On the Criticism of Hegelian Necessity

by

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Dedication

To Evram.
Acknowledgements

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Abstract

According to Hegel, there are no intrinsic limitations on the extent of human knowledge and reason, and one of the prerequisites of overcoming their relative limits is a logic that is capable of grasping the intrinsic contradictions in things. Hegel claims that his *Logic* shows that these contradictions are immanently necessary. By means of a close reexamination of Hegel’s own texts, I defend this claim against two of his most prominent nineteenth century critics, Schelling and Trendelenburg, who hope to undermine Hegelian rationalism and defend the more modest Kantian outlook. I also show that a school of interpretation that I call intuitionism fails in its attempt to defend Hegelian necessity.

In Part 1, I address Schelling’s claim that Hegel’s *Logic* cannot be necessary because it relies on presuppositions. I also show that the intuitionist interpretation of Hegelian necessity is both self-defeating and textually inaccurate. Contrary to Schelling and the intuitionists, I argue that Hegelian necessity must be grasped as *logical* necessity in accordance with the principle of non-contradiction, but that the application of this principle produces other principles, the principle of contradiction and the principle of the unity of opposites, which express its intrinsically limited scope.

In Part 2, I address Trendelenburg’s claim that Hegel’s *Logic* cannot be necessary because, as himself Hegel insists, it relies on a posteriori knowledge. The intuitionist Houltgate, like many other Hegel interpreters, attempts to defend the *Logic* against the
intellectual descendants of Trendelenburg’s criticism by reducing Hegel’s absolute idealism to Kantian subjective idealism. I refute this interpretation and show that, according to Hegel, Kant’s subjective idealism is grounded in a prejudice against contradiction, a prejudice that Trendelenburg shares and on which his criticism of Hegelian necessity is based.
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Introduction

G. W. F. Hegel had the rare personal good fortune of being alive when his philosophy reached the height of its popularity. His lectures at the Berlin University enjoyed enormous popularity up until his death in 1831.

However, by the second half of the nineteenth century, the period following the Prussian Reform movement, Hegel’s philosophy had been from toppled its place of prominence and something approaching a consensus had developed in the academy that his philosophy was misguided and unreasonable and, in a word, false.

Some scholars have interpreted the decline in its popularity as evidence that the discipline of philosophy had finally come to its senses. In their accounts, one reads an almost audible sigh of relief that the inexplicable state of hypnosis engendered by the foolish Hegelian philosophy was ultimately so short-lived. For instance, Frederick Beiser calls the second half of the nineteenth century “the age that cured itself of Fichtean and Hegelian jargon” and “realized all too well the great bane of needless technicality and the great value of clarity and common sense.”¹ However, a shift this profound requires a serious explanation. It cannot be chalked up either to the fickleness of philosophers or transparently obvious errors at the heart of Hegel’s system. Moreover, such explanations are out of all proportion with the character of Hegel’s philosophy itself, which was too

systematic and thorough to have been a mere fad or to have been refuted so easily. Moreover, such explanations also downplay the significance of a political shift in nineteenth century Germany that led to the exclusion of Hegelians from academia.

By the early 1840s, Hegel’s ambitious rationalist project had become a pole of attraction for the criticism of the religious authority on which the state relied for its legitimacy. Moreover, Hegel’s great intellectual prestige and influence made it difficult for the government to rely on a purely brute force approach to the disciples of the great master, so, in 1841, Schelling, Hegel’s former friend, was brought to Berlin and was appointed to Hegel’s old chair at the Berlin University for the purpose of attacking Hegel’s system, and above all his Logic.²

This unleashed one of the most important debates in German intellectual history. The debate over Hegel’s philosophy that took place in Berlin in the 1840s, shook German intellectual life. It was one of those rare moments in the history of philosophy when the passions and intellect of leading academics in other fields as well as religious and political figures and ordinary citizens were roused and engaged by a philosophy.

Schelling had not published a single work since 1804. However, the prestige of his philosophy of nature was still enormous, and news of his animosity toward Hegel’s philosophy had spread to Berlin. As early as the Erlangen lectures in 1820, Schelling had

² In this study, I adopt the convention of shortening the title of Hegel’s Science of Logic to Logic.
criticized Hegel’s philosophy. In his lectures in Munich in the 1830s, Schelling further developed these criticisms.

Even before Schelling came to Berlin, another Berlin University professor, Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg, set himself the task of refuting Hegel’s *Logic*. Trendelenburg’s work, *Logische Untersuchungen*, which has never been translated into English in full, has been assigned an important historical role in turning the tide against Hegelianism. Beiser credits Trendelenburg rather than Schelling with providing “a devastating critique” of Hegel’s dialectic.³

Both Schelling and Trendelenburg disputed the grounds on which Hegel based his rationalist optimism. Hegel insisted that there was nothing that is in principle unknowable by the human mind, and he claimed that his own philosophy provided the key to illuminating questions that had vexed philosophers for centuries. This key was his dialectical logic, which, he insisted, placed philosophy on a thoroughly scientific footing by providing logic with the validation of necessity throughout. Whereas the old logic and the old philosophy relied on educated guesswork in adopting their principles, his philosophy produced a necessary deduction of its own principles, thereby removing the last significant obstacle to the rational cognition and knowledge of the world. Consequently, Schelling and Trendelenburg both directed their attacks against Hegelian necessity. In their view, Hegel ought to have accepted, with Kant, that human knowledge, as opposed to divine knowledge, is finite.

³ Beiser, *Late German Idealism*, 13.
While Schelling and Trendelenburg are both relatively well-known, the names of most of Hegel’s defenders have now been forgotten by all but a few specialists. This can perhaps be explained in part by the fact that, although Hegel’s most trenchant critics directed their efforts at refutation against Hegel’s *Logic*, which was generally recognized as the heart of Hegel’s philosophy, the defenses offered by the partisans of Hegelianism tended to have a more immediately political character and did not, for the most part, concern themselves with the more technical aspects of either Schelling and Trendelenburg’s criticisms of Hegel’s philosophy itself.

It is also worth considering whether, if Schelling and Trendelenburg’s refutations of Hegel’s *Logic* had indeed been so devastating, the Prussian state would have found it necessary to combine the theoretical contribution of these two figures with more directly repressive measures. One might even suppose that the respectability of these figures, who directed their efforts at the refutation of Hegel’s *Logic*, provided the Prussian state the political cover it needed for the eventual exclusion of Hegelians from academia. While debates about the significance of Hegel’s philosophy continued outside the universities, it lost its influence within the universities themselves.

Moreover, in a more general sense, those discussions that touch on issues that convulse the central nervous system, as it were, of entire cities, entire nations or an entire continent cannot fail to be shaped by and play a role in shaping the larger social and political context in which they arise and develop. The philosophical assessment of the powers of human reason, which had already played such an important role in the French Revolution, was one such issue.
In this introduction, I am not in a position to provide definitive answers about the precise confluence of causes of the decline of Hegelianism in the German universities in the nineteenth century. And one might even wonder how important it is to answer them at all. The Prussian state does not exist today. German philosophy—and the discipline of philosophy as a whole—have undergone convulsions and transformations before which those distant days in 1830s and 1840s Prussia might appear to pale in significance.

However, I believe that taking these considerations as a decisive gauge of the significance of the debate over Hegel’s Logic initiated by Schelling and Trendelenburg would be mistaken. With regard to the decline of Hegelianism, the very fact that there are serious questions to be raised about the role of historical circumstances of a not immediately philosophical character suggests that it is worth revisiting the philosophical merits of Schelling’s and Trendelenburg’s criticisms.

Moreover, in my view, this issue is of the most pressing contemporary significance for philosophical and intellectual life in the twenty-first century. What is at stake is not merely the stature of one or another historical figure, but our assessment of the powers of human reason itself.

Although Schelling’s and, to a lesser extent, Trendelenburg’s criticisms of Hegel’s Logic have been addressed repeatedly in the literature, to my knowledge, no study has taken up the question of Hegelian necessity that is at the heart of these criticisms and sought to offer a systematic defense of Hegel’s Logic against them.

Thus, in the most fundamental sense, the debate with Schelling and Trendelenburg over the necessity of Hegel’s Logic is not yet over. It is my hope that in
the coming years Hegel scholarship will take up the question of Hegelian necessity with renewed vigor. The present study is my own contribution to this discussion, hopefully the first of many. In it, I offer a defense of the necessity of Hegel’s Logic against Schelling and Trendelenburg’s criticisms and show that recent efforts to defend Hegel against some of these criticisms have not measured up to the task.

This study is divided into two parts. Part 1 takes up Schelling’s criticisms of Hegelian logical necessity.

In Chapter 1, I present Schelling’s criticisms. Although there is a definite continuity in Schelling’s thought from the Munich lectures to the Berlin lectures, Schelling directed his sharpest criticisms against Hegelian necessity in the Munich lectures. Consequently, it is on these that I concentrate in Chapter 1. Schelling argues that, contrary to what Hegel himself proclaims, his Logic is riddled with presuppositions. In Schelling’s view, if Hegel’s Logic is not presuppositionless, then neither can its development be necessary, but if its development is not necessary, then neither is it fully rational, and therefore rationally comprehensible for human reason.

In Chapter 2, I take up the defense of Hegel’s Logic by Schelling and other opponents of his rationalist project offered by a group of Hegel scholars, whom I term the intuitionists. In this chapter, I explain the central tenets of their interpretation, with particular emphasis on the version of the interpretation offered by Stephen Houlgate in his book The Opening of Hegel’s Logic: From Being to Infinity.
I show that, although Houlgate’s aims are admirable, his defense of Hegelian necessity against Schelling’s criticisms ultimately fails, in large part because he fails to provide a definition of the latter.

I also locate the systematic reason for this failure to define Hegelian necessity in their position on the presuppositionlessness of Hegel’s *Logic*. The intuitionists believe that, because the *Logic* is supposed to be presuppositionless, its necessity cannot be defined at the outset with reference to any principle. I then show that an unfortunate consequence of this position is that many of the intuitionists are compelled to rely implicitly on intuition in their explanation of the development of Hegel’s *Logic*. This, however, defeats their purpose, since intuition alone cannot provide a reliable safeguard against the introduction of presuppositions.

In Chapter 3, I elaborate my own interpretation of Hegelian necessity on the basis of a careful consideration of some of the relevant passages of both Hegel’s *Science of Logic* and his *Encyclopedia Logic*. As I show there, for Hegel, the principle of non-contradiction plays a central role in guaranteeing the necessity of his logical deduction. Hegel shows that understanding, which he characterizes as the adherence of thinking to the law or principle of identity (A = A) and the law or principle of non-contradiction (Nothing is both A and not A.), is a necessary side or moment in all theoretical and practical activity and in everything true in general.

Contrary to the supposition of the intuitionists, I argue, for Hegel, it is precisely the consistent, rigorous application of the law of non-contradiction that yields *unavoidable*, i.e., necessary, contradictions in the subsequent development of the *Logic*. 
This leads to what Hegel calls the “law of contradiction,” according to which “everything is contradictory.” This law corresponds to and is immanent in the dialectical moment of the concept. In Hegel’s presentation, this law in turn implies another law, which I call the law of the unity of opposites, and which corresponds to what Hegel calls the speculative moment of the concept.

According to Hegel, the speculative moment rationally articulates the content that is ordinarily only grasped in a confused way by mysticism. Moreover, Hegel insists that unless one irrationally adheres to the standpoint of the understanding, which dogmatically adheres to the principle of non-contradiction even in the face of the deduction of necessary contradictions from the application of this very principle, the speculative moment of the concept does not have to remain mysterious.

In Chapter 4, I defend my interpretation of Hegelian necessity against two of Schelling’s criticisms and argue that, unlike intuitionism, my interpretation successfully refutes these criticisms. I also argue, in this chapter, that both Schelling’s criticisms and the errors of the intuitionists in interpreting Hegel stem from the adherence of both to the standpoint of the understanding.

Part 2 then takes up Trendelenburg’s criticisms of Hegelian logical necessity, which are closely related to those criticisms offered by Schelling that I had not yet addressed in Part 1. In Chapter 5, I present Trendelenburg’s criticisms of Hegelian necessity.

Trendelenburg insists that Hegel’s position on the source of the concepts and transitions in his Logic is fundamentally inconsistent. According to Hegel, the Logic is an
absolutely necessary, logical deduction, a product of pure thought, but Hegel also claims that the Logic presupposes experience in general and the empirical sciences in particular. Trendelenburg insists that Hegel ought to choose one or the other. Either his logic is a product of pure thought, independent of experience, or else it must be deduced from experience.

According to Trendelenburg Hegel should not have rejected Kant’s absolute distinction between a priori knowledge, propositions, and structures of consciousness—those that belong to consciousness independently of all experience—and the a posteriori propositions, knowledge and structures of consciousness—those that it gains only as a result of experience. Because he fails to distinguish the two, and, in particular, because he fails to realize that the concept of becoming has an irreducibly empirical content, he also fails to realize that he fails to deduce this concept in the medium of pure thought.

In Chapter 6, I once again take up Houlgate’s interpretation. Houlgate argues that Hegel’s Logic has a pure a priori development. Like Trendelenburg, Houlgate accepts that if Hegel’s Logic depends on knowledge gained from experience, its development cannot be necessary.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I present my interpretation of the role of a posteriori knowledge in Hegel’s Logic. On the basis of a careful review of the relevant textual evidence, I show that my interpretation of Hegel’s position on this question is consistent with the interpretation of Hegelian logical necessity I presented in Part 1. My interpretation refutes the theoretical basis of both Houlgate’s reductionist attempt to defend the presuppositionlessness and necessity of Hegel’s Logic by portraying its entire
development as exclusively a priori and Trendelenburg’s criticism of the fact that it has both a priori and a posteriori moments. I show that whereas both Houlgate and Trendelenburg presuppose the correctness of Kant’s absolute distinction, Hegel shows that this distinction is itself a consequence of Kant’s prejudice in favor of the standpoint of the understanding.
Part 1

Chapter 1: Schelling’s Criticisms of Hegelian Logical Necessity

A. Introduction

In this chapter, I present the criticisms of Hegelian necessity advanced by Schelling in his lectures in Munich in the 1830s.

So as not to disperse the attention of the reader in too many directions at once, I hold off criticism of Schelling’s criticisms. Looking ahead, in Chapter 2, I present an interpretation of Hegel’s Logic, one of whose aims is defense of Hegel against Schelling. In Chapter 3, I present my own interpretation of Hegelian necessity, and, in Chapter 4, I defend Hegelian necessity on the basis of this interpretation.

Returning to Schelling, the central theme of his critique is the claim that Hegel’s Logic depends on contingently selected presuppositions and therefore does not, as Hegel claims, develop in accordance with a necessity immanent in (intrinsic in and productive of) concepts themselves.

However, Schelling himself is not an opponent of presuppositions. Indeed, he introduces his critique of Hegel’s philosophy by criticizing Hegel for not presupposing fundamental limits on human reason. Of course, this criticism cannot itself be counted as any kind of refutation and Schelling does not appear to think it is one either. Rather,
Schelling’s position on this question indicates why he takes such pains to refute Hegelian necessity.

After presenting this general context of Schelling’s criticisms, I review in detail his attempt at a refutation of Hegelian necessity.

B. Schelling’s Religious Criticisms of Hegel’s Rationalist Project

According to Schelling, we can think the possible but cannot think the actual, what exists. Rather, he claims, we cognize the actual, by which he means that we grasp it only with the help of empirical intuition. Schelling insists that thinking ought only to be able to grasp what “can” be known, but not what “is known.”

Schelling holds that real objects are in their essence external and independent of reason, and that they resist reason’s efforts to conquer them. Like Kant, Schelling believes that they contain an element that is irreducibly incomprehensible to reason that can only be grasped, in a limited way, by means of a faculty of sensation or empirical intuition.

According to Schelling, Hegel failed to respect this distinction between the positive (existence) and the negative (logic of the possible). Specifically, Schelling complains that Hegel failed to “renounce[e] everything positive” in his articulation of logic. Hegel fails to withdraw “to pure thought, to the pure concept” as he claims to do,

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Schelling argues, since, for Hegel, “the concept [is] everything” and it leaves “nothing outside itself.”⁵ There is thus nothing from which it can withdraw.

However, though related, this is not what Schelling finds most troubling about Hegel’s Logic. What Schelling finds most troubling is Hegel’s presentation of the Absolute Idea in the Science of Logic, where the latter claims that “the method” of the logic “is only the movement of the concept itself.”⁶ This “method,” Hegel elaborates,

is only the movement of the concept itself, but in the sense that the concept is everything and its movement is the universal absolute activity. The method is, therefore, the infinite power of knowing.⁷

Schelling notes, moreover, that, according to Hegel, “no object, to the extent to which it presents itself as external, distant from reason and independent of reason, can put up any resistance” to this power.⁸

In other words, everything real has an inner form of motion that can be comprehended by the human mind. There is nothing left over in a thing that is

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⁵ Schelling, History of Modern Philosophy, 134.

⁶ Schelling, History of Modern Philosophy, 134.

⁷ Schelling, History of Modern Philosophy, 134.

⁸ Schelling, History of Modern Philosophy, 135.
fundamentally incomprehensible. This is the central thesis in Hegel’s philosophy to which Schelling objects, and this thesis is objectionable, in Schelling’s view, above all because it “leaves nothing left for God other than the movement of the concept, i.e. than for Himself to be only the concept.”

Schelling admits that one “cannot reproach Hegel with holding the opinion that God is just a concept” in the sense that God is merely the subjective possession of the conceptual thought of human beings, since, for Hegel, the concept is “the thing itself (Sache selbst).” For Hegel, Schelling explains, “the true creator is the concept” since “with the concept one has the creator and needs no other outside this creator.”

The problem with this, in Schelling’s view, is that Hegel’s philosophy attributes to itself the most objective meaning and, in particular, a wholly complete knowledge (Erkenntnis) of God and of divine things—the knowledge which Kant denied to philosophy is supposedly achieved by his philosophy.

Again, Schelling’s distaste for the rationalist ambitions of Hegel’s project, which brought the latter into conflict with Kant, cannot be counted as a refutation of any aspect

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of Hegel’s *Logic*. However, it does serve to explain Schelling’s motivation for attempting such a refutation, and the central role that Schelling’s attack on the allegedly immanently necessary development of Hegel’s *Logic* plays in this effort. In Schelling’s view, if Hegel’s *Logic* does not develop in an immanently necessary way, if Hegel—despite his claims about the immanent necessity of his *Logic*—had to rely instead on a variety of presuppositions, then this failure on Hegel’s part would lend a certain amount of credence to the supposition that human reason is irreducibly dependent on a content (or possibly even a will) that lies outside of the scope of its own comprehension.

Thus, Schelling sets out to demonstrate that Hegel’s *Logic* does not develop in accordance with immanent necessity but is instead riddled with presuppositions. These presuppositions take the form of (1) a merely adventitious beginning, and (2) an unconsciously presupposed aim derived from his previous habits of thought, which include (a) unproven logical forms adopted from other philosophers and (b) concepts formed with the help of empirical intuition. In Schelling’s view, if presuppositions shape the development of the *Logic*, this refutes Hegel’s claim that this development is necessary and thus fully rational, and therefore rationally comprehensible for human reason.

C. Schelling’s Criticism of Hegelian Logical Necessity

*a. The Adventitious Beginning of the Logic*

According to Schelling, Hegel begins his *Logic* with the thought of pure being for reasons that are merely adventitious, i.e., though not entirely arbitrary, certainly not necessary. In Schelling’s view, Hegel then has definite reasons for finding “pure being”
attractive as a beginning, but another philosopher—Schelling, for instance—could easily find another alternative beginning attractive for (superior) reasons of his own.

Schelling explains that in deciding how to begin his philosophy, Hegel was influenced by the prior development of German idealism—Fichte’s and also Schelling’s own systems—which each sought in their own way to provide philosophy with a foundation that was at once both subjective and objective.

Schelling claims that Hegel wished to “establish the same system overall” as Schelling himself, but (misguidedly) sought to do so on the basis of a beginning that was (supposedly) not only objective, but “the most objective” of all, i.e. more objective than Schelling’s beginning.¹³ Hegel’s task was then, Schelling claims, to “determin[e] that which is most objective as the negation of everything subjective.”¹⁴ In Schelling’s view, Hegel must have selected pure being as the starting point because it was an idea that is devoid of all subjectivity.

This idea of pure being is not only objective, but also the most general idea that there is, the idea from which nothing can be considered in abstraction. As Schelling explains, the proof that “pure being” is the “absolutely first thought” is that “nothing could exclude itself from this concept if it is thought in its purity and complete abstraction.”¹⁵


Pure being is, moreover, according to Schelling, “the purest and most immediate certainty, or pure certainty itself without further content, that which is presupposed along with all certainty.”\textsuperscript{16} It is not entirely clear whether Schelling attributes this last position to Hegel or what he thinks its significance is.

Schelling notes that this initial thought of being is, according to Hegel, not “an arbitrary action.”\textsuperscript{17} It is instead “the most complete necessity.”\textsuperscript{18} In Schelling’s view, Hegel thinks that because the thought of pure being is absolutely general, it is therefore also necessary rather than arbitrary.

Schelling objects, however, that this beginning is not even “plausible,” at least not to everyone.\textsuperscript{19} He insists that the supposed “necessity” of Hegel’s beginning is nothing but a “pretense,” since it is not even possible “to think being in general.”\textsuperscript{20} We cannot think being in general, in Schelling’s view, “because there is no being in general, there is no being without a subject.”\textsuperscript{21} Schelling contends that being is “necessarily at all times something determinate, either essential (wesend) being, which returns to the essence

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{16}] Schelling, \textit{History of Modern Philosophy}, 139.
\item[\textsuperscript{17}] Schelling, \textit{History of Modern Philosophy}, 139.
\item[\textsuperscript{18}] Schelling, \textit{History of Modern Philosophy}, 139.
\item[\textsuperscript{19}] Schelling, \textit{History of Modern Philosophy}, 139.
\item[\textsuperscript{20}] Schelling, \textit{History of Modern Philosophy}, 139.
\item[\textsuperscript{21}] Schelling, \textit{History of Modern Philosophy}, 139.
\end{itemize}
(Wesen) and is identical with it, or objective (gegenständlich) being.” Accordingly, Schelling chastises Hegel for “completely ignor[ing]” this distinction.

Thus, according to Schelling, Hegel selects pure being as the first thought of the Logic because he thinks it this is the most objective beginning, because it is the most general beginning, and possibly also because it is the most certain beginning. According to Schelling, Hegel also thinks that the beginning that is most general is necessary, but Schelling thinks that Hegel is wrong about this. In Schelling’s view, the generality of “pure being” makes it an attractive beginning, at least to Hegel, but Hegel is wrong in supposing that this makes it necessary.

b. The Presupposed Aim of the Logic

The second presupposition of which Schelling accuses Hegel is intimately connected with the first one. While, in Schelling’s presentation, Hegel presupposes “pure being” at the beginning of his Logic on the basis of his own, contingent motives, he presupposes the aim of the Logic because he cannot help doing so. Because he presupposes a beginning that is devoid of content, he is compelled to seek the opposite, i.e., determinate or concrete being. Schelling explains that Hegel, just like every other thinking subject, is “already used to a more concrete being, a being more full of content.” Consequently,

22 Schelling, History of Modern Philosophy, 139.

23 Schelling, History of Modern Philosophy, 139.

Hegel is incapable of being “satisfied with that meagre diet of pure being.” The movement of Hegel’s thought beyond the empty abstraction of “pure being” is thus an expression of his own basic dissatisfaction with this empty abstraction, which flows from his nature as a thinking being. As Schelling puts it, Hegel “feels it is impossible for it to stop at this most abstract and most empty thing of all.”

In connection with this, Schelling believes that there is a sense in which necessity does drive Hegel’s Logic forward, but this necessity is not intrinsic to (immanent in) the subject matter itself, as Hegel himself supposes. Rather, the development is driven forward by Hegel’s psychological desire to overcome the abstract indeterminacy of his own beginning.

As Schelling puts it, the “necessity” at work in Hegel’s Logic is only “a necessity which lies in the philosopher,” not a “necessity which lies in the concept itself.” This necessity is “imposed” on the philosopher “by his memory” (of concrete being). The necessity at work in Hegel’s Logic is thus a psychological rather than a logical necessity in Schelling’s presentation of it. The only reason Hegel “attributes an immanent movement to pure being,” is that he feels this psychological compulsion and misidentifies it as an objective necessity that belongs to the concept instead of a subjective necessity.

belonging to him in particular. Following the initial movement from an empty abstraction (pure being) to the thought of determinate being, it is once again thought, in the person of the philosopher (Hegel) that makes itself increasingly determinate, that “seeks again successively to fulfil itself, seeks to get to a content, and finally to the complete content of the world and of consciousness.”

Schelling agrees with Hegel that this development takes place in a “necessary progression,” not a “random” one. However, again, in Schelling’s view, the reason the development is not random is that human psychology is not random. There is always an aim, a goal, that “tacitly leads” the progression, namely the desire for knowledge of the real world “at which science is finally to arrive.” Human psychology, in Schelling’s view, has at least to some degree, a universal and thus also a necessary character. Human beings, who are themselves determinate, are naturally attracted to the thought of determinate being. According to Schelling then, the fact that Hegel’s Logic moves on from pure being to determinate concepts simply instantiates this universal truth. Hegel thus commits two basic errors, according to Schelling.

First, he substitutes the (objective, impersonal) concept for (subjective, human) thought. Hegel believes that this concept can “move itself,” but Schelling insists that this

is impossible. He assures us that “a thinking subject” is absolutely required and without it, “the concept for its own part would lie completely immobile.”

Second, Schelling protests against Hegel’s supposition that “thought is driven forward only by a necessity which lies in itself.” On the contrary, Schelling insists, thought “obviously has a goal that it is striving towards.” Moreover, Schelling explains, when the “person philosophizing,” namely Hegel, “seeks to hide consciousness” of the goal “from himself,” it will “for this reason unconsciously affect the course of philosophizing all the more decisively.” The fact that Hegel does not think that a goal drives the development of his Logic does not at all imply that this is not actually the case. Indeed, in Schelling’s psychoanalysis, the very fact that Hegel does not believe that a goal is driving the development of his Logic blinds him even more to the role that this goal plays in shaping each and every step. In this way, according to Schelling, Hegel presupposes the goal of his philosophizing and this presupposition rather a necessity immanent in the development itself drives the development forward.

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34 Schelling, History of Modern Philosophy, 139.
35 Schelling, History of Modern Philosophy, 139.
36 Schelling, History of Modern Philosophy, 139.
c. Empirical Intuition in the Development of the Logic

According to Schelling, Hegel’s effort “to erect his abstract Logic above the Naturphilosophie” (philosophy of nature) was doomed from the beginning.\textsuperscript{37}

Schelling notes that Hegel had hoped to elaborate an ontology of concepts that corrected the defects of previous metaphysical theories. In all of these theories, and in the philosophy of Christian Wolff in particular, Schelling recounts, “the various categories were set up and dealt with in a more or less just coincidental, more or less indifferent, juxtaposition and succession.”\textsuperscript{38}

In order to overcome this defect and “breathe a life, an inner compulsion to progression” into the “mere concepts” that make up the content of his Logic, Schelling relates, Hegel tries to employ the method of the Naturphilosophie in his exposition of these concepts.\textsuperscript{39} Schelling believes that this effort fails. In Hegel’s Logic, “the translation of the [natural] concept of process into the dialectical movement” also eliminates the “struggle” that is integral to natural processes, leaving “only a monotonous, almost soporific progression.”\textsuperscript{40} In his misguided effort to present concepts as somehow dynamic, Hegel “hid[es] the lack of true life” in the concepts by means of a

\textsuperscript{37} Schelling, \textit{History of Modern Philosophy}, 143.

\textsuperscript{38} Schelling, \textit{History of Modern Philosophy}, 144.

\textsuperscript{39} Schelling, \textit{History of Modern Philosophy}, 144.

\textsuperscript{40} Schelling, \textit{History of Modern Philosophy}, 143.
“misuse of words.” That is, he makes it sound as though the development, the “inner compulsion to progression,” comes from the concepts themselves, whereas it really comes from the thinker, from Hegel himself.

According to Schelling, Hegel’s misconstrual of the role of empirical intuition in his own thought plays an important role here. Whereas Schelling accepts the role of empirical intuition in his Naturphilosophie, Hegel, according to Schelling, tries to eliminate intuition from his logic. In order to make it seem as though the concepts themselves are the source of the transitions, Hegel tries to separate concepts from intuition, to purify them of intuition, and to consider them on their own. Schelling insists that this effort fails. Hegel “presuppose[s] intuition” at the very outset of his Logic, Schelling insists, and is unable to “take a single step without assuming it.”

In Schelling’s view, one has to presuppose the empirical intuition of nature before one can formulate concepts that correspond to what is to be found there. Abstractions cannot “be taken for realities, before that from which they are abstracted.” For example, Schelling insists that “becoming cannot be there before something becomes” and “existence not before something exists.” We have to have experience of existence and

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41 Schelling, History of Modern Philosophy, 143.
42 Schelling, History of Modern Philosophy, 143.
43 Schelling, History of Modern Philosophy, 143.
44 Schelling, History of Modern Philosophy, 145.
45 Schelling, History of Modern Philosophy, 145.
becoming in the empirical world before we can abstract from this experience and formulate these concepts.

Again, Schelling believes that this process of abstraction inevitably leaves something behind:

Everything can be in the logical Idea without anything being *explained* thereby, as, for example, everything in the sensuous world is grasped in number and measure, which does not therefore mean that geometry or arithmetic explain the sensuous world. The whole world lies, so to speak, in the nets of the understanding or of reason, but the question is *how* exactly it got into those nets, since there is obviously something other and something *more* than mere reason in the world, indeed there is something which strives beyond these barriers.\(^{46}\)

There is of course a concrete *content* that geometry and arithmetic inevitably leave behind, whether it is the properties of matter, the requirements of life or the interactions of society, and we have knowledge of this content that exceeds the powers of mathematics to capture it. However, other than assuring us that it is “obvious” *that* something lies beyond “the nets of the understanding or of reason,” Schelling does not specify what it is that does so.\(^{47}\) The trouble with specifying this is, of course, that to


specify it would be to explain precisely the thing that Schelling has just told us cannot be explained. Rather than dealing with this problem, Schelling returns to the issue of “how exactly [the sensuous world] got into” the “nets of the understanding or of reason,” but Schelling has just told us that the “how” is through the process of abstraction, so it remains somewhat unclear, at least at this stage of his career, what exactly what it is that he thinks lies forever beyond the grasp of reason and the understanding.

