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Symposium: Author Meets Critics

Lydia Moland

Hegel's Aesthetics: The Art of Idealism

Oxford University Press, 2019, 333 pp., \$66.33 (hbk), ISBN 978-0190847340.

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Reviewed by:

Ingvild Torsen, University of Oslo

Rachel Falkenstern, St. Francis College

Richard Eldridge, Swarthmore College

Response by:

Lydia Moland, Colby College

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Review 1: Ingvild Torsen, University of Oslo

If there were a Hegelian aesthetic slogan for our late modern times, “Make the general state of the world poetic again” would be it. The statement occurs in Lydia Moland’s book (albeit not in imperative form) and I will make it a slogan for my comments because it connects two central, important, and interesting themes in Moland’s interpretation of Hegel (42). First, “making the prosaic poetic” is one way Moland interprets what it means for art to be true. Second, since it is a description of the task of art facing Hegel’s contemporaries, it is a slogan that brings us to the heart of the discussion of the meaning of Hegel’s so-called end of art thesis. Focusing on the imperative to make the prosaic poetic is, then, a way to think about the relation between two aspects of Hegel’s philosophy of art that Moland skillfully takes apart: the conceptual possibilities of art and the historical manifestations of art and its decline.

Moland’s book is a thorough, impressive, and highly readable interpretation of the whole of Hegel’s *Aesthetics* that follows the structure of the Hotho edition. She demonstrates the richness of Hegel’s philosophy of art, and the book forces its readers to think of the *whole* of the lectures in a more systematic manner than is typically done. Three original points stand out as particularly important in Moland’s interpretation: The first is her insistence on paying attention to the distinction between the development of art in part II of the lectures (“Development of the Ideal into the Particular Forms of Art”), which follows the history of spirit, and the analysis of individual arts in part III (“The System of the Individual Arts”), which she claims is conceptual. The second is Moland’s insistence that we must understand the truth of art, and thereby the meaning of Hegel’s notion of freedom, in ways that go beyond the sociopolitical, and that this will then deepen our understanding both of the *Aesthetics* and of art. Finally, her third point, accomplished through the other two, is to nuance and thereby downplay the so-called end of art thesis.

Hegel’s aesthetics is an aesthetics of art—that is, it is uninterested in experience of natural beauty—it is an aesthetics of truth: this means that art is a source of knowledge and insight, and it means that art is potentially incredibly important. It also means that there are several ways that art can fail. The insistence on the connection between art and truth is one that Hegel shares with several post-Kantian thinkers up through the

phenomenologies of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, but what is not shared in this tradition is a clear and common understanding of truth. A characteristic feature of Hegel's theory is that the truth of art is at least in principle conceptually available and can be *thought*, and this distinguishes him from some of the other figures in this tradition. Even though the truth of art is conceptually available, according to Hegel, art is not something that is true by virtue of representing some independent fact or feature of the world. We come to realize something when encountering a great artwork, but this is not just a clarification on our part: the truth of art is not that some independent *being* is now *known*. Rather, something happens and becomes real with the work of art—truth is made manifest with the work of art—so that *what is* and *what is known* is actualized simultaneously. The conceptual availability of the truth of art is hence *subsequent* to the coming into being of the artwork. What art does then, Moland suggests, is to exemplify a deep truth of Hegel's idealism: "Objects are not in fact waiting to be apprehended, but ... we and the world's objects are part of a mutually determining whole." When art *fails* to do this, when it is "claiming to mirror simply what is there instead of exposing humans' mutual formation in reality," it is not poetic, but *prosaic* (128).

Moland devotes the first section of her book to a systematic overview of the meaning of truth in the idealist system and in relation to art. Hegel's truth is also called the Idea, "the interpenetrating, mutually determining unity of thought and object" (24) and "the knowledge of that unity" (29). When the *Idea* is sensuously experienced, that is, when it can be grasped "in a determinate form," we have the *truth of art*, which is what Hegel calls *beauty* (27). This mutual determining of thought and object, of us and world, "of transforming and being transformed," is also what *freedom* is, according to Hegel. Hegel's lectures are in a sense a manifold unpacking of what these general descriptions mean beyond Hegel's system, showing the many ways this truth can happen in art. It is also a way for those of us who are not already convinced Hegelians to understand core ideas in Hegel's system.

One way to make sense of Hegel's claim about the truth of art is in sociopolitical terms—an artwork is a sensuous particular that articulates something about the whole, that is, about us and the world, in such a way that we change with it as the artwork makes its truth manifest, in the way we live and understand ourselves and our social world. For example, one could give a Hegelian interpretation of Ibsen's "A Doll's House," arguing

that it makes manifest that marriage as an institution will no longer be adequate to our (or rather, the late nineteenth century's bourgeoisie) ways of loving and living together, unless it is changed. What the drama reveals is true, but this "fact" about what marriage needs to be now (or a hundred years ago) only becomes real and cognized *with* the artwork. Such a sociopolitical reading of Hegel's "aesthetics of truth" is fairly widespread. However, an important claim in Moland's book is that thinking of the truth of art exclusively in this manner, "as primarily a kind of expressionism in which artists articulate a culture's self-understanding in general and its understanding of freedom in particular," is too narrow, focusing too heavily on the content of the artwork (13). By claiming this, she contrasts her work with that of recent interpretations of Hegel's aesthetics, Benjamin Rutter's and Robert Pippin's in particular.¹ I think she is right to insist on a broader understanding of the truth of art, both because Hegel's claim goes beyond the sociopolitical and also because *art* calls for understanding its truth in more manifold ways—it seems reductive or forced to interpret all that art does and the ways art matters in terms of the sociopolitical. Instead, Moland claims:

Hegel's analysis of individual arts can allow us to look beyond the social-political aspects of freedom to the way freedom has its foundation in Hegel's description of our experience of space, our perception, our emotions, and our imagination ... freedom for Hegel is not confined to the social and political spheres. It requires a consciousness of our mutually determinative capacities at the level of perception and feeling as well. (14)

Here we see why Part III of the *Aesthetics* is so important for Moland's goal: That art makes manifest insights about our human condition, not just as social creatures, but more fundamentally as perceiving, feeling, and imagining creatures is especially visible when we look at the third part, where Hegel goes through the individual arts, architecture,

¹ Benjamin Rutter, *Hegel on the Modern Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Robert Pippin, *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Robert Pippin, *After the Beautiful: Hegel and the Philosophy of Pictorial Modernism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014).

sculpture, painting, music, and poetry. Moland claims that what art does is to enable resistance to accepting the given “at *all* levels,” including our experience of space, perception, emotions, and imagination (14). Hegel’s aesthetics teaches us “how we, through our senses, understand ourselves also as embodied creatures,” not just social and political creatures (14). The description of the individual arts is where she finds the support for this claim.

This is an aspect of Moland’s book that is both exciting and promising. The force and meaning of this claim, that the truth that art affords us goes beyond the sociopolitical, could be developed and bolstered by further interpretation of concrete artworks, that is, more independent and detailed interpretation of artworks along these lines. Where Rutter and Pippin offer rich and detailed interpretations of particular artworks to show and not just state the fruitfulness of sociopolitical readings, Moland mostly stays with Hegel’s own descriptions or suggests possible lines of interpretation of contemporary art. Here are some of Moland’s descriptions of the dimensions of the truth of art that reveal what we might call metaphysical or existential truths that are overlooked when the focus is more narrowly on the sociopolitical dimension:

In the case of architecture and sculpture:

And, like architecture’s ability to bring our attention to our role in the conceptualization of space, sculpture brings us to consider the reflective capacity necessary to recognize shape. By so perfectly capturing living flesh, it challenges our understanding of inorganic matter and, by creating out of inorganic material the semblance of our own flesh and blood, it makes our embodiment strange to us. (194)

And about painting:

In making humans aware of their own participation in the sensing of dimension, it gives us an explicit moment of understanding ourselves as mutually determining reality. Painting also embodies the idea that there is no given: painted objects only become the objects they should be when we bring our own activity to them. (220)

About music:

... music responds to social transformations. What the subject feels when it hears such music changes, as then does the subject itself. These developments in subjectivity in turn affect the social conditions that themselves affect what is possible for humans emotionally. (232)

And further:

The romantic arts make the familiar strange: they call our attention to capacities—sight, hearing, inner imagination—we otherwise take for granted. (197)

Somewhat surprisingly, the resulting “alternative” truth of art that Moland puts forth by looking at the individual arts often ends up sounding quite similar across the different genres and works. As the quotations suggest, art seems to offer a kind of idealist meta-knowledge about ourselves, by making us reflect on how we experience art and about how we are actively participating in shaping what is offered by the work of art, through our bodies, perceptive faculties, and emotions. Making the familiar strange and making the prosaic poetic is what enables this idealist self-knowledge. Moland claims art ends “when it fails to convert the prosaic into the poetic and so fails to mirror philosophical truth” (50). As far as I can tell, Moland thinks this meta-knowledge is made *explicit* in art: “It is this ability to show us explicitly what we do implicitly—creatively participate in the structuring of our world—that makes art part of Absolute Spirit and part of our freedom” (37). But is this “mirroring of philosophical truth” really the common truth of art for Hegel? As we saw above, Moland herself has suggested that “mirroring” is not a good metaphor for poetic truth. And, independently of the textual issues, is this a good way to think of what art does? I think the answer is, well, *sometimes*, but not always.

For one thing, it seems like this is a kind of philosophical insight that one really might not need to understand more than once, so if that is the truth of art available to modern art especially, one might wonder why one would need to experience more than one artwork of each genre. Second, such descriptions seem to me to be obfuscating, more

than promoting, insight into art. To say that this is what art always does is too general, and erases some of the difference between different artworks and different genres. Some artworks can make the most fantastical scenes seem completely real and familiar, while others strike us as explicitly *made*, and thereby draw attention to the mutual formation that is necessary for a work of art to be possible. Some artworks are occasions for reflection and estrangement, while others invite complete immersion and temporary relief from both subjectivity and reflection, even after Hegel's *Aesthetics*.

This brings us to the next larger issue, the end of art thesis, since that is, I think, also a thesis about *how* truth is made manifest in art, by way of revealing the status of the historical in Hegel's aesthetic theory. In her book, Moland starts out with what is often taken to be the provocative problem with Hegel's *Aesthetics*, making many people who are fond of art, including our contemporary art, dismiss Hegel as irrelevant at the outset: that is, the so-called end of art thesis. Moland quite convincingly shows that there are many such theses in Hegel's work; many attempts and movements and genres come and go through the 1,200 pages of the lectures, and these theses of endings have more to do with conceptual exhaustion of the various genres than with historical ending(s) of art as such. It seems to me that this amounts to her deemphasizing the relevance of distinguishing between artworks "before" and "after" art. One consequence of such a downplaying is that the philosophical meaning of the historical development gets downplayed with it. One might worry that the theory becomes almost too general, so that there is just bad/prosaic/unsuccessful art on the one hand, and great/poetic/successful art on the other, where this is less intimately tied to historical conditions (with a certain rationale and *telos*) than individual, particular luck or success.

Let me try to explain: I started out by suggesting "Make the general state of the world poetic again" as a general slogan for Hegel. What Moland means by emphasizing this is that art makes us realize the truth of idealism, basically that we are always mutually constituting what is actual. It seems to me that this reflective role of art fits quite well with Hegel's description of art *after* the end of art, whereas the art before was more self-sufficient, not just an occasion for reflecting on some philosophical truth, but an event that in itself was a kind of unfolding of truth for, for example, the fifth-century Athenian or the fourteenth-century European Christian. For those people, who live in the eras of art proper, such truth could not be made available as a philosophical truth at all, hence

the artwork is not a kind of disruptive reminder, or mirror, but “the only truth there is” (somewhat overstated).

Another commentator who downplays the relevance of the end of art is Gethmann-Siefert. She stresses the cultural function of art as Hegel’s main concern and claims that *this* is what changes with the end of art thesis: art no longer grounds our whole culture in the way it did for the Greeks, but rather calls for critical reflection.² The historical function of art in modernity, after the end of art, is “formal education” of its audience, but not complete identification, as in the case of the beautiful artwork of classicism for example. Given the way that Moland describes, for example, how sculpture challenges our understanding of our own embodiment as given, I wonder if she projects some of this critical reflexive role back even on art “before” the end. To me it is not clear whether Moland thinks any such “before” and after” talk is useful at all.

This takes me to the final bigger question, which is the status of the historical in Moland’s interpretation. One of the strengths of Hegel’s aesthetics, as I understand it, is that it aims to give an account that does not only explain *that* and *how* art can be true, but also *why* art conveys an important subject matter in a fitting form at a given point in history. This is an ambitious criterion for a theory, but it is also one that can justify art as deeply significant and an occasion for truth. This criterion entails that it should be possible to articulate why art answers a general need and it makes it possible to explain the artist’s choice as embodying relevant content for us in our time. This also has implications for “formal” choices within the particular arts. Put otherwise, the historical dimension of Hegel’s theory is able to give a rationale for the exploration, and final exhaustion, of the conceptual possibilities of the individual arts *in history*. This entails that the features of conceptual analysis of Part III that Moland devotes half her book to are always only realized as *historical*. Only in hindsight is a philosophical conceptual analysis of this sort possible, and this suggests to me that the kind of awareness of the philosophical meaning of the formal features of art, that realize the idealist “meta-knowledge” of art, are also only available to an audience in hindsight, perhaps through criticism or philosophical reflection, but not, strictly speaking, part of the experience of art itself.

² Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert, *Einführung in Hegels Ästhetik* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2005).

The attraction for those who read more into the difference between “before” and “after” art is that it makes it possible to articulate a logic for the formal choices, not merely the chosen content that typically lends itself to the sociopolitical interpretation. I think this is what motivates Danto, more than being true to Hegel’s text.³ The choices of artists *after* the end of art, albeit still resulting in interesting art that promotes reflection, are not driven by a kind of historical *necessity*, and it is no longer possible to explain why a painter chooses to paint *this* way, and the formal possibilities of painting are in a way all equally inadequate to what he or she wants to do. In the Hegelian theory, Danto sees a way to address and think about the present situation in art by drawing on the difference between a “before” and “after.” Put otherwise, if the task facing art is, as per the slogan, to “Make the general state of the world poetic again,” the question Danto is interested in is *how* to do this for an artist *today*. There are of course limitless ways to try to illustrate the idealist insight about us human beings, with our amphibian nature, and to make what is familiar and prosaic appear strange and poetic. But the question of a shared “aesthetic intelligibility,” as Pippin calls it—the question of how to do this in a convincing way that appears necessary and right, not just in terms of content, but in terms of its *execution*, its use of art’s materials and formal possibilities—is the question that is at stake in a very different way now than then. I don’t think Moland explicitly disagrees with this.

Let me try to make this point in a slightly different way, drawing on Pippin’s analysis of Manet’s *Olympia*, where he helps himself to the careful analyses of art historians T. J. Clark and Michael Fried.⁴ A Hegelian account should be able not just to explain the change in art as a function of a change in social order and the development of freedom narrowly understood, but also allow us to understand how, from within the practice of visual art-making itself, the particular change that we see in Manet is warranted. In that sense, it should draw both on the historical logic as well as the conceptual analysis of the different arts from Part III. It is for the latter that Pippin turns to Fried, as a complement to T. J. Clark (who has given him the tools for the sociopolitical interpretation). What Fried adds to the understanding of *Olympia* is—by analysis of the

³ Arthur Danto, *After the End of Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). Moland is surely right that Danto does not get Hegel quite right.

⁴ Robert Pippin, *After the Beautiful*, esp. pp. 82–91.

relationship between beholder, work, and tradition as moments of a first-person phenomenology of *how the painting works*—the ability to explain Olympia’s stare as this works *aesthetically* as an anti-theatrical strategy of “facingness.” The use of Fried is not just there to support an interpretation of “the social alienation Manet’s figures imply,” (217) as Moland describes it, but is actually trying to give an account of how the form—the female nude of representational painting—is painted and given content, in such a way as to result in a truth in 1865. What is apparent is that there is a connection between *what* the painting is about and *how* this is made aesthetically intelligible that is *not* arbitrary.

When art was great, the Idea was not just a philosophical truth given a somewhat arbitrary artistic expression, it was *the way* the Idea could be realized. In that sense, it seems to me important to hold on to the distinction between the truth of the Greek Ideal as made manifest to its contemporaries and the kind of disruptive self-reflection made possible by experiencing such a sculpture now. Moland writes that visiting the Greek sculptures in a museum today is “all the more important,” because they let us catch a glimpse of “the more basic fact of embodiment” (196). Moland presents the latter as still an example of the truth of art, but I wonder if, strictly speaking, such a reflective experience does not live up to Hegel’s definition or to his ambitions for his own theory since the paradigm cases of the truth of art have built into them a justification of why this content is necessarily realized aesthetically, in this way, at this time in history. The Greek sculptures are not experienced with such a necessity for us at all, and the content conveyed is not one that we could not acquire through other means (for example, by reading philosophy). When Hegel’s *Aesthetics* cannot give us reasons for the chosen *how* of aesthetic shaping of content, beyond the laying out of all the conceptual possibilities available, it is indeed the case that we are “after” the end of art, just like Hegel himself stated almost 200 years ago. By extension, I would claim that our art cannot then be true, *in the relevant aesthetic sense*.

Readers might wonder if this is merely a quibble about how extensive the phrase “truth of art” should be, which really makes little difference to the subject matter. The discussion matters primarily for deciding how we should interpret the end of art in Hegel, but is *also* important for a further project that I think Moland is suggesting would be fruitful, although she is not pursuing it herself in this book: that is, using Hegel’s aesthetics for interpreting contemporary art. To see how the different dimensions of

Hegel's analysis of post-romantic art play out in individual works would be, I think, the test case for the importance of a Hegelian aesthetics today (which is a call for a Hegelian-inspired art criticism). I think a Hegelian ambition for such criticism would be that it could help us understand not merely, for example, *that* music shapes emotions, which shape the world that again develops our emotions, or *that* sculpture is an occasion to reflect on embodiment, but also *how* and *why* such development is done aesthetically, this way, now. Moland's book has provided those who want to take up that challenge with the best theoretical guide to Hegel's text that one could hope for.

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Review 2: Rachel Falkenstern, St. Francis College

Introduction

The first thing to notice about Lydia Moland's new book on Hegel's aesthetics is the aesthetics of her book itself. On the hardcover jacket is Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*. My comment is not meant to be a trivial observation of what the book looks like. Instead, I suggest that engaging with the aesthetics of the book itself is an instance of, or performs, two functions that are central to the book's arguments. First, the painting makes us take notice of what it's depicting, of painting itself, of what we're doing—that is, philosophy of art—and this taking notice I connect to Moland's claim that, for Hegel, art makes the strange familiar and the familiar strange. Second, following from this, it indicates a few ways art can end. These two aspects of Moland's book are the focus of my comments in Sections II and III. Before this, Section I examines some of the book's central claims, those related to the notion that, as Moland puts it, "aesthetic experience is the sensuous experience of truth" for Hegel (2). Since her book discusses, among other things, all the forms and types of art that Hegel covers in his lectures, my comments are not able to do justice to the wide range of detailed discussion it offers.

§1. Art and idealism

On the very first page, the book proclaims its ambitious and provocative argument: that a misunderstanding of what is commonly referred to as Hegel's "end of art thesis" impedes our understanding not only of Hegel's philosophy of art but also of his larger idealist system, *and* it "prevents us from fully employing" his philosophy in relation to contemporary art (1). Clearly this is no small task. To do this, Moland takes us through all the steps of his various lectures on art, as well as their historical context, placing Hegel in conversation with philosophies of art by those such as Schelling, both Schlegel brothers, and Kant, among others. Additionally, she utilizes current scholarship on Hegel's aesthetics as a resource both to strengthen and to distinguish her own position. Finally, throughout the book she connects Hegel's philosophy of art to various parts of his system, grounding it solidly in his logic. Moland does all this not only convincingly to my mind,

but also in a manageable way, sifting Hegel's various lectures into a coherent whole of only 300 pages without sacrificing the complexities of his philosophy, and while interjecting her own voice at the same time.

Such large claims about the necessary relationship between Hegel's theory of art and his idealism are sure to incite some dissent and controversy. On the one hand, one might argue that there is much to be gained from using Hegel's aesthetics in relative isolation from the rest of his system. Arthur Danto's famous take on the end of art, for example, has for many breathed new life not only into Hegel but also into artists such as Warhol and Duchamp, among others.⁵ Or, we might think of philosophies of art influenced by Hegel that had a large impact on audiences beyond philosophy, such as Clement Greenberg, or Hegel's reach into art history more generally.

On the other hand, however, I agree with Moland that if one's goal is to understand Hegel's aesthetics on its own terms, then attending to his wider philosophy will get you closer, and that, on the flipside, his aesthetics illuminate other aspects of his system (2). This is not to discount the important work of those just mentioned or of others who use Hegel in a similar way, but to understand what art truly is for Hegel, seeing his philosophy of art as part of his idealism is essential. A main tenet of Hegel's idealism is that the true is the whole, and the whole is one that was sundered and put back together again (4).⁶ Thus, central to Moland's book is to show various ways true (or good) art is a "unity of unity and division," a phrase repeated throughout the book. In this light, we must keep art contextualized as Absolute Spirit, that is, as an activity through which we come to know the constitutive relationship between ourselves and our world; art is part of a world that is dynamic, formative, and transforming. Related, central to her book are the claims that nothing is given, "but that we and the world's objects are part of a mutually determining whole," and art is "one way of making this process explicit" (2–3).

But what follows from this is a surprising new take on Hegel: Moland argues that

⁵ In, for example, Danto, *The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art* (Chicago: Open Court, 2003) and "The End of Art," in *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

⁶ This famous saying (true is the whole) appears in Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), §20.

the experience of this truth is “the foundation of aesthetic pleasure” (3). To that end, throughout the book she takes the reader through various discussions of the artistic process from the perspectives of artist, audience, and theorist to support her reading of Hegel in this respect. It is especially her treatment of artistic creation and the imagination that fills a lacuna in the existing literature on Hegel. For example, in her explanation of the way poetry is particularly effective in our “co-authorship with the world” or “idealistic truth,” since it’s composed of language and ideas, she explains that it “generates the pleasure we associate with aesthetic experience” (253).

Although at first the notion of pleasure in aesthetic experiences might sound very Kantian, this is not along the lines of what Moland is arguing. Kant’s free play of the mind during the experience of beauty is different from Hegel’s experience of truth in artistic experience (28). First, as I see it, for Kant the mind never finds the concepts it is searching for—the pleasure is in the fact that we never really get anywhere—but for Hegel, artistic beauty and truth are directly related to the *product* of the synthesis the mind performs (as mutual formation of each other). For example, as Moland elucidates, enjoyment is derived from the image my mind has created through reading or listening to poetry (254).⁷ Second, since the free play of the faculties in Kant’s aesthetic judgment is passive, one of “complacency” [*Wohlgefallens*], then any pleasure we experience on Hegel’s account cannot be of the same brand, as his aesthetic experience is an active one (302).⁸

Another option one might consider is that this Hegelian pleasure Moland argues for is related to the experience of self-understanding, somewhat akin to Aristotelian pleasure in learning. Perhaps, but we also know that art cannot be truly art if it’s made only to moralize or instruct.⁹ Pleasure, Hegel says, can be had in imitations of nature, for example, but such imitation is not art, or bad art (30).¹⁰ Indeed, if it’s pleasure (or any feeling really) that art is after, it’s a merely formal exercise.¹¹ In these sorts of discussions, he seems to me to be discounting pleasure [*Vergnügen, Belieben*, etc.], not allowing it

⁷ See Hegel, *Aesthetics*, Vol. II, p. 961.

⁸ Ibid., p. 58.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 48–50.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 43.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 47.

into the aesthetic experience of art proper. Overall, I have only found “pleasure” to appear in Hegel’s lectures almost exclusively in relation to Kant or to trivial moments in which the pleasure is not part of something worthy of the name of art. This is because, as Moland notes, it would be connected to the instrumental theories he argues against, theories that move it away from its “true vocation” of presenting truth as an end in itself (33–34).¹² Indeed, she notes, Hegel “seems uninterested in pleasure altogether” (28). Therefore, one wonders exactly how Moland can argue for pleasure as such an important part of Hegel’s theory.¹³

Ultimately, Moland relates this pleasure to the senses, positing that aesthetic experience is “the pleasure derived from experiencing that truth sensuously” (304). One reason to highlight the role of the senses in this experience of truth is that this is what differentiates art from the other two forms of absolute spirit—religion and philosophy—whose materials are faith and thought, respectively. In Hegelian terms, the Idea as it appears in art is beauty, which he terms the Ideal (27).¹⁴ Here and throughout, Moland’s book is helpful in reminding readers that this sensuous appearance of the Idea, beauty, is key not despite but because of the centrality of truth in Hegel’s aesthetics. And, on the flipside, this is why artistic beauty (as human creation) and not that of nature is key for Hegel—natural beauty doesn’t tell us much about ourselves at all (33).

But in the explanation that immediately follows this point about pleasure (and throughout the book), Moland describes aesthetic experience in terms that sound less sensory and much more intellectual, involving such things as the formation of reality, recognition of truth, self-understanding, and reflection. This sounds to me less sensuous and more like what I suggest that Hegel has in mind. Additionally, when Moland discusses aesthetic experience in a social context, ideas such as interpretation, meaning, and connectedness remain key, in keeping with her thesis that art is part of a mutual determination of truth. Further, even when discussing the sensory aspects of aesthetic

¹² Ibid., p. 55.

¹³ One might also think that perhaps the pleasure Moland argues for is somehow related to connections between art and freedom—because, as Moland also reminds us, for Hegel art helps us experience freedom (pp. 6, 14, 56, etc.). However, although this might be at play, Moland does not highlight freedom in her discussions of aesthetic pleasure.

¹⁴ See Hegel, *Aesthetics, Vol. I*, p. 111.

experience more directly, Moland rarely does so in terms of pleasure, which, again, seems right to me—because the range of emotions and feelings we have when engaging with art *and* the ways we characterize aesthetic experience are rich and varied.

Overall, then, I'm not sure that I completely see how Hegel holds the view that pleasure is centrally involved in aesthetic experience in the way Moland describes, or perhaps I'm not quite reading her correctly. While Hegel does say that we do enjoy art, and of course while acknowledging that art is sensory, I see the intellectual and emotional aspects of aesthetic experience as not necessarily, or perhaps even not very often, pleasant or pleasurable. Hegel does use a related term, namely, "satisfaction" [*Befriedigung*]. With this I take him to mean that art satisfies a "spiritual need" in a loftier sense than mere pleasure, a sort of intellectual satisfaction different from what I understand as sensory pleasure.¹⁵ This satisfaction I interpret as one of enjoyment, in the sense of "enjoy" as "to benefit from." Occasionally Moland uses the term "joy," and perhaps this is closer to what I see as Hegel's view here. At one point, for example, she says that it "might ... highlight our senses in new ways that allow us the joy of recognizing our participation in art's very existence" (304).¹⁶ I wonder, then, what the differences are, if any, between the sensory pleasure Moland describes and what I see as a deeper satisfaction of spirit.

My questions on this issue only prove that Moland's commentary brings fresh insights to Hegel's aesthetics that are sure to spark new debates. At the same time, it offers a comprehensive analysis of his lectures that clears up many irregularities, misunderstandings, and interpretative challenges. Her arguments shed new light on Hegel's theory of art by highlighting aesthetic experience and its connection to truth. Her explanations of the connections between absolute truth as art and his wider absolute idealism would be helpful for any reader of Hegel, from beginner to seasoned. As she takes us through history and through logic, through the different forms of art and the particular arts, she reminds us at each step that for Hegel, truth is at play here. And, one thing that makes this artistic truth so tricky is that it is also historical. Thus, in the next section I

¹⁵ Moland mentions Hegel's idea of our spiritual need for art in the context of her discussion of art's higher status than the beauty of nature (33).

¹⁶ And, she goes on to ask, "But what exactly is the source of that joy, commonly known as aesthetic experience? Hegel never says" (304).

look at this absolute, historical truth as it appears in the ends of art.

§2. Ends of art

One of the important contributions Moland's book makes to the literature on Hegel's aesthetics is to clarify that the so-called end of art thesis is really many theses, or, in other words, that there are many ends of art. For example, it can be prosaic, mere entertainment, or moralizing (57). Further, each art *form* ends, with romantic art being the end of art's conceptual development of art, and poetry being the "last" of the particular arts. There is not enough space here to cover all of art's endings, so I highlight a few that I find to be particularly interesting or original to Moland's book.

Despite these many endings, Moland reminds us that Hegel nowhere says that art is completely dead or over. However, with the life of Jesus, art reaches its historical end, and, Moland argues, this is the most profound of art's endings (98). Do other relationships between art and religion help us understand this claim? One answer Moland gives is that in Hegel's view, art goes from creating religion, as it did for the ancient Greeks, to merely depicting it (57). That is, Jesus was a historical person, while the ancient gods were written by myths and embodied by sculpture (98). As she explains, art "no longer shows the miracle of a human in divine form and just shows us ourselves. ... The fact that humans begin to find only themselves, and not the divine ... means that it fails to achieve *the status of art*" (91). This, I posit, helps us understand Hegel's perhaps strange-sounding claim that we "bow down the knee no longer" to art.¹⁷ We may certainly contest this claim, but for Hegel, art is no longer central to our lives in this way (57).

After art's historical end, it nonetheless continues to progress in its ability to present freedom (98). Yet, at the same time, as we become more reflective and freer subjects, art begins to "point beyond itself" due to its sensuous limitation (92). Classical art was the perfect blend of "spirit and sensuous existence," but this blend is not our true nature; art is more limited than its subject matter, which is free, infinite spirit (92).¹⁸ Thus, classical art is the highest form *qua* beautiful, but the beauty of ancient Greek art is inadequate for us (100). That subject is substance and that the human is divine (or the

¹⁷ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, Vol. I, p. 103.

¹⁸ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, Vol. I, p. 79.

divine human) is impossible to capture sensuously (102). As Moland puts it: “After the development of subjectivity, humans will never be able to adopt a worldview that can be perfectly expressed sensuously again” (92). In this light, the less sensuous romantic arts are more adequate for us. Indeed, despite being the last genre of the last of the particular arts (i.e., poetry) and thus another end of art, drama is also the highest form of art in showing us the fullest picture of ourselves as free, embodied subjects acting in a world of our own creation (40–41).

This goes some way toward helping us understand what Hegel means by calling poetry “the most complete’ art” (249). It is so because of its “ability to synthesize inner and outer” (253). Following this, Moland makes the interesting point that one thing that poetry does (like all art) is to make us aware of our own minds (279). This sounds to me very Kantian, and I had not thought of Hegel’s theory of art in this way before. As she explains, poetry contributes to “our sense of self, independent of content,” which is related to our “role in the mutual formation of reality” (251). This is an intriguing aspect of her overall claim about the relationship between truth and art. However, as an aside, I’m not sure if I see how we can have a sense of self that is independent of content—that is, if self and world are mutually determining, there does not seem to be room for a formal self in Hegel.

In the particular arts, poetry ends conceptually when it turns into philosophy (250). Here, when it runs the risk of becoming too philosophical, to quote Hegel, it “does violence to both art and thought”—although Hegel thinks Schiller gets away with this in some of his poems (279).¹⁹ Interestingly, Moland describes this exception as Schiller “managing to allow for ‘free play’ even within his philosophical musings” (279). She might mean that his poems are philosophical, and Hegel might agree here. But Hegel’s point is that the poetic free play must mask logical connections, that the poem must remain art and not lapse into didactic philosophy. I find this exception of Hegel’s frustrating, yet another remark in the *Lectures* that he leaves unexplained. I also find it curious that Moland switches it around, implying that Schiller’s philosophical essays are poetic, in contrast to what I see as Hegel’s point that there is philosophical content to his poems.

It is here, in the divisions of Absolute Spirit and between the types of arts, that

¹⁹ See *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 1128.

Hegel has raised some of the hardest questions for me. For example, and not to oversimplify, but isn't it the case that everything we do is sensuous? Even philosophy is itself sensuous, and doing philosophy is an embodied action. I have wondered about what is really at stake here in keeping the three forms of absolute spirit apart, or, what if anything is lost when one thing slips into another. Moland does shed light on a distinction between poetry and philosophy: for Hegel, poetry's material is not words but intuition and the imagination itself (251–252).²⁰ Yet, this again points to the immateriality of poetry, its similarity to philosophy, and back again to Hegel's point that this is an end of art. And yet, when looking at Schiller—or Nietzsche, or Whitman, or Dickinson, or Lorde—where do we draw the line? Thus, overall, I'm not convinced that Hegel himself can resolve some his own contradictions in his attempt to codify everything, and he thus leaves many of these questions open for us to deal with.

Such contradictions also pertain to the historical end—and progression—of art. While Hegel's aesthetics is reconciliatory, my own view is that he also leaves room for late romantic (that is, late- and post-Industrial Revolution era) art to maintain a dissonance within its harmony that was unavailable earlier.²¹ Modern art more explicitly shows the beginnings of rupture we saw in ancient tragedy, and late romantic art makes it most explicit. If art is the unity of unity and division, to be consistent, Hegel must allow this division to be present to us in romantic art.²² The cracks never fully heal, the scars remain, so that the undifferentiated unity of pre-romantic art is harmonious in a way that we, or art, can never be again—thus, today, we consider classical art to be flatly affirmative. In late romantic art the final unity is present in the fullest way possible, by preserving the rupture, allowing nuanced dissonant qualities that are more subtle than ancient tragedy, such as in Schiller's sublime. While art is inherently serene, as Hegel puts it, "In romantic art the *distraction* and dissonance of the heart goes further and ... the oppositions

²⁰ Ibid, p. 964.

