Hegel's Relation to Kant

It will not have escaped the notice of those conversant with German philosophy that some of the views I have attributed to Hegel are remarkably similar to those put forward by his great Enlightenment predecessor, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). It was, after all, Kant who first argued, in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781, second edition 1787), that categories allow us to conceive as an *object* that which we perceive through the senses and that such categories are therefore the necessary conditions of objective experience. Hegel readily acknowledges his debt to Kant in this and many others areas of philosophy; indeed, he praises Kant for providing "the base and the starting-point of recent German philosophy" (by which he means primarily the thought of Fichte and Schelling out of which his own speculative philosophy developed) (*SL* 61/1: 59).

Plato and Aristotle win Hegel's approval for being the first to point out that the human mind thinks in terms of abstract categories, or "forms" (such as "one" and "many"), and for separating them from the complex array of intuitions, representations, and desires in which they are normally submerged and so making them objects of contemplation in their own right (*SL* 33/1: 22). Kant merits particular praise from Hegel, however, for noting the special role categories play in lending *objectivity* to our perceptions. Categories for Kant (as later for Hegel) are what permit us to say of what we see, hear and touch, not just that it is a collection of sensations (colors, sounds, and tactile impressions) but that it is a real object with identifiable properties and of measurable size standing in causal relations with other similar objects. Categories thus constitute the conditions of the possibility of experience because "only by means of them can any *object* of experience be thought at all."[3]

Kant's other great insight, in Hegel's view, is that the fundamental general categories, through which what we perceive "become[s] an object for me" (*CPR* 249/149 [B 138]), are a priori concepts generated "spontaneously" and independently by pure thought. In other words, Kant saw (as Hegel himself puts it), that "the thought-determinations have their source in the I (*Ich*)" and in the I alone (*EL* 84/117 [§42 Add. 1]).[4] Categories, such as "reality," "quantity," "substance," and "cause" are thus not abstracted from what is given to the senses in the manner of empirical concepts: we do not first encounter a variety of colors and sounds, gradually notice that they all have in common the quality of being "real," and then formulate the general concept "reality" as we formulate (or at

3. I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. P. Guyer and A. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 224 (B 126), my emphasis; I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, ed. R. Schmidt (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1990), p. 134. Further references to the *Critique of Pure Reason* will be given in the following form: *CPR* 224/134 (B 126). See also Hegel, *EL* 81/113 (§40).

4. The translators of the Hackett edition of the *Encyclopaedia Logic* render *Ich* in this passage as "Ego" rather than "I," though elsewhere they also render it as "I."

least might be said to formulate) the empirical concept "red" by comparing and contrasting the various shades of red that we see. Rather, the category of "reality" is produced spontaneously and independently by thought and then employed to understand as real the red that is given to us.

Kant exercised an enormous influence on Hegel, especially in the areas of moral philosophy, aesthetics, and the philosophy of history. In the area of theoretical philosophy, however, one of the Kantian ideas that most impressed Hegel is clearly this claim that "the *original identity* of the 'I' within thinking (the transcendental unity of self-consciousness) [constitutes] the determinate *ground* of the concepts of the understanding" (*EL* 83/116 [§42]). Hegel will take up this idea and make it the cornerstone (albeit in an amended form) of his whole philosophy.

One important difference between Kant and Hegel is that Hegel in his lectures on the philosophy of history and the history of philosophy argues—*contra* Kant—that the categories are not all produced at the same time by thought or employed together in every period of history. Kant understands the categories discussed in the *Critique of Pure Reason* to be the universal conditions of the possibility of objective experience for *any* rational being endowed with a discursive, finite intellect. For Hegel, by contrast, human thought generates the basic categories over a period of time, so they are not all to be found—or at least not all given the same prominence—in every epoch of history or in every culture. Consequently, although Hegel believes that all the categories discussed in the *Logic* will be familiar to the inhabitants of our post-Reformation Western world, they would not necessarily all be familiar to ancient Egyptians or Greeks. Yet Hegel agrees with Kant that the source of the categories is always and only the spontaneous activity of pure thought itself. Thought certainly produces its categories in response to changing situations, but the categories with which it responds are wholly its own and a priori.

As I remarked above, Hegel sees it as the task of the *Logic* to provide in a rigorous and disciplined manner a proper understanding of the familiar categories of thought whose meanings we normally take for granted. The purpose of the *Logic* is not just to describe and analyze how we understand categories in everyday life but to determine how they are supposed to be understood, how they are to be understood *in truth*. Hegel thus will not describe the way concepts operate in concrete speech situations or given language games (in the manner of J. L. Austin or Wittgenstein), nor will he examine the way concepts operate in given texts (in the manner of Derrida). Such descriptions may well reveal that we do not actually understand and employ concepts as we imagine we do. But as descriptions of the way concepts happen to be used in *given* verbal or textual practices, they would not be able to establish how concepts *should* be understood.