**d. Presupposed Logical Forms in the Development of the Logic**

According to Schelling, Hegel also presupposes the various “common logical forms” identified by other philosophers with whose work Hegel happens to be familiar.\(^48\) Indeed, he “must presuppose them,” Schelling insists.\(^49\)

Moreover, Schelling insists, Hegel “presupposes” not only the various “logical forms.”\(^50\) He presupposes “virtually all concepts which we use in everyday life” and he “take[s] up” each of these concepts “as a moment of the absolute Idea at a specific point.”\(^51\) In everyday life, we presuppose these concepts “without further reflection and without considering it necessary for us to justify ourselves because of them,” but Hegel, who claims to provide a justification of them, simply fails to do so.\(^52\)


\(^{50}\) Schelling, *History of Modern Philosophy*, 148.


For instance, Schelling complains, Hegel claims that “‘Pure being is nothing,’ without in the least having proved anything about the meaning of this is.”\textsuperscript{53} He also “uses the concept nothing as one that needs no explanation, which is completely self-evident.”\textsuperscript{54} In connection with this “is,” Schelling complains that Hegel fails to specify whether the proposition “Pure being is nothing” is supposed to be a tautology or an instance of judgment (predication).\textsuperscript{55}

Shelling insists that if it is meant to be a tautology, then the difference between “being” and “nothing” would be a difference of mere words in which “two different expressions” have one and the same meaning. But a tautological proposition “says nothing” and “nothing can follow from it.”\textsuperscript{56}

On the other hand, if the proposition “pure being is nothing” is meant to be a judgment, then it means “pure being is the subject, that which carries nothingness.”\textsuperscript{57}

Thus, Schelling does not think that Hegel explicitly endorses either presupposed logical form, identity or predication, but that it is impossible to employ an expression of the form “A is B” without presupposing one or the other. Hegel does not endorse either meaning and for Schelling this counts as a defect.

\textsuperscript{54} Schelling, \textit{History of Modern Philosophy}, 140.
\textsuperscript{55} Schelling, \textit{History of Modern Philosophy}, 140.
\textsuperscript{56} Schelling, \textit{History of Modern Philosophy}, 140.
\textsuperscript{57} Schelling, \textit{History of Modern Philosophy}, 140.
D. A Summary of Schelling’s Case against Hegelian Necessity

In this chapter I have summarized Schelling’s criticisms of Hegel’s claim that the development of his *Logic* is necessary. According to Schelling, Hegel’s *Logic* is vitiated by various presuppositions. Hegel’s presuppositions take several different forms. First, Schelling holds that the beginning of Hegel’s *Logic* is not necessary because it has a merely adventitious beginning. The beginning is not arbitrary, but neither is it necessary. Second, Schelling claims that Hegel unconsciously presupposes the aim of the *Logic*, namely knowledge of the real world or determinate being in all its concreteness. According to Schelling, Hegel unconsciously arrives at this aim as a result of his previous habits of thought that have been shaped by his experience of the real world. As a consequence, the *Logic* is cobbled together from concepts formed with the help of empirical intuition, unproven logical forms adopted from other philosophers, and concepts taken from everyday life.

Two claims that Schelling makes in the course of his discussion of Hegel neatly summarize his stance on Hegelian necessity.

First, he questions how Hegel can distinguish between necessity and its mere appearance. Recall that Schelling holds that the more a philosopher tries to suppress consciousness of his presupposed aim, the more influence it will have on his thinking. As a consequence, Schelling believes, thinking alone is unable to “guarantee” that it has successfully excluded “arbitrariness” in its arrangement of its thoughts.58 In Schelling’s

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view then, thinking can be easily “satisfied with a mere appearance of necessity” or else “a mere appearance of the concept” if it is left to its own devices.59

Second, since there is an irreducible element of arbitrariness in the way that one presents knowledge of the real world, Schelling believes that “one could easily produce this so-called real logic in 10 different ways.”60

In the next chapter, I consider how one group of interpretations attempts to defend Hegel’s Logic against this charge of arbitrariness.

59 Schelling, History of Modern Philosophy, 143.
60 Schelling, History of Modern Philosophy, 147.
Chapter 2: The Intuitionist Defense of Hegelian Necessity

A. Introduction

A group of interpreters of Hegel’s *Logic*, whom I term the intuitionists, set themselves the admirable goal of defending Hegel against Schelling and other opponents of his rationalist project. In this chapter, I explain the central tenets of their interpretation, with particular emphasis on the version of the interpretation offered by Stephen Houlgate in his book *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic: From Being to Infinity*.

Houlgate’s interpretation of Hegel’s *Logic* is more sophisticated and textually accurate than that offered by many of the other intuitionists. Moreover, Houlgate explicitly opposes Schelling’s stance on Hegel’s *Logic* and offers a defense of the necessary development of the latter.

I show that, although Houlgate’s aims are admirable, his defense of Hegelian necessity against Schelling’s criticisms ultimately fails. In the present chapter I show that Houlgate’s stance on Hegelian necessity is internally inconsistent. In Chapter 4, I also show that it is also inaccurate because of what it ignores in Hegel’s texts.

As I discuss below, I am not the first to notice internal inconsistencies in the intuitionist interpretation. However, up until now, the critics of intuitionism have used its inconsistencies to justify their skeptical stance toward Hegelian necessity and Hegel’s entire rationalist project. My aim in Chapters 3 and 4 will be to show that these skeptical
conclusions are not warranted. As I show there, the intuitionist defense of Hegelian necessity is not, as the anti-intuitionists presume, the only defense possible or even the most textually accurate one.

However, before I proceed to the main task at hand, I would like to offer a brief explanation why I selected the terms intuitionist and intuitionism to describe the interpretations I am considering in this chapter, since my choice of terminology admittedly could be viewed as somewhat contentious (though this is not my aim).

J. M. Fritzman calls this same group of interpreters “non-foundational Hegelians,” a designation they might prefer. The defense of the “presuppositionlessness” of Hegel’s Logic, i.e., its lack of a foundation in the traditional sense, is certainly central to their interpretation, and defending the presuppositionlessness of the Logic is indeed considerably more important to them than defending the necessity of its development. Houlgate, for example, makes presuppositionlessness the cornerstone of his interpretation and presents the presuppositionless beginning of the Logic more or less as a condition of the possibility of its subsequent necessary development.

However, this emphasis on the possibility of a logical development is more akin to the Kantian approach to metaphysics than the Hegelian approach to logic. Hegel’s Logic is not supposed to be about the possibility of a logic whose development would be necessary, but that logic itself. Moreover, for Hegel, the beginning of the Logic is not, as Houlgate presents it, just a condition of the possibility of a subsequent necessary development but is itself necessary.
On the other hand, even though the group of interpreters I call the intuitionists place their emphasis on the possible development of Hegel’s *Logic*, they do also provide an interpretation of its actual development: they all present its actual development (implicitly if not explicitly) as a product of intuition. In some cases, this means that they both present it in such a way that it resembles a purely intuitive process and fail to distinguish it from the latter. However, it is not always obvious that their interpretations rely on intuition in this way. Rather, it is something that has to be demonstrated.

Since, as I have explained, the actual development of the *Logic* is what is central for Hegel himself, the stance of an interpretation on this question should likewise be taken as central to the evaluation of that interpretation, and what one calls any such interpretation should reflect the centrality of this question. For this reason, once I have shown that intuition does indeed play the role in their interpretations that I attribute to it, I believe my use of the terms intuitionist and intuitionism is justified.

Moreover, since, as I also show, the intuitionists present a self-contradictory defense of the presuppositionlessness of Hegel’s *Logic*, the term “non-foundational Hegelians” is arguably also a misnomer.

**B. Intuitionism on the Role of Presuppositionlessness in Hegel’s *Logic***

**a. Presuppositionlessness**

Although, as I show, the intuitionists ultimately fail, the fact remains that their central aim is to refute the claims of those interpreters who either deny that Hegel intended his *Logic* to be free of presuppositions or, if he intended it, that he succeeded.
First, Houlgate seeks to establish that Hegel “really meant his philosophy to be presuppositionless,” contrary to the supposition of some “modern commentator[s].” He insists that both the testimony of Hegel’s “nineteenth-century critics”—including Schelling, Trendelenburg and Kierkegaard—and textual evidence from Hegel’s own works decisively refute their position.

Houlgate points out while none of Hegel’s nineteenth century critics “believed that Hegel’s philosophy was actually presuppositionless” or held that “presuppositionlessness is even desirable,” they nevertheless “all took seriously” Hegel’s claim that it was so. Moreover, in Houlgate’s view, “that is precisely why” these critics were “so eager to refute” his philosophy.

Houlgate insists that the Hegel’s texts support his interpretation. First, he quotes a passage from the Encyclopedia Logic, where Hegel says:

All . . . presuppositions or assumptions (Voraussetzungen oder Vorurteile) must equally be given up when we enter into the Science, whether they are taken from representation or from thinking; for it is this Science, in which all determinations of this sort must first be investigated, and in which their meaning and validity like

61 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 29.
62 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 29.
63 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 29-30.
64 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 30.
that of their antitheses must be [re]cognized. . . . Science should be preceded by universal doubt, i.e., by total presuppositionlessness (*die gänzliche Voraussetzungslosigkeit*).\(^{65}\)

The second passage Houlgate quotes comes from the *Science of Logic*, where Hegel says:

>The beginning must be an absolute, or what is synonymous here, an abstract beginning; and so it may not presuppose anything, must not be mediated by anything nor have a ground; rather it is to be itself the ground of the entire science.\(^{66}\)

Houlgate interprets these passages to mean that when we “philosophize ‘without presuppositions,’” this implies “that we do not take for granted any particular conception of thought and its categories at the outset of philosophy.”\(^{67}\) For example, we do not “assume (with Kant) that concepts are ‘predicates of possible judgments’” (CPR 205/109 [B 94]). On the other hand, nor may we “assume that thought should be governed by the

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\(^{65}\) Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 29.


\(^{67}\) Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 30.
rules of Aristotelian logic or that the law of noncontradiction holds, or that thought is
regulated by any principles or laws whatsoever.”

Houlgate holds that if Hegel (or anyone else) proceeded on the basis of any
principle at all at the outset, this principle would itself constitute a presupposition of the
subsequent development. Consequently, Houlgate holds that it would also be wrong to
criticize Hegel for not adopting any principle at the outset, since this would amount to the
demand that Hegel adopt an unjustified presupposition.

These “principles” may turn out to be correct but acknowledging this is different
from assuming at the outset that they “are clearly correct and determine in advance what
is to count as rational.” In other words, it is different from presupposing them.

Since, for example, formal logic is not presuppositionless, it would be
inappropriate to “look to formal logic to provide a standard by which to establish whether
Hegel’s arguments in the Logic are rational” or else “judge that they are sophistical.”

As Houlgate notes, G.R.G. Mure adopts a similar position in his book A Study of
Hegel’s Logic. The latter claims that it would be begging the question to “evaluate
Hegel’s logic against the conventional standards of formal logic” since “Hegel is asking
about the grounds of all logical validity.” Houlgate agrees with Mure’s assessment and

68 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 30.
69 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 30.
70 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 30.
71 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 30.
adds that “if there is one thing that a truly critical philosopher may not do, in Hegel’s view, it is ‘beg the question.’”\(^7\)

According to Houlgate, Hegel does not ultimately reject “all that traditionally counts as ‘thought,’ ‘concept,’ or ‘rationality.’”\(^7\) Rather, he insists on “suspend[ing] our familiar assumptions about thought” and “look[ing] to discover in the course of the science of logic whether or not they will prove to be correct.”\(^7\) The science of logic has to suspend these familiar assumptions “at the beginning” since the task of this science itself is to determine “what it is to think and which categories (if any) are inherent in thought as such.”\(^7\) Accordingly, Houlgate insists that Hegel’s critics “from Schopenhauer to Popper” are wrong to “rail against” him “for deliberately violating the law of noncontradiction” since this is not Hegel’s aim at all.\(^7\) Instead, Hegel simply refuses to presuppose these laws of thought at the outset before determining whether they are correct.

\textit{b. Method}

In Houlgate’s view, the presuppositionlessness of Hegel’s \textit{Logic} has profound implications for what can count for it as a method. Because it cannot make any

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 30.
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\item Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 31.
\item Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 31.
\end{itemize}}
assumptions at all concerning either categories of thought or principles for its direction, it cannot presuppose any methodological principles either.

Houlgate elaborates on this question in a section entitled “Does Hegel Have a Method?” Because Hegel is committed to “radical presuppositionlessness,” Houlgate explains, he cannot presuppose that his “examination of thought … should take any particular course or follow any particular rule of procedure.”

Along these same lines, Houlgate endorses the claim of fellow intuitionist, Richard Winfield, who insists that for Hegel the “examination of thought ‘cannot be guided or legitimated by any propositional calculus, rules of syllogism, logic of discovery, semantic analysis, or doctrine of intentionality.’” Again, Houlgate explains, “none of these can be assumed at the outset to have any validity.”

Houlgate also expresses his agreement with yet another intuitionist, William Maker, who insists that Hegel cannot be said to have a method “insofar as one uses the term ‘method’ in its traditional philosophical sense,” that is, Houlgate explains, “to mean a rule of procedure that can be specified prior to its application to a given content.”

In the passage of Maker’s *Philosophy without Foundations* that Houlgate cites, Maker claims:

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77 Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 32.

78 Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 32.

79 Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 32.

80 Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 33.
Insofar as method is that which can—even if only in principle—be justified, formulated or learned in abstraction from the subject matter to which it is to be applied, Hegel does not have a method. . . . Insofar as one can speak of there being, in the sense just outlined, a phenomenological method, a scientific method, a transcendental method, an analytical method, a speculative method, and so on, Hegel does not have a method.”

Accordingly, Houlgate insists that objections to Hegel’s procedure that suppose that Hegel’s application of the supposed rules of his method do not correspond to his actual presentation of the development of the *Logic* itself are missing the point, since no such abstract articulation is possible.

For example, those who believe that Hegel wants “to proceed dialectically in the *Logic* by showing, say, how one category passes over into, or contains, its opposite and then is taken up with that opposite into a third category that synthesizes the first two” are mistaken. Again, this may well take place, “but we may not assume at the outset” that it will “or that our method should be to look for such dialectical slippage in other categories.”

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82 Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 32.

83 Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 32.
Nevertheless, according to Houlgate, the rejection of presuppositions, including a presupposed method, is not the same as having no method at all. He claims that Hegel does indeed oppose the “crude rejection of all method” even though he does not have a method in the traditional sense.\(^8^4\)

According to Houlgate, Hegel’s method “can consist in nothing more than considering indeterminate being itself and setting out what, if anything, the thought of such being involves.”\(^8^5\) He also claims that once Hegel “has ‘abstracted’ from everything, his method must be simply ‘to take up what is there before us’ and calmly ‘observe’ it.”\(^8^6\) Putting these two claims together, the method, for Houlgate, consists in “abstract[ing],” “considering” or “observ[ing]” and then “setting out” what is “involve[d]” in being.\(^8^7\)

However, Houlgate does not think that Hegel’s method is entirely passive. One is active in employing this method insofar as one is actively passive, i.e., attentive to what is presented to passive observation. Houlgate elaborates his perspective on this question in the section of his book entitled “Passivity and Activity in Presuppositionless Thought.”\(^8^8\) He maintains there that Hegel’s philosophy is characterized by “a spirit of

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\(^8^4\) Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 31.

\(^8^5\) Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 32.

\(^8^6\) Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 32.

\(^8^7\) Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 32.

\(^8^8\) Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 60.
radical openness,” which requires that “we simply let the thought of pure being take us where it will.”

In this sense, Houlgate maintains, Hegel’s *Logic* does have a presupposition, but it is a “hermeneutic presupposition” rather than a “founding presupposition.” This hermeneutic presupposition consists in nothing more than a “self-critical openness of mind,” a “willingness to let.”

Hegel’s *Logic* “presupposes” this same attitude “on the part of the reader,” this same “willingness to let our thinking be guided and determined by what is immanent in the matter at hand.” In other words, the “presupposition” does not determine the direction of development or the content of the *Logic*, but only a certain subjective attitude of openness that makes one receptive to the development of the content.

Many of Hegel’s critics, on the other hand, base their criticisms on the supposition that Hegel does presuppose a “general philosophical method,” which they claim Hegel fails to apply correctly or consistently throughout the *Logic*. Houlgate objects to this

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89 Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 60.

90 Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 60.

91 Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 60.

92 Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 60.

93 Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 34.
claim as well as to the claim that the “structure” of this method “can be described in abstraction from, and prior to, any particular Hegelian analysis.”

To summarize, the criticisms of Hegel’s method that Houlgate addresses are the following: (1) Hegel presupposes the abstract structure of his method; (2) in practice, his application of this method does not measure up to this presupposed abstract structure; and (3) the abstract structure of Hegel’s presupposed method or else its application are somehow inferior to the presupposed abstract structure of the critic’s own method. The problem with all such criticisms, according to Houlgate, is that they start from the assumption that Hegel acknowledges (or else ought to acknowledge) the appropriateness of presupposed abstract methodological criteria. Houlgate insists that the first two criticisms are based on an inaccurate reading of Hegel’s texts, while the third criticism is based on a stance that involves the uncritical adoption of presuppositions, a procedure that Hegel rightly rejects.

Thus, in Houlgate’s view, there are really only two possibilities when it comes to method: (1) a method that is based on presupposed criteria for the development of the content or (2) a method that consists in absolute openness to “observing” how the content develops itself. He insists that Hegel adopts the latter sort of method.

Again, for Houlgate, the presuppositionlessness of Hegel’s Logic serves as a “hermeneutic presupposition,” a condition of the possibility of the employment of his method of radical openness. However, Houlgate does not specify how this method

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unfolds the *Logic*. Instead, Houlgate seems to be under the impression that presuppositionlessness together with radical openness constitute the sufficient condition for the unfolding of Hegel’s *Logic*, since its method cannot involve the presupposing any other principle.

c. Necessity

The lack of specificity in Houlgate’s general characterization of Hegel’s method presents a problem for his defense of the immanent necessity of Hegel’s *Logic*. Given that Houlgate defends both the presuppositionlessness and the immanent necessity of Hegel’s *Logic*, it would be reasonable to expect Houlgate to provide some explanation of how, in his view, Hegel’s method is supposed to produce a development that is not only presuppositionless, but also immanently necessary. But this is something he cannot do because doing so would impute general principles of development to the *Logic*. Consequently, he is never able to tell us exactly what he thinks Hegel means by necessity.

Instead his explanation of both the method and the necessity of the *Logic* stops at presuppositionlessness. For Houlgate, the presuppositionlessness of Hegel’s *Logic* serves as a condition of the possibility of the method—"radical openness”—and its presuppositionlessness likewise serves as a condition of the possibility of the necessary development revealed by this method.

Houlgate traces the tradition of criticism of Hegelian necessity back to Schelling, who, as we have already seen, criticizes both Hegel’s claim that his *Logic* is presuppositionless and his claim that it develops with immanent necessity. According to
Schelling, Houlgate recounts, the “development of the Logic beyond the initial abstract category of pure being” is not necessary because it “depends on upon the prior assumption” that the aim “is not actually abstract but concrete.”

In Schelling’s view, Houlgate recounts, because Hegel finds that pure being is abstract rather than concrete, he concludes that it is “deficient” and, consequently, he “move[s] on from it to other, more determinate categories.” In Schelling’s view, Hegel only “pretend[s] that thought is moved forward by a necessity immanent within its most indeterminate category,” even though it is really driven forward by his own presupposition that he ought to end up at concrete being. In this way, Houlgate singles out only one of the reasons that Schelling provides in justification for his conclusion that Hegel’s Logic is not presuppositionless, though, as we will see, he also considers some of Schelling’s other criticisms in more contemporary forms.

Houlgate observes that subsequent critics of Hegel’s Logic have followed Schelling’s lead in arguing that the Logic cannot have an immanently necessary development because, allegedly, it presupposes its aim.

On the contrary, Houlgate maintains, Hegel’s Logic has no “preset goal” or “assumption of absolute closure,” but instead “begins from self-critical openness.”

95 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 54.
96 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 54.
97 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 54.
98 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 58.
In discussing the role of necessity in Hegel’s Logic, Houlgate also addresses an issue related to Schelling’s claim that Hegel relies on empirical intuition, unproven logical forms adopted from other philosophers, and concepts taken from everyday life. Specifically, Houlgate insists that Hegel does not approach the derivation of the categories empirically in the way that Kant does, by deriving them from the forms of judgement enumerated without proof by the traditional logic. What Houlgate has in mind here when he calls this procedure empirical has nothing to do with sensory intuition, however. Rather, Kant’s procedure is empirical in the sense that he “base[s] his account of the categories on various kinds of judgment that he finds in formal logic after they had themselves been found by formal logicians in thought.”

However, Houlgate explains, Hegel is not satisfied with knowing “how [basic categories] have in fact been understood” in the past. Houlgate notes that both Fichte and Hegel criticize Kant’s “account of the categories” because it relies on “unproven assumptions.” Kant only shows how the categories, in Houlgate’s words, “are to be understood given those assumptions,” not how they “have to be understood.” An understanding of the categories that does not rely on presuppositions, but is, instead, “completely necessary” requires a “deduction” of the categories, a demonstration of

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“which categories are inherent in thought as such.” Houlgate maintains that, for Hegel, as for Fichte, “we can only do this if we allow pure thought to determine itself—and so to generate its own determinations.”

Note that in Houlgate’s presentation, we “can” find out which categories are inherent in thought and “how they have to be understood” only if “we allow pure thought to determine itself” and “only the suspension of one’s cherished assumptions will [automatically?] lead to what is necessary and true.” Again, Houlgate presents a condition of the possibility of a necessary development but does not explain what makes that development necessary itself.

According to Houlgate, Fichte and then Hegel follow in Kant’s footsteps in seeking an explanation of how the understanding produces categories, but they believe that Kant’s own derivation of them is not “rigorous” enough. Whereas Kant simply takes up the forms of judgment and the corresponding categories from an empirical examination of consciousness, Fichte and Hegel seek to “demonstrate that the categories follow necessarily from what thought itself is.”

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103 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 16, 24.
104 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 24.
105 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 25.
106 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 27.
107 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 27.
But what precisely does Houlgate think Hegel means by necessity? Houlgate apparently does not think that Hegel’s derivation of the categories is a logically necessary deduction in a traditional sense, that is, a product of reasoning in accordance with the principle of non-contradiction. He explicitly states that he believes that Hegel’s Logic does not presuppose this principle and would not be presuppositionless if it did. He also believes that Hegel’s Logic can have a necessary development only if it is presuppositionless. If it presupposed the principle of non-contradiction, it could not be necessary. So whatever Houlgate thinks Hegel means by “logic,” it cannot be reasoning in accordance with the principle of non-contradiction.

Indeed, Houlgate makes this position more or less explicit when he declares that the “ontology” of Hegel’s Logic is “prefigured in Kant’s transcendental logic” and that Hegel is “indebted to Kant” for his idea of a logic of concepts that is distinct from “general logic.”108 For Kant, the latter consists in the “rules of [formally] valid thinking,” Houlgate explains, whereas the former, transcendental logic, is devoted to the rules our thinking must observe “if what we are conscious of is to count as an object rather than a mere succession of subjective images or perceptions.”109 In Houlgate’s view, Hegel develops his own version of a transcendental logic, namely an ontological logic (a logic of being). The main difference between Hegel’s ontological logic and Kant’s transcendental logic, for Houlgate, is that Hegel’s logic is presuppositionless, whereas

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108 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 123.

109 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 123.
Kant’s so-called deduction is merely the result of an empirical examination of the contents of consciousness.

However, Houlgate’s explanation of some of the things that Hegelian necessity is not still leaves it all rather mysterious what Houlgate thinks Hegelian necessity is. As I explained at the beginning of this section, Houlgate cannot explain how Hegelian necessity works, i.e., what it is, because doing so would involve explaining the development to the Logic in terms of general principles, which he has told us is impossible.

The way that Schelling and his intellectual descendants frame their criticisms of Hegelian necessity also allows Houlgate to avoid this question. Again, they deny that it is possible for Hegel’s Logic to be necessary since, as they insist, it relies on presuppositions. In defense of the necessity of Hegel’s Logic, Houlgate then simply denies that it relies on presuppositions. Thus, in Houlgate’s presentation, Hegel seeks a presuppositionless derivation of the categories as a condition of the possibility of a necessary development. However, Houlgate never takes the further step of explaining what this necessity that is made possible by presuppositionlessness in fact is, and perhaps he does not even believe that he has to do so, since the entire discussion, as framed by Schelling and his intellectual descendants, concerns the very possibility of a necessary development.

C. Intuitionism on the Actual Development of Hegel’s Logic

As I explained in the introduction to this chapter, intuitionism offers not only an interpretation of the condition of the possibility of the (necessary) development of
Hegel’s *Logic*, but also an interpretation of the development itself. There, if anywhere, we should gain some insight into what the proponents of this interpretation mean by necessity. Let us now turn to this side of intuitionism.

I wish to introduce this discussion by turning briefly from the examination of the version of intuitionism presented by Houlgate to that presented by Michael Rosen in order to provide a deeper understanding of the interpretations offered by Houlgate and the other intuitionists. Once I have explained Rosen’s view of the development of the *Logic*, I will elaborate the ways in which it coincides with Houlgate’s approach to this same question.

I believe it is valuable to examine both obvious examples and less obvious, more subtle examples of specific ways of thinking about Hegel’s *Logic*. In the present case, Rosen explicitly claims that Hegel develops his *Logic* by means of intuition, whereas it is much less obvious that this is Houlgate’s position. The examples in which it is more obvious what is going (Rosen’s interpretation in this case) on can serve as a bridge to grasping how the same sort of thing is going on in the more subtle examples (Houlgate’s interpretation in this case). It is, in turn, worthwhile to examine the more subtle examples in order to see where they in fact diverge from Hegel’s texts in order, through this process, to gain ultimately a more precise conception of the Hegel’s own positions. In the present case, it is not entirely *obvious*, as I indicated in the introduction to this chapter, that everyone I call an intuitionist ought to be called intuitionists at all. Whereas Rosen’s interpretation is openly intuitionist, other intuitionists approach the role of intuition in Hegel’s *Logic* with a certain degree of ambivalence. My aim is to show that in spite of this ambivalence, intuition plays the same role for them that it does for Rosen. Having
presented a clear picture of the claims of intuitionism, I will then be in a position to evaluate its internal coherence and its success or failure as an answer to Schelling’s criticisms.

\textit{a. Rosen’s Open Intuitionism}

Rosen’s intuitionist interpretation of Hegel’s \textit{Logic} differs significantly from that of the other intuitionists in two additional respects. First, Rosen does not believe that Hegel’s Logic is presuppositionless. So, regarding what makes Hegel’s Logic possible, Rosen’s interpretation differs from that of the other intuitionists, even though, as I will show, his interpretation more or less coincides with theirs regarding the actual development of the logic. Despite the fact that this difference would be deemed as highly significant by those intuitionists who emphasize the presuppositionlessness of Hegel’s \textit{Logic}, it will play no role in my discussion here, since it does not relate directly to the role of intuition there.

The second significant difference concerns the role of inference in Hegel’s \textit{Logic}. As I will explain shortly, this difference goes some of the way to explaining the ambivalence of the other intuitionists on the question of the role of intuition.

According to Rosen, Hegel’s \textit{Logic} does not develop in accordance with a “dialectical procedure.”\footnote{Michael Rosen, \textit{Hegel’s Dialect and Its Criticism}, 72.} On the contrary, he insists, “the movement of the Logic is non-inferential,” and for this reason also “intuitionistic.”\footnote{Michael Rosen, \textit{Hegel’s Dialect and Its Criticism}, 72.} The type of intuition that Rosen believes is responsible for the development of the \textit{Logic} “consists,” he explains, “solely
in holding in Thought the Thought-content.” While the movement of this thought “has the status of a proof,” the movement is nevertheless “non-inferential” insofar as “it is not, nor does it depend on, an argument, operation or calculus.” In other words, Hegel’s does not present a logic at all. The exposition contained in the *Logic* somehow manages to be a “proof,” while failing to achieve the status of a logical deduction.

Rosen observes that some scholars may object to the interpretation of Hegel’s procedure as “intuitionistic” on the grounds that it seems to contradict Hegel’s “own text.” In fact, as Rosen acknowledges, in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, “Hegel is scathing about the pretensions of intuition to displace Science” and “he contrasts the Scientific status of philosophy with what is “dished up with the assurance that it comes from the shrine of ‘divine intuition.’”

However, Rosen is unwilling to interpret such statements on Hegel’s part as a rejection of “intuitionistic” thought. Instead, when Hegel objects to intuition as a source of knowledge, Rosen explains, Hegel is actually addressing Jacobi’s claim that intuition provides knowledge that is “immediate.” Rosen then summarizes the grounds on which Hegel rejects such immediate knowing. First, he explains, Hegel insists that the

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114 Michael Rosen, *Hegel’s Dialectic and Its Criticism*, 73.
115 Michael Rosen, *Hegel’s Dialectic and Its Criticism*, 73.
proponents of immediate knowledge mistakenly suppose that “subjective certainty” can serve as “the standard of truth.” 118 Second, Hegel objects that “immediate consciousness” does not have a “criterion by which to discriminate among claims to truth.” 119 Third, Hegel contends that immediate knowledge excludes “specific content” and confines itself to generalities. 120

All three objections, Rosen maintains, are directed against a “one-sided” approach to immediate knowledge but not against immediate knowledge as such. Therefore, he argues, Hegel’s presentation of these criticisms does not imply that he endorses “mediate, in the sense of inferential, knowledge.”121

In support of this position, Rosen cites Hegel’s approving remarks about Descartes’ Cogito (“I think, therefore I am.”) and Hegel’s denial that it constitutes and inference.

Rosen also points out Hegel’s emphasis on “the observing character of the Scientific activity” and how this differs from the “common conception of argument, as Räsonnieren.”122 In support of this point, he includes an extended quote from Hegel’s Phenomenology, in which Hegel says:

118 Michael Rosen, Hegel’s Dialectic and Its Criticism, 73.
119 Michael Rosen, Hegel’s Dialectic and Its Criticism, 74.
120 Michael Rosen, Hegel’s Dialectic and Its Criticism, 74.
121 Michael Rosen, Hegel’s Dialectic and Its Criticism, 47.
122 Michael Rosen, Hegel’s Dialectic and Its Criticism, 74.
Argumentation [Räsonnieren] is freedom from its content and vanity towards it. What is required of it is the effort of giving up this freedom and, instead of being the arbitrary moving principle of the content, to sink its freedom into the content and to allow the content to move itself spontaneously according to its own nature—viz. the self as its own self—and to observe this movement. To refrain from intruding into the immanent rhythm of the notion and not to intervene arbitrarily or with wisdom obtained from elsewhere is itself an essential moment of attention to the notion.\textsuperscript{123}

In Rosen’s view, Hegel’s criticism of argumentation, the arbitrary rearrangement of the content and the eclectic insertion of irrelevant “wisdom” obtained in another context, implies an absolute rejection of inferential thought. He interprets this passage to mean that “the dialectical movement cannot be justified with reference to [inferential] principles” because only the “actual carrying out” of the “movement” can serve as “conclusive vindication.”\textsuperscript{124} Evidently, in Rosen’s view, the role of principles or laws is to serve as justification, and justification always constitutes a form of “‘external’ discourse,” so the justification through principles or laws cannot “adequately capture” this movement.\textsuperscript{125} That is, because Rosen views any principles or laws as necessarily

\textsuperscript{123} Michael Rosen, \textit{Hegel’s Dialectic and Its Criticism}, 74.

