: 179 [1887–8]). Cf. also 'Hegel is a vast intellect. . . . But . . . the study of Hegelianism tends too much toward subjectivism' ('Contributions to *The Nation*, Part Three: 1901–08', 104 [1902]).

⁶¹ *CP* 8.129 [1902].

⁶² Carl R. Hausman, *Charles S. Peirce's Evolutionary Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 17. Cf. also Apel, *Charles S. Peirce*, 109:

[I]n contrast to Hegel, [Peirce] visualized the absolute point of convergence in his system as residing not in the logos-mystical perfection of reflection, but rather in the infinite future. . . . For Pragmatism the relationship to the future is constitutive even for meaning (*Sinn*). But as long as there is a relationship to the future and it is constitutive for our understanding of something as something it will remain impossible, at least in empirical science and in our common-sense understanding of the praxis of life, to subsume (*aufheben*) the qualities of experience and the facticity of events under the generality of the concept. . . . In his mature thought Peirce even conceived the normatively postulated goal of the development of the world, which he takes to be really possible, as only a 'would be,' and he thereby made the *esse in futuro* of Thirdness dependent upon contingent facts (Secondness) and upon spontaneous freedom (Firstness).

Cf. *CP* 6.218 [1898]: 'It is true that the whole universe and every feature of it must be regarded as rational, that is as brought about by the logic of events. But it does not follow that it is *constrained* to be as it is by the logic of events; for the logic of evolution and of life need not be supposed to be of that wooden kind that absolutely constrains a given conclusion. The logic may be that of the inductive or hypothetic inference. . . . The effect of this error of Hegel is that he is forced to deny the fundamental character of two elements of experience [i.e. Firstness and Secondness] which cannot result from deductive logic'.

⁶³ Cf. *CP* 8.118 [c.1902]: 'The metaphysician is a worshipper of his own prepossessions. . . . The Absolute Knowledge of Hegel is nothing but G. W. F. Hegel's idea of himself. . . . Inquiry must react against experience in order that the ship may be propelled through the ocean of thought'.

that it is by ignoring the 'Outward Clash' of Secondness that the idealist manages to overlook the fact that reality is mind-independent,⁶⁴ with the result that he may come to think that generality and laws are real even though they are not instantiated in anything outside us, which is to think of them as 'real' in a merely nominalist manner. In treating Hegel as a nominalist, therefore, Peirce seems to have believed that this nominalism was not only *compatible* with what he saw as Hegel's overly strong commitment to Thirdness, but even that the former arose from the latter, where for 'the idea of a *genuine* Thirdness' what is required is 'an independent solid Secondness and not a Secondness that is a mere corollary of an unfounded and inconceivable Thirdness; and a similar remark may be made in reference to Firstness'.⁶⁵

IV

Having seen what Peirce may have meant in calling Hegel a nominalist, and why there is no tension between this and what he says regarding Hegel's commitment to Thirdness, we may now ask whether Peirce was *right* to categorize Hegel in this way, and thus whether the grounds on which he did so were correct.

This is, of course, a profoundly difficult question to answer with finality, as any reading of Hegel is bound to prove controversial; and, as we have seen, Peirce's approach has both *prima facie* textual support, and (at least until recently) a kind of orthodoxy about it. Nonetheless, I will suggest that Peirce's criticism is flawed, and that Hegel deserves to be seen by Peirce as an exception to those nominalistic tendencies which he (and Abbot) saw as engulfing 'modern philosophy'; indeed, I will suggest, the position Hegel occupies is closer to Peirce's own than he realizes.

⁶⁴ Cf. *CP* 6.95 [1903]: 'Nothing can be more completely false than that we can experience only our ideas. That is indeed without exaggeration the very epitome of all falsity. Our knowledge of things in themselves is entirely relative, it is true; but all experience and all knowledge is knowledge of that which is, independently of being represented. . . . These things are utterly unintelligible as long as your thoughts are mere dreams. But as soon as you take into account that Secondness that jabs you repeatedly in the ribs, you become awake to their truth'.

⁶⁵ *EP* II, 177 (*CP* 5.91) (my emphasis). Cf. also *MS* L75 392–5 ('Parts of Carnegie Application' [1902], in *The New Elements of Mathematics*, ed. Carolyn Eisele, 4 vols (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1976), IV, 30–1):

The term 'objective logic' is Hegel's; but since I reject Absolute Idealism as false, 'objective logic' necessarily means *more* for me than it did for him. Let me explain. In saying that *to be* and *to be represented* were the same, Hegel ignored the category of Reaction (that is, he imagined he reduced it to a mode of being represented) thus failing to do justice to *being*, and at the same time he was obliged to strain the nature of *thought*, and fail to do justice to that side also. Having thus distorted both sides of the truth, it was a small thing for him to say that *Begriffe* were concrete and had their part in the activity of the world; since that activity, for him, was merely represented activity. But when I, with my scientific appreciation of objectivity and the brute nature of reaction, maintain, nevertheless, that ideas really influence the physical world, and in doing so carry their logic with them, I give to objective logic a waking life which was absent from Hegel's dreamland.

The first issue, then, concerns Hegel's treatment of '*esse in potentia*', and Peirce's claim that 'the truth is that Hegel agrees with all other modern philosophers in recognizing no other mode of being than being *in actu*'. It is certainly true that Hegel has a higher regard for what is actual than what is merely possible: 'Rational, practical people do not let themselves be impressed by what is possible, precisely because it is only possible; instead they hold onto what is actual'.⁶⁶ And he also clearly thinks that the more one understands about the world, the less one will think of certain possibilities as 'real' or 'genuine' possibilities, that is, as possibilities that are actually likely to happen: 'The more uneducated a person is, the less he knows about the determinate relations in which the objects that he is considering stand and the more inclined he tends to be to indulge in all manner of empty possibilities; we see this, for example, with the so-called pub politicians in the political domain'.⁶⁷ This may then fuel the suspicion that Hegel's position is ultimately Spinozistic, leaving no room for possibility or contingency, and making everything necessary, so that (as Apel suggested) all future development is ultimately '*aufgehoben* at the end of world history'. As several commentators have argued recently, however,⁶⁸ this would be a mistaken picture of Hegel's position, for (as Hegel puts it), 'Although it follows from the discussion so far that contingency is only a one-sided moment of actuality, and must therefore not be confused with it, still as a form of the Idea as a whole it does deserve its due in the world of objects'.⁶⁹ Here it is important to remember Hegel's distinction between what is actual and what exists or what is 'immediately there' (*das unmittelbar Daseiende*),⁷⁰ where the actual is necessary but the existent is not, and where Hegel is quite happy to accept that (for example) the natural world is

⁶⁶ Hegel, *EL*, §143Z, 216 [*Werke*, VIII: 283] (where the translators use 'ob-ject' as their rendering of 'Gegenstand' as opposed to 'Objekt').

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Cf. Dieter Henrich, 'Hegels Theorie über den Zufall', *Kant-Studien*, 50 (1959), 131–48, repr. in his *Hegel im Kontext* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), 157–86; George di Giovanni, 'The Category of Contingency in Hegel's Logic', in Warren E. Steinkraus and Kenneth I. Schmitz (eds.), *Art and Logic in Hegel's Philosophy* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1980), 179–200; John Burbidge, 'The Necessity of Contingency', in Warren E. Steinkraus and Kenneth I. Schmitz (eds.), *Art and Logic in Hegel's Philosophy* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1980), 201–18.

⁶⁹ Hegel, *EL*, §145Z, 219 [*Werke*, VIII: 286].

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, §142Z, 214–15 [*Werke*, VIII: 280–1]. Cf. also *ibid.*, §6, 29–30 [*Werke*, VIII: 48]:

In common life people may happen to call every brain wave, error, evil, and suchlike 'actual,' as well as every existence, however wilted and transient it may be. But even for our ordinary feeling, a contingent existence does not deserve to be called something-actual in the emphatic sense of the word; what contingently exists has no greater value than that which something-possible has; it is an existence which (although it is) can just as well *not be*. But when I speak of actuality, one should, of course, think about the sense in which I use this expression, given the fact that I dealt with actuality too in a quite elaborate *Logic*, and I distinguished it quite clearly and directly, not just from what is contingent, even though it has existence too, but also, more precisely, from being-there, from existence, and from other determinations.

In the Hegel literature, this point has often been made in relation to Hegel's notorious *Doppelsatz* from the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* ('What is rational is actual, and what is actual is rational'):

not fully 'actual' in this sense, though it does of course exist. Thus, while Peirce might have been right to say that Hegel took a greater philosophical interest in actuality and thus necessity than in possibility and contingency, he was far from denying the reality of the latter: 'It is quite correct to say that the task of science and, more precisely, of philosophy, consists generally in coming to know the necessity hidden under the semblance of contingency; but this must not be understood to mean that contingency pertains only to our subjective views and that it must therefore be set aside totally if we wish to attain the truth. Scientific endeavours which one-sidedly push in this direction will not escape the justified reproach of being an empty game and a strained pedantry'.⁷¹

Turning now to the second issue, of whether it could be argued that Hegel was a nominalist in a way that Peirce was not, because he did not hold that Thirdness is 'directly perceived', the issue is greatly complicated by the difficulty in establishing exactly what Peirce meant by this claim. If Peirce had held that Thirdness is part of the non-conceptual 'given' of 'immediate experience', then he would certainly have been right to contrast his position with Hegel's, for Hegel would not have believed that 'sensuous consciousness' (*das sinnliche Bewußtsein*)⁷² could be sufficiently contentful in this respect; but it is far from clear that this is what Peirce *does* mean, so that grounds for disagreement with Hegel are harder to find. For, it is only at the level of *perceptual judgments* that Thirdness is experiential for Peirce; and in this, it seems, Hegel would have agreed. Thus, Peirce comments in the fifth Harvard lecture: 'If you object that there can be no immediate consciousness of generality, I grant that. If you add that one can have no direct experience of the general, I grant that as well. Generality, Thirdness, pours in upon us in our very perceptual judgments. . . .'⁷³ Similarly, Hegel characterizes perception (*das Wahrnehmen*), as distinct from sensuous consciousness, as follows:

Although perception starts from observation of sensuous materials it does not stop short at these, does not confine itself simply to smelling, tasting, seeing, hearing, and feeling (touch), but necessarily goes on to relate the sensuous to a universal which is not observable in an immediate manner, to cognize each individual thing as an internally

see for example Michael O. Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 52–6.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, §145Z, 219 [*Werke*, VIII: 286–7].

⁷² Cf. Hegel, *EM*, §§418–19, 158–61 [*Werke*, X: 205–8].

⁷³ *EP* II, 207 (*CP* 5.150). Cf. also *EP* II, 223–4:

I do not think it is possible fully to comprehend the problem of the merits of pragmatism without recognizing these three truths: *first*, that there are no conceptions which are not given to us in perceptual judgments, so that we may say that all our ideas are perceptual ideas. This sounds like sensationalism. But in order to maintain this position, it is necessary to recognize, *second*, that perceptual judgments contain elements of generality, so that Thirdness is directly perceived; and finally, I think it of great importance to recognize, *third*, that the abductive faculty, whereby we divine the secrets of nature, is, as we may say, a shading off, a gradation of that which in its higher perfection we call perception.

coherent whole: in force, for example, to comprehend all its manifestations; and to seek out the connections and mediations that exist between separate individual things. While the bare sensuous consciousness merely *shows* things, that is to say, only exhibits them in their immediacy, perception, on the other hand, apprehends the connectedness of things, demonstrates that where such and such circumstances are present such and such a thing follows, and thus begins to demonstrate the truth of things.⁷⁴

Given the apparent similarity between this position and his own, Peirce would surely not take this essentially Kantian conception of experience (which holds that 'intuitions without concepts are blind')⁷⁵ as evidence of nominalism. In fact, the issue of nominalism would seem to arise for Peirce at a *later* point, where the grounds for Thirdness become purely *inferential*, precisely because perceptual judgments are not seen as experiential, so that 'Thirdness is experimentally verifiable, that is, is inferable by induction, though it cannot be directly perceived'.⁷⁶ It is by no means clear, however, that when Hegel comments in the passage cited earlier that '[t]he universal cannot be grasped by means of the senses [*den Sinnen*]', it is this sort of inferentialist picture he has in mind, or instead the more Peircean one, that what is required is perceptual judgment and not mere sensuous consciousness. So, for example, in the following passage, while Hegel clearly questions the capacities of this sensuous consciousness to give us experience of laws, it is not obvious that he is denying that we have experience of laws altogether, in the richer sense of experience which Peirce also has in mind when he speaks about perceptual judgments:

The question of whether a completed sensuousness [*Sinnlichkeit*] or the Notion is the higher may . . . be easily decided. For the laws of the heavens are not immediately perceived, but merely the change in position on the part of the stars. It is only when this object of immediate perception is laid hold of and brought under universal thought-determinations that experience arises therefrom, which has a claim to validity for all time. The category which brings the unity of thought into the content of feeling is thus the objective element in experience, which receives thereby universality and necessity, while that which is perceived is rather the subjective and contingent. Our finding both these elements in experience demonstrates indeed that a correct analysis has been made.⁷⁷

Finally, we can look at the third way in which Peirce may have taken Hegel to have been a nominalist, which is perhaps the most important, namely, that Hegel 'degrades [Thirdness] to a mere stage of thinking'. Is Peirce right to have adopted this way of reading Hegel?

⁷⁴ Hegel, *EM*, §420Z, 161–2 [*Werke*, X: 209], trans. modified. The final remark involves a pun on *Wahrnehmen* and 'true' (*wahr*). Cf. also *ibid.*, §418Z, 159 [*Werke*, X: 206], trans. modified: 'When the essence of things becomes the object of consciousness, this consciousness is no longer merely *sensuous*, but *perceptual*. From this standpoint, *individual* things are referred to the *universal*, but only *referred* to it'.

⁷⁵ Kant, *CPR* A51/B75.

⁷⁶ *EP* II, 240 (*CP* 5.209).

⁷⁷ Hegel, *LHP* III, 440 ['Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie', vol 3, ed. Karl Ludwig Michelet, in *G. W. F. Hegels Werke*, ed. Philip Marheineke et al., 18 vols, 2nd edn. (1840–44), 15, 515].

Now, as readings of Hegel as a mentalistic idealist are far from uncommon, then as now, it is not surprising to find Peirce adopting this view.⁷⁸ But it seems plausible to think that Peirce's encounter with Abbot's *Scientific Theism* was particularly significant in this respect; for, as we have seen, it was Abbot who had an important role in focusing the nominalism/realism issue for Peirce, and who discusses Hegel explicitly in this context, putting him clearly on the nominalist and therefore idealist side of the debate. In *Scientific Theism*, Abbot treats all modern philosophy as nominalistic in this way, and thus idealistic in a mentalistic or subjectivist sense, so that for modern philosophy, nominalism is 'its root' and idealism 'its flower':⁷⁹ 'If all the general and special relations of things, conceived by the mind and expressed by general terms, exist in the mind alone, nothing is known of things themselves; for knowledge of things is knowledge of their relations. Nominalism, therefore, is the original source of the definition of knowledge adopted by Idealism, as shown above: that is, the contents of consciousness alone'.⁸⁰ It may have seemed to Peirce, as it seemed to Abbot, that Hegel's nominalism is apparent in the way he is also an idealist.

Peirce would have done well to have mistrusted Abbot's judgement here, however, and if he had done so, he would arguably have found Hegel's position to be much closer to Abbot's and his own. Abbot cites only two statements by Hegel in support of his reading of Hegel as a mentalistic idealist, giving his own translations of each:

Hegel, the greatest of the post-Kantian Idealists, says: 'Thought, by its own free act, seizes a standpoint where it exists for itself, and generates its own object;' and again: 'This ideality of the finite is the chief maxim of philosophy; and for that reason every true philosophy is Idealism.' This is the absolute sacrifice of the objective factor in human experience. Hegel sublimely disregards the distinction between Finite Thought and Infinite Thought: the latter, indeed, *creates*, while the former *finds*, its object. And, since human philosophy is only finite, it follows that *no* true philosophy is Idealism, except the Infinite Philosophy or Self-thinking of God.⁸¹

While plausibly read as statements of mentalistic idealism when taken out of context in this way, it is not clear on closer inspection that the remarks Abbot

⁷⁸ Of course, sources for Peirce's reading of Hegel include not only Royce and Abbot, but also Augusto Vera (cf. *CP* 4.2 [1898]), as well as the various Hegelians who published in the early volumes of the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* (such as W. T. Harris and J. H. Stirling (cf. *CP* 1.40 [c.1892], where Peirce uses the phrase 'The Secret of Hegel', which was the title of Stirling's main work)), and those whose work Peirce reviewed (such as David G. Ritchie and James B. Baillie). Another less direct influence may have been F. H. Bradley (who Peirce never mentions explicitly in this connection, but who Royce criticized in his 'Supplementary Essay' to *The World and the Individual*, which Peirce reviewed for *The Nation* in 1900 (see *CP* 8.100–116)). As we shall see later in the discussion of Harris, not all of these writers defended an idealistic view of Hegel, though Peirce clearly seems to have in the end sided with those who did: cf. his comment made in a letter to William James of 1904: 'Notwithstanding what Royce says, Hegel appears to me to be on the whole a nominalist with patches of realism rather than a real realist' (*CP* 8.258).

⁷⁹ Abbot, *Scientific Theism*, 9.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 179.

cites from Hegel here can bear the interpretative weight he places upon them. The first statement might be translated more accurately as follows: 'Only what we have here is the free act of thought, that puts itself at the standpoint where it is for itself and where hereby it produces and gives to itself its object'.⁸² This comes in the Introduction to the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, where Hegel is discussing the difference between philosophy and other forms of inquiry. Other inquiries, Hegel suggests, must presuppose their objects (such as space, or numbers), but philosophy need not do so, because philosophy investigates thought and the adequacy of our categories and so produces its own object simply through the process of inquiry itself, as this already employs thought and the categories. Thus, in saying here that (in Abbot's translation) 'Thought . . . generates its own object', Hegel is not making the subjective idealist claim, that the world is created by the mind, but rather saying that in the *Logic*, thinking is not simply taken for granted as an object for philosophy to investigate, as thinking is inherent in the process of investigation itself.

Likewise, Abbot's second quoted statement is not best read as a declaration of subjective idealism. For, although Hegel does indeed say in the *Encyclopaedia Logic* that 'This ideality of the finite is the most important proposition of philosophy, and for that reason every genuine philosophy is *Idealism*',⁸³ the context is again important here, as the corresponding passage from the *Science of Logic* makes clear:

The proposition that the finite is ideal [*ideell*] constitutes idealism. The idealism of philosophy consists in nothing else than in recognizing that the finite has no veritable being [*wahrhaft Seiendes*]. Every philosophy is essentially an idealism or at least has idealism for its principle, and the question then is how far this principle is actually carried out. This is as true of philosophy as of religion; for religion equally does not recognize finitude as a veritable being [*ein wahrhaftes Sein*], as something ultimate and absolute or as something underived, uncreated, eternal. Consequently the opposition of idealistic and realistic philosophy has no significance. A philosophy which ascribed veritable, ultimate, absolute being to finite existences as such, would not deserve the name of philosophy; the principles of ancient or modern philosophies, water, or matter, or atoms are *thoughts*, universals, ideal entities, not things as they immediately present themselves to us, that is, in their sensuous individuality—not even the water of Thales. For although this is also empirical water, it is at the same time also the *in-itself* or *essence* of all other things, too, and these other things are not self-subsistent or grounded in themselves, but are *posited* by, are *derived* from, an *other*, from water, that is they are ideal entities.⁸⁴

When looked at in detail, it is clear that Hegel is not conceiving of idealism here in mentalistic terms: for if he was, he could hardly claim that '[e]very philosophy is essentially an idealism', as mentalistic idealism is a position held by

⁸² Hegel, *EL*, §17, 41 [*Werke*, VIII: 63], trans. modified. The original is as follows: 'Allein es ist dies der freie Akt des Denkens, sich auf den Standpunkt zu stellen, wo es für sich selber ist und sich hiermit seinen Gegenstand selbst erzeugt und gibt'.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, §95 Addition, 152 [*Werke*, VIII: 203].

⁸⁴ Hegel, *SL*, 154–5 [*Werke*, V: 172].

few philosophers, and not by those classical philosophers directly and indirectly referred to here, such as Thales, Leucippus, Democritus, and Empedocles, not to mention Plato and Aristotle—as Hegel clearly recognized.⁸⁵ A better reading of the passage is to see Hegel as offering a picture of idealism not as mentalistic, but as *holistic*.⁸⁶ On this account, Hegel claims that finite entities do not have ‘veritable, ultimate, absolute being’ because they are dependent on other entities for their existence in the way that parts are dependent on other parts within a whole; and idealism consists in recognizing this relatedness between things, in a way that ordinary consciousness fails to do.⁸⁷ The idealist thus sees the world differently from the realist, not as a plurality of separate entities that are ‘self-subsistent or grounded in themselves’, but as parts of an interconnected totality in which these entities are dependent on their place within the whole. It turns out, then, that idealism for Hegel is primarily an ontological position, which holds that the things of ordinary experience are ideal in the sense that they have no being in their own right, and so lack the self-sufficiency and self-subsistence required to be fully real. Once again, therefore, Abbot would seem to lack adequate textual support for his account of Hegel’s idealism.

⁸⁵ Cf. Hegel, *LHP* II, 43–4 [*Werke*, XIX: 54–5]:

[T]he idealism of Plato must not be thought of as being subjective idealism, and as that false idealism which has made its appearance in modern times, and which maintains that we do not learn anything, are not influenced from without, but that all conceptions are derived from out of the subject. It is often said that idealism means that the individual produces from himself all his ideas, even the most immediate. But this is an unhistoric, and quite false conception; if we take this rude definition of idealism, there have been no idealists amongst the philosophers, and Platonic idealism is certainly far removed from anything of this kind.

⁸⁶ Cf. Kenneth R. Westphal, *Hegel’s Epistemological Realism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), 143: ‘Hegel’s idealism is thus an ontological thesis, a thesis concerning the interdependence of everything there is, and thus is quite rightly contrasted with epistemologically based subjective idealism’, and his ‘Hegel’s Attitude Toward Jacobi in “The Third Attitude of Thought Toward Objectivity”’, *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 27 (1989), 135–56, at 146: ‘The basic model of Hegel’s ontology is a radical ontological holism’. Cf. also Thomas E. Wartenberg, ‘Hegel’s Idealism: The Logic of Conceptuality’, in Frederick C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 107: ‘[Hegel’s] manner of characterizing his idealism emphasizes that it is a form of holism. According to this view, individuals are mere parts and thus are not fully real or independent’. For further discussion of the issues raised here, see Robert Stern, ‘Hegel’s Idealism’, in Frederick C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 135–73; repr. above as Ch. 1.

⁸⁷ Cf. Hegel, *EL*, §45Z, 88 [*Werke*, VIII: 122]:

For our ordinary consciousness (i.e., the consciousness at the level of sense-perception and understanding) the ob-jects that it knows count as self-standing and as self-founded in their isolation from one another; and when they prove to be related to each other, and conditioned by one another, their mutual dependence upon one another is regarded as something external to the ob-ject, and not as belonging to their nature. It must certainly be maintained against this that the ob-jects of which we have immediate knowledge are mere appearances, i.e., they do not have the ground of their being within themselves, but within something else.

As a result of misreading Hegel in this way, Abbot failed to recognize how much Hegel's trajectory away from Kantian idealism resembled his own; and in following Abbot here, Peirce did the same. Much like Abbot (and later Peirce), Hegel complains that for Kant 'the categories are to be regarded as belonging only to *us* (or as "subjective")',⁸⁸ giving rise to the spectre of 'things-in-themselves' lying beyond the categorial framework we impose on the world; to dispel this spectre, Hegel argues (again like Abbot and Peirce) that we must see the world as conceptually structured in itself: 'Now, although the categories (e.g. unity, cause and effect, etc.) pertain to our thinking as such, it does not at all follow from this that they must therefore be merely something of ours, and not also determinations of objects themselves'.⁸⁹ Like Abbot (and Peirce), Hegel sees himself as reviving here a vital insight of classical philosophy, which the subjective idealism of modern thought has submerged: 'It has most notably been only in modern times . . . that doubts have been raised and the distinction between the products of our thinking and what things are in themselves has been insisted on. It has been said that the In-itself of things is quite different from what we make of them. This separateness is the standpoint that has been maintained especially by the Critical Philosophy, against the conviction of the whole world previously in which the agreement between the matter [itself] and thought was taken for granted. The central concern of modern philosophy turns on this antithesis. But it is the natural belief of mankind that this antithesis has no truth'.⁹⁰ No less than Abbot and Peirce, therefore, Hegel was a realist concerning the relation between mind and world, where that relation is mediated by the conceptual

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, §42Z, 85 [*Werke*, VIII: 118–19].

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 85–6 [*Werke*, VIII: 119].

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, §22Z, 54 [*Werke*, VIII: 79]. Cf. Hegel, *SL*, 45–6 [*Werke*, V: 38]:

Ancient metaphysics had in this respect a higher conception of thinking than is current today. For it based itself on the fact that the knowledge of things obtained through thinking is alone what is really true in them, that is, things not in their immediacy but as first raised into the form of thought, as things *thought*. Thus this metaphysics believed that thinking (and its determinations) is not anything alien to the object, but rather its essential nature, or that things and the thinking of them—our language too expresses their kinship—are explicitly in full agreement, thinking in its immanent determinations and the true nature of things forming one and the same content.

But *reflective* understanding took possession of philosophy. . . . Directed against reason, it behaves as ordinary common sense and imposes its view that truth rests on sensuous reality, that thoughts are *only* thoughts, meaning that it is sense perception which first gives them filling and reality and that reason left to its own resources engenders only figments of the brain. In this self-renunciation on the part of reason, the Notion of truth is lost; it is limited to knowing only subjective truth, phenomena, appearances, only something to which the nature of the object itself does not correspond: knowing has lapsed into opinion.

Cf. also Hegel, *ILHP*, 90 [*Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1940), 121]: 'Thinking does belong to man alone but not merely to man as a single individual, a subject; we must take thought essentially in an objective sense. A thought is the universal as such; even in nature we find thoughts present as its species and laws, and thus they are not merely present in the form of consciousness, but absolutely and therefore objectively. The reason of the world is not subjective reason'.

structures inherent in reality, in a way that the nominalist and subjective idealist denies.

In the earlier part of his career, Peirce perhaps knew this about Hegel himself.⁹¹ For, in his exchange with the leading American Hegelian W. T. Harris, carried out in 1868 in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, which Harris founded and edited, Harris labels the Hegelian position as realist in the title he gave to their correspondence, in contrast to Peirce's nominalism.⁹² Harris explains the distinction he has in mind in one of his replies to Peirce, which echoes

⁹¹ If Abbot was responsible for convincing Peirce that Hegel was a nominalist, this effect was not immediate. Writing in 1893, Peirce seems to put Hegel alongside himself and Abbot on the realist side of the debate:

Hegel first advocated realism; and Hegel unfortunately was about at the average degree of German correctness in logic. The author of the present treatise [i.e. Peirce] is a Scotistic realist. He entirely approved of the brief statement of Dr. F. E. Abbott [sic] in his *Scientific Theism* that Realism is implied in modern science. In calling himself a Scotist, the writer does not mean that he is going back to the general views of 600 years back; he merely means that the point of metaphysics on which Scotus chiefly insisted and which has since passed out of mind, is a very important point, inseparably bound up with the *most* important point to be insisted upon today. The author might with more reason, call himself an Hegelian; but that would be to appear to place himself among a known band of thinkers to which he does not in fact at all belong, although he is strongly drawn to them. (*CP* 4.50)

A passage that is harder to interpret from the Cambridge Conferences Lectures of 1898 may also be relevant, as perhaps suggesting that Hegel could have called himself a realist if this term had not been misappropriated; although the passage could just be saying that Hegel (like everyone else since 1800) used the terminology wrongly, without any suggestion that Hegel was himself a realist:

Rule IV. As far as practicable, let the terms of philosophy be modelled after those of scholasticism. You are aware that the whole of the Kantian language was formed in this way. Nor does Hegel himself, in my judgment, violate this principle. . . . However, the abuse of the word *Realism* can certainly be charged to Hegel's account; for it began about 1800 when in consequent of Bardilis introducing a system of realism distinguished from idealistic realism, which it somewhat resembled, by being dualistic, *realism* came to be applicable to that sect of philosophy which has long been called by the unexceptionable name of *dualism*. (*Reasoning and the Logic of Things: The Cambridge Conferences Lectures of 1898*, ed. Kenneth Laine Ketner (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 230–1)

(‘Bardilis’ is a reference to Christoph Gottfried Bardili (or Bardilli), who defended a position of ‘rational realism’, which was dualistic in the sense of holding that rational reflection on the categories can only yield a science of nature when applied to a matter that must be presupposed independently of all thought. Bardili's thinking and terminology had a large influence on Reinhold around 1800, and thus (Peirce may have thought) on German idealism more generally.)

⁹² Hegel himself did not use the label ‘nominalist’ to characterize his opponents, generally calling them ‘subjective idealists’ instead. Bruce Kuklick has suggested that J. S. Mill was responsible for introducing the position of nominalism into the American debate in his *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (1865), in a way that may have led Harris to pick up the terminology and use it in this Hegelian context. See Bruce Kuklick, *A History of Philosophy in America, 1720–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 96. Harris continued to talk of Hegel as a critic of nominalism in his later works: see William T. Harris, *Hegel's Logic: A Book on the Genesis and Categories of the Mind* (Chicago: S. G. Griggs, 1890; repr. New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1970), ch. II.

(consciously or unconsciously) the passage from Hegel on idealism that we cited earlier, but where he makes plain that idealism in this broadly Platonic and non-subjectivist sense might equally well be characterized as a form of realism:

The whole question of the validity of formal logic and of common sense *vs.* speculative philosophy, can be reduced to this: Do you believe that there are any finite or dependent beings? In other words, Are you a nominalist [who does not] or a realist [who does]?

This is the gist of all philosophizing: If one holds [with the nominalist] that things are not interdependent, but that each is for itself [and so is not finite or dependent], he will hold that general terms correspond to no object, and may get along with formal logic; and if he holds that he knows things directly in their essence, he needs no philosophy—common sense is sufficient.

But if he holds [with the realist] that any particular thing is dependent upon what lies beyond its immediate limits, he holds, virtually, that its true being lies beyond it, or, more precisely, that its immediate being is not identical with its total being, and hence, that it is in contradiction with itself, and is therefore *changeable, transitory, and evanescent*, regarded from the *immediate* point of view. But regarding the entire or total being (The Generic), we cannot call it changeable or contradictory, for that perpetually abides. It is the 'Form of Eternity.'⁹³

Harris here presents Peirce with a clearly anti-nominalist conception of Hegelianism,⁹⁴ and it is one that Peirce saw as offering a challenge regarding 'the rationale of the objective validity of logical laws'.⁹⁵ This was not the challenge identified by Max Fisch, however, of showing 'how on [Peirce's] nominalistic principles the

⁹³ WP 2:153–4. Cf. also Harris, in *ibid.*, 148–9:

For it is evident that the doctrine enunciated by our querist [i.e. Peirce] implies that general terms as well as abstract terms are only '*flatus vocis*'—in short that individual things compose the universe, and that these are true and valid in themselves. On the contrary, we must hold that true actualities must be self-determined totalities, and not mere *things*, for these are always dependent on somewhats, and are separated from their true selves. . . . That which abides in the process of origination and decay, which *things* are always undergoing, is the generic; the generic is the total comprehension, the true actuality, or the Universal, and its identity is always preserved, while the mere 'thing,' which is not self-contained, loses its identity perpetually. The loss of identity of the *thing*, is the very process that manifests the identity of the total. Hence, to pre-suppose such a doctrine as formal logic pre-supposes, is to set up the doctrine of immediateness as the only true.

and Editor [W. T. Harris], 'Introduction to Philosophy: Chapter IX', *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 2 (1868), 51–6, at 53: 'When the mind rises out of the sensuous habit of viewing things as true in their isolated independence, and comes to see that interdependence obtains among such things—then it is that a suspicion of the inadequacy of these forms [the laws of thought] gains strength, and formal logic falls into disrepute'.

⁹⁴ That Harris may have led Peirce to adopt this reading of Hegel as a realist at this stage, prior to the influence of Abbot, is suggested by a lecture on Ockham given at Harvard in 1869, shortly after his exchanges with Harris, where Peirce remarks that '[t]he difference between Nominalism and Realism has a relation not remote from that between the Idealism of Berkeley and Mill and the Idealisms of Kant and Hegel' (*MS 160/WP 2:336*).

⁹⁵ WP 2:158–9. According to the editors of *WP*, the letters to which Peirce was replying in which Harris raised this question have been lost (see *WP 2:522*).

validity of the laws of logic would be other than inexplicable',⁹⁶ as if Harris were saying that the laws of logic are valid, but that Peirce cannot show they are unless he moves from nominalism to realism; for (as we have seen) Harris did not think they *are* valid, so this is not likely to be the 'challenge' he set for Peirce. Rather, Harris was presumably saying the opposite: namely, that the laws of logic are *not* valid, so all Peirce as a nominalist can do is 'get along' with them, without being able to offer any grounds for their validity. Peirce's response to Harris⁹⁷ in the article 'Grounds of Validity of the Laws of Logic' which appeared in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* in the following year is thus to respond to the kind of Hegelian challenge offered to formal logic by Harris, and to show that formal logic has no such limitations,⁹⁸ so that if (as Harris suggests), Peirce's position involves a commitment to formal logic, Peirce has nothing to fear in this respect.

We have seen, then, that Peirce might have come to view Hegel as an ally in his later anti-nominalism, if his encounter with Abbot had not led him to read Hegel in a different light; and we have seen how far Abbot's treatment of Hegel involves a distortion of the latter's position. In this respect, Peirce's criticism of Hegel as a nominalist should be rejected.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Fisch, 'Hegel and Peirce', in *Hegel and the History of Philosophy*, 191; repr. in his *Peirce, Semiotic and Pragmatism*, 278. Among others, Brent follows Fisch here:

[The] correspondence [between Harris and Peirce] began as a challenge by Harris to Peirce to defend the nominalism of the 'Cambridge Metaphysics,' and more particularly to show how on nominalist grounds the laws of logic could be anything other than inexplicable. In the process of responding to Harris in two letters and three articles, the last and most important of which was called 'Grounds of Validity of the Laws of Logic: Further Consequences of Four Incapacities,' Peirce found himself forced by his examination of the matter to recognize that generals, such as the laws of science, are real and to examine the meaning of his doctrine of signs. (Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce*, 72)

⁹⁷ That Peirce is responding to Harris here is clear from the beginning of the article (*EP* I, 57 (*CP* 5.318/*WP* 2:243)), where Peirce tells us he is addressing 'readers . . . who deny that those laws of logic which men generally admit have universal validity' (a reference to Hegelians in general), and the person who has presented Peirce with 'a challenge . . . to show how upon my principles the validity of the laws of logic can be other than inexplicable' (a reference to Harris in particular, as Peirce's letter to Harris of 9 April 1868 shows: see *WP* 2:158–9, where almost the same wording is used). However, although Harris provides the spur for this article (and while he may have prompted Peirce to include a discussion of Hegel within it), it would be wrong to claim that Harris forced Peirce to face this issue for the first time: for, Peirce says in his letter of 9 April that 'I have already devoted some attention to that subject' (*WP* 2:159) prior to Harris's challenge.

⁹⁸ Cf. *EP* I, 60–82 (*CP* 5.327–57/*WP* 2:247–72). Specific Hegelian objections to formal logic are considered at *EP* I, 63, 64–5 (*CP* 5.330/*WP* 2:250, 5.332/*WP* 2:252). For a helpful discussion of Hegel's own position on this issue, see Robert Hanna, 'From an Ontological Point of View: Hegel's Critique of the Common Logic', *Review of Metaphysics*, 40 (1986), 305–38; repr. in Jon Stewart (ed.), *The Hegel Myths and Legends* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 253–81.

⁹⁹ Paul Forster has made a suggestion of how that criticism should be taken which we have not considered, namely that 'It is the commitment to noumena that qualifies writers such as Plato, Hegel and Leibniz as Nominalists in Peirce's eyes, despite their rejection of many of the theses attributed to Nominalism' (Paul D. Forster, 'Peirce and the Threat of Nominalism', *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 28 (1992), 691–724, at 716 n. 12). Given Hegel's repeated objections to Kant's attempts to confine knowledge to the phenomenal as against 'things in themselves', this looks like an exceedingly unpromising basis on which to try to convict Hegel of nominalism (see

There is, however, a final point to consider. It might be argued that Peirce's conception of Hegel as a nominalist is not dependent on taking Hegel to be a subjective idealist, and thus is not affected by Abbot's misreading of Hegel; for Peirce also takes Platonism to lead to nominalism, so a Platonic reading of Hegel is also consistent with the nominalistic charge. This seems to be Apel's view, when he writes: '... when Hegel, in contrast to the British sensationalists, allows the validity of general concepts to triumph over the immediate particular nature and *hic et nunc* of sense perception, he does not thereby prove their validity *in rebus*; instead, he absolutizes the arbitrary action of subjectivity, which has a nominalistic origin. Platonism and Nominalism generally stand for Peirce in a secret alliance'.¹⁰⁰ Apel's idea seems to be that Peirce saw a connection between Platonism and nominalism, because the Platonist questions the reality of the things in which general concepts might inhere, and so does not treat these concepts as instantiated in the world, and so is not a realist in this (Aristotelian) sense; and the same is true of Hegel's idealism. There are three points to be made in response to this view. First, while Peirce does suggest a way in which nominalism might lead to Platonism,¹⁰¹ I have found no passage which links Platonism to nominalism, in the way Apel suggests. Second, in the Harvard lectures, the kind of nominalism Peirce has in mind seems clearly to have a subjective idealist rather than a Platonistic provenance,

e.g. Hegel, *EL*, §44, 87 [*Werke*, VIII: 120–1]); but fortunately I have found no textual evidence to suggest that this was part of Peirce's view.

¹⁰⁰ Apel, *Charles S. Peirce*, 24.