How, then, is Hegel to proceed in his task? The way forward is indicated by Kant. If, as Kant argues, the categories have their source in and are generated by

pure thought alone, then *pure thought* alone must determine how those categories are properly to be conceived (just as it must explain our ordinary understanding of the categories, which may or may not overlap with the proper understanding). The way to determine the proper understanding of the categories is thus to consider how pure thought itself *requires* categories to be conceived. This is what Hegel will endeavor to do in the *Logic*: that text will seek to determine which categories are necessitated by, and so are inherent in, thought, as well as the form that these categories must take. In this way, it will set up a standard—the proper understanding of the categories—in relation to which we can determine to what extent our ordinary understanding is rational and appropriate. Hegel's *Logic* will thus not only clarify the categories of thought for thought but also offer a thorough *critique* of our ordinary conception of them to the extent that that conception falls short of what the *Logic* reveals them to be.

Hegel is aware that Kant also set out to discover the principal categories of thought (and how to conceive them) by determining which ones are inherent in thought. As is evident from both the *Logic* and the *Encyclopedia Logic* (1830), however, Hegel believes that Kant's attempt to discover the categories is vitiated by the fact that he took for granted rather too readily what is to be regarded as the essential character of thought. From Hegel's perspective, Kant's procedure for identifying the principal categories of thought rests on the unwarranted *assumption* that thought is fundamentally the activity of judgment and that the various kinds of judgment with which we are familiar from traditional (Aristotelian) formal logic yield the categories. Hegel's view of Kant's method of discovering the categories is set out in this passage from the *Encyclopedia Logic:*

> We are all well aware that Kant's philosophy took the easy way in its *finding* of the categories. "I," the unity of self-consciousness, is totally abstract and completely undetermined. So how are we to arrive at the *determinations* of the I, or at the categories? Fortunately, we can find the *various kinds of judgment* (*Arten des Urteils*) already specified empirically in the traditional logic. To judge, however, is to *think* a determinate object. So, the various modes of judgment that have already been enumerated give us the various *determinations of thinking.* (*EL* 84/116–17 [§42]; see also *SL* 47/1: 40–1)

The core of Hegel's complaint here is clear: Kant "discovers" the categories by simply examining "the *various kinds of judgment* already specified *empirically* in the traditional logic." It is important, however, not to be misled by the word "empirically." As we know, Hegel is well aware that Kant believes the categories are generated *a priori* by the understanding and are not produced in the manner of empirical concepts by comparing and generalizing from empirical perceptions. In the passage just quoted, Hegel is not accusing Kant himself of simply gleaning the principal categories from our empirical experience in a haphazard way as we might gather sea-shells on a beach. *Pace* Rolf-Peter Horstmann, he is thus not

maintaining that Kant's procedure for discerning the categories "is lacking a convincing principle which guides it."[5]

Hegel understands that Kant's procedure is indeed guided by a principle: namely, that the categories are determined by the basic intellectual activity of judgment. But he has two specific concerns about that procedure.

First, Kant—in common with many other philosophers—does not investigate fully *whether* the basic activity of thought is in fact judgment or "*whether* the form of the judgment could be the form of truth" (*EL* 66/94 [§28], my emphasis). He simply assumes that it is because it is deemed to be such by traditional formal logic. Second, Kant simply accepts the various kinds of judgment that he *finds* in formal logic. That is to say, he takes over the different kinds of judgment (and therewith the categories) "*from formal logic* as *given*" (*SL* 789/2: 505). In the doctrine of the concept (part 3 of the *Logic*), Hegel claims that formal logicians themselves simply *found* certain kinds of judgment and categories to be fundamental to thought (*SL* 613/2: 289). He thus understands Kant to base his account of the categories on various kinds of judgment that he *finds* in formal logic after they had themselves been *found* by formal logicians in thought. It is this reliance on what he *assumes* thought to be and on what he *finds* in formal logic, not any alleged recourse to empirical, sensuous experience, that makes Kant's procedure in Hegel's eyes "empirical."[6]

Kant's "empirical" approach to thought, judgments, and the categories falls short of what is demanded in a science of logic, Hegel believes, because it does not demonstrate that thought itself requires the categories to be conceived in a particular way. It does not prove that thought *by its very nature* is the activity of judging and that the categories thus have to be taken from the various kinds of judgment, but it simply assumes the primacy of judgment. Furthermore, Kant does not show that the specific kinds of judgment that he takes to underlie the categories inhere in thought necessarily. Kant thus fails to determine the proper way to conceive of the categories because his own account lacks necessity. In-

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5. R.-P. Horstmann, "What's Wrong with Kant's Categories, Professor Hegel?" in *Proceedings of the Eighth International Kant Congress*, ed. H. Robinson, 2 vols. (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1995), 1.3: 1009. For my reply to this paper, see S. Houlgate, "Response to Professor Horstmann," in *Proceedings of the Eighth International Kant Congress*, 1.3: 1017–23.

6. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy. The Lectures of 1825–1826*, ed. R. F. Brown, trans. R. F. Brown and J. M. Stewart with the assistance of H. S. Harris, vol. 3: *Medieval and Modern Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 229; G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie. Teil 4: Philosophie des Mittelalters und der neueren Zeit*, ed. P. Garniron and W. Jaeschke, *Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, vol. 9 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1986), p. 157. Further references to the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* will be given in the following form: *LHP* 229/157.

deed, it simply follows in the footsteps of ordinary, everyday consciousness by *taking for granted* what it is to think and how to understand the categories.