\textsuperscript{124} Michael Rosen, \textit{Hegel’s Dialectic and Its Criticism}, 72.

\textsuperscript{125} Michael Rosen, \textit{Hegel’s Dialectic and Its Criticism}, 72.
external to the immanent development of the *Logic*, he believes that such principles or laws must play no role.

Rosen’s position here clearly bears a striking resemblance to Houlgate’s position on this same question, except that for Houlgate, unlike for Rosen, this development somehow constitutes a deduction. However, despite this difference, the two interpretations coincide on the question of the principle of non-contradiction. Inasmuch as Hegel’s *Logic* is, according to Rosen, non-inferential, it cannot consist in reasoning at all. Therefore, for Rosen as for Houlgate, it cannot consist in reasoning in accordance with the law of non-contradiction.

Having established to his satisfaction, that Hegel’s *Logic* is non-inferential in character, Rosen explains how he thinks the intuition in the *Logic* is different from sensory intuition:

To emphasize the difference between the progress of Thought and ‘inner picturing’ one might call the dialectical process of the *Logic* a process of *hyperintuition*, to indicate that it is a non-inferential form of development whose specific character consists in being *beyond* the ‘inner picturing’ which intuition is normally taken to be; it is accomplished by the *purified* consciousness of Thought, rather than the everyday one of *Vorstellung*.  

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Rosen does not provide a discursive explanation of the development or the “dialectical process” that is the object of such “observation,” since he believes that such a process lies outside the domain of discursive explanation.

b. Covert Intuitionism

i. Metaphorical Language

The problems with the metaphorical language employed by the intuitionists that I discuss below are in part inspired by the work of David Kolb, who, in his essay, “The Necessities of Hegel’s Logics,” offers some apt criticisms of Houlgate’s interpretation of Hegel’s Logic. I return to Kolb’s criticisms of Houlgate’s interpretation and discuss the conclusions he draws about Hegel on the basis of its shortcomings toward the end of this chapter.

As I discussed in relation to Houlgate’s interpretation of Hegel’s stance on method, the former, like Rosen, places heavy emphasis on the role of “observation” in Hegel’s Logic. In this context, I quoted Houlgate’s claim that Hegel’s method consists first in abstracting from all presuppositions and then “take[ing] up what is there before us’ and calmly ‘observ[ing]’ it.”

Houlgate makes repeated references to this injunction to “observe” throughout his book. At another point, for example, Houlgate insists that Hegel, as a “presuppositionless philosopher,” does not “aim” to begin by “demonstrat[ing] that the thought of being

\[127\] Stephen Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 32.
generates a more complex—dialectical or nondialectical—view of the world.”\textsuperscript{128} Instead, his aim “is simply to consider the indeterminate thought of being itself, to dwell with that category for its own sake, and to observe where, if anywhere, it takes us.”\textsuperscript{129}

At yet another point in his text, Houlgate expresses this same position once again when he says that in determining “what, if anything, is implicit in [the] idea of sheer being,” the task is “simply to observe what, if anything, happens to the idea as we attend to it in thought.”\textsuperscript{130}

Houlgate does not, like Rosen, explain what kind of mental activity this metaphor—observation—is supposed to represent but instead introduces several other metaphors of his own to describe what it is we are supposed to find ourselves “observing.”

For instance, in his discussion of Hegel’s method, he explains that the transition from being to nothing in Hegel’s \textit{Logic} is an instance of “dialectical slippage.”\textsuperscript{131} Later he says that

the thought of pure being slips away of its own accord into the thought of nothing, and the thought of nothing itself slips away into the thought of pure being, thereby

\textsuperscript{128} Stephen Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 51.

\textsuperscript{129} Stephen Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 51.

\textsuperscript{130} Stephen Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 110.

\textsuperscript{131} Stephen Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 32.
generating a new thought of this very slippage or “vanishing,” which Hegel names becoming.\textsuperscript{132}

At another point, Houlgate refers once again to the “dialectical slippage of nothing into being” and claims that nothingness “slip[s] ineluctably into being.”\textsuperscript{133}

Moreover, in Houlgate’s presentation, such slippage produces not only transitions, but distinctions: while “being is certainly understood to be distinct from nothing” it also “comes to be distinguished from nothing in the very dialectical slippage through which that distinction is undermined.”\textsuperscript{134}

On one occasion, Houlgate defines this process of “dialectical slippage” of one category into another as a process in which “each [category] negates itself through what it is into its negation,” but he does not indicate why this is the case.\textsuperscript{135}

Houlgate goes even deeper into the territory of metaphor when he refers to the “conversion or slippage of being and nothing into one another through their own nature

\textsuperscript{132} Stephen Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 52.

\textsuperscript{133} Stephen Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 269.

\textsuperscript{134} Stephen Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 65.

\textsuperscript{135} Stephen Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 42.
and ‘action’” as the “tragic nature of being.” Like “heroes and heroines, such as Macbeth and Antigone, [who] destroy themselves through their own actions,” being gives way to nothing out of its own nature. While this is a vivid and interesting metaphor, it does not in and of itself explain much of anything.

Another favorite formulation of Houlgate’s relates to the way that “categories” allegedly “mutate” into other “categories.” We observe, according to Houlgate, that less determinate “categories” in Hegel's Logic “mutate” into more determinate ones. Houlgate uses the terms “mutate” and “mutation” over and over again to describe the development of Hegel’s Logic.

As he puts it in one passage, Hegel’s Logic “shows an initial indeterminate thought mutate into further categories in terms of which we must think and must understand being.”

Often, Houlgate attaches the adverb “logically” to the verb “mutate” but he does not explain what precisely this descriptor is supposed to signify. For example, he claims that, although “being and nothing are initially pure and indeterminate,” being eventually

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136 Stephen Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 282.

137 Stephen Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 282.


139 Stephen Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 138.
“mutat[es] logically” into something “much more determinate and complex,” namely “reality, being-something, actuality, and ultimately, space.”\textsuperscript{140}

At one point, Houlgate claims that finitude “mutat[es] logically into infinity.”\textsuperscript{141} He generalizes this formulation when he claims that there is something about each “level of being” that develops out of the first thought of pure being that “requires it to mutate logically into a more complex level.”\textsuperscript{142}

Because, in Houlgate’s view, there can be no consistent methodological principle or law that determines the course of each and every instance of slippage or mutation, this would seem to imply that there is no consistent meaning that can be assigned to the adverb “logically” either. This is problematic, however, because if no consistent definition can be provided, it will be difficult if not impossible to distinguish what is logical from what is illogical.

In Rosen’s presentation, what is observed is of course not a logical inference at all, so the difficulty in explaining what is logical about it does not arise for him in the same way.

Houlgate, however, does seem to want to hold onto the idea that there is an inference involved. According to Houlgate, Hegel’s task in the Logic is to show how the later categories “render explicit what is implicit” in the earlier categories. To accomplish

\textsuperscript{140} Stephen Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 266.

\textsuperscript{141} Stephen Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 382.

\textsuperscript{142} Stephen Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 286.
this, Houlgate tells us that Hegel must simply “let each category unfold its own implications and thereby mutate of its own accord into further categories.” But to grasp out the implications of something is to make an inference, so it seems that Houlgate, unlike Rosen, does think that Hegel’s Logic consists in making inferences even if he cannot make any generalizations at all about what this inferential process involves and even if he thinks that inferring is some sort of passive activity.

In any case, it is safe to say that neither Houlgate nor indeed Hegel himself, could have meant for us to take the term “observation” literally as visual observation. When Houlgate says there is a “slippage” of one category into another, he surely does not mean to indicate that a physical object is losing its balance because of a shift in its center of mass or because it is too slick for the force of friction to hold it firmly in place against the tendency of various other forces to dislodge it. Or when he tells us that categories “mutate,” he is not telling us that they have cells with a genetic structure that is different in some fundamental way than the cellular structure of their parent cells or organisms. Rather, these are all metaphors for something non-physical and non-biological. We are meant to gather that our attitude toward the development of the Logic is supposed to be somehow like visual observation and that what we “observe” is supposed to be like a slippage or a mutation.

However, the problem with metaphors is that things that are merely like another thing in some way or other and not actually one and the same with that thing are also unlike that other thing in other ways. It is not that metaphors are never useful, but they

143 Stephen Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 436.
should only play a supplementary role in an explanation that is supposed to be *scientific* in the broad sense of the term, as opposed to poetic or literary, because an explanation that relies exclusively on metaphor is ineluctably imprecise. This is why Rosen makes the effort to distinguish what he calls Hegel’s “hyperintuition” from sensory intuition, even if this explanation is not entirely satisfying.

But Houlgate fails to offer any explanation of his metaphors. Consequently, we are left to wonder how Hegel’s inferences are supposed to be like and how they are supposed to be unlike the observation of slippages and mutations.

Of course, it is not too difficult to recognize one similarity between a necessary development and visual observation. The cognition of a necessary development involves a kind of compulsion. When we observe something slipping or mutating, our observation is determined by the thing we are observing rather our own subjective desire to see one thing or another or one or another outcome. The observer is compelled by the object of observation to observe whatever it is that that object does and that compulsion acts as a kind of external necessity on the observer.

But, again, a metaphorical explanation can never, by itself, tell us about all of the respects in which the object of comparison may be like or unlike the thing with which it is compared. The explanation it supplies is always incomplete.

Perhaps, for example, thought is never anything like observation *except* when it is driven by the consistent application of some principle or other, in which case it is compelled through its dedication to that principle to follow certain ideas to definite conclusions. For visual sensation to take place, certain stable physical and biological
requirements have to be met. Perhaps similarly stable requirements (in the form of the operation of principles) have to be in place for the cognition of the necessity of the transitions in Hegel’s *Logic*. In Houlgate’s view, this is not how Hegel’s *Logic* works, since it cannot, in his view, presuppose any principle at the outset. However, since Houlgate maintains his explanation at the level of superficial metaphor, he keeps it so vague that he never has to face this challenge.

Moreover, back to the visual analogy, the presence of a kind of compulsion acting on an observer would not imply that there was also some kind of necessary development in whatever was being observed. Houlgate may have selected the “mutation” metaphor because it suggests some sort of transformation to the imagination, but it also (presumably inadvertently) suggests that this transition is random rather than a necessary. If Houlgate wanted to make the case that Hegel’s *Logic* has a *necessary* development immanent in the concepts themselves, he should have explained how the transitions in the *Logic* are not only *like* but also *unlike* mutations, and, even more importantly, why we should believe that this is the case.

Let us explore just how limited the visual analogy with the development of Hegel’s *Logic* is. In vision the principle of organization is an object of cognition, i.e., it is external to the action of seeing. So seeing can never perceive an intrinsic relation between the things that it sees. Moreover, in observing, there does not have to be anything that intrinsically binds successive visual sensations. Just looking around a room, we successively observe all kinds of things that have no intrinsic relation to one another besides spatial juxtaposition. If one holds that there is an intrinsic or even a necessary relation between the content of observations, this is the product of an inference. One does
not explain the inference by falling back on an analogy with observation. So, in order to find an intrinsically necessary relation, one has to go beyond analogies with observation.\textsuperscript{144}

This does not imply that Hegel does not or should not enjoin us to observe the development, but one would hope that he would say something more about what it is that is supposed to make the development we observe necessary.

Houlgate never explains or justifies how Hegel (or we) might tell the difference between a situation in which a category was mutating “logically” rather than illogically, or necessarily rather than contingently or randomly. He does not explain or justify this difference because his interpretation rules out an explanation or justification of it. In Houlgate’s view, there is no consistent methodological principle at work in Hegel’s \textit{Logic} that could serve as such an explanation or justification. His interpretation thus requires that the difference between logic and illogic, between reason and irrationality, and between inference and leap remain unspecified. All he tells us that the development ought to be presuppositionless, but without any criterion for distinguishing logic from illogic, reason from irrationality or inference from leap, how will we know when a

\textsuperscript{144} I am indebted to Lynn Clark and J. M. Fritzman for this criticism of Houlgate’s use of the observation metaphor. In their essay, “Reducing Spirit to Substance: Dove on Hegel’s Method,” they offer a similar criticism of Kenley R. Dove’s interpretation of Hegel’s \textit{Phenomenology}. I discuss this criticism toward the end of this chapter.
presupposition is being introduced and when it is not? Houlgate gives no indication that this question can be answered.

Among the intuitionists, this problem is not unique to Houlgate. Alan White, another intuitionist, characterizes the self-contradictory character of “being” and “nothing” in Hegel's *Logic* as a “conflict” between absolutely diverse terms.\(^\text{145}\) But in any given “conflict,” there are at least two possible outcomes and neither outcome is absolutely necessary or else there would be no genuine conflict, but simply an inevitable outcome. So, again, the metaphor undermines the explanation of what it is supposed to be explaining (necessary development and transition) since we are never told how the development is *unlike* a conflict. White’s term “conflict,”—like Houlgate's “mutation,” suggests a contingent rather than a necessary development.

As I argue shortly, it is this element of mystery about the object of “observation” and about what will be observed next that opens the door to intuition as a stand-in for an explanation of Hegel’s *Logic*.

*ii. Houlgate’s Rejection of a Kind of Intuitionism*

However, before we get to this, it is important to acknowledge that Houlgate explicitly denies that Hegel’s *Logic* is the product of a “mysterious” or “esoteric” power of

\(^{145}\) White, *Absolute Knowledge*, 58.
Houlgate tells us that Hegel rejects a purely intuitive method insofar as such a method might be considered the property of an exclusive few individuals:

Hegel’s *Logic* is difficult, but nothing about it is meant to be esoteric; it is not to be the province of a privileged few who are gifted with some mysterious power of dialectical insight or intuition. It is intended to be a rigorous, disciplined study of the categories of thought that can be followed by anyone who seeks to understand what it is to think and what it is to be, without assuming in advance that they already know.147

This implies that, in Houlgate’s interpretation, if intuition plays a role in the development of Hegel *Logic*, this role should be comprehensible to more than just Hegel himself. It should be publicly accessible.

And there is indeed a specific sense in which Houlgate presents Hegel’s method as publicly accessible. Supposedly anyone at all can engage in “radical openness.” But this simply gives the problem another name. It does not matter how open we are if we have no criterion for determining when we are being open to “observing” a category mutating “logically” rather than illogically, or necessarily rather than contingently or

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randomly. So, if there is a right way to be “radically open,” it cannot be articulated and communicated.

iii. Houlgate’s Explicit Endorsement of a Role for Intuition

Nevertheless, Houlgate, like Rosen, believes there is a sense in which Hegel’s Logic is intuitive. He claims that, for Hegel, thought is intuitive insofar as it grasps being directly without the need of an intermediary:

For Hegel, pure thought is indeed the intellectual intuition of being. It is directly aware that there is being and it understands by itself what being is. This is why, at the beginning of the main text of the Logic, Hegel speaks of the category of nothing as “the same empty intuition or thought (Anschauen oder Denken) as pure being.”148

Hegel opposes Kant on this question, Houlgate explains, since Kant holds that thought cannot be intuitive insofar as it also has the discursive character of judgment.

Houlgate makes this same point in an earlier paper, “Schelling’s Critique of Hegel’s Science of Logic” in which he contrasts Hegel’s perspective with Schelling’s Kantian perspective. In this paper, Houlgate claims that “the principal difference between

148 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 125.
Hegel and Schelling” is that Schelling, like Kant, believes that “thought is primarily discursive,” whereas “Hegel understands thought to be a form of intellectual intuition.”

Moreover, Houlgate claims in this paper that, for Hegel, “in its proper functioning,” thought is “primarily” the “thought of being” or “the intellectual intuition of being as such,” not “judgment or predication.” However, Hegel also “show[s] in the *Logic* that thought involves determining, thinking quantitatively, judging, and so on.”

In other words, Houlgate believes that, in Hegel’s view, we have immediate—and thus intuitive—access to a content that turns out to be discursive. This access is not the province of a few individuals but is granted to anyone who succeeds in adopting a stance that is sufficiently “radical” in its openness to being, i.e., sufficiently free of presuppositions.

*iv. The Implicit Role of Intuition in Houlgate’s Interpretation*

Despite these explanations, there remains something mysterious about Houlgate’s view of the role of intuition in Hegel’s *Logic* as well as about his interpretation taken as a whole. His explicit position on the role of intuition does not reveal very much about how he thinks Hegel’s *Logic* develops, i.e., how Hegel gets from one thought to the next, except that the thoughts themselves supposedly “mutate” somehow without the intervention of the thinker. Again, Houlgate does not consider Hegel’s *Logic* to be “non-

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150 Houlgate, “Schelling’s Critique,” 120.

151 Houlgate, “Schelling’s Critique,” 120.
inferential” as Rosen does, even though he uses similar metaphorical language to Rosen to describe its development. Nor does Houlgate, like Rosen, explicitly claim that intuition is the source of the transitions in the Logic.

So, does Houlgate think that the development of the Logic is intuitive process, the product of a series of immediate insights, or does he hope to describe some other sort of process by means of his metaphors? Perhaps Houlgate thinks that thought is intuitive only insofar as it gives us direct access to being, including the various determinacies of being or “categories”? But Houlgate thinks that Hegel’s “method” of “radical openness” reveals the “slippage” or “mutation” of one “category” into another and that this “slippage” or “mutation” is immanent in the categories. So what role, if any, does Houlgate think intuition plays in this process? He does not say.

Thankfully, even though Houlgate is somewhat evasive on this questions, White’s position is much less so and can offer us some insight into Houlgate’s view as well, since Houlgate claims he “fully endorse[s] White’s understanding of Hegel’s dialectical method.”152 Once again, a more explicit example of a way of thinking about Hegel’s Logic can provide insight into a less obvious example of the same way of thinking about it.

White declares that, for Hegel, “there is an ‘intuitive’ moment in each dialectical move” in the Logic inasmuch as “the logician must ‘see’ the category that will meet the

152 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 121.
requirements of the dialectic at each point.”153 In this process of consecutive seeing, “each category must arise spontaneously—and thus be ‘immediate.’”154 After the logician sees a given category, he must “analyze” it in order to “know” it as “determined through its relation to other categories, by which it is mediated.”155

This position, expressed by White and apparently endorsed by Houlgate, is substantially the same as Rosen’s. Rosen claims that Hegel rejects “one-sided” intuition and White claims that Hegel’s “dialectical move[s]” have an “‘intuitive’ moment,” implying that there is also some kind of discursive moment involved in these “moves” as well. These positions are also similar to Houlgate’s position on the relationship between the discursive and intuitive moments as I explained it in the previous subsection, namely that, in Hegel’s view, we have immediate—and thus intuitive—access to a content that turns out to be discursive.

None of the intuitionists explain how the two “sides” or “moments” are supposed to work together, but simply assert that they do. In this way, they present the development of Hegel’s Logic as a fundamentally mysterious process.

Indeed, they cannot explain the role of the discursive and intuitive moments of the development in terms of any principle, since they deny that it presupposes or is determined by any principle in the first place.

153 White, Absolute Knowledge, 63-64.

154 White, Absolute Knowledge, 64.

155 White, Absolute Knowledge, 64.
The consequence of this for Houlgate’s interpretation is that, despite his explicit denial that Hegel’s method amounts to a “mysterious power of dialectical insight or intuition” belonging only to “a privileged few,” as well as his effort to cast Hegel’s Logic as a rigorous development of success implications, his interpretation of what Hegel means by presuppositionlessness nevertheless demands that it remain mysterious why the Logic develops in the way that it does.\(^\text{156}\) The demand for radical openness contains in itself no criterion, available for public scrutiny, for judging whether one is being “open” enough such that a transition can be determined to be the product not of unconscious presuppositions but of a necessity immanent in the thought determinations themselves. Moreover, Houlgate’s account of the development rules out any explanation why one should accept that any given example of a Hegelian deduction is indeed an instance of logical necessity.

I have pointed out a number of inconsistencies in Houlgate’s intuitionist interpretation. Houlgate would like to defend the presuppositionlessness of Hegel’s Logic, but his interpretation of what this means in practice is so vague that he is unable to provide a criterion by which it could be determined when a presupposition is or is not being introduced. He would like to defend Hegelian necessity but does not define what necessity means for Hegel. He compares the allegedly necessary development of Hegel’s Logic to mutation, which is generally a random event. He would like to deny that Hegel’s Logic is the product of a mysterious power of intuition and therefore the property of an exclusive few individuals, but he defines its development in such a way that it is

\(^{156}\) Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 66.
indistinguishable from a mysterious power of intuition. He wants to claim that the
development of Hegel’s Logic involves implication, but he denies that Hegel presupposes
the law of non-contradiction. These are all serious problems.

However, we are not yet finished. Since my primary purpose in examining
Houlgate’s interpretation is to evaluate its success as a defense of Hegel’s Logic against
Schelling’s criticisms, at this point I would like to consider the implications of its
inconsistencies for this defense. I will then consider how other critics of the intuitionists
have responded to some of these inconsistencies before providing my own interpretation
of Hegelian necessity in Chapter 3, and then, in Chapter 4, bringing this interpretation to
bear on the other interpretations I have considered.

D. Intuitionism as an answer to Schelling

As we saw in Chapter 1, Schelling does indeed criticize Hegel for allegedly falsely
claiming that his Logic is presuppositionless and has a necessary development, as
Houlgate emphasizes. Recall that, in Schelling’s presentation, Hegel’s presuppositions
take the form of (1) a merely adventitious beginning, and (2) an unconsciously
presupposed aim (a concept of determinate being) derived from his previous habits of
thought, which include (a) unproven logical forms adopted from other philosophers and
concepts taken from everyday life and (b) concepts formed with the help of empirical
intuition.

Recall, in addition, that Schelling remarks that in his view “one could easily
produce” a logic like Hegel’s, which is supposed to be a logic of reality, “in ten different

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Since Schelling does not think that Hegel produces his *Logic* out of a necessity immanent in the thought determinations themselves, there is, in Schelling’s view no one single way that Hegel’s aim—a concept of concrete being—could be produced. A related point Schelling raises is that it is important to be able to distinguish necessity from the mere appearance of necessity. In his view, Hegel fails at this.

Let us now consider how Houlgate’s intuitionism fares as a defense of Hegelian necessity against each of these criticisms.

**a. The Adventitious Beginning**

As I explained in Chapter 1, Schelling denies that the beginning of Hegel’s *Logic* is a product of necessity. As I also explained there, Schelling thinks that Hegel has definite reasons for finding “pure being” attractive as a beginning, but that this alone does not imply that the beginning is necessary, only that it is not groundless. However, since the beginning is, according to Schelling, not a product of necessity, another philosopher could with equal or even superior justification, begin in an entirely different way.

According to Schelling’s account, the thought with which his *Logic* begins, pure being, is supposed to be necessary because it is absolutely general in the sense that “nothing could exclude itself from this concept.” Schelling is not a fan of this beginning and, again, does not agree that it is necessary.

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Houlgate does not address this objection to the necessity of Hegel’s *Logic* at all. Of course, Houlgate *is* a fan of Hegel’s beginning, since he thinks that a presuppositionless beginning is a condition of the possibility of a subsequent presuppositionless and necessary beginning. For Houlgate, it is enough that Hegel should have good reasons for selecting “pure being” as the beginning of the *Logic*.

If Schelling is right that Hegel intends the beginning itself to be necessary (In Chapter 3, I show that he is.), it follows that Houlgate either does not notice this about Hegel or else does not agree with Hegel that the beginning is necessary. If the latter explanation is correct, this would imply that Houlgate agrees with Schelling that the beginning is adventitious without agreeing with Schelling that Hegel’s beginning is flawed. In either case, Houlgate has no cause to defend Hegel’s *Logic* against this criticism by Schelling, since he and Schelling both hold that the beginning is not necessary.

**b. The Presupposed Aim**

As I explained in Chapter 1, Schelling believes that Hegel presupposes the aim of the *Logic* from the very beginning and that the development of the *Logic* is a product of “a necessity which lies in the philosopher” rather than a “necessity which lies in the concept itself.”\(^{159}\) As I also explained there, Schelling believes that this aim consists in knowledge of the real world “at which science is finally to arrive.”\(^{160}\) In Schelling’s view, the


necessity at work in Hegel’s Logic is thus psychological rather than logical. Recall, moreover, that Schelling presses onward with his psychoanalysis of Hegel by suggesting that the latter “seeks to hide consciousness” of his goal “from himself,” and precisely because he represses his consciousness of this goal, it “affect[s] the course of philosophizing all the more decisively.”\footnote{Schelling, *History of Modern Philosophy*, 139.}

No one questions whether an outcome is necessary on the grounds that it is desired in the case of mathematics. If a mathematician offers a proof of a theorem, no one ever attempts to refute the proof simply by pointing out that the mathematician hoped the initial conjecture would turn out to be correct. But in the case of Hegel’s Logic, Houlgate takes this argument as good coin. While Houlgate is right to oppose the claim that the course of Hegel’s Logic is determined by a presupposed aim, he opposes this claim essentially by claiming that the Logic is aimless.

Houlgate addresses this criticism by denying that Hegel believed he was guiding the process by means of some preconceived idea of its aim. He falsely supposes that the absence of a conscious aim that could serve as the motivation for a merely contingent development guarantees the alternative, namely that the development is necessary. But if psychological motivation is different from logical necessity, both (a) a conscious aim and (b) the lack of a conscious aim are compatible with either (1) a necessary or (2) a contingent development. If the development of Hegel’s Logic were indeed the product of a mysterious power of intuition—and, again, Houlgate presents the Logic in such a way that his explanation of its development is ultimately indistinguishable from this—then its
aim might well be the psychological force that drove its development. Consequently, Houlgate’s attempt at a defense of Hegelian necessity against Schelling’s second criticism fails.

c. Presupposed Concepts and Intuitions

Recall that Schelling not only discusses the aim of Hegel’s *Logic* in general terms, as knowledge of concrete being, i.e., the real world. He also discusses the nature and origins of this knowledge, which he believes consists in abstractions produced by empirical intuition, concepts of everyday life, and logical forms developed by other philosophers. In Schelling’s view, the concepts found in Hegel’s *Logic* cannot be a product both of a necessity immanent in the concepts themselves and a knowledge of empirical reality and socially developed forms of thought, and since they are a product of the latter, they cannot be a product of the former.

Recall Houlgate’s account of the difference between Kant and Hegel on the question of the derivation of the categories. According to Houlgate, Kant derives the categories from the forms of judgment as described by the traditional logic, whereas Hegel does not simply accept this account, but seeks to “demonstrate that the categories follow necessarily from what thought itself is.”162 However, Houlgate has only the metaphor with observation to offer as an account of how Hegel provides a necessary derivation of the “categories.” Moreover, as I noted above, there does not have to be anything that intrinsically binds successive visual sensations and if Hegel’s procedure is

162 Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 27.
analogous with visual observation, he may well end up with an arbitrary collection of thoughts that have no intrinsic relationship with one another. Thus, this metaphor is unable to account for how Hegel is supposedly able to distinguish his procedure from Kant’s empirical examination of consciousness.

Consequently, Houlgate’s interpretation does not seem to have the resources to defend Hegel’s *Logic* against Schelling’s objection that Hegel uncritically adopts his insights from a variety of sources rather than producing them with immanent necessity.

Houlgate does address this objection more directly, though not in answer to Schelling in particular. However, I postpone the detailed consideration of this response to Part 2, where I consider a related objection to the necessity of Hegel’s *Logic* offered by Trendelenburg and the intuitionist response to this objection.

*d. No Guarantee against Arbitrariness or the Mere Appearance of Necessity*

Again, Schelling does not believe that Hegel has any means of distinguishing necessity from the “mere appearance of necessity.” Like Houlgate, Schelling apparently believes that because Hegel insists that the *Logic* must be presuppositionless, Hegel is not in a position to appeal to any principles in distinguishing necessity from its mere appearance.

According to Houlgate, “external criticism” of Hegel’s *Logic* is illegitimate since, unlike Hegel’s *Logic* itself, this sort of criticism bases itself on presuppositions and is

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therefore automatically less self-critical than the *Logic*. However, Houlgate does not think that this implies that Hegel’s *Logic* is absolutely beyond all criticism.

As Houlgate puts it, “any rational person can examine Hegel’s account of what is implicit in the initial category of being (and the subsequent categories) and consider whether or not that account is correct” and “to the extent that Hegel does not in fact render explicit what is implicit in a specific category, he is open to criticism and correction by the reader.”

This is the closest Houlgate comes to addressing Schelling’s concern. However, Houlgate does not explain how it would be possible to distinguish when the “mutations” that one intuits are necessary (successfully avoiding the introduction of “presuppositions”) and when one merely mistakenly believes that they do. Indeed, Houlgate’s view implies that no such criterion can exist, since the criterion itself would constitute an external presupposition.

Houlgate would claim that we do not need a criterion, since pure being itself can guide us. But this throws us right back into the same problem, because we would then need a criterion for judging when it was being that we were perceiving and when it was some figment of an individual subjective consciousness.

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165 Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 41.
Incidentally, White’s interpretation of Hegel’s dialectical method, which Houlgate “fully endorse[s]” suffers from the same problem.\footnote{Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 121.} That is, White does not address a situation in which one logician “sees” one category and another logician “sees” another category at one and the same point and both believe that their respective intuitions “meet the requirements of the dialectic.”\footnote{White, \textit{Absolute Knowledge}, 64.} In other words, what White leaves out is precisely an explanation of what would makes an intuition necessary rather than contingent on the peculiarities of a given “logician.”

