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HEGEL ON KANT'S ANTINOMIES
AND DISTINCTION BETWEEN
GENERAL AND TRANSCENDENTAL LOGIC¹

A common reaction to Hegel's suggestion that we collapse Kant's distinction between form and content is that, since such a move would also deprive us of any way of distinguishing the merely logical from the real possibility of our concepts, it is incoherent and ought to be rejected. It is true that these two distinctions are intimately related in Kant, such that if one goes, the other does as well. But it is less obvious that giving them up as *Kant* conceives them is as incoherent a proposal as many of Hegel's critics think. It has been the point of a recent account of Hegel's idealism to demonstrate that his critique of Kant's dichotomy between form and content or concept and intuition does not commit him to the view that human cognition is materially creative of its content in the manner of a God-like or intuitive intellect—does not, in other words, signify a return to a pre-Critical metaphysics.² This is the interpretative stance I adopt here as well, in hope of giving defenders of Kant reasons for taking Hegel more seriously.

In what follows I argue that Hegel does indeed uncover serious difficulties in Kant's form/content dichotomy and in the related distinctions between general and transcendental logic, and logical and real possibility. I focus on his critique of Kant's treatment of the Antinomies of pure reason, limiting my discussion to references to the mathematical Antinomies in particular. For Kant, antinomy is the key to the discovery of transcendental idealism; for Hegel, it reveals the inadequacy of that form of idealism, and the need for a more consistent alternative.

I begin in Sections I–III by considering how the methodological strategy of Kant's approach to the Antinomies depends upon the distinction central to his Critical philosophy between general and transcendental logic. I review his conception of the respective roles of the two logics in order to draw out the sense in which for him one has a material or objective function while the other is supposed to be purely formal. In Sections IV and V, I introduce a Hegelian perspective to argue that Kant fails to recognize in his own consideration of the Antinomies problems which undermine his distinction between the two logics and which therefore call into question the foundational assumptions upon which transcendental idealism rests. Finally in Section VI, I take a brief look at two implications of Hegel's critique for

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his own conception of an idealist logic. While some of what I will have to say on that topic may come as old news to the card-carrying Hegelian, I intend my discussion more for the benefit of an audience of Kantians. I should say in addition that, to a large extent, this essay is a development of recent interpretative work on Hegel by Michael Wolff.³

I

First, a few explanatory remarks about Kant's method in the Antinomy chapter of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and how it reflects his distinction between general and transcendental logic. In that the "transcendental assertions" of reason, he tells us there, "lay claim to insight into what is beyond the field of all possible experiences," they cannot be tested empirically. Since, furthermore, their justification—unlike that of concepts of mathematics—cannot proceed by way of a construction of the objects to which they refer, it is also the case that their objective validity cannot be exhibited in pure intuition.⁴ Among reason's transcendental assertions, however, the cosmological arguments have the unique feature of generating out of their effort to discover the unconditioned, more than a single determination. For this reason, they, unlike the other transcendental assertions, do admit of some test: that of internal harmony or consistency. Should reason find itself involved in self-contradiction, it is alerted on Kant's view to the presence of a false assumption or set of assumptions undermining the legitimacy of its claims. (See A406/B433; A423f/B451f)⁵

Kant refers to the two-step procedure by means of which he sets out to test the cosmological arguments as his "sceptical method": First, what is determined is whether the assertions may be provoked into conflict; if so, an investigation is then undertaken to discover the conflict's source. (A423/B451) Determining the conflict's source involves the employment of "transcendental critique," such as is practiced in the Transcendental Dialectic generally. In the Antinomy chapter as well as in the chapters on the Ideal of Pure Reason and the Paralogisms, what we learn by way of transcendental critique is that in its claim to know the unconditioned, reason becomes involved in the "transcendental illusion" of taking, ". . . the subjective necessity of a connection of our concepts . . . for an objective necessity in the determination of things in themselves." (B353/A297)

It is important to see what is specifically "transcendental" about this form of criticism. According to Kant, transcendental critique introduces into our investigations the necessity of distinguishing the faculties of

knowledge and the respective ways in which representations may be given to them. What it discovers in all cases of transcendental illusion is the failure to keep the faculties of knowledge or their respective objects apart. And it is this conflation which is what he thinks is responsible for reason's pretensions to knowledge of the unconditioned.