²¹ E.g., "a spiritual inwardness, a joy in *submission*, a *bliss* in grief and *rapture* in suffering, even a delight in agony"; *ibid*, Vol. I, p. 158. See also his description of industrial-era alienation, Hegel, *Aesthetics*, Vol. I, p. 260.

²² Humanity is "not only the bearer of the contradiction of his multiple nature but the sustainer of it, remaining therein equal and true to himself"; *ibid.*, p. 240.

displayed in it are deepened and their disunion may be *maintained*.”²³ Moland mentions something along these lines, but as far as I could find does not go into detail on what this looks like (291, 300). I’m curious if this might be one point on which Moland and I diverge, or if she also sees this as implying that the rupture can be intuited by the senses, and if she agrees that this is part of the truth of humanity and our art.

§3. Familiar and strange

This notion of rupture and dissonance brings me to the last part of my comments, and to what is to me perhaps the most fascinating claim in Moland’s book, namely, that art, for Hegel, “resists the given ... by making the familiar strange” (4). Indeed, parts of Hegel’s philosophy of art have become so familiar to me that pursuing this idea of hers has made Hegel’s aesthetics itself seem strange to me. The other side of the coin is that the strange becomes familiar (4–5). Again, I hadn’t thought of Hegel’s theory of art in quite those terms, although this idea is certainly less surprising to me than art making the familiar strange, because art presents to us the divine.²⁴ Since it does so, the fact that the “divine is a product of our own activity” means that what would be strange—the divine—is ultimately made familiar (5).

Perhaps similar to this notion of familiarity, I’ve always thought of Hegel’s theory of art in terms of his more general theory of recognition.²⁵ Moland’s book hints at this aspect as it analyzes how we and the world are mutually formative. Art is not simply a mirror, but a way for Spirit to see its highest truths, to understand itself. In this way, Hegel’s aesthetics can be read as arguing that aesthetic experience is one of feeling at home, because we are in it, and have created it. Yet, as we constantly seek and often achieve reunification, one might wonder how else strangeness comes into play here beyond the alienation we seek to resolve. Moland connects these seemingly opposed notions of strangeness and being at home when she says that we can achieve “recognition of ourselves through the strangeness of art” (304). How then is art strange? I’m not sure I actually find the answer in Hegel, but instead in Moland’s contribution to our

²³ Ibid., p. 158.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 31.

understanding of his aesthetics. I find it to be a helpful and exciting new perspective on Hegel's philosophy of art, one that is indeed in keeping with his idealism but one that also, I posit, lends itself to applying his theory to contemporary art—which, we remember, is one of the aims of Moland's book.

Moland's answer to the question of strangeness is related to the creative process as well as to art's truth function—and to why art's beauty is higher than natural beauty. Since art's job is to show the truth of our mutual determination, then any "art" that is imitative or too realistic in a naturalism vein is not doing its job properly, because it perpetuates the myth of the given (36–37). I interpret Moland here as arguing that art transforms what was seemingly given into what is clearly not: we see it *as* our own creation, born of Spirit, and we see *in* it ourselves; thus we realize that what was given was not, and what was familiar is now strange. This is not just true of the artwork itself but also of what it presents—its content, topic, or subject matter in the everyday sense. As a prime example she gives us dramas that present social upheaval, dramas that show that the norms and values that we take for granted are not given but instead created by us (42). Such dramas also show us our self-determination, reminding us that freedom is another important factor in Hegel's aesthetics (though one I'm not able to explore here).

Art's potential to fail at making the familiar strange (and thus, if I'm reading her right, to fail at being art) is also related to an end of art. Moland explains that "romantic art's move toward familiar human concerns intensifies the difficulty of achieving" the required strangeness, because it becomes prosaic and no longer poetic (103). For example, Moland notes, one of the things poetry does is allow us to (in Knox's translation) "tarry in the particular"—which certainly sounds more boring than tarrying with the negative, albeit easier (260).²⁶ And modern art, for example in naturalism or movements that focus on the everyday or mundane, is in even more danger of missing the mark—art that crosses the line into the prosaic risks not being art (36). Thus, perhaps one could extend Moland's point: the everyday is familiar, so art, by definition non-prosaic, is not of the everyday and, thus, in this sense, is strange.

Another way to think of the notion of strangeness might be in light of Moland's point that art makes us aware of our own minds (274). As I see it, while the mind is

²⁶ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 981.

familiar to us, as always “with” us, it is also strange in that we cannot think it—or at very least, when we try to, we become very aware of what a strange exercise this is and indeed that we are estranging our selves in this very act of trying to make subject object. One way Moland describes this is through our engagement with poetry: it “allows humans to reflect on their actions by making them strange through poetic expression”—although here I suspect she means actions in the world and not mental acts (255). The way poetry, in particular, does this, Moland explains, is that poetry’s material is the imagination itself, not words (252). As we reflect on created images, human-made concepts, in our minds, we are experiencing the mutual determination Moland has been describing throughout the book. As she puts it: “Since both its form (language) and its content (ideas) are explicitly human creations, poetry shows humans’ co-authorship with the world most explicitly” (253).

Perhaps surprisingly, beauty too plays a part in the strangeness. “In our everyday lives,” Moland posits, “we experience both our selves and the world independently, individually existing: in short, as given,” but beauty disrupts this misconception (31). Yet how beauty does so is not necessarily clear, if we think of beauty as harmony. In the passage from Hegel’s aesthetics that Moland points us to here, Hegel describes aesthetic experience as one in which the agent (or audience)—the self that is contemplating the beautiful thing—is explicitly aware of the unity.²⁷ But it is important to recall that it is a unity of unity and division, and not a simple undifferentiated whole, as Moland has been arguing all along.

It is here I see a connection to contemporary art. Some well-known works that bring our attention to the strangeness of the familiar, often making the familiar strange, are the likes of Warhol’s *Eat* (1963), Yvonne Rainer’s dances of the same period, or Duchamp’s various readymades. Moland points to John Cage and others who “de-center and disrupt our perceptions; in so doing, they challenge visual norms and draw our attention to the ways in which we form and are formed by the sensuous world” (303). Indeed, I might add, Cage also does this with music and silence. Here, Moland also posits that Duchamp’s *Nude* “prompts us to contemplate motion’s dimensionality” and to wonder how we can see the nude “even in extreme abstraction” (303). Additionally, one

²⁷ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 114.

could argue that he makes the artistic nude, or a walking human, so strange that in fact many people did *not* recognize it as such, which leads us to ask further questions about what it means to make the familiar so strange to the point of being unrecognizable—of art asking us to see what in this sense is not there. In this way, *Nude* performs Moland’s claim that truth is not given: Duchamp is *not* simply giving us a nude. He is trying to make a painting do what stop-motion photography and film do, *and* to give a static representation of movement. This is an end of art not just as the dissolution of figuration, no longer resembling nature, or as a decline of the beautiful, but as an end of painting in that it points beyond its medium. The painting is thus trying to do the impossible. It is pointing beyond itself, as all romantic art does—and, perhaps, as all art tries to do.²⁸

I suggest that such disruptions are also seen in Fluxus and in performance art that utilizes only the body, challenging the line between art and life, and in works such as Ono’s *Grapefruit* and Craig-Martin’s *An Oak Tree* that not only again ask us to see what in a different sense is not there, but also beg questions about differences between art and philosophy, between art and religion, or other conceptual works that problematize the necessity of sensuous materiality in art at all. In addition to the senses, even time itself can be disrupted and brought to attention (like Moland’s *Nude* does for motion), as in Hollis Frampton’s (*nostalgia*) (1971). The disruptions in these cases are not caused by something that we would traditionally call beauty. This would seem to lead us to the old question of the role of beauty in contemporary art, or of the possibility of such non-beautiful works being art within Hegel’s definition. However, Moland refers us to Fred Rush’s argument that art and beauty can be considered synonymous for Hegel, because beautiful or fine art [*schöne Kunst*] is simply the term he uses for art proper (32). And, I posit, such works indeed are fine art if we remember art’s job as involving a strange truth about ourselves and the world, of knowing ourselves as a combination of opposing forces that are ultimately not opposed because we unify them.

Finally, with this point, I am reminded of an additional sense of the strange, and of something Hegel says that at first glance might seem strange. Both freedom and necessity must necessarily be a part of art, and art “must be hidden behind an appearance

²⁸ Ibid., p. 438.

of undesigned contingency.”²⁹ Moland evokes this notion of mystery, albeit perhaps unintentionally, when she states: “Art must essentially and obviously be a seeming” (36). As I interpret this, art must not seem to be bare or given reality, but more than that: it must be actual. Hegel posits that art is only interesting to us as long as it doesn’t reveal everything, as long as something “secret ... obscure or inward is left over.”³⁰ For the absolute idealist who claims that the real is rational, who did his utmost to correct the lacunas Kant left us, who claims that art presents absolute truth, this might be one of his most surprising statements. However, if we understand art as a working out of and not as giving the truth, perhaps it is fitting. Regardless, it is a compelling description and explanation of our engagement with art and why we revisit certain works. I wonder, then, if this is another aspect of the strangeness that Moland argues for: that, despite the fact that art is a practice of knowing and self-creation, there will always remain something necessarily secret about it, as it points beyond itself and to something about ourselves that will always remain a mystery to us.

Conclusion

Lydia Moland’s book allows us to think about Hegel’s philosophy of art in a new light. It has caused me to rethink some of my own positions, and opened the way for seeing Hegel’s aesthetic theory anew, for making the familiar strange. At the same time, Moland has confirmed my own view that Hegel gets something right; namely, that art is an act of self-understanding, a working out of existential and cultural truths. Overall, this book leaves those of us grappling with Hegel’s philosophy, as well as those interested in theories of art more broadly, not only with a rich resource to better understand Hegel, but also with the challenge of taking up some of the new questions it has posed. I am grateful

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

³⁰ “[I]t is the effect and the progress of art itself which, by bringing before our vision as an object its own indwelling material, at every step along this road makes its own contribution to freeing art from the content represented. What through art or thinking we have before our physical or spiritual eye as an object has lost all absolute interest for us if it has been put before us so completely that the content is exhausted, that everything is revealed, and nothing obscure or inward is left over any more. For interest is to be found only in the case of lively activity [of mind]. The spirit occupies itself with objects so long as there is something secret, not revealed, in them” (*ibid.*, p. 604).

for having had the opportunity to do so.

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Review 3: Richard Eldridge, Swarthmore

For those who haven't read the book, it is perhaps useful to begin by quoting myself from its dust jacket: "Lydia Moland's new book will be the go-to commentary on Hegel's aesthetics." The dust jacket comments by Frederick Beiser and Fred Rush—no slouches they as Hegel scholars—are equally laudatory and fully apt. So, *Hegel's Aesthetics*, the book, is worth a lot of attention.

Moland announces early on that the book has two main aims: "to show the relevance of Hegel's aesthetics for understanding his idealism" and "to clarify the senses in which Hegel talks about the end of art"—senses that have been misunderstood by critics and whose misunderstandings have blocked Hegel's genuine insights into modern art (3). I will comment on each of these main aims in turn.

Moland describes Hegel's idealism as the "claim that objects are not in fact independent, waiting to be apprehended, but that we and the world's objects are part of a mutually determining whole" or, alternatively, that we "are involved in this mutually formative process [that includes both other subjects and natural objects] throughout our lives" (2). There is externality to us and resistance to our efforts, to be sure, but there is nothing simply brutally given "in itself" or absolutely that stands as a permanent and insuperable obstacle to the unfolding of free and meaningful human life. Art can and does give us a sensuous experience of this conditioned and reciprocal unfolding, or, as Hegel puts it in the *Lectures*, exemplary works of art function to "strip the world of its inflexible foreignness" (A, I, 31) and present it as at least incipiently and tendentially good enough to live in.³¹ Aesthetic experience is then the pleasurable and cognitive experience of this presentation, or, as Moland describes it, the sensuous and pleasurable experience of "recognized truth: a truth that can pierce the hard shell of our prosaic lives and reveal the poetry at the core of existence" (20). In an echo of Viktor Shklovsky, Moland describes this presentation as a matter of making "the strange familiar and the familiar strange" (36), as artworks disclose hitherto unregistered possibilities of meaning and movement

³¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, Vol. 1, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 31.

in our interactions with things. “It is this ability to do explicitly what we do implicitly—creatively participate in the structuring of our world—that makes art part of Absolute Spirit and part of our freedom” (37).

Apart from Moland’s exemplary exposition of these claims, it is important to consider their plausibility head on. Is it really true or plausible that there is no brutally resistant otherness, really true or plausible that free and meaningful life is at least incipiently and tendentially achievable, really true and plausible that presenting such facts is what major art is all about? To use Heideggerian language, is it really true or plausible that earth—the given ground on which all human projects are erected—is graspable under a *logos* of achievable meaningfulness? Can it really be true or plausible, as Moland puts it, “that Hegel articulated something true about the role art plays in our modern lives” (305)—precisely in virtue of the relation between his theory of art and his systematic idealism? This is a set of enormous questions to which I will be unable to do full justice. But the surprising answer, in my view, is: maybe. It’s not clearly either not true or not plausible, and Moland’s book does enormously important work in helping us to consider both the attractions and limitations of Hegel’s intertwined metaphysics and aesthetics.

Here are two ways to think about Hegel’s views about art in relation to his metaphysics. First, as Moland makes clear, Hegel is not aiming to produce a tidy taxonomy with a hard, bright line between everything that it’s reasonable to call art and everything that it isn’t. Instead, he is interested primarily in elucidating the roles of major works of art in human life and in sketching the broad criteria for regarding major works as fulfilling those roles. The rest can and should be left to criticism. This seems to me to be an eminently sensible way of proceeding in thinking about art. Functions, roles, and exemplary cases do matter more than tidy taxonomies. This way of thinking about art in broadly functional terms has, moreover, been shared by most of those whom I regard as the most important philosophers of modern art apart from Hegel: Collingwood, Dewey, Heidegger, Adorno, and Marcuse. There are strains of it even in Danto and Beardsley, who were concerned with lines of demarcation. Those who have practiced this way of thinking have also broadly focused on something like truth-content. This is the point, for example, of György Lukács’s defense of art as a vehicle of objective truth and his criticisms of both mechanical materialism or documentary naturalism in the styles of Diderot and

Zola, and detached, individualist, “hypocritical foggy idealism,” or a subjective impressionism of aesthetic pleasure. Such idealism and subjectivism amounts to “a flight from the great issues of the era, a denial of reality,”³² according to Lukács. Contra them, and as Hegel, Collingwood, Dewey, Heidegger, Adorno, Marcuse, and Lukács variously saw, major art does concern how we’re doing, or how a “we” of at least some extent within a sociohistorical formation is doing, in trying to live freely and meaningfully. If the experience of major art is not in some way a sensuous–critical experience of the truth about this, then I do not know what it is.

Second, against Hegel, one can worry a bit about how much of a “we” there is. Some major modernist art has, as Stanley Cavell has remarked, split its audience into insiders and outsiders, as, in the name of honesty against bourgeois complacencies, it has undertaken to be provocative, aggressive, difficult, and all but unreceivable by some or many.³³ As Cavell went on to say, it is all but typical for us to experience both gratitude and distrust for the effort of a major artist in the modern world to express a subjectivity and to invite us to share it: gratitude for the articulate attention and feeling, coupled with the thought that we are not alone; distrust of the impertinence in the effort to speak on our behalf and against the grain of our feelings as they stand.³⁴ Perhaps we live in fragmented and pluralized social worlds and art worlds, so that both incipient meaningful human freedom and major art of wide scope and significance as such are no longer possible on a wide scale.

And yet in the end I think that cannot quite be right. As Hegel poignantly and astonishingly remarked in the *Aesthetics*, perhaps revising his own official views about the appearance of freedom in modernity, modern life under conditions of technological development and social differentiation is “burdened with abstraction,” so that we, all of us, are at least prone to suffer from a lack of “freedom in feeling.”³⁵ Major art does seem to address this condition—our need to confront our shared abstraction—burdened social

³² György Lukács, “Art and Objective Truth,” trans. Arthur D. Kahn, in *Critical Theory Since 1965*, eds. Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1986), pp. 794–795.

³³ See Stanley Cavell, “Music Discomposed,” in Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1969), p. 205.

³⁴ Cavell, “Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy,” in Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, p. 94.

³⁵ Hegel, *Hegel’s Aesthetics*, Vol. 1, pp. 1128, 1112.

world in feeling—in various ways. To cite only a few examples from the last half dozen or so years: Jennifer Egan’s novel *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, or Bong Joon-ho’s film *Parasite*, or Paul Schoenfield’s piano trio *Café Music*. Moland does vital and important work in recovering, articulating, and defending Hegel’s large thoughts about the significance of art in and for human life both throughout history and in the contemporary world. She helps us to see how and why art matters.

This brings me to Moland’s second major aim—the clarification of the multiple senses in which Hegel described the end of art—for it is by way of this clarification that Moland undertakes to recover and defend Hegel’s account of *how* the trick of making major art can still be done. Here—for the first time in the existing scholarly literature, so far as I am aware—Moland makes important sense of the different topics of Part II, “Development of the Ideal into the Particular Forms of Art,” and Part III, “The System of the Individual Arts” of Hegel’s *Aesthetics*. As the title suggests, Part II tracks how the Ideal, or what human beings hold highest, appears successively in the different forms of art—that is, in Symbolic, Classical, and Romantic forms. These forms of appearance of the Ideal treat, successively, what Moland calls “The Symbolic Divine” or the divine as presentable only via abstract symbolization, “The Embodied Divine” or the divine as presented primarily in sculptures of Greek gods in human form, and “The Human Divine,” or the divine now understood, subsequent to the incarnation of Jesus and the appearance of the Holy Spirit, as present in human beings as such. The Ideal, or the lived conception of the divine, changes in tandem with broad changes in mode of life, in worldview, and in which medium of art is most salient. These changes yield a number of distinct deaths of art or what Moland calls *conceptual endings* of art, as the central task of presenting the Ideal is either done in a new way within art or taken up by the successor forms of Absolute Spirit, that is, Religion and Philosophy. Symbolic Art—paradigmatically, Egyptian art—ends when human beings both grasp and concretely experience the divine no longer as a vague, distantly absent something. Classical Art, paradigmatically Greek sculpture, ends when human beings both grasp and concretely live the divine as reposing more in self-moving subjectivity than in restful, embodied self-satisfaction. Moland calls this ending of Greek art, rightly, “the most profound of art’s endings” (98). This is the death of art in its highest vocation, as the primary form of Absolute Spirit or of the presentation of a lived understanding of the divine, as first

religion and then philosophy become more adequate to the presentation of the new lived understanding, and as, non-coincidentally, the romantic arts of inwardness—painting, music, and poetry—become more important in human life. Finally, romantic art ends “as poetry, already the least sensual of the arts, transitions into philosophy” as the most adequate form of the presentation of the modern understanding of the divine *qua* meaningful human social freedom and reciprocity (154). With each of these conceptual endings, artworks continue to be made, understood, enjoyed, and talked about. The point is not the cessation of art as such, even as something somehow important, but instead the changing saliences and functions of different forms of art—Symbolic, Classical, and Romantic—and of Absolute Spirit (art, religion, and philosophy) in relation to lived worldviews.

In contrast, Part III treats what Moland calls *prosaic endings* of art within the individual media of art. The emphasis here is on how artists explore what can be done within a given medium in order to invite, sustain, and reward absorbed, reflective attention to a work as *it* both reflects and reflects on human beings in the world. Instead of focusing on ordered successions of lived worldviews and on dominant media, the topic in Part III is now, in turn, the architectural, the sculptural, the painterly, the musical, and the poetic as such. That is to say, the central question in Part III is which particular subject matters and modes of treatment within a given medium make a particular work successfully architectural, sculptural, painterly, musical, or poetic. Artists discover answers to this question by developing and exercising imagination (*Phantasie*) and technique in working the materials of a medium. Prosaic endings are then fallings away from these medium-specific discoveries of what is effective, lapses back into the prosaic from the successfully achieved poetic. Artists who fail to achieve the architectural, sculptural, painterly, musical, or poetic, thus, as Moland puts it, produce “artworks [that are] still within [the] definition of art but that no longer achieve its highest potential” (154). When the relevant medium-specific discoveries have been made, then there is, in Moland’s elegant phrasing, “nowhere else conceptually for art to go” (301), according to Hegel, in discovering what it can be; there are no new subject matters wedded to techniques in a medium left to be found. Either the relevantly successful subject matters and modes of treatment are used, or they are not. But, in any case, the criteria for success in handling of subject matter, material, and form that Hegel outlines with respect to each

medium of art are clear. “Once ... the criteria for [distinctly successful] contemporary art [in a medium] are clear, [Hegel] is happy to leave the application of those criteria to those who know the art world better” (154; cp. 300).

In this analysis of the achievement of artistic beauty or success within the individual media of art, it is crucial that artistic beauty is a second-order, multi-relational property, and not at all a matter of decorative surface alone. It proceeds from imagination and technique together achieving within the medium a unity of form with content of all kind—depictive, descriptive, thematic, emotional, and reflective. One of the most important achievements of Moland’s book is her careful uncovering and rehearsing of Hegel’s detailed criteria for the achievement of artistic success in different media. Following Hegel, but also expanding on and clarifying Hegel’s examples and treatments of them, Moland gives us sharp accounts of how crucifixion paintings and Flemish paintings of daily life achieve the painterly, how Goethe and Sterne achieve the poetic, and how Venetian painters successfully use color, among many other wonderful discussions.

Beyond that, Moland argues that there can still be important successes in artistic making in the contemporary world by Hegelian lights. “Hegel is aware that the institutions of modern life can be alienating and enervating. He will ultimately claim that art can allow us to find meaning in the prosaic everyday, and that it can help us see modern institutions as our own creations and therefore part of our self-determination,” though it will, of course, take imagination, technique, and reflective understanding to do this (125). While this may happen in ways that Hegel did not fully anticipate in his discussions of the art he knew, it is nonetheless an achievement that might be understood in broadly Hegelian terms. For example, Pollock and Rothko, Moland suggests,

prompt us to see three dimensions where there are only two and to recognize our participation in the creation of the third dimension. If anything, this is an intensification of Hegel’s point that genre painting prompts us to be reconciled to the triviality of our daily lives. In abstract painting, it is not even those prosaic lives we are asked to evaluate but even more meaningless phenomena such as dribbles of paint or squares of color. Abstraction exposes our participation in the

existence of the painting more fully: it reminds us that *we* are capable of seeing what is not there. (219)

Similar points hold *mutatis mutandis* for the novel, music, sculpture, film, performance art, television, and all the rest (cf. 303). If we can be brought in our experience of the work to enter into its point of view on its subject matter—emotionally, imaginatively, and reflectively—where the subject matter at the highest level is how we are doing, well or badly, in making, living, and finding satisfaction within our world, then the artistic will have been achieved.

I am broadly on board with all of this, and it is a major achievement on Moland's part to have Part II and its account of conceptual endings disambiguated from Part III and its account of prosaic endings. And it is likewise a major achievement on Moland's part to have found in Part III and its accounts of achievements of the architectural, the sculptural, the painterly, the musical, the poetic, and their respective prosaic endings materials that help to illuminate possibilities of achievement in contemporary art in new media. I do, however, want to raise one question about Moland's distinction between conceptual and prosaic endings. It is this: does this distinction amount to pulling too far apart what might be called conceptual history or the history of lived worldviews from what might be called conceptual analysis? It seems to me that there is some warrant in Hegel's thought in general for holding Parts II and III more closely together than Moland does, and I think it is a sense that they are not so easily pulled apart that drives the misreadings of Hegel that Moland is challenging. To be more specific, if the romantic lived worldview fully displaces the classical worldview, and if as a result art is now less important as a form of Absolute Spirit than either religion or philosophy, then how seriously can we take contemporary achievements of the artistic by Hegel's lights in Part III? With Moland, I think the answer is, "very seriously indeed," and I applaud entirely her pulling apart of Part III from Part II. But I think there may also be costs to this correct maneuver. To wit: isn't the correct thing to say that Hegel's tidy developmental scheme of *forms* of art—Symbolic, Classical, and Romantic—is not quite right, though not quite wrong, either? What I mean is that there is a big problem for Hegel in defending the thought that successions of lived worldviews are governed by the Absolute Idea, by a *logos* that is coming to fulfillment in the achievement of free and meaningful life, with philosophy as

the culminating form of Absolute Spirit that reflects on this achievement. In the *Phenomenology*, this theodicy includes the transitions from Chapter VI, Ethical Life, to Chapter VII, Religion, where we discover that how people develop their successive ethical lives is determined by the fact that Spirit as subject and agent “picks out [*greift ... heraus*]” (§680) the next shape appropriate for its development,³⁶ and from Chapter VII, Religion, to Chapter VIII, Absolute Knowledge, where we discover that philosophy presents in pure, non-figural conceptual thought the truth about meaningful freedom in human life that religion presented only representationally. Both these traditions seem to me to be *ad hoc* and indefensible. They do not emerge via determinate negation as the inevitable next step in the efforts of discursive consciousness to understand or characterize fully what it is and does.

But if this is right, then, I think, the transition in forms of life and art in the *Aesthetics* from Symbolic to Classical to Romantic cannot fully stand either. There is *some* broad illumination in the thoughts that Egyptian art is highly abstract and symbolic, that Greek classical art celebrates embodied, lived, present actuality, and that modern art is significantly concerned with self-moving subjectivity or inwardness. But the claim that first religion and then philosophy simply absorb and displace art as the primary vehicles of self-understanding cannot stand, and in particular the idea that philosophy, Hegelian philosophy, is itself purely conceptual and non-figural cannot stand. Instead of seeing succession via absorption and displacement, we might do better to see continuing mutual interaction and influence among art, religion, and philosophy (William Desmond usefully made this point in his 1986 book on Hegel’s aesthetics).³⁷

The suggestion, first, is that Spirit—the lived understanding that shapes a form of social life—is always already more fragmented, contested, and broken than Hegel takes it to be, at least incipiently and tendentially. Second, art can and does respond to this situation—to lived understandings of what human beings hold highest that characterize social worlds. Therefore, conceptual analysis cannot be fully separated from an

³⁶ Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Terry Pinkard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), §680, p. 394. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1952), p. 478.

³⁷ William Desmond, *Art and the Absolute: A Study of Hegel’s Aesthetics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986).

understanding of historical social practices. Part III cannot be fully separated from Part II. But, contra Hegel's presentation, there is no tidy narrative of progress that governs Part II, though there are multiple, more or less intelligible transitions. Art that responds to lived situations, where there is no single *logos* that governs historical social development, will, along with Religion and Philosophy, have to present not only the unity of unity and difference *qua* reconciliation with the triviality of daily existence and stripping the world of inflexible foreignness; it will also have to register somehow the constitutive incompleteness and contestability of its presentations. Or, as Herbert Marcuse once poignantly put it, "the [unmixed] happy ending is 'the other' of art. ... Authentic works of art are aware of this; they reject the promise made too easily: they refuse the unburdened happy end. ... Where it nevertheless appears, it seems to be denied by the work as a whole."³⁸ Hegel, committed to some form of reconciliationist theodicy, to the distinctness and superiority of philosophy over art and religion as a form of Absolute Spirit, and to the Symbolic, Classical, Romantic developmental scheme for art, neither saw nor accepted this. If it is right, then Hegel's generally illuminating criteria for successful modern art will need at least some modification. We will need to emphasize the open and contestable character of artistic achievement as registered in the process-indicating endings in adjectival noun phrases "the architectural, the sculptural, the painterly, the musical, and the poetic." And we will need somehow to think about the interactions between successes in artistic technique (the subject of Part III) and lived self-understandings (the subject of Part II), yet, contra Hegel, without consistent progress and closure, either historically or conceptually.

I am not sure what Moland thinks about this. I worry that she is trying to save too much of the Symbolic-Classical-Romantic developmental story from Part II (albeit that I would save *some* soft, non-progressivist version of it, too) and that she is, like Hegel, more committed than I think apt to a strong art/philosophy distinction (though of course there is some distinction), and so to disjoining the conceptual analysis of Part III from the historical analysis of Part II. In contrast, I would rather modify the historical analysis of Part II and retain the connection between historical and conceptual analysis. Despite my

³⁸ Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, trans. Herbert Marcuse and Erica Sherover (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), p. 47.

reservation on this point, I end by returning to the thought that there is no other book on Hegel's aesthetics that helps us to see as well as this one does both how historical and conceptual analysis work in Hegel's philosophy of art and why they matter.

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Author Response: Lydia Moland, Colby College

§1. Central Claims and Examples

First, my deep gratitude to my three commentators for the time and intellectual energy they have devoted to evaluating my work. It is both humbling and energizing to see my thoughts reflected in the writing of these insightful scholars, and I am grateful for the questions they raise and the problems they press me to consider.

The commentators' analyses, taken together, give a very good sense of the central aims of my book. At the risk of being repetitive, however, I would like to start my response by articulating a few of the book's major claims.

- Hegel's aesthetics is not just an illustration of his idealism. Instead, it is crucial to understanding what his idealism means, and it is also essential to grasping major parts of his system, including his theories of the senses, selfhood, perception, and recognition.
- Art, according to Hegel, is a sensuous experience of truth. Here is one way I articulate that experience in the book: "The artistic process, the art object itself, and our experience of that object all embody Hegel's claim that objects are not in fact independent, waiting to be apprehended, but that we and the world's objects are part of a mutually determining whole. We are implicitly involved in this mutually formative process throughout our lives. Art is one way of making that process explicit" (2).
- I argue that aesthetic experience—a topic Hegel gives very little explicit attention to—is the joy of recognized truth: a truth, as I put it, "that can pierce the hard shell of our everyday, prosaic lives and reveal the poetry at the core of existence" (20).
- I claim that there has been an overemphasis, almost to the point of exclusivity, on Part II of Hegel's lectures on art. In Part II, Hegel discusses particular art forms

and analyzes the adequacy of the worldviews that underlie them. If we take only Part II into account, Hegel's philosophy of art seems to be a kind of expressionism about our social–political lives. Part III, by contrast, is focused on the individual arts (architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry) and on our experience of space, perception, emotion, and imagination. I argue that our freedom is also contingent on our understanding of our own creative activity in regard to these aspects of our experience, and that Hegel believes that art can help us become conscious of that activity.

- As regards Hegel's so-called "end of art thesis," I argue that art ends in three distinct ways. The first is art's "historical end," which occurs when, after the advent of Christianity, art ceases to create religion and instead can only depict it. Secondly, there are conceptual endings, which occur when symbolic art transitions into classical, or classical into romantic, or when architecture transitions into sculpture, sculpture into painting, and so forth. Thirdly, there are prosaic endings, which describe the points at which art lapses into forms that no longer bring our awareness to the truths of idealism as Hegel understands them. These endings occur at many stages in Hegel's lectures, ranging from his discussions of pleasant sculpture to abstract music to contemporary comedy. A major aim of the book is differentiating these endings and showing the role they play in Hegel's philosophy of art.

One more preliminary point: because a few of my commentators' questions address my claims about the differences between Part II and Part III of Hegel's lectures, let me offer two examples that might serve to illuminate the distinctions I am trying to make. First consider Betye Saar's 1972 *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima*, which includes an image of this well-known black figure—famous in the nineteenth century for her exuberant domesticity—holding both a broom and a rifle. This piece lends itself easily to what I would consider a Part II analysis of Hegel's theory. It offers us a moment of self-understanding about prejudices deeply embedded in American society, allowing us to experience central elements of our history and culture sensuously. It also, as Hegel argues

all romantic art should, challenges us to think of ourselves as responsible for the norms referenced in this artwork. These norms are not issued from a distant divine: they are our creation and ours to change.

But in order to analyze this piece as an *artwork*, we would also want to talk about its sensuous aspects: what its combination of two-dimensional and three-dimensional images says about our visual and tactile senses; what effect the color, depth, and textures Saar chooses have on us. *These* aspects are better analyzed through Part III, where Hegel encourages us to think about what painting's two dimensions or sculpture's three dimensions tell us about our participation in this object's existence.

Alexander Calder's mobiles, by contrast, are a prime example of something that can most readily be interpreted through Part III: namely, through our asking ourselves how they encourage us to experience shape as shape, balance as balance, motion as motion, color as color. But, certainly, there is also much to say about Calder's art as an expression of a culture's self-understanding, a report about who "we" are (or were) in the twentieth century as well: as about abstraction, formalism, non-representational art, and so forth. Some kinds of art, in other words, will lend themselves more readily to interpretation via Part II, and some via Part III. It is part of the strength of Hegel's theory, I argue, that he accounts for this distinction.

§2. Response to Torsen

With these examples in mind, I want first to answer Torsen's initial question, namely: how does Part III make manifest freedom in ways that are *not* sociopolitical? One of Hegel's most basic idealist commitments, I argue in the book, is to show that humans exist in a fundamentally mutually constitutive relationship to the world. We are the part of the true that is the whole that can conceptualize shape as shape—we do not bring shape wholesale into the world, which is the interpretation of Hegel's metaphysics that I wish to avoid—but we are the ones that can articulate objects *as objects*, shape *as shape*, sound *as sound*. This is what humans do all day every day: together with what and who is around us, we make the world what it is. But we are not generally aware that we do this, which makes things around us feel given. Once we treat even designations like shape and sound as given, we allow them to determine us: we become, as Hegel says, unfree. Art helps us see our participation in the world's structure again. Insofar as we look at a Calder and

become conscious of our participation in the presence of shape and color, or of our conceptualization of natural laws like gravity, we can experience ourselves as free in a way that is not sociopolitical. This might not feel much like being free. But insofar as it shows us to be co-creating the world we live in, including its meaning, this deflated sense of freedom is, Hegel thinks, actually a better reflection of the truth.