Though Houlgate and White agree with Schelling that Hegel's method is purely intuitive, they fail to recognize—as Schelling did—that a “method” consisting entirely of intuition is incapable of distinguishing necessity from the mere appearance of necessity, no matter how blind this intuition claims to be about where it is going. Moreover, as I have shown, Schelling himself never claimed that Hegel consciously departed from a necessary development. Rather, he insisted that an unconscious aim would affect the course of Hegel's philosophizing “all the more decisively.”\footnote{Schelling, \textit{History of Modern Philosophy}, 139.}

Thus, Houlgate fails to defend Hegel against Schelling's accusation that the former unconsciously presupposed the determinate content of the development of the \textit{Logic} from the beginning and that his conclusions are the mere circular repetition of his unconscious presuppositions.
What merely appears necessary to one thinker may not appear necessary to another. Given Houlgate’s and White’s accounts of the way that Hegel’s *Logic* develops, Schelling’s claim that “one could easily produce” a logic like Hegel’s “in ten different ways” cannot be discounted.¹⁶⁹

Moreover, the failure of the intuitionists to specify any universally acceptable criterion by which the one could judge that Hegel’s *Logic* is or is not necessary or, to put it another way, their failure to define Hegelian necessity, opens the door to contemporary critics of Hegelian necessity whose criticisms of Hegel are similar to Schelling’s.

E. The Criticisms of the anti-intuitionists

The inadequacies of the intuitionist interpretation of Hegel’s *Logic* have not gone unnoticed by the opponents of immanent necessity. In this section, I review the criticisms of the intuitionist interpretation presented by several other Hegel interpreters and the alternative view of Hegelian necessity they believe these criticisms justify. I then conclude that Hegelian immanent necessity requires an entirely different kind of defense than that offered by the intuitionists.

In his essay “The Necessities of Hegel’s *Logic*,” David Kolb presents some of the same criticisms I have developed in this chapter. He criticizes the visual analogies that permeate the texts of the intuitionists and the element of contingency bound up with them.

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and expresses concern about the vagueness of appeals to “clear sight.” He also points out that these same problems arise when Houlgate makes a direct appeal to intuition:

Winfield and Houlgate presuppose that the internal development must be unique. Why should it be so? And even if it were, what if two versions of the development both seem plausible? How do we conduct their "examination"? How do we tell which is right? Essentially, we are told to just look. Performing the examination properly, we can see which version is right, or necessary, or truly self-developing.

There is a good deal of visual imagery in Houlgate and the others' discussions of the Logic. We are to look and see the necessity happening, while we keep ourselves passive and become aware. Eventually Houlgate says that pure thought involves an intellectual intuition of pure being and its self-development. But what if I see something different than you do? Appeals to intuition always have trouble when they yield divergent results. Houlgate is forced into the position Husserl found himself in: one of us lacks sufficiently clear sight. We must purify our intuition. Rather than Husserl's endless preparatory reductions, Houlgate opts for the strength of a "resolve" to see only what is internal and its (presumed) unique necessary development.171

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We also see here a reiteration of one of the same criticisms of Hegel’s *Logic* expressed by Schelling, namely that if the “necessity” at work in Hegel’s *Logic* is not genuine logical necessity, but only some form of intuition, then there are no grounds for supposing two people will intuit one and the same development.

The inadequacy of the intuitionist account thus provides part of the impetus for Kolb’s argument that Hegel’s *Logic* does not in fact develop with immanent necessity. Like Schelling and all the other anti-intuitionists, Kolb concludes that various presuppositions must determine the course of development of the *Logic*. Inasmuch as the intuitionists have nothing but visual analogies, or intuition—which amounts to the same thing—to offer in defense of their claim that Hegel’s *Logic* develops with immanent necessity, they fail to defend their position against the claim that such presuppositions determine the course of its development.

Moreover, since intuitionism cannot provide a concrete explanation of why Hegel changes his mind at various points about the sequential emergence of the various thought determinations and presents the development slightly differently in the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia Logic*, except perhaps to say that he becomes more “self-critical” or more nearly achieves the goal of “presuppositionlessness” or achieved clearer vision—all equally vague assurances—Kolb is free to interpret these changes as evidence against the supposition that the development of Hegel’s *Logic* is immanently necessary.

And Kolb is not the only one to use the complete absence in the literature of an adequate defense of the immanent necessity of Hegel’s *Logic* as a justification for
concluding that the development is a contingent one. The inadequacy of the intuitionist defense of immanent necessity is taken as decisive in this regard.

  Wendy Lynn Clark and J. M. Fritzman, for example, base their criticism of the idea that Hegel’s *Phenomenology* is driven by immanent (“prospective”) logical necessity in part on the failure of Kenley Dove’s “Nonfoundational Hegelian” (intuitionist) interpretation. Dove, like Houlgate, White and others, presents the development of Hegel’s *Logic* as nothing more than the passive observation of a sequence of categories.

  Clark and Fritzman point out that Dove’s interpretation does not capture the way that Hegel presents the connections between the diverse moments of its development, and they also draw rather drastic conclusions from this fact. As they put it:

  The point to be made is that how a succession of experiences is seen—whether as constituting a scientific progression, a going to hell in a handbasket, or just one damned thing after another—is not determined at the level of observation but instead is decided at the metalevel of punctuation.\(^{172}\)

\(^{172}\) Clark and Fritzman, “Reducing Spirit to Substance,” 84.
What they mean by this is that a consciousness that merely “experiences” a “sequence of events” cannot distinguish, as Hegel’s *Phenomenology* clearly does, between these different forms of progression.173

However, since Dove and Houlgate, whom they also cite, present no other criterion for the development other than to say that it results from passive observation, Clark and Fritzman are free to conclude that Hegel must supply the connection by means of external criteria.

They note that “Hegel frequently claims that the transitions from one shape of spirit to the next are necessary,” but insist that “it is clear” that the necessity that is operative in Hegel’s *Phenomenology* “cannot be logical necessity” because “what the next shape will be cannot be deduced” from “the set of successive shapes reached at any point in the text.”174

Having thus assured us that Hegelian necessity is not genuine logical necessity, they suggest an alternative interpretation of it: “given a difficulty or contradiction encountered within a particular shape, its successor is necessary because only that successor could resolve the problem.” 175 However, they reject this explanation as “not

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173 Clark and Fritzman, “Reducing Spirit to Substance,” 84.

174 Clark and Fritzman, “Reducing Spirit to Substance,” 90.

175 Clark and Fritzman, “Reducing Spirit to Substance,” 90.
credible,” since “problems generally have more than one solution.”¹⁷⁶ Like Schelling and like Kolb, they can imagine a logic like Hegel’s developing in ten different ways.

Having decided that each successive shape is not uniquely logically necessitated by the previous shape, they set out to determine “in what sense … the transitions from one shape of spirit to the next [are] necessary.”¹⁷⁷

Building on Philip J. Kain’s interpretation of Hegel’s Phenomenology, they decide that “the necessity at issue here is not logical necessity but narrational necessity.”¹⁷⁸

Explaining how this narrational necessity works, they argue:

In order to make sense of spirit’s sojourn, Hegel narrates a story explaining that its various shapes were leading to its present result. After one shape has succeeded another, everything prior to that shape becomes necessary for that shape to have occurred. This is so because if anything prior to that shape had been different, the shape itself would have been different too.¹⁷⁹

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¹⁷⁶ Clark and Fritzman, “Reducing Spirit to Substance,” 90.
¹⁷⁷ Clark and Fritzman, “Reducing Spirit to Substance,” 90.
¹⁷⁸ Clark and Fritzman, “Reducing Spirit to Substance,” 90.
¹⁷⁹ Clark and Fritzman, “Reducing Spirit to Substance,” 90.
While those who deny that the development of Hegel’s logic is immanently or even genuinely logically necessary base their interpretations in part on considerations I have not gone into here, the weaknesses of the intuitionist interpretation, and the absence of any competing defense of the immanent necessity of Hegel’s *Logic*, play a decisive role in allowing them to exclude immanent necessity from their explanations of Hegel’s philosophy.

**F. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have outlined the intuitionist interpretation of Hegel’s *Logic* with particular emphasis on the version of this interpretation presented by Houlgate. My focus has been Houlgate’s defense of Hegelian necessity against Schelling’s criticisms. I have shown that this defense fails because intuition, as the intuitionists present it, is fundamentally mysterious such that it cannot explain why Hegel’s procedure produces the results that it does. Moreover, I have shown that the weaknesses of intuitionism have made it relatively easy for other interpreters to dismiss Hegel’s claim that his *Logic* has an immanently necessary development.

In the next chapter, Chapter 3, I advance my own interpretation of the necessity of Hegel’s *Logic*. Then, in Chapter 4, I use this interpretation to defend Hegelian necessity. I show there that intuitionism and its opponents misinterpret Hegelian necessity and consequently fail to defend it successfully against Schelling’s criticisms.
Chapter 3: An Interpretation of the Immanent Logical Necessity of Hegel’s Logic

A. Introduction

In this chapter, I advance my own explanation of the immanent necessity of Hegel’s Logic. I show that its necessity flows from Hegel’s application of the principle or law of non-contradiction to the content of pure thought.¹⁸⁰

First, I review Hegel’s claims about the necessity of the Logic. Then, I address the thought of pure being with which Hegel’s Logic begins, and show that, for Hegel, this beginning is a necessary insofar as it results from the application of the law of non-contradiction to the subject matter of the Logic.

Next, placing my interpretation in the context of Hegel’s general account of the concept, I show that, for Hegel, it is precisely the consistent, rigorous application of the law of non-contradiction that yields unavoidable, i.e., necessary, contradictions in the subsequent development of the Logic. That is, the very law that forbids contradictions in fact produces them. For Hegel, this self-contradiction implies that the law is not absolutely but only relatively true.

¹⁸⁰ Principle and law will be taken as synonymous here.
According to Hegel, every concept has three “sides” or “moments” that constitute together what that concept is. These moments are a product of logical necessity insofar as they follow from the law of non-contradiction. Hegel calls the thinking that is dominated by the first moment, the understanding. Its activity consists in fixing distinctions, separating and abstracting a given content from every other content and holding it there in thought. The second or dialectical moment consists in the intrinsically and necessarily self-contradictory character of every finite determination, which can and logically must be deduced from that content, regardless of whether any thinker happens to be willing to do so. The third or speculative moment is a subsisting contradiction; it consists in the unity of opposed determinations that results from their mutual transition into one another.

After I explain the role the law of non-contradiction, the law of contradiction and the law of the unity of opposites in Hegel’s deduction of thought determinations from other thought determinations, I discuss in what sense it is and is not correct in Hegel’s view to interpret these as separate laws.

Next, I show that the development at the beginning of Hegel’s Logic does indeed instantiate Hegel’s general account of the moments of the concept in their necessary transitions. This shows that Hegel’s general account of it is consistent with at least one actual example of a development that he presents in the Logic.

I then consider and refute a possible objection to my claim the first few thought determinations and transitions in Hegel’s Logic instantiate the moments of the concept as laid out in his general account of them. Following up on my reply to this objection, I then consider and refute a possible criticism of Hegel’s procedure in the Logic.
Finally, I show that Hegel’s stance on intellectual intuition agrees with my interpretation of Hegelian logical necessity.

In the course of this chapter, I take note of claims about Hegel’s *Logic* made by Schelling and the intuitionists that are justified by the texts I consider here. However, I hold off most of my criticisms of their interpretations until the next chapter, Chapter 4. In Chapter 4, I bring the interpretation presented in this chapter to bear on the criticisms of Hegelian necessity discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.

**B. The Demand for Necessity**

Aside from the discussion of necessity in relation to freedom, contingency, actuality and possibility in the second subdivision of the logic, the “Doctrine of Essence,” as Hegel calls it in both the *Encyclopedia Logic* and the *Science of Logic*, references to necessity in both works are sparse and appear mostly in the prefaces and introductions.

For example, in the 1831 preface to the second edition of the *Science of Logic*, Hegel says that this work puts the content of the older sciences of metaphysics and logic in true philosophical form, so that thinking can be exhibited “in its own immanent activity or what is the same, in its necessary development.”\(^{181}\)

Conversely, in the introduction to the same work, he claims that if a science begins with a definition, then it will fail to “demonstrate the necessity of the subject

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“matter” and it will thereby also fail to demonstrate the necessity “of the science itself.”

In Hegel’s view, only a science that is necessary throughout is fully justified and fully scientific.

Moreover, Hegel insists in this same preface that “the immanent coming-to-be of the distinctions and the necessity of their connection with each other must present themselves in the exposition of the subject matter itself.”

In the preface to the 1827 second edition to the Encyclopedia Logic, he claims that the time is ripe for the replacement of mystery with a scientific grasp of the basic logic of all reality. This is the “task” of the science of logic, in which thinking

affirms the stubborn determination only to be reconciled with the solid content so far as that content has at the same time been able to give itself the shape that is most worthy of it. This is the shape of the Concept, the shape of the necessity that binds all content and thoughts alike, and precisely thereby makes them free.

Likewise, in the introduction to the Encyclopedia Logic, he insists that mere “familiarity” with the objects of philosophy thought is inadequate. Therefore, it “inadmissible” simply

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182 Hegel, Science of Logic, 49.

183 Hegel, Science of Logic, 55.

184 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 17.
to presuppose these objects or provide mere “assurances” about them. Rather, philosophy must deduce the nature of its objects from start to finish.

As I mentioned above, Hegel also discusses necessity in the “Doctrine of Essence” in both the *Encyclopedia Logic* and the *Science of Logic*, in terms of its relation to freedom, contingency, actuality, and possibility. This discussion builds on what he says about freedom and necessity in the 1827 preface quoted above. For example, Hegel explains in the *Encyclopedia Logic* that freedom and necessity ought not to be viewed as “mutually exclusive.” True necessity, for Hegel, is not external compulsion, but intrinsic development in accordance with the true nature, or concept, of a thing. Likewise, true freedom is not mere whim, but is likewise development in accordance with the true nature or concept of something. For example, thinking is free insofar as it flows from the true nature, or concept, of thinking as such in its necessary development. Thus, thinking is free, according to Hegel, insofar as it is *logically* necessary. However, while this discussion and the discussion of contingency, actuality and possibility contribute to a full appreciation of Hegel’s stance on necessity, it is not the focus of the present study.

What is most relevant here with regard to Hegel’s explicit claims about necessity are (1) his insistence that logic ought to be put in the form of immanent necessity, and (2) his claim that his logic accomplishes this. Let us begin the examination of these claims by considering the role of logical necessity at the beginning of the *Logic*.

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C. The Logical Necessity of the Beginning

Hegel explains that the various special sciences each presuppose a method or principles that do not receive their justification within the science itself. He insists that the science of logic must differ from these other sciences in this respect. The science of logic must not have a beginning that presupposes a content that lies outside of it, since the clarification of the “nature of cognition” is its own task.\textsuperscript{187}

In this regard, the intuitionists are certainly correct to point out that Hegel’s \textit{Logic} is supposed to be presuppositionless. As we have seen, Houlgate in particular backs up his position on the presuppositionlessness of Hegel’s \textit{Logic} with solid textual evidence.

Moreover, Schelling is correct in maintaining that, according to Hegel, the beginning itself is necessary. As Hegel explains, the beginning is not an “arbitrary” or “merely provisional assumption” that is at first “tentatively presupposed,” and then only “subsequently shown to have been properly made the beginning.”\textsuperscript{188} Thus, according to Hegel, the beginning must be necessary. Indeed, according to Hegel, the beginning, pure being, is then necessitated by and flows from the very concept of an absolute beginning.

Hegel explains that the thought of being, with which the \textit{Logic} begins, is the thought of indeterminate immediacy. In the \textit{Science of Logic}, he points out that “if [the beginning] were not this pure indeterminateness, if it were determinate, it would have

\textsuperscript{187} Hegel, \textit{Science of Logic}, 68.

\textsuperscript{188} Hegel, \textit{Science of Logic}, 72.
been taken as something mediated, something already carried a stage further.”¹⁸⁹ But something that is determinate is not genuinely logically first at all in that, as Hegel puts it, it “implies an other to a first.”¹⁹⁰ Hegel concludes from this that “it lies in the very nature of a beginning that it must be being and nothing else.”¹⁹¹ In other words, any other beginning would contradict the concept of a beginning. It would be “a first” that was at the same time not a first. In this way, Hegel reasons from the principle of non-contradiction applied to the concept of the beginning to the necessity of beginning with pure being.

Similarly, in the Encyclopedia Logic, Hegel insists that the science whose subject matter is logic must begin with pure being because “the first beginning cannot be anything mediated and further determined.”¹⁹² There too he claims that the “nature of the beginning” itself “implies” the thought of pure being.¹⁹³ The science begins with indeterminacy because it cannot begin with anything determinate. If it began with something determinate, this would imply “both one and another” and “at the beginning we have as yet no other.”¹⁹⁴ Hegel explains moreover that the beginning is “immediate”

¹⁸⁹ Hegel, Science of Logic, 72.
¹⁹⁰ Hegel, Science of Logic, 72.
¹⁹¹ Hegel, Science of Logic, 72.
¹⁹² Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 136.
¹⁹³ Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 137.
¹⁹⁴ Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 137.
insofar as it lacks any determination at all.\textsuperscript{195} It is not a relative ("mediated") lack of determination, but "the lack of determination in all its immediacy, what lacks determination prior to all determinacy, what lacks determinacy because it stands at the very beginning."\textsuperscript{196} Hegel submits that what fits this description is that which "we call ‘being.’"\textsuperscript{197}

Again, all of this shows that the beginning is not an "arbitrary" or "merely provisional assumption" that is at first "tentatively presupposed."\textsuperscript{198} It is in this respect that a logical deduction is entirely different from the situation in geometry where "it becomes apparent only afterwards in the proof that one took the right course in drawing just those lines and then, in the proof itself, in beginning with the comparison of those lines or angles."\textsuperscript{199} In a geometrical proof of this kind, "drawing such lines and comparing them" does not constitute "an essential part of the proof itself," but is only done beforehand in preparation for the proof.\textsuperscript{200} Hegel contrasts this kind of proof with logical proof in which "the ground, the reason, why the beginning is made with pure being … is directly given in the science itself."\textsuperscript{201}

\textsuperscript{195} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 137.

\textsuperscript{196} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 137.

\textsuperscript{197} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 137.

\textsuperscript{198} Hegel, \textit{Science of Logic}, 72.

\textsuperscript{199} Hegel, \textit{Science of Logic}, 72.

\textsuperscript{200} Hegel, \textit{Science of Logic}, 72.

\textsuperscript{201} Hegel, \textit{Science of Logic}, 72.
When Hegel says that lines are drawn in “preparation for the proof,” his point is that drawing the lines and comparing them serves a purpose but the purpose it serves becomes apparent only in retrospect. One might say that drawing and comparing the lines is necessary for the aim of producing the proof insofar as they are needed in order to achieve that end. However, this is not the kind of necessity Hegel claims is at work in the Logic.

Recall that Schelling thinks that for Hegel pure being is “pure certainty itself.” It is therefore worth noting here that Hegel does raise certainty as a criterion for a good beginning of philosophy from the point of view of other philosophers. Then he rejects this criterion. Motivated by a desire for “something strictly certain, i.e., with the certainty of oneself, or with a definition or intuition of what is absolutely true” philosophers have proposed various beginnings, including for example “I = I, as absolute Indifference or Identity” or “intellectual intuition.” The problem with all of “these forms” is that they all contain mediation within them and therefore “they are not truly first [for] mediation consists in having already left a first behind, to go on to a second, and in a going forth

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from moments that are distinct." Thus, according to Hegel, certainty is not an adequate criterion for the beginning of a science of logic.

Now, although beginning with pure being is necessary, according to Hegel, he nevertheless presents this beginning as a presupposition, since, as he points out, "a beginning (being something immediate) does make a presupposition or, rather, it is itself just that." The specific presupposition with which the Logic begins is, however, necessary insofar as it is implied by the concept of the absolute beginning itself. How can Hegel demand a presuppositionless beginning but then claim that this presuppositionless beginning is a presupposition? How can a presuppositionless beginning be a presupposition?

This requires some interpretation, but I believe that there are two reasons. First, the beginning, pure being, does not presuppose anything else and is only the presupposition of what follows from it. Second, the specific presupposition with which the Logic begins (assuming Hegel is right to call it a presupposition) is unavoidable—necessary—whereas the presuppositions involved in a relative (rather than an absolute) beginning are avoidable. Hegel thus avoids all avoidable presuppositions but does not seek to avoid what is intrinsically unavoidable.

However, to grasp fully the difference between Hegel’s use of presuppositions and the ordinary use of them (which often results in circular formal reasoning that begs

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204 Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 137.

the question) we will have to examine the way in which Hegel’s Logic approaches necessity and contradiction in the subsequent development of the Logic.

D. The General Form of Logical Necessity in Hegel’s Logic

In a section of the Encyclopedia Logic entitled “More Precise Conception and Division of the Logic,” Hegel describes the three “sides” or three “moments of everything logically real; i.e., of every concept or of everything true in general.” Hegel explains that these so-called “moments” are not “three parts of the Logic.” Rather they are intrinsic in every concept and constitute together what that concept is. I will argue that Hegel’s presentation of these moments is consistent with viewing them as produced by necessary principles or laws.

Hegel’s explanation in this section is only preliminary precisely because a necessary deduction, by its nature, is something that has to be demonstrated concretely. That is to say, an exposition that is about a necessary deduction is not the deduction itself and therefore cannot serve as a substitute for it. Rather, it is the task of the Logic as a whole to deduce the necessity of each and every transition and relation.

Houlgate is thus correct in pointing out that Hegel’s Logic is not the result of Hegel’s imposition of a presupposed conception of the moments of the concept on the concepts or “categories” developed there. As Houlgate correctly notes, it is possible that the development could turn out to have a regular form even if Hegel did not assume that

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206 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 125.

207 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 125.
it did at the outset. Indeed, it is entirely possible that Hegel wrote the section I am discussing here as preparation for the reader after he wrote the body of the text.

Nevertheless, as I argue below, the content of the section refutes the supposition that Hegel does not presuppose any rules, laws or principles of thought. In particular, it serves to refute his claim that Hegel does not assume the law of non-contradiction at the outset.

**a. The Understanding**

Hegel names the first moment, the “side of abstraction” or just the “understanding,” after an activity and stance of subjective cognition.\(^{208}\) When subjective cognition is dominated by this moment, its thinking, Hegel explains, consists in “separat[ing] and abstract[ing]” some content from everything else.\(^{209}\)

If human beings were incapable of understanding, they would accomplish nothing, because, Hegel explains, in that case there would be “no fixity or determinacy in the domains either of theory or of practice.”\(^{210}\)

In the theoretical sphere, the understanding “begins by apprehending given objects in their determinate distinctions.”\(^{211}\) For example, in natural science, Hegel explains, “distinctions are drawn between matters, forces, kinds, etc.,” and each of these

\(^{208}\) Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 125.

\(^{209}\) Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 126.

\(^{210}\) Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 126.

\(^{211}\) Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 126.
are kept separate or “in isolation one from another.”\textsuperscript{212} If such distinctions were not made and the various matters, forces and kinds were not distinguished from one another, no progress could be made in natural science.

When thinking as the understanding considers things or attributes as distinct, it does not—at least initially—reflect on where the distinct things or attributes originate. It simply accepts them, takes them as given. To maintain its distinctions, the understanding holds them apart from one another, and takes their separateness to be permanent and absolute.

In the practical sphere, the understanding can take the form of singlemindedness and determination. Hegel notes that “a man of character is a man of understanding” and that this allows him to have “definite purposes in mind” that he pursues “with firm intent.”\textsuperscript{213} Such a person, who finds himself “in a definite situation,” will have to “stick to something determinate and not dissipate his powers in a great many directions” if he wishes to achieve something.\textsuperscript{214}

But while “understanding” is an activity of a thinking subject, Hegel also takes pains to emphasize that the “moment” that corresponds to this activity does not find its sole manifestation in human thought. He contends that “logical thinking in general must not be interpreted merely in terms of a subjective activity, but rather as what is strictly

\textsuperscript{212} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 126.

\textsuperscript{213} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 126.

\textsuperscript{214} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 126.
universal and hence objective at the same time.”\textsuperscript{215} As I noted at the beginning of this section, he claims that the three moments of the concept to which the section is devoted belong to “everything logically real,” to “every concept,” to “everything true in general.”\textsuperscript{216} Thus, the indispensable role that this moment plays in the activity of thinking subjects is a reflection of the fact that such thinking contains genuine truth.

According to Hegel, the fact that the moment of the understanding is not merely a subjective activity, but also finds its manifestation in the world in general is reflected in popular consciousness when people talk about “the goodness of God.”\textsuperscript{217} In essence, this idea that God provides reflects the fact that “finite things are, that they subsist.”\textsuperscript{218} Hegel elaborates on this point as follows:

For instance, we recognise the goodness of God in nature by the fact that the various kinds and classes, of both animals and plants, are provided with everything they need in order to preserve themselves and prosper. The situation is the same with man, too, both for individuals and for whole peoples, who similarly possess what is required for their subsistence and their development. In part this is given to them as something that is immediately present (like climate, for example,

\textsuperscript{215} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 127.

\textsuperscript{216} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 125.

\textsuperscript{217} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 127.

\textsuperscript{218} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 127.
or the character and products of the country, etc.); and in part they possess it in the form of aptitudes, talents, etc. Interpreted in this way, then, the understanding manifests itself everywhere in all the domains of the objective world, and the ‘perfection’ of an object essentially implies that the principle of the understanding gets its due therein.\(^\text{219}\)

In making this observation, Hegel’s point is not primarily theological. He is not telling us that he believes that another subject, God, actually produces finite things that subsist. Rather, his point is that the idea of God’s goodness is one way in which popular consciousness grasps something fundamental about the nature of things (that they are and that they subsist), and that this corresponds to the moment of the understanding. In this way, the separating and abstracting activity of the understanding grasps and corresponds to a definite side or “moment” of the concept of some content. The concept (Begriff), in Hegel’s use of the term, is not the exclusive possession of thinking, but also belongs to nature and society as a regularity, a universal form of motion. A regularity or universal form of motion qualifies for Hegel as conceptual whether it is grasped by subjective cognition or not.

So, how does all of this relate to the practice of philosophy? Again, Hegel explained at the beginning of this section that the moments of the concept belong to

\(^{219}\) Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 127.
“everything logically real” and “everything true in general.” Accordingly, it is not surprising that Hegel holds that philosophical thinking, like all other domains of theory and practice, requires the activity of the understanding. “Philosophy,” Hegel insists, “cannot do without the understanding.” In philosophy, “each thought should be grasped in its full precision” and “nothing should remain vague and indeterminate.”

The “principle” of the understanding is “identity, simple self-relation.” Since Hegel presents the moment of the understanding as theoretically and practically necessary, insofar as without it, there is “no fixity or determinacy in the domains either of theory or of practice,” the principle of the understanding is necessary as well. This principle is necessary for all thinking and all human activity, not because it is written down and accepted by everyone, nor because it is used by everyone as an external criterion for the correctness of all thoughts and actions, but because in thinking or in acting in some definite way or other, one is, at that moment, thinking and acting in that way and no other.

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In adopting this principle, the understanding also implicitly presupposes the principle of non-contradiction because to suppose that a thing is *what it is* is not to suppose that it is what it is not.

Hegel shows that, although the moment of the understanding plays an indispensable role in all areas of theory and practice and corresponds to an essential moment of the real world in which human beings find themselves, this moment does not contain the absolute truth within itself. It encompasses only a partial truth about the world.

However, apparently on account of its successes, the understanding (or those whose thinking is dominated by this moment) tends to presuppose that its principles have absolute, unconditional validity. It seems that the very nature of the law of non-contradiction encourages this “prejudice,” as Hegel calls it.\textsuperscript{225} The understanding, in observance of the law of non-contradiction, insists that identity is a more “characteristically essential and immanent” determination than contradiction and indeed that “there is nothing that is contradictory.”\textsuperscript{226} According to the understanding, Hegel explains, contradiction is essential neither to actual things, nor to the thinking or imagining subject. In both cases, contradiction is considered “a kind of abnormality and a passing paroxysm of sickness.”\textsuperscript{227}

\textsuperscript{225} Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 439.

\textsuperscript{226} Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 439.

\textsuperscript{227} Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 440.
Thus, Hegel could just as easily have claimed that both identity and non-contradiction are principles of the understanding.

The reason that this view of contradiction is a prejudice, according to Hegel, is that the application of the analytic principles of the understanding reveals the relative inadequacy, the relative falsity, of these very principles, above all the principle of non-contradiction. This is where the second moment of the concept, the dialectical moment comes in.

b. The Dialectical Moment

The dialectical moment consists in “the immanent transcending of the isolated determinacy” that was posited by the understanding.\(^\text{228}\) In general, the immanent transcending, or sublation (\textit{Aufhebung}), of the abstractions of the understanding is a result of the fact that an abstracted content, an isolated determinacy, “contradicts itself inwardly.”\(^\text{229}\) Moreover, because the abstracted content of thought that is first presupposed to be self-identical and non-contradictory is shown in fact to be self-contradictory precisely through the application of the principle of non-contradiction, this contradiction is itself necessary.

Again, for Hegel, \textit{that} this takes place is not to be taken simply as an article of faith. In the Logic, he shows again and again how such a development takes place. The section entitled “More Precise Conception and Division of the Logic” and the other

\(^{228}\) Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 128.

\(^{229}\) Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 129.
introductory sections in the *Encyclopedia Logic* and the *Science of Logic* are only concerned with characterizing the general form of the concept and the attitudes of different philosophers toward them. On the other hand, the body of the texts of these works is devoted to demonstrating the emergence of contradictions (and, as we will see, their resolution as well).

When faced with an *unavoidable* contradiction, Hegel notes, the usual procedure of the understanding, when exercised beyond the bounds of its validity, is to adhere to its formal principles anyway, but irrationally refuse to accept the conclusions that follow necessarily from their application. The understanding cannot accept the principle of contradiction that is affirmed by Hegel, namely that “everything is inherently contradictory.”

But Hegel insists that the dialectical moment, the moment of contradiction, “must in no way be regarded as present only for philosophical consciousness.” The intrinsically contradictory character of things “is found already in all other forms of consciousness, too, and in everyone’s experience.” Indeed, Hegel even goes so far as to claim that “everything around us can be regarded as an example of dialectic.” This is demonstrated by the fact that “instead of being fixed and ultimate, everything finite is

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alterable and perishable, and this is nothing but the dialectic of the finite.”

Through this dialectic, the finite “is driven beyond what it immediately is and overturns into its opposite,” since it is “implicitly the other of itself.”

Just as, in popular consciousness, the understanding finds its reflection in the “goodness of God,” the dialectic likewise finds its reflection there in the idea of “God’s might.”

Contained in this expression is the insight, in popular form, that “all things,” that is, all “finite [things] as such come to judgment.” Again, the issue for Hegel here is not whether there is actually a God who judges things in this way. Rather, the point is that this is the way in which popular consciousness conceives a fundamental truth about all things, a fundamental moment of reality. Hegel calls this moment “the dialectic.” It is “the universal, irresistible might before which nothing can subsist, however firm and secure it may deem itself to be.”