The function of transcendental critique is also elucidated in Kant's discussion of the "concepts of reflection" in the *Transcendental Analytic*. There, as well as in the *Dialectic*, he underscores the importance of correctly identifying the faculty of knowledge which is the source of the objects of our concepts. We can compare concepts "logically," he says, to determine their various relations (of identity, difference, agreement, opposition, etc.)—without, that is, considering whether the objects to which they refer belong to sensibility or to pure understanding. But, "if we wish to advance to the objects [*Gegenstände*] with these concepts," in his words, "we must first resort to transcendental reflection. . . ." (A269/B325) In the interest of determining the various logical relations which hold among the *objects* of our concepts and judgments, failure to distinguish the empirical and the transcendental employments of the understanding or the sensible and intellectual sources of our representations, results in "misinterpretation" or, more technically, in "amphiboly." (B336/A280)

Because Leibniz for example understood transcendental reflection to be something merely "logical" and "compared all things with each other by means of concepts alone," on Kant's view, he neglected to take into account the conditions of the possibility of objects of perception. (A270/B326) For this reason, he made the mistake of applying his principle of the identity of indiscernibles not merely to "concepts of things in general," but to empirical objects as well. (A271f/B327f) "Certainly," Kant remarks, "if I know a drop of water in all its internal determinations as a thing in itself, and if the whole concept of any one drop is identical with that of every other, I cannot allow that any drop is different from any other. But if the drop is an appearance in space, it has its location not only in understanding (under concepts) but in sensible outer intuition (in space), and the physical locations are there quite indifferent to the inner determinations of things." (A272/B328) Because Leibniz did not distinguish between objects given in pure understanding and objects given in empirical intuition, because he "intellectualized appearances" or took appearances to be a merely "confused" species of our representations of things in themselves, he committed the amphiboly on Kant's analysis of imputing to them relations valid only for things in themselves. (A270f/B326f; A279/B335)

So, the failure to distinguish by way of transcendental reflection or critique the two faculties of knowledge, sensibility and understanding, or the manner in which objects are given to them, leads in the Analytic to amphiboly, and in the Dialectic to transcendental illusion. Both involve unwarranted claims to *a priori* knowledge and represent forms of what Kant calls “dogmatic metaphysics”: “the presumption that it is possible to make progress with pure knowledge . . . from concepts alone. . . .” (Bxxxv)

Kant’s very conception of the two-step procedure of his “sceptical method”—which, as mentioned above, first enlists logical reflection in identifying the antinomies of reason and then transcendental reflection in determining their source—presupposes the division fundamental to his Critical philosophy between general and transcendental logic.⁶ In laying forth the *a priori* laws governing all thought, general logic, in his words, “abstracts from all content of the knowledge of the understanding and from all differences in its objects. . . .” (B78/A54) General logic offers an account of the various ways in which representations, whatever their source, may be brought together under concepts and then combined to form judgments; and it specifies as a condition of the possibility of all judgments, whatever their form, that they not be self-contradictory. (A70/B95; B189/A150) In determining the formal conditions of all thought, the validity of laws of general logic is not relative to any particular kind of content, pure or empirical; it provides the “universal and necessary rules of the understanding,” *whatever* the nature of its object. (A59/B84; see also B77/A43) The business of logical reflection, then, is to determine whether and in what way our assertions accord with those rules.

But while general logic provides the universal and necessary rules of the form of all thought, it cannot be appealed to in establishing whether a particular thought or judgment has an empirical content. While laws of general logic govern the limits of “logical” possibility, they are of no help when it comes to determining what Kant refers to as the “material (objective) truth of knowledge.” (A60/B85; Bxxvii) It is when we make the mistake of taking general logic or logical reflection to inform us about “real possibility”—i.e., about the empirical content of our judgments—that we commit, as we have seen, either amphiboly or transcendental illusion. (B85/A61)

II

Because these distinctions between general and transcendental logic and between logical and transcendent forms of reflection are called into question by Hegel, we need to be especially clear about their role—indeed,

their indispensability—in the Critical philosophy. Responsible for Kant's introduction of a specifically transcendental logic is his interest to provide an alternative to a metaphysics he thought was “dogmatic,” without having to settle for what on his view was the equally untenable option of empiricism. Because he was unwilling to attribute to human cognition an intuitive form of understanding or the God-like capacity to create objects in the very process of having representations, and because he rejected the doctrine of pre-established harmony, Kant saw the task of demonstrating any necessary connection between our concepts and their objects as a genuine problem.⁷ The discovery of his Critical solution involved rejecting the assumption he believed both options of empiricism and dogmatism held in common: that our knowledge has only one source, either sensible or intellectual. He supposed that this strategy would then provide him the means of circumventing both the scepticism which he thought followed from a consistent empiricism, and a metaphysics which he thought presumed without warrant a necessary connection between the forms of thought and their content.⁸

How did he propose to demonstrate the objective validity of our concepts without recourse to a pre-established harmony and without awarding human intellect God-like creative capacities? The answer Kant gives us is of course contained in his Transcendental Logic. There a problem is addressed which could not be raised within the scope of general logic, on his view: namely, how does our thought relate to a content, pure or empirical, *at all*? In the Transcendental Logic, we are offered an account of how our representations, whatever their source, are synthesized in accordance with *a priori* functions of judgment or categories into possible objects of thought—and of how, in conjunction with our *a priori* forms of sensible intuition through which the matter or empirical content of our thought is given, they are synthesized into objects of possible experience. Although functioning in this way as necessary conditions of empirical objects, the categories do not create or produce the material to which they give unity. Rather, they can fulfill their role in making objects of experience possible only on the condition that the material synthesized is given independently in empirical intuition. Their validity from the standpoint of our knowledge is therefore restricted to that content—restricted to what Kant calls “appearances.”