If we are to determine how the categories have to be conceived, our conception of them must be based not just on what thought is found or assumed to be but on what thought *proves itself* or *determines itself* to be. In other words, our conception of the categories has to be derived or deduced from—and so necessitated by—thought's own self-determination. According to Hegel, such a deduction would involve demonstrating that certain categories understood in a certain way arise directly from the very nature of thought as such; that is to say, it would entail "the exposition of the *transition* of that simple unity of self-consciousness *into* these its determinations and distinctions" (*SL* 789/2: 505, my emphasis). But, Hegel laments, "Kant spared himself the trouble of demonstrating this genuinely synthetic progress" by simply taking the basic character of thought (and therefore of its categories) for granted.

Kant's Account of the Categories

In my view, Hegel's criticisms of Kant are insightful and acute. Kant does ultimately take it for granted that thought—or at least the understanding (*Verstand*)—is essentially the activity of judgment, and he does seek to discover the categories by examining the kinds of judgment he finds in formal logic. The process whereby he identifies the categories is set out in the so-called "Metaphysical Deduction" in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. There Kant notes (a) that the categories "spring pure and unmixed from the understanding," and (b) that "the *understanding* in general can be represented as a *faculty for judging* (*Vermögen zu urteilen*)" (*CPR* 204-5/107–9 [B 92–4]). He clearly indicates thereby that the categories originate in, or at least are closely related to, the activity of judgment and that the way to discover them is to examine the distinctive forms that judgment can take (see *CPR* 213/119 [B 106]).[7]

It could be argued, however, that Kant does not merely assume that understanding is the activity of judgment but derives that conclusion from consideration of another, more fundamental feature of thought. At the start of the Metaphysical Deduction, Kant makes no explicit mention of judgment but notes simply that "the understanding is . . . not a faculty of intuition" (*CPR* 205/108 [B 92]). This means that through understanding we are not made aware of the immediate presence of objects, as we are through vision or touch. (Merely

7. Note that Kant does not refer to his "derivation" of the categories from the activity of judgment as a "metaphysical deduction" until later in the text; see *CPR* 261/177 (B 159). Judgment (*Urteilen*), or the logical activity of connecting concepts with one another, should not, of course, be confused with the "power of judgment" (*Urteilskraft*), which is the activity of subsuming intuitions under concepts or rules; see *CPR* 268/193 (B 171).

thinking of a hundred dollars does not place us in "immediate" relation to them in the way that seeing them does; see *CPR* 172, 567/63, 572 [B 33, 627].) Knowledge yielded by understanding thus can only be *discursive*. That is to say, all that understanding can do is give us "mediate knowledge" of, or tell us "about," what is (or can be) brought before the mind by nonintellectual, sensuous intuition or perception: it tells us *that* what we are seeing is "one hundred dollars" or *that* what we touch is "something real" or "something measurable." The concepts employed by understanding thus cannot yield knowledge by themselves but only insofar as they are used to determine or characterize something given in sensuous intuition. It is for this reason, Kant maintains, that "the understanding can make no other use of these concepts than that of judging by means of them"—judging *that* this intuited or perceived X is to be characterized as Y or as Z. Concepts, indeed, are nothing but "predicates of possible judgments" (*CPR* 205/108–9 [B 93–4]).

It therefore appears that, strictly speaking, Kant does not just assume that understanding is the activity of judgment but derives that conclusion from the supposition that understanding is fundamentally nonintuitive or discursive. It has to be said, however, that there is not really any *derivation* of judgment here: for the assertion that understanding is the activity of judgment is actually just another way of saying that understanding is discursive and can only tell us "about" things by means of concepts. Kant thus can be defended against the charge that he simply assumes understanding to be judgment only if it can be shown that he does not just assume that understanding is discursive.

Prima facie it seems that a case can be made for saying that Kant does not just assume this: for Kant's assertion that our spontaneous, active understanding cannot be a faculty of intuition, and so must be discursive, itself rests on the prior claim that human beings cannot intuit anything without *sensibility*—that is, without being passively affected by something. Furthermore, it would seem from a passage at the end of the Transcendental Aesthetic in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that this claim is not just taken for granted either but is based on a prior argument.

Kant maintains at the end of the Transcendental Aesthetic that *intellectual* intuition would be able to give us "the existence of the object of intuition," that is, would be able to bring an actual object before the mind merely by conceiving of it. He also maintains that "so far as we can have insight" the only being for whom an object would actually be given merely by being thought would be God. Accordingly, "intellectual intuition . . . seems to pertain only to the original being." A human being, for Kant, is not self-sufficient like God but a finite dependent being—"dependent as regards both its existence and its intuition." Our mode of intuition thus cannot bring an actual object before the mind by itself but "is dependent on the existence of the object": it is "possible only insofar as the representational capacity of the subject is affected through that [object]" and so is *sensible* (*CPR* 191–2/92–3 [B 72]). Kant therefore does not just as-

sume that our mode of intuition is sensible; he argues that it must be because only God is capable of intellectual intuition, and we are not God.