In a section of the Encyclopedia Logic on Kant’s critical philosophy, Hegel discusses Kant’s position on contradiction in relation to his own. According to Hegel,

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234 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 130.
235 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 130.
236 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 130.
237 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 130.
238 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 130.
239 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 130.
Kant’s great insight in his *Critique of Pure Reason* is that there are unavoidable contradictions. As Kant explains and Hegel recounts, there are “opposed propositions about the same object” and that these propositions “must be affirmed with equal necessity.”\(^{240}\) Although Kant does not deduce these contradictions in the way that Hegel does, Hegel nevertheless believes that Kant has grasped something essential in positing their necessity. In particular, Hegel thinks that it is important that the contradictions in Kant’s antinomies result from the “categories on their own account.”\(^{241}\) Kant’s insight that “the contradiction” that follows from the categories of the understanding is “essential and necessary” is, in Hegel’s view, “one of the most important and profound advances of the philosophy of modern times.”\(^{242}\) However, Hegel does not think that Kant follows this insight to its logical conclusion, since Kant, limited by the prejudices of the understanding, refuses to believe that the “object in and for itself” is contradictory.\(^{243}\)

The “solution” that Kant proposes to the problem presented by the antinomies is to claim that contradiction is contained in “reason and its cognition of the object” instead of in the object itself.\(^{244}\) Kant achieves this solution by reducing the object to something subjective, a mere combination of categories and intuitions, and simultaneously emptying

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\(^{240}\) Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 91.


\(^{244}\) Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 91.
the real object, the object in and for itself, of all content, reducing it to an empty thing in itself.

The reason that Kant proposes such a drastic solution, Hegel maintains, is not that it actually resolves the contradiction successfully, but that Kant shares in that “usual tenderness for things, whose only care is that they do not contradict themselves.”\textsuperscript{245} In Kant’s view, “the stain of contradiction ought not to be in the essence of what is in the world.”\textsuperscript{246} Instead, this stain is supposed “to belong only to thinking reason, to the essence of the spirit.”\textsuperscript{247} Kant does not find it “objectionable that the world as it appears” to the “sensibility” and “understanding” of the thinking subject “shows contradictions to the [subjective] spirit that observes it.”\textsuperscript{248} However, Hegel insists, Kant “forgets” that he does not resolve the contradiction at all in this way, but only shifts it to the thinking subject.\textsuperscript{249}

Moreover, Hegel maintains, not only does Kant fail to resolve the contradictions he presents in his antinomies. He also grossly underestimates the extent of the problem. Hegel insists that Kant is mistaken in “bring[ing] forward only four antinomies” and that this evinces Kant’s “failure to study the antinomy in more depth.”\textsuperscript{250} Hegel maintains that

\textsuperscript{245} Hegel, \textit{Science of Logic}, 423.

\textsuperscript{246} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 91.

\textsuperscript{247} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 91.

\textsuperscript{248} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 91.

\textsuperscript{249} Hegel, \textit{Science of Logic}, 423-424.

\textsuperscript{250} It is in this context that Hegel also raises his criticisms of Kant for “presupposing the
“antinomy is found not only in the four particular objects taken from cosmology” that Kant discusses, “but rather in all objects of all kinds, in all representations, concepts, and ideas.”\textsuperscript{251} To gain knowledge of the role of contradiction in objects is “what is essential in philosophical study,” Hegel contends.\textsuperscript{252}

In the \textit{Science of Logic}, Hegel once again affirms the ubiquity of contradiction. Indeed, he insists that it ought to “be grasped and enunciated as a law: \textit{everything is contradictory}.”\textsuperscript{253}

\textbf{c. The Speculative Moment}

Again, Hegel presents the inadequacy of premises or presuppositions and the principles through which they are defined as a \textit{relative}, not an \textit{absolute} inadequacy. But how can Hegel claim to deduce anything positive at all from a contradiction, let alone an entire series and system of thought determinations? Does the deduction of a necessary contradiction resulting from an application of the principle of non-contradiction not constitute a devastating indictment of any claim on the part of thought that it is capable of grasping truth?

d\textsuperscript{251} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 92.

\textsuperscript{252} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 92.

\textsuperscript{253} Hegel, \textit{Science of Logic}, 439.
Perhaps such a conclusion would be warranted if the result of the dialectic were only an “empty, abstract nothing,” but, in order to come to such a conclusion, one would have to ignore what a “result” is. 254 Hegel insists that a result is “not an immediate nothing” precisely because it is the “result,” the “negation” of those determinations from which it issues forth. 255 A result as such is not merely something negative, but a product of some development and therefore something positive. This result is not just an abstract thought but is also “something-concrete” inasmuch as it contains within it “distinct determinations,” both the content from which it issued and the negation of that content. 256

This brings us to the third moment of the concept, what Hegel calls the synthetic or “speculative or positively rational” moment. 257 This moment is both new and not new. It both goes beyond and does not go beyond the first two moments, or, rather, is nothing but the going beyond themselves of these moments themselves.

The first determination is what it is not, and what it is not is a second determination, but what it is not is therefore once again the first determination at the same time that it is the second. The speculative moment is apprehended when one stands back and recognizes the determinate unity that results from these continual mutual transitions.

254 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 131.
255 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 131.
256 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 131.
257 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 131.
Because the application of the analytic principles of the understanding produced a self-contradiction, the positing of the identity of its determinations and the positing of their self-contradiction are not two separate activities but are equally logically necessary sides or moments of one and the same movement. Speculative thinking is the recognition that the logical derivation of the self-contradiction and mutual transition of determinations it initially presupposed as absolutely distinct is nothing but the positive proof of their own intrinsic unity.

The principle or law of the unity of opposites therefore follows from the entire antecedent development. However, since it is a unity of opposites, the distinction between the two opposed moments is not completely obliterated by their unity. As Hegel often puts it, the contradiction is not removed, but suspended (aufgehoben). Although Hegel himself does not present the speculative moment in the form of a law, one could express it in this form: everything that is necessarily contradictory is in truth a unity of opposed determinations.

Since Hegel holds that the “concrete thoughts” of the sort that result from speculative thinking are the necessary consequence of the application of the law of non-contradiction and the law of contradiction, Hegel thinks that philosophy too ought to devote itself to such thoughts, and not content itself with “mere abstractions or formal thoughts” of the sort that belong to “what is usually called logic,” the formal “logic of the understanding.”\(^\text{258}\) Since formal logic leaves out “the dialectical and the rational,” Hegel

\(^{258}\) Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 131.
holds that it is inadequate and untrue and not suitable for philosophy.\textsuperscript{259} After all, he explains if one leaves out the dialectical and the rational what is leftover is merely “a descriptive collection of determinations of thought put together in various ways, which in their finitude [is supposed to] count for something infinite.”\textsuperscript{260}

Hegel returns here to the demand that he sets forth in the 1827 preface to the \textit{Encyclopedia Logic} that mystery give way to a scientific grasp of the logic of reality. He claims that in “earlier times” people meant the same thing by “mystical” that he refers to here as “the speculative” or what is “positively rational.”\textsuperscript{261} However, the meaning of “the ‘mystical’” had changed and people now tended to refer to whatever “is mysterious and incomprehensible” as mystical.\textsuperscript{262} According to Hegel, the mystical, which he equates here with the speculative, does not have to be mysterious unless one adheres to the standpoint of the understanding. The understanding is confused by the mystical because it views everything in terms of its principle of “abstract identity.”\textsuperscript{263} It grasps determinations “only in their separation and opposition” so that the concrete speculative unity of these determinations is incomprehensible to it.\textsuperscript{264}

\textsuperscript{259} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 131-132.

\textsuperscript{260} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 132.

\textsuperscript{261} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 133.

\textsuperscript{262} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 133.

\textsuperscript{263} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 133.

\textsuperscript{264} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 133.
Those who “recognise the mystical as what is genuine” sometimes view it as “something utterly mysterious, and just leave it at that.”265 Hegel explains that for these people, as well as for those who place value on the understanding and renounce what is mysterious, “thinking has only the significance of an abstract positing of identity.”266 That is, they reduce thinking to the understanding. As a consequence, they believe that “in order to attain the truth we must renounce thinking.”267

However, all those who reduce thinking to the understanding are mistaken in equating it with thought as such and, moreover, they are mistaken about the character of the understanding. The abstract thought of the understanding is, Hegel explains, not “firm and ultimate” in the way that many suppose, but “proves itself, on the contrary, to be a constant sublating of itself and an overturning into its opposite.”268

On the other hand, “the rational as such is rational precisely because it contains both of the opposites as ideal moments within itself.”269 For this reason, “everything rational can equally be called ‘mystical,’” since it “transcends the understanding,” but this does not mean that it is “inaccessible to thinking and incomprehensible.”270

265 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 133.  
266 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 133.  
267 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 133.  
268 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 133.  
269 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 133.  
270 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 133.
E. Hegel on Laws of Thought

I have claimed that Hegel’s presentation of the moments of the concept is consistent with viewing them as produced by necessary principles or laws. In the last three sections, I have discussed four such laws or principles of thought: the laws of identity and non-contradiction; the law of contradiction; and the law of the unity of opposites. Let us review these principles or laws briefly before discussing Hegel’s general stance on laws of thought.

The first principle I have discussed, the principle of identity, is implicitly presupposed by and inherent in the activity of the understanding. Again, according to Hegel, the moment of the understanding is necessary for human activity insofar as no theoretical or practical progress can be made without it. Hegel also holds that this moment is intrinsic in what is immediately other than subjective cognition and appears as the relative permanence of things. This moment is then reflected in popular consciousness as the “goodness of God,” the idea that God provides.271

The second principle or law I have discussed, the law of non-contradiction, is implicit in the theoretical activity of the understanding, which asserts the separateness and distinctness of its determinations, and the practical activity that engages in one definite form of activity rather than others. However, Hegel calls only identity the principle of the understanding, perhaps because he takes the law or principle of non-contradiction as following from it.

271 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 127.
The third principle or law (or the second, depending how you look at it) corresponds to the second moment, the dialectical moment and consists in the emergence of unavoidable and therefore necessary contradictions produced by the activity of the understanding. This is the law of contradiction, according to which “everything is contradictory.” In popular consciousness, this moment corresponds to the idea of “God’s might.”

The fourth law I have presented is the law of the unity of opposites—everything that is necessarily contradictory is in truth a unity of opposed determinations. Hegel never calls the fourth law I have presented a “law”; I have only inferred that it is such. I would like to justify this way of characterizing it by means of a brief discussion of Hegel’s position on “laws of thought.”

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel discusses and criticizes a number of different conceptions of the relationship between thought and its object. He calls one family of such conceptions “observing reason.” According to one of these conceptions, there are logical laws or “Laws of pure thought” in much the same way that there are natural laws of inorganic nature.

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Viewed in this way, in terms of a collection of laws, thinking appears to be determined by “a multitude of detached necessities.” As Hegel explains, when viewed in this way, the laws are abstracted from or “torn out of [the] context” of the motion of thought “in the course of considering them.” Consequently, each law contains a necessary relation, but it does not contain the whole continuously necessary development of thought.

The conception of thought according to which it is determined by “a number of different Laws” contradicts in this way “the unity of self-consciousness.” According to Hegel, the laws themselves ought to be grasped as moments, not as “fixed” and “constant” in the way that the stance of “observing reason” conceives them. As he also puts it, the “Laws of thought” are “single vanishing moments whose truth is only the whole movement of thought, knowing itself.”

Thus, although Hegel is critical of the standpoint of “observing reason,” this does not mean that he is absolutely opposed to conceiving of thought in terms of laws. As moments, one law produces the next. It is only when they are conceived as detached necessities that viewing them as laws is a problem, in Hegel’s view. For instance, in the case of the law of non-contradiction and the law of contradiction, these two laws directly

276 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 181.

277 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 181.

278 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 181.

279 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 181.

280 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 181.
contradict one another. Both laws—*nothing is contradictory* and *everything is contradictory*—express a form of necessity, but when they are detached from the context of the development of thought in which the former law, together with the law of identity, produces the latter law, the two laws simply contradict one another and it remains unclear which one ought to be considered applicable. From a Hegelian perspective, this is part of the problem with the standpoint of the understanding. Since it views laws of thought as detached necessities, it has to take the law of non-contradiction as absolute or not apply it at all, but if it does not apply it at all, then it cannot make any progress at all in theory or in practice, so it rejects the law of contradiction instead, or, rather, it takes all contradictions to be nothing but “a kind of abnormality and a passing paroxysm of sickness.”

For Hegel, on the other hand, the law of non-contradiction *produces* contradictions and these contradictions produce their own resolution in the unity of opposites. I have claimed that the latter can be expressed in the form of a law—*everything that is necessarily contradictory is in truth a unity of opposed determinations.* If this law is not conceived as a detached necessity, but as a moment, a result of the application of the laws of non-contradiction and contradiction, then viewing it as such does not contradict Hegel’s own presentation of it. Moreover, doing so brings to the forefront the relationship between laws of thought and the three moments of the concept.

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F. The Moments of the Concept and the Beginning of the Logic

It is now time to show that the development at the beginning of Hegel’s Logic does indeed accord with Hegel’s general account of the moments of the concept in their necessary transitions. Unfortunately, it is impossible to examine in the space of the present work whether the entirety of Hegel’s Logic, every transition and every moment, indeed instantiates the three moments of the concept as Hegel presents them in the section “More Precise Conception and Division of the Logic.” However, my aim in showing that the beginning accords with Hegel’s general account is to show that the latter it is consistent with at least one example of an actual development that he presents in the Logic.

Of course, one might suppose that in Hegel’s view only the “Doctrine of the Concept,” the third major section of Hegel’s Logic, should instantiate these moments, but this supposition would involve a mistaken conception of Hegel’s position on truth. Again, according to Hegel, the moments of the concept belong to “everything logically real” and “everything true in general.” 282 It follows that if the content of the “Doctrine of Being” is “logically real” or true to any degree or in any sense, then the development presented in this part of the Logic should instantiate these moments. And while Hegel presents the third part of the Logic, the “Doctrine of the Concept” as the perfected form of truth, this does not imply that he thinks that being and essence are absolutely false or that their refutation, the deduction of their relative inadequacy, in “Doctrine of Being” and the

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282 Hegel, The Encyclopedia Logic, 125.
“Doctrine of Essence,” is an *absolute* refutation. As Hegel explains, in reference to the history of philosophy,

when people talk about a philosophy’s being refuted, they usually take this first in a merely abstract, negative sense—in other words, as meaning that the refuted philosophy is simply no longer valid at all, that it is set aside and done with.\(^283\)

If this way of conceiving of the history of philosophy were correct, Hegel points out, then it would be pointless to study this history. Older philosophies have indeed “been refuted,” Hegel submits, but, he likewise insists, “it must also equally be affirmed that no philosophy has ever been refuted.”\(^284\) First of all, the “content” of “every philosophy worthy of the name” is “the Idea,” i.e., “what is true in and for itself.”\(^285\) Second of all,

every philosophical system should be regarded as the presentation of a particular moment, or a particular stage, in the process of development of the Idea. So, the


“refuting” of a philosophy means only that its restricting boundary has been 
overstepped and its determinate principle has been reduced to an ideal moment.\textsuperscript{286}

In another place, he claims that

the genuine refutation of one philosophical system by another … consists 
precisely in the fact that the principle of the refuted philosophy is exhibited in its 
dialectic and reduced to an ideal moment of a higher concrete form of the Idea.\textsuperscript{287}

To refute is in general to show something is false. The foregoing discussion implies that, 
in Hegel’s view, a \textit{refutation} of a philosophy deserving of the name does not result in the 
conclusion that that philosophy is \textit{absolutely false}. The principle of a philosophy 
(considered here in a broader sense than merely the most basic logical principles 
discussed above) is generally not absolutely false but corrects what is false in the 
previous philosophy and to a limited extent finds its place in the next one. Hegel’s 
definition of philosophical truth confirms this interpretation.

\textsuperscript{286} Hegel, \textit{The Encyclopedia Logic}, 138.

\textsuperscript{287} Hegel, \textit{The Encyclopedia Logic}, 145.
He claims that “in the philosophical sense” truth consists in “the agreement of a content with itself.” This implies that if the content does not absolutely “agree” with itself, that is, if it is self-contradictory, then is relatively untrue or false. However, it must also be relatively true in order to be what it is at all. The beginning of Hegel’s *Logic*, for instance, is not absolutely false because there is some degree of agreement of the content with itself.

Indeed, it is not too difficult to discover how the three moments of the concept are instantiated at the beginning of the *Logic*.

The beginning of the *Logic*, pure being or “indeterminate immediacy” is the result of an abstraction from all content. I have already discussed in section C of this chapter why this beginning is necessary. Recall that I explained there that, for Hegel, it is necessary insofar as any other beginning would contradict the idea of an absolute beginning. In this way, the beginning is implied by the principle of non-contradiction, which, according to Hegel, must be presupposed for any theoretical progress to be made at all. The activity of the understanding consists in applying this principle along with the principle of identity in that it consists in positing the content of its thought in its absolute separateness and distinctness from everything else.

As I already explained in section C, all mediation and determinacy imply a development beyond the beginning. Therefore, the beginning, when taken separately and in abstraction from that of which it is the beginning is absolute immediacy and

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indeterminacy as such. Again, this is the thought of indeterminate immediacy, or pure
being, and it is not possible to fix this beginning in thought without presupposing that it is
self-identical (principle of identity). But if it is identical only with itself, then it cannot be
identical with anything else that it is not. Thus, Hegel also presupposes the principle of
non-contradiction.

In its activity of absolute abstraction, the understanding would try to hold the
thought of indeterminate being apart from the thought of abstract nothing and posit the
absolute distinctness of these two thoughts. Accordingly, Hegel issues the following
challenge to those who stop short at the standpoint of the understanding: “Let those who
insist that being and nothing are different tackle the problem of stating in what the
difference consists.”

The understanding is unable to answer this challenge and explain what
distinguishes indeterminate being and nothing because its own analytic principles require
that it adhere to the simple thoughts of indeterminate being and indeterminate nothing
and not ascribe any determinacy to them. As Hegel explains:

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If being and nothing had any determinateness by which they were distinguished from each other then, as has been observed, they would be determinate being and determinate nothing, not the pure being and pure nothing that here they still are.\footnote{290} Since indeterminate being and nothing are indistinguishable, they must be identical. This contradiction follows with necessity from the presupposition of analytic principles, including the principle of non-contradiction. As Hegel maintains, “the deduction” of the unity of being and nothing is “entirely analytic” and the “whole course of philosophising” is “methodical, i.e., necessary” inasmuch as it is “nothing else but the mere positing of what is already contained in a concept.”\footnote{291}

However, this necessary conclusion does not prompt Hegel to draw the further and unwarranted conclusion that the analytic logical principles of the understanding are absolutely false. He recognizes that only by presupposing these principles was he able to deduce the contradiction. Therefore, these principles are not absolutely, but only relatively false, and being and nothing are still non-identical at the same time that they are identical.

The deduction of the contradiction is also the deduction of the first determinate concept of the Logic, namely becoming. This concept is a solution to or dissolution of the

\footnote{290} Hegel, \textit{Science of Logic}, 92.

\footnote{291} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 141.
source of the contradiction in being and nothing. Unlike these simple thoughts, it is
determinate and therefore distinguishable through this determinacy from both
indeterminate being and indeterminate nothing.

However, becoming is also not absolutely distinct from being and nothing.
Hegel's method does not consist in recognizing the inadequacy in being and nothing and
then searching for [intuiting] a concept that simply does not have this inadequacy. Such a
procedure would represent a departure from the path of logical necessity.

Rather, the concept of becoming is the recognition and affirmation of the
deduction that has already taken place. The concept of becoming is the mutual transition
of being into nothing and nothing into being. This concept has already emerged as soon
as these transitions have been shown to be necessary. Therefore, becoming itself emerges
necessarily as the speculative moment of the development.

In this way, the law of contradiction and the law of the unity of opposites are not
imposed by Hegel on the development of the content from the outside. Nor are these laws
used as criteria for judging after the fact whether the development follows the course that
it ought to follow. However, the contradiction and the unity of opposites follow from the
initial (necessary) application of the principle of non-contradiction at the beginning in
precisely as Hegel explains that it will in the “More Precise Conception and Division of
the Logic” discussed in section D of this chapter.

Now if thinking, in its activity as the understanding, once again supposes that it
has, in the concept of becoming, reached the end of its labor, it will be disappointed. The
application of its analytic principles to this concept—which it must apply in order to
develop its thinking further—will lead it to yet another contradiction, but this will yield yet another resolution of the contradiction and so on. This is the method by which the subsequent course of the Logic is supposed to proceed. However, as I have already noted, the demonstration that this is indeed what takes place in the subsequent course of development of the Logic is outside of the scope of the present study.

I have claimed that the principle of non-contradiction plays a central role in Hegel’s Logic from the very beginning. It may be objected that Hegel himself must not presuppose this principle in the “Doctrine of Being,” since Hegel does not introduce this principle explicitly until he gets to the “Doctrine of Essence.” Indeed, some of the quotes I have used in support of my interpretation come from that section in the Science of Logic.

However, my point is that, given Hegel’s claim that without the understanding there is “no fixity or determinacy in the domains either of theory or of practice,” the moment of the understanding and the principles of formal identity and non-contradiction must be presupposed from the beginning even if Hegel does not explicitly state these principles there.

This brings up yet another possible objection. That is, it could be argued that if I am right, that only compounds the problem because it implies that, in the “Doctrine of Being,” Hegel presupposes a principle he only deduces later in the “Doctrine of Essence,” so perhaps he is only pretends to deduce the principle later or else deceives himself that he does so. However, this objection would miss the point. There is no sleight of hand involved. As I have already explained, the Logic begins with a necessary
presupposition. *Thinking* is impossible without the moment of the understanding. However, the full articulation of what that moment is and involves requires mediation, a second, and the *Logic* must begin with what is first. It is thus *necessary* for it to begin with the application of principles that have not yet been fully articulated.

I will not go into detail here into the deduction of identity itself. In the present context, I believe it is sufficient to note (1) why the principle must be presupposed at the beginning and (2) why the subsequent explicit affirmation of this principle in the “Doctrine of Essence” does not imply that Hegel’s *Logic* begs the question.

The demand for a justification of a principle *before* it is used is related to what Hegel calls, in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, “the mistaken project of wanting to have cognition before we have any cognition.”\(^\text{292}\) He compares this project with “not wanting to go into the water before we have learned to swim.”\(^\text{293}\) In Hegel’s view, the Kantian philosophy falls into this error when it seeks the conditions of the possibility of knowledge rather than knowledge itself.

Hegel certainly acknowledges that “the forms of thinking should not be used without investigation,” but he points out that “this process of investigation is itself a process of cognition.”\(^\text{294}\) There is no way of investigating thinking without *thinking*. Instead of approaching the matter in that way, he insists that “the activity of thinking”

\(^{292}\) Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 82.

\(^{293}\) Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 82.

\(^{294}\) Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 82.
and the “critique” thereof “must be united within the process of cognition.”

The kind of thinking that is capable of investigating itself, of “point[ing] out [its] own defects” and correcting them, is called the “dialectic.”

It is precisely because the deficiencies of certain forms of thought inevitably reveal themselves in self-contradictions that Hegel is able to begin by presupposing the (necessary) principles of identity and non-contradiction without worrying that his Logic is tainted by a presupposition that may turn out to be false. It does turn out to be relatively false, and it is his Logic that shows this.

Hegel ultimately subjects the formal principle of identity to such an investigation and shows that this principle itself contains a contradiction within it. Thus, far from undermining the subsequent development by presupposing the principle at the beginning, its shortcomings are demonstrated in an initial way in the contradiction that emerges in the thought of being in spite of the application of this principle at the beginning of the Logic. Thus, Hegel did not presuppose that the principle has absolute validity, but he also did not presuppose that it gave way to a contradiction either in itself or in the content to which it was applied.

On the other hand, those who proceed from the standpoint of the understanding consider formal identity to be “something true.” They insist that “identity is not

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295 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 82.

296 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 82.

297 Hegel, Science of Logic, 413.
difference, but that identity and difference are different." The characteristic activity of those who proceed from the standpoint of the understanding consists in separating determinations and holding them apart from one another and they have faith that this procedure will always produce results in line with their prejudices.

Consequently, they are blind to the fact that their position is self-contradictory. As Hegel points out, “in this very assertion they are themselves saying that identity is different when they claim that “identity is different from difference.” Granted, they are saying it is different from difference, but they cannot do so without saying, at the same time, that identity itself contains difference. The fact that identity is different from difference is not just a claim about the nature of difference or something external to identity. It is a claim about “the nature of identity” itself. Thus, those who cling to the standpoint of the understanding are correct when they claim that identity and difference are different, but they also succeed thereby in saying that identity and difference are not absolutely different, and, since it is impossible not to say both at once, both are correct. However, they do not recognize that what they are saying is self-contradictory or that by “clinging to” a false concept of identity as “unmoved” and absolutely distinct from difference “they thereby convert it into a one-sided determinateness which, as such, has no truth.”

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298 Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 413.

299 Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 413.

300 Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 413.

It is important to note that Hegel does not conclude here that identity itself has no truth. What has no truth is the supposition that the identity subsists in absolute separation from difference. For this reason, Hegel claims that “true identity” is different from the “formal identity” of the understanding insofar as it is not just an empty tautology, but “contain[s] distinction” within it.302

What all of this implies is that identity is not simply presupposed in the “Doctrine of Being” and then reiterated uncritically in the “Doctrine of Essence.” Instead, it is refuted in both. That is, its relative inadequacy is demonstrated in both, though implicitly in the “Doctrine of Being” and explicitly in the “Doctrine of Essence.”

G. Intellectual Intuition

Since intellectual intuition (or “hyperintuition,” as Rosen calls it) plays a central role in the intuitionist interpretation of Hegel’s Logic, and since Hegel himself does think that there is such a thing as intellectual intuition, my defense of Hegelian necessity would not be complete without a discussion of what Hegel actually says about intellectual intuition, its role in his philosophy, and its relationship with the necessary development of the Logic.

In his discussion of intuition in the Philosophy of Mind, Hegel explains that “immediate or sensory consciousness,” which is sometimes falsely equated with intuition as such, “relates itself [only] to the immediate individuality of the object” without grasping in what the unity of that object consists. Inevitably, sensory consciousness views

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the object as “a multiplicity of aspects” without comprehending the genuine, animating concept of the object.\textsuperscript{303} The problem with sensory consciousness is thus above all a problem with its form.

“Genuine,” or “mindful” or “intellectual,” intuition, on the other hand, Hegel explains, consists in “a totality, a cohesive fullness of determinations” and “apprehends the solid substance of the object.”\textsuperscript{304}

According to Hegel, acquiring such an intuition requires that a man enter into relationship with the subject-matter with mind, with heart and soul, briefly in his entirety, that he stand in the centre of it and give it free play. Only when thinking is firmly grounded in intuition of the substance of the object can one, without deserting the truth, go on to consider the particular which is rooted in that substance, but becomes worthless straw when detached from it.\textsuperscript{305}

\textsuperscript{303} Hegel, \textit{Philosophy of Mind}, 182.

\textsuperscript{304} Hegel, \textit{Philosophy of Mind}, 182-183.

\textsuperscript{305} Hegel, \textit{Philosophy of Mind}, 183.
According to Hegel, this holds true not only when it comes to the study of philosophy, but in the study of any and every subject matter. Hegel considers the example of “a talented historian,” who has studied his subject-matter closely and “has before him in vivid intuition the whole of the conditions and events he is to describe.” Such a vivid, cohesive whole is only possible on the basis of such study. Conversely, a person “who possesses no talent for the portrayal of history” and who fails to immerse himself in such a study, “confines himself to individual details” while “overlook[ing] the substantial.”

Hegel insists that “in all branches of knowledge, and especially in philosophy too, one should speak from intuition of the subject-matter” because if “a solid intuition of the object is lacking from the outset or if it disappears again,” then the result will be that “reflective thinking loses itself in the consideration of the manifold, individualized determinations and relationships occurring in the object.” In that case,

the separating intellect tears the object apart, even when it is a living creature, a plant or an animal, by its one-sided finite categories of cause and effect, external end and means, etc., and in this manner, despite all its clever ruses, fails to

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308 Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 183.
comprehend the concrete nature of the object, to recognize the spiritual bond holding together all the individual details.\textsuperscript{309}

This one-sided reflective thinking is the sort of thinking engaged in by the understanding.

Conversely, someone who has transcended the standpoint of the understanding and achieved “the pure thinking of conceptual reason” has acquired “a perfectly determinate, genuine intuition” and this intuition is “only the solid form into which his completely developed cognition is concentrated again” in the form of “an internally articulated, systematic totality.”\textsuperscript{310}

Thus, for Hegel, intellectual intuition is indeed very important, but as the result of the development of the science, not as what produces the result. Of course, the Logic produces various intermediate results, which are also concrete. It is above all the speculative moment that has the form of an intellectual intuition insofar as it too is an internally articulated systematic totality. Intellectual intuition is thus the speculative moment in the form of subjective cognition.

\textbf{H. Conclusion}

In this chapter, I have presented my own interpretation what Hegel means when he says that the development of his Logic is necessary. The principle of non-contradiction plays a

\textsuperscript{309} Hegel, \textit{Philosophy of Mind}, 183.

\textsuperscript{310} Hegel, \textit{Philosophy of Mind}, 183.
central role in my interpretation because Hegel’s application of it leads to unavoidable contradictions that instantiate yet another principle, the principle of contradiction. This principle serves as a corrective to the inadequacy of the principle of non-contradiction, which violates itself by producing contradictions. Moreover, the principle of the unity of opposites, as I have called it, follows unavoidably from the fact that a second determination, contradicting a first, is a result of this first. The necessity of Hegel’s Logic is thus supposed to consist in a more rigorous application of the very same principles presupposed by the understanding than the understanding itself is capable of achieving.

I have based my interpretation throughout on a careful reading of Hegel’s texts, and have shown that it is borne out in the transitions at the beginning of Hegel’s Logic. Moreover, I have shown that Hegel’s aim is to transcend mystery in his elucidation of the basic determinations of cognition and the real world, and that the role of logical principles in his effort at such an elucidation is indeed not mysterious at all.

The reader has probably already noticed some of the ways in which my interpretation differs from those of Schelling, the intuitionists, and the anti-intuitionists. In the next chapter, Chapter 4, I make these differences explicit.
Chapter 4: The Demystification of Hegel’s *Logic*: An Answer to Hegel’s Critics and Defenders

A. Introduction

In this chapter, I use my interpretation of Hegelian logical necessity, which I presented in Chapter 3, to address several closely related questions. Schelling, the intuitionists, and the anti-intuitionists ignore any textual evidence that does not accord with their interpretations. The refutation of their positions therefore consists above all in drawing attention to those passages that they ignore. This is what I have already sought to do in Chapter 3 in the course of elaborating my own interpretation. However, it is worth (1) drawing explicit attention to some of the major discrepancies between the interpretations presented by these critics and defenders of Hegel’s *Logic* and Hegel’s own texts, and (2) seeking an explanation of some of the deeper reasons for these discrepancies. Each of the sections in this chapter are aimed at accomplishing both of these goals. Section B of this chapter is devoted to answering Hegel’s more recent interpreters and section C is devoted to answering Schelling.