III

In light of the above, we can say that for Kant transcendental logic has an objectifying function and general logic does not. The categories make

possible the unification into objects representations given to all forms of sensible intuition. Applied to representations given via our forms of sensible intuition space and time, they gain empirical content and thus “objective reality.”⁹ In this way they make possible not merely objects of all thought, but objects of our possible experience, objects as appearances. This is why Kant remarks in Section 2 of the Principles that, “the conditions of the possibility of experience are likewise conditions of the possibility of objects of experience.” (B197/A158)

In contrast, it is not the task of general logic to determine how representations come to be synthesized in accordance with the categories in-to either pure or empirical objects for us. As we have seen, general logic provides an analysis of how various representations may be classified under a single concept, and specifies the various ways in which concepts may be brought together to form judgments. It lays forth the many possible logical relations that hold among concepts that Kant tells us are “already given.”¹⁰ The determination of how pure concepts make objects possible for us at all is not included within its scope. And its specification of logical relations is, according to Kant, purely formal—carried out, in other words, without attention to how representations may first be given. The laws of general logic, he says, “Must be applied in the examination and appraising of the form of all knowledge before we proceed to determine whether their content contains positive truth in respect to their object.” (B84/A60)

IV

As Michael Wolff points out, the distinctions so central to the Critical philosophy between logical versus transcendental forms of reflection and general versus transcendental logic are precisely what from the Hegelian standpoint are undermined in Kant’s own treatment of the Antinomies. This is because part of what we learn from the Kantian solution to the conflicts is that a merely logical consideration of the relations holding among the cosmological judgments is inadequate to its designated task. In the mathematical Antinomies, we learn once we undertake an investigation into the source of the apparent conflict that the claims of the theses and antitheses are not contradictory at all, because both turn out to be false. Both turn out to be false because each is discovered to rest on a false assumption. And the discovery that each rests on a false assumption is the outcome of an inquiry into the nature of the object to which the claims refer, an inquiry that is specifically “transcendental,” not “logical.”

On Kant's analysis, the conversion of the relation between the thesis and antithesis of the second Antinomy from that of contradictories to contraries proceeds as follows: As in each of the other cosmological arguments, here the general interest of reason is to characterize the conditioned empirical series of appearances as an "absolute totality" or completed synthesis, what Kant sometimes refers to as the "world" as a "self-subsisting" whole. (A418f/B446f) In this case, the absolute totality or unconditioned condition of the conditioned series is taken to be either that member or simple which admits of no further division or condition, or the series itself as an infinitely divisible and unconditioned whole. Kant argues, however, that from what is given in appearance or in the empirical synthesis in space and time, we cannot infer the totality of its conditions. While members of the empirical series are necessarily successive, the series as an absolute totality or the unconditioned condition does not, as he puts it, "carry with it any limitation through time or any concept of succession." (B528/A500) It is neither a possible object of experience, nor can its objective reality be inferred from the realm of experience. The Antinomy arises under the assumption that the unconditioned may be an object of our knowledge, yet this assumption requires that we abstract from the conditions under which representations may appear to us as objects of perception. The solution of the Antinomy, the conversion of the judgments from contradictories to contraries, involves the recognition that the unconditioned is not an object of possible experience and therefore cannot be known by us—requires, in other words, that we admit a distinction between appearances and things in themselves. Because both thesis and antithesis fail to make this distinction and assume the knowability of things in themselves, both are thus determined to be false.

For our purposes what is important to note here is that the correct account of the logical relationship holding between the thesis and antithesis of this as well as the other cosmological arguments depends on identifying the nature of the object to which both sides refer. At a certain level at least, Kant himself appears to be aware of this point. With reference to the first Antinomy he remarks that,

If we regard the two propositions, that the world is infinite in magnitude and that it is finite in magnitude, as contradictory opposites, we are assuming that the world, the complete series of appearances, is a thing in itself that remains even if I suspend the infinite or the finite regress in the series of its appearances. If, however, I reject this assumption, or rather this accompanying transcendental illusion, and deny that the world is a thing in itself, the contradictory opposition of the two assertions is converted into a merely dialectical opposition. (A504f/B532f)

Applying this reasoning to the second Antinomy: If we regard the two propositions, that substance is infinitely divisible and that it is ultimately simple, as contradictories, we are assuming that substance is a thing in itself which subsists independent of the conditions of its appearing in sensible intuition. If, however, we reject this assumption and deny that it is a thing in itself, what we have presumed to be a genuine contradictory opposition is converted into a merely dialectical one, because both assertions are shown to be false.