Second: I take Torsen's concern that I deemphasize the distinction between "before" and "after" art to mean that I give insufficient attention to the difference in art before and after the advent of Christianity. I certainly do not mean to downplay this distinction: I do, in fact, say that it is the most profound of art's ends since it changes the role art plays forever (10). If I seem to be downplaying it, that might be because it is the easiest of the various ends of art to understand and so least in need of elucidation. It is briefly stated: in the symbolic and classical worlds, Hegel thinks, artists created the divine. Christianity instead claims that God is historical and temporal; he can no longer be created by art, but only depicted. Torsen is right that this changes the way humans relate to art: that, after the development of Christianity, we have a more reflective, distanced relation to art.

But on the related question of whether there is still necessity in art after this historical ending: the answer, I'm afraid, is yes and no. All post-Christian art must, in order to be art by Hegel's definition, help humans develop their understanding of themselves as the only divine there is. This is true of chivalric poems, Shakespearean dramas, bourgeois novels, and so forth. There *is* a kind of historical necessity to that criterion. But part of what *is historically necessary* is that, in romantic art, there is *less historical necessity*. Classical architecture, for instance, had only a limited number of ways to fulfill its function—namely, housing the divine—while making that function explicit through right angles, substantial columns, and so forth. *Romantic* architecture, by contrast, must continue to show its functionality while also undermining it. But there are an infinite number of ways to do that—from the thirteenth-century Gothic cathedrals Hegel discusses to contemporary structures of Libeskind or Gehry. Romantic poetry, in turn, must continue to "disrupt language and evoke inner images in new ways, giving us a sense of ourselves in and through language" (271). There is also likely an infinite number of ways to do *that*—from the *West-östliche Divan* Hegel discusses to surrealist poetry or James Joyce's novels.

This infinite widening of possibilities in romantic art, I argue in the book, explains why Hegel more than once simply ends his discussion of an individual art in the romantic era early in its development: why, for instance, he barely discusses any architecture after thirteenth-century Gothic cathedrals (he makes no mention of monasteries or castles or the Baroque) or doesn't discuss the music or poetry of his contemporaries in ways we might expect. The point here is not that all architecture should be Gothic or all poetry should be like Goethe. Instead, it is that there will now be such an enormous range of ways we can embody romantic art's claims that it just isn't the philosopher's job to go into them. (Such an inventory should be left to art historians.) So in a way, the historic necessity in the Romantic era is that there *is* much less necessity *as long as* whatever form art takes, it reflects this new understanding of freedom that develops after the historical end of art.

But Torsen is right that this situation itself needs to be reflected in art, and also in art's materials. The features of conceptual analysis in Part III are, then, absolutely also realized historically. This is why I disagree with Danto's assessment (as least as Torsen puts it) that it is "no longer possible to explain why a painter chooses to paint *this way*." There could be many explanations of why a particular brushstroke, or melody, or dramatic plot are used at a particular moment in history, just as the content of these works will be historically formed as well. So romantic art after art's historical end can continue to give an account of why a particular content needs to take a particular aesthetic form: it can, I think, continue to be true in "the relevant aesthetic sense." And here I think we also find one answer to another of Torsen's questions: if all it takes is one artwork to help us reflect on shape as shape and recognize our role in that articulation, why would we need to experience more than one example of any genre? The answer, I think, is because the historical conditions for both form and content will continue to change and require reflection. What embodiment means in the case of sculpture, or perspective in the case of painting, or self-feeling in the case of music, and so forth, will continue to be a topic of reflection. Art will continue to facilitate this reflection through both form and content.

§3. Response to Falkenstern

I'm grateful to Rachel Falkenstern for highlighting the use of Duchamp's *Nude Descending the Staircase (No. 2)* on the book's cover. I chose this painting in part because, as all three of my commentators point out, one of my hopes for the book is that

it allows us to extend Hegel's analysis to contemporary art. I especially appreciate the painting's reference to classical art via the nude, and also its challenge to one of Hegel's descriptions of painting's limitation, namely its purported inability to depict movement.

I'd like to respond first to Falkenstern's question about aesthetic pleasure. I'm grateful here for an opportunity for clarification. When I wrote that aesthetic experience entails "the pleasure derived from experiencing that truth sensuously" (304), I meant not to associate aesthetic pleasure with sensual pleasure but to convey that this pleasure has its origins in things we sense. So whatever pleasure I derive from viewing a Duchamp painting comes from the senses (my vision) but is not sensual pleasure in the way that sitting in the warm sun is. She is also right to notice that I usually simply talk about aesthetic *experience* without referencing pleasure and that I sometimes use the word "joy" instead of pleasure. This is indeed in response to the fact that Hegel himself does not cast aesthetic experience in terms of pleasure even though he clearly thinks it offers us a positive experience of some kind.

I appreciate Falkenstern's suggestion that the joy of aesthetic experience for Hegel might be akin to Aristotle's description of joy in learning. I think there is something to this, and I also think it is possible on Hegel's view to have this kind of joy without the art in question being moralizing or pedantic. I'm tempted to call this a kind of epiphanic pleasure: the pleasure of a moment of revelation or clarity. To return to Saar's *Liberation of Aunt Jemima*: we might, upon contemplating this work, have an epiphany about the tangled contradictions of racial prejudice. Ideally, on Hegel's view, part of the epiphany will *also* be that these prejudices are of our own making and therefore are our responsibility. They are not "natural"; they do not come from a distant divine; they come from us. Insofar as *this* realization reminds us of our freedom and that we are the only divine there is, it should be both sobering (being divine comes with heavy responsibility) and empowering (these norms are ours and we can change them). Falkenstern is also right that this might explain why aesthetic experience is not necessarily pleasant. This is certainly true insofar as art can make us feel sadness (when for instance we watch a tragedy or listen to sad music) or more conscious of our complicity in structures of racial oppression. But there can be a kind of pleasure—perhaps it is Aristotelian—in figuring something out when it otherwise feels mysterious or contorted. I should emphasize here that I do not think that there is "an answer" that Saar's work conveys that we are supposed

to “get”—if there were, her work would shade from art into something else, maybe philosophy. The fact that there is no one answer to “get” will have to do with the essential physicality of the work, which I will return to below.

This leads me to another of Falkenstern’s questions, namely: what, in Hegel’s view, is at stake in keeping the parts of Absolute Spirit—art, religion, philosophy—separate? At stake, I think, is an acknowledgement of the different components of being human, or, as Hegel puts it, our amphibious natures. We are embodied creatures, also drawn to narrative, and also needing to process the world through thought. Absolute Spirit thus contains art, which addresses our embodied natures; religion, which parses the truth through narratives of holy texts; and philosophy. Hegel *does* put these in a hierarchy, but I do *not* think he means us to conclude that philosophy will, or should, ever make art or religion superfluous. As long as humans are embodied, we will need art to convey truth to us through our senses. So in answer to Falkenstern’s next question, namely what is lost when art becomes philosophy, I think the answer is not much. The object on one side of the divide is still art; the object on the other is not. I do not, in other words, think that Hegel in this case is *evaluating* a difference; he is just describing it. Art will continue to be necessary, and distinct from philosophy, for a few reasons. Since humans are embodied, that part of us needs to be represented within Absolute Spirit. More systematically considered: the whole is supposed to include division, so it should also include the sensuous, which is being contrasted here to Spirit. (There is an analogy to this point in the case of architecture’s role in the individual arts: Hegel explicitly says that architecture must remain unspiritual so that the unspiritual is retained in art’s development. I discuss this further below.)

Does art’s foundation in the senses imply, as Falkenstern also asks, that “despite the fact that art is a practice of knowing and self-creation, there will always remain something necessarily secret about it, and thus, something about ourselves that will always remain a mystery to us”? I wouldn’t choose the word secret, but I do think that part of art’s essential role is that it includes in Absolute Spirit something inexpressible in thought, namely our embodiment. If we didn’t have art, we wouldn’t be able to reflect on *that*—there would be no way to reflect on the fact that part of who we are resists conceptualization. This is part of why I think it matters to Hegel that Absolute Spirit always include art.

Falkenstern also asks about my more Kantian-sounding claim that art makes us aware of our own minds. Specifically, she asks whether my claim that “poetry contributes to ‘our sense of self, independent of content’” implies that “we can have a sense of self that is independent of content” or, as she also puts it: “If self and world are mutually determining, is there really room for a formal self in Hegel?” I again appreciate the opportunity for clarification: when I wrote “independently” here, I perhaps should have written “in addition to.” When I hear a poem describing (to use Hegel’s favorite Homeric example) “When in the dawn Aurora rises with rosy fingers,” I do get an image of a sunrise. But, in addition, I can become aware of the mental operation that allows me to take a succession of words and transform it into a mental image—a procedure that, as Hegel points out, synthesizes both the successive nature of music (the synthesizing of a series of notes into a melody) and the visual character of painting. But part of Hegel’s larger point is indeed that there can be no self without this content, which is certainly part of the mutually determining nature of reality on his view.

Finally: as to Falkenstern’s suggestion that there is room in Hegel’s description of romantic art to preserve the dissonance in reconciliation: absolutely. I agree with everything she says about Hegel and late romantic art here: it should absolutely be true, on Hegel’s view, that “the cracks never fully heal, the scars remain.” Post-classical art that does *not* show its scars would not, on Hegel’s view, be doing its job. So architecture that does not undermine its own functionality (which is a kind of rupture), or painting that does not signal Spirit’s withdrawal (a kind of loss), or poetry that does not make us aware of the tenuousness of our linguistic structures (another loss of certainty)—none of these would be fulfilling art’s mission in our late romantic age. Art’s project now has to be to make us reconciled to our lack of reconciliation. A familiar line of criticism of Hegel’s project is that this is in fact not a preservation of disruption: it is only a deeper, more sophisticated denial of that disruption. But I don’t see a way around this interpretation of Hegel. His philosophy, as I say in the book, implies a holism and a fundamental reconciliation. Otherwise he would not be the kind of idealist he is.

§4. Response to Eldridge

I’m very appreciative of Richard Eldridge’s attention to my attempts to separate Parts II and III of Hegel’s thoughts on art, and I want to respond to his concern that this

distinction amounts “to pulling too far apart what might be called conceptual history [or the history of worldviews] from what might be called conceptual analysis.” Eldridge’s reason for this concern has to do with the fact that if Parts II and III are too meticulously separated, it will become unclear “how seriously [we can] take contemporary achievements of the artistic by Hegel’s lights in Part III.” This is a very deep question, which I will paraphrase as follows: if Parts II and III are as distinct as I argue they are, then, when we want to consider contemporary painting as helping us reflect on color, or our ability to see dimensions that are not there, or a painter’s ability to evoke shapes by shades of color only, without drawn boundaries: if, in short, we want to consider it as *painting* and *not* as an expression of a worldview—how will we evaluate it by Hegel’s standards? Divorced from the developmental trajectory of worldviews in Part II, how do we judge contemporary art’s value?

To answer this question, I want first to take a slight detour into a taxonomy of conceptual developments. I do this in part to emphasize the different criteria by which Hegel evaluates art in Parts II and III and in part to address another of Eldridge’s concerns. In setting up his question, Eldridge expresses well-justified skepticism about Hegel’s trajectory of worldviews. This trajectory, in his telling, consists of Hegel’s vague sense that symbolic art was abstract, classical art more actual, and romantic art more subjective. Eldridge also references, as related and similarly suspect, the *Phenomenology’s* “theodicy” from Ethical Life to Religion to Absolute Knowing. Both trajectories, he suggests, are “*ad hoc* and indefensible.” I do not necessarily want to defend Hegel’s categorization here, but I do want to argue that the development of particular art forms in Part II tracks a different and at least *less* arbitrary trajectory. The symbolic–classical–romantic progression comes, Hegel says, from parsing out the “different relations of meaning and shape” that are possible as regards humans’ understanding of the Idea. As I put it in the book: “Symbolic art results when humans have an *inadequate* grasp of the Idea and give it *inadequate* form; classical art results when humans have an *inadequate* grasp of the Idea but give it *adequate* form; romantic art results when humans have an *adequate* grasp of the Idea but give it *inadequate* form. An *adequate* understanding of the Idea given *adequate* form transcends the sensuous limits of art and transitions into philosophy” (55–56). This means that Hegel is not only gathering his historical impressions and intuitions into categories but basing his

developmental story on a kind of conceptual progression: the four possible combinations of meaning and shape. This kind of trajectory, I claim, is what allows him to say that art “ends” with the romantic era: it has simply run out of conceptual possibilities. This does not mean that Eldridge is wrong to worry that this categorization is indefensible. But I do think it makes it less *ad hoc*. It also allows Hegel to talk about romantic art as expressing the *adequate* idea that the human is divine through the *inadequate* medium of the sensual. The best romantic art will allow us to sense ourselves as the divine *and* allow us to sense its own acknowledgment of its inadequacy to express that. This is true of everything from paintings of the Madonna and child to Dutch genre painting to, again, Goethe’s *West-östliche Divan*.

Be that as it may, the conceptual development of Part III is, I argue, very different from the conceptual development of Part II just described. In Part III, Hegel goes from the *externality* of architecture to the *individuality* of sculpture (which combines the externality of nature with the internality of spirit) to the *subjectivity* of the romantic arts, which themselves develop from the partial disappearance of externality in painting (the collapse of three dimensions into two), to the full dimensionless internality of music, to the reintegration of the external in poetry (or at least in poetry’s culminating stage, namely drama). In this development, each art is evaluated based on its essential qualities: architecture by its functionality, sculpture by its seamless integration of nature and spirit, painting by color, music by sound’s ability to evoke the feeling of the self, poetry by its use of words to create internal images.

And then I take Eldridge’s question to be: if Part III focuses only on architecture evaluated by its own essence, how do we evaluate contemporary architecture—which would mean architecture of our late romantic period—without imposing Part II’s scheme of evaluation on Part III, which is what I have argued we should not do? By insisting on different modes of evaluation between Parts II and III, have I robbed us of a Hegelian way of evaluating today’s architecture?

I think there are two answers to this question. The first is to say that Eldridge is right: it would be wrong to separate Parts II and III completely. These parts of Hegel’s lectures *are* intertwined, and a Hegelian critique of contemporary architecture *does* require us to assess it in the light of romantic art. I acknowledge this in the book by admitting that it would be very un-Hegelian *not* to require an ultimate synthesis of the two (302). My book-

length insistence on considering them separately has much to do with correcting a decades-long eliding of this difference, but it is not an absolute difference.

So, I do also think that contemporary architecture can and should be judged by generally romantic criteria: to use Eldridge's formulation, it should be judged by its ability to express the "constitutive incompleteness and contestability of its presentations." Part of assessing Gehry or Libeskind is also asking whether their architecture resists slipping back into comfortable classicism, whether it reflects our sense of anxiety about our own role or even our embrace of that anxiety: whether it can reflect back to us the anxiety of realizing that we are all the divine there is and cannot look to natural or externally divine justification for our norms.

But I think there is a second answer that can help us assess contemporary art through the criteria of Part III as well. In Part III, Hegel asks us to consider how each individual art can best show its essence. What is architectural about architecture, and what kind of architecture can make us ask that question? If, as I suggest, another answer in the case of architecture is that it allows us to think about *space as space*, to reconsider what we define as interior and exterior, to ask questions about balance or gravity, then we can certainly assess contemporary architecture in these terms as well. What kind of architecture poses those questions most effectively?

Here it becomes again apparent just how complicated Hegel's analysis is. To take music as an example, Hegel thinks that music best serves *art's* purpose in general when it accompanies words. This has to do with his assessment of music's mission within art, which is that it makes us aware of *feeling* and, through feeling, the self. But he recognizes that *instrumental* music allows us best to reflect on sound *as sound*, harmony as harmony, and so forth. So if it is true, as Eldridge suggests, that we need to "emphasize the open and contestable character of artistic achievement as registered in the process-indicating endings in adjectival noun phrases 'the architectural, the sculptural, the painterly, the musical, and the poetic,'" modern music that makes us think about sound, or painting that makes us think about color, or sculpture that makes us think about shape, is challenging us to think about process, and foundations, and our participation in the existence of the things we take so unquestionably as given. Insofar as instrumental music, for instance, achieves *that*, it allows us to experience explicitly what we otherwise experience implicitly, which is our participation in the formation of the world we

experience—a world we both transform and are transformed by.

One of my book's arguments is that art helps us achieve *not only* freedom in the social–political sense by interrogating, as Eldridge puts it, “how we’re doing, or how ‘a we’ of at least some extent within a sociohistorical formation is doing.” This formulation focuses on how we need to challenge the social–political norms that we too often take as given. Part III, by contrast, makes us aware of how art can help us understand how actively we, through our senses, construct the reality we otherwise think we are only passively absorbing. Assessing contemporary art through *that* lens, I think, would allow us to give a Hegelian interpretation of what is great about great contemporary art. Sometimes, at least, it is that contemporary art specifically requires us to question the “process-indicating endings,” again in Eldridge’s words, of the architectural, the sculptural, the painterly, the musical, the poetic. The more ingeniously it does that, the more it makes us aware of what I sometimes call theoretical freedom in the book: Hegel’s assessment that humans, in order to be free, must also understand the depth of their participation in the sensual world.

But to take one more dialectical turn: I think a Part II-style analysis of this questioning of art’s foundations in the service of interrogating our participation in the sensuous world is also appropriate. If romantic art is meant to reflect humans’ ongoing attempts to question foundations and categories—not to take perceptual norms as given any more than we take sociopolitical norms as given—then thinking about what is architectural about architecture or musical about music certainly does that. And if that is true, Hegel’s theory of art itself embodies the unity of unity and difference that it professes to find at the core of our reality. In other words, it reconciles itself, in true Hegelian fashion, to understanding that this synthesis is the result of its own creative endeavors.

I end the book by acknowledging that Hegel’s central claim about art—that aesthetic experience is characterized by the joy of reflecting on our own creative capacities in the world—may strike us as strange. It is, to say the least, unlikely to be on our minds as we contemplate a favorite painting or listen to a beloved melody. But I do think there is joy in experiencing our own senses or in witnessing something about our worldview embodied for us. Against misguided claims that Hegel thinks art has ended, I think this joy is just as possible in our contemporary world as it was in Hegel’s. In my view, Hegel’s philosophy of art makes clear that art does and should continue, but also that how it

continues is up to us. This realization, like many others that characterize Hegel's analysis of the modern world, can be both empowering and terrifying. We should hope that we are up to the task. I am grateful to my commentators for helping me articulate that task better. I also hope, I'm sure together with them, that art will continue to be a source of joy and insight as our fraught late-romantic relationship with our mutually created world continues.

Symposium: Author Meets Critics

Alfredo Ferrarin

Thinking and the I: Hegel and the Critique of Kant

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Review 1: Clinton Tolley, UC San Diego

§1. Thinking as a *locus communis* between Kant and Hegel (and Aristotle)

Even before *Thinking and the I*,³⁹ Alfredo Ferrarin has been well-known for producing a very impressive line of comparative philosophical investigations that combine both illuminating conceptual analyses with comprehensive textual and historical–contextual scholarship. Two works of special relevance for the current book deserve to be mentioned, works that both embody these virtues to a very high degree: his excellent 2001 study of the Aristotelian roots of Hegel’s conception of philosophy and of spirit (*Hegel and Aristotle*, itself the results of more than a decade of research, stemming back from Ferrarin’s dissertation in Pisa in 1990), and his more recent 2015 synoptic study of Kant’s “critical” conception of philosophy and of reason (*The Powers of Pure Reason*).

In the book we are discussing today (an expanded re-elaboration of a book Ferrarin published in Italian in 2016), Ferrarin builds upon the results of these works and others to organize a conversation between Kant and Hegel on the topic of thinking, and especially its relationship to “the I.” That the topic of thinking is of central interest and importance for both philosophers can be seen from the placement of their accounts of thinking within the context of their “logics,” understood as a science of thinking: for Kant, a “logic” constitutes what is by far the majority of his *Critique of Pure Reason*; for Hegel, the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences* begins with, and is guided throughout by, the “science of logic” as the first of such sciences. And at least in Kant’s hands, there also can seem to be an essential or internal link between thinking and “the I,” insofar as a central discussion at the outset of his logic seems to provide an analysis of thinking in general in terms of various conditions for the possibility of “the I think” being able to “accompany” representations in a soul—and thereby might seem to have “the I” itself function as a part of a principle or condition for cognition more generally. In Hegel’s own “logic,” however, it is altogether less clear what role, if any, the I is supposed to play in specifying the essence of thinking itself. In the *Encyclopedia Logic*, for example, “I” is not an element

³⁹ Northwestern 2019; unless otherwise marked, all citations will be to this work.

(“thought-determination”) developed in any of the main paragraphs (as opposed to being, essence, etc.). Rather, the I does not show up officially in the *Encyclopedia* until much later, in the section on “consciousness” in the *Philosophy of Spirit*. Moreover, as Ferrarin’s book very nicely brings out (especially in chapter 1), the I turns out, for Hegel, to be something *conditioned* in important respects—more specifically, the I is an achievement or a result of various pre- or un-conscious activities (as partially anticipated by Fichte and Schelling before him). Given the place of the *Logic* in the system, by contrast, thinking would seem to have a better claim to be unconditioned, something “absolute,” or perhaps simply to be “the Absolute” itself.

For these reasons, Ferrarin’s efforts to choreograph a conversation between Kant and Hegel on thinking and the I have the promise of allowing us insight, first, into how radically Hegel might mean to revise the Kantian understanding of thinking and logic as foundational “elements” in any science of philosophy. Secondly, the book promises at the same time to help clarify “how radically Hegel critiques the ordinary view of thinking that reduces thought to a property of an I” (4), insofar as Kant’s views might seem to be paradigmatic for a tradition common throughout modern philosophy and beyond.

Now, one of the many interesting threads of Ferrarin’s book (and one taken up in the previous work as well) is a running exploration of whether Kant himself actually does hold a view of thinking according to which it is ultimately interdependent with the I, *or* whether, if we were to take a closer look at Kant’s views of *reason* in particular, we might find a conception of thinking that would take us well beyond what might have been surmised from any focus limited, however intensively, only on Kant’s dense though ultimately very brief, and relatively quite early, remarks concerning “the I think,” apperception, and the understanding. I can only applaud wholeheartedly Ferrarin’s consistent championing (and masterful executing) of the hermeneutical principle—which one could be forgiven for thinking was actually fairly infrequently followed by commentators, in the case of both Kant and Hegel—of reading all the way to the end of major works of philosophy, before attempting to render one’s interpretive analysis of any given topic or theme. Why one would ever hope to be able to provide an adequate account of thinking in Kant based almost solely on a single 30-page stretch of remarks from the first 200 pages of an 800 page book is not easy to comprehend. Nor is the outsized attention that is typically given in studies of Kant to the contents of these first 200 pages

(the Transcendental Deduction, the account of the possibility (and principle) of experience, etc.), in light of the basic facts that the book is centrally about reason, and that reason itself is not taken up in any substantive way until around page 300 (A293/B359). We have many reasons, then, to be very grateful as well for Ferrarin’s insistence that we make a concerted attempt to push back against the tendency in many recent interpretations to diminish what Ferrarin calls (with tongue-in-cheek) the more “esoteric” aspects of Kant’s views, especially about reason, that one finds Kant occupied with in the last three-fourths(!) of the *Critique*.⁴⁰

Since Rosefeldt’s remarks are to focus on Ferrarin’s treatment of Kant, I will unfortunately have to leave Ferrarin’s rich and illuminating discussions of Kant on thinking, its power, and its spontaneity almost entirely to one side. My own focus will be almost exclusively on the positive picture of thinking, and its relation to the I, that Ferrarin develops on behalf of Hegel, and my primary aim will be to invite Ferrarin to clarify several points about Hegel’s views that I think the book leaves underdeveloped. I will begin (in §2) by asking about what Ferrarin makes of the nature and placement of the first “official” treatment of *thinking itself* that Hegel gives in his *Encyclopedia*, which occurs relatively late, not until in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, and only after the introduction of not just “the soul” and “consciousness” (and “the I”) but also “self-consciousness” and “reason.” I want to highlight this fact in order to raise questions about Ferrarin’s claims about Hegel’s acceptance of the possibility of “unconscious thinking” (cf. 11, 53). I will then turn (in §3) to the question of whether and to what extent Ferrarin maintains that thinking is already being treated or is already under discussion—i.e., to what extent it forms part of the subject matter—in the still earlier *Philosophy of Nature* itself, in light of Ferrarin’s claims (in chapter 2) about specifically “nonhuman thinking” that might be present in things such as the elliptical movements of planets and the behavior of squirrels. This line of examination of Ferrarin’s book, organized around the structure of the *Encyclopedia* itself, will lead us (in §4) fairly directly to the question of in what respect exactly is thinking itself really genuinely a topic (or the subject matter) in the still earlier *Logic*, and if so, when—e.g., already with *being?* or only after the introduction of “the

⁴⁰ Here one would do well to skim the handy list of topics that Ferrarin has compiled on pp. 169–170, and then take and read the earlier 2015 book.

concept” (or perhaps: “the idea”?) in the “subjective logic”? In conclusion (§5), I will turn finally to ask after Ferrarin’s thoughts on the significance of the last sections of the Encyclopedia, on the relation between thinking and *Absolute Spirit*, and what sort of thinking Absolute Spirit will itself engage in as “philosophical science.”

§2. The place of thinking in the Philosophy of Spirit

As noted above, Hegel begins the Encyclopedia with the *Science of Logic*,⁴¹ and though he suggests, in a remark [*Anmerkung*] to an early section, that logic might well be characterized as “the science of *thinking*, of its determinations and laws” (EL §19), the official characterization he himself gives at the outset, in the main body of the text, is that logic is the science of “*the Idea*,” considered in a certain way or respect that will differentiate it from the way in which it will be considered in the other parts of philosophical science, and with philosophy as a whole only capable of presenting “the Idea” wholly or adequately:

Only the *whole* of [philosophical] science is the presentation [*Darstellung*] of the idea.... [T]he science falls into three parts: I. Logic, i.e., the science of the idea in and for itself. (EL §18)

Logic is the science of the pure *Idea*, i.e., the *Idea* in the abstract element of thinking. (EL §19)

It is true that the second formulation indicates that the way in which logic will “present” the idea is “in the abstract element of thinking,” and yet it is unclear that this means that the logic will give a doctrine of *thinking itself*, rather than present how *the idea* exists “in the abstract element of thinking.” On the second interpretation, thinking will function in

⁴¹ I will cite Hegel’s Encyclopedia according to the paragraph numbers of the 3rd 1830 edition, using the abbreviations “EL” for the *Logic*, “EN” for the *Philosophy of Nature*, and “EG” for the *Philosophy of Spirit* (Geist). I will refer to Hegel’s *Wissenschaft der Logik* by “WL,” and give the pagination from the Suhrkamp edition of *Hegels Werke in 20 Bände*, along with the pagination of the Cambridge Edition English translation by Giovanni as *Science of Logic* (“SL”).

the *Logic* only as “the element” in which the idea exists qua logical, i.e., the element within which the Idea will first be considered—with the nature of this element (thinking) not *itself* yet being articulated. To collapse the two topics, we would need some initial indication that “the Idea” just was (identical with) thinking, or that thinking was all and only “the Idea” itself. The suggestion here, however, would seem to be that thinking is instead only “the element” in which “the Idea” exists in a certain fashion or manner. This in turn might be taken to suggest that “the Idea” might have *other* “elements” in which it can exist besides that of thinking; what is more, we also have not heard anything, at least as yet, as to whether anything *else* might exist “in” thinking besides “the Idea.”

In fact, when we turn to the divisions of the Encyclopedia itself, the official entry on *thinking* itself does not occur until quite late, not within the *Logic* at all, but rather not until the third part, the *Philosophy of Spirit*, at EG §465. What is more, it is introduced only after quite a bit of ground has been covered concerning other, presumably more elementary, forms or shapes of *Spirit*. More specifically, Hegel has already indicated that Spirit in general has Nature as its “presupposition,” and also that Spirit has “come forth as the Idea that has reached its being-for-itself” (EG §381)—note, again, “the idea” and not “thinking” (compare as well the summary of the division of the *Philosophy of Spirit*, which consistently speaks of “the Idea”). The first and earliest manifestation of Spirit is as “natural spirit [*Naturgeist*],” which has not yet “awoken” to “consciousness,” nor has it “posited itself as reason,” nor has it become “subject for itself” (EG §387). It does undergo alterations, sensations, and feelings, but it is not yet until there is consciousness that Spirit takes a form in which it even “has an object as such,” let alone “for which I [*Ich*] is the object,” i.e., self-consciousness (EG §417). But even a being that achieves the “unity of consciousness and self-consciousness,” and so involves “reason” (EG §438), is only said initially to have this unity as an act of “intuiting [*anschauen*]” (EG §417).⁴² It is only once reason not only engages in intuiting qua “finding” (EG §446), and also various forms of “representing [*vorstellen*]”—viz., a holding onto or “recollecting” of what is found (EG §452), and an active imaginative associative combination of what is found (EG §455), and

⁴² In contrast to Kant, “intuiting,” as Hegel understands it, is subsequent to both the “perception [*Wahrnehmung*]” of what is sensory (EG §420) and to “understanding [*Verstand*]” (EG §422)—though he agrees with Kant that intuiting precedes “thinking [*denken*].”

a recording of this in signs within a memory (EG §461)—that it is finally ready to make “the transition into the activity of the thought” or “thinking,” an activity that is distinguished by (among other things) having “the genuine [*wahrhafte*] universal” for itself (EG §465).

In light of these features of Hegel’s system, I want to raise two concerns, then, about Ferrarin’s own discussion of thinking. The first concerns the relation between the specific determination that is entitled “thinking” at EG §465 and all of the preceding determinations that have come before. What we have just sketched of Hegel’s exposition suggests that thinking is *only here* being considered directly for the first time—i.e., suggests that no stage that has been considered thus far in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, let alone earlier in the Encyclopedia, should be counted as itself “thinking,” despite the fact that there have been stages of spirit under discussion in which there is consciousness, self-consciousness, understanding, even reason.⁴³

The second concern pertains to the more specific relation between thinking and “the I.” In the sketch of the progression of the *Philosophy of Spirit* we have given above, the emergence of “the I” was given as occurring first with the introduction of

⁴³ Hegel himself seems to recognize, at this point in the text, that the reader might need some direction or clarification here, since certain remarks from the *Logic* in particular might have been taken to suggest something to the contrary. For he adds the following note before transitioning out of this discussion of what is distinctive of “theoretical spirit” to what is distinctive of “practical spirit”:

In *logic*, thinking is as it is first in itself and as reason develops itself in this oppositionless element. In *consciousness*, thinking also occurs [*kommt vor*] as a stage (cf. §437 Anm). Here reason is the truth of the opposition, as it had determined itself within spirit itself.—Thinking emerges [*tritt hervor*] again and again in these different parts of science, because these parts differ only in the element and the form of opposition; while thinking is this one, self-same center, to which, as to their truth, the oppositions return. (EG §467 Anm)

Note that though thinking is said to be present “in” logic, it is present only as it is “in itself” and as “an oppositionless element” in which reason develops itself—rather than being present in any way “for itself,” as a topic or object of scientific cognition. (This is so, even if thinking will ultimately show itself to be that “center” toward which “oppositions return.”)

consciousness. If (as the foregoing suggests) thinking in its technical sense (of EG §465) depends not only on the existence of representation, imagination, reason, self-consciousness, understanding, but also specifically consciousness itself, in order for thinking itself to be really possible, then it would seem that, at least in this technical sense, thinking does depend essentially on the prior existence of the I—first as a correlate of “the object” of consciousness, then as “the object of consciousness” itself (in self-consciousness), etc.

Now, even if this were so, Ferrarin is also concerned with a separate point in the neighborhood of this one, albeit that must be kept separate from any thesis about specifically unconscious thinking, or thinking without an I. For it might well also be true that thinking is not dependent on any determinations that are still *further* on in the Encyclopedia—and in particular, determinations that arise only in the context of “objective spirit,” such as “the person” (EG §488) or “person as subject” (EG §503), let alone any of the particular configurations of “ethical life [*Sittlichkeit*]” such as being (or being “in”) a family or civil society or a state. On this separate point, Ferrarin himself makes several incisive criticisms (cf. chapter 1 in particular) of traditional readings of the sections in the *Philosophy of Spirit* (and their counterparts in the *Phenomenology*)—sections that technically pertain only to self-consciousness, and more specifically, those pertaining to “recognizant [*aner kennende*] self-consciousness” (EG §430 et seq), but that are often taken not just to provide some of the essentials of a specifically social theory, or a theory of sociality, but to already involve specifically “social” elements (i.e., persons in relation to persons) in their metaphysical composition (so to speak). Ferrarin’s cautions against such an inflation of Hegel’s topic through such unwarranted presuppositions are entirely appropriate.

Even so, when Ferrarin himself attempts to give his own more positive characterization of what is at stake in these sections on “recognition” in consciousness, he too ultimately seems to appeal to concepts that are nevertheless essentially social in that they involve relations between “people” (viz., work). To be sure, Ferrarin suggests that they are not yet social because they are only being considered “abstractly,” i.e., not with reference to facts about their family, standing in civil society, etc. (cf. 42f; 36). Against this, however, it might be stressed, first, that the basic concept of *inter*-personality depends on the concept of *personality*, which is itself not developed until the other

objective spiritual categories are in place. Second, the concepts of personality and inter-personality should be contrasted with the more general concepts of *subjectivity* and *inter-subjectivity*, the latter of which can apply with perfect validity even to the unity of two cases of consciousness (i.e., to two “I”s, when “the I” / “subject” is individuated only across cases of consciousness *intra*-personally, i.e., when both “I”s are in the same “rational being” (reason) or “person” (when, e.g., two “I thinks” are both mine, etc.)).