In section B, I first discuss the mystification of Hegel’s *Logic* by the intuitionists within the context of a broader tendency within Hegel scholarship to interpret Hegel from the standpoint of the understanding. I then argue that the deficiencies of intuitionism flow from a prejudice in favor of the understanding for which, Hegel indicates, dialectical and
speculative thinking is mysterious. Since anything beyond the understanding genuinely is mysterious for the understanding, the intuitionists’ adoption of the standpoint of the understanding would, from a Hegelian point of view, explain why they cannot help viewing the development of Hegel’s Logic as mysterious.

I then take Alexander Magee’s interpretation of Hegel’s Logic as an instructive example of a very different interpretation of Hegel’s Logic that is nevertheless similar to intuitionism in several important respects. This example is interesting not only because of the way it marries the standpoint of the understanding with mystery, but also because Magee, unlike the intuitionists, adopts this standpoint in an explicit effort to discredit the possibility of rational cognition of the world.

I then turn back to the intuitionists and address three major areas where, as I argue, they show a preference for the standpoint of the understanding at the expense of an accurate grasp of Hegelian necessity: (1) the question of intellectual intuition; (2) the question of the role of principles in Hegel’s Logic; and (3) the question whether Hegel’s Logic is viciously circular or begs the question.

In Chapter 2, I showed that the intuitionists present Hegel’s Logic as though intuition were responsible for its development. It Chapter 3, I showed that, for Hegel, conversely, a logical deduction rather than intellectual intuition produces the development. I also showed that, for Hegel, intellectual intuition is essentially a result rather than a mode of development. I also argued that intellectual intuition is the third or speculative moment of the concept in the form of subjective cognition in that it consists in an immediate concrete unity of thought determinations. Given all of this, I argue in the
present chapter that, when the intuitionists present the logical deduction as a whole as an intellectual intuition or series of intellectual intuitions, and they do so at the expense of the other two moments, and that just as Hegel himself explained, when the speculative moment is not grasped as a result, its emergence becomes incomprehensible and therefore mysterious.

In Chapter 2, I also showed that by denying that principles play any role in Hegel’s Logic, the intuitionists make it impossible to explain what Hegelian necessity is. In Chapter 3, I offered my interpretation of Hegelian necessity in terms of the role of logical principles in the development in Hegel’s Logic. Given all of this, I argue in the present chapter that the intuitionist rejection of the role of principles in the development of Hegel’s Logic is a consequence of their false supposition that either logical principles must be imposed externally on the subject matter of the Logic or else they must play no role there at all. While Houlgate and Rosen are correct in supposing that Hegel does not apply external criteria to the development of the Logic, they are incorrect in supposing that the principle of non-contradiction is such an external criterion.

In Chapter 2, I discussed the centrality of the question of presuppositionlessness in the intuitionist interpretation of Hegel’s Logic. I also discussed Houlgate’s claim that, in Hegel’s view, a self-critical philosopher must avoid begging the question, that is, reiterating the questionable content of its premises in its conclusion. In Chapter 3, I argued that, far from simply reiterating the content of contingently selected premises, the Logic proceeds from necessary premises to the equally necessary refutation of the inadequacy of these premises. Given all of this, I argue that, far from coming from a standpoint of radical self-criticism, the intuitionist approach to this question avoids a
serious confrontation with the presuppositions of formal logic. The intuitionists avoid addressing Hegel’s deduction of the necessary self-contradictions in the thoughts and concepts of the understanding. Indeed, it is striking how little the intuitionists have to say about contradictions in general. Presenting Hegel’s logic as a “transcendental logic” or an “ontological logic” in which the “observation” of “mutations” or “slippage” takes the place of logical deduction, Houlgate suppresses and conceals the contradictory (i.e., dialectical) content of the Logic. Having missed the real reason why Hegel’s Logic is not circular, namely that it consists in the dialectical refutation of premises rather than the formal reiteration of the content of these premises, he tries to defend Hegel against the charge of begging the question by appealing to its presuppositionlessness alone.

The consideration of the intuitionist approach to these three questions taken together shows that the intuitionist defense of Hegelian necessity fails above all because it fails to confront the standpoint of the understanding of which Hegel’s Logic is the refutation.

However, the anti-intuitionist effort to refute the immanent necessity of Hegel’s Logic therefore fails not only because its own conception of Hegelian necessity is textually inaccurate, but also because the intuitionist interpretation of Hegelian immanent necessity to which it counterposes itself is likewise textually inaccurate both in its approach to specific questions and it the overall orientation from which this approach flows.

This leaves only Schelling himself. In section C, I return once again to Schelling’s criticisms of Hegelian necessity and show that they too are based on a prejudice in favor
of the standpoint of the understanding. Not only does Schelling want to discredit Hegel’s thoroughgoing rationalism in order to leave room for something mysterious. Hegel’s *Logic* is also mystery to him because he is blinded to the dialectic by his own dogmatic adherence to the standpoint of the understanding.

**B. The Marriage of Mystery with the Standpoint of the Understanding**

As I discussed in Chapter 3, Hegel explains that, from the point of view of the understanding, only the thinking of the understanding itself is genuinely thinking at all. Consequently, the understanding can only be transcended by going beyond all thought. But whatever is beyond all thought is mysterious to thinking. Thus, from the standpoint of the understanding, anything that lies beyond itself is mysterious.

However, as I also explained in Chapter 3, Hegel insists that the understanding is mistaken in supposing that only its own thinking is genuinely thinking at all. Dialectical and speculative thinking (the thinking that grasps the dialectical and speculative moments of the concept) is *beyond* the understanding in the sense that it refutes the limited standpoint of the understanding. As Hegel explains, it could be called mystical in the sense that it is beyond the understanding, but not in the sense that it is genuinely mysterious to *all* thinking.

I raise this again here because many of the misinterpretations of Hegel’s *Logic* can themselves be traced back to a prejudice in favor of the standpoint of the understanding. Instead of presenting the dialectical and speculative moments as the refutation of the inadequacy of the (equally necessary) moment of the understanding, one tendency within Hegel scholarship reduces Hegel’s *Logic* to a combination of mysterious
insights on the one hand, and various operations of the understanding on the other. This tendency encompasses a considerable variety of interpretations. However, the problem with this approach is not the variety of ways in which it is carried out, nor even that it is critical of Hegel’s claim that only for the understanding is the transcendence of its standpoint something mysterious. The problem is rather that it uncritically presents Hegel’s philosophy within the confines of an absolute opposition of understanding and what lies beyond all thought, as though Hegel’s philosophy did not itself offer a refutation of this very opposition.

As a consequence, those critics and defenders of Hegel’s Logic who proceed from a prejudice in favor of the standpoint of the understanding miss the role of logical laws, including the law of contradiction, in its development. Far from refuting Hegel’s refutation of the standpoint of the understanding, these interpreters simply take for granted an absolute opposition of the understanding and a mysterious beyond, perhaps in some cases without even realizing they are doing so.

Alexander Magee’s interpretation of Hegel’s Logic is one example of an explanation of Hegel’s philosophy from the standpoint of the understanding. Although Magee is not concerned with the presuppositionlessness of Hegel’s Logic in the way that the intuitionists are, I believe a brief discussion of his interpretation will shed helpful light on their view.

Once again, as in the case of Rosen and the other intuitionists, it is valuable to examine both obvious examples (Magee) and less obvious, more subtle examples of specific ways of thinking about Hegel’s Logic (the intuitionists). In the previous case,
where I compared the positions of Rosen and the other intuitionists on the question of the role of intuition in Hegel’s Logic, I explained that the examples in which it is more obvious what is going on can serve as a bridge to grasping how the same sort of thing is going on in the more subtle examples, while an examination of the more subtle examples as subtle examples of the same thing can reveal where they too diverge from Hegel’s texts. In the present case, I hope by means of this procedure to provide a stark illustration of a broader problem in Hegel interpretation that has proved to be a stumbling block even for vastly different interpretations.

**a. Alexander Magee’s Mystical Interpretation**

Magee takes the somewhat unorthodox position that mysticism, in particular Rosicrucianism and Hermeticism, had a significant influence on Hegel in his formulation of the Logic. Whereas most mystical doctrines hold that we must “embrace ‘mystery’” in order to transcend “the categories of the Understanding, or the ‘opposites’,” Magee explains, Hegel holds the opposite. Like the Hermeticists, Hegel believes that we can gain “discursive knowledge” of what transcends these opposites and ultimately “discursive knowledge of the nature of God.”³¹¹

Magee describes the general course of development of Hegel’s Logic follows:

³¹¹ Magee, “Hegel and Mysticism,” 278.
in discursive, rational form, the actual nature of God or the Absolute. Hegel employs a logic of contradiction (dialectic) to articulate the ‘moments’ or aspects of this God, taken as an organic whole. Instead of merely pointing to an Absolute that transcends the oppositions of the Understanding, Hegel uses these oppositions to define the Absolute itself in terms of a system of moments in which each element depends upon every other, and each is what it is only in relation to the whole.312

This description certainly bears a resemblance to the development of Hegel’s Logic as he explains it in the section on the “More Precise Conception and Division of the Logic.” However, the wording reveals a fundamental distortion of the content. According to Magee, Hegel “employs a logic of contradiction,” “uses” oppositions, and “uses” the “tension between opposites.”313 What is missing here is the role of necessity in the form of a logical deduction. Magee reads Hegel’s Logic as though the contradictions are not necessary but are merely a device introduced by Hegel to serve a specific purpose. However, Magee neither acknowledges nor attempts to refute Hegel’s position that there are necessary contradictions and a necessary resolution of these contradictions. Thus, if he does not quite present contradictions as “a kind of abnormality and a passing paroxysm of sickness” in the way that Hegel says the understanding tends to view them, neither does it occur to him to see them in any other way than contingent. This


misreading of Hegel only makes sense if Magee himself is proceeding uncritically from the standpoint of the understanding and assumes that everyone else must do so as well.

It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that, having argued to his satisfaction that Hegel’s thought is influenced by a type of mysticism, Magee goes on to suggests in a highly formalistic manner that one of the “larger implications” of this influence “for Hegel scholarship and for the history of ideas in general” is the supremacy of the irrational over the rational. Of course, the type of mysticism that Magee has attributed to Hegel does not, in Magee’s presentation, embrace mystery or the extra-rational at all, but this does not stop him from sweeping aside all such distinctions in his haste to use Hegel’s alleged mysticism to dismiss rationality itself. For Magee, if Hegel, the consummate rationalist, could learn anything at all from anyone who calls himself a mystic for any reason, or elaborate a philosophy that bears even a superficial resemblance to some mystical doctrine or other, then the case against reason itself is decisive:

But if the very idea of the autonomy and progressive unfolding of reason has deeply irrational roots, then perhaps history is better understood as Heidegger said, not as an intelligible progression from superstition to reason, but merely as a random and contingent succession of superstitions, the most stubborn of which are those that present themselves as rational.

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Perhaps, Magee muses, we are mistaken is supposing that reason “is self-grounding and can therefore emancipate itself from and transcend unreason,” that “it can progress beyond the historical contingencies of its starting point.”

What is striking above all about this defense of unreason and irrationality is its marriage with the standpoint of the understanding. Magee’s would-be refutation of Hegel’s credentials as a rationalist amounts to nothing more profound than the uncritical reiteration of the principle of identity, for which *irrationality is irrationality*. He asks us to accept as a matter of course that irrational *roots* or origins lead only to irrational consequences. Transcendence in a dialectical sense, consisting in the *refutation* of mere roots, is, in Magee’s view, simply impossible and to be dismissed without argument. Of course, Magee never actually specifies what is irrational in Hegel’s *Logic*. Nor does he attempt to refute Hegel’s refutation of the standpoint of the understanding. Indeed, Magee does not present himself as a defender of the understanding against dialectical and speculative thinking at all, but he nevertheless adopts its standpoint in his effort to defend mystery.

*b. The Intuitionists and the Standpoint of the Understanding*

Let us now return to the intuitionists and examine how they too bind the standpoint of the understanding with an intuitionistic and semi-mystical reading of Hegel’s *Logic*. Unlike Magee, they do not present themselves as opponents of rationalism or defenders of mystery. However, they exhibit a relatively consistent pattern of preference for the

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standpoint of the understanding. Houlgate and Rosen, for example, consistently soften the
critical edge of the dialectic. The inevitable consequence of this, if not the intention, is
that their interpretation of many of the Hegel’s individual statements, which are actually
sharply critical of the standpoint of the understanding, become incomprehensible. Thus,
as I show, although the details of execution and even the motivations behind Magee’s,
Rosen’s and Houlgate’s approaches to Hegel’s Logic are each quite different, the end
results are similar: a marriage of mystification with an uncritical attitude toward the
understanding. While it seems as though Houlgate must break from such a stance, since
he denies that Hegel presupposes one of the central tenets of the understanding, the
principle of non-contradiction, this is ultimately not the case.

I have already discussed the way in which intuitionism, in effect, portrays the
development of Hegel’s Logic as mysterious. I showed in Chapter 2 that, despite
Houlgate’s explicit denial that Hegel’s method amounts to a “mysterious power of
dialectical insight or intuition” belonging only to “a privileged few,” his interpretation
nevertheless demands that it remain mysterious why the Logic develops in the way that it
does.\(^{317}\) As I pointed out there, the demand for radical openness contains in itself no
criterion, available for public scrutiny, for judging whether one is being “open” enough
such that a transition can be determined to be the product not of unconscious
presuppositions but of a necessity immanent in the thought determinations themselves.
Moreover, as I also pointed out there, Houlgate’s account of the development of Hegel’s

\(^{317}\) Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 66.
Logic rules out any explanation why one should accept that any given example of a Hegelian deduction is indeed an instance of logical necessity.

I now show that Rosen’s and Houlgate’s intuitionist reduction of Hegel’s logical deduction to what can only be described as mystical inspiration is bound up with a prejudice in favor of the standpoint of the understanding.

i. Intellectual Intuition

Intellectual intuition, as Hegel explains it, is not clearly the source of the necessary transitions in the Logic as the intuitionists present it. Rather, intellectual intuition grasps a concrete content that is essentially a result.

Moreover, not only does intellectual intuition not produce the development in Hegel’s presentation, but it is something completely different for Hegel than it is for the intuitionists. As Hegel presents them, the speculative moment and intellectual intuition both consist in an immediate concrete unity of determinations. Intellectual intuition is thus the speculative moment in the form of subjective cognition. Conversely, when the intuitionists reduce logical deduction to intellectual intuition, this moment thereby also loses its own specific content and becomes something mysterious or mystical instead.

Recall Houlgate’s use of Hegel’s claim that “nothing” is “the same empty intuition or thought (Anschauen oder Denken) as pure being.”318 According to Houlgate, this quote proves that, for Hegel, “pure thought” and “intellectual intuition” are the same thing. In making this claim Houlgate ignores Hegel’s distinction, in the Philosophy of

318 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 125.
Between sensory intuition, which “relates itself [only] to the immediate individuality of the object” and “genuine,” or “mindful” or “intellectual,” intuition, which consists in “a totality, a cohesive fullness of determinations” and “apprehends the solid substance of the object.”

According to Hegel, the intuition of being (and nothing) is “empty,” however, so it is clearly not a “a totality, a cohesive fullness of determinations.” Therefore, the intuition of being is only intellectual in the most meager sense of the word.

In Chapter 2, I showed that although Houlgate in particular does not explicitly claim that intellectual intuition is responsible for the development of Hegel’s Logic, this is nonetheless his position. Hegel’s own definition of intellectual intuition as “a totality, a cohesive fullness of determinations” that is able to apprehend “the solid substance of the object” as a result of its immersion in the subject matter refutes this position as well.

The purpose of Hegel’s Logic may be the achievement of such an intellectual intuition, such an apprehension “of the solid substance of [its] object,” but it can achieve this aim only through logical deduction, and it is the nature of this logical deduction that Houlgate fails to explain.

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319 Hegel, Philosophy of Mind, 182-183.

320 Hegel, Philosophy of Mind, 182.

321 Hegel, Philosophy of Mind, 183.
Recall that Houlgate never provides a definition of the nature of the necessity of Hegel’s logical deduction. Recall, moreover, according to Houlgate, the method of Hegel’s *Logic* consists in nothing more than a “self-critical openness of mind” or a “willingness to let.” Inasmuch as Houlgate does not specify and indeed denies that it is possible to specify the form that either this necessity or criticism take, his interpretation suppresses Hegel’s refutation of the standpoint of the understanding.

**ii. Principles and Laws**

The intuitionists deny that Hegel presupposes any principles or that his *Logic* involves the application of principles.

Recall that, in Chapter 2, I included a quote from Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Mind* that Rosen uses to justify his thesis that Hegel’s *Logic* does not develop by means of logical inferences. Let us consider this passage once again:

Argumentation [*Räsonnieren*] is freedom from its content and vanity towards it. What is required of it is the effort of giving up this freedom and, instead of being the arbitrary moving principle of the content, to sink its freedom into the content and to allow the content to move itself spontaneously according to its own nature—viz. the self as its own self—and to observe this movement. To refrain from intruding into the immanent rhythm of the notion and not to intervene

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322 Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 60.
arbitrarily or with wisdom obtained from elsewhere is itself an essential moment of attention to the notion.\textsuperscript{323}

First of all, in invoking this quote, Rosen acknowledges something that Magee ignores, namely that, from Hegel’s point of view, the development of the Logic is not the product of a series of external operations but is immanent in the content itself.

Recall that in Rosen’s view, Hegel’s opposition to externally imposed “wisdom obtained from elsewhere” implies an opposition to justification through principles or laws, since the latter procedure is a form of “external discourse” that cannot “adequately capture” the development of Hegel’s Logic.\textsuperscript{324}

Houlgate of course holds the same position. As I explained in Chapter 2, Houlgate insists that Hegel does not “assume that thought should be governed by the rules of Aristotelian logic or that the law of noncontradiction holds, or that thought is regulated by any principles or laws whatsoever” because, in Houlgate’s view, to do so would be to make an unjustified presupposition. Because Rosen and Houlgate view any principles or laws as necessarily external to the immanent development of the Logic, they think that such principles or laws must play no role whatsoever.

But why do Rosen and Houlgate suppose that principles or laws would have to be imposed externally? This is certainly the attitude of the understanding toward its

\textsuperscript{323} Rosen, *Hegel’s Dialectic and Its Criticism*, 74.

\textsuperscript{324} Rosen, *Hegel’s Dialectic and Its Criticism*, 72.
principles. In the passage quoted by Rosen, Hegel opposes the imposition of the
standpoint of the understanding on the subject matter of the *Logic*. In general, a principle
or law is imposed externally when the application of it is not a product of necessity.

According to Hegel, it is the understanding that applies principles or laws under
circumstances when it is not strictly *necessary* to apply them. Recall, for instance,
Hegel’s discussion of the retrospective necessity at work in a geometrical proof. Once the
proof has been completed, it becomes clear why various lines or figures were drawn in
the sequence that they were. However, there was no immanent necessity of introducing
those lines or figures in that sequence, no necessity intrinsic in one line of drawing the
next one.

The understanding elevates the principle or law of identity or else the principle or
law of non-contradiction to the status of an absolute: it may not be violated at all under
any circumstances, even if the violation itself is a product of the application of the law.
The understanding stands in *judgment* of each and every step of an argument and forbids
contradictions from entering explicitly anywhere regardless of the source of these
contradictions. This is what Hegel opposes. However, the intuitionists seem to believe
that since principles or laws can be applied externally, *any and every* application of a
principle or law must constitute an external application thereof.

I contend that Hegel’s *Logic* is the counterexample to this supposition. As I have
already discussed, if the *Logic* is to make an absolute beginning, this implies that it must
begin with the one idea that does not contradict this concept, the thought of pure being.
But beginning in this way involves abstracting and separating pure being from everything
else. In order genuinely to begin with pure being it is likewise necessary to presuppose that pure being is what it is and is not what it is not. Then the application of the principle does not take the form of an external imposition of a judgment. Rather, the application of the principle, itself a product of necessity makes the thought of pure being what it is. This is the activity of the understanding in its proper place. As Hegel explains and as we have already discussed, there is “no fixity or determinacy in the domains either of theory or of practice” without the understanding.\textsuperscript{325} This is illustrated by the fact that it is only possible to make progress, that is, to make the subsequent discovery that being is in fact nothing, if one first presupposes that it is only what it is and not what it is not, i.e., if one presupposes the principle of non-contradiction. Again, Hegel does not externally impose the law of contradiction, according to which “everything is inherently contradictory” on the content of his Logic.\textsuperscript{326} He does not use this principle to judge externally whether the Logic is taking the correct course. Rather, the principle is produced by the by the principles or laws of identity and non-contradiction, which it necessarily presupposes.

My point, in presenting my interpretation of Hegel’s Logic, was that that the principles themselves produce their own application. In a situation in which it is necessary to presuppose a certain principle, it would be absurd to claim that it ought not to be presupposed.

Hegel holds that thinking that grasps the truth contains these “laws” as “moments,” but they are not “fixed” and “constant” in the way that the standpoint of

\textsuperscript{325} Hegel, \textit{The Encyclopedia Logic}, 126.

\textsuperscript{326} Hegel, \textit{Science of Logic}, 439.
“observing reason” conceives them.\textsuperscript{327} The law of identity produces the law of non-contradiction and this produces the law of contradiction, which then produces the law of the unity of opposites.

It might be wondered whether, if these principles or laws are not external, it makes any difference at all whether we talk about the development of Hegel’s Logic in terms of them. If the development of Hegel’s Logic is immanent, would it not be what it is regardless of whether we ever talk about it in terms of principles or laws? Houlgate seems to think that any general observations that we might make about the course of development of the Logic might be correct but are not essential to the development itself. We might notice patterns after the fact, but the immanent development itself does not depend on us doing so.

Houlgate is correct that Hegel does make generalizations. As I have discussed, Hegel claims that the three moments of the concept belong to “everything logically real” or “everything true in general.”\textsuperscript{328} Houlgate is also most likely correct that Hegel composed the prefaces and introduction in which these generalizations appear after completing the body of the text of the Science of Logic or Encyclopedia.

As I have already argued, the laws or principles that determine the first moment of the concept must be presupposed for any progress at all to be made. The necessity of the development depends entirely on whether these principles are presupposed at the

\textsuperscript{327} Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, 181.

\textsuperscript{328} Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 125.
beginning. Even though, at the beginning, these determinate principles cannot yet be articulated within the *Logic* itself, since they involve mediation, Hegel could not know that pure being was the necessary beginning without knowing that these principles are responsible for its necessity.

However, having once grasped the significance of the laws or principles of identity and non-contradiction in establishing the necessity of the contradiction that followed, Hegel would have to consider the significance of the contradiction that followed from the application of this principle on the level of principle as well.

That the application of the laws of identity and non-contradiction *produced* a contradiction shows that this principle is not the absolute truth in itself but is capable of giving way to its opposite. This is a significant result in even one instance, not a mere side issue. Of course, Hegel formulated the law of contradiction as a generalization, namely that “everything is inherently contradictory,” but his point was not so much that he had observed that there was an interesting pattern of contradiction in a number of things that he had observed, but that contradictions are a product of a necessity inherent in things.³²⁹


The moments of the concept should not be viewed as nothing more than an interesting pattern, the way that we would view shapes we perceive in the clouds as interesting patterns that in no way had any bearing on their essence. Grasping the
necessity of the transitions from being to nothing to becoming requires a precise characterization of the role of principles in these transitions.

The end result of the intuitionists’ failure to acknowledge the fact that Hegel begins by presupposing the principle of non-contradiction is that they suppress Hegel’s dialectical refutation of this principle. Houlgate, for example, never discusses the principle of contradiction at all. The intuitionists thereby exhibit an irrational bias in favor of the standpoint of the understanding.

iii. Vicious Circularicity and Begging the Question

In focusing on the alleged fact that, at the beginning, Hegel withholds judgment on the law of non-contradiction, Houlgate manages to suppress Hegel’s criticism of the standpoint of the understanding and its dogmatic adherence to the principle of non-contradiction. It is only because Hegel *does* presuppose the law of non-contradiction that he is able to refute it, since the application of this law itself produces the contradiction.

Moreover, as I have already explained, a prejudice in favor of formal identity is evinced in the effort of the intuitionists to rescue Hegel’s *Logic* from the charge of vicious circularity. Hegel’s *dialectical* reasoning, on the other hand, does not merely uncritically reiterate its premises (or presuppositions), but deduces from them a contradiction that demonstrates the relative inadequacy of those very premises (or presuppositions). It consists in the *refutation* of the relative adequacy of necessary presuppositions.

This brings us back to the question of what Hegel’s *Logic* does and what it does not presuppose. In beginning with pure being, Hegel makes what he claims is a *necessary*
beginning. Moreover, as I mentioned in section B, above, Hegel himself calls the beginning a presupposition. I would suggest that it is a presupposition in the same sense that the first moment, the moment of the understanding, *always* takes the form of a presupposition. It is presupposed (*vorausgesetzt*), that is, supposed or posited (*gesetzt*) in advance (*voraus*) of its refutation. It is the moment of fixity and determinacy that precedes the dialectical moment of contradiction and transition.

Houlgate believes that Hegel may not even presuppose the principle of non-contradiction if his *Logic* is going to be presuppositionless because he thinks that presupposing this principle would make Hegel’s *Logic* viciously circular. For related reasons, according to Houlgate, Hegel’s *Logic* should not be judged by the standards of formal logic when it comes to whether he should presuppose the law of non-contradiction in the way that formal logic does. As Houlgate puts it, judging his *Logic* by presupposed standards would beg the question of the correctness of these standards, and “if there is one thing that a truly critical philosopher may not do, in Hegel’s view, it is ‘beg the question.’”

However, there is an ambiguity in Houlgate’s presentation of this issue. Presuppositions (or premises) as such, whether on the part of Hegel’s critics or Hegel himself, do not beg the question. It is the method of reasoning from those presuppositions (or premises) that either begs the question or not.

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In formal deductive reasoning, the form and the content are indifferent to one another. All formal reasoning is viciously circular and “begs the question” inasmuch as its conclusion merely uncritically reiterates the content of its premises (or presuppositions). It purports to provide proof of some conclusion or other but it is only able to do so because that very same content was already present in the premises.

Hegel’s *dialectical* reasoning, on the other hand, does not merely uncritically reiterate its premises (or presuppositions), but deduces from them a contradiction that demonstrates the relative inadequacy of those very premises (or presuppositions). It consists in the *refutation* of the relative adequacy of necessary presuppositions. For example, Hegel does not presuppose the universal applicability of the law of non-contradiction under all circumstances, but he does begin by presupposing that it is applicable *at the beginning* and, indeed, that it must be applied at the beginning. The subsequent reasoning from this very law refutes the law. Since Hegel’s dialectical logic does not behave uncritically toward its premises or presuppositions, since it does not merely reiterate the same content once again in the conclusion, it does not beg the question.

Houlgate and his fellow intuitionists, on the other hand, base their entire defense of Hegel’s *Logic* on the supposition that it simply does not *have* any presuppositions at all. However, as we have seen, this cannot be what Hegel means when he talks about the presuppositionlessness of the *Logic*, since he himself calls the first thought, being, a presupposition. Moreover, if being is a presupposition of the refutation that follows it, then every definite, finite thought determination that comes after being in the development of Hegel’s *Logic* is also a presupposition of its refutation. In that case
Hegel’s *Logic* is full of presuppositions, though it also consists in the successive refutation of these presuppositions. When Hegel claims that the *Logic* must be presuppositionless, all he means is that it should have no *unnecessary presuppositions* and that it should begin with a presupposition that is truly the *first* one.

The intuitionists take it as a given that if Hegel presupposes anything, including the principle of non-contradiction, his *Logic* will be viciously circular. This supposition blinds them to Hegel's consistent application of the principle of non-contradiction. Together with their presentation of an intuitive mode of development of Hegel's *Logic*, this supposition amounts to a denial of the logical character of the *Logic*. This is the fundamental reason why the intuitionist defense of its logical necessity fails. As I have shown, contrary to Houlgate, dialectical logical necessity is non-circular not because it avoids presuppositions—and thereby thought itself—but because it is the immanently necessary self-refutation and correction of the relative inadequacy of its own necessary presuppositions.

Houlgate’s emphasis on the presuppositionlessness of the *Logic* harkens back to what Hegel calls “the mistaken project of wanting to have cognition before we have any cognition,” which I discussed in the previous chapter. Rather than appealing to the presuppositionlessness of the *Logic* as a condition of the possibility of thinking that is already beyond reproach, Hegel insists that thinking subject *itself* to investigation.

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331 Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, 82.
Conversely, notwithstanding the intuitionists’ repeated references to the role of “self-criticism” in Hegel’s *Logic*, they reduce Hegel’s method to the essentially *uncritical* observation (or intuition) of the “mutations” of “categories” in consciousness. They provide no criterion, no principle, by which these mutations could be distinguished from a mere stream of consciousness.

In their approach to Hegel’s *Logic*, the intuitionists thus fail to address the role of contradiction in the development, substituting their own version of an empirical development for the dialectical one that Hegel presents. Houlgate and Rosen, for example, present the development of Hegel’s *Logic* as a product of “observation” without providing a criterion or method for determining how or why this observation is supposed to be distinct from the observation of the contents of consciousness.

The intuitionists thereby evince a prejudice (conscious or unconscious) in favor of the understanding. From the point of view of the understanding, as Hegel explains, contradiction is always “a kind of abnormality and a passing paroxysm of sickness,” not an essential and necessary moment of the development of everything.\(^{332}\) The intuitionists do not attempt to *refute* Hegel’s position on contradiction. They simply ignore it. On the part of the intuitionists, it is perhaps symptomatic of a certain embarrassment in the face of the something that they too view as “abnormal” or “sick,” but which Hegel presents,

with a straight face as it were, as a necessary moment “in all objects of all kinds, in all representations, concepts, and ideas.”

But perhaps this characterization of Houlgate’s reaction to Hegel’s dialectical moment will seem too harsh to some. After all, Houlgate is correct when he claims that any “violat[ion]” of the law of non-contradiction on Hegel’s part would not be a result of his decision “to abandon it” but of the fact that “thought proves not to be completely governed by that law.” This would seem to imply that Houlgate is not too embarrassed about the way that Hegel “violates” the law of non-contradiction to acknowledge Hegel’s deduction of the relative inadequacy of this law.