In our review above of Kant's discussion of amphiboly, we saw that there, too, he seems to recognize that logical relations cannot properly be determined independent of distinguishing between the two faculties of knowledge and between the respective objects given to them. There he tells us that,

the interrelations of given representations can be determined only through transcendental reflection, that is, through [consciousness of] their relation to one or other of the two kinds of knowledge. Whether things are identical or different, in agreement or opposition, etc., cannot be established at once from the concepts themselves by mere comparison (*comparatio*), but solely by means of transcendental consideration (*reflexio*), through distinction of the cognitive faculty to which they belong. (A262/B318)

But while in this passage Kant acknowledges that transcendental reflection needs to be brought in to properly determine logical relations, he remarks a few lines earlier that this is only the case when what we are interested to investigate is not the "logical form" of the relations holding among our concepts, but their "content": "i.e., whether things are themselves identical or different, in agreement or opposition, etc. . . ." (A262/B318) If we are concerned to determine only "logical form," a "mere" act of comparison on his view will do; we need not in addition take account of the faculty of knowledge to which our representations belong. (See also A269/B325)

Here it will help to bring in a point of terminological clarification: The distinction Kant has in mind in this passage between the "logical form" of concepts and their "content" [*Inhalt*] contrasts the investigation into the logical relations holding among concepts with the investigation into the logical relations of the empirical objects to which those concepts refer. (See A269/B325)¹¹ This needs to be emphasized only because in other contexts he means by the "content" of concepts what we might call their intension: that by virtue of which their comparison by way of *logical* reflection is possible, on his view.¹²

As I mentioned above, the distinction Kant draws between the "form" of concepts and their "content" or object indicates from the Hegelian

perspective his failure to appreciate the significance of his own insights into the nature of antinomy and amphiboly. Given our earlier discussion, we can at least understand what motivated this distinction for Kant. While, as we have seen, he was on the one hand concerned to establish that we have *a priori* knowledge of the conditions of possible experience, he also wanted to steer clear of assuming, with Leibniz, any necessary connection between the mere form of thought and things themselves. On Kant's view, this amounted to awarding human cognition the capacity to materially produce its objects out of its own representations. (See A271/B327)¹³ Because he held a more modest estimation of the powers of the human intellect, he proposed a sharp distinction between the forms of all thought and its content, and introduced the idea of a transcendental logic. He deprived general logic of *any* role in the determination of the content of our knowledge, and awarded laws of transcendental logic an objectifying or constitutive employment only on the condition that their application be restricted to a content given independently in empirical intuition.

But while the motive behind Kant's distinction between the "logical" form of the relations among concepts and their "content" or object may be clear, the distinction itself remains vulnerable to the Hegelian critique. In his initial consideration of the relations between the theses and antitheses of the mathematical Antinomies, Kant does not simply stipulate that the judgments stand in contradictory relation to one another. If he had, he would have had no reason to carry out his investigation any further, or to bring in transcendental reflection as a necessary second step of his "sceptical method." If he had stipulated that the judgments were contradictory, the employment of logical reflection alone would have been sufficient to determine their true logical relationship. There would have been no need to inquire into whether the representation of their form as contradictories adequately expressed the content of the concepts involved. We know, however, that Kant did pursue such an inquiry because he was aware that the determination of the true logical relations of the judgments could not be made in abstraction from the determination of their content. Kant in other words recognized the impossibility of a "merely logical" comparison of concepts—without, however, also recognizing the implications this had for his distinction between logical and transcendental reflection.¹⁴

V

What I have so far presented as Hegelian reflections on Kant's treatment of the Antinomies should not be thought of as summarizing or

paraphrasing Hegel's actual discussions of that topic in the *Wissenschaft der Logik* or elsewhere. Rather, following Wolff, I have offered an interpretation—bringing some of the larger aspects of Hegel's critique of Kant to bear on those discussions. This should aid our way, now, in briefly considering some of the mysterious things about the Antinomies he in fact does say.

We know that for Kant the Antinomies are the outcome of the failure to distinguish between the two faculties of knowledge and between appearances and things in themselves. Either reason remains in conflict with itself in its claim to know the unconditioned, or we must give up the assumption responsible for the conflict and grant the truth of transcendental idealism. For Hegel, in contrast, antinomy is not a problem demanding a solution at all. That Kant thought that it was, and that he failed to recognize in his own discovery the key to a radically new philosophy, is a function of the fact that his treatment is, on Hegel's characterization, entirely "subjective."¹⁵