This conclusion, as we have already suggested, supports the further claim that our understanding is discursive and thus a faculty of judgment. For if we are capable only of sensible, not intellectual, intuition, then our understanding cannot intuit anything or be aware of the immediate presence of an object purely through its own spontaneous activity; it can only think "about," and characterize, what is brought before us through sensible intuition. Finite, human understanding thus *has* to be discursive because it can yield knowledge only by determining something that it has been *given* to think: "the understanding . . . demands first that something be given (at least in the concept) in order to be able to determine it in a certain way" (*CPR* 370/314 [B 323]).

But this "proof" that human intuition must be sensible and that human understanding must thus be discursive in fact takes for granted the very thing that is at issue. For the premise from which Kant starts (namely, that "intellectual intuition . . . seems to pertain *only* to the original being") already contains the claim that the human intellect cannot be intuitive and so must be discursive—provided, of course, one assumes, as Kant does, that human beings are quite distinct from God. Kant thus does not prove that human understanding is nonintuitive and discursive by deriving that claim from some independent premise; he takes it for granted in the very premise from which he starts. Now, as I indicated above, the assertion that understanding is the activity of judgment is simply another way of saying that understanding is discursive. In taking for granted that human understanding is discursive, Kant thus takes for granted that understanding is fundamentally *judgment*, just as Hegel claims. One could also point out that Kant's assumption that human beings are quite separate from God is contestable and, indeed, is contested by Spinoza. The idea that human understanding is irreducibly finite and discursive is thus by no means as obvious as Kant seems to believe.

On the surface Hegel's charge that Kant simply assumes that understanding is judgment appears to be too hasty. But closer examination of Kant's position in the *Critique of Pure Reason* proves Hegel to be right. Indeed, one of Kant's strongest advocates, Reinhard Brandt, confirms Hegel's view. In the First *Critique*, Brandt writes, "it is *assumed as obvious* that the understanding is a faculty of knowledge through concepts, [and] that concepts can be used to obtain knowledge only through judgments."[8] Hegel is also right to claim that Kant simply takes over the various kinds of judgment with which he is familiar from formal logic and does not derive them from the nature of understanding itself. Indeed, Kant states explicitly that such a derivation is impossible to provide:

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8. R. Brandt, *The Table of Judgments: Critique of Pure Reason A 67–76; B 92–101*, trans. E. Watkins (Atascadero, Calif.: Ridgeview Publishing, 1995), p. 6, my emphasis.

> for the peculiarity of our understanding, that it is able to bring about the unity of apperception *a priori* only by means of the categories and only through precisely this kind and number of them, a further ground may be offered just as little as one can be offered for *why we have precisely these and no other functions for judgment* or for why space and time are the sole forms of our possible intuition. (*CPR* 254/159 [B145–6], my emphasis)

All Kant can say, therefore, is that "if we abstract from all content of a judgment . . . , we *find* (*finden*) that the function of thinking in that can be brought under four titles" (*CPR* 206/110 [B 95], my emphasis).

Note that, whereas Hegel speaks of various "kinds of judgment" (*Arten des Urteils*) (*EL* 84/116–17 [§42]), Kant himself talks of different "functions" for (or of) judgment. For Kant, the *general* functions of judgment (or functions of thought in judgment)—quantity, quality, relation, and modality—are actually found in all kinds of judgment and in every individual judgment we make.[9] All judgments thus involve a certain quantitative determination (and state, for example, that "all Xs are Y" or that "some Xs are Y"); all have a certain quality (and state that "X is Y" or that "X is not Y"); all give expression to a certain relation (for example, between subject and predicate: "X is Y," or between ground and consequent: "if X, then Y"); and all have a certain modality (and state that "X just is Y," that "X might be Y," or that "X must be Y"). Different kinds of judgment (to use Hegel's phrase) are distinguished by the specific function of thought—the specific kind of quantity, quality, relation, or modality—they exhibit, that is, by whether they are qualitatively affirmative ("X is Y") or negative ("X is not Y"), or whether they give expression to a subject-predicate or a ground-consequent relation. Nevertheless, it remains true that Kant derives neither the general functions nor the various kinds of judgment from the very nature of understanding itself but simply takes them as given, at least in their essentials, in formal logic. It is also true that Kant understands the categories to be based on these given functions of judgment. In this sense, Hegel's charge is perfectly accurate.