¹⁰¹ Cf. *EP* I, 99–100 (*CP* 8.30/*WP* 2:480–1 [1871]):

In the usual sense of the word *reality*, therefore, Berkeley's doctrine is that the reality of sensible things resides only in their archetypes in the divine mind. This is Platonistic, but it is not realistic. On the contrary, since it places reality wholly out of the mind in the cause of sensation, and since it denies reality (in the true sense of the word) to sensible things in so far as they are sensible, it is distinctly nominalistic. Historically there have been prominent examples of an alliance between nominalism and Platonism. Abélard and John of Salisbury, the only two defenders of nominalism of the time of the great controversy whose work remains to us, are both Platonists; and Roscellin, to the famous author of the *sententia de flatu vocis*, the first man in the Middle Ages who carried attention to nominalism, is said and believed (all his writings are lost) to have been a follower of Scotus Erigena, the great Platonist of the ninth century. The reasons of this odd conjunction of doctrines may perhaps be guessed at. The nominalist, by isolating his reality so entirely from mental influence as he has done, has made it something which the mind cannot conceive; he has created the so often talked of 'improportion between the mind and the thing in itself.' And it is to overcome the various difficulties to which this gives rise, that he supposes this *noumenon*, which, being totally unknown, the imagination can play about as it pleases, to be the emanation of archetypal ideas. The reality thus receives an intelligible nature again, and the peculiar inconveniences of nominalism are to some degree avoided.

In this and related passages (e.g. *CP* 5.470 [c.1907], 5.503 [c.1905], *MS* 158/*WP* 2:310–17 [1869]), what seems to interest Peirce here, is how nominalism can tend towards Platonism, rather than the other way round—where the figure of Roscellin (spelt by Peirce as 'Roscellin') is a recurring example, who was the 'extremest nominalist', but also a follower of the 'extreme realist' Scotus Erigena (*MS* 158/*WP* II, 317). For a helpful brief discussion of Roscellin's position, see Eike-Henner W. Kluge, 'Roscellin and the Medieval Problem of Universals', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 14 (1976), 405–14.

where his target is the opponent who says: ““Oh, *Thirdness* merely exists in thought””.¹⁰² And thirdly, Apel’s criticism of Hegel raises the question of whether Hegel’s idealism was any less Aristotelian than Peirce’s, which could certainly be denied;¹⁰³ but given the complexity of this question, perhaps the first two points are sufficient on their own to thankfully mean we do not have to address it here.

There is another large question which we must also leave aside for now: namely, if (as we suggested earlier) Peirce conceived of some conceptual link between Hegel’s neglect of Firstness and Secondness on the one hand, and his nominalism on the other, is there some argument the Peircean might give to show that Hegel should have been driven to nominalism *malgré lui*? Or, conversely, might the Hegelian argue that his realism about Thirdness shows rather that Peirce’s claims about Hegel’s neglect for Firstness and Secondness are as flawed as his treatment of Hegel on Thirdness? The question this raises, concerning Peirce’s critique of Hegel on Firstness and Secondness may therefore be relevant to the final resolution of the issue we have discussed here; but that must be a matter for another occasion.¹⁰⁴

V

In a paper dealing with the question of Peirce’s relation to idealism and realism, Christopher Hookway has summarized what he sees as Peirce’s ‘non-Kantian realism’ in the following theses:¹⁰⁵

1. There is an external world of ‘things in themselves.’¹⁰⁶
2. The fundamental constituents of this world correspond to the categories of experience and thought.

¹⁰² *EP* II, 178.

¹⁰³ Cf. Hegel, *EL*, §24Z, 56–7 [*Werke*, VIII: 82]: ““Animal as such” cannot be pointed out; only a definite animal can ever be pointed at. “The animal” does not exist; on the contrary, this expression refers to the universal nature of single animals, and each existing animal is something that is much more concretely determinate, something particularised. But “to be an animal,” the kind considered as the universal, pertains to the determinate animal and constitutes its determinate essentiality’. For further discussion of this broadly Aristotelian reading of Hegel, see Robert Stern, *Hegel, Kant and the Structure of the Object* (London: Routledge, 1990), as well as several of the other papers in this collection.

¹⁰⁴ This question is taken up further in my papers on Peirce’s treatment of Hegel’s position on Firstness and Secondness, referred to in n. 23. In these papers I argue that Peirce’s claim that Hegel’s extreme view of Thirdness means he cannot give Firstness and Secondness its due is mistaken; if that is right, it would therefore follow that this way of arguing for Hegel’s nominalism is also misguided.

¹⁰⁵ Christopher Hookway, ‘Pragmatism and “Kantian Realism”’, *Versus*, 49 (1988), ed. M. A. Bonfantini and C. J. W. Kloesel, 103–12, at 108–9. I have renumbered Hookway’s propositions, which begin with 5 in the text.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Things in themselves’ is of course a Kantian term of art; all Hookway means by it here, I believe, is a mind-independent world.

3. The mode of development of this world corresponds to the mode of development of our thoughts or inquiries.
4. This reality can be immediately perceived.
5. We are attuned to the explanatory principles operative in this world, not least because we are part of it.
6. Although the nature of the world is not supervenient upon the cognitive states of inquirers, still it is a mental substance best thought of as analogous to the human mind.¹⁰⁷

My suggestion in this paper is that when suitably understood, Hegel would have subscribed to all these theses, and that to this extent, he deserved to be seen by Peirce as a fellow 'post-Kantian realist'; in so far as he was not, Peirce's ill-founded conception of Hegel as a nominalist is unfortunately to blame.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Peirce's remark that 'what we call matter . . . is merely mind hidebound with habits' (*CP* 6.158 [1892]), and Hegel's comment in the *Encyclopaedia*: 'If we say that thought, *qua* objective, is the inwardness of the world, it may seem as if consciousness is being ascribed to natural things. But we feel a repugnance against conceiving the inner activity of things to be thinking, since we say that man is distinguished from what is merely natural by virtue of thinking. We would therefore have to talk about nature as a system of thought without consciousness, or an intelligence which, as Schelling says, is petrified' (Hegel, *EL*, § 24Z, 56 [*Werke*, VIII: 81], trans. modified). As Hookway's comment makes clear, while this view attributes a mind-like structure to the world, it should not be confused with a mentalistic idealism, for there is no claim that this structure is the result of the activity of minds *on* the world, or that this is 'supervenient upon the cognitive states of inquirers'.

¹⁰⁸ I am particularly grateful to Christopher Hookway for his encouragement and support in undertaking this project, and for his many very helpful comments on various drafts. I am also very grateful to three anonymous referees, and to Paul Redding and Nick Walker, for a number of suggestions that have helped improve the paper. I would also like to acknowledge the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, for funding the research leave during which this paper was written.

9

Peirce, Hegel, and the Category of Secondness

Writing in a critical response to *Hegel's Ladder*, the magisterial study of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* by H. S. Harris, John Burbidge adopts Peircean terminology in raising his central concerns:

What I miss, throughout Harris's commentary, is that healthy sense of reality that secondness provides. The commentary on each paragraph elaborates the text into an intricate web of philosophical and literary traditions. One acquires a rich sense of the polysemy of Hegel's writings—how they are filled with the mediated, reflective structures of thought. There is a lot of thirdness, to use Peirce's term. As well, Harris, with his acute aesthetic sensibility, weaves this network of mediation into a whole which collapses into a pervasive immediacy, into an intuitive apprehension of the total picture, or firstness. Missing are the brute facts of secondness which trigger thought's mediation, the evidence that everyday consciousness and self-conscious experience does not conform to our expectations. As I read the *Phenomenology*, Hegel's primary focus is on this concrete content of consciousness' *experience* and what it does to our confident pervasive assumptions, breaking them apart so that mediation is required.¹

In his reply to Burbidge, Harris defends himself by stating that 'Hegel is "a philosopher of thirdness"', so that he is right to approach the *Phenomenology* in the way he does; but he also admits that 'we philosophers of thirdness need "the dilemmas and struggles of real life"', and concludes: 'But, of course, without secondness, there could not be any thirdness at all'.²

This treatment of Hegel in Peircean terms is surprising in two respects. Firstly, it is surprising to see Peirce invoked in relation to Hegel at all, as the connection between the two has received hardly any critical attention.³ Secondly, it is curious

¹ John W. Burbidge, 'Secondness', *The Owl of Minerva*, 33 (2001–2), 27–39, at 30.

² H. S. Harris, 'Thirdness: A Response to the "Secondness" of John Burbidge', *The Owl of Minerva*, 33 (2001–2), 41–3, at 43.

³ Probably the best-known discussion is Max H. Fisch, 'Hegel and Peirce', in J. T. O'Malley, K. W. Algozin, and F. G. Weiss (eds.), *Hegel and the History of Philosophy* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 172–93; repr. in his *Peirce, Semeiotic and Pragmatism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 261–82. For other studies see: H. G. Townsend, 'The Pragmatism of Peirce and Hegel', *Philosophical Review*, 37 (1928), 297–303; Joseph Anthony Petrick, 'Peirce on Hegel', unpublished PhD dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1972; Gary Shapiro, 'Peirce's Critique of Hegel's Phenomenology and Dialectic', *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, XVII (1981), 269–75; and Kipton E. Jensen, 'Peirce as Educator: On Some Hegelisms', *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, XL (2004), 271–88.

to see Burbidge insisting that a reading of Hegel should offer ‘that healthy sense of reality that secondness provides’, when Peirce himself was critical of Hegel in just these terms, for neglecting Secondness within his philosophical system. And yet, as I hope to show in this paper, we can come to see that the question Burbidge raises has considerable interest; for the debate between Peirce and Hegel on Secondness can be used to sharpen fundamental issues in the understanding of Hegel’s thought, just as much as the more familiar debates between Schelling and Hegel, Marx and Hegel, Derrida and Hegel, and many others. It is the issue highlighted by Burbidge, concerning the Peircean category of Secondness, that I wish to explore here.

As we shall see in what follows, Peirce held that a neglect for Secondness leads to a loss of ‘a healthy sense of reality’ because of the role that Secondness plays within his categorical scheme, which also comprises the categories of Firstness and Thirdness. As with any theory of categories, Peirce’s claim is that these are the fundamental conceptions that can be used to classify everything there is or could be. Over the course of his career, Peirce approached these categories in different ways. In the 1870s, he saw them in terms of the logical structure of thought, while by the late 1880s, he was showing how these categories were manifested in the world, tracing monadic, dyadic, and triadic elements in the subject-matter of biology, psychology, physics, and so on. Most important, for our purposes, is his slightly later phenomenological identification of the monadic, dyadic, and triadic: put very briefly, Firstness is manifested in those aspects of things that concern their immediacy or individuality, where they are seen in monadic terms, as unrelated to anything else; Secondness is manifested in the awareness of things as ‘other’ or external, as things with which we *react* in a relational or dyadic manner; and Thirdness is manifested by the mediation between things, as when the relation between individuals is said to be governed by laws or grounded in the universals they exemplify, and hence is a triadic notion. Fundamental to Peirce’s position is that philosophical errors follow if we attempt to prioritize one of these categories at the expense of the other two, although this is always a temptation.⁴

In particular, as far as Hegel is concerned, Peirce believed that he showed a lack of sensitivity to Secondness as the relational category, and thus neglected the relation of reaction and resistance that holds between things, including us and the world, where this is needed to prevent the reflective intellect assimilating everything to itself. As we shall see, Peirce therefore complains of Hegel—just as Burbidge complains of Harris’s commentary on Hegel—that he is ‘missing the brute facts of secondness which trigger thought’s mediation’, with the result that

⁴ Cf. *EP* II, 267: ‘According to the present writer [i.e. Peirce], these *universal categories* are three. Since all three are invariably present, a pure idea of any one, absolutely distinct from the others, is impossible; indeed, anything like a satisfactory clear discrimination of them is a mark of long and active meditation. They may be termed *Firstness*, *Secondness*, and *Thirdness*’.

he is left (as critics from Schelling onwards have complained) with nothing but 'arbitrary constructions of thought'.⁵ We must first look at this criticism in more detail (in Sections I to III), and then explore its cogency (Sections IV and V).

I

Peirce's criticism of Hegel concerning his treatment of the categories, including Secondness, is made at its clearest in the paper 'On Phenomenology', which forms the text of Peirce's second Harvard lecture delivered on 2 April 1903. This paper is one of the first in which Peirce offers a phenomenological approach to the investigation of the categories as 'an element of phenomena of the first rank of generality', by focusing on the nature and structure of our experience and how the world appears to us: 'The business of phenomenology is to draw up a catalogue of categories and prove its sufficiency and freedom from redundancies, to make out the characteristics of each category, and to show the relations of each to the others'.⁶ Peirce says he will focus on the 'universal order' of the categories, which form a 'short list', and notes the similarity between his list and Hegel's, while denying any direct influence:

My intention this evening is to limit myself to the Universal, or Short List of Categories, and I may say, at once, that I consider Hegel's three stages [of thought] as being, roughly speaking, the correct list of Universal Categories.⁷ I regard the fact that I reached the same result as he did by a process as unlike his as possible, at a time when my attitude toward him was rather one of contempt than of awe, and without being influenced by him in any discernible way however slightly, as being a not inconsiderable argument in favor of the correctness of the list. For if I am mistaken in thinking that my thought was uninfluenced by his, it would seem to follow that that thought was of a quality which gave it a secret power, that would in itself argue pretty strongly for its truth.⁸

In Peirce's terminology, the 'short list' comprises the categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness, although he does not introduce that terminology until the next lecture. Here, he offers a characterization of the first two categories in phenomenological terms, beginning with Firstness, which he identifies with *presentness* because of its immediacy. Peirce then turns to Secondness, which because of its relationality he characterizes in terms of '*Struggle*', by which he means the resistance of the world to the self and vice versa, illustrating this with the examples of pushing against a door; being hit on the back of the head by

⁵ Burbidge, 'Secondness', 31. ⁶ *EP* II, 148 (*CP* 5.43).

⁷ Cf. also *CP* 8.213 and *CP* 8.267. It is not immediately clear what Peirce meant by Hegel's 'stages of thought', and thus what in Hegel he took to correspond to Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. For discussion of some of the complexities here, see Martin Suhr, 'On the Relation of Peirce's "Universal Categories" to Hegel's "Stages of Thought"', *Graduate Studies Texas Tech University*, 23 (1981), 275–9.

⁸ *EP* II, 148 (*CP* 5.43). Cf. also *CP* 8.329.

a ladder someone is carrying; and seeing a flash of lightning in pitch darkness.⁹ He also argues that this resistance can be felt in the case of images drawn in the imagination, and other 'inner objects', though this is felt less strongly. Then, at the beginning of the next section of the text, Peirce comes to the category of Thirdness; but here we do not get any phenomenological analysis of the category, but an account of why 'no modern writer of any stripe, unless it be some obscure student like myself, has ever done [it] anything approaching to justice'.¹⁰

Now, Peirce offers a criticism of Hegel in relation to each of the three categories. Thus, in relation to Firstness, Peirce argues that while Hegel recognized 'presentness' or 'immediacy', he treated this as an 'abstraction', as if such presentness could not be a genuine aspect of experience in itself, but only something arrived at by the 'negation' of something more complex: '[Presentness] cannot be *abstracted* (which is what Hegel means by the abstract) for the abstracted is what the concrete, which gives it whatever being it has, makes it to be. The present, being such as it is while utterly ignoring everything else, is *positively* such as it is'.¹¹ In relation to Secondness, Peirce argues that Hegelians will tend to reduce 'struggle' to a lawlike relation and hence to something general, and so will eliminate Secondness in favour of Thirdness.¹² And in relation to Thirdness, Peirce claims that Hegel's position is insufficiently realist, so that like all 'modern philosophers', Hegel is ultimately a nominalist.¹³

While each of these criticisms is clearly expressed, and repeated elsewhere,¹⁴ there is some difficulty in assessing their force in relation to Firstness and Thirdness. For, in relation to Firstness, while on the one hand Peirce's position might suggest that he wants to adopt a kind of phenomenological and ontological monadism or atomism in contrast to Hegel's holism, whereby 'the first category' relates to 'whatever is such as it is positively and regardless of aught else',¹⁵ on closer inspection Peirce's position appears to come closer to Hegel's, in so far as he ultimately refuses to accord Firstness any undue privilege, and gives it the status of a 'mere potentiality, without existence'.¹⁶ Thus, as one commentator has noted, in the final analysis, there is arguably a 'predominance of thirdness in Peirce's treatment' of Firstness of a kind that he attributes to Hegel: 'almost any act of the mind leads so immediately to thirdness [for Peirce] . . . that the

⁹ *EP* II, 150–1 (*CP* 5.45). Cf. also *CP* 8.330.

¹⁰ *EP* II, 155–6 (*CP* 5.59). Cf. also *CP* 7.528.

¹¹ *EP* II, 150 (*CP* 5.44).

¹² *EP* II, 151–2 (*CP* 5.46).

¹³ *EP* II, 156–7 (*CP* 5.61).

¹⁴ For similar criticisms of Hegel on Firstness see e.g. *CP* 1.533 and *CP* 1.302. And for similar criticisms of Hegel on Thirdness see e.g. *CP* 8.258 and *EP* II, 143 (*CP* 5.37). Criticisms of Hegel on Secondness will be referred to throughout this paper.

¹⁵ *EP* II, 150 (*CP* 5.44).

¹⁶ *CP* 1.328.

priority of firstness is not only left behind, but begins to seem unimportant'.¹⁷ Likewise, in relation to Thirdness, Peirce's criticism is also hard to pin down: for it is surprising that he should accuse Hegel of nominalism, when he *also* thinks that Thirdness is 'the chief burden of Hegel's song',¹⁸ where Thirdness is predominantly associated by Peirce with realism about 'generals' (such as laws and universals), and hence would seem to essentially involve an *anti-nominalist* position.

However such issues are dealt with,¹⁹ it would appear that no such difficulties arise in relation to the category of Secondness. For here it seems that there are clear grounds for divergence between Peirce and Hegel, at least from Peirce's perspective. As with the category of Firstness, the central disagreement here concerns the relation between Secondness and Thirdness, and the Hegelian tendency (as Peirce sees it) to subsume the former under the latter. Thus, Peirce claims that 'the idea of Hegel' is that 'Thirdness is the one sole category'; and while he allows that 'unquestionably it contains a truth', he argues that Hegel takes this view too far:

Not only does Thirdness suppose and involve the ideas of Secondness and Firstness, but never will it be possible to find any Secondness or Firstness in the phenomena that is not accompanied by Thirdness.

If the Hegelians confined themselves to that position they would find a hearty friend in my doctrine.

But they do not. Hegel is possessed with the idea that the Absolute is One. Three absolutes he would regard as a ludicrous contradiction *in adjecto*. Consequently, he wishes to make out that the three categories have not their several independent and irrefutable standings in thought. *Firstness* and *Secondness* must somehow be *aufgehoben*. But it is not true. They are no way refuted or refutable. Thirdness it is true involves Secondness and Firstness, in a sense. That is to say, if you have the idea of Thirdness you must have had the idea of Secondness and Firstness to build upon. But what is required for the idea of a genuine Thirdness is an independent solid Secondness and not a Secondness that is a mere corollary of an unfounded and inconceivable Thirdness; and a similar remark may be made in reference to Firstness.²⁰

While in relation to Firstness, a difficulty with this and related passages is that ultimately Peirce appears to treat Firstness as less 'independent' than he here

¹⁷ John F. Boler, *Charles Peirce and Scholastic Realism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963), 123.

¹⁸ *EP* II, 155 (*CP* 5.59).

¹⁹ I consider them further in 'Peirce, Hegel, and the Category of Firstness', *International Yearbook of German Idealism*, 5 (2007), 276–308, and in 'Peirce on Hegel: Nominalist or Realist?', *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, XLI (2005), 65–99 (both repr. in this volume).

²⁰ *EP* II, 177 (*CP* 5.90–1). Cf also *CP* 8.268; *CP* 1.524; *CP* 4.354; *EP* II, 345 (*CP* 5.436); *EP* II, 164 (*CP* 5.90).

suggests, in respect of Secondness his position tends to remain rather more robust, as can be seen when the various dimensions of this issue are explored.

II

For Peirce, to insist on the importance of acknowledging 'an independent solid Secondness' is to signal a commitment to a variety of related epistemological and metaphysical theses, all of which he sees as anti-Hegelian, and none of which he thinks should be compromised.

A first anti-Hegelian thesis that Peirce associates with Secondness is his opposition to what he views as Hegel's speculative idealist project, which on Peirce's account treats 'the Universe [as] an evolution of Pure Reason'.²¹ According to this reading, Hegel is seen as wanting to offer a conception of the world in which everything can be explained, as from a divine perspective or (a similar thing) the perspective of 'absolute knowing', where there are therefore no sheer contingencies (so everything is ultimately *necessary*), or unsatisfactory regresses of explanation (so that the system as a whole is reflexively structured and hence *self-explanatory*). Hegel's difficulty with Firstness and Secondness is therefore seen to be that he cannot acknowledge either the 'bruteness' of certain features of the world (why some things are one way and not another),²² or the contingency of certain events (why things happen as they do):²³

[I]f, while you are walking in the street reflecting upon how everything is the pure distillate of Reason, a man carrying a heavy pole suddenly pokes you in the small of the

²¹ *EP* II, 177 (*CP* 5.92).

²² Cf. *CP* 2.85; *EP* I, 363 (*CP* 6.305); and *CP* 7.511: 'Light, for example, moves over 300,000,000 centimetres per second. . . . The explanation of the laws of nature must be of such a nature that it shall explain why these quantities should have the particular values they have. But these particular values have nothing rational about them. They are mere arbitrary Secondness'.

²³ Cf. *CP* 6.218:

Now the question arises, what necessarily resulted from that state of things [i.e. potential being]? But the only sane answer is that where freedom was boundless nothing in particular necessarily resulted. In this proposition lies the prime difference between my objective logic and that of Hegel. He says, if there is any sense in philosophy at all, the whole universe and every feature of it, however minute, is rational, and was constrained to be as it is by the logic of events, so that there is no principle of action in the universe but reason. But I reply, this line of thought, though it begins rightly, is not exact. A logical slip is committed; and the conclusion reached is manifestly at variance with observation. It is true that the whole universe and every feature of it must be regarded as rational, that is as brought about by the logic of events. But it does not follow that it is *constrained* to be as it is by the logic of events; for the logic of evolution and of life need not be supposed to be of that wooden kind that absolutely constrains a given conclusion. The logic may be that of the inductive or hypothetic inference. This may-be is at once converted into must-be when we reflect that among the facts to be accounted for are such as that, for example, red things look red and not blue and *vice versa*. It is obvious that that cannot be a necessary consequence of abstract being. The effect of this error of Hegel is that he is forced to deny [the] fundamental character of the two elements of experience [i.e. Firstness and Secondness] which cannot result from deductive logic.

back, you may think there is something in the Universe that Pure Reason fails to account for; and when you look at the color *red* and ask yourself how Pure Reason could make *red* to have that utterly inexpressible and irrational positive quality it has, you will be perhaps disposed to think that Quality [i.e. Firstness] and Reaction [i.e. Secondness] have their independent standings in the Universe.²⁴

In a way somewhat reminiscent of Kierkegaard, Hegel is seen by Peirce as a paradigmatically ‘abstracted’ philosopher,²⁵ whose absurd intellectual ambitions have led him to neglect the reality of the world around us (with its teeming variety, complexity, and ‘irresponsible, free, Originality’)²⁶ in the attempt to give the impression that reason can conquer all. To be committed to Secondness, therefore, is in part to be committed to the claim that the world will always lie outside the attempt to place it fully within the self-articulation of the Hegelian Idea, as a necessary structure apparently designed to explain and encompass everything.

A second thesis is an implication of this Peircean position: namely that a proper recognition of Secondness requires a greater commitment to experience or ‘experientialism’, as how the world is and goes on cannot be deduced from ‘Pure Reason’ in what Peirce takes to be the Hegelian manner. Of course, Peirce himself is no crude empiricist,²⁷ and is happy to allow that ‘Hegel’s plan of evolving everything out of the abstractest conception by a dialectical procedure [is] far from being so absurd as the experientialists think’;²⁸ nonetheless, he holds that Hegel takes this to extremes, in a way that a proper acknowledgement of ‘the brute facts of secondness’ (as Burbidge put it) would have prevented:

The scientific man hangs upon the lips of nature, in order to learn wherein he is ignorant and mistaken: the whole character of the scientific procedure springs from that disposition. The metaphysician begins with a resolve to make out the truth of a forgone conclusion that he has never doubted for an instant. Hegel was frank enough to avow that it was so in his case. His ‘voyage of discovery’ was undertaken in order to recover the very

²⁴ EP II, 177–8 (CP 5.92).

²⁵ Cf. CP 2.258, where Peirce contrasts ‘the philosopher’s high walled garden’ with ‘the market place of life, where facts hold sway’—where the context of a discussion of the principle of excluded middle suggests strongly that ‘the philosopher’ in question may well be Hegel.

²⁶ CP 2.85.

²⁷ Cf. EP II, 153–4 (CP 5.50):

But without beating longer round the bush, let us come to close quarters. Experience is our only teacher. Far be it from me to enunciate any doctrine of a *tabula rasa*. For as I said a few minutes ago, there is manifestly not one drop of principle in the whole vast reservoir of established scientific theory that has sprung from any other source than the power of the human mind to *originate* ideas that are true. But this power, for all it has accomplished, is so feeble that as ideas flow from their springs in the soul, the truths are almost drowned by a flood of false notions; and that which experience does is gradually, and by a sort of fractionation, to precipitate and filter off the false ideas, eliminating them and letting the truth pour on in its mighty current.

Cf. also EP I, 274 (CP 1.404); CP 2.755; CP 4.91; and CP 6.492.

²⁸ EP I, 256 (CP 1.268).

fleece that it professed to bring home.²⁹ The development of the metaphysician's thought is a continual breeding in and in; its destined outcome, sterility. The experiment was fairly tried with Hegelianism through an entire generation of Germans. The metaphysician is a worshipper of his own presuppositions . . . The Absolute Knowledge of Hegel is nothing but G. W. F. Hegel's idea of himself . . . If the idealist school will add to their superior earnestness the diligence of the mathematician about details, one will be glad to hope that it may be they who shall make metaphysics one of the true sciences . . . But it cannot be brought to accomplishment until Hegel is *aufgehoben*, with his mere rotation upon his axis. Inquiry must react against experience in order that the ship may be propelled through the ocean of thought . . .³⁰

Like many other critics, Peirce is accusing Hegel here of speculative a priorism, which for Peirce is symptomatic of his lack of respect for Secondness.

A third thesis concerns Hegel's idealism, which Peirce generally presents in a mentalistic manner, and thus as the view that the world is a 'representation' of the mind. It is this form of idealism which he therefore thinks characterizes 'absolute idealism', of the sort he attributes to the prominent American Hegelian Josiah Royce:

The truth is that Professor Royce is blind to a fact which all ordinary people will see plainly enough; that the essence of the realist's opinion is that it is one thing to *be* and another thing to *be represented*; and the cause of this cecity is that the Professor is completely immersed in his absolute idealism, which precisely consists in denying that distinction.³¹

Once again, Peirce makes clear that his view is that the Hegelians slip into this erroneous position because they fail to acknowledge how far reality is not something deducible from thought, but something that impinges on us 'from outside', in the manner of Secondness rather than Thirdness:

Nothing can be more completely false than that we can experience only our own ideas. This is indeed without exaggeration the very epitome of falsity. Our knowledge of things in themselves is entirely relative, it is true; but all experience and all knowledge is knowledge of that which is, independently of being represented . . . These things are utterly unintelligible as long as your thoughts are mere dreams. But as soon as you take into account that Secondness that jabs you perpetually in the ribs, you become aware of their truth.³²

Peirce thus claims that in his idealism, Hegel 'has usually overlooked external secondness, altogether. In other words, he has committed the trifling oversight of forgetting that there is a real world with real actions and reactions. Rather a serious oversight that'.³³

²⁹ I take it that this is a reference to Hegel's comments on the circularity of his philosophical system; cf. Hegel, *SL*, 71 [*Werke*, V: 70–1] and Hegel, *EL*, §§15–17, 39–41 [*Werke*, VIII: 60–3].

³⁰ *CP* 8.118. Cf. also *EPI*, 237 (*CP* 8.45) and *CP* 8.112.

³¹ *CP* 8.129.

³² *CP* 6.95.

³³ *EP* I, 256 (*CP* 1.368). This aspect of Peirce's critique of Hegel has been emphasized by Drucilla Cornell: 'The Category of Secondness is the key to understanding Peirce's break with

Fourthly, Peirce also claims that because Hegel overlooks Secondness in this way, and thus ignores ‘the compulsion, the insistency, that characterizes experience’,³⁴ Hegel also fails to accord sufficient ontological significance to the *individual*, as opposed to the universal and general: for it is this individuality that is given to us in experience in this manner, as particular things impose themselves on us:

But to say that a singular thing is known by sense is a confusion of thought. It is not known by the feeling-element of sense [i.e. Firstness] but by the compulsion, the insistency [i.e. Secondness], that characterises experience. For the singular subject is real; and reality is insistency. That is what we mean by ‘reality.’ It is the brute irrational insistency that forces us to acknowledge the reality of what we experience, that gives us our conviction of any singular.³⁵

Peirce therefore contrasts his own commitment to Duns Scotus’s conception of ‘Thisness’ or *haecceity* to the Hegelian position, which he thinks thus fails to recognize that the individual is something over and above a collection of universals, because its neglect of Secondness leads to the prioritization of Thirdness or generality in this way:

Hic et nunc is the phrase perpetually in the mouth of Duns Scotus, who first elucidated individual existence . . . Two drops of water retain each its identity and opposition to the other no matter in what or how many respects they are alike . . . The point to be remarked is that the qualities of the individual thing, however permanent they may be, neither help nor hinder its individual existence. However permanent and peculiar those qualities may be, they are but *accidents*; that is to say, they are not involved in the mode of being of the thing; for the mode of being of the individual thing is existence; and existence lies in opposition merely.³⁶

Finally, Peirce develops his conception of Secondness, and its relation to individuality or haecceity, against Royce’s view that the subject of a proposition is picked out by a general description.³⁷ For Peirce, this is to miss the role of indexicals in reference; and he thinks the reason an Hegelian like Royce overlooks this role is precisely because he neglects the significance of Secondness, whereby the particular individual manifests itself to us in a way that makes indexical reference possible. According to Peirce, Royce’s error was ‘to think that the real subject of a proposition can be denoted by a general term of the proposition; that is, that precisely what you are talking about can be distinguished from other

Hegel’s absolute idealism. Secondness is the real that resists, or what Peirce himself has called “the Outward Clash”. Secondness is that against which we struggle and which demands our attention to what is outside ourselves and our representational schema’ (Drucilla Cornell, *Transformations* (London: Routledge, 1993), 26).

³⁴ CP 6.340. ³⁵ CP 6.340. Cf. also CP 6.374 and CP 8.266. ³⁶ CP 1.458.

³⁷ For an excellent discussion of this issue, see Christopher Hookway, ‘Truth and Reference: Peirce versus Royce’, in his *Truth, Rationality, and Pragmatism: Themes from Peirce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 108–34.

things by giving a general description of it'.³⁸ Although in his early work in the 1860s this had also been Peirce's view,³⁹ Peirce came to change his mind, partly as a result of the invention of quantifiers by himself and his pupil O. H. Mitchell in 1884, and partly also because this led him to take more seriously the Kantian distinction between intuitions (as singular) and concepts (as general) to be found in Kant's 'cataclysmic work',⁴⁰ *The Critique of Pure Reason*. Peirce's mature view was that 'it is not in the nature of concepts adequately to define individuals',⁴¹ and that 'The real world cannot be distinguished from a fictitious world by any description'.⁴² Peirce thus argued instead that non-descriptive reference is made possible by the use of indexicals; and this in turn requires the recognition of the fact of Secondness in our experience, or (as he puts it in his unpublished critical review of Royce of 1885), 'the Outward Clash':

We now find that, besides general terms, two other kinds of signs are perfectly indispensable in all reasoning. One of these kinds is the *index*, which like a pointing finger, exercises a real physiological *force* over the attention, like the power of a mesmerizer, and directs it to a particular object of sense. One such index at least must enter into every proposition, its function being to designate the subject of discourse. . . . If the subject of discourse had to be distinguished from other things, if at all, by a general term, that is, by its particular characteristics, it would be quite true [as Royce argues] that its complete segregation would require a full knowledge of its character and would preclude ignorance. But the index, which in point of fact alone can designate the subject of a proposition, designates it without implying any characters at all. A blinding flash of lightning forces my attention and directs it to a certain moment of time with an emphatic 'Now!' . . . [I]t is by volitional acts that dates and positions are distinguished. . . . What I call volition is the consciousness of the discharge of nerve-cells, either into the muscles, etc., or into other nerve-cells; it does not involve the sense of time (i.e. not of a continuum) but it does involve the sense of action and reaction, resistance, externality, otherness, pair-edness. It is the sense that something has hit me or that I am hitting something; it might be called a sense of collision or clash. It has an outward and inward variety, corresponding to Kant's outer and inner sense, to will and self-control, to nerve action and inhibition, to the logical types *A:B* and *A:A*. The capital error of Hegel which permeates his whole system in every part of it is that he almost altogether ignores the Outward Clash. Besides the lower consciousness of feeling and the higher consciousness of intuition, this direct consciousness of hitting and of getting hit enters into all cognition and serves to make it mean something real.⁴³

It can be seen, therefore, that Peirce viewed Royce's position as typically Hegelian, in failing to see that individual entities at particular times and places are identified for us through the dyadic process of being hit or hitting something through the 'Outward Clash', where this phenomenological feature of our experience was

³⁸ *EP* I, 232 (*CP* 8.41).

³⁹ Cf. *WP* 2, 180: 'Every cognition we are in possession of is a judgement whose subject and predicate are general terms'.

⁴⁰ *EPI*, 232 (*CP* 8.41).

⁴¹ *CP* 3.612.

⁴² *CP* 2.337.

⁴³ *EPI*, 233 (*CP* 8.41).

later to be referred to by Peirce as 'Secondness', qua 'struggle'; and without this, Peirce believes, there could be no room in this Hegelian position for the role of indexicals in reference.

III

Having identified the issues, which Peirce took to differentiate himself from Hegel in relation to Secondness, we can now turn to a consideration of the cogency of the associated criticisms that Peirce offers of the Hegelian position as he saw it. To do so, we must consider not only the strength of Peirce's arguments, but also whether they are well-directed: that is, whether the views Peirce is criticizing really are Hegel's.

Before moving on to specifics, at a general level it may appear that there are grounds for doubt on the latter point: for, in characterizing the motivations behind the Hegelian position, Peirce makes some rather implausible claims that suggest he may have had little understanding of his opponent's thought. Two aspects of Peirce's characterization seem particularly vulnerable: first, that Hegel treats Secondness (and Firstness) as 'refuted or refutable'⁴⁴ because it must be *aufgehoben*, and second that Hegel thinks it must be *aufgehoben* because 'Hegel is possessed with the idea that the Absolute is One'.⁴⁵ In presenting Hegel's position in this way, however, Peirce seems fairly obviously mistaken: for, firstly, Peirce misses the fact that for Hegel *aufgehoben* means not merely refuted, but also 'preserved' and 'raised up';⁴⁶ and secondly, all the evidence counts against a monistic reading of the Hegelian absolute, for example in Hegel's criticisms of Spinoza⁴⁷ and Schellingianism,⁴⁸ and in his definition of the Absolute as Concept (*Begriff*),⁴⁹ where this involves a complex interrelation of the categories of universality, particularity, and individuality, rather than the reduction of the Absolute to a homogeneous unity. To this extent, therefore, it might be felt that Peirce has no warrant for claiming that Hegel's general outlook motivated him to treat Secondness in a way that can be legitimately criticized.

However, there is a third aspect to Peirce's general view of Hegel that would appear to many to have a greater degree of plausibility as an explanation for why

⁴⁴ *EP* II, 177 (*CP* 5.91). ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Cf. Hegel, *EL*, §96Z, 154 [*Werke*, VIII: 204–5] and *SL*, 107 [*Werke*, V: 114].

⁴⁷ Cf. Hegel, *LHP* III, 288 [*Werke*, XX: 166]: 'As all differences and determinations of things and of consciousness simply go back into the One substance, one may say that in the system of Spinoza all things are merely cast down into this abyss of annihilation. But from this abyss nothing comes out'.

⁴⁸ Cf. Hegel's famous jibe against Schelling: 'To pit this single insight, that in the Absolute everything is the same, against the full body of articulated cognition, which at least seeks and demands such fulfilment, to palm of its Absolute as the night in which, as the saying goes, all cows are black—this is cognition naively reduced to vacuity' (Hegel, *PS*, 9 [*Werke*, III: 22]).

⁴⁹ Cf. Hegel, *EL*, §160Z, 237 [*Werke*, VIII: 308].

Hegel might have come to neglect Secondness in just the manner that Peirce claims: this is Peirce's suggestion that Hegel wants to treat 'the Universe [as] an evolution of Pure Reason' in a way that leaves no room for Secondness (or Firstness). For, this way of taking Hegel, as aiming to construct a complete explanatory system from some sort of self-positing first cause, forms a clear part of the *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, and constitutes a traditional basis for criticism, from the late Schelling onwards. Like Peirce, these critics accuse Hegel of failing to recognize the distinction between individuals on the one hand and concepts on the other, and in the process of therefore losing sight of the way in which thought alone cannot explain or encompass individuality. It is therefore possible to find in these critics concerns that prefigure Peirce's remarks concerning the 'outward clash'; for example, in Feuerbach's critique of Hegel's account of sense-certainty, where Feuerbach accuses Hegel of trying to argue here that individuality is 'untruth' and so that 'the general is real', on the grounds that to sense-certainty each individual is equally 'here' and 'now', and so is no different from any other. In response, Feuerbach emphasizes what Peirce would characterize as the Secondness of experience, in order to remind Hegel of the individuality that Feuerbach (like Peirce) thinks he neglects:

[According to Hegel] The 'here' of the *Phenomenology* is in no way different from another 'here' because it is actually general. But [in fact] the real 'here' is distinguished from another 'here' in a real way; it is an exclusive 'here'. 'This "here" is, for example, a tree. I turn around and this truth has disappeared.' This can of course happen in the *Phenomenology*, where turning around costs nothing but a little word. But, in reality, where I must turn my ponderous body around, the 'here' proves to be a very real thing even behind my back. The tree delimits my back and excludes me from the place it already occupies. Hegel does not refute the 'here' that forms the object of sensuous consciousness, that is, an object for us distinct from pure thought. He refutes only the logical 'here', the logical 'now'.⁵⁰

In this way, therefore, many of Hegel's earlier critics, who like Peirce interpreted his project in a rationalistic manner, arrived at an equally similar point of divergence; and as providing some explanation for his purported neglect of Secondness, this view of Hegel's project has a much greater degree of plausibility. For, as earlier critics like Feuerbach had argued, there seems to be enough in Hegel's writings to suggest that he took 'the Universe to be an evolution of Pure Reason' in this manner, such as his notorious description of the *Logic* as 'the expression of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and finite mind';⁵¹ his claim that in the transition from the *Logic* to the *Philosophy of*

⁵⁰ Ludwig Feuerbach, 'Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy', trans. Zawar Hanfi in *The Fiery Brook: Selected Writings of Ludwig Feuerbach* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972), 53–96, 78–9; repr. in *G. W. F. Hegel: Critical Assessments*, ed. Robert Stern, 4 vols (London: Routledge, 1993), I, 100–30, at 118.