Kant's treatment is "subjective" in that he insists that the presence of contradiction is evidence of a fallacy committed on the part of reason. In so doing, he rules out the possibility that, as Hegel sometimes puts it, the world itself is in contradiction, or that "every concept is a unity of opposing moments. . . ." (WL:I, 276, 217/237, 191)¹⁶ This is because he presumes that, "knowledge has no other form of thinking than [that of] finite categories." (WL:I, 216/190) Here Hegel is drawing attention to the fact that for Kant, concepts and their possible logical relations have a fixed content or intension independent of or prior to their relation in judgment to objects.¹⁷ We have seen how this assumption is responsible for his conceptions of general logic and logical reflection. The unconditional validity of laws of general logic—their validity for all thought—is for Kant a function of the fact that they are purely formal: determined in abstraction from their relation to possible pure or empirical objects. And it is because he thinks that concepts have a fixed content independent of their role in any particular judgment, independent of their relation to other concepts or to objects, that a logical comparison of them is possible, on his view.¹⁸ This insistence upon a self-sufficient and fixed form independent of an equally self-sufficient and fixed content is a feature of the standpoint Hegel calls "*Verstand*" according to which, "On one side stands the world of sensation, and of the understanding which reflects on it." "On the other side . . . the independence [*Selbstständigkeit*] of a self-apprehending thought. . . ."¹⁹

So, because Kant assumes that our concepts cannot contain contradiction but must be "finite" in this way, antinomy is for him a problem and

demands a solution. Because he also assumes that possible experience is the standard by means of which we test the reality of our concepts, the presence of antinomy cannot indicate some contradiction in experience itself or in our conception of experience, but must trace back to a fallacy committed on the part of reason. (See A489/B517)²⁰ That fallacy, as we have seen, is taken to be the presupposition both sides of the conflicts hold in common: reason's claim to provide insight into the unconditioned, or knowledge of things in themselves.

Hegel rejects this "subjective" treatment on at least three grounds: First, he thinks that it presupposes rather than provides indirect evidence for the truth of transcendental idealism. This is because of the assumptions we have just considered: that our concepts cannot contain contradiction or antinomy and that the conflicts therefore require a solution. Given these assumptions in conjunction with the identification of both the theses and antitheses as forms of transcendent realism, transcendental idealism is indeed what (via *reductio*) follows—and with it the distinction between appearances and things in themselves, and the necessity of what Hegel calls Kant's "concrete" treatment of the competing claims whereby they are tested with reference to their verifiability in possible experience. (WL:I, 217, 271/191, 234) Since Hegel thinks that Kant's argument is question-begging in this way, he is unwilling to follow him in proclaiming antinomy the key to the "discovery" of transcendental idealism.²¹

Secondly, Hegel rejects Kant's treatment because the Critical solution leaves us with what he thinks is the sceptical result that the rightful claims of reason are limited to the sensible realm, and that we can never know things in themselves. (WL:I, 217/191)²² And finally, he thinks that if we follow Kant, we are prevented from recognizing what he calls the "true" and "positive" meaning of antinomy: that "everything real contains within itself opposing determinations."²³

VI

If we accept the above argument that the distinctions between general and transcendental logic and between logical and transcendental reflection cannot hold as Kant draws them because the determination of logical relations cannot proceed purely formally or in abstraction from content, what follows? I turn in this final Section to consider very briefly two implications of Hegel's critique as I have presented it.²⁴

First, if the line between general and transcendental logic cannot be sharply drawn, then neither is it possible to distinguish, in the way that Kant does, between a merely formal and a material logic, or between the formal and objectifying functions of cognition. What this suggests to Hegel is that laws of formal logic must also be material in some way. But how?

Returning to our discussion of the second Antinomy, we saw that if we determine the thesis and antithesis to be contradictories, it is because we assume that substance is a thing in itself which subsists independent of the conditions of its appearing in sensible intuition. If we determine the judgments to be contraries, on the other hand, it is because we reject this assumption and admit a distinction between appearances and things in themselves. In this way, our identification of the form of the judgments depends on and cannot occur without presuppositions about the kind of content to which they refer. What this means is that if we want to establish whether our concepts apply to appearances versus things in themselves or are “really” versus only “logically” possible, we do not have to appeal outside the “mere form” of thought and introduce into our analysis a second source of knowledge or separate faculty of receptivity. As one commentator has recently put it, the reality of our concepts on this conception is not a function of their being “anchored” in an independent content given to us in empirical intuition.²⁵ Rather, Hegel wants us to think of the very act on the part of logical reflection of determining form as carrying with it what we might call an ontological commitment. This is the sense in which general logic has for him an objectifying function. And it explains why on his account its rules, like those of transcendental logic, condition the possibility of pure or empirical objects for us.²⁶

But while Hegel wants us to think of general logic as material or transcendental in this way, his conception of transcendental logic is by no means a simple appropriation of that of Kant's. Most significantly, it requires no sceptical remainder or commitment to an unknowable thing in itself. The fact that for Kant the real or constitutive function of transcendental logic is restricted to appearances, is a consequence of the way in which he construes the problem his innovation of transcendental logic is intended to solve. As we have seen, he conceives the task of establishing the objective reality of our concepts as that of guaranteeing a necessary connection between the form of thought on the one side and an independent content or object on the other. The problematic presupposes, in other words, the dualistic standpoint Hegel identifies as “Verstand.” Kant thinks that because human cognition is discursive rather than intuitive, we cannot demonstrate any necessary connection between our thought and things in

themselves. Our categories therefore can have a real use or objectifying function only in a restricted way: as making possible objects given to us via our *a priori* forms of sensible intuition, objects as appearances.