Kant defines categories as "concepts of an object in general, by means of which its intuition is regarded as *determined* with regard to one of the *logical functions* for judgments" (*CPR* 226, 252, 344/136, 156, 295 [B 128, 143, A 245]). This sounds somewhat intimidating, but Kant's idea is actually relatively simple. Consider first the specific logical function that a judgment may express. A judgment may, for example, attribute a predicate to a subject (rather than connect a ground and its consequent) and be a "categorical" judgment. The example Kant gives (on B 128) is "all bodies are divisible," in which divisibility is

9. See H. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 117.

predicated of the subject, "all bodies." Now, we can reverse the order of the two concepts in this judgment and formulate a second judgment that states the immediate consequence of the first: "something divisible is a body." In this case, "being a body" is predicated of the subject, "something divisible." The concepts of "body" and "divisibility" can thus each occupy the position of logical subject or logical predicate in the judgment; either way the judgment is intelligible and well formed. From a purely logical point of view, therefore, it remains "undetermined which of these two concepts will be given the function of the subject and which will be given that of the predicate" (*CPR* 226/136 [B 128]).

The fact that the *logical* role that can be played by the concept of body in a judgment is not fixed does not mean, however, that the *objective* status of the bodies we actually see around us also has to remain indeterminate. That is to say, it need not leave us unsure whether those bodies themselves constitute the fundamental reality or whether "being a body" is merely a quality that is predicated of some other, more fundamental reality, such as "divisibility." In Kant's view, we can avoid all such ambiguity and definitely understand bodies to constitute the fundamental reality in our world even if the concept that refers to them in a judgment is given the role of logical predicate (as in the judgment "something divisible is a body"). But we can understand bodies in this way only if we think of their perceived or intuited presence as always constituting the *actual* subject of our discourse, whatever the logical role of the concept "body" may be. In Kant's words, bodies can be conceived as the fundamental reality, if each body's "empirical intuition in experience [is] always . . . considered as subject, never as mere predicate."

Now, according to Kant, the concept of "something that can be thought as a subject (without being a predicate of something else)" is the concept or category of *substance* (*CPR* 277/204 [B 186]). We thus protect the bodies we actually experience from the logical ambiguity attaching to the concept of "body" by understanding those perceived bodies to be substances. Similarly, we can understand the divisibility which we experience to be a definite *accident* of those bodily substances even when the concept of divisibility forms the logical subject of the judgment. In Kant's view, all logical subjects for which there is a corresponding empirical intuition or perception must be conceived in this way as referring either to real substances or to their accidents. Otherwise, we can never fix the *objective* status of the perceived "things" which those logical subjects denote.[10]

Two things should be noticed here. First, Kant understands the category of substance to be a thought by means of which our empirical *intuition* of bodies is rendered determinate. Subsuming the concept of body under the category of

10. Ultimately for Kant the only real substances in experience are movable particles of matter. Empirical objects, such as chairs and tables are in fact "accidental" constellations of such particles; see Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, p. 211.

substance enables intuited bodies to be understood as substances, but it does not remove the logical indeterminacy attaching to the concept of body itself: that concept can still function as a logical subject or predicate. Second, Kant understands the category of substance to be a thought by means of which our empirical intuition of bodies is rendered determinate *in respect of one of the logical functions of judgment*. Subsuming the concept of body under the category of substance determines the bodies we experience to be real *subjects* rather than predicates and so introduces into our intuitions a determinacy that is specifically derived from the categorical function of judgment.

Kant's definition of a category on B 128 thus captures precisely the way in which he understands the category of substance, namely as the "concept of an object in general, by means of which its intuition is regarded as determined with regard to one of the logical functions for judgments."[11] Indeed, this definition reveals how every Kantian category is to be generated (though Kant does not explicitly define every category himself). In each case, we simply take a specific function (or kind) of judgment (such as "if X, then Y," "X is Y," or "all Xs are Y"), introduce a thought such as "object" or "something" or "that which," and then form the thought of that which is *determined* in respect of the specific function of judgment concerned.[12] This thought or category is then used to render determinate what is given to us in intuition—and so to understand it—in some specific way. That is to say, the category is used to understand what we perceive to be definitely this kind of thing rather than that.

A *cause* is thus something that is definitely a ground rather than consequence (an "if," rather than a "then"); the category of *reality* signifies that which is definitely affirmative rather than negative; the category of *totality* signifies that which is determined to be "all" rather than "some"; and so on. Even *negation* is to be conceived in this way. Negation is thus that which is determined to be negative rather than affirmative: nonbeing, absence rather than being, reality, presence. This is not to say that the concept of negation refers to some *positive* object called "the negative." But it is to say that the concept is not simply without any referent whatsoever: for the category of negation signifies a definite and determinate *lack* of positive reality. To understand what it is to be cold, therefore, one must be able to form the thought not of some positive quality but of the *identifiable* lack of heat.[13] To be sure, categories are fully meaningful only when they are "schematized" or understood in temporal terms: substance is to be understood as that which is permanent, and cause as that which can never come after its effect (*CPR* 272, 341/197, 290 [B 177, 299]). Nevertheless, Kant rec-

11. See also Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, p. 126.

12. For Kant "all the categories . . . constitute the thinking of an *object* (*Objekt*) *in general*" (*CPR* 260/176 [B 158]; see also *CPR* 193/94 [B 75]).

13. See Kant, *CPR* 274, 382, 555/201, 332, 553–4 (B182, 347, 602).

ognizes that each category also has a meaning of its own in abstraction from its temporal sense, and in each case the definition of a category given on B 128 provides the key to that purely logical meaning.