At times Ferrarin himself seems to emphasize the higher generality of the concept of subjectivity for Hegel, and seems also drawn to an idea of the “self” or “subject” that is active prior to the achievement even of “the I” or “consciousness” in particular (cf. 11, 18), such that there can be subjectivity without yet there being “the I” (cf. 25). This seems completely right to me, and of crucial importance for any understanding of Hegel’s more general conception of “the subject” (treated, e.g., in the *Logic*) and how it is distinct from the specific form of “the I” (treated in the *Philosophy of Spirit*). What seems less in line with Hegel’s texts, however, is the fact that Ferrarin does not always seem to follow through this differentiation further upwards along the order of later concepts Hegel also distinguishes, each of which might also and often, in someone else’s hands, be lumped or run together (so, not just: self, subjectivity, vs. soul, consciousness (“the I”), but also these vs. reason, spirit, person, person as subject, person as citizen, etc.). The unity of “the I” of a single consciousness, with that of a single second consciousness, across cases of self-consciousness, might be sufficient to constitute a form of *inter-subjectivity*, which itself might yield (metaphysically) sufficient conditions for the achievement of reason—but as we have seen, even this is not yet sufficient for personality, inter-personality, sociality, or even Spirit in the technical sense—let alone for thinking in the technical sense.

§3. The place(?) of thinking in the Philosophy of Nature

Returning to Hegel’s remarks from the outset of the *Logic*, concerning the definition of logic as the science of “the Idea” in the “element” of thinking, we can now be on the lookout for a possible distinction between (i) “the idea” as a topic, over and against (ii) the consideration of this topic specifically as to how it shows up in a specific “element”—e.g., as to how it is manifest merely in thinking—and then over and against as well (iii) what it would be to consider a specific element itself (e.g., thinking) as to its own conditions. I have sketched an interpretation according to which the consideration of (iii)

thinking itself, directly, as its own subject matter, does not happen until a decent way into the *Philosophy of Spirit*, even if the consideration of (ii) is already taking place in the *Logic*. Yet if (iii) isn't taking place until the *Philosophy of Spirit*, then it is also not taking place within the *Philosophy of Nature*.

Certain moments in Ferrarin's presentation might be taken to suggest that, to the contrary, the *Philosophy of Nature* (EN) itself is actually "about" thinking. Compare his discussion early on, and running throughout, not just of the elliptical movements of the planets—the topic of sections of the EN (cf. EN §280)—but also the organic structure of the life of squirrels—the topic of later sections of the EN (cf. EN §350). In both contexts, it seems that Ferrarin is trying to draw a suggestive inference from the fact that, early in the *Logic*, Hegel glosses the fact that thinking and thoughts can be *true*, and thereby "objective," by saying that true thoughts "coincide" with "the things grasped in thoughts," and hence that the science of things (metaphysics) "coincides" with the science of thinking (logic) (EL §24). From this fact—along with other explicit claims about nature itself being "the *Idea*", e.g., "the idea in the form of being-other" (cf. EN §247; cf. EN §§251–252, etc.)—Ferrarin seems to want to infer that, for Hegel, nature itself is a case of (an activity of) thinking. But then since squirrels and especially planets do not possess consciousness and are (ex hypothesi) not themselves human, this is meant to support Ferrarin's general thesis that, for Hegel, there can be not only "unconscious thinking" but even "nonhuman thinking" (cf. chapter 2).

Now, I think Ferrarin is right to emphasize that Hegel in no way means to characterize planets and squirrels as conscious or spiritual beings. What is less clear from the text of the *Philosophy of Nature* itself, however, is that Ferrarin is right to think that either nature as a whole, or these individual phenomena, are themselves properly described as either activities or movements of *thinking* or as cases of thought themselves (so, our (iii) above). This is so, even if nature is itself described as (ii) another manner in which "the *Idea*" exists or is realized. Notably, however, at the end of the *Logic*, Hegel highlights the fact that the manner in which the *Idea* exists as nature is distinct from how "the idea" exists merely in the element of *thinking*: nature is "the idea insofar as it *intuits* [*die anschauende Idee*]" (EL §244).

What is more, the term "thinking" itself only shows up in the *Philosophy of Nature* as a determination of how phenomena are to be "treated" within this science (i.e.,

“physics” will consist in a “*denkende Betrachtung*” of nature, etc.; EN §246)—i.e., not as part of the subject matter itself. To be sure, other terms that were themselves already developed in the *Logic*—such as: “subjectivity,” “life,” or even “the Idea” itself—and that might otherwise have been associated with thinking, are eventually used to characterize specific phenomena within nature itself.⁴⁴ Yet as we saw above, none of these terms is necessarily identical in significance with that of thinking—let alone any of the other terms (soul, consciousness, the I, self-consciousness, etc.) that pick out the other stages or shapes of spirit that obtain only in spirit and yet prior to thinking. Hence, the fact that nature is “the Idea” realizing itself as some form of “subjectivity,” and yet does so without consciousness or any obvious relation to “the I,” in no way speaks against the fact that it is not yet *thinking* or thought, and that thinking is in every case with consciousness and bears some relation to some I (Ferrarin, p. 59).

§4. The place(?) of thinking in the *Science of Logic*

In several ways—as we ourselves have anticipated above—much of the foregoing line of questioning of Ferrarin’s treatment of Hegel on thinking could be telescoped into a question about the subject matter of the science of logic itself. Insofar as one assumes—as I think Ferrarin does—not just that the *Logic* is about the way in which “the *Idea*” manifests itself in pure thinking, but that it is itself about *thinking* as to its subject matter, then it will be completely understandable that one would assume that, any time any of the “determinations” mentioned within the *Logic* show up anywhere else in the Encyclopedia, these signal that thinking is present in the subject matter at hand, whether implicitly or explicitly. This would entail, however, the quite strong conclusion that anytime anything is said, e.g., to “be,” to “not be,” to “become,” etc., we are entitled to assume that we are always already talking or judging *about thinking*, because all being (etc.) is itself thinking, since “being” (etc.) is a determination considered in the *Logic*.

⁴⁴ The whole aspect of nature that is “organic,” for example, is said to characterize “the idea as nature” specifically “in the determination of subjectivity” (EN §252), and is also highlighted as the moment when “the idea” finally “arrives at existence, first and immediately in life” (EN §337). The specific kinds of “subjectivity” that obtain within various forms of nature are also contrasted with one another (viz., the subjectivity of “vegetable nature” (EN §343) is contrasted with the subjectivity that pertains to the “animal organism” (EN §350)).

Now, an alternative to this interpretive assumption was already suggested above, provided we attend to the distinction between (a) “the *Idea* as manifest in pure thinking” (and the system of determinations that are seen to pertain to “the *Idea*” in this element) and (b) *thinking* itself. Just because “being” is (necessarily) the first determination of the *Idea* as it is manifest within thinking itself, in no way entails that everything that is (all *being*) is itself (a case of, or identical with some act of) thinking. Moreover, even if it turns out to be true, conversely—as it should be, since “thinking” itself shows up as a determination whose real actuality will presuppose as its condition all of the determinations that have come before it in the *Encyclopedia*—that every case of *thinking* itself is or has being, and also is not, and also becomes, and also exists, etc., this fact about thinking itself will only be able to be demonstrated and comprehended on the basis of the understanding of *what thinking itself is*—i.e., as a determination specifically of *Spirit* at a certain stage or shape. This specific “spiritual” determination, however, has not yet been officially introduced at the outset of the *Logic*, or even at the conclusion of the *Logic*—nor have the other “spiritual” determinations prerequisite for thinking, such as “soul,” “consciousness,” “intuition,” “representation,” etc., and nor have the “natural” determinations, which are themselves “presupposed” by spirit itself (as we saw above). In fact, Hegel is quite explicit about ruling out the former determinations as not forming a part of the subject matter of the *Logic*, in remarks such as the following from the “larger” *Science of Logic*:

[S]uch shapes as *intuition*, *representation*, and the like, belong to the *self-conscious spirit* which, as such, is not treated in logical science. Of course, the pure determinations of being, essence, and the concept, also constitute the substrate and the inner sustaining structure of the forms of spirit; spirit, as intuiting as well as sensuous consciousness, is in the form of immediate being, just as spirit as representing and also perceiving consciousness has risen from being to the stage of essence or reflection. But these concrete shapes are of as little interest to the science of logic as are the concrete forms that logical determinations assume in nature. These last would be space and time, then space and time as filled, as inorganic nature, and then organic nature. Similarly, the concept is also not to be considered here as the act of the self-conscious understanding, not as subjective

understanding, but as the concept in and for itself which constitutes a *stage of nature* as well as of *spirit*. Life, or organic nature, is the stage of nature where the concept comes on the scene, but as a blind concept that does not grasp itself, that is, is not a thinking concept [*nicht denkender Begriff*]; only as such does it belong to spirit. Its logical form, however, is independent of such shapes, whether unspiritual or spiritual. (WL 6:257; SL 517; my underline)

Later, Hegel explicitly groups “thinking [*Denken*]” together with “spirit” and “self-consciousness” as further “determinations of the idea,” beyond those treated within logic itself, determinations that occur only “insofar as the idea has itself and its existence as object” (WL 6:487; SL 689). This is of a piece with the underlined claim in the longer passage, where Hegel explicitly rules out mere life in organic nature as being a “thinking concept,” but then also explicitly confers this title only on what belongs to Spirit.

Note, by contrast, that the concept of “the concept” is not itself ruled out as being manifest in nature as well as spirit; this is because “concept” is named explicitly in the title of one of the three main parts of the *Logic*, whereas thinking is not named at all. This seems to speak against Ferrarin’s interpretive claim that, already within the *Logic*, *thinking* will be doubled as mere soul or life but also as the understanding or knowing of life (cf. 62–66). Note, finally, that the passage that Ferrarin himself cites as evidence that there is a self-knowing of thinking as thinking that already exists in the *Logic* (cf. 71), is not actually a quote from the *Logic* itself, but from the very end of the Encyclopedia, at the culmination of the *Philosophy of Spirit*. What is more, it is not from a discussion of thinking per se, but rather of *philosophy* itself, as “the self-thinking Idea, the knowing truth” (EG §574). This leads me to the final set of questions, pertaining to Ferrarin’s interpretation of the culmination of Hegel’s account of Spirit in the discussion of science and philosophy, as manifestations specifically of “*Absolute spirit*.”

§5. Thinking as an activity of Absolute Spirit

It is true that at the very end of the Encyclopedia, Hegel presents a reassessment of “the logical [*das Logische*],” in order to show how the logical, which formed the starting-point for philosophy, is itself ultimately to be comprehended as a “result as the spiritual [*das Geistige*]” (EG §574). This suggests, first, that “the logical” is only to be

comprehended as Spiritual at the conclusion of the Encyclopedia, rather than at the outset. Initially, the *Logic* is concerned only with the basic determinations of “the Idea,” which are manifest as they arise purely in the element of thinking (again: in contrast with being concerned with the nature of thinking itself as the pure element within which such determinations arise). By the conclusion of the Encyclopedia, by contrast, the very fact that the *Logic* itself is a *science* is sufficient indication that what is transpiring within it will involve specifically *spiritual* movement. This is because science in general can only be the achievement of Spirit, and a very demanding one at that. More specifically, science is a spiritual movement that depends not just on subjective spiritual forms (viz., intuiting, representing, or even thinking), but also objective spiritual forms (viz., family, civil society, the state, world-history), but *also* art and religion as earlier forms of the activity and realization of *Absolute* Spirit. This rich relation of dependencies, however, is in no way manifest at the outset of the *Logic*—or even at its conclusion—in particular, since none of the requisite “spiritual” determinations have been developed, and hence there is no material with which to comprehend what these dependencies might involve. Rather, as the end of the “larger” *Logic* has it, the concluding result of this science is the Idea as “still *logical*,” as still “shut up in pure thought,” such that *Logic* yields “the science only of the divine *concept*” (WL 6:572; SL 752)—rather than effecting the comprehension of either “the Idea” or of thinking itself as something actual, real, as a determination of Spirit, as a substance that is subject, etc.

This is further borne out, it would seem, by the concluding paragraph of the Encyclopedia *Logic* itself, which does not in any way purport to subsume “the Absolute Idea,” which it has hitherto developed, under the heading of anything spiritual whatsoever. Rather, it describes a movement that “the Idea” (not: thinking) itself makes to “freely release itself as *nature*” rather than as Spirit; what is more, as we anticipated above, it associates this movement with an “intuiting” (again, not: thinking) (cf. EL §244). Now, it is surely striking that here the Idea is said to be capable of performing an act, which is later introduced as pertaining to spirit, rather than to nature itself. Still, we might read this (as with the introductory sections of the *Logic* itself) as Hegel anticipating the fact that “the Idea” itself can manifest itself in a second spiritual element besides thought, namely, intuition (as it can even manifest in a third spiritual element: representation (qua religion)). Nevertheless, as with the *Logic* itself, and the possibility that consideration of

thinking per se is being bracketed, so too with the *Philosophy of Nature*, it is open to us to interpret Hegel as bracketing *intuiting* per se from that which is being considered, since this, too, will not be a topic until the *Philosophy of Spirit*; rather, it is only *the Idea* as to its manifestation in the element of intuiting that is being considered (cf. eg. EN §258).

This leads us to the question of whether it is possible for the Idea to wholly and adequately manifest itself as actual in either intuiting or in thinking. The structure of the Encyclopedia suggests that nature (*idea qua intuiting*) is not the culmination of the Idea's realizations. This insufficiency is more fully confirmed by Hegel's later discussions of art as an act of the intuiting of the Idea by an absolute spirit (EG §556), and its overcoming through the activity of religion and its representing (EG §565) and finally by philosophy as an absolute form of the Idea "self-consciously thinking" (EG §572). Bracketing what, precisely, it will mean for the Idea to fully and adequately manifest itself in the "self-conscious thinking" of philosophical science, the main point of interest for our present purposes is that consideration of this possibility does not transpire at the end of the *Logic*. What more will be needed to even formulate this question can be anticipated by our own quick sketch of the progress of the *Philosophy of Spirit* itself: thinking will itself need to be considered not just as the manifestation of spirit in general—as a development beyond self-consciousness and reason, beyond intuiting and representing—but specifically as to its highest possibility.

But can we say anything more about what form this absolute spiritual activity will take? There are moments where it can seem that, for his part, Ferrarin means for absolute spirit to itself be something that takes the form of "the I," and also to include or incorporate—or perhaps even be performed by—the *specifically human* "I" (cf. his remarks about religion and "God in his community," (75–77). It is not clear, however, how Ferrarin means to bring this into line with Hegel's own continual reference to religion in general—and (as Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of religion suggest) Christian trinitarian theology in particular—as the most adequate "representation" of the absolute, i.e., of the same content that is ultimately comprehended in "thinking" within philosophy. Though the human community is one aspect or side of the manifestation of the absolute in religion, it is not the only aspect. In particular, no human community seems capable of manifesting absolute Spirit as not just the "final cause" (77) of existence, but as also self-productive, and this not just in the sense of "realizing" *itself* (cf. p105f), but as the realizing

of *all that is*, and on the most cosmic of scales. On each of these fronts, the representing that is manifest in religion—along with the intuiting that is manifest in art, and the thinking that is manifest in philosophy—seems to incorporate the “nonhuman” at least in the sense of involving activity that is—not *below* the human, but decidedly *more-than-human*. This itself seems partially anticipated in the designation of “the absolute Idea” as “the divine [*göttliche*] concept” at the end of the *Logic*, and also signaled in Hegel’s infamous remark that logic itself presents God in its eternal essence, before the creation of nature and of finite Spirit (cf. WL 5:44; SL 29).

None of this, of course, gives all that much indication of an alternative substantive answer to the question of how best to understand “absolute Spirit” itself. Nor does it do more than gesture at what “the absolute idea” would be, considered in abstraction from its realization in “the absolute Spirit,” considered only as it is manifest “in” the element of thinking, as in the *Logic* itself, without yet a full or complete “self-conscious thinking” of itself. I will be very happy to hear more of Ferrarin’s own thoughts about these matters—both in this symposium and in his future work—and I am delighted to have had the chance to think along with him in reading this very rewarding book.

Review 2: Tobias Rosefeldt, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Within one week of August 1770, the two main seeds of classical German philosophy that would eventually develop into Hegel's absolute idealism saw the light of day for the first time. The first one, of course, was little Georg Wilhelm Friedrich himself, who was born in Stuttgart on the 26th of August. The second one, conceived with a little less crying just six days earlier and about 1000 km away, was Kant's *Inaugural Dissertation*, which he defended on the 21st of August in Königsberg.

To remind oneself of this coincidence is instructive for two reasons. First, it gives us occasion to reread Kant's first semi-critical exposition of transcendental idealism and notice that some of the central ideas of Hegel's ripe idealist system can already be found in this work, albeit in a somewhat embryonic state. There is, of course, the idea that some structural features of the world are *ideal*, i.e., somehow correspond to structures of the self-conscious subject, and that this explains how these features can be essential for the world but also be recognizable as such. But it is also the central topic of Kant's book that casts its shadow on the future, namely the question of what turns a manifold into a world, i.e., an organized totality.⁴⁵

Second, the coincidence reminds us of the fact that Kant and Hegel are temporal neighbors, that the one was just in his mid-forties when the other was born. Of course, we all know that in some sense. We all know that Hegel published his first important philosophical writings when Kant was still alive. However, that does not diminish the impression that the two come from different philosophical ages or planets. I do not only mean this in the sense that a lot of philosophical development has taken place between Kant's main works and Hegel's entry on the philosophical scene. There also has certainly been a lot of philosophical development between Plato and the Stoics, between Descartes and Hume or between Frege and Quine. However, in all of these cases one could easily

⁴⁵ See Sec. 1 of the *Inaugural Dissertation*, 2:387–392 (all references to Kant are to the volume and page numbers of *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, edited by the Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Georg Reimer (later Walter de Gruyter), 1900–), except in case of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which is cited by reference to the A and B pagination of the original 1781 and 1787 editions).

imagine a counterfactual scenario in which the earlier of these figures read one of the main works of the later and had a meaningful discussion about it with its author. And this is precisely something that is extremely difficult to imagine in the case of Kant and Hegel. It seems inconceivable that Kant had read the *Phenomenology*, or the *Science of Logic*, and would then afterwards have been able to have a philosophical discussion with Hegel about it. This inconceivability is not due to our lack of imagination but has a *fundamentum in re*, which needs explanation.

One of the things I liked very much about Ferrarin's book is that he takes on the challenge to give such an explanation. The first part of this explanation, set out in the first four chapters of the book, is an exposition of one element of Hegel's philosophy that sets him radically apart from the Kantian and pre-Kantian tradition, namely his account of thought as something that is "objective" in a sense that is incompatible with its traditional description as an activity of the self-conscious subject (chapters 1–4). The other part is a diagnosis and criticism of Hegel's own engagement with Kant's philosophy. In chapter 5 of the book, Ferrarin shows in great detail and with admirable exegetical subtlety how many of Hegel's characterizations of Kant's system are based on a rather superficial, uncharitable, and simplistic reading of Kant's writings. Moreover, Ferrarin argues that surprisingly many of Hegel's critical responses and alleged alternatives to what he sees in Kant can already be found in Kant himself. Given the resulting more charitable understanding of Kant, the differences between their philosophies are less insurmountable and a meaningful dialogue can begin—if not between Kant and Hegel, then between contemporary inhabitants of planet Kant and planet Hegel.

Being myself an expert on the first planet much more than on the latter, I obviously have great sympathy for Ferrarin's project in chapter 5. Not only do I also have a natural tendency to defend Kant against simplified and uncharitable interpretations and found many of his responses to Hegel from a Kantian perspective very persuasive, I also agree with Ferrarin that Hegel's misunderstandings and suggested alternatives can nevertheless be philosophically very fruitful because they force us to read Kant in a much more demanding and interesting way, a way in which we might never have read him

unless we had seen him through the eyes of Hegel.⁴⁶ So I will not present any fundamental criticism of Ferrarin's project in chapter 5. I will, rather, comment on one aspect of Ferrarin's defense of Kant against Hegel and push it a little bit further, namely his remarks about Kant's account of sensible intuition and its features of singularity, immediacy, and the givenness of its objects. These elements of Kant's philosophy seem to me the most fundamental and most important points of disagreement between him and Hegel, and a more comprehensive discussion will hopefully contribute to the general discussion about their relationship. I also want to press Ferrarin a little to take sides and say more explicitly whose account he finds more convincing regarding these aspects.

I will start with a quote in which Ferrarin raises an objection against Hegel's criticism of Kant's views of space and time as objects of *a priori* sensible intuition, expressed in the claim that "intuition should serve the purpose of saving us the trouble of comprehending":

Hegel does not see that the problem of space and time is not what we can learn about them once we have translated them into concepts, but the type of existence and the function they have. The uniqueness of space and time has nothing to do with the uniqueness of a concept of color. When Hegel translates it into these terms, he brings the problem back to his own ground, that is the dialectic between universal and particular. The relation between color and blue, moreover the relation between blue and singular instances of blue things, does not have anything in common with the relation between space and objects in space or portions of space. Hegel ignores—he refuses to understand—that, unlike a discursive concept, space exists as an undivided whole.

A discursive concept is a class with an extension achieved by a composition ... of conceptual notes ... and an object is an instance, falling *under* a concept. Space instead is undivided, uncomposed, continuous, as an infinite given magnitude in relation to which all particular space are not instances falling under space, but are

⁴⁶ See Ferrarin's fine remarks about how Hegel's thinking can inspire our method of doing history of philosophy in the *Introduction* of his book.

“only though *in it*” (KrV A 25/B 39) as *limitations* ... of a presupposed continuum.
(162)

We could also put Ferrarin’s point this way: Hegel seems to confuse two distinct one–many relations here, that of a concept to its instances, which is governed by the relation of set membership, and that of a whole to the parts of which it consists, which is governed by the parthood relation of mereology. And he does not seem to see that the fact that there is this distinction is one of Kant’s central arguments for assuming that intuition, as a faculty of singular representation, is irreducible to the understanding.

Alfredo continues to criticize Hegel for the overhasty dismissal of the faculty of sensibility that is based on the confusion of these two relations:

The egregious Hegelian reduction of the faculties of pure reason to two, understanding and reason proper, goes incredibly unnoticed (at least I have not found any mention, let alone discussion of this, in the rich bibliography on Hegel’s critique of Kant). Since sensibility is our way of accessing appearances, so goes Hegel’s reasoning, it is not a faculty but only a vehicle of the presentation of things to thought. (163)

I think that this criticism is perfectly convincing. And I think that it is rather devastating for Hegel’s general criticism of Kant and maybe also for his own philosophy. The distinction between understanding and sensibility as two irreducible cognitive faculties is probably *the* most important Kantian objection against rationalism. And if Hegel, the heir of rationalism, has misunderstood one of Kant’s main arguments for the irreducibility of the two faculties, then this is really bad news for the project of reducing everything to reason (understood so narrowly that it excludes a non-conceptual faculty). For Kant, the fact that intuitions are singular representations and can present us with unified manifolds that are structured by part–whole relationships was a reason to ascribe to sensible intuitions its own irreducible content, and hence not to take them to be mere “vehicles” but to regard them as grounded in an irreducible cognitive faculty. But can we still believe in Hegel’s absolutisms of reason if this is true? I was not sure how devastating Ferrarin regards his own criticism here.

I want to extend Ferrarin's defense of Kant's account of intuition to two further features that Kant thinks are essentially connected to it and could not be taken over by reason and understanding: immediacy and the property of giving us objects. Both of these features get very bad press among Hegelians, and it is worth asking whether the Hegelian criticism of them is justified.

Let us start with immediacy. There seem to me two senses in which one could understand Kant's claim that intuitions are immediate representations in a way that was objectionable from a Hegelian perspective. The first sense is that intuitions are immediate in the sense that they can deliver some content to consciousness all by themselves, i.e., without the help, or mediation, of some other faculty. Although this point is controversial among Kantians, there are good reasons not to understand Kant in this sense. As Ferrarin rightly remarks, the fact that Kant introduces the faculties of sensibility, understanding, and reason one after the other and claims that they are irreducible to one another might mislead one to think that he thought that these faculties work independently from one another (cf. 157, 165). However, he continues, Kant makes clear that the faculties have to cooperate in order to deliver conscious content. In the case of intuition, Kant famously held that an activity of sensible synthesis has to be performed by the spontaneity under the guise of the transcendental imagination in order to generate consciousness of objects of intuitions, e.g., space and time as objects of *a priori* intuition.

The second questionable sense in which Kant could mean intuitions to be immediate is that they give us atomic content, content that is determined all by itself and not through a distinction from other content. (Hegel's criticism of "*sinnliche Gewissheit*" in the *Phenomenology* can be read as criticism of this idea of non-mediated content.) However, again this is not the sense of immediacy that Kant has in mind when he characterizes intuitions as immediate. This is clear if we look at the reasons that Kant gives for his claim that a sensible synthesis of the imagination operates on the manifold given in intuition. This sensible synthesis has the function of making the manifold conscious as such.⁴⁷ Now, Kant stood in the rationalists' tradition of spelling out the being

⁴⁷ Although there are interpretations that read Kant as holding a form of representational atomism, according to which no non-simple items could ever be given to us in sensibility and any sensible manifold

conscious of representations by means of whether and to what extent we can distinguish the content of the representation from something else (clearness of consciousness), or from the parts it contains (distinctness of consciousness). However, unlike the rationalists, who thought that sensible and intellectual representations are fundamentally of the same kind and are only distinct with respect to their clearness and distinctness, Kant thought that the distinction between obscure, clear, and distinct representations applies to both concepts and intuitions.⁴⁸ In order for intuitions to be conscious representations, the synthesis of the imagination has to make it the case that we are able to sensibly distinguish objects from their surroundings or wholes from their parts.

One striking example Kant gives for the working of the synthesis on sensibility has to do with the way in which we become aware of the parts of a spatial whole. In the context of the Second Antinomy, Kant writes that we cannot treat the totality of parts of a given extended body as given because “the parts are given for the very first time through the regress of the decomposing synthesis” (A 505/B 533). *Prima facie*, Kant’s talk of a “decomposing synthesis” sounds like a *contradictio in adjecto*, and Hegelians might like it for its truly speculative nature. However, once we have understood that the function of synthesis is not to put together manifolds, but rather to make given manifolds conscious, it is clear how there can be such a thing like a decomposing synthesis for Kant. Take the example of a circle that we divide by drawing a straight line through its center. By drawing that line, we bring to our awareness two halves of the circle. These halves might have been there in some sense already before my drawing the line, but they were certainly not objects of my consciousness then because I could not distinguish them from one another. But by dividing the circle, I am suddenly sensibly aware of the whole of the circle consisting of two parts and so the division can count as an act of synthesis. It is not a conceptual act. I am not distinguishing the two halves by means of general marks with respect to which they differ and also not by recognizing the fact that the universal “being half of a circle” can have two distinct instances. I distinguish them intuitively.

would have to be composed from atomic elements, it is neither compulsory nor plausible to take Kant to be committed to such a form of atomism (see Grüne, *Blinde Anschauung*, Frankfurt a.M. Klostermann 2006).

⁴⁸ Cf. *Lectures on Metaphysics Mongrovius* (29:879), *Jäsche-Logic* (9:35) and *Anthropology* (7:136); for a detailed interpretation see Grüne, *Blinde Anschauung*, chapter 1.3.2.

So, if intuitions are neither immediate in the sense that they can give us content without the cooperation with some other faculty, nor immediate in the sense that they can give us content without the need to distinguish this content from other content, in what sense *are* intuitions immediate after all? I think they are immediate because the referential mechanism by which they represent is different from concepts. Concepts contain marks and refer to individual objects because these objects have these marks. Intuitions refer to individual objects directly, they make these objects present to us.

Again, we can ask how much of Hegel's criticism of Kant's account of sensible intuition can be sustained once we have understood that Kant did not assume immediacy in any of the two objectionable senses? And I again would like to hear from Ferrarin more pronouncedly what he thinks is left of Hegel's criticism after this insight.

I also want to say a few words about the third feature that makes intuitions irreducible and special for Kant, the fact that intuition "gives us objects." This role of intuition for putting us in touch with actually existing things has been a central motive of Kant's philosophy from his criticism of the ontological proof in his *Beweisgrundchrift* onwards. And also, independently from Kant, it seems just very natural to assume that something has to be given to us, and that we hence have to be passive in some respect, in order to have access to actuality. So not only the Kantians need to be given very profound reasons to give up this idea. Does Hegel offer such reasons?

Again, I will take my starting point from a passage from Ferrarin's own penetrating objections of Hegel's portrayal of the Kantian account. On the question regarding how far objects are produced by reason and the understanding, he writes:

[For Kant] (1) experience is actually made possible by reason's constitutive activity; (2) the individual is made possible by the universal, the empirical by the *a priori*; and (3) the indefiniteness of experience is in principle intelligible, lawlike, and *familiar*. For I can experience particulars in a meaningful way because every particular is part of a universal and necessary connection of all apprehension. Thus, what preexists from the point of view of experience is not a material particular, but a formal theory of the object of experience. Objectivity is the universal and necessary anticipation that we project onto things. (174)

Now, one might think that such a notion of objectivity and objecthood is incompatible with the idea that objects are given to us in intuition. For how could it be possible, one might ask, that objects are given to us from outside if it is only because of us that there is such a thing as objecthood at all?

I do not think that the givenness of objects in intuition is incompatible with the claim that our understanding constitutes what objecthood consists in. At least the two are compatible if we chose the right understanding of the phrase “the object is given.” Phrases of the form “*F*s are given to *x*” can be understood in two senses. In the first sense they mean that something is already an *F* and then it is given to *x*. If you give me a coin then the coin is given to me in this sense. However, if you give me a kiss then the kiss is given in a different sense. It is not the case that the kiss is already there and then you give it to me. The kiss only exists in the act of its giving, so to speak. However, this does not mean that it is not given at all and that I am not passive in receiving the kiss. (There can be a big difference between kissing and being kissed!) Now, what I want to suggest is that Kantian objects are given to us like kisses not like coins. The coin-model would indeed conflict with the idea of a constitution of objecthood by the understanding, because it presupposes that things can already be objects before they are given to us. But if objects are given like kisses then we can accept that things would not be full-fledged objects unless they were constituted by our understanding as such. But these very objects could also be given because we are to a certain extent passive with respect to them: the *a priori* form of objecthood that lies in our understanding neither determines the contingent and *a posteriori* features of such objects nor entails their actual existence.

Hegel strongly opposes the idea that anything outside of reason could be given to reason. And that is one of his fundamental disagreements with Kant. Ferrarin puts this point nicely as follows:

It seems to me that what separates Kant from Hegel is, more than reason, reason’s other. Kant takes his bearings from the empirical and the alienness of the world that reason seeks to penetrate. Hegel ascribes to such a position a subordinate place as reflection ... and has the more radical ambition of abolishing all transcendence. For Hegel, there is nothing *relevant* other than

reason. For him Kant, who turns what is found into a product, should have followed through on this point and overcome givenness once and for all. (167)

With our newly introduced terminology we can put this point as follows: For Hegel reason is not kissable by its other.

Now, is this a good or a bad thing? And if the former, why is it a good thing rather than a bad thing? I would like both Ferrarin and Hegel to say more about these questions. The passage that I have just quoted is one of those in the book in which Ferrarin says where Hegel does differ from Kant even if the latter is freed from Hegel's own misinterpretations of him. What I have sometimes found missing from these passages is a clear statement of whether and for what reasons Hegel's system is superior (or maybe inferior?) to that of Kant's regarding the aspects where they differ. Why should I, playing the role of a convinced Kantian, accept the undeniably anti-Kantian features of Hegel's system, e.g., his abolition of givenness?

I would also like to hear more from Hegel about this question. My own experience with Hegel is that he is a very suggestive narrator of conceptual developments and he offers penetrating diagnoses. But he does not give a lot of arguments for his claims. The persuasiveness of his philosophy does not rest on his engagement with his opponent on an accepted common ground and arguments to the effect that his own system fares better with respect to them. It is rather a redescription of the opponent's views within the framework of his own grand narrative. This can be inspiring, but also sometimes frustrating. And I think it is probably the deeper reason why a fruitful conversation between the historical Kant and the historical Hegel is so hard to imagine.

Author Response: Alfredo Ferrarin, University of Pisa

§1. Introduction

I am very grateful to Clinton Tolley and Tobias Rosefeldt for the time and scrupulous attention they devoted to my book *Thinking and the I: Hegel and the Critique of Kant* and for their criticisms. Before I discuss them, let me say something to explain how this book came to be.

Actually, it is the second book I have recently written: after one on Kant, now this one on Hegel (it is only by a strange coincidence that they were both published here in Illinois).⁴⁹ It was only as I was completing them that I realized something I had not thought out as part of the original plan. By the end of my Kant book, I realized that I was often trying to respond to Hegel's critique of Kant. The traits of Kant's idea of reason that surfaced with ever greater necessity in my mind gave voice to what I interpreted as Kant's possible reply to what I began to identify as Hegel's one-sided reading, if not misunderstanding, of Kant.

As I wrote my Hegel book, while deploring that Hegel never took seriously the Doctrine of Method of the first *Critique* or even the Dialectic, which he was one of the few (and first) to praise, I realized that Hegel tried to solve, or give a very different version of, some problems that I had isolated as internal to the Doctrine of Method itself.

Naturally the two books are mutually independent and address different issues and audiences. Yet, if taken together, they can be portrayed as one complex and sustained argument on reason in Kant and Hegel. This, along with the fact that chapter 5 is much more intricate and difficult than the rest of the book (and I am painfully aware it is not an easy reading), may be why in their critique of my Hegel book both Rosefeldt and Tolley focus in good part on this relation.