There is, then, a clear connection between the standpoint of "Verstand" which determines Kant's construal of the problem of objectivity, and the sceptical remainder or restriction thesis entailed by his solution. Hegel thinks that the sceptical remainder can be avoided, because he thinks he can provide reasons for rejecting the ground upon which it rests. On his view, it is because Kant never calls into question his own conception of logical reflection that he is led to make the restrictions he does on the objectifying function of thought. He thus fails to trace the origin of the very distinction between form and content, between concept and object, back to thought itself, but rather persists in the view that in addition to what can be an object for us as determined by subjective form is some independent content or thing in itself which serves to indicate the limits to what we can know. For Hegel, however, the thing in itself, the unconditioned, the infinite, are as much products of the formal determinations of subjectivity as finite appearance. We can think of substance, for example, either as appearance in space in time, or as the permanent ground of all appearance, as thing in itself. Both determinations are products of thought's activity; as such, neither can indicate an absolutely inaccessible extra-conceptual content. This explains those passages in which Hegel says of the thing in itself that there is, "nothing we can know so easily."²⁷

Note that these arguments for the knowability of the thing in itself and for the collapse of the Kantian form/content distinction do not signify a return to a pre-Critical metaphysics or require that we ascribe to human cognition the creative capacities of an intuitive intellect. Hegel's critique of Kant concerns not the existence of an extra-conceptual content but its cognitive import. As independent of the determinations of subjectivity, that content on his view cannot be appealed to as evidence justifying any sceptical conclusions about the limits of our knowledge. For this reason it cannot be taken as grounds for giving up, as Kant recommends, "the proud name of an Ontology," for a "mere Analytic of pure understanding." (B303/A247)

Turning finally to the second implication: Not only does Hegel think that general logic is material in addition to formal in the above sense, its laws are furthermore conditional or synthetic on his view. We know that for Kant the unconditional character of laws of general logic is a function of both their necessity and their universal scope: they are the formal rules of all thought, *whatever* its content. As we have seen, we are supposed to be able

to determine the logical possibility of our assertions by checking them against these rules, by employing the procedure Kant calls “logical reflection.” But, if valid, the argument we have just considered undermines the very possibility of a logical comparison of concepts in so far as that procedure depends on the assumption that a determination of formal relations may be carried out in abstraction from presuppositions regarding content. According to Hegel, no two concepts are ever absolutely (i.e., purely formally) contradictory or absolutely (i.e., purely formally) identical. This is because on his view concepts have no determinate content or intention independent of their role in particular judgments or independent of background assumptions about the nature of the objects to which they refer. As we have seen, we are correct in identifying the theses and the antitheses of the mathematical Antinomies as contradictories, only on the condition that we take the object to which they refer to be a thing in itself. Because the determination of logical relations cannot be based on an analysis of concepts alone, Hegel thinks that the logical form of all our judgments—including those which express the laws of general logic—must therefore be synthetic.²⁸

If the content or intension of concepts is not fixed or “already given,” if logical form is not absolute or unconditional, then given different assumptions about content, concepts that are in one instance identical may in another be non-identical. This gives us some clue as to why for Hegel contradiction or antinomy is a constitutive feature of all thought. It is not a “problem” that demands the transcendental idealist introduction of two faculties of knowledge and distinction between appearances and things in themselves; on his view, antinomy is the “most fortunate perplexity of reason” because in revealing the true nature of our concepts, it also reveals the need for a new form of idealism.²⁹

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NOTES

1. I am grateful to Professor Burkhard Tuschling for his kind hospitality during my visit to the Philipps-Universität Marburg in the spring and summer months of 1990. More than anyone else in the past few years, he has influenced my views about Kant and Hegel. (Specific references to some of his works follow.) I am also indebted to Professors Manfred Baum and Robert Fogelin for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

2. The account I have in mind is provided by Robert B. Pippin in, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

3. The two works by Wolff from which I have most benefitted are his book, *Der Begriff des Widerspruchs: Eine Studie zur Dialektik Kants und Hegels* (Verlag Anton Hain Meisenheim BmbH, Königstein/Ts., 1981), and his article, "Der Begriff des Widerspruchs in der 'Kritik der reinen Vernunft': Zum Verhältnis von formaler und transzendentaler Logik," in *Probleme der 'Kritik der reinen Vernunft': Kant-Tagung Marburg 1981*, ed. Burkhard Tuschling (New York/Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984). See also his, "Über Hegels Lehre vom Widerspruch," in *Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik: Formation und Rekonstruktion*, ed. Dieter Henrich (Klett-Cotta, 1986).