As we have seen from this brief account of the way Kant discovers the categories, Hegel is absolutely right that, for Kant, "the various modes of judgment (*Urteilsweisen*) that have already been enumerated [in traditional logic] give us the various *determinations of thinking*" (*EL* 84/117 [§42]). We can also see why this should matter: Kant's manner of establishing the categories has a direct bearing on the number of categories he regards as fundamental and on how they are to be conceived. Since there are twelve specific functions of judgment, in Kant's view, there can be only twelve basic categories: the categories of quantity (unity, plurality, totality), of quality (reality, negation, limitation), of relation (substance, causality, reciprocity), and of modality (possibility, actuality, and necessity)—though further "predicables," such as force, action, passion, and resistance can be "derived" from these (*CPR* 212–14/118–20 [B 106–8]). But, of course, this leaves open the following question: how many categories would thought prove to have if they were not taken from the twelve functions of judgment that Kant simply *finds* there to be?

Similarly, the fact that Kant bases the categories on distinct functions and kinds of judgment (and, indeed, the fact that each category is the thought of something *determined* in one way rather than another) means that he conceives the categories themselves as logically distinct from one another (even though they are all needed for determinate cognition of what is given in intuition and so are epistemically interdependent). The category of reality, for example, is quite distinct from that of negation—which is what allows Kant to formulate the idea of God as the most real being or *ens realissimum*, which has no negation or lack originally in itself (*CPR* 557/556–7 [B 606–7]).[14] The (meta-)category of quantity is quite distinct from that of quality—which is what allows Kant to regard the proposition that "the straight line between two points is the shortest" as a synthetic one in which the predicate adds something that is not already contained in the subject (CPR 145/49 [B 16]). And the category of substance is quite distinct from that of causality—which is what allows Kant to reject Spinoza's conception of substance as causa sui and to see in substance solely that in which accidents inhere.[15] But once again we must ask whether the cate-

14. See also S. Houlgate, "Hegel, Kant, and the Formal Distinctions of Reflective Understanding," in *Hegel on the Modern World*, ed. A. Collins (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), p. 132.

15. I. Kant, *Schriften zur Metaphysik und Logik*, ed. W. Weischedel, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1968), 1: 340–1 (note). See also S. Houlgate, "Substance, Causality, and the Question of Method in Hegel's *Science of Logic*," in *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy: Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel*, ed. Sally Sedgwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 247–8.

gories would still have to be conceived as logically distinct from one another in this way if they were not based on distinct kinds of judgment (or generated by thinking of something as determined in respect of a logical function of judgment—as this rather than that). Might not categories derived in a different way prove to be logically much more closely interrelated than Kant allows?

Whatever one may think generally about the merits (and occasional distortions) in Hegel's critique of Kant, it is important to recognize that he comes to his distinctive conception of the categories in the *Logic* for one very simple reason: he endeavors to base his understanding of those categories not, as Kant does, on what formal logicians have simply *found* thought to be but on what thought itself *proves* to be. Hegel's aim in the *Logic* is thus to avoid making any unwarranted assumptions about thought, such as Kant makes, and to derive the categories from what thought minimally has to be. By determining in this way which categories are inherent in thought *as such* (and how they are to be conceived), Hegel hopes to provide the immanent deduction (*Ableitung*) of the categories that he believes Kant was obliged but failed to deliver (*SL* 47/1: 40).

Fichte's Contribution

Before Hegel, another great German Idealist, Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), made the charge that Kant failed to provide a proper deduction or derivation of the categories. Fichte acknowledges Kant to be the founder of Critical (or Transcendental) Idealism, the philosophy according to which the fundamental concepts and laws of thought—or "determinations of consciousness"—are generated by the spontaneous activity of the intellect itself rather than imposed on the intellect from some outside source. Yet Fichte maintains that Kant himself "does not derive the presumed laws of the intellect from the very nature of the intellect," but abstracts these laws from our empirical experience of objects, albeit via a "detour through logic" (which itself abstracts its laws from our experience of objects).[16] In Fichte's view, therefore, Kant may assert that the categories and laws of thought have their source in the spontaneity of the intellect, but—because of the way he proceeds—"he has no way to confirm that the laws of thought he postulates actually are laws of thought and that they are really nothing else but the immanent laws of the intellect." The only way to confirm this, Fichte tells us, would be to start from the simple premise that the intellect *acts*—that the intellect is "a kind of *doing* and absolutely nothing more"—and to show how the laws of thought can be derived from this premise alone. By proceeding in this way, he suggests, "Critical idealism allows the entire range of our representations to come into being gradually before the eyes of the reader or

16. J.G. Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings*, trans. D. Breazeale (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), pp. 25, 27–8.

listener" and so reconstructs for the reader the logical *genesis* of the categories and laws of thought from the activity of thought itself.[17]