But there is more about the genesis of this book I would like to mention in these opening remarks. One point that nicely sums up some of the leading questions of my book,

⁴⁹ *The Powers of Pure Reason: Kant and the Idea of Cosmic Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015); *Thinking and the I: Hegel and the Critique of Kant* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2019).

and which again I had not thought of as I wrote it, is Jacobi's dictum (or, better, question): "*Hat der Mensch Vernunft, oder hat Vernunft den Menschen?*" (Does man have reason, or reason man?). In many ways, this question is behind the relation between thinking and the I that I have tried to discuss. Another consideration is this: For many years now, more than I care to remember, I have been writing two other, quite different books. One is a theoretical essay on imagination and images, one is on imagination in Kant and in the history prior to him. I hope the stack of pages in my drawer will see the light of day before I die (I keep telling myself a sabbatical is all I would need, but I am not sure I believe that). As I reread the book we are discussing today, I like to think some of my interest in imagination helps shape my understanding of both Hegel and Kant and the way I write philosophy.

It is my personal belief, as I claim in the Introduction to the book, that to write compelling essays on classic figures in the history of philosophy an imaginative effort is required. Without the understanding's sharpness and reason's comprehensive regard philosophy can hardly stake any serious and cogent claim, but without imagination it does not get off the ground and all too often veers toward repetition and paraphrase. Imagination can at times be blind, but analysis is empty without it. Imagination is the archenemy of positivism: it revokes what is accepted, it negates the obvious, it keeps possibilities alive for the sake of understanding when facts have decided otherwise, it turns the gaze away from the given it puts in question to enable the conception of an alternative development. In my book on Hegel I see imagination take on different forms and work at various levels. One lesson we can draw from Hegel is to look past the surface for more than meets the eye. What appears is a motley crust that can change form and look, and we must regard it as the provisional reification of a spontaneous movement beyond our control. Seeing in being the becoming that made it what it is, in the present a moment of the whole development from the past to the intimation of a future, in the actual the concretions of some possibilities and not others, in the positive the negative, in identity difference: this is the anti-positivistic core of dialectic.

Contrary to popular belief, Hegel celebrates the understanding's work. Without it we have nothing to go on. Without it we do not get reason, but irrationality. The understanding's identity, determinacy, univocity are indispensable. But identity is itself one moment of rationality, to be thought together with non-identity. The understanding

is one form reason takes. The understanding is necessary, but as a premise that reason must make fluid and comprehend in its movement. Where the understanding looks for univocal definitions, reason seeks the plurivocity of meaning of thought-determinations.

In this sense, something in dialectic and Hegel's speculative reason is comparable to a logic of imagination. Better said, imagination and reason together must invert the fixed truths the understanding pretends to claim. In Hegel's dialectic the different meanings of all philosophical concepts require their continuous going back to themselves. This is their dialectic, their plasticity: a lexicon in the making, a dictionary of all philosophical concepts exhibited in their development, where nouns are provisional designations of knots to be untangled rather than titles of a possible solution. Language is the work of the understanding insofar as it fixates its objects in their identity, whereas dialectic must be able to show their contradictoriness, their becoming, their movement, their fluidity. If determinacy and identity must rule language, language presupposes an ontology made up of distinct and separate entities as well as grammatical and syntactical structures notable for their separateness. Hegel's logic has the effect of recasting our vocabulary, our whole system of thought. In my book I show how philosophy provides us with a new speculative vocabulary regarding such diverse concepts as thinking, subjectivity, self, concept, actuality, and others, but more thematically reason and the I.

§2. On Tolley's Comments

Tolley's opening words are very flattering, to the point I am almost embarrassed to say publicly how much I appreciate them. Before I begin addressing his points, let me make a few comments on Hegel's dialectic. You may wonder why they should be relevant in this context, but I trust you will eventually come to see how they are an indispensable premise for my replies to Tolley.

Dialectic of course does not have its own language. Even when Hegel speaks of the speculative sentence, as I write in my book, all he aims at is to show the limitations of the logic of ordinary language as it has an inevitable impact on philosophy and speculative thinking. Philosophy must make do with what it has; but it makes do by subverting the existing language from within, by putting in question the linearity of its syntax and showing how an accomplished univocity is an incoherent dream. All important concepts are ambiguous, have different nuances when not different meanings. What philosophy

does is return to them relentlessly and all the time, from ever new vantage points: it examines them in their use and as a developing system. Categories are not pure concepts we can hope to grasp in their clear-cut identity once and for all. They shift meaning at different systematic levels, they are fluid and plastic. Among other consequences, this implies they are not generated by a rigorous demonstrative logic but rather by the effort at defining them; in this effort we realize they cannot stand on their feet, they show their limitations and urge beyond themselves. This is their peculiar kind of necessity. But, as David Lachterman showed, it is vain to hope to sketch a dialectical logic as a set of rules or method alternative to the ordinary ones. At best you can study what is problematic for ordinary logic: the recursivity of categories, or the fact that some categories are defined in their application to themselves, or the difference between operative concepts and the same concepts as they become thematic; and some scholars have given us important studies, beginning with Dieter Henrich's study of the different forms of negation. If Ricoeur were still here in Chicago, we could perhaps hope to get a rich account not so much of metaphors in Hegel, but of the ways in which dialectic twists ordinary language through unexpected rhetorical tropes, similes, metonymy, catachresis, and alike. One exemplary rhetorical figure in Hegel's philosophy is synecdoche, the figure that uses the part for the whole or an inclusive notion for a less inclusive one (or vice-versa), whereby one term stands for itself but at once also for its kind. Often in Hegel one category or concept represents itself individually, but represents also the widest latitude of its meaning, or its possible application to different scopes. Concepts in Hegel defy the understanding and challenge the aspiration to univocity; their determinacy must be arrived at through their relation to and interaction with akin notions in any given context. And this is for Hegel the best way to approach the dynamism of thinking, which cannot stand still.

The paramount example of this practice in Hegel is the use of the same term in a wide and a narrow sense. Incidentally, this is not only Hegel's prerogative or the hallmark of dialectic, as if dialectic were one particular kind of logic and not, as I just argued, one way to turn inside out the ordinary kind of logic: take as a significant example the title of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the simultaneity of reason in a general wide and comprehensive sense, as the internal articulation of sensibility, understanding and reason proper, and in a narrow sense as a faculty of the unconditioned; and consider, moreover,

the twofold role of the genitive, as subjective (it is reason that criticizes itself) and objective (reason is the object of its own critique), which accounts for the identity *and* difference of judge and defendant in the tribunal to which the title of the work refers. As is clear even from this example, recursivity, synecdoche, and ambiguity are pervasive and inescapable to the point they cannot be thought away; but this is an aspect we must question and a resource we can fruitfully exploit, rather than a problem we should try to stay away from (and thereby avoid facing). Let me now return to Hegel. I was saying that the terms “Idea” and “thinking” are equally used in wide and narrow senses. In the logic the Idea has its specific place in the subjective logic, but it is also true that the whole logic is nothing but the idea in the abstract element of thinking. I would say that, conversely, thinking proper is reached at the end of the logic, but it is the element throughout its progression and the reason and force of its unfolding. In this sense it seems to me that “Idea” and “thinking” have largely overlapping uses and meanings: the logic has to do with thinking as it is (Being and Essence) and thinking as it is thought (Concept). Likewise, the Idea exists outside itself in nature, but in itself in the logic.

Not so Tolley. He dissociates Idea and thinking. My premise on the language of dialectic is indispensable because I see that Tolley makes a sustained effort at keeping apart what he calls a “technical” or “official” treatment of thinking from other uses of the word “thinking,” as in my phrase “unconscious thinking.” Having separated “thinking” and “idea,” he concludes that Hegel's logic has to do with the Idea in the abstract element of thinking, but wants to deny that thinking is its subject matter. His point is that “thinking specifically as to how it shows up in a specific element ... [is quite different from] thinking itself, directly, as its own subject-matter.” Differently stated, his point is that thinking is the element of the idea, but the idea has “other modes of existing which is not just in thinking.” So far so good, for me that goes without saying; except it should be clear that here “thinking” is taken in a very narrow sense, the sense Tolley finds at the end of the Psychology in the Philosophy of Subjective Spirit; and except, more pertinently, that he uses this remark to criticize my interpretation because he believes that it is only here that thinking is “considered directly for the first time.” In other words, he charges me with collapsing Idea and thinking. Once we have realized what it is he has in mind by “thinking” (i.e., essentially a conscious activity, “in every case with consciousness” in his words), we can appreciate the result of his remark: he opposes Idea and thinking, and he takes the

idea as distinct from thinking (we attend to "the distinction between (a) the Idea as manifest in pure thinking ... and (b) thinking itself"). This baffles me because it suggests not simply a conceptual and literal difference between Idea and thinking, *as well it should*, but also an Idea that manifests itself in thinking but does not think itself. What could that possibly amount to? What does it mean for the Idea to exist in thinking but not to think? This seems unintelligible to me. It escapes me how, specifically, the Absolute Idea does not think itself according to Tolley, while it seems to me that it has the function of going retrospectively over—of *thinking through*—all the logical passages that led us to it until we realize its primacy. Before that, it escapes me how the idea of knowledge (the *Idee des Erkennens* in the *Science of Logic*), with the analyses and synthesis of scientific method etc., can be seen as anything other than thinking: as anything other than the conscious activity of an I as he/she pursues a science.

Upon closer scrutiny, it seems to me he and I have a different reading of the relation between logic and *Realphilosophie*—so different that our divergence must be behind the striking views he ascribes to me. It would be quite absurd, and it never was my intention (I have explained the shortcomings of a realist interpretation of the idea in Hegel), to claim that nature is a case of the *activity* of thinking. Yet, you cannot make sense of Hegel's nature (or, for that matter, Aristotle's, even Galileo and Newton's nature) without seeing it as objective thought, i.e., as pervaded by essences, forces, laws, and categories. From nature to the anthropology, what we have, says Hegel, is "passive *nous*" (ENZ § 389). This is not my "inference" and it certainly rules out that "thinking is in every case with consciousness." The fact that "thinking is not named at all" in the logic, before being false, is neither here nor there, since the logic deals with nothing else.

I agree with Tolley that it is necessary to distinguish between the thought-determinations (concepts, categories) in the logic and the concepts Spirit produces for itself (in the Philosophy of Subjective Spirit), but that does not mean that in the former case you get the Idea, in the latter thinking, as if they were two different elements. In the former you have the Idea in its abstract element, in the latter you have the Idea as it is for Spirit. What the logic does is abstract and isolate categories from the substrates of thought in which they are enmeshed and inevitably live; at that point you enter the realm of shadows (*Reich der Schatten*) in which you focus on each thought in itself, in its purity, for what it purports to claim, and you examine each category in its own right. In the

Philosophy of Subjective Spirit, you focus on thought through the stages in which it makes its appearance *in* or *for* an individual subject of thought; here the categories are, on the one hand, mixed with sensuous content, on the other, dependent on subjective forms of representation. In this sense of the word, thinking naturally presupposes soul, consciousness, imagination, self-consciousness etc., alright; i.e., thinking thereby obviously presupposes the I; but that is because thinking is here understood as the subjective product of Spirit's awakening, coming into its own and getting to know itself. That is a description of what it is for Spirit to know thinking—a description of *thinking for Spirit*—not of all thinking or thinking in a supposedly “technical” sense. I would disagree with Tolley's thesis that understanding what thinking itself is comes down to understanding it “as a determination specifically of spirit at a certain stage”: the logic is the understanding of what thinking is in itself, i.e., logically or *for thinking*, as opposed to *for Spirit*. If there is a difference between the logical element that animates the world and the logic as thorough knowledge of conceptual relations, that is, the logical element as being and the logic as thought's self-consciousness, there is another, no less important difference between logical thinking and spirit's thinking: the first is “the realm of shadows, the world of simple essentialities, freed of all sensuous concretion,”⁵⁰ the second is thinking as it is made possible by representation, language, memory for an individual subject who reflects on the progressive freedom of the modes of its theoretical attitudes. The Psychology focuses on the faculties or activities involved in thinking. By contrast, the logic presupposes an immense work of abstraction whereby concepts are investigated and thought through in their purity.

There is an obvious interaction between logical categories and Spirit's concepts (in fact they can be considered to stand to one another as soul to flesh). For example, the I or self-consciousness of the Philosophy of Subjective Spirit is studied abstractly in the logic in its different senses and as implicit in different categories, from the self-relation of *Fürsichsein* in Being to the Subjective Concept; conversely, the Idea as one logical category has reality *qua* life in organic nature, but also *qua* individual self-consciousness, *qua* ethical life in objective spirit, *qua* Greek sculpture, etc. The underlying rationale for

⁵⁰ *Wissenschaft der Logik*, in *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, Red. E. Moldenhauer und K. M. Michel (Frankfurt a. M. 1969–1971), vol. 5, p. 55. *Science of Logic*, trans. G. di Giovanni (Cambridge 2010), p. 37.

this interaction is that logic, the Idea, or thinking exist in different ways in all those dimensions; and the logic is the science that studies these categories in their purity, knowing fully well they are the same categories at work in their concreteness in nature and in spirit. In this sense, precisely because I am sympathetic with Tolley's reference to §574 of the *Encyclopaedia* and believe the Absolute Idea is to be kept distinct from Absolute Spirit, I would say that the logical exists in different modes, in its abstract–logical and its natural and spiritual senses, and what spirit contributes to it is the concrete reality of the forms in which it lives. That is, I do not see the difference Tolley finds between the self-thinking Idea as the knowing truth and the Absolute Idea, for what changes is only the perspective from which you consider the *same content*. To this effect, in the book (71–73) I wrote that the logical element has different meanings depending on whether we take it as the result of the sciences or as a beginning. Knowing only the logical Idea means to possess its truth, but knowing also how the Idea pervades reality means for Spirit to possess the certainty that that truth is all there is. In other words, knowing the concept—the Idea, thinking—is not yet knowing its congruence with reality. Knowing the Idea without knowing the modes of its realization is *formal* knowledge. Since the Idea can intuit its reality only in Spirit, the logic cannot be the exclusive core of philosophy at all, that is, its goal or its presumed end. Therefore thinking, including the idea of knowledge, belongs in the logical Idea, but it is nothing more than a possibility that becomes real only in finite Spirit. In the Introduction to the *Science of Logic* Hegel compares the study of logic to that of grammar.⁵¹ To those who know a certain language well, grammar shows how the Spirit and culture of a people permeate and pervade that language. In the absence of such knowledge, grammar seems to contain only abstract, dry, and arbitrary rules. The difference is between abstract and empty universals and concrete universals, namely universals made concrete by a living Spirit that shines in and through the details. As you can see, the difference is between a logic understood as one particular formal structure, alongside other structures that may interest and excite us much more, and a logical element that we finally see weaving and pulsing in every living fold of reality.

Something similar applies to the reading of Hegel. The Absolute Idea is real only insofar as it is thought. Only when it is made true by Spirit does the logic reveal itself in

⁵¹ *Wissenschaft der Logik*, op. cit., 55, *Science of Logic*, op. cit., 37.

its true value. In sum, there exists no truth in itself. Without the meaning it has for us, truth is not. For this reason I find it striking that Tolley quotes §574 of the *Encyclopaedia* not as an indication that the perspective on the interrelation of the three “parts” of philosophy (logic, nature, spirit) can vary and be approached differently, but as “the culmination of the philosophy of spirit.” I believe this is simply wrong (the sections on philosophy at the end of the *Encyclopaedia* are not the culmination of Spirit but Hegel's metaphilosophy instructing us how to read his work). I also believe it rests (much like the previous point on the relation between logic and *Realphilosophie*) on some notable tacit assumptions: the *Encyclopaedia* is Hegel's final system, its parts are arranged in a rigid order and fixed structure set once for all, the logic and philosophy of Spirit are mutually independent. But Hegel has always fought against the idea of independent parts of philosophy, which he considers a misunderstanding or “an appearance” (§§575–577) that the three syllogisms are expressly meant to dispel.

Tolley asks me to say more on recognition and the struggle of two self-consciousnesses. He distinguishes between intersubjectivity and interpersonality. I believe that despite our different terminology we may be in principle in agreement here. Let me simply specify that when I spoke about intersubjectivity—because neither this word nor “interpersonality” are to be found in Hegel—I used the term in a loose sense, the sense that has become known in phenomenology after Husserl's Fifth *Cartesian Meditation*. What I meant to convey is that the two self-consciousnesses struggling for recognition in the famous pages of the *Phenomenology* are only a premise for something like Husserl's intersubjectivity: they are not yet social in a spiritual or ethical sense because they are painted in too abstract brushstrokes, as to designate two somewhat autistic individuals. It would be like asking about military strategy and campaigns and being offered the example of a duel.

Finally, I am not sure what is problematic in my comments on philosophy and religion and why Tolley says he does not see how my suggestion that Absolute Spirit might take the form of the I can be brought “into line with Hegel's own continual reference to religion and Christian trinitarian theology as the most adequate representation of the absolute.” In chapter 4 I do talk about the opening lines of the *Encyclopaedia* regarding the identity in content of philosophy and religion; that religion should be “the most adequate *representation* of the absolute” is precisely its limitation, that it holds for

representation and not for thinking. And I did qualify at the outset that by “nonhuman” I meant both subhuman and divine (53). Tolley doubts that a human religious community can manifest Absolute Spirit; I believe Hegel might want to retort: who but precisely a finite spirit of this sort can rise to the understanding of its being one with divine spirit “on the most cosmic of scales”? Whether a Christian believer may want to subscribe to Hegel’s view of religion is of course a wholly different matter, one which I luckily need not go into.

§3. On Rosefeldt's Comments

There is a tension in the way Rosefeldt characterizes the relation between Kant and Hegel. At the beginning two fairly different views surface and coexist: on the one hand, the impression that Kant and Hegel come from different ages or planets, on the other Hegel is heir to Kant’s philosophy to the point that, if his critique of Kant is wrongheaded, so must be his philosophy. Rosefeldt takes my book to explain why a dialogue between Kant and Hegel has so far seemed inconceivable, and how it can now start. I wish I could make contemporary inhabitants of planet Kant and planet Hegel start a meaningful dialogue. It seems to me that as long as they inhabit distant planets they can’t, and won’t: there is too much at stake in terms of identity and sense of belonging in the opposing camps, and the arguments from the enemy are invariably seen with suspicion, when they are not dismissed *a priori*. If, by contrast, you live on the planet Earth and philosophy is what you love, then you are already willing to learn from two of the greatest minds of all time. And in that case what I have shown in this book may be of interest and may help assess in more balanced ways what has surprisingly been adjudicated from the start and bought wholesale by Hegelians and what-nots, or pronounced meaningless by neo-Kantians. A balanced view includes giving Kant back his due after Hegel’s supposed dismissal of his thought, but that is not all I wanted to accomplish. And the dialogue is not simply between two opponents, but takes place at different levels also among different forces within each camp (or planet): for example, and I will have more to say about that below, between the 1781 Kant and the 1790 Kant, to whom I ascribe a weighty responsibility for creating legends in whose wake—not to say under whose spell—we still are living today.

Anyway, of the two views—the different planets and the continuity between Kant and Hegel, if not derivation of Hegel from Kant—the latter is more foreign to me. From

the start, Rosefeldt portrays the transition from "Kant's first semi-critical exposition of transcendental idealism to Hegel's ripe idealist system" so as to suggest a progression, as if one could push one's way from A to B by degrees, or by extension and extremization, while remaining inside the same underlying ground (which in this case would be called idealism). Later, he establishes definite connections I am not sure I see when he writes: "The distinction between understanding and sensibility ... is probably *the* most important Kantian objection against rationalism. And if Hegel, the heir of rationalism, has misunderstood Kant ... then this is really bad news for the project of reducing everything to reason (understood so narrowly that it excludes a non-conceptual faculty)." I wonder, incidentally, if that is because he thinks that, as he puts it, for Kant space and time are "ideal, i.e., somehow grounded in the *Geist*," and he thinks that has some bearing on Hegel, which is something I would disagree with (space and time are not ideal or grounded in *Geist* for Hegel. They are intuitions, modeled indeed largely after Kant's Aesthetics, but in the form of the initial and basic abstract exteriority of *nature's* being). However that may be, I would not consider Hegel the heir of rationalism; nor would I say that he aims at *reducing* everything to reason; nor, finally, does Hegel's reason exclude a non-conceptual faculty, for Hegel's thesis is precisely that the concept pervades the non-conceptual as a life-pulse and a force.

So, when Rosefeldt writes, "can we still believe in Hegel's absolutisms of reason if this is true? I was not sure how devastating Ferrarin regards his own criticism here. (Is anybody willing to defend Hegel here?)" My reply would ring: "I am." Rosefeldt wants to know what I think is left of Hegel's criticism of Kant after the blunders he makes in interpreting intuition that I have exposed. Not much, I would say, concerning *that* specific issue; I show that Hegel has no idea what he is saying on that particular point (pure intuition, as opposed to empirical, in *a priori* synthesis), and it is far from being a secondary point. And yet, this blindness undermines one part of Hegel's criticism of Kant, but his criticism is intended to reach further; and definitely his philosophy, which I would not consider an absolutism of reason, is quite independent of that, precisely because—and here I realize how far my reading is from contemporary, widely shared views—his philosophy is not Kantian or transcendental, but, if anything, rather closer to, say, Aristotle or Spinoza.

Rosefeldt presses me to take sides and asks, "how much of Hegel's criticism of

Kant's account of sensible intuition can be sustained once we have understood that Kant did not assume immediacy in any of the two objectionable senses? And I again would like to hear from Ferrarin more pronouncedly what he thinks is left of Hegel's criticism after this insight." My immediate temptation would be to recur to Hegel's puns on the futility of personal beliefs in philosophy ("*meine Meinung ist nur mein*," which one former student of mine at Boston University translated as "what I opine is only mine"), but that is a facile dismissal, which is neither polite nor serious, and besides I have no qualms being frank. On the level of work and scholarship, I do think my task was to present as rigorously as possible the arguments at stake and show which were tenable and which were not, and I do believe that if now I profess to being Hegelian or Kantian more than appeared from my pages that should be of little or no interest to the public at large. But if you do want to know, I think that Hegel's criticism—according to many, one of the highest peaks of philosophical speculation and critique—is often one-sided, shallow, misguided, at times plainly wrong, and based on simple ignorance (so my first aim there was to understand it and at once contextualize its relevance). But it is not entirely without merits (so my second aim was to understand what it still has to teach us). Also, if Hegel had taken Kant more seriously he would have acknowledged that his distance from Kant was far less pronounced than he thought, and he would have seen some alternatives he did not consider (so my third aim was to show the unsuspected affinities between Kant and Hegel). But those were some of the aims of chapter 5; the more general aims of my book were to understand the meaning of dialectic and of an objective thought, i.e., how Hegel's logic can work as his metaphysics, something that runs directly against the grain of Kant's philosophy—and which, I might add on a final note, I find quite inspiring, deep, and true.

Rosefeldt appreciates my analysis when he writes: "Hegel's characterizations of Kant's system are based on a rather superficial, uncharitable, and simplistic reading of Kant's writings. Moreover, Ferrarin argues that surprisingly many of Hegel's critical responses and alleged alternatives to what he sees in Kant can already be found in Kant himself." But I wonder if he would appreciate it no less if I were to stress that many of Hegel's simplifications can be found in Kant himself. Hegel does not invent anything as he charges Kant with a self-undermining reason. The standard simplified picture of Kant's philosophy, which unfortunately Hegel is partly responsible for and after him is rather common, stems actually from Kant's own retrospective judgments in the 1780s, as Kant

progressively undermines the whole architectonic structure of his system and the inner articulation of reason he had proposed in 1781. He progressively pushes out of the first *Critique* the noumenon to make it an exclusively moral problem of freedom. He expunges ideas, which migrate partly to the moral domain (the causality of freedom) and partly to the aesthetic domain (as aesthetic ideas, but especially in the notion of purposiveness and the representation of nature by reflection *as if* nature had been ordered systematically and providentially by a mind, so that the regulative function of ideas becomes the new principle of reflecting judgment). Reason, which was the only authority in its own tribunal, abdicates more and more clearly in favor of a newly appointed prosecutor, the understanding, which was one of its subordinate functions. Kant also jumbles up the whole structure of the first *Critique* by calling reason, in the second and third *Critiques*, the faculty of desire. At the same time, ideas are evaluated on the basis of a criterion that was elaborated for the understanding, that is, objective reality and the application of concepts to experience, and are judged on that basis. In turn, the understanding becomes synonymous with determining judgment and the mechanical execution—as the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* portrays it⁵²—of an intention that is now clearly identified as exclusively *epistemological*. The understanding has meanwhile removed from itself everything that cannot be reduced to the mechanism of nature; for example, the *ideas* of homogeneity, affinity, and specification, which in the Appendix to the 1781 Dialectic were nothing less than the criterion of empirical truth (KrV A 651), disappear from the concepts of the empirical sciences. In sum, reason now becomes exclusively transcendent, and is evaluated in terms of the understanding.

So, it is Kant who undermines Kant before Hegel does. It is Kant who in the third *Critique* portrays the first *Critique* as a work in epistemology. It is Kant who took care that handbooks had a convenient and simplified version of his philosophy to hand down to students who had no time or were too slack to go deeper.

Earlier I said that I do not agree with a supposed absolutism of reason. Rosefeldt is quite right when he dwells on the immediacy of intuition. I cannot but agree with him,

⁵² *Akademie-Ausgabe (Kants gesammelte Schriften*, hrsg. von der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Berlin: 1910 ff.), vol. 5, 195, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 80–81.

and it would be surprising if I did not, given that he quotes my words to the effect that in Kant reason makes experience possible, not the other way round. In *The Powers of Pure Reason* I emphasized the difference between passivity and receptivity in Kant. Now Rosefeldt has a sweet and apt characterization of the difference between the givenness of a coin and that of a kiss. He thereby genuinely portrays the spirit of a transcendental idealism. But he adds that for Hegel reason is not kissable by its other, and I seriously doubt that. In Hegel, so to speak, it is not about coins, it's all about kisses; this is what grounds his notion of a need for philosophy and for reuniting with what has been lost, or appears as foreign, or seems to fall asunder. This is precisely what the definition of Spirit as *Beisichselbstsein* is supposed to highlight. If I insisted that, unlike Kant, Hegel does not recognize givenness as relevant, I did not imply that he abolishes it (in the passage Rosefeldt quotes from my book I claim Hegel abolishes *transcendence*, not *givenness*); saying as much would amount to denying that dialectic works because of the contradiction, pain, toil, and work that having to face alterity and overcome its alienness implies. Without an other that reason strives to re-appropriate and come to terms with, we would not have a world, or even a history as a slaughter bench, in Hegel's sense. When Rosefeldt writes that "something has to be given to us ... Kantians need to be given very profound reasons to give up this idea" (suggesting Hegel does not offer any), I think Hegel would reply that he never wanted to give it up. What he wanted was to show how spirit progresses in its education, which is a *tendential* and progressive *effort* at liberation from the externality and immediacy with which it starts in the Philosophy of Subjective Spirit, inasmuch as it relies less and less on external, sensuous presence and more on the conceptual connections that spirit has learned to make on its own. Nor should immediacy have a "bad press" among Hegelians, as Rosefeldt writes. In the *Science of Logic* we find a famous passage stressing that there is nothing under the sun that is not both mediated and immediate at the same time. What Hegel does articulate with painstaking attention and care is the different degrees and meanings of "givenness"; and in the book I talk about the growing complexity of categories (of being, quality, modality, relation, etc.) in the logic, categories that show diverse profiles of what is usually taken for "reality," from being to determinacy, from existence to "lazy existence," from reality to actuality as actualization. Finally, I would like to point out that a major outcome of my interpretation of Hegel is the attention it calls to the *passivity* of logos in its many facets.

When Rosefeldt concludes that "The persuasiveness of his philosophy ... is rather a redescription of the opponent's views within the framework of his own grand narrative," again I would dispute the spirit of this remark. First, and on a literal level, who does not redescribe the opponent's view within one's own narrative? Would Leibniz, Baumgarten, or Mendelssohn, or even Fichte, not be entitled to complain about Kant that he did exactly that to them? Evidently, and here is the second point, it all depends on how much we have to learn from a narrative. I have been quite critical of Hegel's reading of Kant in my book. I said that he treats Kant's ambivalence as if it were Kant's solution and is never charitable or open to hearing out Kant after the sometimes brilliant, sometimes misleading pages from his youthful *Glauben und Wissen*. Still, is Hegel not right about Kant's confusion on the thing in itself? Is he not right when he calls attention to the shortcomings of a subjective idealism? Is he not right about the timidity of the third *Critique*, which introduces a purposiveness it immediately deprives of all truth because it only describes reflecting judgment?

But, more basically (and here I am not talking about Rosefeldt but about a generalized attitude), I would like to ask: why do we need an ultimate univocal verdict? Why do we feel compelled to choose? Why are we looking for a spotless system where everything hangs together in a consummate and immaculate way, and is uniformly true, so we can finally adopt it wholesale? Conversely and more fundamentally, why, if we find some flaw or internal contradiction, are we ready to throw away the baby with the bathwater and dismiss giants of the past, if we are their children? This is a terrible disservice, with self-destructive consequences, scholarship would give rise to if we understood ourselves and our work in this fashion. A keen historical sense does not have to mean a historicist and relativizing view; it can and must mean that as we judge philosophers of the past we put their views into their context, but remain eager and open to learning from what we think they still have to teach us. In my view this is what we need more of.

Symposium: Author Meets Critics

Karin Nisenbaum

For the Love of Metaphysics: Nihilism and the Conflict of Reason from Kant to Rosenzweig

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Review 1: Lara Ostaric, Temple University

In her *For the Love of Metaphysics: Nihilism and the Conflict of Reason from Kant to Rosenzweig*, Karin Nisenbaum argues that Kant's philosophy aimed to diagnose and cure "a debilitating illness affecting human reason and human experience, and to provide a form of therapy by means of reason's self-examination" (1). This "debilitating illness" that Kant's Critical philosophy aimed to address was not, as one would expect, the conflict of reason that ensues from the perspective of transcendental realism but rather the conflict between "thinking and acting, or knowing and willing" (1), or, what Nisenbaum calls, "a conflict between the principles or maxims that govern each power or faculty of the mind and their associated conditions for being applied" (4). This is what Nisenbaum calls the "conflict of reason" in both its speculative and practical use (4). By this I take her to mean that Kant's philosophy aimed to diagnose and cure, on the one hand, a conflict between reason's necessary thought of the unconditioned and its limitations in having the knowledge of the unconditioned (this would be the conflict within the speculative reason) and, on the other hand, reason's determination of the will by the unconditioned moral law and the will's limitations in the realization of the unconditioned end of reason (this would be the conflict of reason in its practical domain). Furthermore, Nisenbaum's "main contention" is that "the rise and fall" of German Idealism is a "story about the different interpretations, appropriations, and radicalizations of Kant's view that reason's quest for the unconditioned can only be realized practically" (15). Her project is not, however, limited to the "fate of this Kantian view; it is also a *defense* of it" (15). It is a "defense of the *love* of metaphysics," namely, the fact that the search for the unconditioned remains a quest of a *finite* reason and thus, an object of "need" or desire, which also explains why Hegel could not be a part of Nisenbaum's story (16).

In her monograph, Nisenbaum discusses a number of figures and their reception of what she refers to as the Kantian "conflict of reason": Jacobi, Maimon, Fichte, Schelling, and Rosenzweig. She also considers an impressive number of contemporary views and commentaries on this problem. I will not be able to address all the different strands of Nisenbaum's argument and instead my comments will be limited, given my background, to her discussion of what she calls the "conflict of reason" in Kant, Schelling,

and to some extent Fichte. More specifically, I will focus on the following three examples of the “conflict of reason” Nisenbaum discusses in her book: (1) Kant’s Primacy of the Practical and Schelling’s *Philosophical Letters On Dogmatism and Criticism*, (2) Kant’s “Fact of Reason” and Fichte’s Self-Positing (*Selbstsetzung*), and (3) Kant’s notion of “Radical Evil” and Schelling’s *Freiheitsschrift*. While I remain sympathetic to the main thrust of Nisenbaum’s overall project, my comments should be understood as an invitation for her to further clarify her views.