⁵¹ Hegel, *SL*, 50 [*Werke*, V: 44].

Nature, the Idea 'freely releases itself';⁵² and his incorporation of the ontological argument.⁵³ Thus, while few serious interpreters of Hegel would be prepared to accept that Peirce's discussion of *Aufhebung* and the Hegelian Absolute ring true, this rationalistic diagnosis of Hegel's neglect for Secondness can claim to have more compelling evidence in its favour, and to command support from many other of Hegel's critics.

Nonetheless, of course, even this reading of Hegel cannot be said to be beyond dispute, and defenders of Hegel might argue that Peirce is wrong to assume that Hegel's project is as rationalistic as he suggests, just as they have argued in the same way against similar interpretations offered by Schelling, Feuerbach, and others. These interpreters have claimed that that way of characterizing Hegel's position as a form of Neoplatonic 'emanation theory' misconstrues his philosophical ambition, which was not to offer the Idea as a kind of First Cause,⁵⁴ but to show rather that it is a mistake to treat reason as if it demands an answer of this kind, when in fact it might be satisfied without it, thus allowing room for the contingency of events and the sheer facticity of things.⁵⁵ On this view, then, Peirce would be wrong (just as Schelling and others were wrong) to think that Hegel needed to negate the 'brute facts of secondness', as if this were something that he had to do away with; on the contrary, it has been argued, Hegel's aim is to *accommodate* such contingencies by showing that they are inevitable, and do not make it any more difficult for reason to see the world as the place where it can be 'at home'. In fact, on this sort of account, Hegel's attitude might be compared to Peirce's own as expressed in 'A Guess at the Riddle':

Most systems of philosophy maintain certain facts or principles as ultimate. In truth, any fact is in one sense ultimate,—that is to say, in its isolated aggressive stubbornness and individual reality. What Scotus calls the haecceities of things, the here-ness and now-ness of them, are indeed ultimate. Why this which is here is such as it is, how, for instance, if it happens to be a grain of sand, it came to be so small and so hard, we can ask; we can also ask how it got carried here, but the explanation in this case merely carries us back

⁵² *Ibid.*, 843 [*Werke*, VI: 573].

⁵³ Cf. Hegel, *EL*, §51, 98–100 [*Werke*, VIII: 135–7].

⁵⁴ In fact, if anyone, it is Peirce himself who comes close to such emanationism: cf. *CP* 6.219: 'I say that nothing *necessarily* resulted from the Nothing of boundless freedom. That is, according to deductive logic. But such is not the logic of freedom or possibility. The logic of freedom, or potentiality, is that it shall annul itself. For if it does not annul itself, it remains a completely idle and do-nothing potentiality; and a completely idle potentiality is annulled by its complete idleness'.

⁵⁵ Very broadly speaking, this approach is characteristic of the so-called 'non-metaphysical' approaches to Hegel that are currently in vogue. The term 'non-metaphysical' itself may be traced back to Klaus Hartmann's classic article 'Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View', in Alasdair MacIntyre (ed.), *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972), 101–24, and various proponents of the view might be said to include Terry Pinkard, Robert Pippin, Alan White, Paul Redding, and many others (although there is no complete unanimity in this approach). I have argued elsewhere that in fact a 'non-metaphysical' reading can be found considerably earlier in the *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, such as in the work of the British Hegelians: see Robert Stern, 'British Hegelianism: A Non-Metaphysical View?', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 2 (1994), 293–321 [repr. above].

to the fact that it was once in some other place, where similar things might naturally be expected to be. Why IT, independently of its general characters, comes to have any definite place in the world, is not a question to be asked; it is simply an ultimate fact. There is also another class of facts of which it is not reasonable to expect an explanation, namely, facts of indeterminacy or variety. Why one definite kind of event is frequent and another rare, is a question to be asked, but a reason for the general fact that of events some kinds are common and some rare, it would be unfair to demand. If all births took place on a given day of the week, or if there were always more on Sundays than on Mondays, that would be a fact to be accounted for, but that they happen in about equal proportions on all the days requires no particular explanation. If we were to find that all the grains of sand on a certain beach separated themselves into two or more sharply discrete classes, as spherical and cubical ones, there would be something to be explained, but that they are of various sizes and shapes, of no definable character, can only be referred to the general manifoldness of nature. Indeterminacy, then, or pure firstness, and haecceity, or pure secondness, are facts not calling for and capable of explanation. Indeterminacy affords us nothing to ask a question about; haecceity is the *ultima ratio*, the brutal fact that will not be questioned. But every fact of a general or orderly nature calls for an explanation; and logic forbids us to assume in regard to any given fact of that sort that it is of its own nature absolutely inexplicable.⁵⁶

Just as Peirce tries to show here that Firstness and Secondness set limits to explanation in a way that nonetheless poses no threat to reason, so on the account we have been considering, Hegel does the same; it could therefore be argued that Hegel can leave more room for Peircean Secondness (and Firstness) than Peirce allows.

It might be said, however, that even if it is an exaggeration to claim that Hegel wanted to 'account for' everything in the world in rationalistic terms, Peirce is still right to identify an unwillingness in Hegel to recognize a proper distinction between the individual and the conceptual, as a result of Hegel's insistence that we 'go beyond' Kant, and transcend this Kantian dichotomy (along with others).⁵⁷ On this reading, Hegel is taken to be exploiting the equivocal nature of Kant's own position. For, on the one hand, Kant argued that

⁵⁶ *EP* I, 274–5 (*CP* 1.405).

⁵⁷ Cf. Hegel, *LHP* III, 441 [*Werke*, XX: 347–8]:

For Kant says that in the mind, in self-consciousness, there are pure conceptions of the understanding and pure sensuous perceptions; now it is the schematism of the pure understanding, the transcendental faculty of the imagination, which determines the pure sensuous perception in conformity with the category and thus constitutes the transition to experience. The connection of these two is again one of the most attractive sides of the Kantian philosophy, whereby pure sensuousness and pure understanding, which were formerly expressed as absolute opposites, are now united. There is thus here present a perceptive understanding or an understanding perception; but Kant does not see this, he does not bring these thoughts together: he does not grasp the fact that he has here brought both sides of knowledge into one, and has thereby expressed their implicitude. Knowledge itself is in fact the unity and truth of both moments; but with Kant the thinking understanding and sensuousness are both something particular, and they are only united in an external, superficial way, just as a piece of wood and a leg might be bound together by a cord.

knowledge requires the application of concepts formed by the understanding to intuitions or representations of particular objects furnished by sensibility ('Thoughts without content are empty');⁵⁸ on the other hand, these 'objects' do not seem to be real concrete individuals (tables, chairs, people etc.) because prior to conceptualization by the understanding, sensibility is unable to yield any experience of such objects ('intuitions without concepts are blind');⁵⁹ so, while Kant's insistence that intuition and understanding are 'heterogeneous factors'⁶⁰ suggested that the complete determination of particulars cannot be derived from our concepts of them, Kant's equal insistence that particulars cannot be known except as falling under concepts suggested that particular individuals (such as tables, chairs etc.) could not be more than the exemplification of certain general characteristics. Hegel is thus seen as taking up the Kantian claim that 'intuitions without concepts are blind', in a way that leads to Hegel's objective idealism: the individuals we experience are determined by the concepts they exemplify, so that individuality is nothing over and above universality, but is constituted by it, in a manner that the orthodox Kantian cannot accept.⁶¹

As we have already seen, it is by returning to this more orthodox Kantian position that Peirce takes himself to be restoring a place for Secondness as an 'independent' category, in opposition to what he takes to be the Hegelian view:

... the greatest merit of [Kant's] doctrine... lay in his sharp discrimination of the intuitive and discursive processes of the mind... This was what emancipated him from Leibnizianism, and at the same time turned him against sensationalism. It was also what enabled him to see that no general description of existence is possible, which is perhaps the most valuable proposition that the *Critic* contains.⁶²

This suggests, then, that Peirce might be prepared to rest his account of Hegel's neglect of Secondness not on the claim that Hegel is a monist, nor that he was a rationalistic Neoplatonist, but rather on the claim that Hegel wanted to do away with the crucial Kantian dichotomy between 'the intuitive and discursive processes of the mind', where Secondness relates to the former and Thirdness to the latter; and in so far as many of Hegel's defenders would be willing to accept that this is indeed a dichotomy Hegel wished to transcend,⁶³ this can perhaps provide Peirce with the background he needs to show why Hegel might have come to treat Secondness in the way Peirce suggests, as the generality

⁵⁸ Kant, *CPR* A51/B75. ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, §76.

⁶¹ For a recent attempt to draw a contrast between Kant and Hegel along these lines, see Paul Guyer, 'Thought and Being: Hegel's Critique of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy', in Frederick C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 171–210.

⁶² *CP* 1.35.

⁶³ Cf. Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 9, where he characterizes Hegel as abandoning 'the very possibility of a clear distinction between concept and intuition'; and John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 41–5.

of thought comes to predominate over the ‘outward clash’ and singularity of intuition.

We have found, then, that if Peirce is right to claim that Hegel had a distorted view of Secondness, there is a *prima facie* plausible diagnostic story that Peirce might tell to explain this distortion. We must therefore look more closely at the specific charges Peirce makes to show that in Hegel’s system Secondness *is* ‘refuted’, and see whether Peirce’s critique can also be made plausible at this level.

IV

At first sight, there may certainly appear to be a good deal of justice in Peirce’s specific claims regarding Hegel’s unwillingness to give Secondness its due, and Peirce’s complaints here undoubtedly fit a certain traditional way of reading Hegel as a speculative metaphysician with an extravagantly idealist and a prioristic project. However, in many respects that traditional reading has been challenged in recent years, in ways that show a side to Hegel’s thought in which a greater role for Peircean Secondness can perhaps be found.

The first issue, then, concerns how far Hegel leaves room for what Burbidge called ‘the brute facts of Secondness’, such as the poke in the back ‘that Pure Reason fails to account for’. On a traditional view, which Peirce seems to endorse, Hegel’s position is seen as being Spinozistic, ruling out possibility or contingency, and rendering everything necessary. However, as several commentators have argued recently (including Burbidge), this is a mistaken picture of Hegel’s position, for (as Hegel puts it) ‘Although it follows from discussion so far that contingency is only a one-sided moment of actuality, and must therefore not be confused with it, still as a form of the Idea as a whole it does deserve its due on the world of ob-jects’.⁶⁴ Here it is important to remember Hegel’s distinction between what is actual and what exists or what is ‘immediately there’ (*das unmittelbar Daseiende*),⁶⁵ where the actual is necessary but the existent is not, and where Hegel is quite happy to accept that (for example) the natural world is not fully

⁶⁴ Hegel, *EL*, §145Z, 219 [*Werke*, VIII: 286] (where the translators use ‘ob-ject’ as their rendering of ‘Gegenstand’ as opposed to ‘Objekt’).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, §143Z, 216–17 [*Werke*, VIII: 283]. Cf. also *ibid.*, §6, 29–30 [*Werke*, VIII: 48]:

In common life people may happen to call every brain wave, error, evil, and suchlike ‘actual,’ as well as every existence, however wilted and transient it may be. But even for our ordinary feeling, a contingent existence does not deserve to be called something-actual in the emphatic sense of the word; what contingently exists has no greater value than that which something-*possible* has; it is an existence which (although it is) can just as well *not be*. But when I speak of actuality, one should, of course, think about the sense in which I use this expression, given the fact that I dealt with actuality too in a quite elaborate *Logic*, and I distinguished it quite clearly and directly, not just from what is contingent, even though it has existence too, but also, more precisely, from being-there, from existence, and from other determinations.

‘actual’ in this sense, though it does of course exist. Thus, while Peirce might have been right to say that Hegel took a greater philosophical interest in actuality than in possibility and contingency, he was far from denying its reality:

It is quite correct to say that the task of science and, more precisely, of philosophy, consists generally in coming to know the necessity hidden under the semblance of contingency; but this must not be understood to mean that contingency pertains only to our subjective views and that it must therefore be set aside totally if we wish to attain the truth. Scientific endeavours which one-sidedly push in this direction will not escape the justified reproach of being an empty game and a strained pedantry.⁶⁶

Turning now to the second issue, of whether Hegel’s neglect of Secondness can be seen in his corresponding neglect for the role of experience in the acquisition of knowledge, it is again a complex matter to decide whether Peirce is right in what he claims. Central to Peirce’s position is the way in which he sees Hegel as a typical proponent of what in ‘The Fixation of Belief’ Peirce identified as the ‘a priori method’, and thus as someone who holds that our reason will lead us to a convergence on the truth; according to Peirce, Hegel therefore fails to recognize that unless there is a sufficient role for experience, this method cannot result in any stable consensus, as what is ‘agreeable to reason’⁶⁷ (like what is agreeable to taste) is ‘always more or less a matter of fashion’,⁶⁸ which depends too much on the subjective dispositions of inquirers and not enough on how things are in the world. Peirce thus sees Hegel’s dialectical approach as an attempt to reach truth in this rationalistic fashion, in the hope of showing that each limited category or standpoint can lead to the next until we attain a category or standpoint for which no limitation can be found; but he doubts the feasibility of this enterprise, claiming that not everyone will find the moves Hegel makes or the criticisms he offers ‘rationally compelling’, so that in the end Hegel cannot claim to reach ‘absolute knowledge’, as a picture of the world to which we must all consent; rather, he can only appeal to those who already think like him and share his preconceptions:

[Hegel] simply launches his boat into the current of thought and allows himself to be carried wherever the current leads. He himself calls his method *dialectic*, meaning that a frank discussion of the difficulties to which any opinion spontaneously gives rise will lead to modification after modification until a tenable position is attained. This is a distinct profession of faith in the method of inclinations.⁶⁹

Thus, rather than guiding his inquiries by the ‘outward clash’ of experience, Peirce claims that Hegel fails to see the significance of Secondness in this respect, because he hopes that by following ‘that which we find ourselves inclined to believe’⁷⁰ (and thus ‘the method of inclinations’), we can be led to convergence, and so to truth.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, §145Z, 219 [*Werke*, VIII: 286–7].

⁶⁷ *EP* I, 119 (*CP* 5.382).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *CP* 5.382 n.

⁷⁰ *EP* I, 119 (*CP* 5.382).

Now, one difficulty in assessing Peirce's criticism here is that he does not tell us precisely what he has in mind: Hegel's *Phenomenology*, his *Logic*, or the *Encyclopaedia* system as a whole. As regards the *Phenomenology*, we have already seen that commentators such as Burbidge would choose to emphasize the role of Secondness in that work, as what moves consciousness on from one standpoint to the next is an awareness of how things around us do not fit how we conceive them to be.⁷¹ In the case of the *Logic*, Peirce may be correct to say that there is no role for experience as such here, as one category is seen to lead on to another, in accordance with 'Hegel's plan of evolving everything out of the abstractest conception by a dialectical procedure';⁷² but in fact Peirce allows that Hegel might be right to adopt this method here, commenting as we have seen that it is 'far from being so absurd as the experientialists think',⁷³ his only reservation being its ambitiousness: '[it] overlooks the weakness of individual man, who wants the strength to wield such a weapon as that'.⁷⁴ Peirce thus chooses to argue for the necessity of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness not in this dialectical manner, but by showing (in 'A Guess at the Riddle') how this triad plays a fundamental role in all the 'fields of thought', such as logic, metaphysics, psychology, physiology, biological development, and physics, as well as showing (in the later Harvard lectures) that they have a fundamental role in our phenomenology. It could be argued that by appealing to the sciences in support of his categorial theorizing in this way, Peirce is again showing a greater recognition of Secondness than Hegel, in acknowledging that the empirical nature of these sciences must play a role in warranting our speculations about the categories. But again this implied contrast between Peirce and Hegel is potentially misleading: for Hegel himself

⁷¹ Cf. Burbidge, 'Secondness', 31: '[In the *Phenomenology*] Hegel is deciphering those elementary encounters with reality—some generic and oft repeated, others unique to an historical epoch—that are embedded within our common experience and are the source of so much of what we call knowledge. That fundamental analysis exposes and explains the rational necessity underlying all of the literary accounts and philosophical theories that may be used to illustrate each stage. Apart from that brute encounter with secondness, those accounts and theories are just arbitrary constructions of thought, the illusions a particular species has used to insulate it from reality'. Peirce himself recognizes a way of taking Hegel's method that would allow a role for experience in this way: cf. *CP* 2.46:

I will first describe [Hegel's] method generically. . . . Hegel begins, then, by assuming whatever appears most evident to an utterly unreflecting person, and sets it down. The only difference between the unreflecting person and Hegel, as he is in this mood, is that the former would consider the subject exhausted, and would pass to something else; while Hegel insists upon harping on that string until certain inevitable difficulties are met with. . . . He pushes his objection for all it is worth. . . . Hegel is anxious not to allow 'foreign considerations' to intervene in the struggle which ensues—that is to say, no suggestions from a more advanced stage of philosophical development. I cannot see that it would conflict with the spirit of the general method to allow suggestions from experience, provided they are such as would be inevitable, and such as would be within the grasp of thought which for the moment occupies the theatre.

For a more critical way of putting this point, cf. *CP* 8.110.

⁷² *EP* I, 256 (*CP* 1.368).

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* Cf. *CP* 2.32: 'What has been said of the utter impracticability of any one man's actually executing the design of the *Critic of Pure Reason* is a hundredfold more true of Hegel's *Logic* . . . '.

uses the second and third books of the *Encyclopaedia* (the *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Mind*) in just this way, trying to show how the categories he has developed in the *Logic* can be used to inform our inquiries into the natural and human worlds, to which they must themselves be compatible: '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'.⁷⁵ Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Mind* can thus be read not as spurious attempts to use a priori methods to try to establish truths about the natural and human worlds that are in fact really established through the empirical sciences (as Peirce suggests at one point),⁷⁶ but rather as attempts to reflect on the categories that our inquiries into these areas employ, in order to 'clarify' them⁷⁷ and make them more explicit, so that those inquiries can be made more fruitful, in a way that their empirical results will then attest to. Of course, none of this makes Hegel a straightforward empiricist, in confining knowledge to the evidence of the senses or treating that evidence as if it was somehow independent of or prior to our capacity for thought: but Peirce himself was no such empiricist either. Thus, while Peirce's picture of Hegel as an a priori metaphysician and thus as an opponent of Secondness fits with a certain traditional interpretation,⁷⁸ we have seen how it can be argued that this does not do justice to the full story.⁷⁹

In fact, it is perhaps symptomatic of Peirce's tendency to read Hegel in a rather one-sided way on this issue, that in the Royce review, where he accuses Hegel of making the 'capital error' of ignoring 'the Outward Clash', the text from Hegel that he cites in support of this claim does not seem to substantiate it sufficiently. The text Peirce refers to is from the Remark to §7 of the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, which Peirce renders as follows: "We must be in contact with our subject-matter," says

⁷⁵ Hegel, *EN*, §246, I, 197 [*Werke*, IX: 15].

⁷⁶ *EP* I, 121 (*CP* 5.385):

The Hegelian system recognizes every natural tendency of thought as logical, although it be certain to be abolished by counter-tendencies. Hegel thinks there is a regular system in the succession of these tendencies, in consequence of which, after drifting one way and the other for a long time, opinion will at last go right. And it is true that metaphysicians get the right ideas at last; Hegel system of Nature represents tolerably the science of that day; and one may be sure that whatever scientific investigation has put out of doubt will presently receive a *a priori* demonstration on the part of the metaphysicians.

⁷⁷ Cf. Hegel, *SL*, 37 [*Werke*, V: 27]: 'As impulses the categories are only instinctively active. At first they enter consciousness separately and so are variable and mutually confusing; consequently they afford to mind only a fragmentary and uncertain actuality; the loftier business of logic therefore is to clarify these categories and in them to raise mind to freedom and truth'.

⁷⁸ For a recent, and sophisticated, attempt to revive aspects of that interpretation, see Alison Stone, *Petrified Intelligence: Nature in Hegel's Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005).

⁷⁹ This is not to deny, of course, that no real differences in Peirce's and Hegel's approach to developing a theory of the categories remain, where in particular the way in which each viewed the relation between the categories and formal logic is significantly divergent (Peirce stressing the importance of the latter, and Hegel questioning it); but this difference has little to do with the issue of Secondness.

he [i.e. Hegel] in one place, “whether it be by means of our external senses, *or, what is better*, by our profounder mind and our innermost self-consciousness”⁸⁰. This is in fact a paraphrase of part of the following:

The principle of *experience* contains the infinitely important determination that, for a content to be accepted and held to be true, man must himself *be* actively involved *with it*, more precisely that he must find any such content to be at one and in unity with the *certainty of his own self*. He must himself be involved with it, whether only with his external senses, or with his deeper spirit, with his essential consciousness of self as well. — This is the same principle that is today called faith, immediate knowing, revelation in the [outer] world, and above all in one’s *own* inner [world].⁸¹

Aside from the fact that Peirce’s paraphrase is somewhat inaccurate (for example, there is nothing in the original corresponding to the phrase ‘or *what is better*’), Peirce’s way of using this remark by Hegel also fails to appreciate its context. For, Hegel’s aim here is not to contrast experience on the one hand with some form of knowledge acquired solely by ‘our profounder mind and our innermost self-consciousness’ on the other, and certainly not to claim that the latter would be ‘better’ than the former. Rather, he is simply registering the fact that some of his contemporaries (and the language he uses strongly suggests he has F. H. Jacobi in mind) have extended ‘experience’ to include not just the evidence of our outer senses concerning the spatio-temporal world around us, but also the evidence of our experience of ourselves as subjects as well as of God. Hegel is thus not saying that knowledge is better had without experience or ‘the Outward Clash’, but rather noting that his contemporaries have extended this notion of ‘the Outward Clash’ beyond our awareness of the empirical world to our awareness of ourselves and of God, because otherwise we would feel alienated from the latter as much as without experience we would feel alienated from the former. But if this is all that Hegel is saying here, it would seem Peirce is wrong to take the passage in the way he does, as attempting to give priority to our ‘essential consciousness of self’ as a form of non-experiential knowledge, when Hegel’s aim is to show how the concept of experience has come to be *extended to* knowledge of this kind, rather than being excluded from it (as many more traditional empiricists may have thought). Of course, it may be that Peirce would be critical of this

⁸⁰ *EPI*, 233, n.

⁸¹ Hegel, *EL*, §7, 31 [*Werke*, VIII: 49–50]. The passage in German reads as follows: ‘Das Prinzip der *Erfahrung* erhält die unendlich wichtige Bestimmung, daß für das Annehmen und Fürwahrhalten eines Inhalts der Mensch selbst *dabei sein* müsse, bestimmter, daß er solchen Inhalt mit *der Gewißheit seiner selbst* in Einigkeit und vereinigt finde. Er muß selbst dabei sein, sei es nur mit seinen äußerlichen Sinnen oder aber mit seinem tieferen Geiste, seinem wesentlichen Selbstbewußtsein. — Es ist dies Prinzip dasselbe, was heutigentags Glauben, unmittelbares Wissen, die Offenbarung im Äußeren und vornehmlich im *eigenen* Innern genannt worden ist’. The editors of *WP* cite the 1827 edition of the *Encyclopaedia* as the work actually owned by Peirce (see *WP* V, 447); but the text is virtually the same as the one for the 1832–45 edition used in Hegel’s *Werke* that is quoted here.

extension;⁸² but nonetheless the fact that Hegel here remarks upon it in the way he does in no way suggests that he was opposed to the ‘infinitely important determination’ that ‘the principle of *experience* contains’, which is what Peirce wants to claim.

The Peircean might argue, however, that Peirce’s characterization of Hegel’s method as a priori in Peirce’s sense can be shown to be justified, because Hegel’s lacks the commitment to *realism* that Peirce identifies with the ‘method of science’ and which lies behind its recognition of the importance of experience in our inquiries. In a well-known passage from ‘The Fixation of Belief’, Peirce makes this connection clear, between the method of science, realism, and what he would later call Secondness:

To satisfy our doubts . . . it is necessary that a method [of inquiry] should be found by which our beliefs may be caused by nothing human, but by some external permanency—by something upon which our thinking has no effect . . . Such is the method of science. Its fundamental hypothesis, restated in more familiar language, is this: There are real things, whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them; those realities affect our senses according to regular laws, and, though our sensations are as different as our relations to the objects, yet, by taking advantage of the laws of perception, we can ascertain by reasoning how things really are, and any man, if he have sufficient experience and reason enough about it, will be led to the one true conclusion. The new conception here involved is that of reality.⁸³

This then brings us to the third issue of dispute between Peirce and Hegel over Secondness: namely, the claim that Hegel is an idealist, who fails to see that experience is needed because our beliefs must be related to ‘something upon which our thinking has no effect’, whereas the coherentism of the dialectical method neglects to incorporate any such relation, leaving us to move from one standpoint to the next within the circle of thought.

In categorizing Hegel as an idealist in this manner, it is plausible to think that Peirce was following the lead of F. E. Abbot, whose work had a major influence in taking Peirce’s thought in a realist direction.⁸⁴ In his book *Scientific Theism*,

⁸² Cf. *EP I*, 234 (*CP* 8.43): ‘[Dr. Royce and his school] so overlook the Outward Clash, that they do not know what experience is. They are like Roger Bacon, who after stating in eloquent terms that all knowledge comes from experience, goes on to mention spiritual illumination from on high as one of the most valuable kinds of experiences’. Hegel might be taken to agree with Peirce’s scepticism here, when he comments that ‘[F]eelings concerning right, ethical life, and religion are feelings—and hence an experience—of the kind of content that has its root and its seat in thinking alone’, and so should not be confused with the notion of experience used in the empirical sciences (Hegel, *EL*, §8, 32 [*Werke*, VIII: 51–2]).

⁸³ *EP I*, 120 (*CP* 5.384).

⁸⁴ Helpful discussions of the influence of Abbot on Peirce can be found in Daniel D. O’Connor, ‘Peirce’s Debt to F. E. Abbot’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 25 (1964), 543–64; Max H. Fisch, ‘Peirce’s Progress from Nominalism Toward Realism’, *Monist* 51 (1967), 159–77; Christopher Hookway, *Peirce* (London: Routledge, 1985), 113–16. For biographical details on Peirce’s connections with Abbot, see Joseph Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life* (Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1993).

Abbot portrays all modern philosophy as nominalistic, and thus as idealistic in a mentalistic or subjectivist sense, so that for modern philosophy, nominalism is 'its root' and idealism 'its flower';⁸⁵ and he sees Hegel as exemplifying this trend:

Hegel, the greatest of the post-Kantian Idealists, says: 'Thought, by its own free act, seizes a standpoint where it exists for itself, and generates its own object;' and again: 'This ideality of the finite is the chief maxim of philosophy; and for that reason every true philosophy is Idealism.' This is the absolute sacrifice of the objective factor in human experience. Hegel sublimely disregards the distinction between Finite Thought and Infinite Thought: the latter, indeed, *creates*, while the former *finds*, its object. And, since human philosophy is only finite, it follows that *no* true philosophy is Idealism, except the Infinite Philosophy or Self-thinking of God.⁸⁶

It is likely that comments such as these encouraged Peirce to adopt this reading of Hegel.⁸⁷

However, while plausibly read as statements of mentalistic idealism when taken out of context in this way, it is not clear on closer inspection that the remarks Abbot cites here can bear the interpretative weight he places upon them. The first statement might be translated more accurately as follows: 'Only what we have here is the free act of thought, that puts itself at the standpoint where it is for itself and where hereby it produces and gives to itself its object'.⁸⁸ This comes in the Introduction to the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, where Hegel is discussing the difference between philosophy and other forms of inquiry. Other inquiries, Hegel suggests, must presuppose their objects (such as space, or numbers), but philosophy need not do so, because philosophy investigates thought and the adequacy of our categories and so produces its own object simply through the process of inquiry itself, as this already employs thought and the categories. Thus, in saying here that (in Abbot's translation) 'Thought . . . generates its own object', Hegel is not making the subjective idealist claim, that the world is created by the mind, but rather saying that in the *Logic*, thinking is not simply taken for

⁸⁵ Francis Ellingwood Abbot, *Scientific Theism* (London: Macmillan, 1885; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1979), 9.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁸⁷ This issue is also indirectly relevant to the dispute between Abbot and Royce, in which Peirce was also involved, where Royce accused Abbot of plagiarizing Hegel, and Peirce came to Abbot's defence. In one of the pamphlets Abbot had published in which he responded to Royce, Abbot insists that his position is not to be compared to Hegel's: 'I deny that I "borrowed" my realistic theory of universals from the idealist Hegel, whether consciously or unconsciously. The charge is unspeakably silly. Realism and idealism contradict each other more absolutely than protectionism and free-trade' (F. E. Abbot, *Professor Royce's Libel: A Public Appeal for Redress to the Corporation and Overseers of Harvard University* (Boston: Geo. H. Ellis, 1891), 15). Abbot's protestations on this matter no doubt had an influence on Peirce's understanding of the relation between Hegel's position and his own.

⁸⁸ Hegel, *EL*, §17, 41 [*Werke*, VIII: 63], trans. modified. The original is as follows: 'Allein es ist dies der freie Akt des Denkens, sich auf den Standpunkt zu stellen, wo es für sich selber ist und *sich* hiermit *seinen Gegenstand selbst erzeugt und gibt*'.

granted as an object for philosophy to investigate, as thinking is inherent in the process of investigation itself.

Likewise, Abbot's second quoted statement is not best read as a declaration of subjective idealism. For, although Hegel does indeed say in the *Encyclopaedia Logic* that 'This ideality of the finite is the most important proposition of philosophy, and for that reason every genuine philosophy is *Idealism*',⁸⁹ the context is again important here, as the corresponding passage from the *Science of Logic* makes clear:

The proposition that the finite is ideal [*ideell*] constitutes idealism. The idealism of philosophy consists in nothing else than in recognizing that the finite has no veritable being [*wahrhaft Seiendes*]. Every philosophy is essentially an idealism, or at least has idealism for its principle, and the question then is how far this principle is actually carried out. This is as true of philosophy as of religion; for religion equally does not recognize finitude as a veritable being [*ein wahrhaftes Sein*], as something ultimate and absolute or as something underived, uncreated, eternal. Consequently the opposition of idealistic and realistic philosophy has no significance. A philosophy which ascribed veritable, ultimate, absolute being to finite existences as such, would not deserve the name of philosophy; the principles of ancient or modern philosophies, water, or matter, or atoms are *thoughts*, universals, ideal entities, not things as they immediately present themselves to us, that is, in their sensuous individuality—not even the water of Thales. For although this is also empirical water, it is at the same time also the *in-itself* or *essence* of all other things, too, and these other things are not self-subsistent or grounded in themselves, but are *posited* by, are *derived* from, an *other*, from water, that is they are ideal entities.⁹⁰

When looked at in detail, it is clear that Hegel is not conceiving of idealism here in mentalistic terms: for if he was, he could hardly claim that '[e]very philosophy is essentially an idealism', as mentalistic idealism is a position held by few philosophers, and not by those classical philosophers directly and indirectly referred to here, such as Thales, Leucippus, Democritus, and Empedocles, not to mention Plato and Aristotle—as Hegel clearly recognized.⁹¹ A better reading of the passage is to see Hegel as offering a picture of idealism not as mentalistic, but as *holistic*.⁹² On this account, Hegel claims that finite entities do not have

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, §95Z, 152 [*Werke*, VIII: 203]. ⁹⁰ Hegel, *SL*, 154–5 [*Werke*, V: 172].

⁹¹ Cf. Hegel, *LHP* II, 43–4 [*Werke*, XIX: 54–5]:

[T]he idealism of Plato must not be thought of as being subjective idealism, and as that false idealism which has made its appearance in modern times, and which maintains that we do not learn anything, are not influenced from without, but that all conceptions are derived from out of the subject. It is often said that idealism means that the individual produces from himself all his ideas, even the most immediate. But this is an unhistoric, and quite false conception; if we take this rude definition of idealism, there have been no idealists amongst the philosophers, and Platonic idealism is certainly far removed from anything of this kind.

⁹² Cf. Kenneth R. Westphal, *Hegel's Epistemological Realism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), 143: 'Hegel's idealism is thus an ontological thesis, a thesis concerning the interdependence of everything there is, and thus is quite rightly contrasted with epistemologically based subjective idealism', and his 'Hegel's Attitude Toward Jacobi in "The Third Attitude of Thought Toward Objectivity"',

‘veritable, ultimate, absolute being’ because they are dependent on other entities for their existence in the way that parts are dependent on other parts within a whole; and idealism consists in recognizing this relatedness between things, in a way that ordinary consciousness fails to do.⁹³ The idealist thus sees the world differently from the realist, not as a plurality of separate entities that are ‘self-subsistent or grounded in themselves’, but as parts of an interconnected totality in which these entities are dependent on their place within the whole. It turns out, then, that idealism for Hegel is primarily an ontological position, which holds that the things of ordinary experience are ideal in the sense that they have no being in their own right, and so lack the self-sufficiency and self-subsistence required to be fully real. Once again, therefore, Abbot would seem to lack adequate textual support for his account of Hegel’s idealism.

As a result of misreading Hegel in this way, Abbot failed to recognize how much Hegel’s trajectory away from Kantian idealism resembled his own; and in following Abbot here, Peirce did the same. Much like Abbot (and later Peirce), Hegel complains that for Kant ‘the categories are to be regarded as belonging only to *us* (or as “subjective”)',⁹⁴ giving rise to the spectre of ‘things-in-themselves’ lying beyond the categorial framework we impose on the world; to dispel this spectre, Hegel argues (again like Abbot and Peirce) that we must see the world as conceptually structured in itself: ‘Now, although the categories (e.g. unity, cause and effect, etc.) pertain to our thinking as such, it does not at all follow from this that they must therefore be merely something of ours, and not also determinations of ob-jects themselves’.⁹⁵ Like Abbot (and Peirce), Hegel sees himself as reviving here a vital insight of classical philosophy, which the subjective idealism of modern thought has submerged:

It has most notably been only in modern times . . . that doubts have been raised and the distinction between the products of our thinking and what things are in themselves has

Southern Journal of Philosophy, 27 (1989), 135–56, at 146: ‘The basic model of Hegel’s ontology is a radical ontological holism’. Cf. also Thomas E. Wartenberg, ‘Hegel’s Idealism: The Logic of Conceptuality’, in Frederick C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 102–29, at 107: ‘[Hegel’s] manner of characterizing his idealism emphasizes that it is a form of holism. According to this view, individuals are mere parts and thus are not fully real or independent’. For further discussion of the issues raised here, see Robert Stern, ‘Hegel’s Idealism’, in Frederick C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 135–73 (repr. above as Ch. 1).

⁹³ Cf. Hegel, *EL*, §45Z, 88 [*Werke*, VIII: 122]: ‘For our ordinary consciousness (i.e., the consciousness at the level of sense-perception and understanding) the ob-jects that it knows count as self-standing and as self-founded in their isolation from one another; and when they prove to be related to each other, and conditioned by one another, their mutual dependence upon one another is regarded as something external to the ob-ject, and not as belonging to their nature. It must certainly be maintained against this that the ob-jects of which we have immediate knowledge are mere appearances, i.e., they do not have the ground of their being within themselves, but within something else.’

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, §42Z, 85 [*Werke*, VIII: 118–9].

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 85–6 [*Werke*, VIII: 119].

been insisted on. It has been said that the In-itself of things is quite different from what we make of them. This separateness is the standpoint that has been maintained especially by the Critical Philosophy, against the conviction of the whole world previously in which the agreement between the matter [itself] and thought was taken for granted. The central concern of modern philosophy turns on this antithesis. But it is the natural belief of mankind that this antithesis has no truth.⁹⁶

No less than Abbot and Peirce, therefore, Hegel was a realist concerning the relation between mind and world, where that relation is mediated by the conceptual structures inherent in reality, in a way that the nominalist and subjective idealist denies.

If this is so, then once again it can be argued that Peirce's case is undermined, that Hegel naturally adopted a dialectical method that had no role for Secondness: for, this involves the assumption that Hegel was a coherentist idealist, who rejected the hypothesis that 'There are real things, whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them'; in seeing Hegel as a realist, we do not have this reason to hold that Hegel has neglected Secondness in this respect.

V

Thus far, therefore, we have given grounds for supposing that Peirce's critique of Hegel on Secondness is wide of the mark, in so far as Hegel can be shown not to have held many of the views that Peirce attributes to him, and which Peirce suggests led him to neglect that category in favour of Thirdness. However, I now want to turn to two remaining issues that Peirce identifies as differentiating his view from Hegel's—the issue of haecceity, and of indexicality—and to show that here there is a genuine difference between these two thinkers; but I want to suggest that on these issues Hegel can perhaps stand his ground in the face of Peirce's critique, and argue that Peirce's emphasis on Secondness in these respects is misplaced.

The doctrine of haecceity comes from Duns Scotus, and while its details are notoriously complex, it is evident in a general way why Peirce should associate it with Secondness.⁹⁷ For, as we have seen, Peirce distinguishes Secondness from Thirdness in so far as it relates to particularity, whereby the individual is differentiated from other things: 'Secondness, strictly speaking, is just when and where it takes place, and has no other being; and therefore, different Secondnesses, strictly speaking, have in themselves no quality in common'.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, §22 Addition, 54 [*Werke*, VIII: 79]. Cf. Hegel, *SL*, 45–6 [*Werke*, V: 38].