4. *Critique of Pure Reason* B452f/A425; A713ff/B741ff. Hereafter all citations to this work appear in parentheses in the text. I rely on the Norman Kemp Smith translation (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1929). Strictly speaking, of course, concepts of mathematics do not require justification or a deduction at all, on Kant's view. This is because our knowledge of them is derived immediately from their construction in pure intuition. They therefore possess what Kant calls "intuitive certainty." A734/B762

5. The fact that the cosmological arguments may be tested in this way explains their unique role as responsible for Kant's discovery of the Critical philosophy. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant refers to the antinomy as "the most fortunate perplexity in which human reason could ever have become involved. . . ." (AK 107) For other texts in which Kant acknowledges the importance of the antinomy for his discovery of the Critical philosophy, see his letter to Christian Garve (AK XII, 258), *Kant's Philosophical Correspondence, 1759-1799*, ed. and trans. A. Zweig, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970) p. 252; *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics* §§50, 52; and in the *Critique of Pure Reason* A424/B452.

6. I can find no passage in the chapter on the Antinomy where Kant uses the term "Logical Reflection" to describe what I am referring to as the first step of his sceptical method; but since the identification of the conflicts at that point is made independently of distinguishing the faculties of knowledge and their respective objects, it must on Kant's own conception be the result of a purely "logical" consideration.

7. Regarding Leibniz's reliance on pre-established harmony, Kant notes in the first *Critique* that, "Leibniz, in attributing to the substances of the world, as thought through the understanding alone, a community, had . . . to resort to the mediating intervention of a Deity. For, as he justly recognized, a community of substances is utterly inconceivable as arising simply from their existence." B293

8. I am of course presenting in highly condensed form what is an enormously complicated story. See, for relevant texts: Kant's letter to Marcus Herz, Feb. 21, 1772; *Critique of Pure Reason* B124f; and Lewis White Beck's article, "Kant's Strategy," in his collection *Essays on Kant and Hume* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978).

9. *Critique of Pure Reason*, §§23 and 10.

10. In the *Prolegomena* §39, Kant defines "concepts of reflection" as "concepts of mere comparison of concepts already given. . . ." See also §10 of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Wolff discusses this passage in "Der Begriff des Widerspruchs," p. 194.

11. That Kant means by “objects” [*Gegenstände*] in this context *empirical* objects is clear from his discussion of the amphiboly he thinks is committed by Leibniz. See A271f/B327f, and above my Section I.

12. At A279/B335 Kant says: “If we reflect in a merely logical fashion, we are only comparing our concepts with each other in the understanding, to find whether both have the same content, whether they are contradictory or not, whether something is contained within the concept or is an addition from outside. . . .”

13. I have found Henry E. Allison’s summary of this aspect of Kant’s relation to Leibniz very clear and helpful. See his *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 20–21.

14. As Wolff notes (*Der Begriff des Widerspruchs*, p. 16), we can detect in this argument anticipations of Quine’s critique of the analytic/synthetic distinction. For an excellent discussion of the Quine-Hegel connection, see Burkhard Tuschling, “Sind die Urteile der Logik vielleicht ‘ingesamt synthetisch’?,” *Kant-Studien* vol. 72, no. 3 (1981), 304–35.

15. G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel’s Science of Logic*, vol. I, trans. A. V. Miller (New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1969), pp. 190–92; *Wissenschaft der Logik I*, Theorie Werkausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), Band 5: 216–18. Hereafter this work will be cited in parentheses in the text as “WL:I” with page references first from the German and then from the English editions. (So in this case, e.g., WL:I, 216–218/190–192.) While I include page references to the Miller edition, all translations from the *Logik* in this paper are mine.

16. Kant excludes from the outset the possibility that concepts themselves contain antinomy or, as Hegel puts it, that “two determinations, opposed and necessary to one and the same content, cannot be valid in their singularity, each for itself, but have their truth in the overcoming of their singularity, in the unity of their concept.” (WL:I 218/191f)

17. See Hegel’s discussions in his, *Logic: Being Part One of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. W. Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse: Erster Teil: Die Wissenschaft der Logik*, Theorie Werkausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), Band 8, §§25, 52z. This text is hereafter referred to as “*Enzyklopädie I*.” When quoting from it, I occasionally alter Wallace’s translation.

18. The point that for Kant concepts have a “fixed content” is not that it is his view that the meaning or intension of all concepts is unrevisable. We know from his discussion in “The Discipline of Pure Reason” that he thinks that only those concepts are unrevisable (and so, allow of definition) which are “arbitrarily invented.” A729/B757 Concepts (including empirical concepts) are fixed for Kant, however, in the sense required for the possibility of logical reflection: they can be compared purely logically or independent of the determination of their content or object-reference, on his view. Following Wolff, I have been arguing that this is the assumption undermined by his own analyses of amphiboly and antinomy.

