

Hegel and Metaphysics

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Hegel and Metaphysics



On Logic and Ontology in the System

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List of Abbreviations

Hegel

<i>Briefe</i>	<i>Briefe von und an Hegel (vols 1–4.2)</i>
<i>Differenz</i>	<i>Differenz des Fichte'schen und Schelling'schen Systems der Philosophie</i>
<i>Enc</i>	<i>Encyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften 1830</i>
<i>Enc 1817</i>	<i>Encyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften 1817</i>
<i>Enc 1827</i>	<i>Encyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften 1827</i>
<i>Gl&Wi</i>	<i>Glauben und Wissen</i>
<i>GW</i>	<i>Hegel, Gesammelte Werke</i>
<i>PhG</i>	<i>System der Wissenschaft. Erster Theil, die Phänomenologie des Geistes</i>
<i>RPh</i>	<i>Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse. Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts</i>
<i>TWA</i>	<i>Hegel. Werke in zwanzig Bänden. Theorie Werkausgabe</i>
<i>V</i>	<i>Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte</i>
<i>VGeist</i>	<i>Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Geistes (V 13)</i>
<i>VGesch</i>	<i>Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte (V 12)</i>
<i>VGPh</i>	<i>Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie (V 6–9)</i>
<i>VRel</i>	<i>Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion (V 3–5)</i>
<i>WL</i>	<i>Wissenschaft der Logik</i>

Kant

<i>AA</i>	<i>Kants gesammelte Schriften (Akademiedition)</i>
<i>KpV</i>	<i>Kritik der praktischen Vernunft (AA V)</i>
<i>KrV</i>	<i>Kritik der reinen Vernunft (AA III, IV)</i>
<i>KU</i>	<i>Kritik der Urteilskraft (AA V)</i>
<i>MAN</i>	<i>Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaften (AA IV)</i>
<i>Prol</i>	<i>Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als wissenschaftlich wird auftreten können (AA IV)</i>

Marx, Engels

<i>MEW</i>	<i>Marx-Engels Werke</i>
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Allegra de Laurentiis

Introduction

The thirteen essays here collected were first presented at the twenty-third meeting of the Hegel Society of America, held from October 31 to November 2, 2014 at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

The conference title was “Hegel Without Metaphysics?” but this collection bears the title *Hegel and Metaphysics* in acknowledgement of the fact that all of the presenters, though from different perspectives and to different degrees, answered the question in the negative. They broadly acknowledged that Hegel’s system, though certainly not every subsection of it, is an integral part of the controversial history of western metaphysics—even if, or rather because, Hegel intends to “sublate” that history in his philosophy.

Metaphysics: a very large tent of a word, at once a storeroom, house and sanctuary of colossal dimensions. It is perhaps not accidental that, just as Aristotle’s “being,” metaphysics has been and continues to be “said in many ways.” Beyond its role as the posthumous and rather fortuitous title of fourteen Aristotelian books, metaphysics has been practiced throughout the history of western philosophy under such disparate names as first philosophy, ontology, first science, theology—even as “science of logic.”

Yet in the twentieth century, the history of metaphysics appeared to some as having come to an end. In the span of less than ten years philosophers who are thought to inhabit opposite regions of the philosophical landscape published seminal essays with identical titles and the same ambitious goal: “*Die Überwindung der Metaphysik*” (Carnap in 1932, Heidegger in 1938/39). Analytically and continentally inspired thinkers have been wrestling ever since with various alternatives: ignoring metaphysical problems, renaming them, dissolving them into questions of language, ideologizing them, setting them up in strawman arguments (say, the canon’s alleged “forgetfulness of Being”), or boldly declaring them to be remnants of the history of nonsense.

As the essays here presented demonstrate, this “fury of destruction” did not last long past the end of the last century. Recent analytic philosophy does not label as “merely metaphysical” every problem that science cannot solve. It is seriously committed to inquiry into ontological themes (*entia*, *qualia*, thinghood, mind) while it qualifies its research as (purely) formal ontology or (merely) descriptive metaphysics in order to ensure minimal contamination by the perceived insanity of historical *metaphysica generalis*. While the anti-metaphysical rhetoric of influential strands of existential phenomenology has been even stronger than that of its original neopositivist contenders, its simultaneous embrace of the

themes and concepts of *metaphysica specialis* appears to have been (and to still be) impassioned. Dramatic calls to overcome “onto-theology” (believed to be co-extensive with metaphysics *tout court*), for example, have generated equally dramatic returns to what Kant would have called a “metaphysics as mere rhapsody” concerning The Event, or what Hegel would have identified as a return to the pre-critical thinking of the “essentialities” (*die Wesenheiten*) of things.