Hegel leaves no doubt about the tremendous importance he attributes to Fichte's critical development of Kantian thought. "It remains the profound and enduring merit of *Fichte's* philosophy," he writes in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, "to have reminded us that the *thought-determinations* must be exhibited in their *necessity*, and that it is essential for them to be *deduced* (*daß sie wesentlich abzuleiten seien*)" (*EL* 84/117 [§42]). Indeed, in his lectures on the history of philosophy, Hegel claims that apart from Fichte "no-one else since Aristotle has thought about how to exhibit the determinations of thinking in their necessity, their derivation, their construction."[18] Furthermore, he praises Fichte for attempting to provide such a derivation by "letting reason itself exhibit its own determinations" (*SL* 47/1: 41). Nevertheless, Hegel believes that Fichte himself takes too much for granted in his derivation of the categories by assuming that the pure thought or intellectual activity with which philosophy is to begin is to be understood from the outset as *I* (*Ich*), or immediate, abstract *self-consciousness*. The possibility of self-consciousness may be implicit in thought but self-consciousness for Hegel is not the most basic feature of thought (see *SL* 75–8/1: 76–9 [183–7]). Pure self-consciousness, or I, thus should not provide the starting point from which to derive the categories, and the task of philosophy should not be (as Fichte puts it), to define the categories *"by showing how each category is determinately related to the possibility of self-consciousness."*[19] The task of philosophy, in Hegel's view, is rather to establish which categories are immanent in thought conceived simply as *thought* as such. (The proper deduction of the categories, which "Kant spared himself" and which was referred to earlier [p. 16], thus actually involves "the exposition of the transition of thought"—rather than the simple unity of self-consciousness—"into these its determinations and distinctions.")

Radical Self-Criticism

So far I have suggested that what motivates Hegel in the *Logic* is the desire for necessity. Like Fichte, Hegel wants to find out how basic categories have to be understood, not just how they have in fact been understood. This can only be discovered, he believes, if we demonstrate which categories are inherent in thought as such, and we can only do this if we allow pure thought to determine *itself*—and so to generate its own determinations—"before our very eyes" (to use Fichte's expression).[20] The study of thought will inevitably lack such neces-

17. Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre*, pp. 26–8.
18. Hegel, *LHP* 234/160.
19. Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre*, p. 63.
20. Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre*, p. 28.

sity if it begins not from thought as such but from what we merely assume, find, or assert thought to be. This is because, as Fichte puts it, "it is hard to see why we should place any more credence in the unproven assertions of the one than in the unproven assertions of the other"; or as Hegel himself writes in the introduction to the *Phenomenology*, "one bare assurance is worth just as much as another."[21] An account of the categories—such as Kant's (or indeed Fichte's own)—that is based upon unproven assumptions can thus never demonstrate how the categories have to be understood *schlechthin* but only how they are to be understood *given* those assumptions. Accordingly, we can determine the necessary character of the categories only if we avoid all such unproven assumptions about thought and derive the categories from what thought itself minimally *is.* Hegel's concern to begin the *Logic* by suspending all our familiar views about thought is thus a direct consequence of his search for an account of the categories that is completely necessary.

Yet—though it may come as a surprise to some to learn this—it is also the consequence of his desire to be utterly *self-critical.* The conviction that only the suspension of one's cherished assumptions will lead to what is necessary and true is, as Hegel well knows, a central pillar of Descartes's philosophy. Hegel traces the demand for a thoroughly critical study of the *categories* back to Kant, however, rather than to the "father" of modern philosophy. Prior to Kant, Hegel tells us, metaphysical and empiricist philosophers employed categories, such as substance and causality, to understand the world, but they did not prove that it was actually legitimate to do so. This is true of Aristotle, Leibniz, Locke, and indeed—despite his pledge to demolish all his previous opinions—Descartes.[22] In his *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant put an end to such "naive thinking" by "investigating just how far the forms of thinking are in general capable of helping us reach the cognition of truth" (*EL* 81–2/114 [§41 Add. 1]). Hegel maintains that "Kant's subjection of knowing to examination in this way was a great and important step."[23] Yet, at the same time, he claims that Kant himself did not take his critical investigation of the legitimacy of the categories anything like far enough.

For Hegel, Kant's concern was to determine the epistemic status of the categories—that is, whether categories, such as substance or causality, can justifiably be used to understand objects in the world (*EL* 81–2/114 [§41 Add. 1]). Kant concluded that such categories can be employed to understand objects as they are given to us in spatio-temporal intuition but that they cannot be used to determine objects as they might be "in themselves," that is, apart from the way they appear to intuition. As we shall see later, Hegel rejects the idea that the

21. See Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre*, p. 28, and Hegel, *PhS* 49/71.

22. For Hegel's views on pre-Kantian metaphysics and empiricism, see *EL* 65–80/93–112 (§§26–39).

23. Hegel, *LHP* 218/149.

categories do not apply to things themselves.[24] More importantly, however (at least for our current discussion), Hegel points out that in undertaking this critical examination of the *epistemic* status of the categories Kant neglects to carry out a similar critical investigation of the *logical* meaning of the categories themselves. Kant's "critique does not involve itself with the *content,* . . . or with the determinate mutual relationship of these thought-determinations to each other" (*EL* 81/113 [§41]).[25] Instead, as we have seen, Kant simply bases his understanding of the categories on the functions of judgment traditionally assumed in formal logic. As Hegel recognizes, Kant insists against some of his predecessors that the categories have to be understood in temporal terms (or "schematized") in order to be fully meaningful.[26] But this does not affect Kant's understanding of the purely logical meaning of the categories, which remains governed by the accepted functions of judgment. 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. 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" (*EL* 82/115 [§41 Add. 1], my emphasis). A properly critical thinking, by contrast, would suspend the traditional conception of the categories and determine anew how the categories are to be understood.