However, the way that Houlgate acknowledges this once again evinces his prejudice in favor of the understanding. Houlgate either does not notice or does not acknowledge that Hegel proves that the law of non-contradiction does not hold, that it is necessarily false, under certain circumstances, i.e., that he refutes the law, its absoluteness and universality. But since Hegel has to presuppose the law in order to begin the logical deduction in his Logic, he can only refute it once he has presupposed it. However, this only demonstrates that the analytic principles of the understanding are relatively inadequate, not that they are absolutely inadequate. They are not absolutely inadequate because thinking at all requires their application. However, they are also not adequate.

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333 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 92.

334 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 31.
absolutely adequate because they are themselves responsible for the emergence of the contradiction.

c. The Case against Intuitionism and Anti-Intuitionism

Recall that, in Chapter 2, I showed that intuitionism fails in its defense of Hegelian immanent necessity insofar as it both fails to define this necessity and presents the development of Hegel’s *Logic* in such a way that it appears to be the mysterious product of intuition, which no one would be obligated rationally to find the least bit convincing. In Chapter 3, I argued that Hegel’s *Logic* develops through logical principles and that its necessity of each of the other principles flows from his application of the principle of non-contradiction.

In this chapter I have argued that the underlying reason why the intuitionists fail to define Hegelian necessity in terms of logical principles is that they adopt an uncritical attitude toward the standpoint of the understanding. This attitude is evident in their approach to three fundamental questions. Once again, these questions are (1) the question of intellectual intuition; (2) the question of the role of principles in Hegel’s *Logic*; and (3) the question whether Hegel’s *Logic* is viciously circular or begs the question. The consideration of the intuitionist approach to these three questions taken together shows that the intuitionist defense of Hegelian necessity fails above all because it fails to confront the standpoint of the understanding of which Hegel’s *Logic* is the refutation.

Despite their trenchant criticisms of intuitionism, the anti-intuitionists, for their part, also fail to provide an accurate definition of Hegelian necessity. The anti-intuitionist position that Hegel’s *Logic* does not develop in accordance with immanent logical
necessity, but some form of narrational or retrospective “necessity” instead, has no basis in Hegel’s texts. Instead, it presents itself as a straightforward alternative to intuitionism and the failure of the latter to establish the immanent necessity of the Logic by means of intuition. Apart from the fact that Hegel himself denies that logical necessity has a retrospective character, and explicitly affirms that it has an immanent character, the anti-intuitionists also conflate the claim that the development of Hegel’s Logic is immanently necessary with the presentation of this development as a product of intuition. Since the intuitionist defense of immanent necessity fails, the anti-intuitionists conclude that no defense of it can succeed. However, I have shown that Hegelian immanent necessity, correctly conceived, is not a product of intuition at all. In this way, my refutation of intuitionism in this chapter and in Chapter 2 and the textual evidence I presented for my interpretation of Hegelian logical necessity in Chapter 3 serve to refute the anti-intuitionist position on Hegelian necessity as well.

Before moving on to Schelling, I think it is important to note that the result of my refutation of intuitionism has not been purely negative. Rather, the thorough dissection of the problems with Houlgate’s intuitionism has served an important purpose. It has revealed the alternatives. If we deny that Hegel’s Logic presupposes anything at all, including the principle of non-contradiction, then it is not possible both to defend Hegelian necessity and explain what it is. But if we cannot explain what it is, all that is left is the assurance that it is. This is why, despite the ambivalence of Houlgate and some of the other intuitionists on the question of intuition, they inevitably end up presenting it as the product of an inexplicable power that is indistinguishable from intuition. This not only contradicts Hegel’s own position on the role of intuition, but also contradicts the
spirit of Hegel’s Logic, which is the positive refutation of the standpoint of the understanding.

With this in mind, I now turn back to Schelling and show that his criticisms of Hegelian necessity, like the intuitionist interpretation of the latter, are grounded in a prejudice in favor of the standpoint of the understanding. Hegel’s Logic is ultimately a mystery to Schelling because he is blinded to the dialectic by his own dogmatic adherence to the standpoint of the understanding, he too misses the role of logical principles in the development of Hegel’s Logic.

C. An Answer to Schelling

As I explained in Chapter 1, Schelling hopes to refute Hegel’s claim that his Logic has an absolutely necessary development from start to finish by showing, or at least suggesting, that Hegel unconsciously sets out with various presuppositions that he subsequently makes explicit in the course of the Logic.

In this section, I argue that my interpretation of Hegelian logical necessity successfully refutes Schelling’s criticisms of the latter, whereas intuitionism fails to do so. So far, rather than countering Schelling’s claims about Hegel’s presuppositions directly, I have focused my defense of Hegelian necessity on elaborating an interpretation of it that does not suffer from the weaknesses of the intuitionist interpretation.

On the one hand, I have shown that presuppositions do not represent for Hegel the threat that Schelling and the intuitionists believe they do. Both Schelling and the intuitionists fail to realize that it is the method of reasoning from presuppositions (or premises) that either begs the question or not. If the conclusion simply reiterates these
presuppositions or premises, then the reasoning is viciously circular, and this begs the question. However, if the reasoning is dialectical, it consists in the refutation of presuppositions or premises. Since Hegel’s Logic consists in the refutation of premises, even if it turned out that Hegel does presuppose everything that Schelling claims he presupposes, this would not automatically imply that Hegel fails to refute the inadequacies of all of these presuppositions in the course of his Logic.

Conversely, neither Schelling nor the intuitionists attempt to refute Hegel’s presentation of the emergence of the dialectical and speculative moments. Perhaps on Schelling’s part this is symptomatic of his inability to come up with of any sort of adequate rejoinder in defense of the understanding.

Recall that Schelling, like Magee, is an explicit opponent of rationalism. Like Magee, he is motivated by a desire to undermine Hegel’s claim that there is nothing that is in principle inaccessible to the human mind. This alone does not make him either right or wrong about Hegelian necessity, but it is worth noting because it suggests that like Magee, and also like the intuitionists, Schelling’s own position on mystery is bound up with a preference for the standpoint of the understanding.

I would now like to focus more closely on a few of Schelling’s criticisms. The reader will recall that, in Schelling’s presentation, Hegel’s presuppositions take the form of (1) a merely adventitious beginning, and (2) an unconsciously presupposed aim (a concept of determinate being) derived from his previous habits of thought, which take the form of (a) unproven logical forms adopted from other philosophers and concepts taken from everyday life and (b) concepts formed with the help of empirical intuition.
a. The Adventitious Beginning

Unlike some of Hegel’s recent interpreters, Schelling was well aware that Hegel claimed that the beginning of his Logic was necessary. However, Schelling invented a contingent, external explanation for this beginning that contradicts this claim without establishing any basis for this explanation in Hegel’s texts. Indeed no such basis exists.

Recall once again that, as I explained in Chapter 1, in Schelling’s account, Hegel thinks that the thought with which his Logic begins, pure being, is necessary because it is absolutely general in the sense that “nothing could exclude itself from this concept.”\textsuperscript{335} This explanation is nowhere to be found in either the Science of Logic or the Encyclopedia Logic.

Recall, in addition, that Schelling claims that Hegel’s beginning, being, is “pure certainty itself.”\textsuperscript{336} However, this is not at all how Hegel explains the necessity of the beginning. As I explained in Chapter 3, Hegel rejects various beginnings that other philosophers have selected on the grounds that they are supposed to be “strictly certain,” or “absolutely true.”\textsuperscript{337} Recall that Hegel’s objection to such beginnings as “I = I, as absolute Indifference or Identity” or “intellectual intuition” is not that they are not general enough or not certain enough, but that all of these beginnings are mediated.\textsuperscript{338} All

\textsuperscript{335} Schelling, History of Modern Philosophy, 139.

\textsuperscript{336} Schelling, History of Modern Philosophy, 139.

\textsuperscript{337} Hegel, The Encyclopedia Logic, 137.

\textsuperscript{338} Hegel, The Encyclopedia Logic, 137.
of these beginnings are mediated and “mediation consists in having already left a first behind, to go on to a second, and in a going forth from moments that are distinct.” In other words, mediation presupposes immediacy. There is no mediation without immediacy. But to be determinate is likewise to contain mediation and to have left indeterminacy behind. Therefore, in the same way, determinacy presupposes indeterminacy. Thus, for Hegel, the beginning is necessary insofar as the very concept of the beginning implies what the beginning must be: pure being. If we accept Hegel’s demand for an absolute beginning of the Logic, we will have to admit that any other beginning than pure being would involve a contradiction with the concept of an absolute beginning.

However, Schelling never grapples with Hegel’s own explanation of the necessity of the beginning. Instead, Schelling argues that it is impossible for Hegel (or anyone else) to begin with the idea of pure being because all being is determinate being, so there is no such thing as pure being, and therefore too Hegel must presuppose determinate being in order to have an idea of being at all.

But when Schelling insists that there is no pure being, if what he really means that there are no determinate instances of being that are not instances of a type of being (essential or objective), since to be an instance is to be distinguished from other instances and thereby determined as such, then Schelling certainly would be correct as far as this goes. However, this would not at all imply that the thought of pure being itself is

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nonsensical, only that the thought of an instance of a type of pure being is nonsensical because determinate being is not pure being.

On the other hand, if Schelling is attacking the idea of pure being for its intrinsic inadequacy, its emptiness, i.e., its intrinsically contradictory character, then Hegel himself certainly agrees that it is inadequate, but this is something that has to be demonstrated, not simply assumed at the outset.

As I explained in Chapter 3, Hegel shows that insofar as we have a concept of an absolute beginning, we must also have an idea of pure being. A concept of determinate being follows from the inadequacy of the idea of pure being. Thus, from the point of view of Hegel’s Logic, it is really Schelling who, in conceiving determinate being, is presupposing pure being without acknowledging that he is doing so.

**b. The Presupposed Aim**

Recall that Schelling tries to refute Hegel’s claim that the development of his Logic is necessary by arguing that Hegel presupposes the aim of the Logic.

However, the situation is actually the reverse. Schelling’s supposition that it even matters whether Hegel presupposes the aim of the Logic actually follows from his prior assumption that Hegel’s Logic is not a product of logical necessity at all. That this is the case follows from the meaning of logical necessity. If Hegel’s Logic were a product of a necessary development, it would not matter at all what Hegel might hope the result of this development would be. The result would be whatever it was regardless of his wishes one way or the other. In particular, if Hegel’s subjective wishes about the end result of his deduction coincided with such a necessary development, this would not make the
development any less a product of necessity. Psychoanalysis is not philosophical refutation.

Thus, in pointing out that Hegel’s *Logic* ends in the result Hegel desired, what Schelling succeeds in providing is not so much a refutation of the necessity of Hegel’s *Logic* as an explanation of how it came about, assuming at the outset that it could not have been the product of a necessary development. Perhaps, as I have already suggested, Schelling is simply blind to the role of logical principles in the development of Hegel’s *Logic* because, proceeding from the standpoint of the understanding, their development is mysterious to him. Schelling believes Hegel’s *Logic* is not a product of immanent necessity because he does grasp what kind of necessity is supposed to be at work there.

c. *Presupposed Concepts and Intuitions*

Recall, once again, that Schelling discusses the nature and origins of the knowledge he believes Hegel presupposes, which he believes consists in abstractions produced by empirical intuition, concepts of everyday life, and logical forms developed by other philosophers. Again, in Schelling’s view, the concepts found in Hegel’s *Logic* cannot be a product *both* of a necessity immanent in the concepts themselves *and* a knowledge of empirical reality and socially developed forms of thought, and since they are a product of the latter, they cannot be a product of the former.

Recall, in addition, that Schelling claims Hegel presupposes that a sentence such as ‘Pure being is nothing’ makes sense even though he also refuses to specify whether
this “is” is supposed to signify tautology or, conversely, predication.\textsuperscript{340} Schelling is also upset that when Hegel makes the claim that “Pure being is nothing” he has not “proved anything about the meaning of this is.”\textsuperscript{341}

I would contend Hegel has in mind not so much tautology as identity. As I have already explained at length, identity is, according to Hegel, the principle of the understanding, which must be presupposed implicitly in order for the Logic to make its beginning. Later in the Logic, in the “Doctrine of Essence,” Hegel subjects both formal predication and formal identity to criticism. Thus, Schelling is right that Hegel presupposes identity at the beginning of the Logic, but he does so because logically he must. Moreover, as I discussed in Chapter 3, he subjects formal identity to criticism in the “Doctrine of Essence,” or, far from simply unquestioningly assuming that the principle of identity is absolutely true, he deduces a self-contradiction from the formal concept of identity and on this basis corrects the formal concept of it.

However, even if I am right that Hegel presupposes the laws of identity and non-contradiction and Schelling and the intuitionists are wrong in supposing the contrary, one still may doubt whether dialectical necessity is capable of producing precisely those logical forms developed by other philosophers or those everyday concepts that appear to be formed with the help of empirical intuition. I take up Schelling’s final charge in Part 2,


\textsuperscript{341} Schelling, \textit{History of Modern Philosophy}, 148.
where I consider a related objection to the necessity of Hegel’s *Logic* offered by Trendelenburg.

d. A Guarantee against Arbitrariness and the Mere Appearance of Necessity

Recall, once again, that Schelling does not believe that Hegel has any means of distinguishing necessity from its “mere appearance.” Schelling apparently assumes, like the intuitionists, that since Hegel insists that the *Logic* is presuppositionless, he is not in a position to appeal to any principles in distinguishing necessity from its appearance.

Because my interpretation of Hegelian necessity includes a *definition* of what Hegel means by logical necessity, it avoids this problem. Again, an instance of deduction is *necessary* whenever it results from an application of the principle or law of non-contradiction to the content under consideration. This definition provides a criterion for distinguishing necessity from its mere appearance and is based on a careful reading of Hegel’s texts.

Recall, in addition, that, in Schelling’s view, a “real logic” that contains the same concepts and logical forms as Hegel’s *Logic* could be produced “in ten different ways.” Schelling believes that, since Hegel has no way of distinguishing necessity from its mere appearance, one could come up with ten different accounts of the supposed genesis of the same concepts and logical forms and each of these accounts would be worth just as much (or as little) as any of the others, including Hegel’s own.

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Schelling evidently does not agree with Hegel that there are necessary contradictions and he probably believes that Hegel \emph{arbitrarily} introduces the concept that is supposed to resolve a given instance of a contradiction. This is certainly the view suggested by a great many Hegel interpretations. Indeed, White and Magee hold this view.

It has of course not been possible for me to show within the confines of this study that every resolution of every contradiction that arises in the course of Hegel’s \emph{Logic} is itself necessary. However, I have shown this in Chapter 3 in case of the concept of becoming. I showed there that the unity, namely becoming, that follows from the contradiction (Being is nothing and nothing is being.) is not imposed from above on the thoughts of being and nothing but is simply that in which the mutual transition of being and nothing into one another consists. There is thus only one immediate way in which the first contradiction in Hegel’s \emph{Logic} can be resolved as well as only one way that the \emph{Logic} can begin.

**H. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have drawn explicit attention to some of the major discrepancies between the interpretations of Hegel’s \emph{Logic} presented by Schelling, the intuitionists and anti-intuitionists and Hegel’s own texts. I have also offered an explanation of some of the deeper reasons behind these discrepancies.

First, I discussed the mystification of Hegel’s \emph{Logic} by the intuitionists within the context of a broader tendency within Hegel scholarship to interpret Hegel from the standpoint of the understanding. I argued that the deficiencies of each of these
interpretations flow from a prejudice in favor of the understanding for which, as Hegel indicates, dialectical and speculative thinking is mysterious. Since anything beyond the understanding genuinely is mysterious for the understanding, the intuitionists’ adoption of the standpoint of the understanding serves to explain, from a Hegelian point of view, why they cannot help viewing the development of Hegel’s *Logic* as a product of a mysterious power of intuition.

Next, I argued that there are three major areas where intuitionism shows a preference for the standpoint of the understanding at the expense of an accurate grasp of Hegelian necessity: (1) the question of intellectual intuition; (2) the question of the role of principles in Hegel’s *Logic*; and (3) the question whether Hegel’s *Logic* is viciously circular or begs the question.

After that, I argued that the anti-intuitionist interpretation of Hegelian necessity as “retrospective” or “narrational,” which is textually inaccurate, also falsely equates Hegelian immanent necessity with the intuitionist interpretation of the latter.

Finally, I showed that Schelling, like the intuitionists, criticizes Hegelian necessity from the standpoint of the understanding. Hegel’s *Logic* is mystery to him because he is blinded to the dialectic by his own dogmatic adherence to this standpoint. Consequently, he too misses the role of logical principles in the development of Hegel’s *Logic*. He is critical of Hegelian necessity because, like the intuitionists, he does not know what it is.
Part 2

Chapter 5: Trendelenburg’s Criticisms of Hegelian Logical Necessity

A. Introduction

In this Chapter, I introduce Trendelenburg’s criticism of Hegelian necessity, and explain how it is grounded in a Kantian perspective on the relationship between categories and intuitions. I also take note of the similarity of Trendelenburg’s criticism with some of the points made by Schelling.

According to Trendelenburg, Hegel’s position on the source of the concepts and transitions in his Logic is fundamentally inconsistent. On the one hand, Trendelenburg observes, the Logic is supposed to be an absolutely necessary, logical deduction, a product of pure thought. On the other hand, he also observes that Hegel himself claims that the Logic presupposes experience in general and the empirical sciences in particular. Trendelenburg insists that Hegel cannot have it both ways. He must choose one or the other. Either the logic is a product of pure thought, independent of experience, or else it must be deduced from experience.

However, Trendelenburg finds the first alternative entirely unconvincing. He insists that the concept of becoming is based on the empirical concept of motion. Hegel’s and everyone else’s concept of becoming must, in his view, come from experience originally. Like Schelling, Trendelenburg believes that one has to have an empirical
intuition of nature before one can formulate concepts that correspond to what is to be found there. As Schelling insists, abstractions cannot “be taken for realities, before that from which they are abstracted.”³⁴⁴

Trendelenburg argues that because Hegel neglects Kant’s absolute distinction between a priori knowledge, propositions, and structures of consciousness—those that belong to consciousness independently of all experience—and the a posteriori propositions, knowledge and structures of consciousness—those that it gains only as a result of experience—Hegel’s attempt at a necessary, a priori deduction of the concept of becoming fails.

After I present Trendelenburg’s central criticism of Hegel’s Logic, I briefly review Kant’s stance on the difference between a priori and a posteriori knowledge, propositions, and structures of consciousness in order further to elucidate the position that Trendelenburg defends.

Looking forward, in Chapter 6, I present Houlgate’s attempt at a defense of Hegelian necessity against the criticism of it that it depends on a posteriori knowledge. Houlgate’s defense consists in making the case that Hegel’s Logic is indeed an a priori deduction of the sort that Trendelenburg thinks it cannot possibly be.

Then, in Chapter 7, I present Hegel’s own explanation of the relationship between a priori and a posteriori knowledge and show that both Trendelenburg’s criticism and

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Houlgate’s attempt at a defense of the a priori character of Hegel’s *Logic* are based on a misreading of Hegel’s *Logic*.

**B. Trendelenburg’s Dilemma**

Trendelenburg explains that, in Hegel’s view, divine reason is absolutely first, and “dialectical motion is nothing other than self-grasping reason.”

Consequently, Trendelenburg insists, “the entire cycle (*Kreislauf*) that it describes signifies a priori knowledge.” That is, according to Trendelenburg, Hegel thinks that everything is intrinsically rational, including both human experience, and the divine reason presupposed by human experience. Consequently, Hegel simply ignores or forgets “whether and how” the concepts of his logic “rest on preceding experience.”

However, Trendelenburg points out, Hegel also “admits” that the dialectic “presupposes the empirical sciences.” But if that is the case, Trendelenburg reasons, then the dialectic “also presupposes their manner of justification, without which they themselves are nothing.” Consequently, a method that is “supposedly absolute” thereby actually “rests on a foreign foundation.”

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Indeed, Trendelenburg remarks, although Hegel admits that the dialectic “presupposes the empirical sciences,” he fails to show “where the dialectical method takes up into itself the material won by the empirical sciences.”351 In Trendelenburg’s view, it would indeed have been simply impossible for Hegel to do this because “there remains no entrance open to that.”352 There is simply no way for an “absolute method” to transform a “foreign foundation” into something of its own, Trendelenburg insists, and this makes it impossible for Hegel to show “how the methods of the dialectic and the empirical sciences merge into one another in order to constitute a unity.”353

This whole situation creates “a serious dilemma” for the Hegelian dialectic:

Either the dialectical development is independent and determined only by itself; then it must actually know everything from its own self. Or it presupposes the finite sciences and empirical knowledge; then the immanent progress and the seamless connection is broken by what is taken up externally; and it behaves uncritically toward experience at that. The dialectic may choose. We see no third possibility.”354

351 Trendelenburg, Logische Untersuchungen, 91.
352 Trendelenburg, Logische Untersuchungen, 91.
353 Trendelenburg, Logische Untersuchungen, 91.
354 Trendelenburg, Logische Untersuchungen, 91-92.
Indeed, in Trendelenburg’s view, the problem with the “foreign foundation” of the dialectic is actually even more fundamental than this. The problem is not simply that the dialectic cannot appropriate the discoveries of the empirical sciences and incorporate them in a seamless way into its own movement. Rather, Hegel’s dialectic cannot provide an immanent derivation of even the most basic thought determinations of the Logic without relying on a representation produced by the mind from an empirical intuition.

For example, Trendelenburg insists that because pure being is devoid of content, it cannot in and of itself serve as the impulse for any sort of development, and it is consequently incapable of producing the concept of becoming. He explains his position as follows:

Pure being is empty being. There is nothing in it to intuit, nothing in it to think; and being and nothing have become equal in it. Therefore, thought determines itself to the concept in which the one goes over into the other. But this subsequent “therefore” does not follow at all. Pure being is the empty, and the empty the pure. In this complete equalization, every impulse to progress or transition is expired. Logical reflection of the equality is realized as a real unity. Who would believe in becoming, if it only came from there?355

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355 Trendelenburg, Logische Untersuchungen, 39-40.
Therefore, Trendelenburg insists, even though Hegel wants to remain in the “simplicity” of “pure thought,” his thought is forced to go “beyond itself.”\textsuperscript{356} In the very “first step” beyond the empty being, thought “has grown together with a representation, in which one recognizes space and time as moments.”\textsuperscript{357} Because it combines itself in this way with a representation, Hegel’s thought is then no longer “pure thought, completely unchained from external being.”\textsuperscript{358}

In general, Trendelenburg explains, “intuition intervenes where the dialectic reaches its end.”\textsuperscript{359} That is, Hegel patches the holes in his dialectical logic by means of empirical intuition. This creates the “false appearance” (\textit{nur Schein}) of immanent progress.\textsuperscript{360}

Once again on the question of becoming, Trendelenburg insists that Hegel’s derivation of it presupposes “the representation of spatial motion” because without this representation, “becoming could not be understood.”\textsuperscript{361} The whole progress of development of the dialectic though the development of “Quantity”\textsuperscript{362} is, Trendelenburg

\textsuperscript{356} Trendelenburg, \textit{Logische Untersuchungen}, 40.

\textsuperscript{357} Trendelenburg, \textit{Logische Untersuchungen}, 40.

\textsuperscript{358} Trendelenburg, \textit{Logische Untersuchungen}, 40.

\textsuperscript{359} Trendelenburg, \textit{Logische Untersuchungen}, 70.

\textsuperscript{360} Trendelenburg, \textit{Logische Untersuchungen}, 70.

\textsuperscript{361} Trendelenburg, \textit{Logische Untersuchungen}, 70.

\textsuperscript{362} “Quantity is one of the stages in the development of Hegel’s “Doctrine of Being.”
maintains, only possible on account of this empirical representation of spatial motion, which, “like an interpreter, accompanies the subsequent development.”

However, Trendelenburg explains that his criticism only applies to Hegel’s false presentation of the way in which human knowledge is produced. He actually agrees with Hegel that “experience itself presupposes that creative thought out of which all things originate,” and that “in this way one may trace this [experience] back to that prius,” i.e., back to divine reason.

The problem, in Trendelenburg’s view, is that Hegel has drawn the wrong conclusions from this about the nature of human knowledge:

Kant’s prudent question returns, if we want to grasp the origin and procedure of human knowing. It will not allow itself to be settled or silenced in this way, through the twisting of words. No one has denied that everything true originates from the prius of divine reason; however, this does not mean that it is a priori knowledge.

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Kant, unlike Hegel, “prudently separated out the knowledge that was produced immediately from the mind and independently of experience.” As a consequence, “the *a priori* received a determinate meaning” in Kant’s philosophy. Hegel’s dialectic, on the other hand, views “the question whether there is a priori knowledge” and what knowledge should count as a priori as “extinguished,” i.e., no longer relevant.

**C. Kant**

I now briefly review Kant’s position on the a priori and a posteriori modes of knowing.

According to Kant, experience *presupposes* certain innate structures of consciousness. Without these a priori structures that are the possession of consciousness as such *prior* to all experience, experience is not possible at all. Kant defines a priori knowledge above all as knowledge that is “*absolutely* independent of all experience,” not simply “knowledge independent of this or that experience.”

Nevertheless, Kant insists that our cognitions begin “with experience” and we have “no cognition” prior to experience. Our cognitive faculty is “prompted by

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369 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 43.
sensible impressions,” at which point it cognizes objects in terms of its own a priori structures.\textsuperscript{371}

However, it is not always obvious to us after the fact how we ought to distinguish that part of our cognitions that stems from the innate structures of consciousness “until long practice has made us attentive to it and skilled in separating it out.”\textsuperscript{372} Before we have acquired this skill, we ought not simply to assume that there is no “cognition independent of all experience and even all impressions of the senses.”\textsuperscript{373}

But once we have acquired this skill (with Kant’s help), we will discover that these structures consist in a table of categories (the most fundamental and universal concepts), two forms of intuition (space and time), and certain “ideas of reason,” namely God, freedom and the immortality of the soul.

In addition, Kant claims that all appearances of which we have knowledge presuppose the idea of that which appears, namely a thing in itself that is an unconditioned condition of those appearances. However, Kant insists, we can have no \textit{knowledge} of these things-in-themselves.

The opposite of a priori knowledge is a posteriori knowledge, which is gained through experience. All knowledge of the objects found in experience and the determinate (empirical) concepts that classify and explain them relies on our particular syntheses of the sensuous manifold by means of the categories. This operation of

\textsuperscript{371} Kant, \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, 136.

\textsuperscript{372} Kant, \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, 136.

\textsuperscript{373} Kant, \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, 136.
synthesis presupposes the original unity of self-consciousness (the transcendental unity of apperception), which lends thought its synthetic powers. According to Kant, the type of knowledge gained by means of such synthesis—a posteriori knowledge—could only have come about in this way and could never have been deduced only from those innate structures of cognition that belong to it exclusively a priori.

However, it is important to note that Kant’s definitions of a priori and a posteriori knowledge do not rule out the mixing of these two types of knowledge in a single proposition. For instance, a proposition about bodies whose existence and features can only be known through familiarity with the external world could involve the a priori category of causation. When there is no such admixture, “a priori modes of knowledge are entitled pure.”

*Pure* a priori knowledge, which Kant also calls transcendental knowledge, is knowledge of those structures of consciousness that belong to it independently of (prior to) all experience. There is, moreover, an a priori mode of knowing of the objects of natural science, inasmuch as our reasoning about the empirical concepts does not depend wholly on their empirical nature, but also on the laws of reasoning itself. Such knowledge is not *pure* a priori knowledge but has an a priori component.

Kant also explains the relationship between logical necessity and the distinction between the a priori and a posteriori modes of knowing. He claims that “if we have a proposition which in being thought is thought as necessary, it is an *a priori* judgment.”

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374 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 43.

375 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 43.
and if, besides, it is not derived from any proposition except one which also has the validity of a necessary judgment, it is an absolutely *a priori* judgment.\(^{376}\)

Thus, Trendelenburg’s issue with Hegel is that, in Trendelenburg’s view, Hegel supposes it is possible to have pure a priori knowledge of becoming, a concept that, from a Kantian perspective, results from a synthesis of intuitions of space and time. Like Schelling, Trendelenburg agrees with Kant that empirical intuition is required for the cognition of such concepts and that thinking cannot grasp them in their entirety by itself.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have outlined Trendelenburg’s criticism of Hegelian necessity and his defense of Kant’s distinction between a priori and a posteriori modes of knowing.

Next, in Chapter 6, I present Houlgate’s attempt at a defense of Hegelian necessity against the criticism of it that it depends on a posteriori knowledge before presenting Hegel’s own explanation of the relationship between a priori and a posteriori knowledge in Chapter 7. Both Trendelenburg’s criticism and Houlgate’s attempt at a defense of the a priori character of Hegel’s *Logic* are, as I show there, based on a misreading of Hegel’s *Logic*.

\(^{376}\) *Kant, Critique of Pure Reason*, 43.
Chapter 6: Houlgate’s A Priori Interpretation of Hegel’s Logic

A. Introduction

In this chapter, I present Houlgate’s argument that Hegel’s Logic has a pure a priori development. Houlgate, like Trendelenburg, accepts that if the “structure” of Hegel’s Logic “depends upon factors outside of philosophy itself,” its development cannot be “purely a priori and immanent” (100). Accordingly, Houlgate is at pains to demonstrate that Hegel’s Logic does not depend on any such “factors.” To this end, Houlgate advances an interpretation of the relationship between Kant and Hegel, according to which these philosophers agree on the a priori character of the “categories.”

The a priori interpretation of Hegel’s Logic is far from unique to Houlgate or even the intuitionists, though it is certainly shared by all of the intuitionists.377 However, in this chapter I once again focus on Houlgate’s stance on Hegel’s Logic. I believe this focus will prove instructive for several reasons.

First, I have already addressed in Part 1 the way that intuitionism, and Houlgate in particular, answer Schelling’s first two criticisms of Hegelian immanent necessity, so for

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377 White does not consistently adhere to an a priori interpretation of Hegel’s Logic and fails to offer any means of resolving this inconsistency. The problems with his interpretation are ultimately quite similar to the problems with Houlgate’s.
the sake of completeness, it is worth examining what resources Houlgate’s interpretation has for answering Schelling’s remaining criticisms. As I showed in Part 1, Houlgate’s concept of Hegelian necessity is too indeterminate genuinely to count as necessity at all. However, given that not many interpreters take on the task of defending Hegelian necessity at all, it is worth completing the project of evaluating its merits.

Second, Houlgate bases his defense of the a priori character of Hegel’s *Logic* on a comparatively careful consideration of the relevant texts. Although I think Houlgate is wrong, it is perhaps not immediately entirely obvious why this should be so, and it is therefore worth addressing his argument in detail.