Even so, Hegel’s own criticism of metaphysical theorizing, on the one hand, and his pervasive incorporation of metaphysical concepts and deductions into his account of the real, on the other, present scholars with highly challenging problems (to use an understatement). With regard to the first of these issues, Hegel’s judgments about metaphysics as a discipline include, to choose but one example, both the chastisement of “old metaphysics” and the glorification of Aristotle’s *De anima* as “the only work of speculative interest” written on the soul in two millennia. Thus one might have to conclude that “old” or “hitherto metaphysics” is not meant to refer to Greek thought but only to Scholastic and pre-critical metaphysics.

With regard to the second issue, i.e., the vital role of metaphysical notions in the philosophies of nature and of spirit, an even moderately close reading of the texts shows that the *Realphilosophie* is neither merely prefaced by nor only schematically built upon the science of thought thinking itself. At every step, the Logic’s categories and their necessary connections bleed into the conceptual sequencing, the arguments, and the detailed accounts of the most familiar—and indeed prosaic—phenomena of the mechanical, physico-chemical and organic systems of nature, as well as into those of spirit in its subjective, objective, and absolute dimensions. The natural psyche, to name a familiar phenomenon not as central to the Philosophy of Spirit as, say, “consciousness” or “right” (only appearing as it does in the first subsection of the first division of the third part of the system) is a reality that Hegel explains in terms of its Being (the sentient soul), its Essence (the soul feeling her sentience), and its full-fledged Concept (the actuality of fully active soul).

This picture is further complicated by the well-known fact that at every juncture of the system Hegel expects his readers not only to be familiar with all the preceding parts, but actually to be on their second (preferably third) reading through it, so that they may be persuaded by the particular conclusion at hand in light of their knowledge of the whole—including the ultimate self-disclosure of reality, *via* speculative philosophy, as syllogism of syllogisms. Yet in fact the panoramic view is not always necessary when, for example, what is at stake is only a particular critical reflection on a specified set of scientific, religious, social or psychological themes treated in Hegel’s system. Thus many valuable con-

tributions to Hegel studies exist that do not appeal at every turn to the True as the Whole.

In view of all this, the past and present skepticism of some scholars with regard to Hegel's reliance on metaphysical thought is fully understandable and is indeed a welcome opportunity for a text-oriented, non-ideological debate about Hegel's work and its legacy. This is the opportunity that the Hegel Society took at the Northwestern University conference.

* * *

The essays in this volume take seriously the systematic character of Hegel's philosophy. They take metaphysical thinking itself equally seriously, just as Hegel does, in both its historical existence as a millenary body of work and in the role it plays in our ongoing rational inquiries into nature, history, political life, and action. The common focus of the highly diverse contributions presented here lies in the recognition that controversies about the presence, absence or sublation of metaphysics in Hegel's work need to be squarely addressed (and some perhaps put to rest) through a painstaking analysis of what Hegel means by *Metaphysik*.

One of the major strengths of the volume as a whole consists, I believe, in the fact that all contributors move well beyond the stalemate opposition between an "analytic" and a "continental" understanding of Hegel's philosophy. They also show persuasively that the exclusive disjunction between "pro-metaphysical" and "anti-metaphysical" readings is a false alternative, if for no other reason than Hegel's explicit—and, some would say, characteristically equivocal—self-understanding: "Thus *logic* coincides with *metaphysics*, with the science of *things* grasped in *thoughts*" (*Encyclopaedia* of 1830, § 24). It should come as no surprise that several contributors indicate a qualified return to Aristotelian ontology as a viable interpretation of Hegel's position. Indeed, the most ancient statement of what Hegel here calls "coincidence" (*Zusammenfallen*) also marks the closing of the *Encyclopaedia*: "But by partaking in what it thinks, thinking [*nous*; Hegel: *die Vernunft*] thinks itself [...] so that thinking and what is thought are the same. For thinking is what is receptive of the intelligible and of the essence [*ousia*; Hegel: *die Wesenheit*]" (*Metaphysics* Λ, 1072b 20; *Encyclopaedia* 1830, §577).

Six of the following essays address the issue at stake from the eagle's eye perspective of the whole system. They do so, however, from quite different angles: the centrality of the concept of the "true infinite" in the *corpus*; the meaning of the 'unity' of logic and metaphysics in the *Science of Logic*; the viability of reading Hegel as an unapologetic metaphysician; the absence of a metaphysical subject of thinking from Hegel's *Logic*; the presuppositions and conse-

quences of Hegel's criticism of the critique of metaphysics; and the need for a 'deflation' of Hegel's metaphysical semantics. The other seven contributions discuss Hegel's metaphysical commitments with regard to special themes: self-consciousness, practical philosophy, the legacy of Hegelian categories in existential phenomenology and postmodernism, philosophical holism, naturalism, human agency, and the problem of language and thought.