⁹⁷ The fullest discussion of the relation between Peirce and Scotus on this issue can be found in Bolter, *Charles Peirce and Scholastic Realism*.

⁹⁸ *CP* 1.532.

Secondness thus leads inevitably to the classical problem of individuation: how is it that individuals *can* be unique in this way, where any properties we attribute to them are universal and so can be shared by other individuals?:

A law is in itself nothing but a general formula or symbol. An existing thing is simply a blind reacting thing, to which not merely all generality, but even all representation, is utterly foreign. The general formula may logically determine another, less broadly general. But it will be of its essential nature general, and its being narrower does not in the least constitute any participation in the reacting character of the thing. Here we have that great problem of the *principle of individuation* which the scholastic doctors after a century of the closest possible analysis were obliged to confess was quite incomprehensible to them.⁹⁹

Scotus's solution to this problem, which Peirce favours above the others, is to introduce the idea of *haecceity*, as the unique 'Thisness' of the thing that makes it an individual, and which cannot be characterized in any way, for to characterize it would make it general again: 'An index does not describe the qualities of an object. An object, in so far as it is denoted by an index, having *thisness*, and distinguishing itself from other things by its continuous identity and forcefulness, but not by any distinguishing characters, may be called a *hecceity*'.¹⁰⁰

Now, in so far as Peirce associates the doctrine of haecceity with Secondness in this way, I think it is right to see a real difference here with Hegel. This is not because, as some critics have suggested, Hegel does not recognize the status of individuals *at all*, and so failed to take the problem of individuation seriously;¹⁰¹ it is just that he was suspicious of answers to that problem that leave the solution opaque, in so far as the 'Thisness' that supposedly constitutes the individuality of the particular has no determination of any kind, where for Hegel this indeterminacy means that in fact it cannot serve an individuating role, and is rather utterly general. Hegel famously makes this point when he writes as follows concerning sense-certainty, and its claim to grasp the particular thing in its sheer individuality as 'This':

It is as a universal . . . that we *utter* what the sensuous [content] is. What we say is: 'This', i.e. the *universal* This; or, 'it is', i.e. *Being in general*. Of course, we do not *envisage* the universal This or Being in general, but we *utter* the universal, in other words, we do not strictly say what in this sense-certainty we *mean* to say.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ CP 5.107.

¹⁰⁰ CP 3.434. Cf also CP 1.458 and EP I, 274–5 (CP 1.405): 'In truth, any fact is in one sense ultimate,—that is to say, in its isolated aggressive stubbornness and individual reality. What Scotus calls the haecceities of things, the hereness and nowness of them, are indeed ultimate'.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Karl Löwith, 'Mediation and Immediacy in Hegel, Marx and Feuerbach', in W. E. Steinkraus (ed.), *New Studies in Hegel's Philosophy* (New York: Holt, Rinhart and Winston, 1971), 119–41, at 140: 'Hegel's answer is abstract: what remains is only the "universal" which is indifferent to everything that exists here and now'.

¹⁰² Hegel, *PS*, 60 [*Werke*, III: 85].

I take this and related passages to suggest that Hegel would reject the Peircean solution to the problem of individuation that he adopts from Scotus, and this his claim that Secondness involves haecceity.

But, the Peircean might ask: what then is Hegel's solution to the problem of individuation, if it does not involve haecceity in this way? Very briefly, as I understand it, Hegel's solution is to argue that what constitutes the individuality of a thing is its properties, each of which it may share with other things, but where the particular *combination* of these properties makes something an individual: so, while many other individuals also have properties that I possess (being of a certain height, colour, weight etc.), only I have the specific *set* of properties that determine me as an individual, and so make me who I am. Peirce's conception of individuality means he would be dissatisfied with this, because he wants individuation to be something more than can be derived from the properties of the individual in this way, and so thinks that things could be different even if they were exactly alike in *all* qualitative respects:¹⁰³ but it is open to the Hegelian to deny this, and to argue that to say that it is the 'Thisness' of each that would differentiate them is to make this differentiation wholly mysterious, for if 'This' is indeterminate, *how can it* distinguish one thing from another?

Peirce might go on to claim, however, that where Hegel goes wrong is in failing to see that Peirce's conception of Secondness here is vital to his view of *indexicality*, which picks out the individual as a 'bare this', and not as anything general:

An indexical word, such as a proper noun or demonstrative or selective pronoun, has force to draw the attention of the listener to some haecceity common to the experience of speaker and listener. By a haecceity, I mean, some element of existence which, not merely by the likeness between its different apparitions, but by an inward force of identity, manifesting itself in the continuity of its apparition throughout time and space, is distinct from everything else, and is thus fit (as it can in no other way be) to receive a proper name or be indicated as *this* or *that*.¹⁰⁴

Peirce argues therefore that in so far as 'the index . . . designates [the subject of a proposition] without implying any characters at all',¹⁰⁵ we can refer to the individual as a 'this' which appears to us as an individual in the 'outward clash' of experience.

I take it that Hegel's response to this final issue concerning Secondness reflects the previous one, and is also to be found in his discussion of sense-certainty:

¹⁰³ Cf. *CP* 1.458, cited above. ¹⁰⁴ *CP* 3.460.

¹⁰⁵ *EP* I, 232 (*CP* 8.41). Cf. *CP* 3.361: 'The index asserts nothing; it only says "There!" It takes hold of our eyes, as it were, and forcibly directs them to a particular object, and there it stops'; and *CP* 3.434: 'A sign which denotes a thing by forcing it upon the attention is called an *index*. An index does not describe the qualities of its object. An object, in so far as it is denoted by an index, having *thisness*, and distinguishing itself from other things by its continuous identity and forcefulness, but not by any distinguishing characters, may be called a *haecceity*'.

namely, that for indexicality to work, a description must be involved in the way the thing is picked out, otherwise what ‘this’ refers to is indeterminate: is it (for example) the door in front of me that I am pushing, the door in the wall, the wall in the building, the building in the city, and so on—what exactly is the ‘this’ to which my indexical refers, outside some further specification of the *class* of things to which the ‘this’ belongs?¹⁰⁶ Peirce writes: ‘We now find that, besides general terms, two other kinds of signs are perfectly indispensable in all reasoning. One of these kinds is the *index*, which like a pointing finger, exercises a real physiological *force* over the attention, like the power of a mesmerizer, and directs it to a particular object of sense’,¹⁰⁷ and gives the example of experiencing as a ‘Now!’ a flash of lightning. But unless the flash is conceptualized in some way *as* a particular in distinction from other things (the sky against which it is set, the trees below it, and so on), how can we determine the ‘particular object of sense’ to which the indexical is meant to refer?¹⁰⁸ Of course, in normal contexts, that specification is taken for granted, and so may not be articulated, making it possible to refer to something determinate by just saying ‘This’: but this background is important and should not be forgotten, as Peirce appears to do when he takes it that two speakers will know that ‘this’ or ‘now’ refers to a flash of lightning ‘without implying any characters at all’.¹⁰⁹

However, if the Hegelian is arguing that we are incapable of referring to anything by pointing and just saying ‘This’, but must also categorize the individual in some general way (‘This house’, ‘This tree’ etc.), so that we must use descriptions in picking out individuals, does the Hegelian position have the

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 143–4:

‘For what do these terms [“this”, “now” and “here”] embrace? Take “now”: does it mean this punctual instant, this hour, this day, this decade, this epoch? It can mean all of these, and others in different contexts. But, for it to mean something for me, and not just be an empty word, there must be something else I could say to give a shape, a scope, to this “now”; let it be a term for a time period, such as “day” or “hour”, or some description of the event or process or action that is holding my attention and hence defining the dimensions of my present . . . Any attempt at effective awareness of the particular can only succeed by making use of a descriptive, i.e. general, terms. The purely particular is “unreachable”’.

¹⁰⁷ *EP* I, 232 (*CP* 8.41).

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Hegel, *EL*, §24Z, 57–8 [*Werke*, VIII: 83]: ‘Thus man is always thinking, even when he simply intuits; if he considers something or other he always considers it as something universal, he fixes on something singular, and makes it stand out, thus withdrawing his attention from something else, and he takes it as something abstract and universal, even though it is universal in a merely formal way’.

¹⁰⁹ It might be said, however, that Peirce’s examples are meant to allow for a kind of immediate reference in this way, because in these examples only one item is actually salient—such as the flash of lightning, where in saying ‘Now!’ it is only this that could be referred to, as this is all that stands out in the situation. Even if this were plausible in the cases Peirce describes, however, it is clear that this would not work as a *general* account of indexicality, where it is rare that only one thing could be salient in this manner.

implications that Peirce fears, and which he thinks Royce accepts: namely, 'If the subject of discourse had to be distinguished from other things, if at all, by a general term, that is, by its peculiar characters, it would be quite true that its complete segregation [as an individual from other individuals] would require a full knowledge of its characters and would preclude ignorance?'¹¹⁰ Peirce's concern here is that the Hegelian neglects the role of indexicals altogether, and so can only use general descriptions to refer to individuals; but because any such description can never be specific enough to capture the individual (or at least would require a complete knowledge of all other individuals with which to contrast it), this would seem to put the individual out of reach.

Some interpreters of Hegel have indeed taken this to be his view;¹¹¹ but others have argued that this is one-sided,¹¹² in so far as Hegel is not assuming that indexicals have *no* reference, but only that they cannot perform this role on their own, independent of a use within a context that helps determine what general kind the indexicals are referring to when we say 'This': so, the proper Hegelian view is that neither the indexical 'This', nor the universal description can pick out the individual on their own, but that both must operate together, where the universal serves to mark out the kind of individual to which we are referring using the indexical.

Now, it might be said that to criticize Peirce as having failed to see this is unfair, as it treats Peirce as if he thought Secondness (and hence individuality and indexicality) could be entirely independent of Thirdness (and hence generality), when (as Peirce emphasizes in his Harvard lectures) he agrees with Hegel that each of these categories must involve the others: 'Not only does Thirdness suppose and involve the ideas of Secondness and Firstness, but never will it be possible to find any Secondness or Firstness in the phenomenon that is not accompanied by Thirdness'.¹¹³ Peirce might therefore be expected to agree with this Hegelian view of indexicality, and only to object to the way in which Hegel takes it too far, and moves to claim from this that '*Firstness* and *Secondness* must somehow be *aufgehoben*'.¹¹⁴

But, of course, we have precisely tried to show that this concern of Peirce's is an exaggeration, and that it is possible to read Hegel in a way that shows him to have accorded just the same status to these categories as Peirce himself demanded: namely, as each requiring the others, and none as 'refuted' or 'refutable'. On this

¹¹⁰ EP I, 232 (CP 8.41).

¹¹¹ Cf. Taylor, *Hegel*, 144; Ivan Soll, *An Introduction to Hegel's Metaphysics* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1969), 91–110; Gilbert Plumer, 'Hegel on Singular Demonstrative Reference', *Philosophical Topics*, 11 (1980), 71–94.

¹¹² Cf. Katharina Dulckeit, 'Can Hegel Refer to Particulars?', *The Owl of Minerva*, 17 (1986), 181–94, repr. in Jon Stewart (ed.), *The "Phenomenology of Spirit" Reader* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), 105–21.

¹¹³ EP II, 177 (CP 5.90).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

account, then, Hegel's conception of the Peircean category of Secondness is close to Peirce's own, so that on many of the issues raised by this category, Peirce and Hegel can find common cause in a way that Peirce failed to recognize, and which therefore may have surprised him.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ I am particularly grateful to Christopher Hookway for his very helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. I am also grateful to those who commented on the paper at a departmental seminar at the University of Edinburgh, and a conference on Hegel and Peirce at the University of Sheffield. I would also like to acknowledge the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, for funding the research leave during which this paper was written.

10

Peirce, Hegel, and the Category of Firstness

The aim of this paper is to engage with one aspect of the criticisms of Hegel's thought that were offered by the American pragmatist C. S. Peirce. Although there has been some discussion in the scholarly literature of Peirce's criticisms of Hegel from an historical point of view,¹ there has been little philosophical discussion of the *cogency* of those criticisms.² On the one hand, this may be because those interested in Hegel have not recognized the significance of those criticisms, and have not felt obliged to answer them; but this, I shall suggest, is a mistake, in so far as they are serious enough to deserve our attention. On the other hand, this may be because those interested in Peirce have not seen his critical engagement with Hegel as particularly significant to a consideration of his own position; but again, I shall suggest, this is also mistaken, in so far as his dispute with Hegel takes us to the heart of Peirce's enterprise.

While Peirce's criticisms of Hegel also concern methodological and logical issues, the most important of them concern Hegel's treatment of the categories which for Peirce comprise his 'short list', namely Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. In this paper, I want to focus on the criticism that centres around the category of Firstness, and to consider whether or not it is well taken. As we shall see, Peirce's objections here reflect a widespread unease about the Hegelian position, so that addressing those objections has broad implications for the reception of Hegel's thought. For, in what follows, I will argue that the best way to motivate Peirce's concerns is to compare them to a worry that surfaces in the German Idealist tradition with the later Schelling, and goes on to play a crucial role in the thought of many of Hegel's subsequent critics, from Kierkegaard to Deleuze: namely, has Hegel succeeded

¹ For general discussions of Peirce's relation to Hegel, see H. G. Townsend, 'The Pragmatism of Peirce and Hegel', *Philosophical Review*, 37 (1928), 297–303; Joseph Anthony Petrick, 'Peirce on Hegel', unpublished PhD dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1972; Max H. Fisch, 'Hegel and Peirce', *Hegel and the History of Philosophy*, ed. J. T. O'Malley, K. W. Algozin, K. W., and F. G. Weiss (Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1974) 172–93 (repr. in his *Peirce, Semiotic and Pragmatism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 261–82); and Kipton E. Jensen, 'Peirce as Educator: On Some Hegelisms', *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 60 (2004), 271–88.

² The only piece I have been able to find is Gary Shapiro, 'Peirce's Critique of Hegel's Phenomenology and Dialectic', *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 17 (1981), 269–75.

in addressing Jacobi's worry that our relation to the world must involve an immediacy that cannot be grasped in conceptual terms? Where Peirce's position is interesting, however, is that while he wants to do justice to this concern, he also wants to balance it with a commitment to what he calls Thirdness, so that (I will argue) Peirce's response to it cannot represent a complete break with Hegel (as Peirce himself thought), but may rather provide a model for thinking about what a properly Hegelian treatment of this issue should really be.

I

The criticism of Hegel that I am concerned with is made at its clearest in the paper 'On Phenomenology', which forms the text of Peirce's second Harvard lecture delivered 2 April 1903. In this text, Peirce offers a phenomenological approach to the investigation of the categories as 'an element of phenomena of the first rank of generality': 'The business of phenomenology is to draw up a catalogue of categories and prove its sufficiency and freedom from redundancies, to make out the characteristics of each category, and to show the relations of each to the others'.³ Peirce says he will focus on the 'universal order' of the categories, which form a 'short list', and notes the similarity between his list and Hegel's, while denying any direct influence: 'My intention this evening is to limit myself to the Universal, or Short List of Categories, and I may say, at once, that I consider Hegel's three stages [of thought] as being, roughly speaking, the correct list of Universal Categories.'⁴ I regard the fact that I reached the same result as he

³ *EP* II, 148 (*CP* 5.43).

⁴ Cf. also *CP* 8.213: 'My three categories are nothing but Hegel's three grades of thinking', and *CP* 8.267: 'Anything familiar gains a peculiar positive quality of feeling of its own; and that I think is the connection between Firstness and Hegel's first stage of thought. The second stage agrees better with Secondness'. It is not immediately clear what Peirce meant by Hegel's 'stages of thought', and thus what in Hegel he took to correspond to Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. The editors of *EP* suggest in one note (*EP* II, 517, n. 13), that 'Hegel's "three stages of thought" consist of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis'; but as Hegel scholars often point out (e.g. G. E. Mueller, 'The Hegel Legend of "Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis"', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 19 (1958), 411–14), this terminology is not Hegel's. In connection with the passage we are discussing here, the editors refer to §79 of Hegel's *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, where Hegel distinguishes between three 'sides' of the logical: the understanding which treats each category as distinct (e.g. freedom *or* determinism); the dialectical side where the need for *both* categories is seen to lead to contradiction (e.g. freedom without determinism is mere arbitrariness); and the overcoming of these contradictions where reason sees that categories can form a differentiated unity (e.g. freedom is compatible with determinism). In other contexts, it does seem that it is understanding, dialectic, and reason that Peirce has in mind, e.g. *EPI*, 237 (*CP* 8.45): 'When Hegel tells me that thought has three stages, that of naïve acceptance, that of reaction and criticism, and that of rational correction; in a general sense, I agree to it'. But the difficulty is to see how understanding, dialectic and reason can correspond to Peirce's list of categories, when they seem more to be different ways of *conceiving* the categories. A better match would seem to be §83 of the *Encyclopaedia*, where Hegel himself

did by a process as unlike his as possible, at a time when my attitude toward him was rather one of contempt than of awe, and without being influenced by him in any discernible way however slightly, as being a not inconsiderable argument in favor of the correctness of the list. For if I am mistaken in thinking that my thought was uninfluenced by his, it would seem to follow that that thought was of a quality which gave it a secret power, that would in itself argue pretty strongly for its truth'.⁵

In Peirce's terminology, the 'short list' comprises the categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness, although he does not introduce that terminology until the next lecture. Here, he offers a characterization of the first two categories in phenomenological terms, beginning with Firstness, which he identifies with *presentness*. Peirce then turns to Secondness, which he characterizes in terms of '*Struggle*', by which he means the resistance of the world to the self and vice versa, illustrating this with the examples of pushing against a door; being hit on the back of the head by a ladder someone is carrying; and seeing a flash of lightning in pitch darkness.⁶ He also argues that this resistance can be felt in the case of images drawn in the imagination, and other 'inner objects', though this is felt less strongly. Then, at the beginning of the next section of the text,⁷ Peirce comes to the category of Thirdness; but here we do not get any phenomenological analysis of the category, but an account of why 'no modern writer of any stripe, unless it be some obscure student like myself, has ever done [it] anything approaching to justice'.⁸

talks about the *Logic* as the 'doctrine of thought' having three parts, in terms of the categories of Being, Essence, and Concept, or immediacy, mediation, and mediated immediacy; and this is the terminology Peirce himself uses in making the comparison (see e.g. *EP* II, 149 (*CP* 5.44)). But for further discussion of some of the complexities here, see Martin Suhr, 'On the Relation of Peirce's "Universal Categories" to Hegel's "Stages of Thought"', *Graduate Studies Texas Tech University*, 23 (1981), 275–9. In view of these difficulties, it has been suggested by Kipton Jensen that Peirce may not have intended any very precise reference to Hegel here: 'I do not think it possible to pin down a specific text in Hegel, for example, to §82 of the *Logic*, as decisive to the meaning of the "three grades of thinking"; we are dealing instead with a popular gloss on Hegel's thought—i.e., with something much more in the air than something on the page' (Jensen, 'Peirce as Educator', 276–7).

⁵ *EP* II, 148 (*CP* 5.43). Cf. also *CP* 8.329.

⁶ *EP* II, 150–1 (*CP* 5.45).

⁷ Because it is made up from different unpublished manuscripts (which do not form a final draft), this section actually marks a break between manuscripts: see the editors' explanation in *EP* II, 517 n. 1. For more on the provenance of the text, see C. S. Peirce, *Pragmatism as a Principle and Method of Right Thinking: The 1903 Harvard Lectures on Pragmatism*, ed. Patricia Ann Turrisi (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997).

⁸ *EP* II, 155–6 (*CP* 5.59). Cf. also *CP* 7.528:

'experience is composed of

1st, *monadic experiences*, or *simples*, being elements each of such a nature that it might without inconsistency be what it is though there were nothing else in all experience;

2nd, *dyadic experiences*, or *recurrences*, each a direct experience of an opposing pair of objects;

3rd, *triadic experiences*, or *comprehensions*, each a direct experience which connects other possible experiences'.

Now, Peirce offers a criticism of Hegel in relation to each of the three categories. Thus, in relation to Secondness, Peirce argues that Hegelians will tend to reduce ‘struggle’ to a lawlike relation and hence to something general, and so will eliminate Secondness in favour of Thirdness;⁹ and in relation to Thirdness, Peirce goes on to claim that Hegel’s position here is nominalistic.¹⁰ These criticisms will not concern us directly here, as it is the criticism of Hegel’s treatment of Firstness that I wish to concentrate upon.

This criticism is presented as follows: Peirce begins by saying that ‘*presentness*’ or Firstness is the ‘very first and simplest character to be noted’ in ‘anything [that] is present to the mind’, and comments that ‘[s]o far Hegel is quite right. Immediacy is his word’.¹¹ However, where Hegel goes wrong, according to Peirce, is in treating this presentness as *abstract*, and thus as akin to Pure Being, in the sense that (according to Hegel) Pure Being lacks all determination and is thus equivalent to Nothing:¹² ‘To say, however, that presentness, presentness as it is present, present presentness, is *abstract*, is Pure Being, is a falsity so glaring, that one can only say that Hegel’s theory that the abstract is more primitive than the concrete blinded his eyes to what stood before them’.¹³ Peirce’s thought here is not entirely clear, but he seems to believe the following kind of argument must have been moving Hegel:

1. The abstract is more primitive than the concrete
 2. Presentness is primitive
- Therefore
3. Presentness is abstract
 4. Pure being is abstract
- Therefore
5. Presentness is Pure Being

⁹ *EP* II, 151–2 (*CP* 5.46). For further discussion of this claim, see Robert Stern, ‘Peirce, Hegel, and the Category of Secondness’, *Inquiry*, 50 (2007), 123–55; repr. as Ch. 9 above.

¹⁰ *EP* II, 156–7 (*CP* 5.61–2). For further discussion of this claim, see Robert Stern, ‘Peirce on Hegel: Nominalist or Realist?’, *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, XLI (2005), 65–99; repr. as Ch. 8 above.

¹¹ *EP* II, 149 (*CP* 5.44).

¹² Cf. *CP* 1.533: ‘Hence Hegel . . . regarded pure being as pretty much the same as nothing’; and *CP* 1.302: ‘In the idea of being, Firstness is predominant, not necessarily on account of the abstractness of that idea, but on account of its self-containedness. It is not in being separated from qualities that Firstness is predominant, but in being something peculiar and idiosyncratic’.

¹³ *EP* II, 149 (*CP* 5.44). Cf. C. S. Peirce ‘Charles Sanders Peirce: Contributions to *The Nation*, Part Three: 1901–1908’, compiled and annotated by Kenneth Laine Ketner and James Edward Cook, *Graduate Studies Texas Tech University*, 19 (1979) 125: ‘What, for example, could be more monstrous than to call such a conception of Being a primitive one; or indeed, what more absurd than to say that the *immediate* is *abstract*?’ These comments come from a review (of a book on Hegel’s *Logic* by John Grier Hibben), which was also written in 1903.

Peirce doesn't tell us exactly what he has in mind in attributing the 'theory' of premise 1 to Hegel, but a reasonable conjecture might be Hegel's distinction between abstract and concrete universals, where Hegel treats some universals such as 'red' as more 'primitive' than others such as 'man' or 'rose', where these property universals are seen as simple aspects of the more complex substance universals under which a plurality of property universals are related (for example, to be a rose is not just to be red, but also sweet smelling, prickly and so on).¹⁴ Peirce then might think that Hegel believed that presentness was primitive in this way (it just contains a singular, undifferentiated and simple experience that forms an aspect of something more complex), and so holds it to be abstract, like Pure Being, which just 'is' and nothing more.

Now, Peirce doesn't state precisely where this Hegelian argument is mistaken, but probably believes he doesn't have to, as (he holds) its conclusion is so 'glaringly' false, we can be sure *something* is. And, to bring home to us its glaring falsity, he offers us a series of examples, designed to show that presentness is not abstract in the way Hegel believed, because the 'qualities of feeling' we experience in these examples are simple and unanalyzable, but not 'abstract', either in the sense of being aspects of a more complex experience which is prior to them from which they are abstracted and on which they depend, or in the sense of being 'empty' or 'pretty much the same as nothing'¹⁵ like Pure Being:

Go out under the blue dome of heaven and look at what is present as it appears to the artist's eye. The poetic mood approaches the state in which the present appears as it is present. Is poetry so abstract and colorless? The present is just what it is regardless of the absent, regardless of past and future. It is such as it is, utterly ignoring anything else. Consequently, it cannot be *abstracted* (which is what Hegel means by the abstract) for the abstracted is what the concrete, which gives it whatever being it has, makes it to be. The present, being such as it is while utterly ignoring everything else, is *positively* such as it is. Imagine, if you please, a consciousness in which there is no comparison, no relation, no recognized multiplicity (since parts would be other than the whole), no change, no imagination of any modification of what is positively there, no reflexion, — nothing but a simple positive character. Such a consciousness might be just an odor, say a smell of attar; or it might be one infinite dead ache; it might be the hearing of [a]¹⁶ piercing eternal whistle. In short, any simple and positive quality of feeling would be something which our description fits,—that it is such as it is quite regardless of anything else. The quality of feeling is the true psychical representative of the first category of the immediate as it is in its immediacy, of the present in its direct positive presentness. Qualities of feeling show myriad-fold variety, far beyond what the psychologists admit. This variety however is in them only in so far as they are compared and gathered together into collections. But as they are in their presentness, each is sole and unique; and all the

¹⁴ Cf. Hegel, *EL*, §163–93, 239–71 [*Werke*, VIII: 311–50].

¹⁵ *CP* 1.533.

¹⁶ Words appearing in italic brackets have been supplied or reconstructed by the editors of *EP*.

others are absolute nothingness to it,—or rather much less than nothingness, for not even recognition as absent things or as fictions is accorded to them. The first category, then, is Quality of Feeling, or whatever is such as it is positively and regardless of aught else.¹⁷

Peirce's case against Hegel here seems to be as follows: According to Peirce, the category of Firstness is monadic, and is irreducible to the categories of Secondness (dyadic) and Thirdness (triadic); and he believes he can offer a phenomenological argument to show this, because he believes we can view aspects of our experience 'monadically' in this way, as 'sole and unique' and unrelated to anything else, as when we prescind from the way certain properties form part of a complex whole, and focus on them simply as such—like the redness on the coat of a guardsman, when we focus *just* on this redness, or the whistle of a train when we focus *just* on the whistle.¹⁸ Once we recognize these phenomena, we will see that Firstness is a category we cannot do without, because these phenomena are monadic rather than relational (Secondness) or general (Thirdness). Now, Peirce thinks that Hegel failed to see this, because he thought that there was no experience of this monadic (or immediate) kind, because Hegel held that all experience was relational (or mediated), in the sense that redness or whistling cannot be experienced simply as such, but only as interconnected with other experiences, and so as part of a more complex experiential whole (Secondness) and not just as this red or this whistling sound, but only as an instance of a more general type (Thirdness): away from these relations and types, Peirce holds that Hegel takes these experiences to be empty. By giving us his examples, Peirce hopes he can persuade us that we can envisage experience as 'monadic' in the way he suggests, and that we will therefore recognize (contra Hegel) that Firstness should have its own irreducible status as a category.

Having set out the mistake he takes Hegel to have made in this way, in the next Harvard lecture Peirce provides a diagnosis of what led Hegel to make it. The suggestion he offers is that for Hegel, it was not sufficient to recognize merely the interdependence of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness (an interdependence which Peirce himself accepts); rather, Hegel's monistic conception of the Absolute meant that he had to move to a more reductionist position, and so to make the kind of 'glaring' phenomenological error attributed to him by Peirce in the earlier lecture:

¹⁷ *EP* II 149–50 (*CP* 5.44). Cf. *MS* 304 [c.1903]: 'How shall I show you anything so manifest [as presentness]? I wish we were out of doors. Philosophizing ought to be done under the light of heaven. Hegel himself in the opening of the *Phänomenologie* [i.e. in the discussion of sense-certainty] supposes that he and the reader are out of doors. But somehow his theory that the abstract is more primitive than the concrete blinded his eyes to what stood before him. Let us try to get into an unsophisticated state so that we can perceive what is present to us. Let me read you a bit of poetry just to rinse out your thoughts'.

¹⁸ Cf. *CP* 8.329–30.

Not only does Thirdness suppose and involve the ideas of Secondness and Firstness, but never will it be possible to find any Secondness or Firstness in the phenomenon that is not accompanied by Thirdness.¹⁹

If the Hegelians confined themselves to that position they would find a hearty friend in my doctrine.

But they do not. Hegel is possessed with the idea that the Absolute is One. Three absolutes he would regard as a ludicrous contradiction *in adjecto*. Consequently, he wishes to make out that the three categories have not their several independent and irrefutable standings in thought. *Firstness* and *Secondness* must somehow be *aufgehoben*. But it is not true. They are no way refuted or refutable. Thirdness it is true involves Secondness and Firstness, in a sense. That is to say, if you have the idea of Thirdness you must have had the ideas of Secondness and Firstness to build upon. But what is required for the idea of a genuine Thirdness is an independent solid Secondness and not a Secondness that is a mere corollary of an unfounded and inconceivable Thirdness; and a similar remark may be made in reference to Firstness.²⁰

Peirce then goes on to offer two further examples, one designed to show the irreducibility of Secondness, and the other to show the irreducibility of Firstness:

Let the Universe be an evolution of Pure Reason if you will. Yet if while you are walking in the street reflecting upon how everything is the pure distillate of Reason, a man carrying a heavy pole suddenly pokes you in the small of the back, you may think there is something in the Universe that Pure Reason fails to account for; and when you look at the color *red* and ask yourself how Pure Reason could make *red* to have that utterly inexpressible and irrational positive quality it has, you will be perhaps disposed to think that Quality and Reaction have their independent standings in the Universe.²¹

In general, then, Peirce argues that while Hegel had some insight into Firstness, the direction of his thinking made it impossible for him to do proper justice to those insights, so that in the end they were lost.²²

¹⁹ Cf. *EP* II, 267: 'According to the present writer [i.e. Peirce], these *universal categories* are three. Since all three are invariably present, a pure idea of any one, absolutely distinct from the others, is impossible; indeed, anything like a satisfactorily clear discrimination of them is a work of long and active meditation. They may be termed *Firstness*, *Secondness*, and *Thirdness*'.

²⁰ *EP* II, 177 (*CP* 5.90–1). Cf. also *CP* 8.268: 'The third stage is very close indeed to Thirdness, which is substantially Hegel's *Begriff*. Hegel, of course, blunders monstrously, as we shall all be seen to do; but to my mind the one fatal disease of his philosophy is that, seeing that the *Begriff* in a sense implies Secondness and Firstness, he failed to see that nevertheless they are elements of the phenomenon not to be *aufgehoben*, but as real and able to stand their ground as the *Begriff* itself'; and *EP* II, 164 (*CP* 5.79): 'Hegel . . . regards Category the Third as the only true one . . . For in the Hegelian system the other two [i.e. Firstness and Secondness] are only introduced in order to be *aufgehoben*'.

²¹ *EP* II, 177–8 (*CP* 5.92).

²² Cf. also *CP* 1.524: 'Hegel brought out the three elements [i.e. Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness] much more clearly [than Kant did]; but the element of Secondness, of *hard fact*, is not accorded its due place in his system; and in a lesser degree the same is true of Firstness'; *CP* 4.354: 'To recognize the triad is a step out of the bounds of mere dualism; but to attempt [to deny] independent being to the dyad and monad, Hegel-wise, is only another one-sidedness'; and *EP* II, 345 (*CP* 5.436): 'Had Hegel, instead of regarding the first two stages [of thought; i.e. Firstness and Secondness] with his smile of contempt, held on to them as independent or distinct elements of the triune Reality, pragmatists might have looked up to him as the great vindicator of their truth'.

II

Having set out the criticisms that Peirce offers of Hegel on the question of Firstness, we may now assess their cogency; doing so will also reveal some of the deeper issues underlying them.

Initially, it may seem that Peirce's position is clearly flawed, because the diagnostic part of his critique of Hegel appears to suffer from obvious weaknesses. Two points of that diagnosis appear to be particularly vulnerable. First, Peirce seems to have misunderstood the Hegelian notion of *Aufhebung* or 'sublation', which Peirce glosses as meaning 'refuted';²³ but of course, while for Hegel this aspect of the term is important, equally so are its other meanings of 'preserve' and 'raise up', so that to be *aufgehoben* is not to be destroyed or done away with, but to be retained at a higher level, as when spirit retains an indissoluble relation to nature, even while going beyond it to a more developed form of being, so that nature is 'sublated' within it:

At this point we should remember the double meaning of the German expression '*aufheben*'. On the one hand, we understand it to mean 'clear away' or 'cancel', and in that sense we say that a law or regulation is cancelled (*aufgehoben*). But the word also means 'to preserve', and we say in this sense that something is well taken care of (*wohl aufgehoben*). This ambiguity in linguistic usage, through which the same word has a negative and a positive meaning, cannot be regarded as an accident nor yet as a reason to reproach language as if it were a source of confusion. We ought rather to recognize here the speculative spirit of our language, which transcends the 'either-or' of mere understanding.²⁴

It would seem, therefore, that Peirce is mistaken in taking from Hegel's talk of *Aufhebung* that he meant what is sublated to be 'refuted' or 'refutable'.²⁵

It might be said, however, that Peirce does not commit this error in the way I have suggested: for, in saying that Firstness and Secondness are 'in no way refuted nor refutable' he may not necessarily be claiming that for Hegel

²³ EP II, 177.

²⁴ Hegel, *EL*, §96 Addition, 154 [*Werke*, VIII: 204–5]. Cf. also Hegel, *SL*, 107 [*Werke*, V: 114]: "To sublata" [*Aufheben*] has a twofold meaning in the language: on the one hand, it means to preserve, maintain, and equally it also means to cause to cease, to put an end to. Even "to preserve" includes a negative element, namely, that something is removed from its immediacy and so from an existence which is open to external influences, in order to preserve it. Thus what is sublated is at the same time preserved; it has only lost its immediacy but is not on that account annihilated. . . . Something is sublated only in so far as it has entered into unity with its opposite; in this more particular signification as something reflected, it may fittingly be called a *moment*'.

²⁵ Cf. Shapiro, 'Peirce's Critique of Hegel's Phenomenology and Dialectic', 271–2: 'But since Hegel insists that this *Aufhebung* is as much a preserving as a dissolving, Peirce's contention that Hegelian triads are really monads, leaving his own pragmatism as a more genuinely triadic system of philosophy, is a premature judgement.'

Thirdness 'cancels' the other two categories, but rather just that it is said to be that on which the other two categories depend, so that they lack 'their several independent and irrefutable standings in thought', with the result that for Hegel 'an independent solid' Secondness and Firstness are lost, as each is made 'a mere corollary of an unfounded and inconceivable Thirdness'. Peirce may therefore be taken to be saying that it is because Hegel does not give Firstness and Secondness this 'independent' standing that they are *aufgehoben*, in a way that is much closer to Hegel's use of the term, and Hegel's suggestion that 'something is sublated only in so far as it has entered into unity with its opposite'.²⁶

However, the difficulty now is to see clearly where Peirce is to be taken to be differing from Hegel: for, as we have seen, Peirce's own conception of his three categories is also an essentially relational one, in so far as he is prepared to agree with the Hegelian that 'Not only does Thirdness suppose and involve the ideas of Secondness and Firstness, but never will it be possible to find any Secondness or Firstness in the phenomenon that is not accompanied by Thirdness'.²⁷ How can Peirce accept this much, while also insisting that Firstness and Secondness must be given an 'independent and irrefutable' standing in relation to Thirdness? And how can he speak of the latter as being 'built upon' the former categories, when he allows that they cannot be found in the phenomena without the latter? It is thus hard to see how, if he did indeed have an accurate understanding of Hegel's doctrine of *Aufhebung*, Peirce could have come to view Hegel's position as so different from his own.

But, it is not just the doctrine of *Aufhebung* that is at issue in this passage: another, and related, aspect of Peirce's diagnosis of what he sees as Hegel's error is his claim that 'Hegel is possessed with the idea that the Absolute is One', where this suggests that although Hegel may have wanted to conceive of the categories as mutually interdependent, in the end his picture is a monistic one, where the category of Thirdness is prioritized over the other two. This second element of Peirce's diagnostic picture also appears to be vulnerable, however. For, Peirce offers no textual evidence that Hegel is 'possessed' in this way, and in fact all the evidence counts against it, as Hegel is consistently critical of monism, whether in its Schellingian²⁸ or Spinozistic²⁹ varieties. Of course, Peirce is right to say that 'Three absolutes [Hegel] would regard as a ludicrous contradiction

²⁶ Hegel, *SL*, 107 [*Werke*, V: 114]. ²⁷ *EP* II, 177 (*CP* 5.90).

²⁸ Cf. Hegel's famous jibe against Schelling: 'To pit this single insight, that in the Absolute everything is the same, against the full body of articulated cognition, which at least seeks and demands such fulfilment, to palm of its Absolute as the night in which, as the saying goes, all cows are black—this is cognition naively reduced to vacuity' (Hegel, *PS*, 9 [*Werke*, III: 22]).