19. *Enzyklopädie I*, §60. The objects or content to which our concepts refer are equally self-sufficient on the Kantian view. As Hegel puts it, they are supposedly “fixed and read-at-hand.” *Enzyklopädie I*, §192z. (For more by Hegel on “Verstand,” see also §80.)

For discussions of Hegel's conception of "Verstand," see Robert Hanna, "From an Ontological Point of View: Hegel's Critique of the Common Logic," *Review of Metaphysics* 40 (December 1986): esp. pp. 313–17; Burkhard Tuschling, "Widersprüche in transzendentalen Idealismus," in *Probleme der 'Kritik der reinen Vernunft': Kant-Tagung Marburg 1981*, ed. Burkhard Tuschling (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), pp. 283ff; and Michael Wolff, *Der Begriff des Widerspruchs*, p. 104f.

20. This is the aspect of Kant's treatment of the Antinomies Hegel refers to as his "tenderness for things of the world." *Enzyklopädie I*, §48; WL:I, 276/237; *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Vol. III*, trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson, (New York: The Humanities Press, 1955), p. 451; *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III*, Theorie Werkausgabe (Suhrkamp, 1970), Band 20: 359. Hereafter I refer to this text as "*Vorlesungen III*" with page references first from the German and then from the English editions.

21. I discuss these issues more fully in my paper, "Hegel's Strategy and Critique of Kant's Mathematical Antinomies," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* (forthcoming). For a contemporary account of the question-begging character of Kant's treatment of the antinomies, see Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), ch. 18.

22. Regarding Hegel's relation to scepticism in general see Michael N. Forster, *Hegel and Skepticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), and Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, ch. 5. For an account of his relation to scepticism and to Kant's theoretical philosophy in particular, see Hans Friedrich Fulda, "Hegels Dialektik und die Transzendente Dialektik Kants," *Giornale di Metafisica*, Nuova Serie, IX (1987), 265–94.

23. *Enzyklopädie I*, §48z. Kant's treatment, Hegel says, prevents him from going into the "content of the antinomy itself." WL: I, 227, 217f/199, 191; See also *Vorlesungen III*, 358/450f.

For an account of the development and various stages of Hegel's critique of Kant's treatment of antinomy, see Klaus Düsing, "Hegels Metaphysikkritik, dargestellt am Beispiel seiner Auseinandersetzung mit Kants Antinomienlehre," (scheduled to appear in a Festschrift for Heinz Kimmerle, 1990). In this essay, Düsing also shows how the different approaches of Kant and Hegel to the antinomies presuppose different forms of "Metaphysikkritik." For an account of Hegel's critique in *Glauben und Wissen* of Kant's treatment of the antinomies, see Manfred Baum, "Zur Methode der Logik und Metaphysik beim Jenaer Hegel," in *Hegel in Jena*, Hegel-Studien, Beiheft 20, ed. Dieter Henrich and Klaus Düsing (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag), 119–38.

24. These implications are discussed by Wolff: In his above-cited article, see pp. 196–202; and in his book, see beginning ch. 8, in which he examines in depth Hegel's conceptions of negation and contradiction. Once again, I have greatly benefitted from his analysis.

25. See Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, pp. 8–9, 222, 233. On Hegel's view, "Verstand" and "Anschauung" ought not to be treated as separate faculties at all, but as "one and the same synthetic unity." *Faith and Knowledge*, trans. Walter Cerf and H. S. Harris (Albany, NY: University of New York Press, 1977), 71: *Jenaer Schriften 1801–1807*, Theorie Werkausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), Band 2: 306.

26. See Wolff's discussion in "Der Begriff des Widerspruchs in der 'Kritik der reinen Vernunft'," 195, 199f. He develops this point by suggesting that Kant ought to have recognized that the concepts of reflection (identity, difference, agreement, opposition, etc.) have the same status as the categories. Rather than expressing logical relations simply derived from a comparison of concepts whose content or intension is already given, concepts of reflection, like categories, have a synthetic or objectifying function. While categories make possible a system of the condition of the possibility of objects, concepts of reflection make possible a system of categories, necessary for providing the conditions of the possibility of objects.

27. *Enzyklopädie I*, §44; WL: I, 130/120f. On the topic of Hegel and the thing in itself, see Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, pp. 97–99 and Part III, "Idealist Logic."

28. See Wolff's discussion in "Der Begriff des Widerspruchs," pp. 196–199. Again, I am only skimming the surface of what is obviously an enormously complex topic.

29. Regarding the importance of antinomy for Hegel, see again WL: I, 216/190f; and *Enzyklopädie I*, §48. At §48z he explains that what we learn from (a proper understanding of) antinomy is the unity of those determinations held apart by the standpoint of "Verstand."