Chapter 1, by Alper Türken, discusses a concept that can be considered paradigmatic of the nature of speculative thought: true infinity. The centrality of this logical figure already calls into question the supposedly non-metaphysical character of Hegel's philosophy. But even Hegel's turn away from Kantian transcendentalism (hence from Kant's critique of his own predecessors) cannot be understood, Türken argues, without grasping the new conceptual resources provided by Hegel's novel notion of true infinity.

Chapter 2, contributed by Chong-Fuk Lau, argues instead in favor of reading the Hegelian thesis of the identity of logic and metaphysics as a move toward "deflating" metaphysics into logic and semantics. By clarifying key concepts that underlie human experience and understanding, Hegel's "logico-metaphysics" amounts then to a second-order systematization of the fundamental, historically developed notions of our theoretical and practical orientation in the world.

A very different emphasis is found in Glenn Magee's chapter 3. Magee stresses that Hegel's explicit rejections of metaphysics refer to pre-critical thinking and not to metaphysics *tout court*—witness Hegel's own characterization of his dialectical logic as a new kind of metaphysics. For otherwise, it would be difficult to explain Hegel's employment of ontological categories—even pre-critical ones—in the *Science of Logic* and elsewhere in the system. Magee argues that overwhelming textual evidence is not the only factor supporting the claim that this philosophy is metaphysically grounded. It is precisely the recognition of Hegel's body of work as a contribution to metaphysical theorizing that allows for a genuinely illuminating interpretation of his thought.

Richard Winfield argues in chapter 4 that Kant's and Nietzsche's very different repudiations of metaphysical thinking are both themselves subject to repudiations supplied by Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as well as in the *Science of Logic*. Winfield discusses the consequences that this Hegelian "overcoming of the overcoming" of metaphysics bears for the future of metaphysical thought in philosophy.

Chapter 5, by Andrew Buchwalter, acknowledges the value of non-metaphysical Hegel interpretations. Nonetheless, Buchwalter argues, a judicious analysis of three notions that are key to Hegel's practical philosophy—the idea of objective spirit, the concept of realized freedom, and that of dialectic—shows that appreciating the metaphysical foundations of Hegel's claims enhances our grasp of

the meaning and ongoing value of his practical philosophy instead of obscuring it, as some interpreters have maintained.

In chapter 6, Giacomo Rinaldi carefully delineates the distinction between Scholastic ontology, Cartesianism, Spinozism and Leibnizian metaphysics, on the one hand, and Hegel's speculative philosophy, on the other. In Rinaldi's view, the latter is an intrinsically metaphysical enterprise developed from the perspective of reason, not of the understanding. Speculative philosophy maintains a coherence theory of truth while also allowing for the "unity of opposites" to attain the position of highest law of logic. This enables Hegel to explicate the Absolute as an infinite process of real mediations (God as infinitely creative absolute spirit), thus making the designation of "panentheistic metaphysics" the most apt name for Hegel's philosophical project.

Elena Ficara's chapter 7 challenges the thesis, put forward by Anglo-American scholars as well as influential European interpreters, that the declared "identity" of logic and metaphysics amounts to the "deflation" (see chapter 2) or even the outright dismissal of metaphysics as a rational form of inquiry based on historically dated forms of thought. Ficara shows that Hegel's rejection of pre-critical dogmatic metaphysics goes hand in hand with his rehabilitation (*mutatis mutandis*) of Aristotelian metaphysics. Instead of signaling the mutual reduction of metaphysics and logic, Hegel's tracing of both to their common roots plays an important role even in contemporary metaphysics and philosophy of logic.

In chapter 8, Angelica Nuzzo focuses on the bridging role that Kant's transcendental logic plays between pre-critical metaphysics, Hegel's dialectical-speculative logic, and metaphysics "proper." The essay first analyzes the different types of metaphysical thinking that Hegel either rejects or embraces and, moreover, the peculiar relation of his Logic to the latter type. Nuzzo then shows that Hegel's idea of logical thinking (the object of the speculative science of logic) is, as Hegel himself states, "objective" in the sense that it does not presuppose any kind of metaphysical subject.