²⁹ Cf. Hegel, *LHP* III, 288 [*Werke*, XX: 166]: 'As all differences and determinations of things and of consciousness simply go back into the One substance, one may say that in the system of Spinoza all things are merely cast down into this abyss of annihilation. But from this abyss nothing comes out'.

in adjecto’, and that Hegel did indeed want to deny that ‘the three categories have . . . their several independent and irrefutable standings in thought’, if by this Peirce means that each is in no way dependent on the others and so ‘absolute’ in this sense: but such a picture is compatible with making the categories mutually interdependent, rather than reducing them all to one. Thus, Peirce seems to suggest here that there is a contrast between his holism regarding the categories, and Hegel’s monism; but it is hard to take this seriously, when in offering his definition of the Absolute as Concept (*Begriff*),³⁰ Hegel makes clear that the best way to think about the Absolute is not as One, but as a complex interrelation of the categories of universality, particularity, and individuality, where no ‘moment’ is reducible to any of the others:

Taken abstractly, universality, particularity, and singularity³¹ are the same as identity, distinction, and ground. But the universal is what is identical with itself *explicitly in the sense* that it contains the particular and the singular at the same time. Furthermore, the particular is what is distinct or the determinacy, but in the sense that it is inwardly universal and is [actual] as something-singular. Similarly, the singular means that it is *subject*, the foundation that contains the genus and species within itself and is itself substantial. This is the *posited* unseparatedness of the moments in their distinction (§160)—the *clarity* of the Concept, in which each of the distinctions does not constitute a breach, or blurring, but is transparent precisely as such.³²

Very briefly, I take Hegel’s position here to be the following: Starting from any one of the categories of the Concept (universality, particularity, individuality), this category can only be made intelligible in the light of the other two: individuality is constituted by the particularized substance universal (as an individual, I am a man with a determinate set of properties that distinguish me from other men); the substance universal exists only in individuals, through its particularization (the universal ‘man’ exists *in rebus*, as instantiated in *different* men); and particularity is the differentiation of a substance universal, whereby it constitutes an individual (it is qua man that I have the properties which distinguish me from other men). It is the dialectical interconnection between the three categories which Hegel characterizes as ‘development’ (*Entwicklung*), on the grounds that ‘the [moments: i.e. universality, particularity and individuality] that are distinguished are immediately posited at the same time as identical with one another and with the whole, and [each] determinacy is as a free being of

³⁰ Cf. Hegel, *EL*, §160 Addition, 237 [*Werke*, VIII: 308]: ‘As we said earlier, the various stages of the logical Idea can be considered as a series of definitions of the Absolute. Consequently, the definition that results at this point is that “the Absolute is the *Concept*”’.

³¹ In their translation, Geraets, Suchting, and Harris use ‘singular’ rather than ‘individual’ to translate ‘*Einzelne*’, for reasons they give in the translators’ introduction, xix–xx. While appreciating some of the points they make in favour of this practice, and while I will retain its use when quoting from their translation, in the text I will continue to talk of ‘individual’ rather than ‘singular’, in part because this is still the more common translation in the secondary literature.

³² Hegel, *EL*, §164, 242 [*Werke*, VIII: 314].

the whole Concept'.³³ It would appear, then, that considered in terms of the Concept, Hegel's Absolute is to be conceived along holistic and not monistic lines, as involving not just one category to which the others are reduced, but as three categories standing in a relational unity; if this is right, Peirce is therefore mistaken in accusing Hegel of being driven by his conception of the Absolute to prioritize Thirdness over Secondness and Firstness, when in fact his conception of the Absolute seems precisely designed to make room for the sort of holistic picture that Peirce himself wants to endorse.

Thus, in attempting to convince us that his handling of Firstness will differ significantly from that of Hegel, on the grounds that he and Hegel differ on the question of the oneness of the Absolute and the related need for *Aufhebung*, Peirce may be judged to have failed, for on neither issue does Hegel seem to take a significant step beyond a relational conception of the categories, of the sort that Peirce himself sets out to defend. So far, then, we have no reason to think that there is any meaningful critical distance between the two positions.

There is, however, a third aspect to Peirce's diagnostic story which would appear to many to have a greater degree of plausibility, and is certainly close to a central issue raised by critics of Hegel from the beginning. This third aspect concerns what Peirce sees as Hegel's speculative idealist project, summarized as the claim that 'the Universe [is] an evolution of Pure Reason',³⁴ in such a way as to undermine his appreciation of Firstness (and Secondness). Peirce's other critical remarks suggest three ways in which this comment could be taken: as a criticism of Hegel as a determinist and 'necessitarian'; of Hegel as trying to derive the existence of the world from concepts or thoughts; and of Hegel as trying to claim that everything in the world can be grasped in conceptual terms, so that nothing is 'inexpressible and irrational'.

On the first reading of Peirce's criticism here, the error Peirce is attributing to Hegel is the mistake of being a determinist, where this is the view that 'every single fact in the universe is precisely determined by law'.³⁵ Peirce appears to adopt this account of Hegel in drawing the following contrast with his own position:

Now the question arises, what necessarily resulted from that state of things [i.e. potential being]? But the only sane answer is that where freedom was boundless nothing in particular necessarily resulted.

In this proposition lies the prime difference between my objective logic and that of Hegel. He says, if there is any sense in philosophy at all, the whole universe and every

³³ *Ibid.*, §161, 237 [*Werke*, VIII: 308].

³⁴ *EP* II, 177 (*CP* 5.92). Cf. also *EP* I, 256 (*CP* 1.368): 'Finally Hegel's plan of evolving everything out of the abstractest conception by a dialectical procedure, though far from being so absurd as the experientialists think, but on the contrary representing one of the indispensable parts of the course of science, overlooks the weakness of individual man, who wants the strength to wield such a weapon as that'.

³⁵ *EP* I, 298 (*CP* 6.36).

feature of it, however minute, is rational, and was constrained to be as it is by the logic of events, so that there is no principle of action in the universe but reason. But I reply, this line of thought, though it begins rightly, is not exact. A logical slip is committed; and the conclusion reached is manifestly at variance with observation. It is true that the whole universe and every feature of it must be regarded as rational, that is as brought about by the logic of events. But it does not follow that it is *constrained* to be as it is by the logic of events; for the logic of evolution and of life need not be supposed to be of that wooden kind that absolutely constrains a given conclusion. The logic may be that of the inductive or hypothetic inference. This may-be is at once converted into must-be when we reflect that among the facts to be accounted for are such as that, for example, red things look red and not blue and *vice versa*. It is obvious that that cannot be a necessary consequence of abstract being.

The effect of this error of Hegel is that he is forced to deny [the] fundamental character of two elements of experience [i.e. Firstness and Secondness] which cannot result from deductive logic.³⁶

Against this sort of view, Peirce put forward his doctrine of ‘real chance’, where chance is the metaphysical manifestation of the category of Firstness: ‘Chance is First, Law is Second, the tendency to take habits is Third’.³⁷ Given this conception of Firstness, and his view of Hegel as some kind of ‘necessitarian’, Peirce may therefore seem to have good grounds for diagnosing Hegel’s neglect of Firstness in this way.

However, this argument is perhaps not as compelling as it may appear. On the one hand, it is true to say that Hegel did not have a fully developed doctrine of chance of the kind adopted by Peirce—and indeed this would have been difficult for him, given that (as Ian Hacking has argued convincingly)³⁸ Peirce’s doctrine rested on developments within mathematics and the physical sciences which came after Hegel, and which shaped Peirce’s thinking in this respect. On the other hand, it would be wrong to treat Hegel as any kind of determinist, and thus as opposed to Firstness on these grounds. Hegel had few of the metaphysical and scientific commitments that generally lead to determinism (such as materialism and mechanism); and his view of nature in general was that here ‘the play of forms has unbounded and unbridled contingency’.³⁹ In fact, in his philosophy of nature Hegel gives a rather limited role to the notion of laws,⁴⁰ and certainly there is nothing to suggest that he held the universe to be rational in the ‘necessitarian’ sense of thinking its current state was determined from some initial starting point by a strict ‘logic of events’.

A second way of taking Peirce’s claim that Hegel sees ‘the Universe [as] an evolution of Pure Reason’ is perhaps more promising, however. On this view,

³⁶ *CP* 6.218. ³⁷ *EP* I, 297 (*CP* 6.26).

³⁸ See Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), esp. chs. 2 and 23.

³⁹ Hegel, *EN* I, §248, 209 [*Werke*, IX: 28].

⁴⁰ Cf. Hegel, *EN* I, §270Z, 269 [*Werke*, IX: 93]; and also the ‘Observing Reason’ section of the *Phenomenology*.

Hegel is not seen as trying to offer a deterministic treatment of the evolution of the universe, but rather a philosophical account that is designed to deduce the existence of the world and the things in it as metaphysically necessary, by claiming that their existence can be derived a priori from some more fundamental conceptual structure (the Idea).

Now this way of taking Hegel, as aiming to construct a complete explanatory system from some sort of self-positing first cause, forms a clear part of the *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, and constitutes a traditional basis for criticism, from the late Schelling onwards.⁴¹ Like Peirce, these critics accused Hegel of obscuring the distinction between being and thought, and failing to recognize the ‘utterly inexpressible and irrational positive quality’ of the former,⁴² in his attempt to derive it from the latter.⁴³ Schelling and others argued that while a philosophical system might identify certain conditions on being, in a transcendental manner, it could not explain why there is anything which exists to meet these conditions, and so could not answer the ‘question of being’: ‘why does anything exist at all? why is there not rather nothing?’⁴⁴ Hegel was accused of failing to see this,

⁴¹ While drawing a parallel between Peirce’s position and that of Schelling here, I do not claim that there is any question of influence. While Schelling did indeed have a direct impact on Peirce, it seems to have been on the development of Peirce’s cosmology through Schelling’s early philosophy of nature, and not the ‘positive philosophy’ of Schelling’s later years (roughly the late 1820s onwards). Cf. *EP* I, 312–13 (*CP* 6.102): ‘I have begun by showing that *tychism* must give birth to an evolutionary cosmology, in which all the regularities of nature and of mind are regarded as products of growth, and to a Schelling-fashioned idealism which holds matter to be mere specialised and partially deadened mind. I may mention, for the benefit of those who are curious in studying mental biographies, that I was born and reared in the neighborhood of Concord,—I mean in Cambridge,—at the time when Emerson, Hedge, and their friends were disseminating the ideas they had caught from Schelling, and Schelling from Plotinus, from Boehm, or from God knows what minds stricken with the monstrous mysticism of the East’.

⁴² *EP* II, 177–8 (*CP* 5.92). Cf. also *CP* 1.434, where Peirce presents the philosopher in a satirical light reminiscent of Kierkegaard, in a way that suggests a reference to Hegel: ‘This is the principle of excluded middle, which does not hold for anything general, because the general is partially indeterminate; and any philosophy which does not do full justice to the elements of fact in the world (of which there are many, so remote is the philosopher’s high walled garden from the market place of life, where facts hold sway), will be sure sooner or later to become entangled in a quarrel with this principle of excluded middle’. Cf. also *CP* 3.612: ‘... it is not in the nature of concepts adequately to define individuals...’.

⁴³ In a certain sense, although Schelling is the more significant figure here, in part because of his influence on other critics such as Kierkegaard and Marx, the problem he raises is one that Hegel was familiar with from the very beginning, with Wilhelm Krug’s demand (in his ‘Letters on the Newest Idealism’ of 1801) that the new idealism should deduce the existence of his pen; Hegel’s immediate response is to be found in his article ‘How the Ordinary Human Understand takes Philosophy (as Displayed in the Works of Mr Krug)’ published in the *Critical Journal of Philosophy* in 1802 (trans. H. S. Harris in George di Giovanni and H. S. Harris (eds.), *Between Kant and Hegel* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), 292–310 [Werke, II: 188–207]).

⁴⁴ Cf. F. W. J. Schelling, *Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, in *Schellings Werke*, ed. Manfred Schröter (München: Biederstein), V, 213–14; trans. in *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, trans. Andrew Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1994), 147: ‘... it might be admitted [*pace* Hegel] that everything is in the logical Idea, and indeed in *such* a way that it could not be outside it, because what is senseless really cannot ever exist anywhere. But in this way what is logical also presents itself as the merely negative aspect of existence, as that *without* which nothing could exist, from

precisely on the grounds suggested by Peirce, that he failed to recognize that no concept of a thing can capture its individuality, where this consists in its unique qualitative nature, which then remains something that 'Pure Reason' cannot explain or 'account for': the individual has a singular being that we cannot get to through the logical restriction of one concept by another ('not cows in general, but this type of cow, which differs from others in respect of a, b, c . . .').⁴⁵ As a result, these earlier critics told a story similar in this respect to Peirce's: because Hegel mistakenly thought that he could treat reality as the self-articulation of the Idea, he made the sheer fact of the *existence* of things into something 'abstract', rather than recognizing that this existence is 'concrete' in the sense of being prior to thought, as something that thought on its own cannot explain.

Taking Peirce's diagnostic story in this way undoubtedly makes it more powerful, and gives it a much greater degree of textual plausibility. For, as earlier critics like Schelling argued, there seems to be enough in Hegel's writings to suggest that he took 'the Universe to be an evolution of Pure Reason' in this manner, such as his notorious description of the *Logic* as 'the expression of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and finite mind';⁴⁶ his claim that in the transition from the *Logic* to the *Philosophy of Nature*, the Idea 'freely releases itself';⁴⁷ and his incorporation of the ontological argument.⁴⁸ Thus, while few serious interpreters of Hegel would be prepared to accept the first two aspects of Peirce's diagnostic story, this version of the account can claim to have more compelling reasons in its favour.

Nonetheless, of course, even this account will have its critics, just as defenders of Hegel have criticized the earlier interpretation offered by Schelling and others, which it resembles. These defenders have argued that this way of characterizing Hegel's position as a form of Neoplatonic 'emanation theory' misconstrues his philosophical ambition, which was not to offer the Idea as a kind of First Cause, but to show rather that it is a mistake to treat reason as if it demands an answer of this kind, when in fact it might be satisfied without it, thus allowing room for the contingency of events and the sheer facticity of things.⁴⁹ On this view,

which, however, it by no means follows that everything only exists *via* what is logical. Everything can be in the logical Idea without anything being *explained* thereby, as, for example, everything in the sensuous world is grasped in number and measure, which does not therefore mean that geometry or arithmetic explain the sensuous world. The whole world lies, so to speak, in the nets of the understanding or of reason, but the question is *how* exactly it got into those nets, since there is obviously something other and something *more* than mere reason in the world, indeed there is something which strives beyond these barriers'.

⁴⁵ Cf. Hegel, *PS*, 62 [*Werke*, III: 87]: "When Science is faced with the demand—as if it were an acid test it could not pass—that it should deduce, construct, find *a priori*, or however it is put, something called "this thing" or "this one man", it is reasonable that the demand should say which "this thing", or which "this particular man" is *meant*; but it is impossible to say this'.

⁴⁶ Hegel, *SL*, 50 [*Werke*, V: 44].

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 843 [*Werke*, VI: 573].

⁴⁸ Cf. Hegel, *EL*, §51, 98–100 [*Werke*, VIII: 135–7].

⁴⁹ Very broadly speaking, this approach is characteristic of the so-called 'non-metaphysical' approaches to Hegel that are currently in vogue. The term 'non-metaphysical' itself may be traced

then, Peirce would be wrong (just as Schelling and others were wrong) to think that Hegel set out to show that the nature of a colour like red is something that Pure Reason can 'account for', which then might have led him to lose sight of the 'inexpressible and irrational positive quality it has'; rather, Hegel's strategy was to show that the fact that no such account could be given was no threat to reason, in a way that leaves him able to give this 'positive quality' its full worth. In fact, on this reading, Hegel's attitude might be compared to Peirce's own as expressed in 'A Guess at the Riddle':

Most systems of philosophy maintain certain facts or principles as ultimate. In truth, any fact is in one sense ultimate,—that is to say, in its isolated aggressive stubbornness and individual reality. What Scotus calls the haecceities of things, the here-ness and now-ness of them, are indeed ultimate. Why this which is here is such as it is, how, for instance, if it happens to be a grain of sand, it came to be so small and so hard, we can ask; we can also ask how it got carried here, but the explanation in this case merely carries us back to the fact that it was once in some other place, where similar things might naturally be expected to be. Why IT, independently of its general characters, comes to have any definite place in the world, is not a question to be asked; it is simply an ultimate fact. There is also another class of facts of which it is not reasonable to expect an explanation, namely, facts of indeterminacy or variety. Why one definite kind of event is frequent and another rare, is a question to be asked, but a reason for the general fact that of events some kinds are common and some rare, it would be unfair to demand. If all births took place on a given day of the week, or if there were always more on Sundays than on Mondays, that would be a fact to be accounted for, but that they happen in about equal proportions on all the days requires no particular explanation. If we were to find that all the grains of sand on a certain beach separated themselves into two or more sharply discrete classes, as spherical and cubical ones, there would be something to be explained, but that they are of various sizes and shapes, of no definable character, can only be referred to the general manifoldness of nature. Indeterminacy, then, or pure firstness, and haecceity, or pure secondness, are facts not calling for and not capable of explanation. Indeterminacy affords us nothing to ask a question about; haecceity is the *ultima ratio*, the brutal fact that will not be questioned. But every fact of a general or orderly nature calls for an explanation; and logic forbids us to assume in regard to any given fact of that sort that it is of its own nature absolutely inexplicable.⁵⁰

Just as Peirce tries to show here that we can accept that there are limits to explanation without feeling this to be a threat to reason, while insisting that a proper place for the search for explanation can be found, so on the account we

back to Klaus Hartmann, 'Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View', *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Alasdair MacIntyre (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972), 101–24, and various proponents of the view might be said to include Terry Pinkard, Robert Pippin, Alan White, Paul Redding, and many others (although there is no complete unanimity in this approach). I have argued elsewhere that in fact a 'non-metaphysical' reading can be found considerably earlier in the *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, such as in the work of the British Hegelians: see Robert Stern, 'British Hegelianism: A Non-Metaphysical View?', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 2 (1994), 293–321; repr. above as Ch. 4.

⁵⁰ EP I, 274–5 (CP 1.405).

have been considering Hegel does the same, in a way that shows he then has no *need* to provide a system of any Neoplatonic variety, in so far as the ‘question of being’ can be treated as a ‘question not to be asked’.⁵¹

It might be argued, however, that even if it is an exaggeration to claim that Hegel wanted to ‘account for’ everything in the world in explanatory terms, and thus that the Neoplatonist reading of his idealism is mistaken, Peirce is still right to identify a limitation in Hegel’s thinking over ‘the immediate as it is in its immediacy, . . . the present in its distinct positive presentness’, where this limitation can be explained without treating Hegel as a kind of Neoplatonist. For, it could be argued, although Hegel might not have been an *explanatory* rationalist (and so may not have been committed to treating Pure Reason as some sort of First Cause), he was undoubtedly a *conceptual* rationalist, in the sense of refusing to recognize any limits to conceptual thought: and it is *this*, it might be said, that really lies behind his hostility to immediacy, and which can thus form the fundamental feature of Peirce’s diagnostic story (just as it also plays a role in the story told by Schelling and others). For, on this account, Hegel recognized that concepts are always mediated, and so as a result he was required to reject ‘the immediate as it is in its immediacy’, in order to ensure the claims he wanted to make about the transparency of reality to our conceptual capacities. Let me explain this diagnostic story further, as a third way of taking Peirce’s view that Hegel treats ‘the Universe [as] an evolution of Pure Reason’.

For Hegel and his critics, to be immediate is to be unrelated to other things, to be self-identical, to have an intrinsic nature, to be simple or independent, while to be mediated is to be related to other things, to be determined by those relations, to be complex or dependent.⁵² Now, because Hegel was a conceptual holist, he held that no concept can have any content unless it is mediated, that is, unless it stands in some relation of identity and difference to other concepts: for example, while the concept ‘dog’ is related to the concept ‘cat’ in so far as to have the concept of each is to conceive of an animal, they are only determinate concepts in so far as this involves conceiving of animals in different ways. However, if all concepts must be mediated in this manner, then for conceptual thought to encompass everything there is, both in the world and in our experience of the world, there must be nothing here that is immediate, as this would mean that it could not be conceptually articulated: for if something existed immediately, we could not apply a concept to it, for any such concept

⁵¹ Cf. Alan White, *Absolute Knowledge: Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics*, (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1983), 148: ‘Hegel [is not] intimidated by Schelling’s “final question,” the puzzle: “Why is there anything at all? Why is there not nothing?” . . . That there is, in the broadest sense, “something” rather than “nothing” is a fact that cannot have a reason; that reason would have to be grounded in a presupposed “something,” but there can be no such transcendent “something” beyond the “something” that is the whole’.

⁵² Cf. Hegel, *EL*, §74, 120 [*Werke*, VIII: 163]: ‘The form of immediacy gives to the *particular* the determination of *being*, or of relating *itself to itself*’, and Hegel, *SL*, 85 [*Werke*, V: 86], where Hegel says that mediation ‘contains a reference to another, and hence to *negation*’.

will be mediated. Hegel was thus seen as setting out to undercut any claim to immediacy in this respect.

This Hegelian strategy can be found, it was argued, in Hegel's dispute with F. H. Jacobi. Jacobi had held that knowledge of God must be non-conceptual, as any concept is mediated by a contrast to another concept, whereas God cannot be mediated in any way, as nothing exists outside Him to which he could be related. Jacobi therefore argued that God is an immediate being, who can only be known immediately, as pure presence or sheer being. However, as we have seen, Hegel could not grant any status to this form of knowledge, as this would put limitations on conceptual cognition, as we would lack any concept with which to grasp Him. He therefore argued that this immediate knowledge claimed by Jacobi is in fact empty, as it tells us nothing about the nature of God, but only that He is—but (Hegel insisted) in existing as pure presence in this way, God would therefore be abstract and not concrete:

Finally, the immediate knowing of God [proposed by Jacobi] is only supposed to extend to [the affirmation] *that* God is, not *what* God is; for the latter would be a cognition and would thus lead to mediated knowing. Hence God, as the object⁵³ of religion, is expressly restricted to *God in general*, to the indeterminate supersensible, and the content of religion is reduced to a minimum . . . It gives the *universal* the one-sidedness of an *abstraction*, so that God becomes an essence lacking all determination; but God can only be called spirit inasmuch as he is known as inwardly *mediating himself with himself*. Only in this way is he *concrete*, living, and spirit; and that is just why the *knowing* of God as spirit contains mediation within it.⁵⁴

The issue, then, is both ontological and epistemological: Can there be any immediacy, where what is immediate would have the status of merely 'being' (a *that*) rather than determinate being (a *what*), since all determinacy relies on mediation? And, if there could be an immediacy of this sort, could we have any awareness of it, since all conceptual thought uses concepts that are mediated? Hegel's critics argued that his rationalism drove him to answer both questions negatively, as he could not allow for an immediacy that lies outside the bounds of conceptual knowledge, or for a non-conceptual awareness of it (as when we are aware *that* God is, but not *what* He is). On this account, then, Hegel was thus obliged to do just what Peirce claims, and treat 'presentness, presentness as it is present, present presentness' as '*abstract*'.⁵⁵

⁵³ The translators used 'ob-ject' as their rendering of 'Gegenstand' as opposed to 'Objekt'.

⁵⁴ Hegel, *EL*, §§73–4, 120 [*Werke*, VIII: 163].

⁵⁵ For a representative expression of this criticism, cf. Andrew Bowie, *Introduction to German Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 91–2:

The crucial fact about this approach in the arguments against Hegel is that being transcends what we can say of it. Any particular predicate we attach to 'there is an x such that . . .' can be negated as the thing changes, or as we decide the predicate was falsely applied, or even as x ceases to be something we think exists at all, but *being* is not altered by this. Being is therefore the ineliminable basis upon which we can revise our ideas of what there is . . . This is the difference between *what*

We have found, therefore, that while some of Peirce's diagnostic claims about Hegel are prone to failure, this does not give us reason to reject his view of Hegel with respect to Firstness out of hand, as a better account can be constructed out of some of his other remarks. It therefore seems that Peirce's criticisms of Hegel cannot be dismissed on these grounds alone; we must therefore proceed to look in more detail at what those criticisms amount to.

III

One way to understand those criticisms, is to see them as directed at a Hegelian position which runs as follows:

In order to get a concept of being which has a denotation, we must apply the Spinozistic principle: We must determine by negating. In doing so, we get a concept of being that is something. We now locate a being that is distinct from something else. In other words, to talk about a 'something' is to imply a 'something else'. What this implies, furthermore, is that no 'something' can ever, so to speak, stand alone; its identity conditions must include the identity conditions of that which it is not. For example, to say something is yellow means (and it could have no meaning if it could not be said) that it is neither blue, black, brown, white, nor red, and so on. However detailed a description I give of the properties of a thing—the properties without which the thing in question would not be this specific thing—that description would be incomprehensible if the negation of those properties were not understood. If I say about butter that it is yellow, soft, and edible, it would be incomprehensible if I did not know what it would mean to say that yellow is a color that contrasts with all the other colors, such as red, green, blue, and so on, or to say that softness is that which contrasts, for example, with hardness and fluidity. To say about something that its defining property is, say, A, and A contrasts with B, C, and D, is to say that A gets its meaning by being non-B, non-C, and non-D. A is the positive value, whereas B, C, and D are the negative values (with respect to A).⁵⁶

On this account, Hegel defends a view that is holistic at three levels. It is *conceptually* holistic, in holding that a concept like 'yellow' is determined by its relation of difference from other colour concepts; it is *ontologically* holistic, in holding that an entity (such as a quality, individual, or event) is determined by its relation of difference from other entities; and it is *phenomenologically* holistic, in holding that there cannot be an awareness of an isolated entity, that stands in no relation to others, as this would just give us an awareness of 'being in general', not of any single item. Now, Peirce would seem to accept the Spinozistic principle of determination through negation at the conceptual level, and thus this aspect

there is ('entities'), and the always underlying fact *that* there is (the fact of 'being'), which is the condition of predicating anything of anything at all. Hegel wished to deny this distinction. He thinks being is reducible to its concept, to its 'whatness', because its 'thatness' is just what we have so far failed to determine by a concept.

⁵⁶ Justus Hartnack, *An Introduction to Hegel's Logic* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 20–1.

of Hegel's position;⁵⁷ but his criticism of Hegel is that his holism at this level 'blinded' him to the fact that there can be immediacy or Firstness at other levels, in the sense that at these levels not everything is what it is by virtue of what it is not.⁵⁸

Against Hegel's phenomenological position, therefore, Peirce challenges Hegel's case against sense-certainty in the *Phenomenology*. There, sense-certainty is presented by Hegel as a form of monadic or atomistic awareness, because it tries to 'apprehend' the world without 'comprehending' it, by just immediately experiencing things without thinking about them; and because it does not think about them, it does not try to analyze things or relate them to one another, but just to grasp them as they present themselves to it in their singularity:

I, *this* particular I, am certain of *this* particular thing, not because I, *qua* consciousness, in knowing it have developed myself or thought about it in various ways; and also not because *the thing* of which I am certain, in virtue of a host of distinct qualities, would be in its own self a rich complex of connections, or related in various ways to other things. Neither of these has anything to do with the truth of sense-certainty: here neither I nor the thing has the significance of a complex process of mediation; the 'I' does not have the significance of a manifold imagining or thinking; nor does the 'thing' signify something that has a host of qualities. On the contrary, the thing *is*, and it *is*, merely because it *is*. It *is*, this is the essential point for sense-knowledge, and this pure *being*, or this simple immediacy, constitutes its *truth*. Similarly, certainty as a *connection* is an *immediate* pure connection: consciousness is '*I*', nothing more, a pure 'This'; the singular consciousness knows a pure 'This', or the single item.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Cf. *EP* I, 45 (*CP* 5.294), where Peirce is discussing the definition of the concepts of '*being*' and of '*one, two, and three*':

Now I shall admit at once that neither of these conceptions can be separated into two others higher than itself; and in that sense, therefore, I fully admit that certain very simple and eminently intellectual notions are absolutely simple. But though these concepts cannot be defined by genus and difference, there is another way in which they can be defined. All determination is by negation; we can first recognize any character only by putting an object which possesses it into comparison with an object which possesses it not. A conception, therefore which was quite universal in every respect would be unrecognizable and impossible.

Peirce also mentions the determination principle at *EP* I, 18 n. (*CP* 5.223, n. 2), but to what effect is less clear.

⁵⁸ Cf. Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 188, where Pippin voices the criticism that Hegel is guilty of 'confusing the requirement that any being be characterized "contrastively," in a way that will distinguish it from some other, with the claim that *beings* actually oppose and negate each other and, in their opposition and negation, are essentially related, could not be what they are outside such a relation. The latter claim then, not only represents a conflation with the first, but is itself suspect, since it again confuses logical with ontological issues. It appears to claim that a thing's not being something else is a property of it, part of what makes it what it is'. Cf. Peirce *CP* 1.302: 'The idea of First is predominant in the idea of freshness, life, freedom. The free is that which has not another behind it, determining its actions; but so far as the idea of the negation of another enters, the idea of another enters; and such negative idea must be put in the background, or else we cannot say that the Firstness is predominant'.

⁵⁹ Hegel, *SL*, 58–9 [*Werke*, III: 82–3].

The question Peirce takes Hegel to raise, however, is whether in trying to be aware of 'a pure "This", or the single item' in this atomistic manner, sense-certainty can have an awareness of anything other than 'the empty abstraction of pure being',⁶⁰ on the grounds that, unless sense-certainty is consciousness of the individual in a way that relates it to other individuals, it does not experience anything determinate at all, but the contentless indeterminacy of pure being. Hegel's phenomenological claim thus appears to be that consciousness cannot be of a simple individual as such, for any such awareness would lack content.

Now, against this argument for holism at the phenomenological level, Peirce offers his counterexamples, which are designed to convince us that feeling *can* conceivably present us with experience that is purely monadic or atomistic in this way, as when we are conscious of nothing but a colour, a taste, a smell, or the present moment simply as they are, unrelated to anything else:

The pure idea of a *monad* is not that of an object. For an object is over against me. But it is much nearer an object than it is to a conception of the self, which is still more complex. There must be some determination, or suchness, otherwise we shall think nothing at all. But it must not be an abstract suchness, for that has a reference to a special suchness. It must be a special suchness with some degree of determination, not, however, thought as more or less. There is to be no comparison. So that it is a suchness *sui generis*. Imagine me to make and in a slumberous condition to have a vague, unobjectified, still less unsubjectified, sense of redness, or of salt taste, or of an ache, or of grief or joy, or of a prolonged musical note. That would be, as nearly as possible, a purely monadic state of feeling.⁶¹

Using examples of this sort, and the ones from the Harvard lecture mentioned earlier, Peirce seems to suggest that the Hegelian claim that experience of 'a pure "This"', unrelated to anything else must be empty, is mistaken: for sensory qualities, emotional states, and the present instant,⁶² can be experienced in this way without consciousness becoming empty or grasping nothing at all.

⁶⁰ Hegel, *SL*, 78 [*Werke*, III: 106].

⁶¹ *CP* 1.303. Cf. also *MS* 284: 51 and 63 (*CP* 1.313); *CP* 1.318; *CP* 6.198; *CP* 6.376; *CP* 8.267.

⁶² Cf. *CP* 2.85:

Let us now consider what could appear as being in the present instant were it utterly cut off from past and future. We can only guess; for nothing is more occult than the absolute present. There plainly could be no action; and without the possibility of action, to talk of binarity would be to utter words without meaning. There might be a sort of consciousness, or feeling, with no self; and this feeling might have its tone. Notwithstanding what William James has said, I do not think there could be any continuity like space, which, though it may perhaps appear in an instant in an educated mind, I cannot think it could do so if it had no time at all; and without continuity of parts of the feeling could not be synthesized, and therefore there would be no recognizable parts. There could not even be a degree of vividness of the feeling; for this [the degree of vividness] is the comparative amount of disturbance of general consciousness by a feeling. At any rate, such shall be our hypothesis, and whether or not it is psychologically true or not is of no consequence. The world would be reduced to a quality of unanalysed feeling. There would be an utter absence of binarity. I cannot call it unity; for even unity supposes plurality. I may call its form Firstness, Orience, or Originality. It would be something *which is what it is without reference to anything else*

It might be said, however, that Hegel can claim against Peirce's position what he claims against sense-certainty: namely, that this experience would be 'unutterable',⁶³ because nothing can be *said* about it using concepts, because (as Hartnack put it earlier) 'to say something is yellow means . . . that it is neither blue, black, brown, white, nor red, and so on'. Now, Peirce's response to this point would seem to be to accept it, but to argue that this is no ground to treat Firstness as something we cannot experience, but only to accept that what we can experience may go beyond the bounds of what we can articulate or reflect upon:

[Firstness] cannot be articulately thought: assert it, and it has already lost its characteristic innocence; for assertion always implies a denial of something else. Stop to think of it, and it has flown! What the world was to Adam on the day he opened his eyes to it, before he had drawn any distinctions, or had become conscious of his own existence—that is first, present, immediate, fresh, new, initiative, original, spontaneous, free, vivid, conscious, and evanescent. Only, remember that every description of it must be false to it.⁶⁴

Peirce therefore allows (indeed, insists) that it is a fundamental feature of our experience of Firstness that it cannot be conceptualized or thought about, precisely for the reasons that Hegel gives; but he argues that this does not show that no such experience is possible, but only that it must remain ineffable.

Peirce also considers another objection, which is that even if we could have the experience of a whistling sound, or red colour, or joyous emotion, in fact these phenomena are not really simple or self-related; and if this is right, then the Hegelian could presumably argue that these cases are not properly counterexamples to his position:

Suppose I begin by inquiring of you, Reader, in what particulars a feeling of redness or of purple without beginning, end, or change; or an eternally sounding and unvarying railway whistle; or a sempitern thrill of joyous delight—or rather, such as would afford us delight, but supposed in that respect to be quite neutral—that should constitute the entire universe, would differ from substance? I suppose you will tell me that no such thing could be alone in the universe because, firstly, it would require a mind to feel it, which would not be the feeling itself;⁶⁵ secondly, the color or sound and probably the thrill of delight would consist of vibrations; thirdly, none of them could last forever without a

within it or without it, regardless of all force and of all reason. Now the world is full of this element of irresponsibility, free, Originality.

⁶³ Hegel, *PS*, 66 [*Werke*, III: 92].

⁶⁴ *EP* I, 248 (*CP* 1.357). Cf. also *CP* 1.310; *EP* I, 41 (5.289); *CP* 1.358; *EP* II, 153 (5.49).

⁶⁵ Cf. Hegel, *PS*, 59 [*Werke*, III: 83]: 'An actual sense-certainty is not merely this pure immediacy, but an *instance* of it. Among the countless differences cropping up here we find in every case that the crucial one is that, in sense-certainty, pure being at once splits up into what we have called the two "Thises", one "This" as "I", and the other "This" as object. When *we* reflect on this difference, we find that neither one nor the other is only *immediately* present in sense-certainty, but each is at the same time *mediated*: I have this certainty *through* something else, viz. the thing; and it, similarly, is in sense-certainty *through* something else, viz. through the "I".'

flow of time; fourthly, each would have a quality, which would be a determination in several respects, the color in hue, luminosity, chroma, and vividness; the sound in pitch, timbre (itself highly complex), loudness and vividness; the delight more or less sensual, more or less emotional, more or less elevated, etc., and fifthly, each would require a physical substratum altogether disparate to the feeling itself.⁶⁶

However, Peirce responds to this objection by arguing that while in fact colours, sounds and so on can be shown to be complex and interrelated in these ways, this is not how they present themselves to us in experience, which is what matters for the phenomenological claim he is making:

But I point out to you that these things are only known to us by extraneous experience; none of them are either seen in the color, heard in the sound, or felt in the visceral sensation. Consequently, there can be no logical difficulty in supposing them to be absent, and for my part, I encounter not the slightest psychological difficulty in doing so, either. To suppose, for example, that there is a flow of time, or any degree of vividness, be it high or low, seems to me quite as uncalled for as to suppose that there is freedom of the press or a magnetic field.⁶⁷

We have seen, then, that Peirce feels entitled to claim that ‘a consciousness in which there is no comparison, no relation, no recognized multiplicity. . . , so no change, no imagination of what is potentially there, no reflexion’ would not be empty (as Hegel suggests) but could still contain an awareness of something with ‘a simple positive character’, such as a red colour, an ache, or a whistle. As a result, Peirce feels he can treat Hegel’s ontological holism with some scepticism: for if qualities can be experienced by us in a monistic way (of if we can *conceive* of so experiencing them), then this implies that they can also have a monadic existence:

Firstness is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, positively and without reference to anything else. . . . The typical ideas of firstness are qualities of feeling, or mere appearances. The scarlet of your royal liveries, the quality itself, independently of its being perceived or remembered, is an example. . . . The quality of red is not thought of as belonging to you, or as attached to liveries. It is simply a peculiar positive possibility regardless of anything else.⁶⁸

What Peirce seems to suggest here is that ‘qualities of feeling’ should not be thought of in the relational way implied by Hegel’s use of the Spinozistic principle

⁶⁶ *CP* 1.305.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* Cf. also *MS* 478: 145–6: ‘The first category is simply the phenomenon as it is present in itself regardless of anything else. It therefore is absolutely simple and without parts; for parts are different from one another, and no one is more identical with the whole than is another; so tha[t] none is the whole; therefore to say that the present phenomenon has parts is to take into consideration something other than itself. No doubt that the presentation as a fact has parts; but this is considering it *as a fact*, which is just what it is not; for a fact is a dualistic abstraction’.

⁶⁸ *CP* 8.328–9, and Charles S. Hardwick (ed.), *Semiotic and Significs: The Correspondence between Charles S. Peirce and Victoria Lady Welby* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977), 24–5.

‘all determination is negation’: for Peirce, what gives a quality its determination is intrinsic to it, not its difference from anything else. We might put this point as follows: for Peirce, it is not because red differs from blue that it is red; rather, it is red ‘in its own right’, so to speak, just as ‘[t]he present is just what it is . . . utterly ignoring anything else’.⁶⁹ Peirce would thus seem to offer a position that is strongly opposed to Hegel and his claim that ‘reality is quality, determinate being; consequently, it contains the moment of the negative and is through this alone the determinate being that it is’.⁷⁰ This, for Peirce, is to ignore the fact that qualities have a ‘positive presentness’ of their own, which does not depend on their relation of difference to anything else, just as they can be experienced by consciousness ‘regardless of aught else’ in a similarly monadic way.

Underlying Peirce’s ontological position here, and perhaps motivating it in a way that he does not make fully explicit, is certainly an important worry for the Hegelian. The worry concerns the ultimate coherence of a holism founded on Spinozistic determination principle, and is as follows: if, as Hegel seems to be claiming, ‘only in virtue of what it is not, is any quality precisely what it is—or, for that matter, anything at all’,⁷¹ then everything is dependent on its relation to other things to be what it is; but, if everything is what it is by virtue of its relation to something else, what sense does it make to think of them as *relata* standing in *relations*, and thus what sense does it make to think of A as determined by its difference from B, when neither have any intrinsic being or ‘Firstness’?⁷² And, if everything is dependent for its being on something else, won’t the explanation of the existence of any individual lead us round in a circle, and so leave the system as a whole unexplained?⁷³

However, I want to suggest that while stated in this way, it may look as if the disagreement between Peirce and Hegel over Firstness is clear, when looked at more closely, there is perhaps less distance between them than may initially appear. For, on the one hand, at the phenomenological level, Hegel seems to allow that consciousness *can* have the kind of experience of immediacy that

⁶⁹ *EP* II, 150 (*CP* 5.44).