§1. Kant’s Primacy of the Practical and Schelling’s *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant claims that the project of the *Critique* was undertaken for the sake of putting metaphysics on the “secure path of science” (*KrV*, Bxv)⁵³ by denying to speculative reason “all advance in this field of the supersensible” and by “determining that transcendent rational concept of the unconditioned ... from a practical standpoint ... through practical data of reason” (*KrV*, Bxxi–xxii). Thus, while Kant identified a clear conflict within theoretical reason from the perspective of transcendental realism, his Critical system opened the path for a successful resolution of this conflict within the sphere of the practical. In her book, Nisenbaum shows how Jacobi’s reception and Maimon’s reception of Kant’s philosophy lead to, what she calls, “the radicalization” of this function of practical reason in the philosophical systems of the German Idealists. But I find that these systems in Nisenbaum’s book are not sufficiently kept apart so that the unique contribution of each of these thinkers may easily go unnoticed. One example of this is Nisenbaum’s brief discussion of Schelling’s *Letters*, which she rightly interprets as Schelling’s response to Kant’s doctrine of the “primacy of the practical.” “By primacy among two or more things connected by reason,” writes Kant, “I understand the prerogative of one to be the first determining ground of the connection

⁵³ All references to the *Critique of Pure Reason* are given by abbreviation “*KrV*,” followed by page number from the *Akademie Ausgabe* (the standard 1781 [A] and 1787 [B] editions). The translation used is from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

with all the rest” (*KpV*, 5:119).⁵⁴ In other words, “the prerogative of the interest of one insofar as the interest of the others is subordinated to it” (*KpV*, 5:119). By an “interest” of a faculty, Kant understands “a principle that contains the condition under which alone its [faculty’s] exercise is promoted” (*KpV*, 5:119). The interest of reason’s speculative use consists in the *cognition* of the unconditioned principle or object and, for practical reason, the *determination* of the will to action with respect to the promotion of the highest good. But “the restriction of speculative mischief” (*KpV*, 5:121) also constitutes the interest of speculative reason. In other words, the interest of speculative reason is to cognize the Unconditioned, but in such a way that reason avoids its transcendental fallacies. Thus, it is in the interest of speculative reason not to assent to the truth of the propositions “God exists” and “the soul is immortal,” while it is in the very interest of practical reason that it assents to the very same. With this we have the potential conflict between the interests of reason in its speculative and practical uses. Kant’s argument for the primacy of the practical is his resolution of this potential conflict. I do not have the time here to give Kant’s argument the attention it deserves, but briefly, Kant rejects the idea that speculative reason has primacy. This, however, does not amount to the claim that the propositions “God exists” and “the soul is immortal” are false because theoretical reason, when left to its own resources, can affirm neither the truth nor the falsity of these claims. Instead, speculative reason would deny the knowledge of that which must be known so that practical reason can pursue its own interest, namely the promotion of the highest good in the world. One may be tempted to think that it would suffice for theoretical reason to assume the truth of the postulates as a hypothesis for the purpose of directing the will in a certain way. But Kant denies that this is an acceptable solution because the highest good as the ideal of reason is its *necessary* object. Therefore, one must hold-as-true (*Fürwahrhalten*) the propositions “God exists” and “the soul is immortal” because merely hoping or assuming hypothetically that they are true would not do justice to the necessity that is attached to practical reason’s pursuit of its own ideal. But if speculative reason had

⁵⁴ All references to the *Critique of Practical Reason* are given by abbreviation “KpV,” followed by volume number, and page number from the *Akademie Ausgabe*. The translation used is from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, ed. and trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

primacy, it would remain indifferent to the fact that practical reason is not capable of pursuing its interests. This possibility Kant rejects by claiming that “all interest is ultimately practical and even that of speculative reason is only conditional and is complete in practical use alone” (*KpV*, 5:121). Thus, speculative reason must ultimately recognize the interest of practical reason as its own. But Kant must still offer some account of how theoretical reason can integrate that which it identifies as completely “foreign,” “not grown on its own land” (*KpV*, 5:120–121), into its own unified system of knowledge. And this he does in the Architectonic of the *Critique of Pure Reason* where he appeals to the interest of reason as a whole, a unifying *telos* of reason that is anterior to its differentiation into theoretical and practical employments and purposes.

Schelling follows Kant in his idea that reason is essentially practical. But because, for Kant, the realization of the end of reason depends on the achievements of theoretical reason, which is limited to mechanical causation and hence must make recourse to *Glaube*, Schelling argues for a system of reason and philosophy that, in his view, would be *properly* critical, a system of *true* freedom not limited by theoretical representations of nature, a system of reason that is *thoroughly* practical, which is to carry Kant’s Critical project to its completion. Thus, in order to give objective reality to the Unconditioned in a direct and not an indirect manner, as required by Kant’s postulates, and at the same time to be able to respect the limits of theoretical cognition, reason should aim toward action and not cognition. But for Schelling, a truly practical reason, the one that is thoroughly free, is not the one that determines the will to moral action, but the one that determines the will to *creation*, a “creative [*schöpferische*] reason” (*Letters*, AA I/3:79–80) that properly unites the realm of dogmatism (realism) and criticism (idealism). If we, like Nisenbaum, do not distinguish sufficiently between Fichte’s and Schelling’s solutions to the problem of reason’s unity we miss their unique contributions—i.e., the fact that Schelling’s unity of theoretical and practical reason is different from Fichte’s *Selbstsetzungslehre* and that his notion of intellectual intuition is modeled after Kant’s notion of intuitive understanding and the notion of a creative genius that was a continuous topic of Schelling’s writings since his dissertation.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ See more on this in my “Absolute Freedom and Creative Agency in Early Schelling,” *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 119.1 (2012): 69–93.

§2. Kant’s “Fact of Reason” and Fichte’s “Self-Positing” (*Selbstsetzung*)

In her discussion of Kant’s “fact of reason,” Nisenbaum offers a Fichtean interpretation of this issue, namely Kant’s “fact of reason” as a “form of self-relation that Fichte calls self-positing as the ground of moral obligation” (147). This self-positing “is not only the ground of moral obligation, but also the ground of all constraint or necessitation, both in the theoretical and practical domains. This means that reason as a whole is built on practical foundation” (ibid.). But if we rush to give Kant’s “fact of reason” a Fichtean interpretation and if Kant’s view is never considered on its own terms, it becomes difficult to see how Fichte’s doctrine of self-positing “radicalized Kant’s prioritizing of the practical” (12) and how “Fichte ... transform[s]” (13) Kant’s doctrine of the primacy of the practical “into the more radical claim that reason as a whole is in some sense grounded in the practical” (13). It also becomes difficult to identify the aspects of Kant’s doctrine that may have precipitated this particular type of interpretation on the part of Fichte. Again, I cannot discuss Kant’s “fact of reason” here in great detail and so instead will limit myself to offering a brief sketch of the problem.

In the *Groundwork*, Kant attempted an ambitious theoretical proof for the objective reality of the Idea of freedom and from which the objective validity of the moral law was to be deduced. In the second *Critique*, he abandons this strategy. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, he appeals to the “fact of reason,” the givenness of the moral law as apodictically certain and by means of which he is to offer a proof of freedom’s objective reality. Kant’s doctrine of the “fact of reason” and his abandonment of the aim to provide a theoretical proof of the objective validity of the moral law has been criticized by both his immediate successors as well as contemporary Kant commentators as a disappointing regress into dogmatism. I am sympathetic to Nisenbaum’s attempt to give Kant’s doctrine of the “fact of reason” and his proof of freedom’s real possibility a more charitable interpretation. The existing more charitable interpretations of Kant’s “fact of reason” can be divided into two principal groups: (1) the interpretation according to which Kant’s doctrine of the “fact of reason” is his attempt to present the moral law as a “deed” or a *product* of reason itself, that is, the normative force of the moral law can after all be deduced from some general features of what it means to be a rational agent, a route to morality from some non-moral premise, the capacity to reason as such; (hereafter

“Rational Agent Interpretation” or RAI) and (2) the interpretation according to which the “fact of reason” should be understood as an activity of reason, similar to Fichte’s notion of *Tathandlung* in the *Wissenschaftslehre*, an “active taking up of the pertinent standpoint”⁵⁶ (hereafter “Activity of Reason Interpretation” or ARI). The former interpretation overemphasizes the role of theoretical reason in grounding our moral commitments, and in trying to prove too much it does not do justice to Kant’s claim that “the morally good as an object is something supersensible” (*KpV*, 5:68), namely that the morally good as the object of our will must be unconditioned. The latter interpretation, while it may be able to acknowledge the supersensible aspect of the moral good, completely severs the normative claims of the moral law from theoretical reason and, therefore, proves too little. Kant’s view treads a middle path between these two extremes. Although Kant does not offer a theoretical proof (*Beweis*) of the normative primacy of the moral law and, hence, sees no place for a deduction of the objective validity of the moral law, his efforts are aimed at “showing” (*darzutun*) (*KpV*, 5:3, 42) that our moral conscience has a rational framework.

Kant’s starting point is not a morally neutral perspective, but it is not a dogmatic assumption of the categorical imperative’s normative primacy either. In his theoretical philosophy, his starting point is a common sense experience of the world that is followed by a regressive demonstration of the conditions necessary to demonstrate that this experience amounts to a cognition of the world, that is, judgments that can be universally and necessarily true or false of the world. Similarly, in his practical philosophy, his starting point is a common experience of some moral constraints, that is, the experience that it is wrong for one’s actions to be always exclusively motivated by concerns for one’s own happiness. Just like in his theoretical philosophy, Kant’s aim was to demonstrate that, given certain *a priori* conditions, our common experience of the world is an empirical cognition, so also in his practical philosophy he offers a demonstration that, given certain *a priori* conditions, our common experience of moral constraints is a cognition, namely, practical cognition. Practical cognition is analogous to theoretical and while the latter stands for the cognition of the laws of phenomenal nature, the former stands for the cognition of the laws of supersensible nature. The fact that this practical

⁵⁶ Franks 2005, p. 263.

cognition culminates in the agent’s self-cognition, to wit, the cognition that doing what is morally good is true of who we are essentially, of our noumenal nature, indicates that Kant’s project of justification from a “practical point of view” (*in praktischer Absicht*) presupposes an act of reconstitution. Put differently, the process of justification facilitates a mode of self-understanding that a common sense perspective could not offer. Thus, Kant’s justification from a “practical point of view” is indeed accomplished by proving the reality of the moral law “by what it [pure reason] does [*durch die Tat*]” (*KpV*, 5:3). However, this mode of self-understanding neither merely presupposes the normative primacy of the moral law, nor does it rely too much (RAI) or too little (ARI) on the role of theoretical reason in justifying morality.

On the view I defend,⁵⁷ Kant’s justification from a “practical point of view” as a form of self-understanding presupposes an interpretative framework that draws an analogy between theoretical and practical reason, and relies on the previously defended truths of transcendental idealism. Kant relies for the possibility of drawing the analogy between theoretical and practical cognitions on his notion of the unity of theoretical and practical reason and his claim in the Introduction of the second *Critique* that “it is still pure reason whose cognition here lies at the basis of its practical use” (*KpV*, 5:16).

§3. Kant’s Notion of “Radical Evil” and Schelling’s *Freiheitsschrift*

I am also very sympathetic to Nisenbaum’s ontological interpretation of Schelling’s *Freiheitsschrift*, namely the view according to which Schelling’s attempt to make evil intelligible (i.e., explain its possibility) and also its reality requires that we understand evil as the agent’s defying not the moral law but a cosmic world order. However, I remain puzzled why for Nisenbaum the central opposition of reason, between the ideal and the real in Schelling’s *Freiheitsschrift*, is primarily epistemological in nature, “an attempt to provide an explanation for the distinction and relation of dependence between real and ideal activity ... [that is] another name for the relation of subject and object that characterizes all states of human consciousness” (178). According to Nisenbaum,

⁵⁷ See chapter 1 (“Kant’s Justification of the ‘Fact of Reason’ and the Objective Reality of Freedom from a ‘Practical Point of View’”) of my book manuscript titled “*Critique of Judgment*” and the *Unity of Kant’s Critical System*.

Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift* "offer[s] an answer to the question that Schelling considers to be the central question of philosophy: 'How [does] the absolute ... come out of itself and oppose to itself a world?' Or, 'Why is there a realm of experience at all?'" (ibid.). The opposition between the ideal and the real (the subjective and the objective) is still central to Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift* but there it takes a different meaning than the meaning that the same opposition had in his earlier writings. Schelling's claim that freedom can only be saved if it is understood as freedom for good or evil must be understood against his notion of the "system of the equilibrium of free will." By the latter, Schelling understands empirical indeterminism, which for him is "the common concept of freedom" and the one "according to which freedom is posited as a wholly undetermined capacity to will one or the other of two contradictory opposites, without determining grounds [*Gründe*] but simply because it is willed" (SW, 7:382).⁵⁸ Put differently, according to this conception of free will, I am not causally or empirically determined to do something other than by my own decision to do it. But free will conceived in this way, according to Schelling, leads to an equilibrium and the problem of the "Bouridan ass" that starves when placed before two piles of hay of equal distance, size, and composition. This is because when there is no empirical causal determination (in this example, any account of the motivation or desire to survive), and when the will can only be determined by its own ends ("because it is willed," or because it wants the pile of hay), when placed before the objects that are an identical representation of its ends, the agent would not be able to be moved toward any action. Freedom is therefore only to be saved by "contingency of action," by flipping a coin, and in that case, "it is not to be saved at all" (SW, 7:383) because the contingency destroys the possibility of any genuine decision.

Schelling in the *Freiheitsschrift* believes that empirical indeterminism of the above-described sort is a problem for Kant's notion of agency. This is because the noumenal or intelligible realm for Kant is the realm outside of empirical causal determination. But on Schelling's understanding of Kant, this leaves us with, on the one hand, practical reason's legislation of the moral law and, on the other, the will that must

⁵⁸ The citations from Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift* are from *F. W. J. Schellings sämtliche Werke*, ed. Karl Friedrich August Schelling (Stuttgart/Augsburg: J. G. Cotta, 1775–1854). References are given by abbreviation "SW," followed by volume and page number.

decide for or against the moral law in its choice between moral and non-moral maxims.⁵⁹ Schelling thus thinks that outside of *any* empirical determination, including any desires that are a part of one's preexisting motivational set, both options, whether moral or non-moral (A or –A), present the will with two equal possibilities. Put differently, without any preexisting desires both moral and non-moral options have equally compelling reasons. Thus, we are back at a state of an equilibrium of the *Willkür* that can only be resolved by an utterly contingent action. This is why Schelling claims that “*aequilibrium arbitrii*” (equilibrium of choice) is the “plague of all morality” (*SW*, 7:392–393).

Instead, the solution for Schelling is the following: The proof of freedom's objective reality that would circumvent the problem of the equilibrium of choice would be the one that starts from the conception of freedom Schelling already defended in his early period, namely, the conception of freedom as a unity of contingency of human choice and necessity. That is to say that the proof of the objective reality of freedom, the proof that we actually determine ourselves to choose A rather than –A, must be provided not via the moral law and hence not “through a moral world order,” but ontologically, through one's own nature. The necessity of the latter is neither “external,” i.e., mechanical, nor is it “internal,” i.e., psychological. If the necessity were of the mechanical or psychological kind, then this type of determination would not be consistent with freedom as *self*-determination. It is the necessity of one's *own* being.

Schelling, just like Kant in *Religion*, sees one's capacity to be moved by the good (the predisposition [*Anlage*] to personality) as, in Kant's terms, “original and necessary” (*R*, 6:28).⁶⁰ In other words, for Schelling, one can only become the self, or a person, once self-will is united with the universal will, or once one becomes capable of being moved by the good, to wit, acquires conscience. The spirit, or the birth of the conscience, is at the

⁵⁹ This, however, is not Kant's view. That *Willkür* is a separate faculty that “decides” for or against the moral law is the received interpretation of Kant's practical philosophy at the time. On Kant's view, there is a much stronger, even if not strictly causal, connection between judgment and motivation, or “belief and desire” if we are to phrase the problem in the terminology of contemporary Anglophone ethics.

⁶⁰ The reference to Kant's *Religion Within the Limits of Mere Reason* is given by abbreviation “R”, followed by volume and page number from the *Akademie Ausgabe*. The translation used is from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, ed. and trans. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

same time the condition of the possibility of being a self (personality). However, on Schelling's view, Kant did not go far enough in his ontology insofar as he reduces the human conscience to its formal aspects. On Schelling's view, Kant's conception of conscience overemphasized the "ideal principle," the fact that the moral feeling is a feeling for morality, which requires that it be preceded by a normative stance, a *judgment*. Given Schelling's mistaken conception of Kant's notion of *Begherungsvermögen* as desire understood as a mere feeling, he could not conceive how an evaluative stance or judgment in Kant could have any traction on our sensibility. In other words, for him Kant emphasized the "ideal principle" at the expense of the "real principle," the fact that the moral feeling is a feeling, a capacity for being *affected* or moved by the good. According to Schelling, the proper account of our original orientation toward the good requires that we approach both the sentient and rational aspects of our agency as originating in a prior unity, "the Bond" (*das Band*), which precedes the opposition between the ideal and the real, the thought and the feeling.

For Schelling, evil is, just like for Kant, a dissension against one's conscience, but to do justice to the new ontological reinterpretation of it, Schelling must resort to Baader's metaphor of evil as a disease of an organism in order to illustrate the relation of evil to his ontologized conception of conscience. An individual will that sets itself as a universal end and a law can be represented with a metaphor of an organism where a part of an organism asserts itself to stand independent and above the organic whole so that its own function is the aim and purpose of the organic unity, even though its existence, or its original end, is only the whole. At first it may seem that Schelling resorts to Baader's organic metaphor in order to illustrate that the core of evil is moral, to wit, in the individual asserting its own selfish ends above the ends of others, the community as a whole. However, one should keep in mind the influence Kant's notion of an organism as a "natural end" had on Schelling, and the fact that the whole of an organism for Kant does not consist of the unity of individual members, or parts, so that it could be explained either in terms of "real causes" (efficient causes and the movement of matter) (*KU*, §65, 5:373)⁶¹ or "ideal causes"

⁶¹ All references to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* are given by abbreviation "KU," followed by section, volume, and page number from the *Akademie Ausgabe*. The translation used is from *The*

(an end or purpose according to which we assemble parts in an artifact) (*KU*, §65, 5:373). Instead, it is that which, for Kant taken only regulatively, is metaphysically prior to the parts, in which the ideal and real principles unite, and which explains their complementary use in our representation of the organic formation as a cause and effect of itself. Similarly, for Schelling, the opposition between the self-will and the universal will presupposes the third element, to which Schelling refers as the “bond” (*das Band*); it is that in which they both (the ideal and real principle) unite, the “human spirit” in which God reveals himself. Thus, when the particular will takes itself as its own end and claims this new unity as “original and necessary,” that is, as a legitimate replacement of human conscience, the unity of the “human spirit,” it is not the moral law that one transgresses, but the order and lawfulness of the whole nature. This is because the “eternal spirit” that reveals itself in human conscience is at the same time the principle of order of the entire universe. Evil is a disease, a “disorder which entered nature” (*SW*, 7:366).⁶²

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1. Primary Texts/Abbreviations

Kant

Kants gesammelte Schriften. Edited by Königlich Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 29 vols. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1900–.

All references to the *Critique of Pure Reason* are given according to the standard 1781 (A) and 1787 (B) editions. For all other Kant writings,

Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews and ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁶² For a more detailed account of the opposition between the ideal and the real (judgment and feeling) in the *Freiheitsschrift* and Schelling’s solution to it, see my “Regaining Subjectivity in Absolute Freedom: Schelling’s Ontological Extension of Kant’s Radical Evil in the *Freiheitsschrift*,” in *Schellings Theorie der Menschlichen Freiheit in der Freiheitsschrift von 1809/Schelling’s Theory of Human Freedom According to His Freedom Essay 1809*, ed. Thomas Buchheim, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck Verlag (forthcoming 2020).

citations appear in the order of abbreviation, volume number, and page number from the *Akademie Ausgabe*. All translations are taken from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, edited by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992–).

- Religion* *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* (1793) [*Religion Within the Limits of Mere Reason*]
- KrV* *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781, 1787) [*Critique of Pure Reason*].
- KpV* *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (1785) [*Critique of Practical Reason*].
- KU* *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790) [*Critique of the Power of Judgment*].

Schelling

- SW *F. W. J. Schellings sämtliche Werke*, edited by Karl Friedrich August Schelling (Stuttgart/Augsburg: J. G. Cotta, 1775–1854).

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Review 2: Omri Boehm, *The New School for Social Research*

Kant's "Conflict of Reason" and the Problem of Nihilism.

It is perhaps not too crude to read Karin Nisenbaum's *For the Love of Metaphysics: Nihilism and the Conflict of Reason from Kant to Rosenzweig* as an extended commentary on the fate of Kant's famous sentence: "I had to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith."⁶³ This sentence captures what Nisenbaum has in mind when explaining the Kantian solution to the "conflict of reason"; the conflict that arises, as she explains it, because of the worry "whether each faculty of the mind can pursue its own interest ... when we do not know whether the conditions under which alone it is reasonable to do so are realized" (p. 1f.).⁶⁴

According to Nisenbaum, this conflict of reason generates the threat of nihilism; a threat to which Kant responded by limiting theoretical knowledge of the unconditioned and recovering what he views as metaphysical ideas that are necessary for practical rationality. From the book's Archimedean point of departure with the "conflict of reason," Nisenbaum goes on to elaborate an eloquent story of German Idealism as the extension of this Kantian maneuver. More specifically, hers is the story of the way in which Kant's idea of practical reason's primacy was radicalized into the idea of the grounding of theoretical reason in practical reason—in the hope to overcoming nihilism.

This is not the place to give an overview of the book's whole argument, or touch every point in Nisenbaum's *tour de force* that deserves to be noticed, learned from and discussed, and there are numerous such instances. Instead, I will tackle here briefly two points that I find basic to her argument. The first is Nisenbaum's analysis of the "conflict of reason." The second, which is related to the first, is her analysis of the association of thought and being, and the way in which this association plays into the challenge of nihilism.

First, some lingering questions about Nisenbaum's analysis of "reason's conflict with itself," or the conflict of reason. Since this is the book's Archimedean origin, the

⁶³ Kant, *CPR*, Bxxx.

⁶⁴ As Nisenbaum notes, the Kantian idea that each mental faculty has its own unique interest comes from the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Cf. 5:120.

conflict is characterized at the outset, and at length. While Nisenbaum's characterization is fruitful and illuminating, it does seem to me too general, and in a way that invites complications for her subsequent position.

In the first lines of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant famously speaks of the tragic "fate" of reason to pose questions that it cannot answer.

Human reason has the peculiar fate in *one species of its cognitions* that it is burdened with questions which it cannot dismiss, since they are given to it as problems by the nature of reason itself, but which it also cannot answer, since they transcend every capacity of human reason.⁶⁵

This tragic fate, inherent to the nature of reason, seems to be the most basic formulation of reason's conflict with itself, and Nisenbaum quotes it right at the outset for a good reason. On her account, the conflict is one between thinking and acting, or knowing and willing, and ultimately, as she defines it, "what is at issue is whether each faculty of the mind can continue to pursue its own interest, its own distinctive activity, when we cannot know whether the conditions under which alone it is reasonable to do so are realized" (1). That's Nisenbaum's account of the conflict of reason, and also, on this view, the road to nihilism.

As I read Kant's opening statement in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, reason's tragic fate is not in fact a conflict between theoretical and practical interests. Rather, it is a conflict of theoretical reason with itself—one that indeed has practical consequences. Textually, this is supported by his claim that human reason has a peculiar fate to ask questions it cannot answer—in *one species of its cognitions*, clearly meaning here theoretical cognitions. And if the Antinomies are to be taken as one model of such conflict—a clash between two different theoretical articulations of transcendental realism—it is again a conflict that's internally theoretical but has grave practical consequences. It is *not* a conflict between

⁶⁵ Kant, *CPR*, Avii.

theoretical and practical rationality, as far as I can see.⁶⁶

On this understanding of reason's conflict, while Kant certainly does worry that dogmatic rationalism threatens to undermine practical rationality, strictly speaking this isn't what he is referring to when he's worried about the conflict of reason, or when he opens the *Critique* speaking of Reason's tragic fate. What generates the threat to practical reason is transcendental realism, and the way it relates to the unconditioned. The grounds of nihilism, or the road to eliminating faith and practical reason, is therefore not the conflict of reason but transcendental realism itself. Moreover, the fact that transcendental realism and its concept of the unconditioned lead to a conflict of reason—once it pretends to theoretically cognize the unconditioned, it generates transcendental illusion—is what enables the “positive” function of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, namely, the function of denying knowledge and salvaging practical reason. On this view, what Nisenbaum calls the conflict of reason—the fact that we cannot, at least according to Kant, engage in rational inquiry while assuming that the conditions of completing our inquiry can be met—is the answer to nihilism rather than its cause. This different characterization of the conflict of reason may change the way one interprets the relation between Kant and Jacobi and, subsequently, the rest of the tradition.

In explaining the way in which nihilism follows, according to Jacobi, from the conflict of reason, Nisenbaum follows Rolf-Peter Horstmann's formulation of Jacobi's conception of knowledge as depending on conditions: since this concept of knowledge depends on conditions and excludes knowledge of the unconditioned, it is ultimately frustrated—it cannot be completed—and hence undermined:

According to [Jacobi] our concept of knowledge has to do with our understanding of something as being conditioned, but the idea of something conditioned leads necessarily to the assumption of the unconditioned. Thus it is in the unconditioned that all our claims to knowledge are founded. Because of the impossibility of knowing the unconditioned—knowledge, after

⁶⁶ Cf. Kant, *CPR*, Bxix note, A497/B525, A516/B544, A741/B769, A757/B785. Kant's discussion of the “conflict of reason,” at least in the first *Critique*, is framed exclusively in terms of the conflict theoretical reason has with itself.

all, is restricted to conditioned states of affairs—we can never know what is at the basis of our knowledge claims.⁶⁷

Horstmann's characterization is crucial to Nisenbaum's analysis of the conflict of reason and the way Jacobi derives nihilism, but it seems to me too weak. Specifically, it begs the question vis-à-vis Spinoza, who, Nisenbaum and Jacobi would agree, is the most relevant interlocutor here—arguably the only relevant interlocutor. More specifically, knowledge of the unconditioned is possible if the ontological argument is accepted: if we can know that God exists by defining that it's God's essence to exist. Knowledge of the unconditioned is actual if only it is possible to start with the concept of the unconditioned and gain analytically knowledge of its existence rather than try to ascend from conditioned cognitions to a cognition of the unconditioned—and then indeed fail. Hence, only by assuming the falsity of the ontological argument can one accept the position Nisenbaum is building here from Horstmann's account, and proceed from it to characterize how the inability to know the unconditioned allegedly leads to nihilism. The question is on what grounds would Kant (or Jacobi, or Nisenbaum, or Horstmann) reject the ontological argument rather than just assume its falsity. I doubt that Kant's refutation of that argument—if one wanted to rely on it here—would be very successful vis-à-vis Spinoza.⁶⁸ The reason is, to be very brief, that the rejection of the ontological argument and the status of existence as a real predicate consists in assuming the distinction between possibility and actuality; an assumption that is rejected by Spinoza and his association of thought and being. Late in the book, Nisenbaum follows Don Garrett⁶⁹ and Martin Lin⁷⁰ in referring to Spinoza's "alternative" argument from the Principle of Sufficient Reason, arguing that this argument is insufficient for the association of thought and being because it only establishes that "*if* God exists at all, *then* he exists necessarily."⁷¹ But I'm not referring to that "alternative" argument here, one that I believe Garrett and Lin only mistakenly believe is

⁶⁷ Horstman, "Fichte and Schelling," in *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, pp. 117–140, ed. Karl Ameriks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 129, quoted in Nisenbaum, p. 26.

⁶⁸ See my *Kant's Critique of Spinoza* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), chapter 4.

⁶⁹ Garrett, "Spinoza's Ontological Argument," *Philosophical Review*. 88, no. 2 (1979): 198–223.

⁷⁰ Lin, "Spinoza's Argument," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 75 no. 2 (2007): 269–297.

⁷¹ Garrett, "Spinoza's Ontological Argument," p. 205, quoted in Nisenbaum, p. 218.

independent of the assumption that existence is a predicate—it isn't⁷²—but rather to the classical ontological argument, which explicitly relies on that very assumption. As mentioned above, Spinoza's position is simply immune to the argument that existence isn't a predicate.

This is significant for two related reasons. First, because it raises doubts whether Jacobi himself really does adopt such a concept of knowledge and analysis of nihilism. After all, he famously argues that “there is no philosophy but the philosophy of Spinoza,” and this seems to draw on the realization that Spinoza is successful in asserting knowledge of the unconditioned.⁷³ And second, because this puts in question Nisenbaum's characterization of Jacobi in the book as a rationalist, who contrary to common perceptions turns out to be continuous with Kant. If theoretical reason threatens to undermine practical reason not by its inability to ascend to the unconditioned, but rather precisely by successfully beginning with it, as it is in Spinoza, then Jacobi turns out to be an irrationalist after all. He turns away from theoretical reason to practical reason even though practical reason is *impossible* without having restricted theoretical reason itself.

Here is another way to understand what is at stake. According to Nisenbaum's analysis of Jacobi's *Salto mortale*, the jump is not irrational. “The whole thing comes down to this,” Jacobi famously writes, “from fatalism I immediately conclude against fatalism and everything connected with it.”⁷⁴ Nisenbaum correctly asks, “Even if we agree with Jacobi that Spinoza's metaphysical framework leads to fatalism, does that constitute a valid *reason* for rejecting the framework? How might we reconstruct the argument supporting Jacobi's rejection?” (44). Drawing on Allen Wood's notion of “*absurdum practicum*,”⁷⁵ Nisenbaum hopes to show that Jacobi's leap consists in showing that the acceptance of fatalism and the denial of practical reason/freedom generates such an absurd practice. Thinking itself assumes freedom; hence the *act* of negating it through a theoretical metaphysics generates a performative contradiction. In other words, the leap doesn't

⁷² In brief, it isn't because the Principle of Sufficient Reason itself can only be true if existence is a first order predicate. See my *Kant's Critique of Spinoza*, chapter 4.

⁷³ Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), p. 187.

⁷⁴ Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 189, quoted in Nisenbaum, p. 44.

⁷⁵ Wood, *Kant's Moral Religion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

depend on inclination, but on an *interest of reason* and is anything but a “form of irrationalism” (45). Jacobi’s aim, then, “is not to overthrow reason, but to restore reason by establishing the primacy of reason in its practical use. ... The leap is what makes room for human reason, which has both a theoretical and a practical employment” (45). Recall how Lessing told Jacobi in their conversation that he is not interested in the *salto mortale* because he fears he would land on his head.⁷⁶ Nisenbaum responds to this in a beautiful comment:

On Jacobi’s view, to privilege the interests of reason in its theoretical use over the interests of reason in its practical use, and so to accept without reserve all the consequences that we are led to by valid inferences, even if these consequences include abandoning the beliefs that support our everyday practices, is to get things upside down. If we have been walking on our head, Jacobi’s leap invites us to straighten our gait. (46)

From this perspective—namely, from the attempt to show that Jacobi doesn’t turn his back on reason but restores it by asserting its practical’s primacy—it could seem as if Jacobi’s position is indeed continuous with Kant’s.

Despite its merits, this account, I believe, has to be rejected. The question remains not just whether Jacobi falls back on the practical interest of reason and its primacy; the question is whether he does so having argued that a practical interest of reason is in the first place *possible*. If Spinozism isn’t first undermined as the most consistent theoretical alternative—and it seems to me that Jacobi didn’t think it was refuted as such—then it remains irrational to base one’s claim on reason’s alleged practical interest. Thus, besides arguing that Jacobi’s faith is rational because it is based on practical principles, one should have shown why Jacobi thinks such a stance is rationally possible.

For Nisenbaum, Jacobi’s alleged conscious continuity with Kant is supported by what seems like a powerful Kantian supporting quote:

Thus, in the union of pure speculative with pure practical reason in one cognition,

⁷⁶ Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 189.

the latter has primacy, assuming that this union is not contingent and discretionary but based *a priori* on reason itself and therefore necessary. For, without this subordination a conflict of reason with itself would arise, since if they were merely juxtaposed (coordinate), the first would of itself close its boundaries strictly and admit nothing from the latter into its domain, while the latter would extend its boundaries over everything and, when its need required, would try to include the former within them. But one cannot require pure practical reason to be subordinate to speculative reason and reverse the order, since all interest is ultimately practical and even that of speculative reason is only conditional and is complete in practical use alone.⁷⁷

I am not convinced by this text, however, since Kant's claim here is, for his own perspective, only partial. In Kant, practical reason is only possible if transcendental realism is refuted. Here is a quote from Kant's Introduction to the second edition of the first *Critique*:

If we grant that morality necessarily presupposes freedom ... as a property of our will; if, that is, to say, we grant that it yields practical principles ... as *a priori* data of reason, and that this would be absolutely impossible save on the assumption of freedom; and if at the same time we grant that speculative reason has proved that such freedom does not allow of being thought, then the former supposition—that made on behalf of morality—would have to give way to this other contention, the opposite of which involves a palpable contradiction. For since it is only on the assumption of freedom that the negation of morality contains any contradiction, freedom and with it morality, would have to yield to the mechanisms of nature. (Bxxviii)

The text Nisenbaum brings from the second *Critique* needs to be read, I believe, in light of this one, and the same goes to Jacobi's *salto mortale*. Practical reason has primacy, but only if it is in the first place possible. The question of whether it is possible is, in turn, a theoretical one: that's the sense in which theoretical reason has primacy after all. Kant's

⁷⁷ Kant, *CPrR*, 5:121, quoted in Nisenbaum, p. 50 note 115.

claim that we cannot require practical reason to “reverse order” and bow to “speculative reason” because “all interest is ultimately practical and even that of speculative reason is only conditional and is complete in practical use alone” depends on having theoretically undermined transcendental realism’s culmination in fatalistic mechanism of nature.⁷⁸ That is, in Spinozism. In this light, there is no performative contradiction or an *absurdum practicum* where practice, in a robust sense of that term, and agency, aren’t possible in the first place. Kant relies on a rational argument against transcendental realism in order to claim that there’s room for practical reason and that fatalism and nihilism are refuted. Jacobi claims to move directly from fatalism, which he takes to be theoretically sound, against fatalism. It is for this reason that Kant’s attempt to “deny knowledge to make room for faith” is rational, but Jacobi’s drawing on the primacy of the practical remains irrational after all.

In the book’s concluding chapter, Nisenbaum returns to present Rosenzweig’s *Star of Redemption* as a culmination of the trend that, on her interpretation, began with Jacobi. The first volume of the *Star* is interpreted as “nothing other than a *reductio ad absurdum* and, at the same time, a rescue of the old philosophy.”⁷⁹ That *reductio ad absurdum* is in turn nothing but a form of the aforementioned *absurdum practicum*, on which Nisenbaum relied when interpreting Jacobi’s jump. There, the culmination of the identity of thinking and being in fatalism was (allegedly) refuted by asserting the interest of reason and the primacy of the practical. In the *Star*, Rosenzweig relies on the recognition that death is the “dark presupposition of all life” in order to reveal the “interconnection of being and nothing,”⁸⁰ that is, the interconnection of being and nothing rather than the equivalence of thought and being. “[Death is] a sign for any object of reflection that philosophy has missed something crucial at the bare prereflective core of being. The ‘nothing’ thus becomes Rosenzweig’s heuristic for seizing upon this naked existence.”⁸¹ However, it seems to me

⁷⁸ Kant, *CPrR*, 5:121.