In the conference's presidential address, Robert Bernasconi (chapter 9) argues that Hegel's approach to metaphysics, including his Logic, is governed by his conception of the history of philosophy. While metaphysics may be a past mode of thought, it is also pervasive in every philosophy of the present. Just as "religion can probably exist without philosophy but philosophy cannot exist without religion" (as stated in the 1827 *Encyclopaedia*), so metaphysics, including the "old" one, is not a separable sub-discipline of what can only develop as a genuine whole. Bernasconi shows how dialectical conceptions such as that of the interdependency of opposites are adopted by contemporary thinkers like Heidegger and Derrida in their attempt to "overcome metaphysics"—a formula-

tion that, in this light, Bernasconi judges to be misleading. Whatever our own contemporary interests may be, the essay concludes, a Hegel without metaphysics is not a deflated Hegel, but Hegel's corpse.

In chapter 10, Paul Giladi investigates Hegel's explicit and implicit metaphysical commitments and concludes that they are principally of the "naturalist variety," thus making this kind of inquiry into the real both effective and legitimate. Giladi argues in favor of the need to recognize that this particular metaphysical dimension of Hegel's philosophizing—"speculative naturalism"—is informed by both Aristotelian first philosophy and Kantian criticism.

Hegel's theory of human intentional action is at the center of Herrmann-Sinai's contribution (chapter 11). She elucidates the necessary connection between Hegel's theory of self-determined action in the *Philosophy of Spirit* and the account of the Concept's self-determination in the *Logic*. This is done by means of a comparison with Kant's treatment of self-legislation, self-determination, and the relationship between them. While Hegel maintains this Kantian framework, Herrmann-Sinai argues, he lifts its terms onto a different level and integrates them into the logical analysis of the Concept. The Doctrine of the Concept, especially its account of the syllogism, is key to understanding Hegel's explication of our self-determination in intentional action.

Chapter 12, by Andrew Davis, focuses on contemporary controversies (and their historical precedents in Herder and the early Hegel) regarding the alleged co-extensiveness of thought and language. Davis's contribution offers a detailed analysis of the most extensive passages Hegel ever dedicated to language (in *Subjective Spirit's Psychology*, especially in the sections on Recollection and Memory). Hegel's position in these mature texts differs from his earlier Herderian outlook, on account of which Hegel's conception of language has been recently interpreted as regressive and dualistic. Davis defends Hegel's mature position as a non-regressive and non-dualistic one that is also entirely consistent with the philosophy of spirit and its metaphysical commitments.

In the concluding chapter, Michael Morris offers a new outlook on "Hegel and Metaphysics" from the perspective of a post-Hegelian development, namely Marxian theory. Morris shows that one of the most explicitly anti-Hegelian works by Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, actually embraces two of Hegel's ontological claims. In any given account of the real, (i) the grasp of the whole has priority over that of the parts, and (ii) the fundamental category of the real, substance, refers to a teleological process. *The German Ideology's* recapitulation of crucial passages from Hegel's *Philosophy of Spirit* is thus based on Hegelian ontology, which is precisely what allows Marx-Engels to overcome the originally positivistic character of their work.

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Alper Türken

Hegel's Concept of the True Infinite and the Idea of a post-Critical Metaphysics

Introduction

Recent debate in Hegel scholarship is centered on the tension between two opposing interpretative strategies. The so-called metaphysical interpretations of Hegel put the emphasis on giving an account of Hegel's position that yields the highest fidelity with his texts in view of the entirety of his corpus.¹ For the metaphysical interpreters, Hegel's works on logic are generally the primary focus. In their eyes, aspects of Hegel's philosophy such as ontological monism and systematic holism,² which are widely held to be unfriendly to the contemporary philosophical culture, are considered essential. Reading Hegel in a way that abstracts from those aspects is taken as an inadmissible distortion of Hegel's historical project. For the metaphysical interpreters, identifying different interpretative options that would maximize the relevance of Hegel's thought to the problems of contemporary philosophy is a motive that is peripheral at best.

The other pole of the tension consists of non-metaphysical interpretations that self-admittedly reject at least some aspects of the historical Hegel but focus on establishing strong connections between some elements of his thought and problems of contemporary philosophy. In my view, for the non-metaphysical interpreters the debate is hardly about which interpretation is a more accurate representation of the historical Hegel.³ Their primary motive is appropriating Hegel's thought to maximize its relevance to our contemporary context. This does not mean of course that non-metaphysical interpreters think the metaphysical interpretations to be giving an accurate picture about Hegel, but it is fair to say that non-metaphysical interpreters consciously allow themselves a higher level of liberty in being selective about reading Hegel's texts or emphasizing

¹ Ch. Taylor, R.-P. Horstmann, F. Beiser and S. Houlgate are some of the leading figures among the metaphysical interpreters of Hegel.

² Non-metaphysical interpreters of Hegel, such as R. Brandom, can be friendly to Hegel's holism as long as that holism is taken as limited to the semantic domain and as not extending to an ontological holism.