⁷⁰ Hegel, *SL*, 112 [*Werke*, V: 119]. Cf. also Hegel, *PS*, 69 [*Werke*, III: 95]: ‘. . . if the many determinate properties were strictly indifferent to one another, if they were simply and solely self-related, they would not be determinate; for they are only determinate in so far as they *differentiate* themselves from one another, and *relate* themselves to *others* as to their opposites’.

⁷¹ Errol E. Harris, *An Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), 102.

⁷² This worry has recently been raised (and addressed) by Robert Brandom: see *Tales of the Mighty Dead* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 205: ‘. . . positing the property as—understanding it just in terms of—mediation, exclusion, relation to others puts the relations in place without yet providing the conceptual resources to make sense of the *relata*. This is essentially the position I gestured at above, as threatening to leave us with no ultimately intelligible conception of properties (facts, “forces,” etc.) as elements in a holistic relational structure articulated by relations of determinate exclusion’. Cf. also *ibid.*, 187–8.

⁷³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 205: ‘The conception of reciprocal sense dependence threatens to send us around in (infinite!) circles, without making progress on determining the content of any of the senses we run through. How are we to understand the whole thing as getting off the ground?’

Peirce argues for in his examples; and at the ontological level, Peirce seems to accept much of the force of Hegel's holism.

Beginning with the phenomenological issue, although it is seldom recognized, I think it is clear that Hegel would have accepted that an experience of the kind Peirce identifies in his examples is possible, and forms an aspect of consciousness. In the discussion of 'sensuous consciousness' (*das sinnliche Bewußtsein*) in the third book of the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences, The Philosophy of Mind* (which parallels his discussion of sense-certainty [*die sinnliche Gewißheit*] in the *Phenomenology*), Hegel makes plain that this is in fact what the most basic form of consciousness amounts to, offering an account of it similar in many ways to Peirce's description of Firstness:

[Sensuous consciousness] is distinguished from the other modes of consciousness [i.e. perception and the understanding], not by the fact that in it alone the object is given to us by the senses, but rather by the fact that at this stage the object, whether inner or outer, has no other thought-determination than first, that of simply being, and secondly, of being an independent Other over against me, something reflected into itself, an individual confronting me as an individual, an immediate. . . . [F]or sensuous consciousness as such only the said thought-determination remains, in virtue of which the manifold particular content of sensations concentrates itself into a unity that is outside of me, a unity which at this stage is known by me in an immediate, isolated manner. It enters my consciousness randomly, and then disappears out of it again. To me it is therefore something which, with regard to both its existence and its constitution, is simply given, so that I know nothing of whence it comes, why it has this specific nature, or whether it is something true.⁷⁴

In characterizing sensuous consciousness as a 'mode' of consciousness, as a form consciousness can take, Hegel is acknowledging that this is a way that we can experience the world, rather than arguing (as Peirce suggests) that experience must always be complex and mediated, so that sensuous consciousness must always be empty. I therefore do not think that Hegel would deny that the examples that Peirce offers to illustrate our experience of 'presentness' or Firstness are possibilities for us: on the contrary, it is something very like such experiences which Hegel thinks we can have at the level of sensuous consciousness.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Hegel, *EM*, §418Z, 160 (trans. modified) [*Werke*, X: 209].

⁷⁵ It might be pointed out, however, that Hegel's account of sensuous consciousness just cited does not exactly correspond to Peirce's characterization of Firstness, in so far as sensuous consciousness involves a self/object distinction, in a way that Firstness does not. However, in earlier discussions in the 'Anthropology' section of the *Philosophy of Mind*, Hegel seems quite happy to allow that there can be modes of 'purely sensitive life' that lack even this distinction: see e.g. Hegel, *EM*, §406, 105 [*Werke*, X: 138]: 'The purely sensitive life [das Gefühlsleben] . . . is just this form of immediacy without any distinctions between subjective and objective, between intelligent personality and objective world'; *ibid.*, §400Z, 75, trans. modified [*Werke*, X: 100]: '. . . the soul to the extent that it *only* feels [empfindet], does not yet grasp itself as a subject confronting an object'; and *ibid.*, §402Z, 90 [*Werke*, X: 119]: 'The simple unity of the soul, its serene ideality, does not yet grasp itself in its distinction from an external world'.

It is understandable, however, that Peirce thought otherwise. For Peirce focused, like many readers of Hegel, not on the discussion of sensuous consciousness in the *Philosophy of Mind*, but on the discussion of sense-certainty in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*; and there (as we have seen) Hegel may indeed appear to be saying that consciousness involves no awareness of ‘the present in its direct positive presentness’, because the outlook of sense-certainty is incoherent. However, it is important to recognize that the incoherence Hegel is concerned with here is of a particular sort, namely the claim by sensuous consciousness to be ‘the *richest* kind of knowledge, indeed a knowledge of infinite wealth . . . [and] the *truest* knowledge’.⁷⁶ Thus, in criticizing sensuous consciousness under the heading of sense-certainty, Hegel is claiming not that no such consciousness is possible, but rather just that it is epistemologically impoverished, and fails to live up to its cognitive billing. For it claims to give us a rich knowledge of things in their individuality, but it in fact does no such thing—and Hegel’s point about the ineffability of sense-certainty is designed to make *this* point clear. Hegel can therefore accept the Peircean claim, that sensuous consciousness is capable of giving us an awareness of ‘presentness as it is present’, while insisting on what appears to be his main contention, that such an awareness is not sufficient to give us much by way of knowledge, so that sensuous consciousness can hardly claim to be a cognitive standpoint of ‘infinite wealth’.⁷⁷

Now, of course, it could be suggested that Hegel’s argument against sensuous consciousness here is flawed, and that this form of consciousness would not merely give an awareness of ‘being in general’, but of individuals qua individuals, just as it claims. However, I do not think Peirce himself can press any such argument: for he seems to *agree* with Hegel that Firstness is an experience of sheer ‘presentness’, not of any *individuality* with criteria of identity over time, and for this Secondness and Thirdness are required. Thus, Peirce writes: ‘Individuality is another conception in which Secondness is the more prominent element, although Firstness, of course, is a constituent of it. It is the Firstness of a most genuine Second’;⁷⁸ and goes on to comment:

The conception of a *First*, improperly called an ‘object,’ and of a *Second* should be carefully distinguished from those of Firstness and Secondness, both of which are involved in the conception of First and Second. A First is something to which (or, more accurately, to some substitute for which, thus introducing Thirdness) attention may be directed. It thus

⁷⁶ Hegel, *PS*, 58 [*Werke*, III: 82]. Cf. Shapiro, ‘Peirce’s Critique of Hegel’s Phenomenology and Dialectic’, 271: ‘Hegel’s intent [in the analysis of sense-certainty in the *Phenomenology*] is not to describe immediacy as a general form of consciousness . . . but to consider whether the consciousness of immediacy is at the same time a valid cognitive stance . . . In so far as Hegel has a general phenomenology in Peirce’s sense, it is part of his *philosophy* of subjective mind, and there he does recognize a “monadic” state of “sensitive awareness” analogous to Peircean Firstness . . .’.

⁷⁷ Cf. Hegel, *EM*, §418Z, 160 [*Werke*, X: 207–8] and *EL*, §§72–4, 120–1 [*Werke*, VIII: 162–4], where Hegel emphasizes not that a sensuous consciousness or ‘immediate knowing’ of God would be impossible, but that it would be cognitively very impoverished.

⁷⁸ *EP* II, 271.

involves Secondness as well as Firstness; while a Second is a First *considered as* (here comes Thirdness) a subject of a Secondness. An *object* in the proper sense is a Second.⁷⁹

As Peirce makes clear, in his own terminology, Firstness or ‘presentness’ is not a category that includes individuals: thus, while ‘[w]e can suppose a being whose whole life consists in one unvarying feeling of redness’,⁸⁰ that being would not have any awareness of individual entities, which is precisely the kind of limitation Hegel attributes to sensuous consciousness, and which he wants us to recognize in the transition to perception. Once again, therefore, there seems little reason to separate Peirce and Hegel on this question.

Moreover, in a manner that also resembles Hegel’s position, Peirce’s phenomenological account also in the end moves away from giving undue privilege to Firstness, in his suggestion that what he calls the ‘phaneron’ (namely, what presents itself in consciousness)⁸¹ is to be viewed in terms of all three categories, not just Firstness:

What room, then, is there for *secundans* and *tertians*? Was there some mistake in our demonstration that they must also have their place in the phaneron? No, there was no mistake. I said that the phaneron is made up entirely of qualities of feeling as truly as space is entirely made up of points. There is a certain *protoidal* aspect—I coin the word for the need—under which space is truly made up of nothing but points. Yet it is certain that no collection of points—using the word collection to mean merely a plural, without the idea of objects being brought together—no collection of points, no matter how abnumerable its multitude, can in itself constitute space. . . .⁸²

Thus, while Peirce’s commitment to Firstness may suggest a commitment to the possibility of phenomenological atomism in contrast to Hegel’s holism, in the end this commitment is softened by Peirce’s willingness to give a role to Secondness and Thirdness at this level too, in a way that parallels Hegel’s move from sensuous consciousness, to perception, to the understanding. Thus, as has been noted by other commentators, Peirce himself arguably in the end gives Firstness no great ‘independence’,⁸³ and for reasons that are akin to Hegel’s.

Turning now to the ontological issue, here it is Peirce who can be drawn closer to Hegel, once it is recognized that the ontological status he gives to Firstness as a ‘mode of being’ is rather thinner than it may initially have appeared. Thus, Peirce states that Firstness ‘can only be a possibility’, on the grounds that ‘as long as things do not act upon one another there is no sense or meaning in

⁷⁹ *EP* II, 271, n. Cf. also *CP* 6.375; *CP* 7.528; *CP* 6.340. ⁸⁰ *EP* II, 270.

⁸¹ Cf. *CP* 1.284: ‘[B]y the *phaneron* I mean the collective total of all that is in any way or in any sense present to the mind, quite regardless of whether it corresponds to any real thing or not’.

⁸² *CP* 1.319.

⁸³ Cf. John F. Boler, *Charles Peirce and Scholastic Realism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963), 122–3: ‘[Firstness] is certainly the least clear of the categories, and the one that receives the least attention. To some extent this is due to the predominance of thirdness in Peirce’s treatment: almost any act of the mind leads so immediately to thirdness . . . that the priority of firstness is not only left behind, but begins to seem unimportant’.

saying that they have a being, unless it be that they are such in themselves that they may perhaps come into relations with others';⁸⁴ and that 'The being of a monadic quality is mere potentiality, without existence. Existence is purely dyadic';⁸⁵ and that:

We see that the idea of a quality is the idea of a phenomenon or partial phenomenon considered as a monad, without reference to its parts or components and without reference to anything else. We must not consider whether it exists, or is only imaginary, because existence depends on its subject having a place in the general system of the universe. An element separated from everything else and in no world but itself, may be said, when we come to reflect on it in isolation, to be merely potential.⁸⁶

Now, this talk by Peirce of Firstness in terms of 'possibility' or 'potentiality' has puzzled commentators. So, for example, Thomas Goudge conjectures that Peirce may mean that a universal property (e.g. redness) is a potentiality because it may be instantiated in many things, or that it is a material potentiality or power;⁸⁷ but he confesses that '[n]either of [these] interpretations seems to me compatible with what Peirce had previously said about Firstness'.⁸⁸ However, taken in the context of the debate with Hegel, Peirce's remarks become clearer. For, it seems that he is claiming that while Hegel is wrong to think that Firstness has *no* ontological status (where to Hegel, the 'empty abstraction of pure being' he attributes to the 'This' of sense-certainty is equivalent to 'nothing'), Hegel is right to think that Firstness does not have the rich ontological status of existence;⁸⁹ it therefore has being for Peirce, but only in the way that possibility or potentiality has being, not in the way that a realized actuality does. This does not make the difference between Hegel and Peirce negligible (and relates to what Peirce sees as his disagreement with Hegel over the latter's neglect for possibility over actuality);⁹⁰ but it arguably reduces the difference between them, in so far as both agree that as far as what exists is concerned, something like Hegel's relational picture holds.

It is also notable that while Peirce recognizes the apparent difficulty for such a relational picture mentioned above, he holds that this difficulty is no reason to put this picture aside, where the problem is that if everything is dependent on its relation to something else, won't the explanation of the existence of any individual lead us round in a circle, thus leaving the totality unexplained?:

A thing without opposition *ipso facto* does not exist. Of course the question arises, if everything that exists exists by its reactions, how does the total collection of things exist?

⁸⁴ CP 1.25. ⁸⁵ CP 1.328.

⁸⁶ CP 1.424. Cf. also CP 1.351; CP 1.432; CP 1.457; CP 1.461; CP 5.429; CP 6.342.

⁸⁷ Thomas A. Goudge, *The Thought of C. S. Peirce* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), 86–7.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* ⁸⁹ See CP 6.349 for Peirce's distinction between existence, reality, and being.

⁹⁰ Cf. CP 8.126: 'This makes an apparent difficulty for [Hegel's] idealism. For if all reality is of the nature of an actual idea, there seems to be no room for possibility or for any lower mode than actuality, among the categories of being'.

This is a legitimate and valuable question, the answer to which brings out a new idea. But this is not the time to consider it . . . That question about the totality of things throws no doubt upon the manifest truth that existence lies in opposition.⁹¹

IV

In the final analysis, then, Peirce and Hegel can be brought closer together than may at first have appeared; and on reflection this is not so surprising. For, as Peirce himself saw, by treating Firstness as part of a triad of categories alongside Secondness and Thirdness, his outlook is close to Hegel's and provides grounds for a 'hearty friendship' between them. Once it is recognized that on the one hand, Hegel's commitment to Thirdness is not meant to 'do away with' Firstness (or Secondness), and on the other that to bring in Secondness and Thirdness, Peirce cannot make Firstness too 'independent' of the other categories, then a convergence is to be expected. We have seen, then, that Peirce's critique of Hegel on Firstness is somewhat elusive. For, while it raises certain critical issues for Hegel, it is not clear how far Peirce can really make those issues into genuine points of disagreement, given the broader similarities between Hegel and himself on questions concerning the categories, the nature of knowledge, and the metaphysical background to these positions. Nonetheless, we have seen how working through these questions sheds light on the views of both these thinkers, and the nature of the relation between them.⁹²

⁹¹ *CP* 1.457.

⁹² Versions of this paper were given in departmental seminars at the Universities of Southampton and Stirling, and I am grateful to those who made comments on these occasions. I am also particularly grateful to Christopher Hookway for his encouragement and suggestions, as well as to Paul Redding and Karl Ameriks. I would like to acknowledge the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, for funding the research leave during which this paper was written.

James and Bradley on the Limits of Human Understanding

In trying to reach some view regarding the philosophical exchanges that went on between F. H. Bradley and William James at the turn of the century,¹ it is in some respects tempting to endorse Bradley's view that 'our differences may perhaps on the whole be small when compared with the extent of our agreement'.² Indeed, in most of the articles, letters and books in which the debate between these two men was carried on, one finds the protagonists claiming to be mystified as to the grounds of the dispute, and to see no great distinction in their respective outlooks.

And yet at the same time there is something disingenuous about these protestations. The true position is in fact captured in a metaphor used by both Bradley and James to describe their relationship, namely that of fellow travellers along a road, who then part company when the road sharply divides.³ In this paper I will argue that while James and Bradley share a distrust of the conceptual aspect of thought,⁴ and with this a belief in the limitedness of the human understanding, this idea plays a very different role in their respective philosophical outlooks, James developing it in the context of pragmatic humanism, Bradley against the background of intellectualist rationalism. I will claim that their similarities notwithstanding, the dispute between James and Bradley represents a clash between what Edward Craig has termed the 'Practice Ideal' and the 'Insight Ideal',⁵ and constitutes an important phase in the eclipse of the latter by the former, and thus in the emergence of the philosophical *Weltbild* of the twentieth century. I will begin by outlining the central area of agreement between James and Bradley, and will then go on to argue that despite this, a fundamental

¹ For a list of relevant works by James and Bradley, see below, n. 45.

² Bradley, *Essays on Truth and Reality*, 241, n.

³ See, for example, Bradley, *Essays on Truth and Reality*, 234–5 and James, 'Bradley or Bergson?'

⁴ For an insightful discussion of this issue, see Maurice Mandelbaum, *History, Man and Reason* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 273–372.

⁵ Edward Craig, *The Mind of God and The Works of Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 13–68 and 223–81.

difference in *Weltanschauung* meant that their paths could never do anything other than diverge.

I

In order to grasp the extent and nature of the common ground between James and Bradley, it is necessary to begin with the former's doctrine of radical empiricism.

In the Preface to *The Meaning of Truth*, James outlines the three central claims of radical empiricism as follows:

Radical empiricism consists first of a postulate, next of a statement of fact, and finally of a generalized conclusion.

The postulate is that the only things that shall be debatable among philosophers shall be definable in terms drawn from experience. [Things of an unexperienceable nature may exist ad libitum, but they form no part of the material for philosophic debate.]

The statement of fact is that the relations between things, conjunctive as well as disjunctive, are just as much matters of direct particular experience, neither more so nor less so, than the things themselves.

The generalized conclusion is that therefore the parts of experience hold together from next to next by relations that are themselves parts of experience. The directly apprehended universe needs, in short, no extraneous trans-empirical connective support, but possesses in its own right a concatenated or continuous structure.⁶

While the postulate as it stands is not unorthodox, it is on the statement of fact and the generalized conclusion that James bases his claim to being an empiricist of a radical nature. In outline, his position is that only a form of empiricism which abandons the traditional assumption that the content of experience is atomistic can avoid slipping into a Kantian idealism, which treats the unity of experience as grounded in a 'trans-empirical connective support', i.e. a synthesizing subject. Unless the relatedness of experience is taken as given, therefore, the battle against idealist rationalism will be lost:

The great obstacle to radical empiricism in the contemporary mind is the rooted rationalist belief that experience as immediately given is all disjunction and no conjunction, and that to make one world out of this separateness, a higher unifying agency must be there. In the prevalent idealism this agency is represented as the absolute all-witness which 'relates' things together by throwing 'categories' over them like a net.⁷

James saw that traditional empiricism, beginning from the assumption that experience is made up of discrete sensory elements, played into the hands of

⁶ James, 'Pragmatism' and 'The Meaning of Truth', 172–3 [6–7].

⁷ Ibid., 173 [7].

this Kantian idealism, and that the latter could only be undermined if that assumption was given up.⁸

James's strategy here is well conceived: he seems to be correct in seeing a direct conceptual link between the atomism of Locke or Hume and the emergence of Kantian idealism. As I have argued elsewhere,⁹ in order to understand the evolution of Kant's doctrine of synthesis, it is first necessary to see how he inherited an atomistic conception of experience from Locke and Hume, and an idealistic account of relations from Leibniz. James sets out to block this move towards Kantianism and away from empiricism by radicalizing the latter, to the extent that he takes the relatedness of experience to be inherent and so free of any synthesizing subject.

James does not deny that traditional empiricists recognized some relations in experience: but, he argues, they were mainly disjunctive rather than conjunctive, and relations of the latter sort were treated as external. Against this limited conception of relations, James argues that much stronger conjunctive relations can be found, for example within the stream of consciousness. His claim here is that in this case we have direct experience of relatedness given in the continuity of thought: there is no need, therefore, to postulate any substantial ego or transcendental subject to 'ground' or account for this unity.¹⁰ James argues that it was only the atomism of the Humean 'bundle' theory of the self that made anything like a 'substratum' or Kantian view seem plausible: once the relatedness of consciousness is taken as given, the temptation to make such a philosophical move evaporates.

Moreover, seen in the context of James's neutral monism, according to which the world of material objects is constructed out of pure experiences, which are themselves neither mental nor physical, James can then insist that these pure experiences are equally interrelated and continuous:

'Pure experience' is the name which I gave to the immediate flux of life which furnishes the material to our later reflection with its conceptual categories. Only new-born babes, or men in semi-coma from sleep, drugs, illnesses, or blows, may be assumed to have an experience pure in the literal sense of a *that* which is not yet any definite *what*, tho ready to be all sorts of whats; full both of oneness and of manyness, but in respects that don't appear; changing throughout, yet so confusedly that its phases interpenetrate and no points, either of distinction or of identity, can be caught.¹¹

In treating the basic constructional material as fundamentally continuous in this way, James argues that the process of construction will involve joining up

⁸ Cf. also James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, 22–3.

⁹ For further details, see my *Hegel, Kant and the Structure of the Object* (London: Routledge, 1990), 7–29.

¹⁰ Cf. James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, 23–7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

experience rather than synthesizing it: for pure experiences are an interrelated continuum of elements, from which a world of distinct and independent objects must be carved out. According to James, we 'add a lot of conceptual experiences' to a 'nucleus' of 'perceptual experiences', so that 'a lot of originally chaotic pure experiences [become] gradually differentiated into an orderly inner and outer world'.¹² In this way, James argues, parts of the flux of experience become 'identified and fixed and abstracted', and then the familiar conceptual structure of 'adjectives and nouns and propositions and conjunctions' (and with them the familiar Aristotelian ontology of substances, attributes and relations) can be applied.¹³

Nonetheless, inspired here by Henri Bergson, whose work he very much admired,¹⁴ James took the view that while this conceptual structure of 'adjectives and nouns and propositions and conjunctions' (and its accompanying ontology) may serve a useful practical purpose in giving a fixed structure to the flux of experience, in fact our concepts can never capture its essential nature of becoming, and will inevitably fall into falsifying forms of oppositional thinking:

The essence of life is its continuously changing character; but our concepts are all discontinuous and fixed, and the only mode of making them coincide with life is by arbitrarily supposing positions of arrest therein . . . When we conceptualize, we cut out and fix, and exclude everything but what we have fixed. A concept means a *that-and-no-other*. Conceptually, time excludes space; motion and rest exclude each other; approach excludes contact; presence excludes absence; unity excludes plurality; independence excludes relativity; 'mine' excludes 'yours'; this connection excludes that connection—and so on indefinitely; whereas in the real concrete sensible flux of life experiences compenetrates each other so that it is not easy to know just what is excluded and what not.¹⁵

James argues that 'before reflection shatters our instinctive world for us', by introducing concepts that divide up the flux of experience, 'the active sense of living which we all enjoy . . . is self-luminous and suggests no paradoxes' and no 'intellectual contradictions'.¹⁶ As we shall see, it is in the inability of our conceptual thought to grasp the dynamic unity of the given that James locates the limitations of the human intellect.

¹² Cf. James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, 17–18.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁴ For further details of the relationship between James and Bergson, see Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), Vol. 2, 599–636. For an accessible work by Bergson in which the affinities with James are clear, see 'Introduction to Metaphysics', in *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. M. L. Anderson (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946).

¹⁵ James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (Cambridge Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1977), 113.

¹⁶ James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, 45.

James's radical empiricism therefore constitutes a form of dynamic holism, according to which reality is not made up of stable, mutually distinct entities, in the way that we conceptualize it, but rather all apparently ontologically independent things are carved out from an ever-changing flux of experience, which we cut up and fix using the categories of reflection. To use an illustration employed by James, the division between aspects of experience as we conceptualize them is no more a break in the flux of life than a joint in a piece of bamboo is a break in the wood: the former are breaks in a continuous flux just as much as the joint in the bamboo is a break in a continuous piece of wood.¹⁷ In this way, James argues that it is wrong to think of reality as conceptually divisible by reflection, and insists that the fragmented picture implied by traditional atomistic empiricism should be replaced by his picture of dynamic holism.

Now, while the affinity between James's outlook and Bergson's is clear and well-attested on both sides, the common ground between James and Bradley is perhaps less easy to make out. For, if James and Bergson stand with Heraclitus in developing a metaphysics of process, Bradley stands with Parmenides, in holding that 'reality is one',¹⁸ and ruling out change as a mere appearance. Moreover, as part of this monistic picture, Bradley notoriously rejected the reality of relations, while James (as we have seen) based his radical empiricism on the claim that relations are given in experience and should be treated as real. Bradley showed no sympathy for James's construal of life as a plurality of interconnected elements forming a dynamic unity of flux, and always held that 'plurality as appearance . . . must fall within, must belong to, and must qualify the unity',¹⁹ thereby rejecting James's conception of reality in favour of the Parmenidean One.

However, while not denying that this difference in outlook is substantial, this should not obscure the important affinities that James (and Bergson) had with Bradley, of which James himself was keenly aware. In his article 'Bradley or Bergson?', James refers to three important similarities: First, they all treat immediate experience as 'an immediately intuited much-at-once'; second they all reject the Kantian notion of synthesis; and third, they agree that 'the conceptual function' of thought is inadequate as a tool for comprehending the unity of things.²⁰ This is, I think, an accurate assessment of the extent of the common ground between these thinkers, and it is not insubstantial, as I will now show.

The central similarity between the approach adopted by James and Bradley lies in their rejection of the atomistic assumptions lying behind Kantian idealism.

¹⁷ James, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. 1, 233–4.

¹⁸ Bradley, *Appearance and Reality: A Metaphysical Essay*, 2nd edn., 9th impression (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), 460.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* ²⁰ James, *Essays in Philosophy*, 151–2.

Whereas James, as we have seen, came to this position as part of his radicalization of empiricism, Bradley came to it via Hegel, and his critique of Kant's doctrine of synthesis: but, as I have mentioned earlier and elaborated elsewhere,²¹ Hegel's critique shares much with James's radical rejection of the claim that it is necessary to begin with atomistic assumptions in the construction of our experience of the material world. While James himself was (perhaps not unnaturally) unwilling to recognize his closeness to Hegel in this respect, Bradley rightly insisted on making this point, commenting in a letter to James of 1910, 'I don't think the fastening together of an originally discrete datum is really Hegelian. I think myself that Hegel is far more on your side'.²² Bradley puts the point even more clearly and forcefully in his 'Disclaimer' published in response to James's article 'Bradley or Bergson?' later in the same year:

The too flattering notice of myself by Professor James in the *Journal [of Philosophy]* (January), contains a statement which I think I should ask leave to correct. Professor James credits me with 'breaking loose from the Kantian tradition that immediate feeling is all disconnectedness'. But all that I have really done here is to follow Hegel. In this and in some other points I saw long ago that English psychology had a great deal to learn from Hegel's teaching. To have seen this, and to some extent to have acted on it, is all that common honesty allows me to claim. How far Hegel himself in this point was original, and how again M. Bergson conceives his own relation to post-Kantian philosophy, are matters that here do not concern me. I write merely to disclaim for myself an originality which is not mine. It belongs to me no more than does that heroic perversity or perverse heroism with which I find myself credited.²³

Bradley's point here is an entirely fair one. In the third book of his *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences, The Philosophy of Mind*, Hegel begins his discussion of the evolution of mind not with the experience of atomistic sense-perception, but with a discussion of 'the feeling soul' (*die fühlende Seele*), which (like James) Hegel associates with states of mind lacking in self-consciousness, prior to the division of subject from object, and awareness of space, time, self, and an external world of discrete particulars.²⁴ In placing this mode of experience prior to sense-perception, Hegel (like Bradley and James) treats the atomism of the latter as a development out of a felt totality, and so refuses to treat the content of sense-perception as providing the basic atomistic elements out of which our experience of reality is constructed.

²¹ See Hegel, *Kant and the Structure of the Object*, 7–29.

²² Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, Vol. 2, 643.

²³ Bradley, 'A Disclaimer'.

²⁴ Cf. for example, *EM*, §406Z, 110 [*Werke*, X: 144]: 'But in so far as I am at first only a feeling soul, not as yet awakened, free self-consciousness, I am aware of this actuality of mine, of this world of mine, in a *purely immediate*, quite *abstractly positive* manner, since, as we have already remarked, at this stage I have not as yet posited the world as separate from me, not as yet posited it as an external existence, and my knowledge of it is therefore not as yet *mediated* by the opposition of subjectivity and objectivity and by the removal of this opposition.'

Moreover, it is Hegel whom Bradley is following when, like James and Bergson, he argues that it is reflective thought that leads us to view the world atomistically, and that concepts employed by such forms of thought are inadequate as tools for grasping the unity of reality. Just as Hegel had criticized the categories of the understanding and the forms of judgment as one-sidedly dividing up the differentiated unity contained in experience, so too Bradley argues that this unity appears paradoxical to our ways of thinking, thereby adopting a position with which (as we have seen) James and Bergson would also agree. In this respect, it is striking to note how far the standpoint of Bradley's anti-Kantian Hegelianism coincides with that of James's radical empiricism.

However, these similarities in outlook notwithstanding, it must now be shown how there is a central divergence in approach between Bradley on the one hand and James (and Bergson) on the other, and this (I will argue) made it impossible for their views to 'coalesce'.²⁵ I will now suggest that the fundamental contrast between Bradley and James is not between the former's monism and the latter's dynamic holism, on which I have already remarked, and of which James only made much in his more popular and polemical writings: rather, I will suggest, the fundamental contrast is that between two views of the ends of man, and of the 'theoretical interest',²⁶ which in their letters and more considered exchanges emerges as the clear point of difference that lay between them. It is this difference that must now be explored.

II

Beginning now with Bradley, his conception of the ends of man and of the theoretical interest may best be characterized as that of a pessimistic Hegelian: for although he shared Hegel's belief that from an absolute perspective reality must be ultimately intelligible, coherent, and rational, he departed from Hegel in denying that it could ever be so for us. The contrast can be brought out clearly by comparing the following passages, the first from Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, the second from Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*:

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

²⁵ Cf. Letter to Bradley from James, January 1910; in Kenna, 'Ten Unpublished Letters', 329–30.

²⁶ This phrase is used by Bradley: cf. Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, Vol. 2, 489.

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.²⁷

This intellectual ideal, we know, is not actual fact. It does not exist in our world, and, unless that world were changed radically, its existence is not possible. It would require an alteration of the position in which the intellect stands, and a transformation of its whole connection with the remaining aspects of experience. We need not cast about for arguments to disprove our omniscience, for at every turn through these pages our weakness has been confessed. The universe in its diversity has been seen to be inexplicable . . . Our system throughout its detail is incomplete.²⁸

Hegel's faith in the possibilities of human understanding is here rejected by Bradley in his more limited assessment of our rational powers. But, as we shall see, Bradley never doubts that the universe itself is rational; he just denies that we can ever grasp its rationality, given the limitedness of the human intellect and the system of knowledge it can construct.

Bradley's position here may perhaps better be understood when compared with the more optimistic rationalism of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, of which Hegel's faith in the power of the human mind is an echo. Edward Craig has argued that this rationalism was driven by two central beliefs: that man is made in the image of God (the Similarity Thesis) and that the world is thoroughly intelligible to the human mind (the Insight Ideal). The connection between the two is straightforward: as the world has been created by God according to a rational plan, and our reason resembles the rationality of the creator, nothing could lie beyond human understanding. In this way, our progress in the comprehension of the universe is assured.

Now, while Bradley did not deny that the world was at bottom rationally ordered, and would appear so to some absolute intelligence, he rejected the vital Similarity Thesis, and so denied that we could approximate to this infinite intellect. He therefore went on to deny that we could understand the ultimate nature of the world, and so could fulfil the promise of the Insight Ideal. Our position is both tragic and absurd: we are destined always to strive for the enlightenment that could come from the absolute standpoint, but also destined never to reach that standpoint, thanks to the unavoidable limitedness of our form of intellect.

But in what way, then, is our form of intellect limited, and what is it about reality that, according to Bradley, we can never understand? In answering this question, we will see how far Bradley departs from the assumptions of the seventeenth-century Insight Ideal, by incorporating an Hegelian notion of what rational insight consists in.

²⁷ *LHP*, I, xiii (trans. modified) [*Werke*, XVIII: 13–14].

²⁸ Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, 458.

For the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century rationalists, as Craig explains,²⁹ rendering the world intelligible meant understanding why one thing happened rather than another, and (ultimately) why there is something rather than nothing. In other words, it is our ability to explain the reasons and causes of things that makes the world rationally transparent, and only if no such causes could be found or if no explanation of the operation of causes could be reached, would the world be rendered unintelligible. Behind this ideal of explanation clearly lies a conception of God as creator: for, as creator God must have had reasons for bringing things about as they happen, and in so far as we can approximate to the intellect of God, it is these explanations, which render causal connections 'intelligible', that will be vouchsafed to us.³⁰ To the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century rationalists, therefore, questions concerning the rationality of the world came down to questions concerning the intelligibility of causation, while the human intellect could only be limited if the latter could not be fathomed. It was this problem (as Craig explains) that the pre-Humean notion of causation was designed to overcome.

It is important to see, however, that for Bradley questions concerning the rationality of the world do not centre around the intelligibility or otherwise of causation, and our ability (or inability) to explain why one thing happens rather than another, or why this cause has this effect. Rather, for Bradley, questions concerning the intelligibility of the world resolve themselves into questions regarding our ability (or inability) to grasp the unity-in-difference of reality using our concepts and modes of thought: this matters to him more than questions concerning causation. Put slightly differently, whether or not the world can be rendered rationally transparent to us does not depend upon our making the causal connections we experience intelligible; rather, it depends on us reaching a unified conception of reality, which is free of contradiction and dialectical tension, and it is *this* we cannot do, or properly understand:

We have seen that the various aspects of experience imply one another, and that all point to a unity which comprehends and perfects them. And I would urge next that the unity of these aspects is unknown. By this I certainly do not mean to deny that it essentially is experience, but it is an experience of which, as such, we have no direct knowledge. We never have, or are, a state which is the perfect unity of all aspects; and we must admit that in their special natures they remain inexplicable. An explanation would be a reduction of

²⁹ Craig, *The Mind of God and the Works of Man*, 37–44.

³⁰ As Craig puts it: '... causal connections had to be "intelligible". There had to be something, in principle detectable by reason, which made *that* effect suited to *that, that* lawlike relationship between *those* two variables appropriate rather than any other. If it were not so, there would be facts about the course of events which were intrinsically inexplicable; and this thought, because of its position in the complex of ideas composing the epistemological version of the Image of God doctrine, was in the seventeenth century widely felt to be intolerable' (*ibid.*, 39–40).

their plurality to unity, in such a way that the relation between the unity and the variety was understood. And everywhere an explanation of this kind in the end is beyond us.³¹

In essence, Bradley's position is this: In trying to understand the unity that we find in our original experience of preconceptual feeling, we conceptualize and analyse the world into different elements, which we can then never reintegrate into the kind of unified picture with which we began, and which then becomes unintelligible to us. We are therefore left with a view of the world that appears contradictory to our intellect, for we can never comprehend how it is that apparently diverse aspects of our experience constitute a unity, due to the limited and oppositional nature of our concepts and modes of thought.

Bradley's position here is clearly Hegelian, in that great emphasis is placed on the way in which our modes of thought and concepts lead us to see the world in a manner that generates contradictions and incoherence by imposing one-sided distinctions on the unity of reality; but Bradley departs from Hegel in not offering any real hope that our modes of thought and concepts might be transformed, in such a way as to make a coherent world view possible for us as thinking beings. Thus, whereas Hegel postulated reason as a form of human comprehension that might succeed in making reality transparent to our intellect,³² Bradley suggests that only in some kind of transcendence of human thinking altogether might such a vision be possible, and he offers no real hope that for us this could be attained. Nonetheless, as I have said, Bradley remains a rationalist in that he does not deny that to *some* form of apprehension the contradictions that appear so insuperable to our mode of understanding would be resolved, and so never denies that viewed aright, everything is thoroughly intelligible, though not in a way that we could ever grasp. In this way, like Hegel, Bradley makes room for a mode of comprehension that lies beyond the dialectical contradictions of finite human understanding; but, unlike Hegel, he never explains what such a mode of comprehension might be like, and never suggests that we could attain it, arguing that only in the prereflective and preconceptual experience of feeling do we gain some unreflective sense of the unity-in-difference which in our reflective thought we can never render intelligible:

That on which my view rests is the immediate unity which comes in feeling, and in a sense this unity is ultimate. You have here a whole which at the same time is each and all of its parts, and you have parts each of which makes a difference to all the rest and to the whole. This unity is not ultimate if that means that we are not forced to transcend it. But it is ultimate in the sense that no relational thinking can reconstitute it, and again in the sense that in no relational thinking can we ever get free from the use of it. And

³¹ Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, 414–15.

³² For a discussion of Hegel's position, see my *Hegel, Kant and the Structure of the Object*, 54–7.

an immediate unity of one and many at a higher remove is the ultimate goal of our knowledge and of every endeavour.³³

Thus, as I see it, Bradley's *Weltanschauung* may be summarized as follows: Although at the preconceptual level of feeling we gain some prereflective insight into the way in which reality is in fact coherent and unified, as soon as we begin to seek conceptual understanding we are faced with contradictions and apparent absurdities that we cannot resolve, in so far as we cannot transcend the forms of limited thinking and reflection that constitute our form of intellectual apprehension. In this way, Bradley argues, our efforts at philosophical understanding and comprehension must always remain in vain, and our intellectual quest to resolve the deep problems raised by our way of viewing the world will always be frustrated, leaving the promises of rationalistic philosophy forever unfulfilled.

III

Turning now to James, we are faced with a thinker with a less exalted but more vigorous philosophical temperament, who can accept the limitations of the human intellect with greater equanimity because his pragmatism enabled him to come to terms with them. While (as we have seen) Bradley felt the pull of the ideals of intellectualist rationalism, without being able to see how those ideals could be attained, James's pragmatist empiricism meant that he was never under the spell of such hopes, and so could not identify with the note of melancholic exile that Bradley so often struck. The reason for this difference is quite simple: James saw in what Craig has called 'the practice ideal' a way out of the predicament of 'purely theoretic rationality',³⁴ so that while he invariably agreed with Bradley's negative conclusions regarding the human intellect, this was viewed by James in a rather different light, one that contrasts sharply with Bradley's 'rather ascetic doctrine'.³⁵

The clearest juxtaposition of the insight and practice ideals offered by James himself comes in the following passage from *The Meaning of Truth*, which is worth quoting at some length:

As I understand the pragmatist way of seeing things, it owes its being to the break-down which the last fifty years have brought about in the older notions of scientific truth. 'God geometrizes', it used to be said; and it was believed that Euclid's elements literally

³³ Bradley, *Essays on Truth and Reality*, 230–1. The view that the unity-in-difference of reality is hard for us to grasp is nicely put by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his notebook for October 1803: 'I would make a pilgrimage to the Deserts of Arabia to find the man who could make me understand how the *one can be many!* Eternal universal mystery! It seems as if it were impossible, yet it *is*—and it is every where'.