⁷⁹ Rosenzweig, “The New Thinking,” in *Franz Rosenzweig: Philosophical and Theological Writings*, eds. Paul W. Franks and Michael Morgan (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000), p. 114ff., quoted in Nisenbaum, p. 217.

⁸⁰ Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. Barbara E. Galli (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), p. 11, quoted in Nisenbaum, p. 219.

⁸¹ Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 168, quoted in Nisenbaum, p. 219.

that just as relying on Wood's *absurdum practicum* in interpreting Jacobi's *salto mortale* begs the question *vis-à-vis* Spinoza's identification of thought and being, relying here on death as a methodological heuristic to draw a wedge between thinking and existence fails to answer Spinoza's identification of thought and being. In the fifth part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza tries to demonstrate that the fear of death—as opposed to the love of life—is motivated by inadequate thinking, that is, the type of thinking in which thought and being are dissociated. For Spinoza, we share in being, i.e., exist, and inhere in God, insofar as we think adequately. That is, we exist insofar as we are free. But crucially, to the extent that we think adequately or are free—and exist—we're also eternal and fear no death.⁸² Therefore, one is begging the question when relying on death and the fear of death as an argument for the dissociation of thought and being. Spinoza's whole thought culminates in the idea that just this fear falls out of the picture once thinking and being come together. One almost wants to ask: is the love of metaphysics, on Nisenbaum's view, ultimately grounded in the fear of death? Love better not, and cannot, be grounded in such a fear—indeed in any fear. And while I'm no Spinozist myself, I do think that the best case for Spinoza's nihilist challenge must be insisted on in this context. This case includes the attractive idea that thinking and being are one and the same, and that exactly for that reason the love of metaphysics is a love for life that's grounded in freedom rather than fear.

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⁸² For brevity, I'm painting the picture here in broad brush strokes, but the account is familiar. See, e.g., Michael Della Rocca, *Spinoza* (New York: Routledge, 2008), chapter 7.

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Review 3: Naomi Fisher, Loyola University, Chicago

Karin Nisenbaum traces the development of post-Kantian philosophy, presenting its context as the philosophical values put forth by Jacobi and Maimon. This context can be characterized by two main claims: Maimon affirms the infinite intelligibility of human experience; Jacobi argues that rationalism leads to nihilism and atheism. The impact of these two philosophers in combination with the Critical philosophy leads to an emphasis on freedom, construed primarily as a commitment to a philosophical system. This free commitment is not a purely intellectual enterprise; rather, one's commitment to a philosophical system is a *moral* commitment, one which exposes a fundamental orientation toward the world, God, and other people. These tendencies are ultimately expressed in Schelling's *Freedom* essay and his *Ages of the World*, and are given a more detailed and systematic treatment in Rosenzweig's *Star of the World*.

There are many strands of development traced in Nisenbaum's book, most of which I will not discuss here. I will focus on intelligibility and its relationship to being and ground in order to bring to the fore an aspect of Nisenbaum's story. In other words, one animating commitment of this progression is that the ultimate ground of being is not intelligible. Nisenbaum draws attention to this idea in her presentation of Jacobi, for whom "being, actuality, or existence cannot be brought to thought" (38). It is in combining this insight with a systematizing impulse, and a commitment to the explicability of human experience, that Schelling and Rosenzweig develop their religious philosophical systems. In these systems, the ground of being remains inscrutable, and our knowledge of God remains partial and incomplete. Nisenbaum's presentation brings this into focus with her discussion of practical and theoretical reason; the Absolute can only be realized *practically*. For Schelling and for Rosenzweig, God is progressively realized and actualized through human activity. In what follows, I will highlight this strand of thought in Nisenbaum's book, offer an alternative interpretation of Schelling's philosophy of nature, and then end with a question about how Nisenbaum's work is important for contemporary philosophers.

Nisenbaum rightly shows that a systematizing impulse can exist alongside and in conjunction with a denial of what she calls the identity of being and thinking (217–220).

That is, one can construct a system without thereby being committed to the idea that all that exists is within our cognitive grasp, and all that is within our cognitive grasp exists. Having a fully articulated system does not mean that we take a comprehensive understanding of “the All” to be possible for us. It means, rather, that we seek to organize what we do know and why, and demarcate its boundaries with what we do not or cannot know. Always alongside the totalizing systems of this period (of Spinoza, Leibniz, Fichte, Hegel), there has been a lively tradition of deflating the pretensions of philosophy and reason. On this, Jacobi, Kant, Schelling, and Rosenzweig—and, to a certain extent, Maimon—are united.

Along these lines, Nisenbaum discusses the “infinite intelligibility” of the world of human experience. She traces the commitment to infinite intelligibility to Maimon, and opposes this to Kant’s “modesty,” according to which he allows some aspects of human experience to be inexplicable (60). Space and time end up being such basic and inexplicable features of human experience, for Kant, and Maimon takes issue with this in particular, deriving space and time from the conditions of thought (78). While Nisenbaum maintains that Schelling and Rosenzweig inherit a version of this commitment to infinite intelligibility, what is more striking is the manner in which they are heirs to Kant’s limitation of reason, in that they both propose an unintelligible ground of experience. The rationalistic tendencies of Maimon’s commitments, then, are tempered by Schelling’s rejection of an all-encompassing intelligibility. Not *everything* in their systems is intelligible in the sense that it can be rationally comprehended. Insofar as Schelling inherits Maimon’s commitment to infinite intelligibility, it is only in the sense that he wishes to explain experience, but not in the sense that he wishes to comprehend everything via that explanation, since the ground of existence is itself not intelligible.

Schelling’s commitment to the unintelligibility of an ultimate ground is most apparent in his *Freedom* essay. Here he states the following:

According to the eternal act of self-revelation, everything in the world is, as we behold it now, rule, order and form; but always the unruly [*das Regellose*] lies yet in the ground, as if it could break through once again. And nowhere does it appear as if order and form were that which is original, but rather as if an initial unruliness had been brought to order. This [initial unruliness] is the incomprehensible base

of reality for things, the indivisible remainder [*nie aufgehende Rest*], that which the greatest striving cannot be resolved in understanding, but rather eternally remains in the ground.⁸³

Thus, there is an “incomprehensible base of reality,” and there always will be—it remains “eternally in the ground.” It is not merely the case that the ground is not yet understood or made intelligible; Schelling asserts that it cannot be, that it never will be.

The incomprehensibility of the ground of reality is foreshadowed by Schelling’s commitment to an unlimited substrate of reality in his early philosophy of nature, and we can regard the centrality of this view in the *Freedom* essay as a consistent development and a change in emphasis in Schelling’s work, rather than as a repudiation of previous views. Consider this passage from the Introduction to the *First Outline* (1799):

Since everything of which we can say that it *is*, is of a conditioned nature, only *being itself* can be unconditioned. But since the individual being, as a conditioned thing, can only be thought as a particular limitation of the productive activity (the sole and ultimate substrate of all reality), *being itself* is *thought* as the same productive activity *in its unlimitedness* [*Uneingeschränktheit*].⁸⁴

Here Schelling asserts that being itself is unconditioned and unlimited, the “sole and ultimate substrate of reality.” This prefigures, of course, his *Freedom* essay and other later works, although here the focus is on the ground as “productive activity” or “productivity.”⁸⁵

⁸³ F. W. J. Schelling, *Historisch-kritische Ausgabe* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1976ff.), I/17:131. Hereafter *HkA*.

⁸⁴ Schelling, *HkA* I/8:40.

⁸⁵ There are many passages in Schelling’s early philosophy of nature in which the inscrutability or unintelligibility of the infinite ground of existence or experience is apparent. See, e.g., Schelling *HkA* I/6:77, which asserts an “inexhaustible” principle at the ground of nature; such a principle hides itself behind the appearances (*HkA* I/6:256); see also Schelling *HkA* I/7:77, 80; *HkA* I/8:46. One difficulty in interpreting Schelling’s early work is that he adopts two complementary perspectives, that of the philosophy of nature and that of transcendental idealism, and so his *overall* philosophical outlook is not always apparent from

This topic of inscrutability can also be approached through the treatment of God by each of these philosophers. In her discussion of Maimon's conception of God, Nisenbaum shows how Maimon is drawing from Maimonides' apophatic theology to claim that the term "existence" cannot be applied univocally to God and to other things. The concept of God cannot be determined by the concept of existence, since the concept of God is a regulative idea, to which the term "existence" does not apply. Schelling would agree that the term "existence" cannot apply to the ground, since the ground is indeterminable. There is a similarity between Schelling and Maimon: like Maimon, Schelling claims that the ground can never be presented in experience, yet we can use a term to refer to it. For Schelling, we refer to it variously as "God," "ground," "productive activity," or the "immemorial" or "unprethinkable" being [*unvordenkliches Sein*], among other things. But there is a difference between Schelling and Maimon on this point. For Schelling, such a ground is not *ideal* or regulative, since the ground denotes that which lies at the basis of reality. One might accuse Schelling therefore of making some kind of mistake, of confusing the ideal *explanatory* ground with a real *ontological* ground. But this is not the case. It is true that we posit the ground in order to explain features of the world. Nevertheless, to claim that the ground is for that reason *ideal* is to confuse the posit itself with that which is posited.

On this point in particular Schelling seems closer to Jacobi than Maimon. At the beginning of chapter 1 (24–26), Nisenbaum explores Jacobi's view that one cannot be a realist and demand a philosophical explanation of existence itself. His claim is that "being, actuality, or existence cannot be brought to thought" (38). This can be seen as a faultline that runs throughout the book; Schelling and Rosenzweig are heirs to Jacobi in that they reject the self-sufficiency of reason in favor of a ground that is not itself amenable to rational thought. Nisenbaum focuses on the aspects of God that can be known: God is cognized and realized through human action in the world. If we examine this claim in

these perspectives. Nevertheless, in his 1801 *Darstellung meines Systems* Schelling claims that there is both a surplus of the real in nature and of the ideal in the mind (*HkA I/10:129*); the idea here is that the Absolute outstrips presentation in experience in both respects, in the respect in which it is the ground of the ideal and in the respect in which it is the ground of the real. There is an ineliminable incomprehensibility of that which grounds both aspects of experience.

light of the limits of cognition and the possibility and ground of experience generally, we can then ask how far this practical cognition extends. We see here that God is *partly* actualized and so *partly* cognized.

Schelling addresses cognition of God explicitly in the *Freedom* essay, claiming that religiosity is “that one acts according to what one knows and does not contradict the light of cognition in one’s conduct.”⁸⁶ In this cognition we perceive a “holy necessity,” which Schelling identifies with God, particularly, with God *not* as an independent ground of reality or the will of such a ground. As discussed above, such a ground “cannot be resolved in the understanding.” But in this case, God is the “will of love, through which the word is spoken out into nature, and through which God first makes himself personal.”⁸⁷ If we perceive this light and act according to it, our *self*-knowledge then makes possible knowledge of God, cognition of that divine necessity (cf. 208). But this knowledge is necessarily incomplete: “Being becomes aware of itself only as becoming.” Being is *posited*, Schelling states, as is God’s full realization in a distant future. The possibility of becoming, of human personality as distinct from God, is all based on the incompleteness of God’s actualization. Insofar as we participate in this actualization through our actions, we are joined to God’s own actualization and being.

Human beings, situated as they are in history, will therefore only ever know of God what they actualize in God through their activity. The process of such actualization is also a process of unification, by which what was in darkness or the ground is brought into unity through the light of understanding. Such unification is of the human will with the will of love. Nisenbaum shows how Schelling’s work is taken up by Rosenzweig, particularly in his notions of redemption and acts of love as forms of unification as well. For Rosenzweig as well as Schelling, creation of a finite world is an act of separation, and it is the actions of human beings that bring about a gradual unification of what was separated.

Nisenbaum’s presentation draws attention to the fate of Kant’s “primacy of the practical” in Schelling and Rosenzweig. For both, creation and the possibility of experience, on the one hand, and freedom and moral action on the other, cannot be separated. We are limited in our cognition by finitude and historical circumstance, and

⁸⁶ Schelling, *HkA* I/17:158.

⁸⁷ Schelling, *HkA* I/17:161.

that which lies in the ground of reality remains eternally inscrutable, while that which lies in the will of love is realized progressively and incompletely. What knowledge we have is attained through action in accord with a divine necessity. It seems Schelling even considers laws of nature to be species of a greater class of moral laws that reveal the nature of God, and he quotes Leibniz approvingly in this vein, attributing to him the “recognition of laws of nature as ethically, but not geometrically, necessary.”⁸⁸ In this way theoretical knowledge becomes a species of practical knowledge and religiosity. One could call this development a turn to the ubiquity of the practical, not merely the primacy of the practical. And, following Kant, the perfect realization of such laws in nature stands in contrast to the always imperfect and partial realization of God’s nature in human activity.

To sum up—and I take this to be a friendly highlight of one aspect of the book—if we take seriously the idea that the ground of being is not intelligible, and that it is merely posited, and that God is not merely God as ground but God as moral necessity, we can make sense of action as that which connects these two things. A system of thought is merely ideal. We cannot grasp what grants the world its reality, since any theorizing must remain merely ideal. We posit a ground as the ground of being, but (by definition) the ground cannot form part of the ideal system. The only way to connect such an ideal system of thought with the world is through action. It is through acting that we connect our concepts with reality. And so if we think of God as originally separated into an ideal moral telos and an unruly ground, we can consider ourselves agents of that reunification, by uniting our own moral conscience with reality.

In her conclusion Nisenbaum makes the views of Schelling and Rosenzweig more accessible by drawing out the similarities between their views and those of Engstrom, Korsgaard, and Rödl (254–256). These are *secular* moral theories and, as such, they do not subordinate the traditionally theoretical concerns concerning the possibility of experience or of the existence of a world at all to the progressive realization of what is good. It may be the case, then, that the distinctiveness of this development, the fate of the primacy of the practical, is made clearer *not* by the similarities between Schelling and Rosenzweig and these contemporary philosophers, but rather by the dissimilarities.

⁸⁸ Schelling, *HkA* I/17:161.

The manner in which these views of Schelling and Rosenzweig can be assimilated to those of contemporary philosophers requires replacing the actualization of *God* with the actualization of the *self* or the *good*. If this is how we are to understand the contributions of Schelling and Rosenzweig, then we lose the central and distinctive aspects of their work, which center on a view of creation and revelation, according to which what is good amounts to the realization of the creator of the universe. If we treat as separate the ground of experience and the ground of morality, we no longer have any basis for affirmation of the world.

If, instead, what is at issue is affirmation of the world of nature in which God is *already* partly immanent, and may be made progressively more immanent, and such progress is dependent on us—if what is at issue is that the unconditioned can only be realized practically, and that this practical realization forms the basis not merely for moral philosophy, but for philosophy *generally*—then perhaps Schelling and Rosenzweig offer instruction and challenge precisely in those ways in which their work is *unpalatable* to contemporary philosophers, or incompatible with secular moral theories. Nisenbaum's book therefore offers a unique and provocative challenge in its retelling of post-Kantian philosophy.

Author Response: Karin Nisenbaum, Colgate University

Introduction

I am very grateful to Gerad Gentry and to the Society for German Idealism and Romanticism for organizing this symposium on my book. Many thanks also to Lara Ostaric, Omri Boehm, and Naomi Fisher for their appreciative, perceptive, and also challenging comments. I will begin by briefly summarizing the main thesis of my book. Then I will address my readers' questions and comments.

My book contends that the development of German philosophy from Kant, through post-Kantian German Idealism to the thought of Franz Rosenzweig, was largely motivated by the perceived promise of Kant's philosophy for solving what I call the "conflict of reason," but also by its perceived shortcomings in solving this conflict.

Let me explain what I mean by a conflict of reason. Like Spinoza and Leibniz, Kant holds that human reason is governed by the principle of sufficient reason, which states that for every x , there is a y such that y is the sufficient reason for x . That Spinoza accepts a very strong version of the PSR is clear from his claim, in the eleventh proposition of Part I of the *Ethics*, that: "If something exists, there must be a cause of its existing and if something does not exist, there must be a cause of its nonexistence."⁸⁹

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant formulates the supreme principle of reason, which is just a version of the PSR, in the following way:

P1: "Find the unconditioned for conditioned cognitions of the understanding, with which its unity will be completed."⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Spinoza, *Ethics*, 1p11d2.

⁹⁰ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A307/B364. Passages from the *Critique of Pure Reason* are cited according to the first and second editions, abbreviated A/B. Kant's other works are cited by volume and page number of the German Academy edition, *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, edited by the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1900–). English translations will come from the Cambridge Edition of Kant's works.

As Omri Boehm has noted,

Kant uses [the term] “conditioned” here broadly, referring to anything that could be an object of cognition: any thing, event, or state of affairs, which requires a condition other than itself in order to be given as a fact. A “condition” is the cause or the reason—what would count as an explanation of a conditioned that is given as a fact ... An “unconditioned” is thus an ultimate condition, an ultimate explanatory ground of what is given as conditioned.⁹¹

Note that this principle P1 is a subjective or regulative version of the PSR. It prescribes a task, namely that we strive for complete explanations. But Kant also holds that a metaphysical or objective version of the PSR is a condition for the applicability of the regulative or subjective version; the metaphysical version of the PSR is a condition for it being rational to pursue the regulative or subjective version of the PSR (I’ll explain why in a moment).

The metaphysical or objective formulation of the PSR states:

P2: “When the conditioned is given, then so is the whole series of conditions subordinated one to the other, which is itself unconditioned, also given.”⁹²

This is a metaphysical version of the PSR because it states that complete explanations are to be found in the world. That this metaphysical version of the PSR is a condition for the applicability of the regulative version of the PSR follows from a widely held action-theoretic thesis, viz., the thesis that if a subject rationally intends to do something, she is committed to being able to do it. So, we at least need to assume that the conditions for a given conditioned item of knowledge are there to be found, in order for it to be rational for us to search for them.

⁹¹ See Omri Boehm, “The Principle of Sufficient Reason, the Ontological Argument and the Is/Ought Distinction,” p. 558.

⁹² Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 307–308/B364.

The problem is that Kant holds that in principle, we can never know that this application condition (P2) is satisfied. This is because on Kant's view human knowledge is discursive; it requires both concepts and sensible intuitions. But the unconditioned can never be given to the mind via sensible intuition; it can never be an object of knowledge.

This is what I call the conflict of reason. In the book, I characterize the conflict in a few different ways, but in most general terms, it can be characterized as "a conflict between the principles or maxims that govern each power or faculty of the mind and their associated conditions for being applied" (Nisenbaum 2018, p. 1). (I'll say more about this in my response to Boehm's comments.)

Kant's therapy for the conflict of reason in its speculative or theoretical use involves transcendental idealism, the distinction between appearances and things in themselves, in the following way: Kant holds that P2, the objective or metaphysical formulation of the PSR, would hold for things in themselves, if we could know them; but P1, the subjective or regulative formulation of the PSR, holds for appearances. So, for us, the PSR is restricted and has the status of an ideal that regulates our theoretical activity.

Now, Kant also holds that there is a conflict of reason in its practical use, but as I argue in my book, Kant's understanding of and solution to the conflict of reason in its practical use is not entirely the same as in the theoretical case. Just as theoretical reason seeks the unconditioned (in the form of the totality of conditions for a given conditioned item of knowledge), practical reason also seeks the "unconditioned totality of the object of pure practical reason," namely, the highest good, the systematic connection between happiness (the conditioned) and virtue (the condition). As Kant says in the Dialectic of the *Critique of Practical Reason*:

Pure reason always has its dialectic, whether it is considered in its speculative or in its practical use; for it requires the absolute totality of conditions for a given conditioned, and this can be found only in things in themselves ... But reason in its practical use is no better off. As pure practical reason it likewise seeks the unconditioned for the practically conditioned (which rests on inclinations and natural needs), not indeed as the determining ground of the will, but even when this is given (in the moral law), it seeks the unconditioned totality of the object of

pure practical reason, under the name of the highest good.⁹³

Also, just as in the case of theoretical reason, there are certain metaphysical presuppositions that are necessary for it to be reasonable to pursue the object of pure practical reason (the highest good), namely the postulates (of God's existence and the immortality of the soul). Yet as I argue in the book, there is an important difference between Kant's diagnosis of and solution to the conflict of reason in its theoretical use, and his diagnosis of and solution to the conflict of reason in its practical use. The *mistaken* form of inference that in the first *Critique* Kant attributes to being deceived by transcendental illusion is precisely the form of inference that Kant uses in his argument for the postulates of practical reason: namely, making objective (metaphysical) claims based on certain subjective principles. In the first *Critique*, we are not entitled to ascribe objective validity to P2 (the metaphysical version of the PSR) based on what P1 (the subjective version of the PSR) demands. By contrast, in the second *Critique* we are entitled to affirm the postulates once we see that they are conditions of possibility for pursuing the highest good. We are entitled to assume the existence of God once we see how that assumption is a condition for aiming at the highest good.

Why Kant believes that we are entitled to make this form of inference in the case of practical reason but not in the case of theoretical reason has to do both with Kant's doctrine of the primacy of practical reason and his view that practical reason is efficacious, or capable of realizing (bringing about) its objects. Because Lara Ostaric will say more in her comments about the primacy of practical reason, I will here only explain why focusing on the efficacy of practical reason helps to explain why we are entitled to make this form of inference in the case of practical reason (and not in the case of theoretical reason).

Focusing on the efficacy of practical reason helps to explain why Kant believes that we are entitled to make objective (metaphysical) claims based on practical reason's demand for the unconditioned, but not based on theoretical reason's demand for the unconditioned, because in order for us to know something (theoretically), it must already be presented in sensible intuition. But in order for us to know something (practically), it must be brought about. We know that we cannot know the unconditioned object of

⁹³ Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:107–108.

theoretical reason (because we can never find in appearances the complete series of conditions for a given conditioned), but we do not know that we cannot know the unconditioned object of practical reason (because the highest good is something to be made actual through our will; it is something we must bring about). So, there is an important difference between the status of the unconditioned when we are considering the speculative or theoretical use of reason and the status of the unconditioned when we are considering the practical use of reason. Although the unconditioned functions as a regulative principle both in the theoretical and practical cases, in the practical case it is also an ideal that could potentially be realized by our will, and in that way known.

It is in this sense (I argue) that Kant is committed to the view that reason's quest for the unconditioned can only be realized practically. My main contention in the book is that the rise and fall of post-Kantian German Idealism should be told as a story about the different interpretations, appropriations, and radicalizations of this central Kantian view (that reason's quest for the unconditioned can only be realized practically—or as I also phrase the idea, that the representation of God or the Absolute by finite beings is a topic of practical, not theoretical, philosophy).

One contribution of my book is to show that a fork opens up in the road in the history of post-Kantian German Idealism: one side leads to thinkers such as Hegel, who rejects Kant's view that the representation of God or the Absolute by finite beings is a topic of practical philosophy; another side leads to thinkers such as Jacobi, Fichte, Schelling, and Rosenzweig, who accept but also transform and radicalize Kant's view. As I also argue in the final two chapters of the book, Schelling and Rosenzweig accept Kant's view that the demands of reason cannot be fully satisfied, but instead of merely providing a therapy for reason's conflict with itself (as Kant does), they provide a metaphysical or ontological explanation for the conflict of reason. They hold that the fact that the representation of God or the Absolute by finite beings is a topic of practical philosophy is due to a form of metaphysical incompleteness that affects God, the natural world, and human beings, which can be partly remedied by human beings entering into relations of reciprocal recognition or, as Rosenzweig would put it, by engaging in acts of neighborly love.

Response to Lara Ostaric

In her helpful and challenging comments on my book, Ostaric raises three main objections. First, she believes I don't clearly explain how I see the difference between Kant's, Schelling's, and Fichte's solutions to the conflict of reason in the practical domain (or in her words, how I see the difference between their answers to the "problem of the unity of reason"). Second, she worries that my Fichtean reading of Kant's "fact of reason" doesn't consider Kant's view on its own terms, which makes it difficult to see how Fichte's view that moral obligation is grounded in an act of self-positing is a radicalization of Kant's view, let alone an improvement on Kant's view. Third, while she is sympathetic to my reading of the *Freiheitsschrift* as an attempt to provide an explanation for the relation between subject and object that characterizes all states of human consciousness, she is puzzled by what she takes to be my epistemological take on this issue.

So, first, how do I see the difference between Kant's, Schelling's, and Fichte's solutions to the conflict of reason in the practical domain? Until recently, most discussions of Kant's solution to the antinomy of practical reason in the second *Critique* (which I take to be the manifestation of the conflict of reason in the practical sphere) have focused on Kant's doctrine of the primacy of practical reason. In her comments, Ostaric provides a very clear and helpful discussion of the primacy of practical reason, and she explains how Kant relies on that doctrine in his solution to the antinomy of practical reason. Yet in recent years Stephen Engstrom and Eric Watkins have drawn attention to the way in which Kant's view that practical reason is efficacious or directed toward the realization of its objects (instead of being receptive, like theoretical reason) also plays a significant role in Kant's solution to the antinomy of practical reason.⁹⁴ As I will explain in a moment, it is primarily by focusing on the efficacy of practical reason (and not on Kant's doctrine of the primacy of practical reason, at least as that doctrine is usually understood) that Schelling arrives at the view that we can strive to give objective reality to the unconditioned in a "direct" manner, and not an "indirect manner, as required by Kant's postulates" (Ostaric).

Kant explains what he means by the efficacy of practical reason when he says in

⁹⁴ See Eric Watkins, "The Antinomy of Practical Reason" and Stephen Engstrom, *The Form of Practical Knowledge*.

the second *Critique* that what is practical is “to be made real through our will.”⁹⁵ What practical knowledge represents is its *own* effect, its *own* action, something that depends on *it* for its realization. This point becomes clearer if we keep in mind that willing falls under the broad category of voluntary movements that spring from the “faculty of desire,” which Kant defines as the capacity of a being “to be through its representations the cause of the actuality of the objects of those representations.”⁹⁶ So in the case of theoretical knowledge, the actuality of our knowledge depends on the actuality of what is known: in order for me to know that there is a glass of water on my desk, the glass and the desk must already be there in order for me to perceive them. By contrast, in the case of practical knowledge, the actuality or reality of what is known depends on the actual determination of the will. That means that in the case of practical knowledge, being, reality, or actuality is as it were transferred from the will to the objects of the will. Moreover, it is by this transference of being from the will to the objects of the will that the latter can potentially be and be known.

Let me now explain how focusing on the efficacy of practical reason (and not on the primacy of practical reason) enables the Schellingian interpretation of the Kantian view that reason’s quest for the unconditioned can only be realized practically. In the case of speculative or theoretical reason, Kant shows that we can avoid being deceived by transcendental illusion by distinguishing appearances from things in themselves and holding that in the realm of appearances the ideas of reason have the status of regulative principles. Yet in the case of practical reason, we should aim to realize the highest good, and the requirement to do so entitles us to affirm the postulates: we must think of the highest good as realizable, and that grants reality to the conditions for this realizability (i.e., the postulates). Now, this way of explaining Kant’s solution to the antinomy of practical reason still grants reality to the postulates in an “indirect” manner: what is doing the real work is the action–theoretic thesis that I mentioned in my opening remarks (i.e., the thesis that if a subject rationally intends to do something, she is committed to being able to do it). Again, we must think of the highest good as realizable, and that grants reality to the conditions for this realizability (i.e., the postulates). But the fact that our realizing

⁹⁵ Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:113.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 5:9n.

the highest good gives reality to the postulates only in an indirect manner is due to the fact that Kant distinguishes the highest good from the postulates. On standard readings, the highest good is a state of affairs in which there is a necessary relationship between virtue and happiness, and God makes it the case that this state of affairs ensues. Yet, as I argue in a paper forthcoming in a volume edited by Gerad Gentry on Kant's legacy, Schelling in a sense identifies the highest good with God. He understands the highest good as a state of affairs in which we would all realize our capacity for practical knowledge of the good, and in doing so we would also realize our own nature and the nature of God. I characterize this view as a form of "post-Kantian moral perfectionism." In his *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, Schelling distinguishes his "direct" or practical reading of the postulates from an "indirect" reading as follows: "Most of [the interpreters of Kant's Criticism] do not mean, by the practical postulate of the existence of God, the demand to realize practically the moral implication of the idea of God. They mean merely the demand to assume the existence of God theoretically, [ostensibly] for the sake of moral progress and therefore in a mere practical *intention*."⁹⁷ Practically realizing the moral implication of the idea of God corresponds to Schelling's "direct" manner of realizing reason's quest for the unconditioned (and that reading of the postulates focuses on the efficacy of practical reason). Assuming the existence of God theoretically, for the sake of moral progress, corresponds to the "indirect" manner of realizing reason's quest for the unconditioned (and that reading of the postulates focuses on the primacy of practical reason).

I don't have time here to speak at length about how I see the difference between Fichte and Schelling's solutions to the conflict of reason in the practical domain. But by referring in her comments to what Schelling says in his 1794 commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* about creative activity, or a "creative [*schöpferische*] reason," I take it that Ostaric holds that the main difference between Schelling and Fichte is that Fichte's solution to the problem of the unity of reason goes in a moral or ethical direction, while Schelling's solution goes in an artistic direction. While I fully agree with her that Schelling's early works and especially his *Timaeus-Kommentar* shed important light on his views on the unity of reason, I believe that the model for Schelling's "creative reason"

⁹⁷ Schelling, *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, SW, 333a6.

is not Kant's discussion of genius in the third *Critique* (as Ostaric argues), but Plato's divine demiurge in the *Timaeus*, who creates the world by giving form to matter. (As Ostaric points out in her "Absolute Freedom and Creative Agency in Early Schelling," the "context of Schelling's discussion of Plato's *demiurge* is not aesthetic.")⁹⁸ Like Ostaric, I think that from early on Schelling was interested in reading Kant as consistent with Plato. But as I see it, the main result of that endeavor is a hylomorphic reading of Kant. As Schelling presents Kant's views in his early works (especially in the *Timaeus-Kommentar* and the *Ichschrift*), the human mind achieves scientific understanding (in the theoretical case) and practical knowledge of the good (in the practical case), by giving form to matter: by bringing what is given to us in sensibility under the categories of the understanding and principles of reason (in the theoretical case), and by giving the incentives of our sensuous nature the form of the universal law (in the practical case). It is in this sense that our world is a product of craftsmanship or *dēmiourgia*.⁹⁹ So, how does Schelling's system differ from Fichte's? By offering a hylomorphic reading of Kant, Schelling gives value to nature and to matter, in ways that Fichte does not. Granted, I don't say all of this in the book, but my contract with Oxford specified a word-limit!

I turn now to Ostaric's second question, about my Fichtean reading of Kant's "fact of reason." Again, if I didn't consider Kant's view on its own terms, that was primarily because there is already a small industry on the topic (for example, Paul Franks, Patricia Kitcher, and Owen Ware have made important contributions on the topic),¹⁰⁰ and I thought it would be best to direct readers to that literature and focus on the problem with Kant's "fact of reason" that is the source of the Fichtean reading I provide. I indicate what that problem is immediately before I turn to my two-step reading of Kant's argument: that Kant seems to abandon the hope of grounding moral obligation and dogmatically asserts that the moral law is a fact of reason, in a way that makes it seem as if Kant has nothing to say to a moral skeptic. As I then say, in the passage from my book that Ostaric also cites: "I hope to show that Fichte gives us the conceptual resources for interpreting

⁹⁸ Lara Ostaric, "Absolute Freedom and Creative Agency in Early Schelling," p. 73.

⁹⁹ See Karin Nisenbaum, "Schelling's Systematization of Kant's Moral Philosophy."

¹⁰⁰ See Paul Franks, *All or Nothing*, chapter 5; Owen Ware, "Rethinking Kant's Fact of Reason;" and Patricia Kitcher, "A Kantian Argument for the Formula of Humanity."

Kant's claims in a manner that is consistent with the spirit of Kant's critical philosophy" (Nisenbaum 2018, p. 133).

Having said that, I am not sure I understand the manner in which Ostaric distinguishes the two interpretations of Kant's "fact of reason" (i.e., the "Rational Agent Interpretation" and the "Activity of Reason Interpretation"). Ostaric says that on the Rational Agent Interpretation, "the normative force of the moral law can after all be deduced from some general features of what it means to be a rational agent." But she also says that on this reading, the moral law is presented as a deed or product of reason. I am not sure I see why. If the moral law just describes an aspect of what it is to be a rational agent, then how is that a "deed" of reason? Moreover, it seems to me that what she describes as the Rational Agent Interpretation is just a version of the "reciprocity thesis" (i.e., the thesis that "[transcendental] freedom [or rational agency] and an unconditional practical law reciprocally imply each other"),¹⁰¹ which corresponds to step one in my reconstruction of Kant's argument. On my view, the reciprocity thesis is only step one in the argument, because it would fail to convince anyone who doubts that we are [transcendentally] free. What Ostaric describes as the Activity of Reason Interpretation, according to which the "fact of reason should be understood as an activity of reason, similar to Fichte's notion of *Tathandlung* in the *Wissenschaftslehre*, an 'active taking up of the pertinent standpoint,'" also seems to me to correspond to the second step in my reconstruction of Kant's argument, in which we adopt the standpoint of freedom and ascribe to ourselves the reciprocity thesis. So, Kant's view, on the Fichtean reading I propose in the third chapter of my book, does indeed combine these two interpretations into a single argument with two steps.

Ostaric's last question is about my reading of Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift*, which I see as an attempt to answer the question that in his *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* Schelling says is the most important question of philosophy: "Why does the absolute come out of itself and oppose to itself a world," or "Why is there a realm of experience at all?"¹⁰² Because the existence of the world brings about the relation between subject and object that characterizes all states of human consciousness, the *Freiheitsschrift* is an attempt to

¹⁰¹ Henry Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, pp. 201–203.