³ Pippin, Pinkard and Brandom can be counted among the leading non-metaphysical interpreters of Hegel who openly distance themselves from some aspects of Hegel's thought. Brandom's *de re* interpretation in particular is an innovative and systematic example of such distancing.

some Hegelian themes at the expense of others. For the non-metaphysical interpreters, in many cases the primary focus is on the *Phenomenology of Spirit* rather than the *Science of Logic*. Over the years, metaphysical interpreters have pointed out several shortcomings of the non-metaphysical readings in doing justice to Hegel's authentic position.⁴ On the other hand, unlike non-metaphysical readings,⁵ they have so far not succeeded in articulating specific ways in which Hegel's thought can play an active role in the context of contemporary philosophy. Horstmann argues that the only ones who should expect to find something philosophically valuable in Hegel's legacy are those who share with him the sentiment that there is something fundamentally wrong about our traditional ways of attaining a correct conception of reality (Horstmann 1999, p. 286). In my view, it is precisely this insight that makes it particularly difficult for the metaphysical interpreter to integrate Hegel's thought into the context of contemporary philosophy, as this interpretation finds a fundamental incompatibility between Hegel's and conventional contemporary conceptions of reality.

It may seem that the optimal compromise could be to identify an interpretative strategy that remains loyal to the spirit of the historical Hegel⁶ without being forced to affirm the entirety of his philosophical commitments, while at the same time looking for ways to connect his thoughts to our contemporary philosophical and broader intellectual problems. However, given the strongly systematic and holistic character of Hegel's thought, the suitability of such an approach to not distort Hegel's authentic position remains controversial. It remains unclear which philosophical commitments of Hegel's are to be considered as core, and which ones as collateral.⁷ Consequently, we do not seem to have a principled approach ready at hand for distinguishing a critical reading of Hegel from a philosophical position which is merely influenced or inspired by him.

⁴ See Beiser 1995; Horstmann 1999, 2006a; and Houlgate 2009, for some of the major lines of argument against non-metaphysical interpretations.

⁵ Brandom 1998 should be considered as a primary example here. In his introduction to Sellars 1997, p. 8–9, Rorty refers to Brandom's work as "attempting to usher analytic philosophy from its Kantian to its Hegelian stage." Although the faithfulness of Brandom's Hegel to the historical Hegel remains highly controversial, Brandom's innovative appropriation of some Hegelian themes into the context of linguistically-oriented neo-pragmatism is undeniable.

⁶ Note that in many ways this is what Pippin does, and with considerable success. However, I will argue in this paper, to the extent that we hold that the spirit of Hegel's philosophy is speculative, one has to admit that Pippin's interpretation is not Hegelian in spirit.

⁷ One may argue that such a distinction of core and collateral commitments is incompatible with holism in the Hegelian sense. I will argue in what follows that it need not be so.

Centrality of the True Infinite in Hegel's Philosophy

I argue for one interpretative and one philosophical claim in this paper. My interpretative claim is that a viable interpretation of Hegel, in distinction from a philosophical position that is merely inspired by him, should accommodate the concept of the true infinite in a manner faithful to its meaning for Hegel.⁸ In my view, the primary interpretative challenge facing us today regarding Hegel's system is to demonstrate the possibility of interpreting the concept of the true infinite, in ways that are consistent with Hegel's usage, while still allowing us to integrate this concept into the context of contemporary philosophical and broader intellectual problems. The choice of the true infinite instead of other logical concepts like substance, actuality, Concept, or Idea, or instead of phenomenological concepts like self-consciousness, recognition, *Bildung* or reason, all of which have fundamental functions in Hegel's system, is not arbitrary. My claim is that the concept of the true infinite involves the conceptual kernel of all the richer speculative concepts. In the *Encyclopedia* Logic, Hegel calls the true infinite the basic concept of philosophy (cf. *Enc* § 95R). In the *Science of Logic* he writes that the true infinite "gives us the nature of speculative thought displayed in its determining feature" (*WL GW* 21.139). Metaphorically speaking, the true infinite is the conceptual DNA of the rest of Hegel's logical system. One can understand speculative logic as the self-development of the Concept only if one understands what Hegel means when he says: "the pure concept is the absolutely infinite" (*WL GW* 12.33). Still in the *Science of Logic*, Hegel states that reason knows God, freedom, right and duty because the infinite in them is not the empty abstraction from the finite (cf. *WL GW* 12.91).