³⁴ James, 'The Sentiment of Rationality', in *The Will to Believe* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1979), 65.

³⁵ James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 96.

reproduced his geometrizing. There is an eternal and unchangeable 'reason'; and its voice was supposed to reverberate in *Barbara* and *Celarent*. So also of the 'laws of nature', physical and chemical, so of natural history classifications—all were supposed to be exact and exclusive duplicates of pre-human archetypes buried in the structure of things, to which the spark of divinity hidden in our intellect enables us to penetrate. The anatomy of the world is logical, and its logic is that of a university professor, it was thought. Up to about 1850 almost everyone believed that sciences expressed truths that were exact copies of a definite code of non-human realities. But the enormously rapid multiplication of theories in these latter days has well-nigh upset the notion of any one of them being a more literally objective kind of thing than another. There are so many geometries, so many logics, so many physical and chemical hypotheses, so many classifications, each one of them good for so much and yet not good for everything, that the notion that even the truest formula may be a human device and not a literal transcript has dawned upon us. We hear scientific laws now treated as so much 'conceptual shorthand', true so far as they are useful but no farther. . . . It is to be doubted whether any theorizer to-day, either in mathematics, logic, physics or biology, conceives himself to be literally re-editing processes of nature or thoughts of God. The main forms of our thinking, the separation of subjects from predicates, the negative, hypothetic and disjunctive judgments, are purely human habits. The ether, as Lord Salisbury said, is only a noun for the verb to undulate; and many of our theological ideas are admitted, even by those who call them 'true', to be humanistic in like degree.³⁶

There are several points to be noted about this passage. First, in a way that Craig explains and we have already commented upon, James associates the Insight Ideal with the Similarity Thesis: only in so far as a person 'conceives himself to be literally re-editing processes of nature or thoughts of God' could he or she think that 'there is an eternal and unchangeable "reason" . . . buried in the structure of things, to which the spark of divinity hidden in our intellect enables us to penetrate'. Secondly, James assumes that no right-thinking person could now take this picture seriously, and must instead adopt 'the pragmatist way of seeing things', according to which 'even the truest formula may be a human device and not a literal transcript'. Thirdly, James suggests that the reason why the pragmatist's picture has replaced that of the rationalist is the proliferation of competing logics, geometries, classificatory schemes, physical and chemical hypotheses, so that 'the enormously rapid multiplication of theories in these latter days has well-nigh upset the notion of any one of them being a more literally objective kind of thing than another'. From this, James draws the radical but familiar conclusion that 'the main forms of our thinking, the separation of subjects from predicates, the negative, the hypothetic and disjunctive judgments, are purely human habits.'

From this passage, it appears that James predicated the move to pragmatism on the collapse of the Similarity Thesis and the Insight Ideal, and that like a

³⁶ James, 'Pragmatism' and 'The Meaning of Truth', 206–7 [40–1].

wide range of *fin de siècle* thinkers,³⁷ he based his diagnosis of that collapse on our inability to determine which of several competing theoretical conceptions is valid. It seems that James's adoption of pragmatism was motivated by a failure of the rationalist attempt to provide one coherent picture that might 'fit' reality, and by the realization that it is impossible to establish which of several different theories correspond to the way things really are.

James then goes on to make the move, which has become so familiar to us, of arguing that our concepts and categories have emerged in order to serve our *practical* purpose in negotiating our way around the world, and not because they are grounded in some insight into the nature of things:

The notions of one Time and of one Space as single continuous receptacles; the distinction between thoughts and things, matter and mind; between permanent subjects and changing attributes; the conception of classes with sub-classes within them; the separation of fortuitous from regularly causal connections; surely all these were once definite conquests made at historic dates by our ancestors in their attempts to get the chaos of their crude individual experiences into a more shareable and manageable shape. They proved of such sovereign use as *denkmittel* that they are now a part of the very structure of our mind. We cannot play fast and loose with them. No experience can upset them. On the contrary, they apperceive every experience and assign it to its place.

To what effect? That we may better foresee the course of our experiences, communicate with one another, and steer our lives by rule. Also that we may have a cleaner, clearer, more inclusive mental view.³⁸

We have here all the essential characteristic of Craig's 'practice ideal': our modes of thought have evolved in such a way as to enable us to act in the world and communicate with each other about it, and in so far as we can do this efficiently and effectively, there is nothing further required. Other creatures, in response to differing practical imperatives and as a result of different forms of experience, may have conceptualized the world differently, and no way of conceptualizing the world can have any claim to be 'absolute', in the sense of constituting some final, objective, determinate insight into 'the truth'.³⁹ Viewed in this way, Bradley's claim, that there is one absolute standpoint and conception of the world from which it is utterly intelligible, begins to look less likely and less troubling; less likely, because we now have many competing conceptions of the world, all of

³⁷ Cf. John Skorupski, 'The Legacy of Modernism', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 91, 1990–1, 1–19.

³⁸ James, 'Pragmatism' and 'The Meaning of Truth', 208 [42].

³⁹ Cf. James, *Ibid.*, 209 [43]: '... we respond [to experience in its pristine purity] by ways of thinking which we call "true" in proportion as they facilitate our mental or physical activities and bring us outer power and inner peace. But whether the Other, the universal *That*, has itself any definite inner structure, or whether, if it have any, the structure resembles any of our predicted *whats*, this is a question which humanism leaves untouched. For us, at any rate, it insists, reality is an accumulation of our own intellectual inventions, and the struggle for "truth" in our progressive dealings with it is always a struggle to work in new nouns and adjectives while altering as little as possible the old.'

which can be judged to work in their own ways; and less troubling, because as practical rather than theoretical beings we need no longer feel the imperative of absolute knowledge to be so pressing, and the failure of the rationalistic project due to the limitedness of the human intellect need not weigh so heavily upon us.

IV

By contrasting the *Weltanschauungen* of Bradley and James in this way, we can see how despite considerable similarities in outlook, there remained a fundamental divergence in approach. Although, as we have shown, Bradley and James share a common picture of how the limitations of the human intellect arise, a distrust in the conceptual aspects of thought, and a picture of experience as unified in a thoroughgoing way,⁴⁰ their paths diverge just at the point where Bradley's rationalism clashes with the 'practice ideal' of James (and Bergson), where the claims of the human intellect are replaced by the claims of the human agent. As Bradley himself was aware, when James claimed that 'the concepts we talk with are made for purposes of *practice* and not for purposes of insight',⁴¹ he was transforming the rationalistic conception not only of the purposes of thought, but of man himself. Thus he inquires of James in a letter of 1905:

I do not know how you take the human end, and in what you think it consists. That is one reason why controversy [between us] apart from further explanation would, I think, lead to nothing. I do not think that in the human end you can subordinate its various aspects and elements to anything but the whole. I am here, you see, something of a 'pluralist'. And it is here that I have no idea where the 'pragmatist' stands. What to him is the end and the good?⁴²

To which the following passage, though written earlier, might be taken as James's reply:

The bottom of being is left logically opaque to us, as something which we simply come upon and find, and about which (if we wish to act) we should pause and wonder as little as possible. The philosopher's logical tranquillity is thus in essence no other than the boor's.⁴³

⁴⁰ Cf. James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 114: 'What makes you call real life confusion is that it presents, as if they were dissolved in one another, a lot of differentials which retrospective conception breaks life's flow by keeping apart. But are not differentials actually dissolved in one another? Hasn't every bit of experience its quality, its duration, its extension, its intensity, its urgency, its clearness, and many aspects besides, no one of which can exist in the isolation in which our verbalized logic keeps it? They can only exist *durcheinander*'.

⁴¹ James, *ibid.*, 131.

⁴² Letter from Bradley to James, April 28, 1905; in Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, Vol. 2, 489.

⁴³ James, *The Will to Believe*, 64.

Thus, forced apart by the irreconcilable differences of rationalistic intellectualism on the one hand and pragmatist humanism on the other, the paths of these thinkers inevitably separate, and at what James calls elsewhere ‘the thin watershed between life and philosophy’,⁴⁴ their routes finally divide.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ James, ‘Bradley or Bergson?’, 154. Cf. Henri Bergson, ‘On the Pragmatism of William James. Truth and Reality’, in *The Creative Mind*, 211: ‘Our reason is less satisfied [by James’s radical empiricism]. It feels less at ease in a world where it no longer finds, as in a mirror, its own image. And certainly the importance of human reason is diminished. But the importance of man himself—the whole of man, will and sensibility quite as much as intelligence—will thereby be immeasurably enhanced!’ (This essay was originally written as an introduction to the French translation of James’s *Pragmatism*: see Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, Vol. 2, 634–6.)

⁴⁵ The main items in the exchange between James and Bradley are as follows (in chronological order):

W. James, *Principles of Psychology*, 3 vols (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1981), Vol. 1, 499–503.

F. H. Bradley, ‘On Professor James’s Doctrine of Simple Resemblance’, *Mind*, ns 2 (1893), 83–8; repr. in *Collected Essays*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), Vol. 1, 287–94.

James, ‘Mr Bradley on Immediate Resemblance’, *Mind*, ns 2 (1893), 208–10; repr. in *Essays in Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1978), 65–8.

Bradley, ‘Professor James on Simple Resemblance’, *Mind*, ns 2 (1893), 366–9; repr. in *Collected Essays*, Vol. 1, 295–300.

James, ‘Immediate Resemblance’, *Mind*, ns 2 (1893), 509–10; repr. in *Essays in Philosophy*, 69–70.

Bradley, ‘Reply’, *Mind*, ns 2 (1893), 510; repr. in *Collected Essays*, Vol. 1, 301–2.

Bradley, ‘On Truth and Practice’, *Mind*, ns 13 (1904), 309–35; repr. in *Essays on Truth and Reality* (Oxford University Press, 1914), 65–106.

James, ‘Humanism and Truth’, *Mind*, ns 13 (1904), 457–75; repr. in ‘*Pragmatism*’ and ‘*The Meaning of Truth*’ (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1978), 203–26 [37–60].

James, ‘The Thing and Its Relations’, *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, 2 (1905), 29–41; repr. in *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1976), 45–59.

Bradley, ‘On Truth and Copying’, *Mind*, ns 16 (1907), 165–80; repr. in *Essays on Truth and Reality*, 107–26.

Bradley, ‘On the Ambiguity of Pragmatism’, *Mind*, ns 17 (1908), 226–37; repr. in *Essays on Truth and Reality*, 127–42.

James, ‘Bradley or Bergson?’, *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, 7 (1910), 29–33; repr. in *Essays in Philosophy*, 151–6.

Bradley, ‘A Disclaimer’, *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, 7 (1910), 183; repr. in *Collected Essays*, Vol. 2, 695.

Bradley, ‘On Prof. James’s “Meaning of Truth”’, *Mind*, 20 (1911), 337–41; repr. in *Essays on Truth and Reality*, 142–9.

Bradley, ‘On Prof. James’s “Radical Empiricism”’, *Essays on Truth and Reality*, 149–58.

See also the following collections of letters:

J. C. Kenna, ‘Ten Unpublished Letters from William James, 1842–1910 to Francis Herbert Bradley, 1846–1924’, *Mind*, 75 (1966), 309–31.

Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), Vol. 2, 485–93, 637–44.

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PART IV

THE CONTINENTAL CRITIQUE
OF HEGEL'S METAPHYSICS

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12

Individual Existence and the Philosophy of Difference

It is a commonplace to say that it is hard to understand the trajectory of ‘continental’ philosophy without coming to terms with the influence of Hegel. It might be thought that this is because Hegel led those who came after him in a new direction, which can only be followed by going ‘via’ his work: and in part this is true. But the opposite is also true: namely, that Hegel represents for many ‘continental’ thinkers not a *break* with the mainstream of philosophical thinking, but a *continuation* of it, so that unless one has some insight into Hegelian philosophy, one will not be able to see how through their engagement with Hegel, many continental philosophers are engaged with certain perennial philosophical questions—questions that are often of concern to ‘analytic’ philosophers as well. Hegel should therefore not just be seen as a ‘parting of the ways’ between ‘continental’ and ‘analytic’ philosophy, but as a bridge between them too, as many continental thinkers have come to address the traditional problems of philosophy through their encounters with Hegel, in a way that is hard to see if he is left out of the picture, as most ‘analytic’ discussions of these problems tend to do.

One such traditional question is *the problem of individuality*. This problem concerns the question of what makes something an individual, as a unified entity distinct from other individuals. As we shall see, this problem has its roots in the history of philosophy, from Plato onwards, and is a problem with several dimensions, as it raises concerns not only in metaphysics, but also in epistemology and ethics. Recognizing its importance, Hegel made the issue central to his philosophical system, and offered what he took to be a satisfactory solution to it, using the idea of the ‘concrete universal’. However, from Schelling, Feuerbach, and Kierkegaard onwards, dissatisfaction with this solution has been central to ‘continental’ thought, the objection being that Hegel’s solution fails to do justice to the real uniqueness of individuals, where our incapacity to capture that uniqueness in conceptual terms is seen as a crucial limitation on the Hegelian approach, and on the approach of the philosophical tradition more generally. A recent and sophisticated expression of this dissatisfaction can be found in the work of Gilles Deleuze, whose position we will examine in some detail, in order to see whether his ‘philosophy of difference’ offers a distinctive way out of the difficulties that the problem of individuality poses for us.

1. THE PROBLEM OF INDIVIDUALITY

We can begin by looking in more detail at the problem, and exploring its ramifications.

At an intuitive level, it seems commonsensical to hold that the world around us contains individual entities which (a) are unified conjunctions of properties, (b) are distinct from all other entities, (c) belong to a type or class of relevantly similar entities which has or can have several members, (d) instantiate properties that can be instantiated by other individuals, (e) remain the same over time and various alterations, and (f) have properties but are not properties of anything else. Thus Fido the dog has numerous properties belonging to him (being brown, hairy, lazy, four-legged and so on) that belong together as *his* properties, while Fido himself is distinct from Rex and all other dogs. At the same time, Fido is one among others of the doggy kind, and he is also one among others who are brown, lazy and so on (who may or may not also be dogs: Rex is also brown, while Harry the boy is also lazy).

Now, this common-sense metaphysical position can of course be challenged from the outside, for example by science or theology. But it also has certain internal difficulties, as some of these views seem to be in tension with one another. Two areas of tension will concern us here. The first is that on the one hand, how are we able to do justice to the apparent similarity or sameness between things in terms of their properties and the kind to which they belong ((d) and (c) above), while on the other hand acknowledging their individuality, both as being distinct from other things ((b) above), and as being unified ((a) above)? And the second tension is this: how are we to account for the way in which one entity forms a unified individual, when it exemplifies a plurality of properties? Let us call the first issue *the problem of individuation* (what makes *A* distinct from other things?), and the second *the problem of indivisibility* (what makes *A* a single unified thing?). The real difficulty here (which constitutes *the problem of individuality* as a whole) is that what may look like a good answer to one of these problems leaves us in a poor position to answer the other, so what we want is a position that would properly deal with *both*.

Thus, in relation to the problem of indivisibility, a traditional answer has been that the properties of an individual entity are held together by some sort of underlying substratum, in which the properties inhere. However, substratum theories are then criticized on the grounds that they seem unknowable (what Locke called 'a supposed, I know not what, to support those *Ideas* we call accidents'),¹ while also leading to the problem of individuation: for if each

¹ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), Bk II, ch XXIII, §15, 305.

substance is in itself propertyless, what can distinguish one substratum from another? Reacting against the substratum view, philosophers have therefore adopted instead what are known as bundle theories: individual entities are collections of properties tied together by the relations between those properties, rather than any underlying substratum.² However, a difficulty for the bundle theory is the problem of individuation: if individuals are nothing more than bundles of properties, it follows that to be distinct from one another, two individuals must differ in their properties—but couldn't there be individuals who have exactly the same properties, which are nonetheless distinct? Couldn't Fido have an identical twin, while for all that each is a different individual? To deny that this is possible, one would have to be committed to an implausibly strong version of Leibniz's principle of the identity of indiscernibles, which would rule this out. The bundle theorist might counter this difficulty by appealing to what are sometimes called 'impure' properties (such as being identical with oneself, or being in a specific spatio-temporal location), where including such properties in the bundle would make Leibniz's principle more plausible, perhaps even trivial—but to have such properties (it might be felt), a thing must *already be* an individual, so this cannot explain or constitute its individuality.

Another response might be for the bundle theorist to query the conception of properties on which the problem arises: for, if we conceive of properties not as universals (which can be instantiated by more than one thing, so that Fido and his twin can both be brown at the same time), but as what are usually called *trope*s (which are *particulars*, so that Fido and his twin each have their distinct trope of brown), then the difficulty disappears, as the bundle that constitutes the individual is made up of properties that are *themselves* particulars (so that the brown property Fido possesses could not be possessed by his twin, though of course he could possess one exactly similar to it).

Now, as a form of nominalism, trope versions of the bundle theory have been attacked on that score. But they have also been criticized as not really solving the problem of individuation: for, if this does not now arise at the level of individual entities, it may still seem to arise at the level of individual properties, namely, what makes Fido's brownness numerically distinct from his twin's? A natural answer might be, because brown₁ belongs to Fido, and brown₂ belongs to his twin. But, if Fido and his twin are nothing but bundles of properties, and we are explaining the individuality of each bundle through the particularity of the properties that constitute the bundle, how can we explain the particularity of a property by appealing to the fact that they belong to different bundles—isn't this hopelessly circular? Moreover, the trope theorist cannot appeal to space-time

² Cf. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2nd edn., ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), Bk I, Pt I, §VI, 16: '[N]one will assert, that substance is either a colour, or a sound, or a taste . . . We have therefore no idea of substance, distinct from that of a collection of particular qualities, nor have we any other meaning when we talk or reason concerning it'.

location to determine the identity and diversity of properties, because he must allow such properties to exist ‘compresently’, that is, at the *same* spatio-temporal location (in the way that Fido’s hairiness and four-leggedness do, to the extent that his legs are hairy).³

A natural way to respond to these difficulties, is to look for a position that relies on more than just the properties of the individual (such as brownness or hairiness) to differentiate it, but in a way that does not go back to the earlier substratum model, with its mysterious ‘I know not what’. One such response is to argue that what grounds the distinctness of an individual is not the particularity of its properties (as on the trope theory), or the characterless substratum in which they inhere (as on the substratum theory), but the *substance*-universal that the individual exemplifies, where the substance-universal is the kind to which the individual as a whole belongs (such as ‘dog’, ‘human being’, ‘rose’ and so on) rather than the property the individual may have qua member of that kind (such as being a brown dog, a white dog, a black dog, or whatever). The idea here, then, is that substance-universals are intrinsically individuating: it is by virtue of exemplifying the kind ‘dog’ that Fido is distinct from his twin, even if they have all their (‘pure’) property universals in common, because qua dog, Fido is a different individual from all members of the same kind. This appeal to substance-universals can therefore be presented as a way out of the difficulties of the bundle and substratum approaches to the problem of individuation:

Kinds are universals whose instantiations are numerically different; but the instantiations of a substance-kind just are the various substances which belong to or fall under it. Thus, there is no need either to deny what is obvious—that it is possible for different objects to be indiscernible with respect to their pure universals [which is the problem for the bundle theory] or to appeal to bare substrata in explaining how this is possible [as on the substratum theory]. Indiscernible substances agree in their substance-kinds; but for two or more objects to agree in a substance-kind is *eo ipso* for them to be numerically different. Substance-kinds of and by themselves diversify their members, so that in being given substance-kinds we are thereby given universals that guarantee the diversification of the objects which exemplify them.⁴

The substance-kind theory (as I will label it) may therefore seem to show a way out of the problem of individuation. It may also seem to show a way out of the

³ For this and related problems for the trope view, see E. J. Lowe, ‘Form Without Matter’, in David S. Oderberg (ed.), *Form and Matter: Themes in Contemporary Metaphysics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 1–21, at 17–20.

⁴ Michael J. Loux, *Substance and Attribute: A Study in Ontology* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1978), 163–4. Cf. also Michael J. Loux, *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1998), 117–27 and ‘Beyond Substrata and Bundles: A Prolegomenon to a Substance Ontology’, in Stephen Laurence and Cynthia Macdonald (eds.), *Contemporary Readings in the Foundations of Metaphysics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 233–47, esp. 242–5. A similar view is defended by E. J. Lowe: see ‘Form Without Matter’, 12–13, and *Kinds of Being: A Study of Individuation, Identity and the Logic of Sortal Terms* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 11: ‘. . . the notions of *individual* (or particular) and *sort* (or kind) are, very arguably, interdependent and mutually irreducible. Individuals are only recognizable as *individuals of a sort*, while sorts are only intelligible as *sorts of individuals*’.

problem of indivisibility, for the claim is also that (like the substratum view) we can think of properties as inhering in something while (as on the bundle theory) refusing to treat this underlying subject as a bare particular: rather, the properties inhere in the individual qua member of the kind, not as an indeterminate substratum, so that it is as a dog that Fido is brown, lazy and so on, where it is his doginess that unifies these properties in him as an individual.

It may nonetheless be felt, however, that there is something rather mysterious about this substance-kind theory. For, if the substance-kind is a universal that members of the kind all exemplify, then how can this differentiate the individuals, when as a universal it is the same in each? As an instantiation of a substance-kind, isn't there still a question of what makes a substance of that kind the particular individual it is, if the kind is common to other individuals of the same type? If, on the other hand, this is accounted for on the ground that the substance-kind is instantiated in the individual not as a universal, but as a particular, then this is to opt for a trope-like view of substance-kinds: but as with the trope view of properties, don't we then need some explanation of what makes Fido's exemplification of doginess distinct from his twin's? To say that it *just is* distinct is not to solve the problem of individuation, but to repeat it.

At this point, it may then be tempting to think we must return to something like a substratum view, as offering some grounding for the difference between individuals. One such view is the traditional position of hylomorphism, which treats individuals as the particular individuals they are in virtue of a combination of the stuff (*hyle*) of which they are made, and the form or nature or essence (*morphe*) imposed upon it, where the matter is then seen as providing a principle of individuation for the individual entity that exemplifies the universal type: what makes Fido and his twin distinct is that the form 'dog' is exemplified in different parcels of matter or stuff.⁵ However, if we are obliged to think of matter as formless in itself, how can this be a source of individuality in a thing?

Another attempt to account for individuality is proposed by those who hold that individuals have a unique feature which is the basis for their difference from other things, usually termed 'thisness' or *haecceitas*, which is a non-qualitative property responsible for individuation (as opposed to 'whatness' or *quidditas*, which are properties the thing can share with other things, such as brownness, laziness etc.). Like the substratum theory, the haecceitas theory therefore introduces something over and above the qualitative properties of a

⁵ Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1034a5–7: 'And when we have the whole, such and such a form in this flesh and in these bones, this is Callias or Socrates; and they are different in virtue of their matter (for that is different), but the same in form; for their form is indivisible'. This may suggest that the theory for which Aristotle is the main ancestor is hylomorphism; but in fact some support in Aristotle can be found for most of the positions we have discussed. For an interesting discussion of Aristotle that relates to the themes of this paper, see Theodor W. Adorno, *Metaphysik. Begriff und Probleme*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998); translated as *Metaphysics: Concepts and Problems* by Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

thing to serve as its individuator, but unlike the substratum theory, it treats this 'thisness' as a non-qualitative part of the bundle that constitutes the thing, rather than as a substratum *underlying* its properties. The difficulty with this view, however, is that any such 'thisness' looks as mysterious as the substratum it partially resembles, in not really *explaining* individuation, but just marking the phenomenon we want explained.

We thus seem to face a fundamental tension on how to approach the problem of individuality. On the one hand, we can try to deal with the problem in a qualitative way, arguing that individuals are nothing over and above the properties and substance universals that constitute them: but then we face the difficulty of explaining the unity of individuals, and that it always seems possible that another individual might exist that shares the same properties, in such a way as to show that they are not really individuating. On the other hand, we can add something further to this qualitative view of individuals; but this additional feature (such as a substratum, or haecceity) seems to involve a problematic ontological commitment that it would be good to be without. The difficulties faced here run like a thread through the history of philosophy from at least Plato onwards.

2. HEGEL AND THE 'CONCRETE UNIVERSAL'

Having sketched the problem of individuality, and some of the various attempted solutions it has given rise to, I now want to explore the way in which the problem figures in Hegel's thought. Broadly speaking, as we shall see, Hegel wanted to follow a qualitative way out of the difficulty, while his subsequent opponents argued that this was an inadequate response, and so turned to non-qualitative solutions.

At first sight, it may seem surprising to claim that a concern with such traditional philosophical issues forms part of the Hegelian system, because Kant is widely believed to have shown that such metaphysical concerns can be traced back to nothing more than the 'natural illusions' of reason; so further speculation on such matters might be expected to seem futile to a post-Kantian philosopher such as Hegel. However, in fact if anything the Kantian revolution in philosophy had the opposite effect: for, to Hegel, it appeared that Kant had shown how much our view of the world depends on the fundamental concepts (or categories) we bring to it, so that unless we reflect deeply on the kinds of metaphysics implicitly presupposed by these categories, we can never hope to arrive at a satisfactory picture of reality, making metaphysical speculation seem of more vital significance than ever:

. . . metaphysics is nothing but the range of universal thought-determinations, and is as it were the diamond-net into which we bring everything in order to make it intelligible.

Every cultured consciousness has its metaphysics, its instinctive way of thinking. This is the absolute power within us, and we shall only master it if we make it the object of our knowledge. Philosophy in general, as philosophy, has different categories from those of ordinary consciousness. All cultural change reduces itself to a difference of categories. 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.⁶

Hegel thus believed that ‘to him who looks at the world rationally, the world looks rationally back; the two exist in a reciprocal relationship’,⁷ in the sense that it is only if we come to the world with the right metaphysical framework will we be able to make the world seem a rationally intelligible place, and that continuing metaphysical puzzles are evidence of our failure to achieve this.

Of all such puzzles, Hegel took the problem of the relation between individuals and universals to be the most fundamental, because on this question so much of our view of epistemology, ethics, political philosophy, aesthetics, and much else depends. To take an example: in one of his discussions of the struggle for recognition, which precedes the famous ‘master–slave’ dialectic, Hegel presents a fundamental difficulty we face in our social interaction as the clash between realizing that we are one amongst others who in some sense are the same as us, with the feeling that we are also unique and so fundamentally distinct:

In this determination lies the tremendous contradiction that, on the one hand, the ‘I’ is wholly universal, absolutely pervasive, and interrupted by no limit, a universal essence common to all men, the two mutually related selves therefore constituting one identity, constituting, so to speak, one light; and yet, on the other hand, they are also two selves rigidly and unyieldingly confronting each other, each existing as a reflection-into-self, as absolutely distinct from and impenetrable by the other.⁸

Here, then, the problem of individuality takes a socio-political form, as we attempt to come to terms with our sense of both identity with and difference from one another. The fundamental nature of this problem meant that Hegel therefore felt obliged to deal with it, and thus address the views of the tradition on this question.

As I understand it, there are two strands to Hegel’s discussion of the problem, one negative and critical of certain ways of approaching the difficulty, the other positive and constructive, in attempting a solution. The negative discussion comes largely in the opening sections of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where Hegel takes as his target two prominent non-qualitative ways of thinking about individuality (the haecceity theory and the substratum theory), while he is also

⁶ Hegel, *EN*, §246Z, I, 202 [*Werke*, IX: 20–1].

⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 29 [*Werke*, XII: 23].

⁸ Hegel, *EM*: §430Z, 170–1 [*Werke*, X: 219]. Cf. also Hegel, *EL*: §163Z, 240–1 [*Werke*, VIII: 311–13].

critical of one form of qualitative approach (the bundle theory). In his positive account, Hegel offers a version of substance-kind theory, which is defended largely in Book III of his *Logic*.

The first part of Hegel's negative discussion comes in the section on 'sense-certainty' at the beginning of the *Phenomenology*. As in the *Phenomenology* in general, Hegel's aim here is to present an 'immanent critique' of a position taken by consciousness: that is, he wants to show that a certain view of the world which consciousness adopts is internally incoherent or unstable. The view taken by sense-certainty which concerns him, is that the best way to gain knowledge of the world is to experience it directly or intuitively, without applying concepts to such intuitions, for fear that this distorts our knowledge or makes it more abstract. The claim of sense-certainty is, then, that the 'richest' and 'truest' knowledge comes from 'immediate' rather than 'mediated' knowledge, which involves 'apprehension' rather than 'comprehension'.⁹ This conception of knowledge is made plausible for sense-certainty by a certain ontological view underlying it, namely, that because it does not use concepts but just intuitions, it is able to grasp a thing *as an individual*, without any abstraction from its unique specificity or pure particularity, so that for sense-certainty, 'the existence of *external* objects, which can be more concretely defined as *actual*, absolutely *singular*, wholly *personal*, *individual* things, each of them absolutely unlike anything else' had 'absolutely certainty and truth'.¹⁰ In claiming that each individual has a unique nature, which is subject to direct intuition, sense-certainty resembles the haecceity theory, where this unique nature cannot be grasped conceptually, for all concepts are general and so only apply to universal and shareable characteristics of the thing:

Consciousness, for its part, is in this certainty only as a pure 'I'; or I am in it only as a pure 'This', and the object similarly only as a pure 'This'. I, *this* particular I, am certain of *this* particular thing, not because I, *qua* consciousness, in knowing it have developed myself or thought about it in various ways; and also not because *the thing* of which I am certain, in virtue of a host of distinct qualities, would be in its own self a rich complex of connections, or related in various ways to other things. Neither of these has anything to do with the truth of sense-certainty: here neither I nor the thing has the significance of a complex process of mediation; the 'I' does not have the significance of a manifold imagining or thinking; nor does the 'thing' signify something that has a host of qualities. On the contrary, the thing *is*, and it *is*, merely because it *is*. It *is*; this is the essential point for sense-knowledge, and this pure *being*, or this simple immediacy, constitutes its *truth*. Similarly, certainty as a *connection* is an *immediate* pure connection: consciousness is '*I*', nothing more, a pure 'This'; the singular consciousness knows a pure 'This', or the single item.¹¹

In so far as sense-certainty maintains that the being of the object it knows is constituted by its unique individuality in this way (its 'thisness' or haecceity),

⁹ Hegel, *PS*: 58 [*Werke*, III: 82].

¹⁰ Hegel, *PS*: 66 [*Werke*, III: 91].

¹¹ Hegel, *PS*: 58–9 [*Werke*, III: 82–3].

sense-certainty naturally also holds that knowledge also needs to be aconceptual, and that such knowledge is the ‘richest’ and ‘truest’: for (it claims) if we bring in concepts, we bring in general terms that take us away from things in their singularity.

Hegel now goes on to show, however, that this position is unstable, for it turns out that the ‘thisness’ which sense-certainty attributes to individuals is completely indeterminate, and thus far from being specific to each entity, is in fact entirely general—to the extent that sense-certainty grasps what it means by ‘this’, *everything* possesses it. Because ‘thisness’ is conceived as a non-qualitative property, it cannot be described; but because it cannot be described, there is no feature by which the ‘thisness’ of Fido can be distinguished from the ‘thisness’ of his twin, or of any other object—so ‘thisness’ is utterly general or universal:

If they actually wanted to *say* ‘this’ bit of paper which they mean, if they wanted to *say* it, then this is impossible, because the sensuous This that is meant *cannot be reached* by language, which belongs to consciousness, i.e. to that which is inherently universal. In the actual attempt to say it, it would therefore crumble away; those who started to describe it would not be able to complete the description, but would be compelled to leave it to others, who would themselves finally have to admit to speaking about something which *is not*. They certainly mean, then, *this* bit of paper here which is quite different from the bit mentioned above; but they say ‘actual things’, ‘external or sensuous objects’, ‘absolutely singular entities’ and so on; i.e. they say of them only what is *universal*. Consequently, what is called the unutterable is nothing else than the untrue, the irrational, what is merely meant [but is not actually expressed].¹²

Hegel’s discussion of sense-certainty, therefore, can be interpreted as a critique of one prominent approach to the problem of individuality, where this is attributed to some unique ‘thisness’ belonging to the individual, rather than constructed through the qualitative features of the individual which it may share with others.

Having come to see that it cannot coherently think of individuality in terms of some sort of unique individuating essence, the presentation of consciousness in the *Phenomenology* moves on to the next level of *perception*, where consciousness is now ready to conceive of individuals as being constituted by properties, and so treats each individual as a bundle of universals at a spatio-temporal location, which Hegel terms an ‘Also’.¹³ However, consciousness then finds this bundle

¹² Hegel, *PS*: 66 [*Werke*, III: 91–2].

¹³ Hegel, *PS*: 68–9 [*Werke*, III: 95]; trans. modified:

This abstract universal medium, which can be called simply “thinghood” or “pure essence”, is nothing else than what Here and Now have proved themselves to be, viz. a *simple togetherness* of a plurality; but the many are, *in their determinateness*, simple universals themselves. This salt is a simple Here, and at the same time manifold; it is white and *also* tart, *also* cubical in shape, of a specific weight, etc. All these many properties are in a single simple “Here”, in which, therefore, they interpenetrate; none has a different Here from the others, but each is everywhere, in the same Here in which the others are. And, at the same time, without being separated by different Heres, they do not affect each other in this interpenetration. The whiteness does not affect the cubical shape, and neither affects the tart taste, etc.; on the contrary, since each is itself a simple relating of

view of the object is unstable and so moves to the opposite view, which takes the individual to be a 'One', and thus a unified substratum over and above its properties.¹⁴ Hegel therefore presents consciousness as playing out a familiar dialectic between bundle and substratum views, and oscillating from the one to the other: on the one hand, the bundle view makes it hard to explain why we think of properties as inhering in an individual, whereby different instances of these properties are distinct from one another; on the other hand, the substratum view leads us to a characterless 'One' underlying the 'Also'. Locked in this dialectic, consciousness cannot find a satisfactory way of dealing with the problem of individuality, as it turns from one standpoint to the other.

Hegel's diagnosis of what has gone wrong here, and thus the basis for his positive solution to the problem, is hinted at at the end of the 'Perception' section of the *Phenomenology*, where he comments that while perception involves universality, 'it is only a *sensuous universality*',¹⁵ so that the properties perception attributes to the individual are just sensible properties, such as 'white', 'tart', 'cubical in shape' and so on. The difficulty with such properties, is that they appear to be merely properties or accidents of the individual, so that the individual *itself* is treated as something underlying them, which leads us to the substratum view. What we need, then, is a conception of universality which is more than just a 'sensuous universality', where the universal which the individual exemplifies is constitutive of it in some way, and so underlies its accidental properties; in this way, the individual is viewed as neither a bundle of diverse property-universals, nor a bare property-less substratum, but as constituted by a *substance-universal* (such as 'man', or 'horse', or 'dog') that characterizes it as a unified individual, to which diverse properties belong.

Hegel puts forward a substance-universal theory of this kind in Book III of the *Logic*, where he introduces his distinction between abstract and concrete universality. What this distinction amounts to can be seen by looking at the

self to self it leaves the others alone, and is connected with them only by the indifferent Also. This Also is thus the pure universal itself, or the medium, the 'thinghood', which holds them together in this way.

¹⁴ Hegel, *PS*: 69 [*Werke*, III: 95–6]:

In the relationship which has thus emerged it is only the character of positive universality that is at first observed and developed; but a further side presents itself, which must also be taken into consideration. To wit, if the many determinate properties were strictly indifferent to one another, if they were simply and solely self-related, they would not be determinate; for they are only determinate in so far as they *differentiate* themselves from one another, and *relate* themselves to others as to their opposites. Yet; as thus opposed to one another they cannot be together in the simple unity of their medium, which is just as essential to them as negation; the differentiation of the properties, in so far as it is not an indifferent differentiation but is exclusive, each property negating the others, thus falls outside of the simple medium; and the medium, therefore, is not merely an Also, an indifferent unity, but a *One* as well, a unity which *excludes* an other. The One is the *moment of negation*; it is itself quite simply a relation of self to self and it excludes an other; and it is that by which "thinghood" is determined as a Thing.

¹⁵ Hegel, *PS*: 77 [*Werke*, III: 105].

examples Hegel gives of each kind of universal, particularly as these are presented in his discussion of the hierarchy of judgements and syllogisms. At the most basic level of the qualitative judgement and the qualitative syllogism, the universal is an accidental property of an individual, which fails to differentiate it from other individuals:

When we say: 'This rose is red,' the copula 'is' implies that subject and predicate agree with one another. But, of course, the rose, being something concrete, is not merely red; on the contrary, it also has a scent, a definite form, and all manner of other features, which are not contained within the predicate 'red'. On the other hand, the predicate, being something abstractly universal, does not belong merely to this subject. For there are other flowers, too, and other objects altogether that are also red.¹⁶

Thus, with a universal like 'red', there is a clear distinction we can draw between the universal and the individual that possesses that property, and that universal and the other properties it possesses. At the next level, in the judgement and syllogism of reflection, we get a closer interrelation: for here we predicate properties of individuals which we take to belong to other individuals of the same kind, where being of this kind then comes to be seen as *essential* to the individual, and where some properties are seen as essential to any member of the kind. Thus, in the case of a judgement like 'All men are mortal', we treat being a man as an essential property of each individual man, and not a mere feature that these individuals happen to have in common, such as possessing earlobes.¹⁷ Here, then, we get a closer interconnection between the universal and the individual, in so far as the universal is now seen as an essential property of the individual; and we also have a closer connection between the universal and the particular properties that make something an individual, because it is only qua individual of a certain *kind* that the individual has these properties, and not as a 'bare' individual:

[I]t would not make sense to assume that Caius might perhaps be brave, learned, etc., and yet not be a man. The single human is what he is in particular, only insofar as he is, first of all, human as such, and within the universal; and this universal is not just something over and above the other abstract qualities or mere determinations of reflection, but is rather what permeates and includes within itself everything particular.¹⁸

¹⁶ Hegel, *EL*, §172Z, 250 [*Werke*, VIII: 324]. Cf. also Hegel, *SL*: 621 [*Werke*, VI: 300]: 'When one understands by the universal, what is *common* to several individuals, one is starting from the *indifferent* subsistence of these individuals and confounding the immediacy of *being* with the determination of the Notion. The lowest conception one can have of the universal in this connexion with the individual is this external relation of it as merely a *common element*'.