¹⁰² Schelling, *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, SW, p. 310.

explain the basic relational structure of human consciousness. Yet Ostaric is puzzled by what she takes to be my epistemological take on this issue. I gather that the reason why she believes I understand the basic relational structure of human consciousness in an epistemological way is that we often describe cognitive states in terms of the relation between a representation (the subject) and that which is represented (the object). But the same structure is present in acts of volition. For example, and as I mentioned earlier, Kant defines the “faculty of desire” as the capacity of a being “to be through its representations the cause of the actuality of the objects of those representations.”¹⁰³ So the basic relational structure of human consciousness characterizes both acts of cognition and volition. But my *ontological* reading of the *Freiheitsschrift* shows that, on Schelling’s view, the basic relational structure of human consciousness in acts of cognition and volition manifests a more basic *ontological* relation—what Heidegger calls the “jointure of Being,” and what Schelling often describes as the relation of ground and existence. Central to Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* is the view that all beings continuously become or produce themselves by making explicit what is implicit in their nature, or by bringing their nature (ground) to consciousness (existence). Both in the *Freiheitsschrift* and in the *Weltalter* fragments, Schelling shows how this relation of ground and existence is configured in all natural entities, in human beings, and in God (Nisenbaum 2018, p. 194). *Our* nature is to use our reason: to give form to matter in acts of cognition and volition, and in doing so to make manifest the true and the good (Schelling’s hylomorphic reading of Kant is again at play here). When we do this, we do not only realize our own nature, but also an aspect of the nature of God, and an aspect of the cosmos. When we don’t do this, when we don’t give the incentives of our sensuous nature the form of the moral law, we fail to realize our own nature and the nature of God, and we fail to make the good manifest. It is primarily for *this* reason that my ontological reading of the *Freiheitsschrift* requires that we understand evil, the agent’s defying the moral law, as the agent’s defying a cosmic world order.

Response to Omri Boehm

I turn now to Omri Boehm’s comments. Boehm rightly notes that my book can be seen as an extended commentary on Kant’s famous claim that he had to “deny knowledge

¹⁰³ Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:9n.

in order to make room for faith.”¹⁰⁴ But he worries that my characterization of the conflict of reason is inaccurate or too general. He points out that if the Antinomies in the first *Critique* are one manifestation of the conflict of reason, then the conflict is not a conflict between theoretical and practical reason (as he believes I claim), but a conflict that is internal to speculative reason, which has practical consequences.

The most accurate way to characterize the conflict of reason is as I did in my opening remarks, as “a conflict between the principles or maxims that govern each power or faculty of the mind and their associated conditions for being applied” (Nisenbaum 2018, p. 4). I am grateful to Lara Ostaric for the way she rephrases my claim, which I think gets it right: “By this I take her to mean that Kant’s philosophy aimed to diagnose and cure a conflict between reason’s necessary thought of the unconditioned and its limitations of having the knowledge of the unconditioned (this would be the conflict within speculative reason) and reason’s determination of the will by the unconditioned moral law and the will’s limitations in the realization of the unconditioned end of reason (this would be the conflict of reason in its practical domain).”

For reasons that I will explain in a moment, I concede that it might be misleading to say, as I also say, that the conflict of reason is “symptomatic of the failure to perform a delicate balancing act between thinking and acting, knowing and willing” (Nisenbaum 2018, p. 1). (I don’t believe I ever say that the conflict of reason is a conflict between theoretical and practical reason.) But I disagree with Boehm’s view that the conflict of reason affects only speculative reason, even if that has practical consequences.

First, note that when I characterize the conflict as I just did (as symptomatic of the failure to perform a balancing act between thinking and acting, or knowing and willing), I say (in a footnote), that I do so because in his *Kant’s Dialectic*, Jonathan Bennett argues that at least in the context of the Transcendental Dialectic, “the subjective/objective distinction is ... virtually identical with the practical/theoretical distinction—the line between something which tells scientists how to behave and something which reports facts about reality.”¹⁰⁵ And as I explained in my opening remarks, transcendental illusion, which is one manifestation of the conflict of reason, arises because we take certain

¹⁰⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxxx.

¹⁰⁵ Jonathan Bennet, *Kant’s Dialectic*, p. 268.

subjective principles to be objective. So, my characterization of the conflict of reason as a conflict concerning the relationship between thought and action, or cognition and volition, was primarily meant to draw attention to this aspect of what Kant calls transcendental illusion. Yet I also wanted to characterize the conflict of reason in this way because of how Schelling and Rosenzweig understand the implication of the conflict of (speculative or theoretical) reason. On their view, the fact that we can't have (theoretical) knowledge of the unconditioned enables us to understand that the demands of (theoretical) reason can only be realized by (practical) reason: for Schelling and Rosenzweig, the fact that we can't have (theoretical) knowledge of the unconditioned means that God, the Absolute, or unconditioned must be realized by human action in the world. As Schelling phrases the view in his *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*: "Theoretical reason necessarily seeks what is not conditioned; having formed the idea of the unconditioned, and, as theoretical reason, being unable to realize the unconditioned, it therefore demands the act through which it ought to be realized."¹⁰⁶ Or, "Nothing is left for both systems [criticism and dogmatism] except to make the absolute, which could not be an object of knowledge, an object of action, or, to demand the action by which the absolute is realized."¹⁰⁷ So, for Schelling and Rosenzweig, the conflict that is internal to (speculative or theoretical) reason enables us to understand the relationship between theoretical and practical reason: the fact that the demands of theoretical reason can only be met by practical reason.

Boehm might still object that on Kant's view (if not on Schelling's view or Rosenzweig's view), the conflict of reason is only a conflict internal to (theoretical) reason, which has practical consequences. Boehm holds that the passage that opens the first *Critique*, which I cite on the first page of my book, provides textual evidence for his view. For Kant says there that the tragic fate of reason—to be burdened with questions which it cannot dismiss, but which it also cannot answer—affects only "one species of its cognitions." Boehm takes Kant's claim to mean that the fate of reason *only* affects speculative reason. Yet we should keep in mind that in 1781, when the first edition of the first *Critique* was published, Kant had not yet envisioned writing a *Critique of Practical*

¹⁰⁶ Schelling, *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, SW, p. 299.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 333.

Reason, let alone the Dialectic of Practical Reason (the short “canon of pure reason” is the only section in the first *Critique* that addresses topics in practical philosophy). So it makes sense for him to speak then only about a conflict within speculative reason.

Let me now turn to Boehm’s second and more challenging question. My book argues that the rise and fall of post-Kantian German Idealism can be told as a story about the fate of the Kantian view that knowledge of God, the absolute, or unconditioned, is not possible for finite beings like us. But as Boehm argues, knowledge of the unconditioned is possible if the ontological argument is accepted: “if we can know that God exists by basically defining that it is God’s essence to exist.” So he asks: “On what basis would Kant (or Jacobi, or Fichte, or Schelling, or Rosenzweig) reject the ontological argument without just assuming its falsity?”

That is precisely the question that I tried to answer in section two of chapter 6 of my book, where I explain Rosenzweig’s claim that the first volume of the *Star of Redemption* is a *reductio* of the thesis of the identity of being and thinking, or existence and conceivability (it is worth noting that Rosenzweig’s argument is not a *practical reductio*—like the argument supporting Jacobi’s *salto mortale* that I outlined in chapter 2 of the book). I’ll first briefly summarize the main point of that section, and then explain the same point in a different way and in more detail than I do in the book. Drawing on work by Michael Della Rocca, Martin Lin, and Don Garrett, I note that one powerful objection against Spinoza’s version of the ontological argument in his *Ethics* is that it only establishes that if anything is a substance (and therefore self-caused), then its essence involves its existence.¹⁰⁸ But as I note, the monism-to-nihilism argument that I reconstruct in chapter 2 (Jacobi’s version) and in chapter 4 (Della Rocca’s version) precisely establishes that there is an internal contradiction in the concept of God because nothing can be self-conceived (or self-caused). So Jacobi’s nihilism complaint can be seen as a rejection of Spinoza’s version of the ontological argument: if Spinoza’s version of the argument only establishes that if anything is a substance (and therefore self-caused), then its essence involves its existence, Jacobi’s argument establishes that nothing satisfies that concept. (Again, it is worth noting that the argument I refer to is the first proof of Proposition XX in the *Ethics*, which as Lin argues is the only one of Spinoza’s four

¹⁰⁸ See Martin Lin, “Spinoza’s Argument for the Existence of God,” p. 275.

arguments that might be accurately characterized as an ontological argument.¹⁰⁹ So I don't refer to any of the three other proofs of Proposition XX, which are not really ontological arguments.)

Let me explain this point in more detail, and in a different way than I do in the book. Proposition XX in Part I of Spinoza's *Ethics* states: "God's existence and his essence are one and the same."¹¹⁰ Clearly, Spinoza accepts a version of the ontological argument: he thinks that what it is for God to exist is for him to have a certain nature or essence. The first proof of Proposition XX reads as follows: "The same attributes of God which explain God's eternal essence at the same time explain his eternal existence, that is, that itself which constitutes God's essence at the same time constitutes his existence. So his existence and his essence are one and the same."¹¹¹ Della Rocca explains this proof in a helpful way: "Spinoza seems to be saying that because God's existence and God's essence are explained by precisely the same things (viz., God's attributes), then God's essence is identical to God's existence." This is because "if there is no difference between the things that *a* and *b* are explained by, then there is no difference between *a* and *b*."¹¹² God's existence and his essence are identical, because they are explained by the same thing. So, let's first focus on how Spinoza explains God's essence. As is well known, Spinoza defines God as a substance, and he defines a substance as that which is in itself and conceived through itself.¹¹³ So the essence of a substance is to be self-caused and self-conceived. If God's existence and his essence are identical because they are explained by the same thing, and if being a substance is what explains the essence of God, then being a substance (or self-caused and self-conceived) is that in virtue of which God's essence and his existence are identical. As Della Rocca concludes: "Just as God's existence is God's essence, so too God's existence just is God's conceivability."¹¹⁴ Yet, the point of Jacobi's nihilism complaint is precisely that Spinoza's God cannot be conceived: it is an "All that

¹⁰⁹ See Martin Lin, "Spinoza's Argument for the Existence of God," p. 270.

¹¹⁰ Spinoza, *Ethics*, 1p20.

¹¹¹ Spinoza, *Ethics*, 1p20.

¹¹² Michael Della Rocca, "A Rationalist Manifesto: Spinoza and the Principle of Sufficient Reason," p. 83.

¹¹³ Spinoza, *Ethics*, 1def3.

¹¹⁴ Michael Della Rocca, "A Rationalist Manifesto," p. 84.

is One and therefore Nothing.”¹¹⁵ Jacobi’s lesson is that commitment to the PSR leads to nihilism. It is worth noting that Peter van Inwagen makes a similar point about Bradleyan monism, which he also sees as motivated by the PSR:

Bradley’s argument for the conclusion that there cannot be, in reality, two or more things depends on his argument for the conclusion that there are no external relations. And if this very complicated argument is correct, then a much simpler argument that claims to show that there are no intrinsic properties is correct. But if there are no intrinsic properties, then not even the One can exist. Thus the principles that Bradley uses in his attempt to refute the existence of a plurality of things, if valid, refute even the existence of the One.¹¹⁶

In my book I mention Della Rocca’s important proposal to endorse a corollary of the PSR, in light of the monism to nihilism argument—namely, “that things exist to the extent that those things are intelligible.”¹¹⁷ Endorsing that corollary of the PSR enables us to entertain the idea that things come in degrees of reality and intelligibility, which as I mention in the book, is a view Schelling develops. Indeed, he holds, controversially, that the fact that we cannot conceive God is due to the fact that he does not fully exist: the realization of God partly depends on human action in the world. So, we will be able to know God, as it were, when we realize what the concept of God represents. Again, Schelling and Rosenzweig go beyond Kant (and Jacobi) in providing a metaphysical or ontological explanation for the fact that knowledge of the unconditioned is impossible for human beings.

Response to Naomi Fisher

I am very grateful to Naomi Fisher for her appreciative remarks about my book, and for the way in which she highlights how Maimon and Jacobi set the stage for the story I tell in subsequent chapters: Maimon, by insisting that we meet reason’s demand to explain every aspect of human experience, Jacobi by showing that the attempt to meet

¹¹⁵ Paul Franks, “All or Nothing: Systematicity and Nihilism in Jacobi, Reinhold, and Maimon,” p. 98.

¹¹⁶ Peter van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*, pp. 44–45.

¹¹⁷ Michael Della Rocca, “Rationalism, Idealism, Monism and Beyond,” p. 20.

that demand leads to nihilism, atheism, and fatalism. In her closing remarks, Fisher raises an important question about my attempt (primarily in the conclusion of the book) to make Schelling and Rosenzweig's views more palatable to a contemporary secular philosophical audience by drawing out some similarities between their views and those of Stephen Engstrom, Christine Korsgaard, and Sebastian Rödl. As she rightly notes, assimilating Schelling and Rosenzweig's views to these contemporary views requires replacing the actualization of *God* with the actualization of the *self* or the *good*. Fisher worries that this interpretation of Schelling and Rosenzweig's views means that we no longer have any basis for the affirmation of the world and human action in the world, which is one of the aims of my book. She invites us to consider whether Schelling and Rosenzweig "offer instruction and challenge precisely in those ways in which they are *unpalatable* to contemporary philosophers."

Fisher's question is in fact a version of an objection that Rosenzweig raised in his first essay in Jewish theology, "Atheistic Theology" (1914). In that essay, Rosenzweig criticizes as atheistic those tendencies of contemporary Jewish theology, especially Buber's, to reduce the idea of God to nothing more than the expression of something like a vital aspiration for unity. This tendency, Rosenzweig objected, reduced the divine to nothing more than a human projection. Rosenzweig decisively distances himself from this tendency in Jewish theology and insists that theology cannot avoid taking seriously the idea of revelation: the idea that God, who transcends the world and is independent from human beings, enters into relation with human beings in the world (and indeed makes the realization of his own being partly depend on this relationship). Moreover, Rosenzweig claims in that essay that it is only by taking the idea of revelation seriously—instead of reducing the divine to something like an expression of the drive for unity—that we can view the reconciliation of the self and the world as a process of historical realization.¹¹⁸ In other words, it was the concept of revelation that enabled Rosenzweig to arrive at a form of faith that affirmed the value of the world and of human action in the world. So, Fisher is right to worry about whether I am turning Rosenzweig into a proponent of the "Atheistic Theology" he clearly wished to reject.

From the moment that I started writing the book, I had in mind a task that Fred

¹¹⁸ See Benjamin Pollock, "Revelation and Atheistic Theology."

Beiser says every philosopher whose work is informed by the history of philosophy must perform. In his introduction to the *Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth Century Philosophy*, Beiser says that the most serious challenge confronting the philosophical historian is avoiding both anachronism and antiquarianism. To avoid anachronism and antiquarianism, Beiser says, “The philosophical historian ... has to work back and forth between the demands of history and philosophy ... If [she] is successful in negotiating between the demands of history and philosophy, [she] can sometimes find that middle path where the real historical Hegel [or the real historical Rosenzweig] and our contemporary interests coincide.”¹¹⁹ It was that middle path that I was trying to find.

I might have erred on the side of anachronism, but that is partly because one of the aims of my book is to present Rosenzweig (and Schelling) as a serious philosopher. If Rosenzweig is read at all, he is read primarily in Jewish Studies programs, or in German or Religion Departments. Rosenzweig himself was very frustrated by the reception of *The Star of Redemption*. In an essay he wrote after the publication of the *Star*, titled “The New Thinking,” he protests (in light of the way the book was received) that the *Star* is not, at least not in any straightforward way, a “Jewish book,” nor does it claim to present a “philosophy of religion.” He insists that we should understand his book as a “system of philosophy.”¹²⁰ In doing so, he situates his work at the end of a trajectory that begins with Kant’s “Copernican Revolution.” Engstrom, Korsgaard, and Rödl all see themselves as heirs of that tradition, but as Rosenzweig himself would say, inheriting a tradition always involves transforming it. What is lost, I think, in the non-metaphysical reading of this tradition is not precisely an outlook that enables us to affirm the value of the world and of human action of the world (any philosophical outlook that takes seriously the Kantian view that the very fact that we are human has value in itself can provide that). What is lost, I think, is a robust understanding of the unity of reason, and an understanding of the unity of the self, the world, and other human beings. But, as I argue in the book, for Rosenzweig, gaining that form of understanding is a condition for affirming the value of the world and human action in the world—hence the title of the book.

¹¹⁹ Frederick Beiser, *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, p. 8.

¹²⁰ Franz Rosenzweig, “The New Thinking,” pp. 109–110.

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Kevin Thompson, *Hegel's Theory of Normativity*

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How do the various norms and institutions outlined in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* gain their normative power? And how exactly are we to understand the normative claims they make on us? Kevin Thompson's book seeks a new answer to these questions. Central to Thompson's approach is the idea that Hegel intends to justify the normative claims of right by showing that they can be derived, without any further presuppositions, from the philosophical system. Indeed, it is Thompson's contention (6) that this highly systematic strategy of normative justification has widely been neglected by commentators, many of whom, Thompson argues, prefer to attribute to Hegel more simplistic argumentative strategies, which substitute the appeal to Hegel's system with a more easily intelligible, yet philosophically less ambitious, appeal to other normative sources (such as, e.g., the intrinsic value of freedom). Yet such more or less self-consciously deflationary approaches, Thompson reminds the reader, sell short Hegel's own philosophical intentions and render his arguments subject to various forms of skepticism (8)—despite the fact that Hegel himself had worked very hard to be able to refute those kinds of skeptical charges. Hence, Thompson concludes, we have a need for a more ambitiously Hegelian reconstruction of the normative foundations of the *Philosophy of Right*. And it is this ambitious reconstruction that the book attempts to provide.

Chapter 1 of the argument begins by introducing the reader to Hegel's overall strategy of normative justification, as Thompson understands it. Setting up the Hegelian argument against the broad background of eighteenth and nineteenth century strategies of normative justification, Thompson argues persuasively that Hegel neither intends to justify the normative claims of right by appeal to custom or tradition, nor by appeal to a moral world order accessible only to intellectual intuition (17–18). Such approaches, after all, would always explain the normative authority of right by something that is ultimately a mere *given* (the facticity of tradition, the authority of intellectual intuition) thereby

providing insufficient defense against challenges that precisely call this “givenness” into question. Instead, Thompson reminds the reader that Hegel’s approach has “a commitment to presuppositionlessness” (26), deriving the claims of right in a necessary, yet purely immanent fashion from the system, without having recourse to any external resources.

Chapters 2 and 3, then, are devoted to showing this kind of strategy in action. Chapter 2, here, takes, by and large, the form of a careful reading of Hegel’s introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*. Taking the reader through these passages, Thompson shows how Hegel intends to argue for the claim that free agency can only count as such if it chooses freedom as its own “highest good ... [and] ultimate end” (70). The passages that Thompson draws on here are among the most difficult in the whole *Rechtsphilosophie*, and it is to Thompson’s great credit that he provides a lucid reading of them that never resorts to mere paraphrase. (That being said, there have been some other such detailed readings of these specific passages lately—e.g., by Mark Alznauer¹²¹—and this reviewer would have appreciated a consideration of these alternative readings, if only to bring out the full originality of Thompson’s approach.)

Chapter 3 completes Thompson’s argument by explaining what it really means, for Hegel, to take freedom as one’s ultimate end. The answer, Thompson argues, is that it means to subject oneself to the *standards of right*—such that the normative authority of those claims ultimately derives from the essence of free agency itself (70–71). Hence, the answer to the normative question that Thompson ultimately attributes to Hegel is an *essentialist one* to the core: the normative standards of right have authority over the exercise of the free will, because exercising the free will *just means* committing oneself to these kinds of standards. The “Master Argument of the Science of Right” (76), then, supplements this essentialist basis by providing a detailed overview over these standards of right that orders their different normative demands (of property, of welfare, etc.) into a rational hierarchy.

An evocative conclusion, entitled “Hegel’s Critical Theory,” rounds out Thompson’s picture. Herein, Thompson takes up the question whether Hegel thinks that

¹²¹ Mark Alznauer, *Hegel’s Theory of Responsibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 45–60.

the normative standards he so carefully justifies also can be used to *evaluate* and *critique* society. After all, as Thompson persuasively argues, it is one thing to philosophically justify certain normative standards and yet another thing to think that there should be a *public use of reason* (86) that brings those standards to bear on society critically and persistently. Using evidence largely from the preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, Thompson then shows how Hegel does not only endorse (in an “admittedly incipient” (ibid.) way) such public use of reason, but also himself engages in this kind of practice.

Thompson’s book, all in all, is remarkable in its attempt to elucidate passages of the *Philosophy of Right* that are rarely grappled with by commentators. Indeed, in a time when Hegel’s social and political philosophy is sometimes simply mined for relevant philosophical and sociological insights that can be abstracted from the rest of the Hegelian system, Thompson provides an important counterbalance, reminding us that Hegel is not, or at least not only, a philosophically minded social theorist, but a systematic philosopher of right.

That being said, it is precisely *because* it raises so many interesting issues that the overall rather slim book (it comes in, without notes, at less than a hundred pages) leaves the reader often wanting more, both at a formal and a substantial level. Most formally, the reader would have appreciated more comment on Thompson’s unconventional choice (11) to restrict his discussion of the text only to the published version of the *Philosophy of Right* (and to the corresponding passages in the 1817 *Encyclopedia*), leaving out the *Nachschriften*, *Mitschriften*, and lecture notes that previous commentators have often fruitfully brought into this discussion. Thompson is certainly right to assert that these kinds of additional materials cannot be given the same authority as the published Hegelian texts themselves (12), but this should not mean that we cannot use them *at all*. This is particularly true since Hegel always intended for his published text to be amended through the experience of his lectures, and the various notes are our best way of recapturing this kind of experience—if we use them with some philological and hermeneutic caution.

Less formally, another aspect that would have certainly warranted further comment is how Hegel’s strategies of normative justification compare to *contemporary approaches* in the burgeoning modern debate about the “sources of normativity,” particularly to those approaches that take similarly essentialist routes (e.g., contemporary

constitutivism.)¹²² Indeed, it is almost a little bit odd that the language of the book seems to be inspired by this modern debate—and that Thompson insists at various points on the viability of the Hegelian approach even against a modern background (e.g., 83)—yet a substantive comparison or dialogue is nowhere pursued. Even the comparison of Hegel’s approach with his own nineteenth century contemporaries happens only at a very high level of altitude, leaving the reader with important questions as to where exactly the Hegelian approach fits in (e.g., vis-a-vis the Kantian and Fichtean approach to normative authority).

Even more substantially, more space could have been devoted to taking up some potential *objections* to Hegel’s position and to replying to them from a Hegelian perspective. Indeed, there are a number of standard objections against the essentialist view that Thompson ultimately attributes to Hegel—namely, that free agency conceptually entails commitment to certain normative standards—and it would have been interesting to take up those problems and to solve them with Hegelian resources. If freedom and doing right are conceptually tied to one another, can we freely do the wrong thing? And if we can’t, how does this reflect on agential responsibility when we fall short of the standards of right? Questions like this should probably be part of a full reconstruction of a Hegelian theory of normativity, and would have presumably led Thompson to consider parts of the *Philosophy of Right* that, in the book, only receive short shrift (such as the discussion of “evil” in the Morality chapter).¹²³

Ultimately, Thompson’s short book can be recommended even more for the important questions it raises than for the answers it gives. Thompson himself stresses multiple times that this book is only supposed to provide a “groundwork” (83) and is itself part of a larger project still in development (ix), which perhaps will tackle some of the issues that the present book leaves unsolved. Given the thought-provoking argument of *Hegel’s Theory of Normativity*, everyone should eagerly await this forthcoming project.

¹²² I have in mind approaches like the one developed in Christine Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity and Integrity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) or, in a different vein, in Paul Katsafanas, *Agency and the Foundations of Ethics: Nietzschean Constitutivism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹²³ Hegel presents this discussion in the famous §§ 139–140 of the *Philosophy of Right* (G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Frankfurt a. M., 2013 orig. 1986), pp. 260–280).

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**Robert B. Pippin, Hegel's Realm of Shadows:
Logic as Metaphysics in *The Science of Logic*.**

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In his new book, Robert Pippin returns to the thorny issues surrounding Hegel's *Science of Logic*, of which he had given a seminal account in his 1989 book *Hegel's Idealism*.¹²⁴ What is the Logic all about? In what sense is it a work that builds on Kant? What does Hegel mean by key terms such as "Concept" and "Idea"? What does he mean when he relates the "Concept" to Kant's notion of apperception, and when he talks about the "self-determination" of the Concept? In what sense is Hegel an idealist? The "non-metaphysical" reading (6) that Pippin offered in response to such questions 30 years ago was often understood to exclude any genuine metaphysics, any inquiry into the fundamental features of reality as it is independently of our human minds, from Hegel's project. Pippin's new book is meant to "complete" the interpretation of the Logic in the 1989 book, and to "foreclose" a reading of the type just mentioned (32, n. 4).

Pippin therefore chooses as the overall focus of his new book Hegel's claim that logic coincides with metaphysics in the *Science of Logic*, or that metaphysics has become logic. As Pippin now makes clearer than he did in the 1989 book, the label of a non-metaphysical reading was only meant to set Hegel's theory apart from early modern rationalist metaphysics and its appeal to non-sensible entities like God and substantial souls (136, n. 75; cf. 4, n. 2). But in another robust sense, Hegel was a metaphysician, as Pippin now emphasizes throughout the new book: Hegel offered an account of the "forms of being," the general features that anything has to possess in order to be "really" (as opposed to merely logically) possible. In order to clarify the nature of this Hegelian metaphysics, Pippin now puts much weight on Hegel's debt to Aristotle, without thereby diminishing the emphasis on Hegel's Kantian heritage, which was a central message of the earlier book.

¹²⁴ Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

The new book is divided into two parts, with the first four chapters addressing fundamental questions about the goals and methodology of the Logic as a whole, and the remaining five chapters focusing on some central parts of the Logic. In broad outline, the interpretation that Pippin proposes here can be summarized as follows. In Hegel’s Logic, pure thinking gains knowledge about itself: the Logic develops an *a priori* account of the *a priori* conditions, without which nothing determinate can be thought, let alone known (15). Pippin understands these conditions as forms of “making sense” of objects, “rendering” them “intelligible,” or “giving accounts” of them (32)—in the basic case, by predicating something of these objects (63). It is possible for us to find out *a priori* what these conditions of determinate thought are, because thought is essentially apperceptive. In thinking a content, we are also aware of what we are thereby attempting to do, whether we are succeeding at this or not, and what further implications this thought has (137). When we attempt to think anything at all, without further determination, as we do in the beginning of the Logic, we discover that we have not thereby really thought anything, that our attempt was a failure (186). In order to correct the failure, we need to introduce some determination and distinguish that which we attempt to think from that which it is not.

Thanks to its apperceptive dimension, thought gradually comes to better understand what is needed in order to achieve such determination in the Logic of Being and the Logic of Essence—qualitative and quantitative predicates (186), various forms of an essence-appearance relation (211), and ultimately a mode of account-giving that is said to integrate all previous ones (36f). We determinately think an object, on this account, by understanding it in terms of “its concept” (251f). The Logic of the Concept then further clarifies the nature of conceptuality, leading in particular to the insight that the possibility of determinate thought requires the availability (a) of an irreducible distinction between inanimate mechanical and chemical systems, on the one hand, and living beings, on the other (275), and (b) of a practical mode of knowledge that sees reality as an endless process in which the Good is realized (307). Since the argument that leads to these results begins without presuppositions and unfolds through necessary transitions, there is no reason to restrict their validity to “our” forms of thought, Pippin thinks. They hold for *any* possible determinate thought (318f).

It is now Pippin’s view that this entire logical inquiry is at the same time a metaphysics, because an account of the necessary preconditions of determinate thought

is at the same time an account of the necessary preconditions for something's being an object. For one thing, Hegel had shown in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that there is no "gap" between mind and world (265). Pippin takes this to imply that by accounting for the necessary structure of thinking, we find out "the truth about [sic] what there is" (48). For another, Pippin sees Hegel as arguing that the notion of an object that cannot be thought, or is not intelligible, is incoherent (65). Pippin concludes that for Hegel (as for Aristotle), to be is to be intelligible (77). Hence, Hegel's account of modes of account-giving is at the same time an account of modes of being; something can be an object only if it has qualitative and quantitative determinations, has an essence, enters into causal relations, instantiates a concept, forms either a mechanistic–chemistic or an organic system, etc.

This indeed amounts to a robust form of metaphysics, and it is a metaphysics with a distinctively post-Kantian shape, since it is established not by addressing metaphysical questions "directly," but rather by investigating the necessary preconditions of cognition with the aid of the apperceptive dimension of thought. So, Pippin certainly succeeds in clarifying and elaborating his earlier interpretation, and it definitely helps that he has eliminated pragmatist (Quinean) talk about "conceptual schemes" and instead highlighted similarities with Aristotle. The book also contains insightful discussions of Kant and Brandom, makes interesting proposals about how the Logic bears on issues of society (25ff.), and sketches many more original ideas than can be summarized here.

That said, I didn't find this book to be as good as it could have been. To begin, it reads more like a collection of independent essays than a unified whole. There is a clear overall orientation and argumentative thread, to be sure, but it often contains redundancies; points that had already been made in earlier chapters are introduced as if they were new; in some cases, the focus of individual chapters on particular sections of the Logic lacks a clear motivation (e.g., Life); nor is it clear why other sections, which are equally if not more relevant to the overall argument—such as the chapters on Appearance and Actuality, which are crucial for Hegel's views about various forms of account-giving, and the chapter on Judgment, which is crucial for Hegel's views on different forms of predication—are hardly mentioned at all.

There are also significant editorial oversights such as quotes with a missing

reference, repeated sentences, and a section entitled “On the Principle of Sufficient Reason” (239ff.), which, apart from an introductory quote, is really about the identity of indiscernibles. It is a pity that the section is not about the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR), for it would have been interesting to find out what Pippin makes of this principle. As a consequence of Pippin’s account, Hegel would have to hold that everything that is really possible can be made sense of or understood, which is a version of the PSR (cf. 63 n. 54). But how can Hegel adopt the PSR without being committed to necessitarianism (87), or to an ultimate explainer (God, a monist substance, or similar), given that the PSR is often seen as entailing both?¹²⁵

Also, the book often merely gestures at views and arguments, without providing much-needed explanation and discussion. For example, Pippin presents as central to the *Logic of Essence* the insight that the relation between ground and grounded “must be understood as a dynamic relation, one whereby the determinacy of the ground and that of the grounded cannot be fixed in isolation from each other” (246). But what could this concretely mean, say, in terms of a theory of things and properties, or of causation? Similarly, Pippin simply claims that without an essence/appearance distinction, “no true determination, true distinguishing of this from that, has occurred” (211), or that “[t]he objective logic has established that the truth of objects is the Concept” (251), without telling us how the arguments for these claims (obviously crucial for the whole project of the *Logic*) are supposed to work.

Another crucial point, about which Pippin is remarkably vague, is his understanding of Hegelian “concepts.” All we learn is that Pippin wishes to resist any appeal to abstract entities and “realism” about universals (52), and instead identifies Hegelian concepts with Aristotelian substantial forms, insisting that the concept of an object is merely the “intelligible way a development” involving that object “develops” (55). But how exactly is it that this development becomes intelligible? And if, as Pippin emphasizes, “there is nothing ‘over and above’ the development” (55), how can concepts be something universal, as Hegel claims (e.g., in *GW* 21:15)¹²⁶ and as the examples he gives (which Pippin cites) confirm (“house,” “state,” “animal”)? As universal, a concept

¹²⁵ Peter van Inwagen, *Metaphysics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009).

¹²⁶ Cf. Franz Knappik, “Hegel’s Essentialism,” p. 764.

can be instantiated by different individuals, while trivially, the (numerically) same token development of one individual cannot be shared by others. And if concepts qua universals belong to the objective “forms of being,” doesn’t it follow that Hegel holds a form of realism about universals, at least what is traditionally known as “Aristotelian realism,” according to which universals have reality insofar as they are instantiated by individuals?

That Pippin does not address such issues about a central part of his interpretation is even more surprising, since much work in the last 20 or 30 years has been devoted to questions of precisely this kind. For the most part, Pippin restricts his engagement with such work to some passing remarks in footnotes. Particularly striking is the case of Jim Kreines, who in his 2015 monograph¹²⁷ and in a series of articles offers a superb discussion of Hegel’s metaphysics of explanation (including his views on concepts) of immediate relevance to Pippin’s concerns. Instead of any sustained discussion of Kreines’ interpretation, Pippin dismisses it in a few words in footnotes. To cite two examples, Pippin writes, “I am not sure how he understands ‘by virtue of’ in ‘things are what they are by virtue of their concept’” (15, n. 21), as if his own account didn’t face exactly the same question, or that it is “a problem” (303, n. 6) for Kreines’ account of Hegelian explanation that “what we want is to *understand*, not to know in the modern scientific sense, that is, to explain” (303), as if it were obvious what the alleged contrast between understanding and explaining amounts to, why “we” want the former and not the latter, and how exactly this is supposed to create a problem for Kreines’ reading. Last but not least, Pippin simply chooses to remain silent about the metaphysics-first interpretation of Hegel’s metaphilosophy, which Kreines spells out and defends, and on which Hegel approaches philosophy by directly engaging with metaphysical issues as such—an interpretation that poses a formidable challenge to Pippin’s epistemology-first view. To put it mildly, there is much room for further debate here.

¹²⁷ James Kreines, *Reason in the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

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