The centrality of the concept of the true infinite is not limited to the Logic but extends to the Phenomenology as well. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel refers to the simple infinity of the concept as the "simple essence of life, the soul of the world, the universal bloodstream" (*PhG* p. 147–8).⁹ Arguably the most important transition in the Phenomenology, the move from consciousness to self-consciousness, occurs when consciousness grasps the holistic inter-

⁸ This does not require that in order to provide an interpretation of a particular concept or theme in Hegel, for example, the concept of recognition in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, one needs to start from an account of true infinity. However, it does require that the account provided of the particular concept in question be compatible with at least one interpretation of the concept of infinity that is true to the original meaning attributed to it by Hegel.

⁹ Citations refer to the Pinkard translation (Works Cited: Hegel 2008).

dependency between itself and its object, at the end of the section on the understanding (*PhG* p. 153). This is a turning point for consciousness, as after this point it gives up the perspective of consciousness that is defined by its understanding of its object and of itself as two finitudes, existing independently and related to each other in an external manner, and evolves into the perspective of self-consciousness that is defined by the necessity to account for the holistic interdependency between itself and its object. In my reading, the concept of the true infinite is the concept of this special form of holistic interdependency. Not only the transition from consciousness to self-consciousness but also the important transition from self-consciousness to reason are marked by the progressive development and realization of this concept: “When infinity is finally an object for consciousness, and consciousness is aware of it as what it is, then consciousness is self-consciousness” (*PhG* p. 153).

In my reading, the infinite is the operative concept in all these statements. They can be made intelligible only by making explicit the concept of the true infinite contained in them. This concept is not a mere hangover from pre-critical metaphysics. What Hegel calls “the rigid dogmatism of the metaphysics of the understanding” (*Enc* § 45 A) that defines pre-critical metaphysics lacks this self-reflective and self-determining notion, as well as the speculative method which is the full self-development of this concept. The true infinite is the conceptual core of the speculative element in Hegel’s philosophy and is as such the primary conceptual innovation that allows Hegel to make the speculative turn from Kant’s critical philosophy.

My philosophical claim is the philosophical correlate of my interpretative proposal. I claim neither that Hegel is doing metaphysics in the pre-critical sense, nor that he is a non-metaphysical thinker. His project is genuinely post-Kantian, and he believes his Logic to be a completion of Kant’s project and in fact the true critique of pure reason: “The objective logic is the true critique of thought-determinations not according to the abstract form of the *a priori* as contrasted with the *a posteriori*, but in themselves according to their particular content” (*WL GW* 21.49).

The crux of the matter lies in getting to the bottom of what is involved in Hegel’s speculative turn and his break with Kant, which is at least as important as his continuity with him. The speculative turn is purposefully introduced by Hegel to address some important deficiencies that he believes to be inherent in Kant’s theoretical philosophy, in order to ground a post-critical metaphysics. It is these deficiencies that Hegel calls attention to when he writes:

It must be recognized that to have established the finitude of the cognition that is based merely on experience and belongs to the understanding, and to have termed its content

“appearance,” was a very important result of the Kantian philosophy. But we ought not to stop at this negative result, or to reduce the unconditioned character of reason to the merely abstract identity that excludes distinction. Since, upon this view, reason is regarded as simply going beyond the finite and conditioned character of the understanding, it is thereby itself degraded into something finite and conditioned, for the genuine infinite is not merely a realm beyond the finite: on the contrary, it contains the finite sublated within itself. (*Enc* § 45 A)

Here Hegel criticizes Kant for taking theoretical reason merely as a bad infinite and failing to recognize its true infinity. In my reading, this point is Hegel's fundamental criticism of Kant's theoretical philosophy. A number of other well-known and important criticisms are the following: i) Kant fails to investigate thought-determinations in and for themselves; ii) Kant also fails to recognize that the critique of thought-determinations and their activity must be included within the process of cognition so that they may determine their own limits and show their own defects; iii) he also falls short of recognizing that our thoughts are not cut off from the thing-in-itself by an impassible gulf, but that the true objectivity of thinking consists instead in the fact that logical categories are not merely our thoughts, but at the same time also the in-itself of things and of whatever else is objective; iv) Kant neglects to acknowledge that categories are not empty, as stipulated by his famous dictum: “thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind” (*KrV* A51/B75) but have a content in virtue of being determinate; v) finally, Kant also misrecognizes the true significance of the antinomies of reason by assessing them merely as consequences of theoretical reason's overstepping its limit, instead of seeing in them what Hegel calls the dialectical moment of logical thinking. By my lights, all of these criticisms are either closely related to and, in some cases, directly derive from Hegel's more fundamental point on Kant's failure to grasp the true infinity of theoretical reason.