¹⁷ Cf. Hegel, *EL*, §175Z, 253 [*Werke*, VIII: 327].

¹⁸ *EL*, §175Z, 253 [*Werke*, VIII: 327]; trans. modified. Cf. also *SL*: 36–7 [*Werke*, V: 26]: '[E]ach human being though infinitely unique is so precisely because he is a *man*, and each individual is such an individual primarily because it is an animal: if this is true, then it would be impossible to say what such an individual could still be if this foundation were removed, no matter how richly endowed the individual might be with other predicates, if, that is, this foundation can equally be called a predicate like any other'.

This then leads to the judgement and syllogism of necessity, where the particular properties that distinguish one individual from another (e.g. this straight line from this curved line) are seen as different manifestations of a shared substance universal (linearity) by virtue of being different particularizations of the way that universal can be (lines are either straight or curved). So, not only do we see how universality is essential to particularity (Caius can only be a particular individual if he is a man); we also see how particularity is essential to universality (Caius cannot be a 'man in general', but must be a determinate example of a man, whose differences from other men nonetheless does not prevent him exemplifying the same universal 'man').¹⁹ At this point, Hegel says, the universal as it is now envisaged is truly concrete, in the following respects:

- it is not merely a property, in the sense of being a way an individual may be: rather, it is *what* the individual *is*, in so far as that individual is an instance of that kind of thing; it is therefore a substance-universal (e.g. 'man' or 'rose') and not a property-universal (e.g. 'red' or 'tall')²⁰
- it supports generic propositions, such as statements of natural law ('human beings are rational agents') and normative statements ('because this person is irrational, he is a poor example of a human being'); these are therefore to be distinguished from universally quantified statements ('all human beings are rational'), which tell us about the shared characteristics of a group of individuals, rather than the characteristics of the kind to which the individuals belong
- it can be exemplified in individuals which have different properties, so that there need be nothing *further* in common between these individuals than the fact they exemplify the same concrete universal (the way in which one individual is a man may be different from the way in which another individual is a man)

¹⁹ Cf. *EL*, §24Z, 56–7 [*Werke*, VIII: 82]:

[I]n speaking of a definite animal, we say that it is [an] 'animal.' 'Animal as such' cannot be pointed out; only a definite animal can ever be pointed at. 'The animal' does not exist; on the contrary, this expression refers to the universal nature of single animals, and each existing animal is something that is much more concretely determinate, something particularised. But 'to be animal,' the kind considered as the universal, pertains to the determinate animal and constitutes its determinate essentiality. If we were to deprive a dog of its animality we could not say what it is. Things as such have a persisting, inner nature, and an external thereness. They live and die, come to be and pass away; their essentiality, their universality, is the kind, and this cannot be interpreted merely as something held in common.

Cf. also Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, 72 [*Werke*, XII: 38]: 'For the individual exists as a determinate being, unlike man in general who has no existence as such'.

²⁰ Cf. Hegel, *EM*, §456Z, 209 [*Werke*, X: 266], where Hegel distinguishes the genus as a concrete universal, from the particular properties of the individual: 'This common element is either any one particular side of the object raised to the form of *universality*, such as, for example, in the rose, the red colour; or the *concrete universal*, the genus, for example, in the rose, the plant'.

We can now see what Hegel means by his claim that ‘the abstract universal . . . is opposed to the particular and the individual’,²¹ while the concrete universal is not: A rose is not an individual rose by virtue of exemplifying the abstract universal ‘red’, whereas it is an individual rose by virtue of exemplifying the concrete universal ‘rose’—so the latter is dialectically related to individuality in the way the former is not; and it exemplifies the abstract universal ‘red’ in the same way as other red things, whereas it exemplifies the concrete universal ‘rose’ differently from other roses, in so far as some roses are scented and others are not, some are evergreen and others are not, etc.—so the latter is dialectically related to particularity in the way the former is not. Thus, whereas it may appear that we can conceive of ‘red’ in abstraction from individuality and particularity, we cannot conceive of ‘rose’ in this manner, so that this kind of universality involves the other ‘moments’ of particularity and individuality in the way that an abstract universal does not.

Taken in this way, Hegel’s position can be viewed as a distinctive contribution to the metaphysical discussion concerning universals, in the tradition of substance-universal accounts. The trouble with abstract universals like ‘red’, Hegel argues, is that instances of such universals are not individuals in themselves, so that individuals are reduced to ‘bundles’ of such universals, while difficulties in individuating these bundles leads to the ‘substratum’ view of objects: but because this substratum is ‘bare’ (i.e. propertyless), it is hard to see how it can do the individuating job required of it. However, if we recognize that there are also concrete universals like ‘man’, we will avoid these problems: for, while instances of ‘red’ are not individuals, instances of substance-universals like ‘man’ are; but for this to be the case, it must be possible to exemplify a universal like ‘man’ in many different ways, such that each of us can be a man uniquely, in a way that constitutes our individuality. Hegel thus offers a way of solving the problem of individuation, without appealing to any of the ‘non-qualitative’ solutions we have discussed, such as haecceity theory, substratum theory, or trope theory: while there is nothing more to the individual than the universals it exemplifies, those universals are a combination of property- and substance-universals, so that it is qua man that I have the particular set of properties that make me into an individual, not as a bare ‘this’. Unless we recognize Hegel’s way of drawing a distinction between abstract and concrete universals, this way of solving the problem is something we will miss.

Hegel’s doctrine of the concrete universal may therefore be summarized as follows: The individual is no more than an instantiation of universals (there are no ‘bare’ individuals). But the universals that constitute the individual are not just property-universals, as these just tell us what attributes the individual has, not what the individual *is* (so the ‘bundle view’ is false). But the substance-universals which constitute the nature of the individual qua individual do not

²¹ Hegel, *SL*: 602 [*Werke*, VI: 275].

exist in the abstract, but only as particularized through property-universals, and thus as instantiated in the form of individuals (so Platonism is false). So, starting from any one of the categories of the Concept (universality, particularity, individuality), this category can only be made intelligible in the light of the other two: individuality is constituted by the particularized substance-universal (as an individual, I am a man with a determinate set of properties that distinguish me from other men); the substance-universal exists only in individuals, through its particularization (the universal 'man' exists *in rebus*, as instantiated in *different* men); and particularity is the differentiation of a substance-universal, whereby it constitutes an individual (it is qua man that I have the properties which distinguish me from other men). It is the dialectical interconnection between the three categories which Hegel thinks is needed if we are to have an adequate solution to the problem of individuality, of the sort that is required.

3. THE EXISTENTIAL PROTEST

Hegel's doctrine of the 'concrete universal' thus offers a subtle and in many ways appealing approach to the problem of individuality, in trying to account for the singularity of the individual on the one hand, while avoiding the obscurities of substratum or haecceity theories on the other. However, as we saw in the opening section, such theories are appealing to those who feel that no qualitative approach (such as Hegel's) can really do justice to the individuality of an object.

In Hegel's case, this worry may be pressed as follows: On Hegel's version of the substance-kind theory, as we have seen, an individual is viewed as a particularized substance-universal; that is, Fido qua individual is an instantiation of the substance-kind 'dog', but in a particular way, so that as a dog, Fido is distinct from Rex. Hegel is therefore suggesting that what individuates Fido is not *just* that he instantiates the substance-universal, as on the 'classical' substance-kind theory introduced in the first section—for that gives rise to the question of how this could be so, as Fido and Rex are both dogs, and so both exemplify the *same* universal. Rather, Hegel is claiming that what differentiates Fido and Rex is that they have distinct ways of being dogs—Fido is one colour, Rex another, and so on, so that in each of them the substance-universal is 'particularized' in a different manner.²² Now, one question this approach raises, is that if Fido and Rex exemplify doginess differently, how can we say that they exemplify doginess as a *universal*, which is supposed to be the *same* in each of its instances? Hegel's response would seem to be that this is just what is distinctive of a *concrete* as opposed to an *abstract* universal: whereas a red rose and a red ball may both be

²² Cf. again Hegel, *EL*, §24Z, 56 [*Werke*, VIII: 82]: "The animal" does not exist; on the contrary, this expression refers to the universal nature of single animals, and each existing animal is something that is much more concretely determinate, something particularised'.

red in the same manner, individuals who are dogs will each be so in different ways. Another question is this: if we are relying on the different properties of Fido and Rex to account for the fact that they are different individuals qua dogs, doesn't this in effect lead us back to the problems of the bundle view? For, it is surely possible that two dogs could have the same particularizing qualities (of laziness, brownness etc), so what could then make them distinct? If the reply is, they are distinct qua dogs, even if their properties are the same, we are back with the 'classical' substance-kind theory, which claims that substance-universals are intrinsically individuating: but how? Hegel's doctrine of particularization seemed to make this less mysterious; but if that means that two dogs can only be distinct if they have different properties, that would appear to mean that like Leibniz, Hegel must deny that two things could ever be qualitatively identical—but then what individuating work is the substance-universal doing, if what makes Fido and Rex distinct are their respective properties?²³

To his subsequent critics, it appeared that Hegel had been led to this impasse because the nature of his philosophical project made it impossible for him to leave room for the unique specificity of the individual: for, as they understood that project, Hegel was an idealistic rationalist, who wanted to show that the fundamental nature of the world is accessible to thought, and who could therefore not acknowledge anything in the 'that' over and above the 'what', for otherwise the existence of a thing would be determined by something unconceptualizable. One of the first to criticize Hegel in these terms was F. W. J. Schelling, who in his later years argued that Hegel had failed to see that 'We live in this determinate world, not in an abstract or universal world that we so much enjoy deluding ourselves with by holding fast to the most *universal* properties of things, without penetrating to their actual relationships'.²⁴ As a result of this error, Schelling argued, Hegel had propounded what he characterized as

²³ Cf. Hegel's discussion of Leibniz in the *Science of Logic*, where Hegel endorses the Leibnizian position, but just argues that it has not been properly proved:

Ordinary thinking is struck by the proposition that no two things are like each other—as in the story of how Leibniz propounded it at court and caused the ladies to look at the leaves of trees to see whether they could find two alike. Happy times for metaphysics when it was the occupation of courtiers and the testing of its propositions called for no more exertion than to compare leaves! . . . The law of diversity . . . asserts that things are different from one another through unlikeness, that the determination of unlikeness belongs to them just as much as that of likeness, for determinate difference is constituted only by both together.

Now this proposition that unlikeness must be predicated of all things, surely stands in need of proof; it cannot be set up as an immediate proposition, for even in the ordinary mode of cognition a proof is demanded of the combination of different determinations in a synthetic proposition, or else the indication of the third term in which they are mediated. This proof would have to exhibit the passage of identity into difference, and then the passage of this into determinate difference, into unlikeness. But as a rule this is not done. (Hegel, *SL*: 422–3 [*Werke*, VI: 53–4])

²⁴ F. W. J. Schelling, *Die Philosophie der Offenbarung Zweiter Teil*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling, 14 vols (Stuttgart and Augsburg: J. G. Cotta, 1856–61; repr. in Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1974–76), 14: 332.

a *negative* philosophy, which is confined to a world of concepts and essences, and neglects the facticity of *existence*, with its fundamental contingency and singularity.

Moreover, Hegel's critics did not only set out to explore the inadequacy of Hegel's own position: they also tried to show that his arguments against the alternative views were unfounded. Thus, both Ludwig Feuerbach and Søren Kierkegaard offered criticisms of Hegel's treatment of sense-certainty, arguing that his attempts to refute the insights of this position were unsuccessful and begged the question against it. On their view, Hegel's central claim was that while sense-certainty holds that each individual has the unique property of being 'this', which is meant to belong just to the particular individual, in fact *everything* has this property; for, when we come to say anything about it, there is nothing we can do to characterize the 'thisness' belonging to Fido, or indeed any other individual, so it appears to be an entirely *general* property, and thus universal. It therefore seemed to be crucial to his argument that Hegel made the demand that sense-certainty should be able to respond to the question 'What is the *This?*', where he then stated that this question could not be satisfactorily answered, except in the most general terms:

It is as a universal too that we *utter* what the sensuous [content] is. What we say is: 'This', i.e. the *universal* This; or, 'it is', i.e. *Being in general*. Of course, we do not *envisage* the universal This or Being in general, but we *utter* the universal; in other words, we do not strictly say what in this sense-certainty we *mean* to say. But language, as we see, is the more truthful; in it, we ourselves directly refute what we *mean* to say, and since the universal is the true [content] of sense-certainty and language expresses this true [content] alone, it is just not possible for us ever to say, or express in words, a sensuous being that we *mean* When Science is faced with the demand—as if it were an acid test it could not pass—that it should deduce, construct, find *a priori*, or however it is put, something called 'this thing' or 'this one man', it is reasonable that the demand should *say* which 'this thing', or which 'this particular man' is *meant*; but it is impossible to say this.²⁵

To his critics, however, the question this passage raises is whether Hegel is right to ask sense-certainty to respond to this demand 'What is *This?*', and whether in so doing he is proceeding *immanently*, examining sense-certainty in its own terms. For, they argued, language is inherently *conceptual*, so that if we are asked to *say* something about the 'This', we will find we cannot characterize it in descriptive terms, and so will appear to be saying that the 'This' is abstract and empty, a mere 'Being in general' that belongs to everything equally: but why should sense-certainty treat the 'This' as if it were linguistically expressible rather than ineffable, something *beyond* the conceptuality of language? After all, isn't that what sense-certainty claims about it in the first place: that it can be *apprehended* but not *comprehended*? So, by setting his question as a test that

²⁵ Hegel, *PS*: 85–7 [*Werke*, III: 60–2].

sense-certainty must pass, isn't Hegel in fact begging the question against it, and so not proceeding 'immanently' in the way he claims?

In his essay 'Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy' (1839), Feuerbach presents this objection as follows, quoting Hegel's remark about 'Language being the more truthful' which we have cited above:

But is this a dialectical [i.e. properly immanent] refutation of the reality of sensuous consciousness? Is it thereby proved that the general is the real? It may well be for someone who is certain in advance that the general is the real, but not for sensuous consciousness or for those who occupy its standpoint and will have to be convinced first of the unreality of sensuous being and the reality of thought . . . Here, language is irrelevant. The reality of sensuous and particular being is a truth that carries the seal of our blood. The commandment that prevails in the sphere of the senses is: an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Enough of words: come down to real things! *Show me what you are talking about!* To sensuous consciousness it is precisely language that is unreal, nothing. How can it regard itself, therefore, as refuted if it is pointed out that a particular entity cannot be expressed in language? Sensuous consciousness sees precisely in this a refutation of language and not a refutation of sensuous certainty . . . [The *Phenomenology*] begins, as mentioned already, not with the 'other-being' of thought, but with the *idea of the 'other-being' of thought*. Given this, thought is naturally certain of its victory over its adversary in advance. Hence the humour with which thought pulls the leg of sensuous consciousness. But this also goes to show that thought has not been able to refute its adversary.²⁶

Feuerbach thus tries to turn the tables on Hegel's argument from language: rather than the ineffability of the 'This' showing it to be an empty abstraction, it rather shows the limitations on what language can express, namely the uniqueness of the individual, so that while Hegel refutes "'this-being," *haecceitas*' as an '*idea*',²⁷ something that can be conceptualized, he does not refute it as a *fact*, as the 'other-being' of thought. For Feuerbach, therefore, there is no reason to take Hegel's arguments against the haecceity theory with any great seriousness, in so far as he himself failed to take that position seriously.

In a similar manner, what Kierkegaard finds striking in Hegel's discussion of sense-certainty is not that it provides a refutation of the immediacy of sense-certainty, but that it points up a tension between that immediacy and the mediacy of language, as sense-certainty struggles to put into words the nature of its unmediated encounter with the individual:

What, then, is immediacy? It is reality itself [*Realitet*]. What is mediacy? It is the word. How does the one cancel the other? By giving expression to it, for that which is given expression is always *presupposed*.

²⁶ Ludwig Feuerbach, 'Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Philosophie', in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Werner Schuffenhauer, vol. 9 (*Kleinere Schriften II (1839–1846)*) (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1990), 43–5; trans. in *The Fiery Brook: Selected Writings of Ludwig Feuerbach*, trans. Zawar Hanfi (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972), 53–96, at 77–9; repr. in Robert Stern (ed.), *G. W. F. Hegel: Critical Assessments*, 4 vols (London: Routledge, 1993), vol. 1, 100–30 at 117–18.

²⁷ Feuerbach, 'Zur Kritik', 45; *The Fiery Brook*, 79; *Critical Assessments*, vol. 1, 118.

Immediacy is reality; language is ideality; consciousness is contradiction [*Modsigelse*]. The moment I make a statement about reality, contradiction is present, for what I say is ideality.²⁸

In an alternative formulation, Kierkegaard makes the issue even clearer: ‘Intrinsically there is already a contradiction between reality and ideality; the one provides the particular defined in time and space, the other the universal’.²⁹ For Kierkegaard, Hegel is to be criticized as seeming to want to overcome this contradiction, but in a way that favours ideality over reality, the universal over the particular, and it is this that then makes him think he can get beyond sense-certainty, whereas in fact it merely raises problems for him that his subsequent account of the ‘concrete universal’ fails to solve, concerning the ‘contradiction between reality and ideality’.

We have seen, therefore, how there is an important strand of nineteenth-century ‘continental’ thought—out of which different forms of existentialism, materialism, critical theory, and empiricism were to develop—that emerges as a reaction against Hegel’s approach to the problem of universality. Turning now to the twentieth century, we will consider how this question plays a role in the thought of Gilles Deleuze, who offers a particularly sophisticated treatment of the issue.

4. INDIVIDUALITY AND DIFFERENCE

Deleuze approaches the problem of individuality from the perspective of what is known as his ‘philosophy of difference’. This perspective is captured in the following passage from one of his major works, *Difference and Repetition*:

That identity not be first, that it exist as a principle but as a second principle, as a principle *become*; that it revolve around the Different; such would be the nature of the Copernican revolution which opens up the possibility of difference having its own concept, rather than being maintained under the domination of a concept in general already understood as identical.³⁰

²⁸ Søren Kierkegaard, *Papirer*, ed. P. A. Heiberg, V. Kuhr, and E. Torstling, 11 vols (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1909–48), IV B1: 146; trans. in *Johannes Climacus, or De Omnibus Dubitandum Est*, in *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus, Philosophical Writings*, VII, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 167–8. Cf. also a draft of this passage (*Papirer* IV B 14: 6; trans. Hong and Hong, 255):

[I]t is language that cancels immediacy; if man could not talk he would remain in the immediate. This could be expressed, he [Johannes Climacus] thought, by saying that the immediate is reality, language is ideality, since by speaking I produce the contradiction. When I seek to express sense perception in this way, the contradiction is present, for what I say is something different from what I want to say. I cannot express reality in language, because I use ideality to characterize it, which is a contradiction, an untruth.

²⁹ *Papirer* IV B 10: 7; trans. Hong and Hong, 257.

³⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), 59; trans. as *Difference and Repetition* by Paul Patton (London: Athlone Press, 1994), 40–1.

For Deleuze, Hegel is typical of a thinker who does not give difference ‘its own concept’, because for Hegel when something is an individual and so distinct from anything else, it is not distinct ‘immediately’ or ‘in itself’, but distinct from things that are of the same kind as itself, by virtue of properties that set these identical things apart from one another. Thus, Deleuze takes Hegel to put identity prior to difference, because he holds that while the difference between things makes them individuals, their difference is grounded in an underlying identity: Fido and Rex are distinct in the properties they possess, but they only possess those properties qua dogs, which is a substance-universal they both share. In this respect, he argues, Hegel puts identity first and difference second, whereas Deleuze wants to put them the other way round.³¹

Deleuze makes clear that he sees the need for his ‘Copernican revolution’ in order to overturn a certain ‘image of thought’,³² which in part arises from treating as essential to individuals what they have in common, in the manner of Plato’s Forms. The danger with this view, as Deleuze sees it, is its underlying conservatism: thought will attempt to assimilate all individuals into a general type, and thereby exclude or devalue their difference or singularity, as when we speak of a ‘common sense’ that is supposed to be shared by everyone, but which in fact imposes a false consensus on the minority; or think of the individual as the less than perfect instantiation of the kind to which it belongs.³³ Deleuze believes he can bring out what is wrong with Hegel’s conception of individuation, whereby Socrates is treated as a variant on a kind, rather than something fundamentally new, unique, original, something which thought cannot assimilate as a ‘reproduction’ of what it has already encountered (as another man, like Callicles or Caius).³⁴

³¹ For helpful general discussions of Deleuze’s critique of Hegel, see Bruce Baugh, *French Hegel: From Surrealism to Postmodernism* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 147–56, and Catherine Malabou, ‘Who’s Afraid of Hegelian Wolves?’, in Paul Patton (ed.), *Deleuze: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 114–38.

³² Cf. Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition*, ch. III, and pp. xvi–xvii of the English trans.

³³ Cf. also Adorno, *Metaphysik*, 125–6; *Metaphysics*, 79:

It might be said with some exaggeration that matter is the *principium individuationis* in Aristotle, and not, as we are inclined to think, form, which is that which determines a particular thing as particular. For him, however, individuation itself is founded precisely on this particularization—the lack of identity, or full identity, of an existent thing with its form. Individuation thus becomes something negative in Aristotle. And that, too, is a basic thesis of all western metaphysics, as it reappears in Kant, where cognition is equated with the determining of an object in its generality and necessity, and as you find it working to its extreme in Hegel, where only the universal manifesting itself through individuation is the substantial—whereas anything which lies outside the identification with the universal principle is regarded as absolutely insignificant, ephemeral and unimportant.

³⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1966), 175; trans. as *Negative Dialectics*, by E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1973), 173: ‘The concept of the particular is always its negation at the same time; it cuts short what the particular is and what nonetheless cannot be directly named, and it replaces this with identity . . . The idealist will not see that, however devoid of qualities “something” may be, this is no reason yet to call it “nothing.” Hegel is constantly forced

Thus, in order to turn the Hegelian picture on its head, Deleuze sets out to challenge it as a solution to the problem of individuation. First, he argues that Hegel cannot account for *difference*, because he must do so in terms of the concepts that the individual exemplifies, which are always general and can therefore be shared by other individuals; and second, he argues that Hegel cannot account for *repetition*, because he must think of this as two (or more) individuals exemplifying the same concept at different places and/or times, which is to misrepresent the phenomenon of repetition, which involves one individual repeating another *individual* as such, rather than exemplifying the same properties *as* another individual.

Deleuze urges the problem of difference against Hegel by arguing that, like Leibniz, Hegel must find himself committed to an implausibly strong version of the principle of the identity of indiscernibles. In Leibniz's case, he finds himself obliged to argue that no two things can be the same with respect to just their non-relational or intrinsic properties, because when God decides to bring an individual thing into existence, what makes it an individual thing different from anything else cannot be its relation to other things, as these relations do not obtain until *after* God's creative act. Leibniz is therefore forced to argue that two leaves must differ from each other not just because they differ in their relational properties (e.g. in their age, or their spatial properties), but in their intrinsic properties (e.g. their colour or shape). Now, Deleuze suggests that Hegel must also be committed to a view that is implausibly strong in the same way: for, on Hegel's view, individuation is the result of the particularization of the substance-universal; but no individual has its relational properties qua instantiation of a kind, or its spatial and temporal properties either, if these are thought of in a non-relational way (as in Kant's example of left and right hands);³⁵ so that on this view these properties cannot be what distinguishes one individual from anything else. For example, while being a certain colour or shape is part of what it is for Fido to be a dog, it is arguable that being here or being born when he was is not an aspect of his doginess in the same way. But if this is so on the Hegelian view, where it is only qua dog that Fido is an individual, and none of these relational properties or spatio-temporal properties are parts of his doginess, then isn't the Hegelian therefore required to hold (like Leibniz) that each individual must differ with respect to its *intrinsic* qualities only, where (as with Leibniz) this seems implausible? Deleuze argues, therefore, that what makes an individual *this* individual can be nothing to do with its nature qua member of a kind, which is what he means when he

to shadow-box because he shrinks from his own conception: from the dialectics of the particular, which destroyed the primacy of identity and thus, consistently, idealism itself.

³⁵ Cf. Immanuel Kant, 'Concerning the Ultimate Ground of the Differentiation of Regions in Space', in *Theoretical Philosophy 1755–1770*, trans. David Walford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 361–72, at 370 [Ak II: 381–2].

says that difference need not be anything to do with *conceptual* difference: for example, two hands can be identical qua hands, but still be different, where the non-conceptual difference between them (for example, one being the left hand and the other the right) is not grounded in this identity, as it is a difference that is not an aspect of 'being a hand', while nonetheless making them distinct. Deleuze thus argues that while Hegel may have thought that he had a better way of establishing Leibniz's principle than looking to see if in fact two things sharing the same intrinsic properties could be found, his position is equally unsatisfactory:

. . . is every difference indeed intrinsic or conceptual in the last instance? Hegel ridiculed Leibniz for having invited the court ladies to undertake experimental metaphysics while walking in the gardens, to see whether two leaves of a tree could not have the same concept.³⁶ Replace the court ladies by forensic scientists: no two grains of dust are absolutely identical, no two hands have the same distinctive points, no two typewriters have the same strike, no two revolvers score their bullets in the same manner. . . . Why, however, do we feel that the problem is not properly defined so long as we look for the criterion of a *principium individuationis* in the facts? It is because a difference can be internal, yet not conceptual (as the paradox of symmetrical objects shows).³⁷

Deleuze thus concludes: 'Perhaps the mistake of the philosophy of difference, from Aristotle to Hegel via Leibniz, lay in confusing the concept of difference with merely conceptual difference, in remaining content to inscribe difference in the concept in general'³⁸—which I take to mean, that because these philosophers have taken the individuality of a thing to be determined by how it differs from other things of the same kind, any non-conceptual basis of difference has been treated as extrinsic to it qua individual, and so has been lost as a ground for individuation, where this can be a basis for difference, which is not related to any identity it has with other individuals of the same kind (Fido may differ from Rex in colour qua dog, but his spatial difference from Rex has nothing to do with his doginess and so is a difference that cannot be 'inscribed in the concept in general').

As well as claiming that Hegel cannot account for difference in this way, Deleuze also argues that he cannot account for the nature of *repetition*. A natural way to think of repetition, and one that may easily seem to follow from the Hegelian picture, is as follows: *B* is a repetition of *A* when *B* has all the same properties as *A*. So, for example, Fido₁ is brown, hairy, lazy etc, and Fido₂ is just the same, so Fido₂ is a repetition of Fido₁. However, the question Deleuze ask is: why doesn't this just make Fido₁ and Fido₂ different instances of the

³⁶ Cf. G. W. Leibniz to Samuel Clarke, fourth letter, 2 June 1716, §4; G. W. Leibniz to the Electress Sophia, 31 October 1705.

³⁷ Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition*, 39; *Difference and Repetition*, 26.

³⁸ *Différence et Répétition*, 41; *Difference and Repetition*, 27. Cf. also *Différence et Répétition*, 20–4; *Difference and Repetition*, 11–14.

same *type*, rather than what we were after, namely a way of seeing Fido₂ as a repetition of Fido₁ qua individual. What has gone wrong, according to Deleuze, is that each individual is seen as an instance of a general kind, whereas the phenomenon of repetition involves the repetition of an *individual*, not merely the instantiation of the same type one more time. Thus, for example, suppose an artist wants to repeat a pattern he has already drawn, or a performance that has already happened—he wants to repeat *this* pattern or *this* performance, not to do something of the same *type* as what has occurred before. But, Deleuze argues, the Hegelian picture has no room for this distinction between repetition and generality, because the individual is never anything more than an instance of a type, so that another individual identical to the first is just another instance, not a repetition of the individual qua individual:

To repeat is to behave in a certain manner, but in relation to something unique or singular which has no equal or equivalent. And perhaps this repetition at the level of an external conduct echoes, for its part, a more secret vibration which animates it, a more profound, internal repetition within the singular. This is the apparent paradox of festivals: they repeat an 'unrepeatable'. They do not add a second and a third time to the first, but carry the first time to the 'nth' power. With respect to this power, repetition interiorizes and therefore reverses itself: as Péguy says, it is not Federation Day which commemorates or represents the fall of the Bastille, but the fall of the Bastille which celebrates and repeats in advance all the Federation Days; or Monet's first water lily which repeats all the others. Generality, as generality of the particular, thus stands opposed to repetition as the universality of the singular. The repetition of the work of art is like a singularity without concept. . . . If repetition exists, it expresses at once a singularity opposed to the general, a universality opposed to the particular, a distinctive opposed to the ordinary, an instantaneity opposed to variation and an eternity opposed to permanence. In every respect, repetition is a transgression. It puts law into question, it denounces its nominal or general character in favour of a more profound and more artistic reality.³⁹

³⁹ *Différence et Répétition*, 7–9; *Difference and Repetition*, 1–3. Cf *Différence et Répétition*, 36; *Difference and Repetition*, 23:

We are right to speak of repetition when we find ourselves confronted by identical elements with exactly the same concept. However, we must distinguish between these discrete elements, these repeated objects, and a secret subject, the real subject of repetition, which repeats itself through them. Repetition must be understood as pronominal; we must find the Self of repetition, the singularity within that which repeats. For there is no repetition without a repeater, nothing repeated without a repetitious soul;

and Gilles Deleuze, 'La conception de la différence chez Bergson', *Les études bergsoniennes*, IV (1956), 77–112, at 104; trans. as 'Bergson's Conception of Difference' by Melissa McMahan, in John Mullarkey (ed.), *The New Bergson* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 42–65, at 58: 'Repetition does indeed form objective kinds, but these kinds are not in themselves general ideas, because they do not envelop a plurality of objects which resemble each other, but only present us the particularity of an object which repeats itself in an identical way'. In focusing on repetition as a central issue, Deleuze was picking up on critical insights he found in Nietzsche and Kierkegaard: cf. *Différence et Répétition*, 12–13; *Difference and Repetition*, 5: 'There is a force common to Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. . . . What separates them is considerable, evident and well-known. But

Deleuze therefore sees in repetition a deep challenge to the Hegelian position, and its account of individuation and individuality.

Having identified these two problems for Hegel, Deleuze makes clear what he sees as the underlying difficulty: that because Hegel adopts a 'philosophy of identity', he treats the differences between things as beginning with an underlying identity; but differentiation conceived of in this manner can never go far enough: no matter how many properties are added to the universal 'dog', Fido's individuality must remain elusive, for these properties can always be shared with another individual, and thus all we reach is the 'infima species' or lowest species, rather than the individual as such:

The individual is neither a qualification nor a partition, neither an organisation nor a determination of species. The individual is no more an *infima species* than it is composed of parts. Qualitative or extensive interpretations of individuation remain incapable of providing reasons why a quality ceases to be general, or why a synthesis of extensity begins here and finishes there. The determination of qualities and species presupposes individuals to be qualified, while extensive parts are relative to an individual rather than the reverse. . . . Because there are individuals of different species and individuals of the same species, there is a tendency to believe that individuation is a continuation of the determination of species, albeit of a different kind and proceeding by different means. In fact any confusion between the two processes, and reduction of individuation to a limit or complication of differentiation, compromises the whole philosophy of difference.⁴⁰

Given this sort of view, it is therefore not surprising to find that Deleuze is drawn to something like a haecceity conception of individuality, as a way of securing his claim 'that individuation precedes differentiation in principle, that every differentiation presupposes a prior intense field of individuation'.⁴¹ Deleuze accepts that individuality conceived of in this way is ineffable, as something that 'rises to the surface yet assumes neither form nor figure. It is there staring at us, but without eyes';⁴² but he resists the Hegelian suggestion that this leaves us in 'the night in which all cows are black', where no individual is distinguishable from any other: 'how differentiated and differentiating is this blackness, even though these differences remain unidentified and barely or non-individuated'.⁴³ In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and his co-author Felix Guattari characterize this 'prior intense field of individuation' as the singularity of spatio-temporal relations, where they treat times and places as having a haecceity, rather than individuals as such, and argue that the former are prior to the latter, where

nothing can hide this prodigious encounter in relation to a philosophy of repetition: *they oppose repetition to all forms of generality*.

⁴⁰ Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition*, 318; *Difference and Repetition*, 247.

⁴¹ Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition*, 318; *Difference and Repetition*, 247.

⁴² Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition*, 197; *Difference and Repetition*, 152.

⁴³ Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition*, 355; *Difference and Repetition*, 277. The reference to 'the night in which all cows are black' is to Hegel's well-known criticism of what he saw as Schelling's monistic conception of the Absolute: see Hegel, *PS*: 9 [*Werke*, III: 22].

individuals should therefore be seen more as 'events' than as 'subjects', in opposition to the traditional metaphysics of individuation that we have been considering.⁴⁴

We have seen, then, how in common with many post-Hegelian thinkers, Deleuze believes that his attempt to construct a 'philosophy of difference' must take him away from Hegel, and into a 'generalized anti-Hegelianism' summarized in the slogan: 'We propose to think difference in itself independently of the forms of representation which reduce it to the Same'.⁴⁵ To Deleuze, Hegel's commitment to this reductionism is clearly evident from the role Hegel (like Aristotle) gives to the substance-universal: for if it is only qua dogs that Fido and Rex can be said to be particularized into individuals, doesn't this show that for Hegel, difference is only allowed to exist in terms of an underlying identity belonging to the generic concept?

However, is Deleuze too quick to set up his 'philosophy of difference' as a challenge to Hegel here in the way he does? Does he overlook the complexities of Hegel's doctrine of the 'concrete universal'? This could perhaps be argued by looking at a passage from Deleuze himself, which comes from an early discussion of Bergson:

In some essential pages dedicated to Ravaisson,⁴⁶ Bergson explains that there are two ways of determining what colours have in common. *Either* one extracts the abstract and general idea of colour, extracted 'by taking away from red what makes it red, from blue what makes it blue, from green what makes it green': one then ends up with a concept which is a genre, with several objects that have the same concept. There is a duality of concept and object, and the relation of the object to the concept is one of subsumption. One thus stops at spatial distinctions, at a state of difference exterior to the thing. *Or*, one passes the colours through a converging lens which directs them on to a single point: what we obtain, in this case, is a 'pure white light', which 'brought out the difference between the tints'. In this case the different colours are no longer *under* a concept, but the nuances or degrees of the concept itself, degrees of difference itself and not differences of degree. The relation is no longer one of subsumption, but participation. White light is still a universal, but a concrete universal, which enables us to understand the particular because it is itself at the extreme of the particular. Just as things have become nuances or degrees of the concept, the concept itself has become the thing. It is a universal thing, we could say, since the objects sketched therein are so many degrees, but a concrete thing, not a kind or generality. Strictly speaking there are no longer several objects with the same concept, as the concept is identical to the thing itself, it is the difference between

⁴⁴ Cf. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie tome 2: Mille plateaux* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1980), 318–21; trans. as *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* by Brian Massumi (London: Athlone, 1987), 260–3.

⁴⁵ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, xix.

⁴⁶ This is a reference to Bergson's 'La vie et l'oeuvre de Ravaisson', in *La pensée et le mouvant* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1934), 281–322, at 287–9; trans. as 'The Life and Works of Ravaisson', in Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Mabelle L. Anderson (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), 220–52, at 225.

the objects related to it, not their resemblance. Such is internal difference: the concept become concept of difference.⁴⁷

In treating Bergson as an ally here, Deleuze offers no acknowledgement that the very idea of a concrete universal has an Hegelian provenance, and that in adopting it, Hegel intended to make just the points that Deleuze follows Bergson in making here; and yet, Deleuze does seem to accept that if we think of the universal in concrete terms, 'the concept [has] become concept of difference'. If this can be allowed, then given Hegel's own account of the concrete universal, Deleuze's claim that Hegel reduces difference to identity could perhaps be resisted in the same way:

When people speak of the Concept, they ordinarily have only abstract universality in mind, and consequently the Concept is usually also defined as a general notion. We speak in this way of the 'concept' of colour, or of a plant, or of an animal, and so on; and these concepts are supposed to arise by omitting the particularities through which the various colours, plants, animals, etc., are distinguished from one another, and holding fast to what they have in common. This is the way in which the understanding apprehends the Concept, and the feeling that such concepts are hollow and empty, that they are mere schemata and shadows, is justified. What is universal about the Concept is indeed not just something common against which the particular stands on its own; instead the universal is what particularises (specifies) itself, remaining at home with itself in its other, in unclouded clarity.⁴⁸

Just as Deleuze finds attractive in Bergson's position the idea that the concept of colour cannot be thought of as something in abstraction from the particular colours, so Hegel emphasizes that these 'particularities' cannot be 'omitted'; and as a result, like Bergson on Deleuze's reading, Hegel claims that the universal is not just something individuals have in common prior to what makes them distinct as individuals, so that he would agree that 'the different colours are no longer *under* a concept' (in a Platonic manner), but 'the nuances or degrees of the concept itself'. On these grounds, it could be argued, it makes no more sense in Hegel's case than it does in Bergson's to claim that identity is *prior to* difference, in so far as the latter can equally be said to be required for the former.

Of course, even if it can be claimed that Hegel's conception of the 'concrete universal' is closer to Deleuze's philosophy of difference than Deleuze was prepared to allow, this does not show that either position is unproblematic or indeed yet free of apparent incoherence: for each, as we have seen, tries to strike a balance between different competing pressures when it comes to thinking of

⁴⁷ Deleuze, 'La conception de la différence chez Bergson', 98–9; 'Bergson's Conception of Difference', 54.

⁴⁸ Hegel, *EL*, §164Z, 240 [*Werke*, VIII: 311–12]. For a further attempt to bring out these aspects of Hegel's position, see Robert Stern, 'Hegel, British Idealism, and the Curious Case of the Concrete Universal', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 15 (2007), 115–53 [repr. above, as Ch. 5].

the problem of individuality. But we have seen how fundamental this problem has become within the 'continental' tradition, and how the complex approaches offered to it reflect the real difficulties it gives rise to, not only in metaphysics, but in ethics, political philosophy, and 'philosophies of life'.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ A version of this paper was presented to a departmental seminar at the University of Warwick, and I am grateful to members of the audience for comments on that occasion. I am also grateful for comments from Keith Ansell-Pearson and Alison Stone.

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