Hegel will show in the *Logic* that the traditional understanding of the categories—found in both pre-Kantian metaphysics and ordinary consciousness—does not in fact correspond fully to the way those categories should be understood. The *Logic*—or at least the first part, entitled the "Objective Logic"—thus provides a "genuine critique" of the categories of metaphysics (and of ordinary thought) (*SL* 64/1: 62). Kant's critique, on the other hand, "has not produced any alteration in [the categories]": they are deemed to be applicable only to what is given in sensuous experience, not to things in themselves, but they are "left in the same shape for the subject knower as they formerly possessed for the object" (*SL* 46-7/1: 40). Hegel's *Logic* thus proves to be an even more thoroughly critical text than Kant's own *Critique of Pure Reason.*

It is clear, then, that Hegel regards his *Logic* as a refinement of Kant's theoretical philosophy in two ways. On the one hand, the *Logic* perfects the genetic

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24. See chapter 6, below, pp. 131–7.

25. See also Houlgate, "Hegel, Kant, and the Formal Distinctions of Reflective Understanding," p. 131 and "Response to Professor Horstmann," *Proceedings of the Eighth International Kant Congress,* 1.3: 1019.

26. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie,* ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel, 3 vols., *Werke in zwanzig Bänden,* vols. 18, 19, and 20 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971), 3: 347–8, and Kant *CPR* 271–7, 341/196–205, 290 (B 176–87, 299). Further references to the *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* will be given in the following form: *VGP* 3: 347–8.

derivation of the categories that (according to Fichte) is made necessary by Kant's insight that the categories have their source in the understanding alone. On the other hand, the *Logic* presents the thorough critique of the traditional conception of the categories that Hegel thinks is demanded by Kant's critical turn but never delivered by Kant himself. These two projects dovetail, of course, because Hegel can derive the proper conception of the categories from thought as such only after he has critically suspended all that thought has traditionally been found to be.

I have great sympathy with Hegel's demand for a thoroughly critical derivation of the categories. I have to admit, however, that Hegel is wrong to believe that Kant's own emphasis on *critique* itself implies such a demand. The word "critique," for Kant, has quite a narrow and restricted meaning. If metaphysics is the body of synthetic a priori principles that constitutes knowledge through pure reason, the task of critique for Kant is simply "to display the sources and conditions of its possibility" (*CPR* 105/13 [A xxi]). Critique thus shows how metaphysics is possible; it does not call for anything like thoroughgoing self-criticism, either explicitly or implicitly. That is a Cartesian, not a Kantian aim. Yet Hegel interprets it as implicit in Kant's critical project. Hegel thus interprets his own critique of Kant as an immanent critique insofar as he sees his own philosophy as fulfilling the demand for radical self-criticism implicit in Kant's critical philosophy better than Kant himself. But Hegel's critique of Kant clearly is not immanent in *that* sense.

Yet in another admittedly rather extended sense, I think that Hegel's critique of Kant can be interpreted as immanent: for I agree with Hegel (and Fichte) that a rigorous *derivation* of the categories of the kind Kant fails to provide is made necessary by Kant's own claim that the categories "spring pure and unmixed from the understanding" (*CPR* 204/107 [B 92]). As we have seen, such a derivation must demonstrate that the categories follow necessarily from what thought itself *is*, not merely from what thought has been found to be. But this means that the philosopher must first suspend all unproven assumptions about thought and so be thoroughly *self-critical*. The demand for a thoroughgoing "Cartesian" critique, or suspension of the traditional conception, of the categories can thus be said to be implicit in Kant's philosophy after all, as Hegel suggests. 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.[27]

The requirement that philosophy make no unwarranted assumptions about thought in its derivation of the categories is the requirement that philosophy be *presuppositionless*. Philosophy, in Hegel's view, should not presuppose that thought is judgment or that it is self-conscious intellectual activity (the work of

27. This revises slightly the conclusion I came to in my "Response to Professor Horstmann"; see *Proceedings of the Eighth International Kant Congress*, 1.3: 1022.

the "I"); indeed, it should not presuppose anything about thought at all. This demand for radical presuppositionlessness is easily misunderstood, and we shall consider later some of the things it definitely does *not* mean. It is essential that we take it seriously, however, even if we are initially tempted to think that it is an impossible demand to fulfil (or perhaps quite insane). For if we do not take it seriously, we will be unable to understand precisely what Hegel is doing in the *Logic* and we will miss what is most exciting and original about that text. In the next chapter we shall examine more closely what presuppositionless thinking entails for Hegel.