Hegel believes that he is able to overcome these deficiencies by taking advantage of the very specific conceptual resources available to him in virtue of his speculative turn. These conceptual resources consist first and foremost of the concept of true infinity and the higher speculative or infinite concepts such as the Concept, the Idea, reason and spirit, which are developed from this concept of the true infinite. Eventually, all traditional categories of western philosophy receive new light through Hegel's interpretation of them from the standpoint of this new concept of infinity, or the speculative standpoint.

Hegel's Concept of True Infinity

I do not have here the necessary space to articulate a full-blown account of Hegel's concept of the true infinite. However, to be able to argue for my case, I provide an overview of what I understand Hegel's concept of the true infinite and its fundamental conceptual determinations to entail.

The idea of infinity is closely related to the idea that all finite determinations are negatively self-related or, to use Hegel's terminology, "self-sublating": "Finite things *are*, but in their reference to themselves they refer to themselves *negatively*—in this very self-reference they propel themselves beyond themselves, beyond their being" (WL GW 21.116). This view is closely related to Hegel's important commitment to, and innovative interpretation of, the medieval principle *omnis determinatio est negatio*, which he attributes to Spinoza (cf. WL GW 21.101). Hegel derives this from the insight that pure being lacks all determination, thus becomes determinate being, and consequently something, only by integrating negation within itself. This is established in the Logic by passing through the stages of becoming and determinate being. Something is determinate being by excluding its other from itself. This negative relation with the other defines the distinction of something from its other and is essential to the former. Something is what it is only through its distinction from the other. This negation that defines the distinction of something from its other is the first negation that belongs to the constitution of something. Hegel calls this first negation that defines the thing and its negative relation to its other, "abstract negation" (WL GW 21.96).

This exclusion of the other from itself by the something is at the same time the inclusion of its own limit. Its limit does not fall outside it but belongs to its very own determination. Without its limit, it would not be a determinate being but indeterminate pure being. As Houlgate points out, something is finite not because it falls short of the infinite but because it includes its limit within itself (cf. Houlgate 2006, p. 382). This expresses the important Hegelian principle that finitude is not a being limited in general but the inclusion of being's own limit or of its non-being within itself. This inclusion of its own non-being within itself is the negative self-relatedness of everything finite, its lack of self-sufficiency. It must be noted that this is not a negative relation merely between our concepts and being; it therefore cannot be resolved by revising our concepts, as Brandom for example seems to suggest (see Brandom 2002, pp. 178–208). For Hegel, being negatively self-related belongs to the very constitution of finite being. This negative self-relatedness of the finite defines its essential restlessness, instability and lack of self-sufficiency. This idea of the ontological status of the negative self-relatedness of everything finite is often overlooked by semantically ori-

ented interpretations of Hegel such as Brandom's. In all of Hegel's works there are clear and explicit references to the ontological status of this negative self-relation of the finite. It is not possible to provide a coherent interpretation of Hegel without accommodating this key aspect of his thought.

Being negatively self-related, however, does not exhaust the determination of the finite. A finite being is not a mere passing away by reason of its suffering from its own immanent limit. Rather, a finite being has also a positive determination. This self-equality of something is possible only through the sublation of the various distinctions of a specific something from all other things. This self-equal positivity of something makes it more than mere determinateness or existence in general. Something becomes a self-identical existent due to this sublation of distinction. As a self-identical thing that sublates its distinction and connectedness with the other, the something sustains itself. Consequently, according to Hegel, the something involves two different forms of negation within itself. First, through its quality and its distinction it is opposed to an other. This first negation defines its connectedness to the other. Second, it is negatively determined not only toward an other but within itself. Hegel calls the first negation (the one that obtains with respect to an other) abstract negation; the second (the one within itself), absolute negation (cf. *WL GW* 21.96).

The positive determination of something when taken in its distinction from the immanent limit of the finite thing is what the thing should be or ought-to-be. While the ought is what the thing is intrinsically, its immanent norm, the thing is actually never that, because of its restriction. What the finite thing ought-to-be is not an external standard or criterion but is immanent in it. As the necessary togetherness of ought and restriction, the finite thing is this inherent tension or opposition between what it is and what it ought to be. On the one hand, in the ought the finite "*transcends* its restriction" and elevates itself above it. On the other hand, the finite is restricted in relation to the ought. The ought and the restriction are inseparable (cf. *WL GW* 21.120). We should recognize here Hegel's attempt to overcome Kant's famous distinction between *quid juris* and *quid facti* with a non-reductionist strategy (*KrV* A51/B75). For Hegel, a fact carries within it the tension between what it is and what it ought to be as an essential aspect of the determination that makes it that particular and singular fact. With the ought the finite already shows itself to be more than a merely finite or limited being. Hegel states that the transcendence of the finite, and hence the progress to infinity, begins in the ought:

In so far as the finite itself is being elevated to infinity, it is not at all an alien force that does this for it; it is rather its nature to refer itself to itself as restriction (both restriction as such

and as ought) and to transcend this restriction, or rather, in this self-reference, to have negated the restriction and gone above and beyond it. (*WL GW* 21.125)

The ceasing-to-be of a finite thing does not leave behind pure non-being or nothing, but the non-being of that particular something. But this non-being of something is something else. Hence, the ceasing-to-be of a finite thing leads to another finite thing. This process of ceasing-to-be of finite beings and their turning into other finite beings does not come to an end but goes on *ad infinitum*. The idea of infinity comes onto the stage through this endless process of ceasing-to-be of finite things and their passing into other finite things. In this endless ceasing-to-be and passing-into-another, finite things form a process of continuous being. This continuous being is non-finite because unlike finite things, it never ceases to be. Finite things therefore, through their own continuous and endless ceasing-to-be, constitute infinite being—being that never ceases to be. This infinite being is dynamic and self-related being.

At this point, we face one of the turning points of the dialectic of finite and infinite, arguably one of the most important moves in Hegel's *Logic*. This is the dialectic of the bad and true infinite. The infinite of the continuous being is non-finite. To the extent that this infinite differentiates itself from the finite, it posits itself as an other to the finite. This differentiating is a necessary determination of the infinite, as it is genuinely non-finite only by differentiating itself from the finite. Through this differentiating, the infinite is immediately negatively related to the finite; it excludes the finite from itself. However, to be related to an other through an immediate negation is to be limited, and being limited is the determination of the finite. By differentiating itself and excluding the finite from itself, the infinite obtains the determination of a finite being. What is intended is infinite but what is posited is finite: "The infinite has vanished and the other, the finite, has stepped in" (*WL GW* 21.128). At this point, the infinite shows itself limited by the finite and as beyond the finite. This infinite that is a beyond of the finite is Hegel's "bad" or "spurious" infinite. It is bad or spurious because it is not yet the fully-developed concept of the infinite and it should not be mistaken for it. Despite this, it is still a necessary stage that belongs in the development of the true infinite.

As something limited and something with a beyond, this bad infinite involves an immanent reference to its own transcendence of its respective infinite. But this new infinite that will emerge is just another bad infinite. It will suffer from the very dialectic that has just been discussed and will fall back to finitude. Hegel calls this process the progress to infinity. He concludes from this that the true concept of the infinite cannot be one in which the finite is excluded and set

as a beyond. The finite and the bad infinite are inseparable yet must be distinguished within their very inseparability.

[T]he unity of the finite and the infinite is not an external bringing together of them, nor an incongruous combination that goes against their nature, one in which inherently separate and opposed terms that exist independently and are consequently incompatible, would be knotted together. Rather, each is itself this unity, and this only as a *sublating* of itself in which neither would have an advantage over the other in in-itselfness and affirmative existence. (WL GW 21.133)

Both the finite and the infinite include the other within themselves. The infinite is nothing but the negation of the finite and involves an immanent reference to it through this negative relation. On the other hand, the finite is nothing but negative self-relation to itself and immanent reference to its beyond: the ought that is the bad infinite. The true concept of the infinite should involve not only the negative relation between the finite and the bad infinite, which is the distinguishing of one from the other, but also the necessary reference of each to the other. Each is what it is only through this immanent reference to the other. In Hegel's terms, this immanent reference to the other is their unity in the speculative sense.¹⁰ While the finite and bad infinite are immediately negatively related and exclude one another, the true infinite involves both of them in their unity-in-distinction. In the concept of the genuine infinite, the self-development of being takes for the very first time a double meaning. According to this, the infinite signifies not only one of the two sides of the distinction but also the totality of the process that expresses itself in this doubling. It shows itself as togetherness of both the essential distinction and the inseparability of both sides. True infinity is this mode of existence as self-differentiation or self-determination which doubles itself into moments of a bad infinity and a determinate finite and still maintains its dynamic unity in this self-doubling and self-differentiation. For Hegel, this innovative conceptual category is constitutive of complex formations such as self, life, nature and spirit. These can only be comprehended as constituted by this infinity.

[T]he determinate unity of the *finite* and the *infinite*, the distinguishing of these two is also present in it. And this distinguishing is not one that would also let them go loose, each subsisting separately, but it rather leaves them in the unity as *idealized*. This *unity* of the infin-

¹⁰ The speculative sense of unity needs to be carefully distinguished from unity in the general sense. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (VRel, Works Cited: Hegel 2006) Hegel states that "everything turns around defining what unity is" (p. 128). The Logic taken in its entirety can be read as Hegel's articulation of the concept of unity in the speculative sense.