Third, as I noted in Chapter 4, the thorough dissection of the problems with Houlgate’s intuitionism serves the important purpose of revealing the far-reaching implications of distinct ways of conceiving the role of principles in the development of Hegel’s *Logic*. In the present chapter, I show that the way that one views the role of empirical knowledge in the development of Hegel’s *Logic* has similarly far-reaching implications. As I showed in Part 1, Houlgate’s intuitionist interpretation of Hegel’s *Logic* proceeds from the standpoint of the understanding. Houlgate proceeds from this same standpoint in elaborating his defense of the a priori status of Hegel’s *Logic*. Consequently, an examination of the shortcomings of Houlgate’s a priori interpretation of Hegel’s *Logic* will reveal some additional pitfalls in attempting to defend Hegelian necessity within this framework.

My presentation of Houlgate’s stance on the a priori character of Hegel’s *Logic* has three major components.
First, I review the textual evidence Houlgate presents for his a priori interpretation of Hegel’s *Logic*. In Houlgate’s view, the textual evidence decisively shows that, for Hegel, subjective self-consciousness alone, independently of experience, is capable of generating the dialectical development of the *Logic*. As I show in Chapter 7, Houlgate ignores the evidence that Hegel views his *Logic* not only as an a priori science but also, as Trendelenburg points out, a product of experience.

Second, I discuss Houlgate’s presentation of the relationship between ordinary categories and philosophical categories, both of which, Houlgate claims, have their source in the human mind alone. According to Houlgate, the philosophical categories of Hegel’s *Logic* are to be distinguished from ordinary categories not by their a priori character, but by their relative clarity, by which he apparently means their presuppositionlessness. I locate the inherent vagueness of this appeal to clarity in both its metaphorical character and its dependence on Houlgate’s equally ill-defined position on the presuppositionless and necessity of Hegel’s *Logic*. In Chapter 7, I show that this vagueness is also bound up with an effort on Houlgate’s part to minimize Hegel’s differences with Kant. Moreover, as I show there, Hegel’s actual position on the relationship between ordinary representations (“categories”) and philosophical thinking (“categories”) both refutes Houlgate’s a priori interpretation and corrects the vagueness of his discussion of this question in particular.

Third, I discuss Houlgate’s interpretation of the relationship between Hegel and Kant on the question of things in themselves. According to Houlgate, Hegel does not think that any things in themselves beyond experience are accessible to the human mind. I take issue with this interpretation in Chapter 7. Whereas Houlgate believes that Hegel
holds that there is nothing inaccessible to human mind because the human mind
determines what can be thought at all—an essentially Kantian position—I show that, on
the contrary, Hegel holds that the human mind can only raise itself to the heights of pure
thought by appropriating for itself a content that is initially external to it, i.e., in itself.

It is my position that Houlgate’s stance on each of these three questions is bound
up with a misguided effort to defend the a priori necessity of Hegel’s Logic in Kantian
terms. Whereas Houlgate attempts to defend Hegel by minimizing the difference between
Kant and Hegel, my interpretation of Hegel draws explicit attention to the sharp
differences between the positions of the two thinkers on the question of the relationship
between logical necessity and a priori and a posteriori knowledge and on related
questions. However, as I have already indicated, I leave the textual refutation of
Houlgate’s position to Chapter 7. I do so as to avoid doing too many things at once.

B. Houlgate on the A Priori Character of Hegel’s Logic

Houlgate holds that, for Hegel, subjective self-consciousness alone is capable of
generating the dialectical development of Hegel’s Logic independently of experience. To
Houlgate, as well as to Trendelenburg, this seems to be an obvious consequence of fact
that the dialectical development of the Logic is supposed to be immanently necessary.
From a Kantian perspective, if “being” is a pure abstraction, a pure thought, then the
immanent development of the various “categories” in the Logic from this initial
abstraction must take place entirely on the side of thought as well. To put it another way,
if the Logic does not presuppose any empirical content, then a posteriori knowledge must
not play any role in its development.
On the other hand, Houlgate notes, those who “deny that Hegel intends his philosophy to be a priori at all” hold that Hegel “provid[es] a philosophical account of concepts that are given to it (by, for example natural science) and that changes in his philosophy are determined by changes in those given concepts.”\(^{378}\) If it were true that Hegel’s philosophy depended on such an externally or empirically given content, Houlgate explains, it would follow that it could not be “purely a priori and immanent” since this would imply that “its structure depends upon factors outside of philosophy itself” (100). In this case, the development of the content of Hegel’s philosophy would be simply a reflection of the development (changes or motion) of an externally or empirically given content. Although Houlgate does not explicitly reference Trendelenburg, this is substantially the same position adopted by the latter.

Some interpreters, Houlgate observes, deny that Hegel even intended to produce an a priori deduction in his Logic. Houlgate disagrees with this stance on the grounds that it contradicts Hegel’s own presentation of the requirements of a scientific treatment of the subject matter of logic as well as Hegel’s claim that his Logic meets these requirements. As Houlgate puts it, Hegel “insists over and over again that his derivation of concepts is a priori, immanent, and necessary.”\(^{379}\) Houlgate quotes one such passage in the Science of Logic, in which Hegel maintains that the “content and character” of the concept “can be

\(^{378}\) Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 100.

\(^{379}\) Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 100.
guaranteed” in a scientific manner “solely by the immanent deduction which contains its genesis” (SL 582/2: 252).\(^{380}\)

Of course, Hegel makes no reference to an “a priori” derivation in this passage, only to an “immanent deduction,” but Houlgate treats the two as more or less synonymous, presumably because an immanent deduction that is supposed to begin with a pure thought must surely maintain its independence from experience throughout.

**C. Houlgate on the Relationship between Ordinary and Philosophical Categories**

However, in Houlgate’s view, it is not the presuppositionlessness of Hegel’s *Logic* that above all makes it an a priori deduction. Rather, the categories of Hegel’s *Logic* are the same categories found in ordinary thinking, and *both* ordinary and philosophical categories are, in Houlgate’s view, the product of the human mind alone.\(^{381}\) That is, in Houlgate’s view, Hegel can “demand both that philosophy be presuppositionless and that it presuppose familiarity with all the concepts concerned” because both philosophical concepts or categories and ordinary concepts or categories are both a priori.\(^{382}\)

According to Houlgate, “in Hegel’s view,” one of Kant’s “great insight[s]” was his recognition that the “fundamental categories” of thought “are a priori concepts

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\(^{380}\) Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 100.

\(^{381}\) Some of Houlgate’s other writings on this question are somewhat inconsistent with what his presentation in *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic*.

\(^{382}\) Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 100.
generated ‘spontaneously’ and independently by pure thought.” Houlgate claims that “Hegel himself” endorsed this insight of Kant’s. He quotes Hegel: “‘the thought-determinations have their source in the I (Ich)’ and the I alone.”

However, unlike Kant, Houlgate recounts, Hegel holds that the various “categories” were discovered in distinct historical periods. Houlgate summarizes Hegel’s position (as he understands it) as follows:

Human thought generates the basic categories over a period of time, so they are not all to be found—or at least not all given the same prominence—in every epoch of history or in every culture. Consequently, although Hegel believes that all the categories discussed in the Logic will be familiar to the inhabitants of our post-Reformation Western world, they would not necessarily all be familiar to ancient Egyptians or Greeks. Yet Hegel agrees with Kant that the source of the categories is always and only the spontaneous activity of pure thought itself. Thought certainly produces its categories in response to changing situations, but the categories with which it responds are wholly its own and a priori.

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383 Houlgate, The Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 12.
384 Houlgate, The Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 12.
Recall Kant’s claim that our cognitive faculty is “prompted by sensible impressions” to cognize objects in terms of its own a priori structures, including its a priori categories.\textsuperscript{386}

According to Houlgate, Hegel too believes that our cognitive faculty responds to the empirical world with its own a priori categories. In Hegel’s view, Houlgate claims, “Kant merits particular praise” because he “not[ed] the special role categories play in lending \textit{objectivity} to our perceptions.”\textsuperscript{387} Thus, in Houlgate presentation, both Kant and Hegel think that a priori categories are the source of the objectivity of our perceptions.

Kant and Hegel differ, on Houlgate’s view, in that whereas for Kant there is a fixed table of categories prompted by the sensible impressions of all human beings at all times in history, for Hegel the number of categories has increased over time in response to changing historical circumstances. Moreover, on Houlgate’s account, for Hegel, many of the categories that Kant would claim are produced by a synthesis of intuitions and a much more limited table of categories are actually a priori categories. However, in both cases, whichever categories each philosopher takes to be pure are, in the view of that philosopher, a product of human subjectivity. Houlgate holds that, for Hegel, in “every epoch of history or in every culture,” ordinary thinking no less than philosophical thinking responds to various “changing situations” with its own a priori categories.\textsuperscript{388}

\textsuperscript{386} Kant, \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, 136.

\textsuperscript{387} Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 12.

\textsuperscript{388} Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 13.
According to Houlgate, Hegel’s *philosophical* task then consists in the “clarification” of these historically developed a priori categories that are initially the possession not only of philosophical thought but of ordinary thought as well.\(^{389}\)

But in what does Houlgate think this philosophical “clarification” in which Hegel engages consists? Houlgate claims that Hegel’s aim is to produce a “radically self-critical derivation and clarification” of the categories that shape “ordinary thought” (99). Since Houlgate adds nothing further about what this clarification is supposed to be, perhaps he means to say that the clarification is nothing more than the “radically self-critical derivation.”\(^{390}\) Recall that, according to Houlgate, thought is “radically self-critical” whenever it is presuppositionless. Thus, to clarify categories would be, on Houlgate’s view, to deduce them without presuppositions from the initial thought of pure being.

According to Houlgate, for the purpose of producing his “self-critical derivation,” of the categories, Hegel “names each category as it arises after the one it resembles most in everyday language.”\(^{391}\) That is, he uses one and the same word for one and the same category that is found in ordinary thought and philosophical thought. However, the Hegel seeks to “clarify” what this category is by deriving it in a way that does not rely on presuppositions.


390 The rest of what Houlgate says (below) about the nature of philosophical “clarification” confirms my interpretation here.

In Houlgate’s view, Hegel is able to do this because (1) like the rest of us, he already “understand[s] the ordinary meanings of words such as *becoming*, *quantity*, and *concept,*” and (2) he also “recognize[s] that the derived category is a purified version of, and so corresponds to, a category we ordinarily employ.”

Hegel thus “makes it clear that the task of the *Logic* is not merely to present a formal system of abstract concepts unrelated to our everyday experience.” Rather, Houlgate quotes Hegel, its task is to “know the concept of that which is otherwise a mere pictorial representation” (*SL* 708/2: 406). In this way, Hegel’s *Logic* “provides a logical ‘reconstruction’ of our ordinary categories or ‘representations’ (*SL* 708/2: 406).”

However, Houlgate insists, the philosophical task is not simply to rearrange our ordinary categories “in a dialectical sequence.” Rather, it is to reconstruct them, which must be done “by deriving [their] true structure,” a structure “that is largely hidden from ordinary thought itself.” Moreover, it does so “immanently and purely a priori from the empty thought of pure, indeterminate being.” Again, according to Houlgate, a
philosophical reconstruction provides a presuppositionless derivation of this “true
structure,” and the true structure is the presuppositionless structure.\footnote{Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 99. As we saw in Part 2, Houlgate never explains what he thinks the difference is between a mere sequence of intuitions and a dialectical derivation.}

However, Houlgate does not explain how a “‘reconstruction’ of our ordinary
categories” is capable of removing all presuppositions any more than he explains in what
the necessity of this reconstruction is supposed to consist.

As I showed in Part 1, Houlgate never explains what prevents the transitions in
the *Logic* from introducing presuppositions in that he never defines what it means for a
transition to be necessary. Such a definition would provide a determinate criterion by
which one could judge whether a transition introduced presuppositions or not. On
Houlgate’s presentation, one simply “observes” such transitions—*clearly*, presumably.

Houlgate’s concept of relative “clarity” thus suffers from the same indeterminacy
as his concept of the alleged role of presuppositionlessness, and whether one talks about
clarity or about presuppositionlessness, nothing definite is being said at all.

Once again, visual analogies are inadequate for the explanation of philosophical
concepts. No *philosophical* insight is gained with regard to the distinction between
ordinary and philosophical thinking by reducing this difference to something like the
difference between the “clear” vision a near-sighted person gains when he obtains a pair
of glasses and the “unclear” vision he had before that. And, one might add, this is hardly
a way of transcending “a mere pictorial representation” of a concept, which, as Houlgate notes, Hegel claims a philosophical deduction is supposed to do (SL 708/2: 406).

This analogical procedure cannot be excused as a means of making Hegel’s philosophy more accessible, of introducing his philosophy to the uninitiated, because, again, it does not genuinely explain Hegel at all. As I show in Chapter 7, for Hegel, conceptual thought is not simply “clearer” than representation similarly to the way that we see more clearly when we did previously once we obtain a correct glasses prescription. Rather, Hegel insists that conceptual thought corrects a fundamental error common to all representational thinking. Again, if the descriptor “clearer” is to have any meaning at all in this context, a determinate explanation of that in which this clarity consists must be specified.

In this way, Houlgate’s discussion of Hegel’s position on the relative degrees of clarity of ordinary and philosophical thinking suffers from the same indeterminacy as his explanation of the necessity of philosophical deduction and, moreover, for the same reasons. Because Houlgate never provides a definition of Hegelian necessity, he never successfully justifies his claim that the Logic is presuppositionless. Therefore, none of the claims he bases on this alleged presuppositionlessness are adequately justified either.

D. Hegel and Kant on Things in Themselves

As I explained in the introduction to this chapter, Houlgate’s effort to defend the a priori necessity of Hegel’s Logic in Kantian terms is evinced in his interpretation of Hegel’s

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400 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 99.
stance on the a priori character of his *Logic* and of ordinary categories as well as in his stance on Kantian things in themselves. I now turn to this question of things in themselves.

According to Houlgate, “the great value of Hegel’s *Logic*” is that “it does not describe a putative noumenal realm ‘beyond’ everyday experience but reveals the ultimate structure of the very world we inhabit every day of our lives.”

This claim is at first somewhat perplexing. If it were true that Hegel claimed he was unable to “describe” anything beyond our everyday experience, his philosophy would not be particularly unique in this regard. Hegel would share this view, for example, with both Hume and Kant, so if Hegel held this position, it would not distinguish his philosophy in the slightest from these others. So why does Houlgate claim that the “great value” of Hegel’s philosophy in particular can be traced back to his alleged position on this question?

In addressing Hegel’s relationship with Kant directly, Houlgate certainly admits that Kant does not believe we have access to some putative “noumenal realm” either. According to Kant, the thought of things in themselves that lie beyond all appearances must be presupposed by the human mind in its cognition of appearances. However, as Kant insists, nothing can be known about things in themselves as such. Houlgate grasps all of this.

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However, Houlgate maintains that Hegel takes his rejection of the “beyond” a step further than Kant in that, whereas Kant thinks that nothing determinate can be known about things in themselves, Hegel denies that there is anything about them to be known. Since Kantian things in themselves are supposed to be thought “in abstraction from all relations,” Houlgate explains, Hegel reasons that it is therefore “too abstract to count as any possible or actual something.”

Houlgate concludes from this that, in Hegel’s view, Kant should have had a less abstract concept of the thing in itself. As it stands, “its degree of abstractness prevents it from counting as a concept of something” because, while Kant’s “concept” of a thing in itself “purports to open up the possibility of things, or dimensions of things, beyond what we experience,” it nevertheless “fails to bring to mind anything determinate.” In this way, Kant fails to recognize the abstraction as a mere abstraction. There is nothing more to know about it insofar as it is abstract but, according to Houlgate, there is plenty to know about it—and we already do know plenty about it—insofar as it is it has the various qualities with which we are already familiar.

Houlgate insists, however, that it would be wrong to suppose that Hegel “argue[s] against Kant that we can gain access” to “a dimension of things beyond our experience.” He claims that Hegel does hold that we have access to the “in itself” of things, but that Hegel “rejects the idea that what a being—or being—is ‘in itself’


transcends our experience and instead conceives of being ‘in itself’ as the intelligible, ontological structure of the very things we experience.\(^{405}\)

Similarly, Houlgate assures us in another place that Hegel does not believe that “we can after all reach a realm of being beyond our sensuous experience that Kant deems to be inaccessible.”\(^{406}\) Instead, Houlgate insists, “Hegel rejects the idea that what is ‘in itself’ transcends our experience.”\(^{407}\) Rather, Hegel’s concept of “what a thing is in itself necessarily stands in relation to other things.”\(^{408}\)

It is important to note at this point that Houlgate presents Hegel’s position on the constitution of our “experience” as nearly identical to Kant’s. That is, he believes that for Hegel, as for Kant, human experience is constituted by the combination of sense perceptions and a priori categories. As Houlgate puts it, in Hegel’s view,

Categories permeate our consciousness and language and give structure to all that we perceive. They turn the flow of our sensations into an intelligible experience of things that exist, that have form and content, and that enter into causal relations with one another.\(^{409}\)

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\(^{405}\) Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 131.

\(^{406}\) Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 125.

\(^{407}\) Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 125.

\(^{408}\) Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 340.

Therefore, Houlgate’s claim that for Hegel there is no “dimension of things beyond our experience” amounts to the claim Hegel believes that there is nothing at all, no reality, that is fundamentally distinct from the combination of our categories with our sensations.

However, Hegel’s alleged stance on things in themselves in this chapter arouses sympathy in Houlgate for those Kantians who may take issue with Hegel’s alleged answer to Kant. He presents two possible criticisms that Kantians may raise.

First, Houlgate believes that Hegel “perhaps overestimate[s] the extent to which Kant conceives of things in themselves in abstraction from all relations” and concedes that “it may well be true that Hegel misrepresents the Kantian thing in itself when he claims that it is utterly nonrelational.”\(^{410}\)

Specifically, Houlgate notes, Kant presents “things in themselves as the ‘intelligible’ (i.e., nonempirical and nonverifiable) ‘cause of experience’ and, in that sense, as related to the knowing mind” (CPR 381/330 [B44]).\(^{411}\) Those interpreters who believe this way of presenting the things in themselves “represents Kant’s considered view” might therefore be inclined to say that Hegel’s characterization of Kant’s view on this question “actually miss[es] its target.”\(^{412}\)

Second, Houlgate suggests that Kantians might maintain that Hegel directs his attention to the Kantian thing in itself, while disregarding Kant’s “doctrine of sensibility”

\(^{410}\) Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 341.

\(^{411}\) Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 341.

\(^{412}\) Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 341.
and that this leads Hegel “seriously to distort Kant’s position and to indulge in a
distinctively Hegelian form of abstraction” inasmuch as “Kant does not start from the
concept of the thing in itself but begins, rather from a certain understanding of
sensibility.”\textsuperscript{413}

Houlgate submits that “there is without doubt some merit to this Kantian
rejoinder.”\textsuperscript{414}

In Houlgate’s view, Hegel has ignored the fact that, according to Kant, “we could
only know \textit{about} things in themselves \textit{from} those things themselves, but “whatever has its
source in us … cannot in principle reveal to us the nature of things themselves.”\textsuperscript{415}

For Kant, Houlgate explains, the thing in itself is “not a free-standing concept that
[he] develops for its own sake,” but a “concept that plays a definite epistemic role.”\textsuperscript{416} Its
role is to “remind us that the conditions under which we intuit things are merely the
conditions under which \textit{we} intuit things and may not be regarded as the ontological
conditions of things as they truly are.”\textsuperscript{417}

According to Houlgate, Hegel’s criticism of Kantian things in themselves
“focuses on Kant’s concept in the abstract” rather than considering them within their

\textsuperscript{413} Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 342.
\textsuperscript{414} Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 342.
\textsuperscript{415} Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 342.
\textsuperscript{416} Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 343.
\textsuperscript{417} Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 343.
Kantian “epistemic context.” In this regard, Houlgate submits, “his critique cannot but fail to miss its mark.” Nevertheless, Houlgate immediately contradicts himself and claims that “Hegel’s logical critique of Kant’s concept of the thing in itself is not invalidated simply because it does not explicitly address that concept’s epistemic role in Kant’s transcendental philosophy.”

Conclusion

As I have shown in this chapter, Houlgate provides a textual justification for his stance that Hegel intends for his Logic to be a purely a priori science. However, as I show in the next chapter, Houlgate ignores important textual evidence that supports the contrary position, namely that Hegel’s Logic is not a purely a priori science in the way that this is traditionally conceived, above all by Kant.

As I have also shown in this chapter, Houlgate relies heavily on comparisons of Hegel with Kant in his effort to present Hegel’s Logic as a purely a priori science. According to Houlgate, the “categories” of Hegel’s Logic, like the categories presented by Kant in his Critique of Pure Reason, are supposed have their source in the human mind alone. Moreover, in Houlgate’s view, Hegel rejects Kant’s position on things in themselves not because Hegel thinks that they are in fact knowable, but because he thinks that they too empty of content to be known.

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418 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 344.
419 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 343.
420 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 344.
In the next chapter, Chapter 7, I present textual evidence that refutes Houlgate’s position in both of these comparisons. I show there that Houlgate’s interpretation falsely reduces Hegel to a Kantian subjective idealist.

Moreover, I show that it thereby fails to provide a satisfactory answer to Trendelenburg’s criticism insofar as it is based on a highly selective reading of Hegel’s texts that ignores the evidence that, in Hegel’s view, empirical knowledge does indeed play an important, albeit a subordinate, role in the *Logic*.

Finally, I also show there that the same textual evidence serves to refute the very basis of Trendelenburg’s dilemma, according to which Hegel’s logic could *only* claim to develop in accordance with immanent necessity if it originated entirely independently of experience.
Chapter 7: A Defense of Hegelian Dialectical Logical Necessity against Kantian Subjective Idealism

A. Introduction

In this chapter, I present my own interpretation of the role of both the a priori and the a posteriori modes of knowing in Hegel’s Logic and show that Trendelenburg is correct in supposing that, for Hegel, the role of both modes of knowing is essential there.

On the basis of a careful review of the relevant passages of the Encyclopedia Logic and the Science of Logic, I show that my interpretation of Hegel’s position on this question is consistent with the interpretation of Hegelian logical necessity I presented in Part 1. In the process of presenting my interpretation, I refute Houlgate’s reductionist attempt to defend the presuppositionlessness and necessity of Hegel’s Logic by portraying its entire development as exclusively a priori.

Houlgate fails to grasp Hegel’s differences with Kant on the role of experience in the acquisition of knowledge in general and the elaboration of the Logic in particular. Instead of elucidating Hegel’s differences with Kant, Houlgate attempts to reach an accommodation between the two thinkers on (1) the a priori and a posteriori modes of knowing, (2) the difference between representation (ordinary categories or concepts) and conceptual thought (philosophical concepts or categories), and (3) knowledge of things in themselves.
The end result is the reduction of Hegel’s *absolute* idealism, according to which thought determinations are not a product of subjective self-consciousness alone, to Kantian subjective idealism, for which both the categories and sensory intuitions are supplied by the knowing subject. I show that this interpretation is false. Hegel explicitly disagrees with Kantian subjective idealism.

I present my interpretation and refute Houlgate’s interpretation in the following steps:

First, I show that while Kant conceives the a priori and a posteriori modes of knowing in absolute formal opposition to one another, that is, from the standpoint of the understanding, Hegel conceives them dialectically, as moments of one and the same development in which a posteriori knowledge *becomes* a priori knowledge through a process of purification and conceptual deduction that exhibits the necessity of the content. Hegel’s *Logic* is the a priori development of a content that is initially a posteriori, i.e., an immediately given content that is initially mediated by the form of its externality. It loses this quality of immediate givenness only when the necessity of the content is grasped in its own self as a content that is equally subjective and objective at the same time. Thus, while Houlgate thinks that Hegel holds that both ordinary and philosophical categories are a priori cognitions, this does not correspond with the way that Hegel presents his own position.

Second, I show that Hegel presents the relationship between representation and conceptual thought (which Houlgate terms ordinary and philosophical categories or concepts) as the final stage in the transformation of a posteriori cognition into a priori,
i.e., self-mediated, cognition. In empirical representations, as opposed to conceptual thoughts, the a posteriori moment dominates. According to Hegel, representations join together a sensible content with a universal, while “leav[ing] out a good deal of what is particular” about the content.\(^{421}\) The task of philosophy, Hegel insists, is to “transform representations into thoughts,” that is, to articulate the particular content that is only implied in the representation, but not articulated by it.\(^{422}\) What Hegel has in mind when he refers to thoughts is, of course, logically necessary conceptual deduction in the medium of universal thought determinations. Thus, for Hegel, philosophy certainly presupposes representations because it is about our world with which we are familiar, but, in its effort to penetrate to the inner forms of motion and necessity of this world, it equally exposes what is inadequate and false in the meager content that, in the form of representation, is passed off for an adequate comprehension of the concept of its object.

Thus, whereas Houlgate thinks that Hegel holds that ordinary and philosophical cognition of the categories or concepts are distinguished by relative clarity, i.e., relative presuppositionlessness, this is not at all how Hegel presents the difference between the two.

Third, I show that Hegel disagrees explicitly with Kant’s subjective idealism and his claim that things in themselves are unknowable.

\(^{421}\) Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 58.

\(^{422}\) Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 50.
According to Hegel, Kantian subjective idealism, for which the knowing subject is the source of both the categories and the intuitions on which the subject imposes these categories, has its ultimate foundation in the prejudice of the understanding against contradiction. Kant thinks that the application of the categories necessarily leads to contradictions, but since Kant shares in “that usual tenderness for things, whose only care is that they do not contradict themselves,” he decides that it would be better to suppose that only the categories have their source in us so that he does not have to suppose that things in themselves are contradictory.\textsuperscript{423}

Hegel points out that Kant has not at all eliminated the contradiction by supposing this, but only shifted it to subjective consciousness. Moreover, Kant does not provide any proof that we ought to share with him his abhorrence of the idea of contradictory things in themselves.

I show that Hegel disagrees with Kant’s claim that things in themselves are unknowable, not, as Houlgate supposes, because Hegel thinks that things in themselves are nothing more than appearances, but because Hegel thinks that, since things in themselves are devoid of content, they are the easiest things to know. Ultimately, according to Hegel, the reason that Kant denies that things in themselves are knowable is that, as I discussed Part 1, Kant shares in that “usual tenderness for things, whose only care is that they do not contradict themselves.”\textsuperscript{424} Kant, Hegel explains, holds that there

\textsuperscript{423} Hegel, \textit{Science of Logic}, 423.

\textsuperscript{424} Hegel, \textit{Science of Logic}, 423.
are necessary contradictions in the “world as it appears” to the sensibility and the understanding, but not in things in themselves.⁴²⁵

Hegel reconstructs Kant’s reasoning as follows. There are unavoidable contradictions in our cognitions and these contradictions that result necessarily from our use of the categories through which we think. However, the source of these contradictions cannot be things in themselves, the unconditioned conditions of the appearances in our experience. Therefore, these categories (and the attendant contradictions) must originate from us rather than from the things in themselves. That is to say, our categories must be a priori. The things in themselves are thus also unknowable, since our knowledge is constituted solely by our a priori categories and forms of intuition together with our sensations.

However, Hegel points out that, when the things in themselves are considered in absolute abstraction from that which they condition, they are absolutely empty and are therefore, as absolutely empty, not only knowable but the easiest thing to know. In this way, the contradiction is not eliminated, but only shifted into subjective consciousness but the thing in itself is shifted into subjective consciousness as well.

Thus, whereas Houlgate claims that Hegel ignores Kant’s “doctrine of sensibility” in his criticism of Kant’s position on things in themselves, it is Houlgate who ignores those passages in which Hegel considers both together.

The understanding, whose principle, as Hegel explains, is formal identity, has only two choices when faced with an opposition (e.g., a priori versus a posteriori knowledge, representations versus conceptual thought, experience versus the thing in itself) and the need to explain the relationship between such opposed terms. It either emphasizes the discontinuity between the two terms at the expense of their continuity, turning the former into an absolute, or tries to eliminate the discontinuity altogether. Dialectical thinking, on the other hand, cognizes the necessary development of opposed—or, rather, contradictory, terms—into one another. These two choices are instantiated in Houlgate’s and Trendelenburg’s alternate responses to Hegel’s *Logic*.

Houlgate, who does not accept Hegel’s dialectic as the genuine essence of his philosophy, tries to eliminate the discontinuity between the a priori and a posteriori moments in Hegel’s *Logic* and between representations and conceptual thought by denying that the a posteriori moment plays any role at all. Trendelenburg, on the other hand, accurately observes that Hegel’s *Logic* is supposed to be a unity of a priori and a posteriori moments, concludes that Hegel is irrational for supposing that it could contain both absolutely discontinuous elements.

Insofar as Houlgate’s defense of the a priori character of Hegel’s *Logic* is based on a highly selective reading of Hegel’s texts that ignores the evidence that, for Hegel, empirical knowledge does indeed play an important, albeit a subordinate, role in the *Logic*, it thereby fails to provide a satisfactory answer to Trendelenburg’s criticism.

On the other hand, to the end of refuting Hegel’s position, it is not sufficient to appeal, as Trendelenburg does, to the fact that Kant has a different view than Hegel. I
argue that rather than refuting Hegel’s position, Trendelenburg only succeeds in expressing a preference for Kant’s view. This does not suffice because Hegel does not simply ignore or disagree with Kant but offers a refutation of the position of the latter.

**B. Hegel on the A Priori and A Posteriori Moments**

Hegel addresses the question of a priori and a posteriori knowledge in the introduction to the *Encyclopedia Logic*.

He explains there that “if mediation is one-sidedly stressed and made into a condition, then we can say that philosophy owes its first beginning to experience (to what is a posteriori).”

That is, if we focus on one moment of the emergence of knowledge to the exclusion of the other moments, we might be inclined, and not without justification, to make the claim that “philosophy owes its first beginning to experience,” that philosophy originates from the experience on which it thereby depends.

But this is only a one-sided account of the emergence of knowledge, because it places its entire emphasis on the source of the knowledge, not the transformation through thinking of the initially external content into the possession of the knowing subject. As Hegel puts it, the claim that “philosophy owes its first beginning to experience” is “not saying very much.”

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“essentially” in “the negation of something immediately given.”⁴²⁹ That is, thought does not leave the content of immediate experience as it finds it, but transforms it into a universal thought content, something that belongs to thought.

First, he introduces an analogy (though for him an analogy alone will not ultimately suffice). He explains that “we owe our eating to food because without it we could not eat,” but “eating is represented as ungrateful, since it is the digesting of that to which it is supposed to owe itself.”⁴³⁰ In the same way that thought receives the given content, the organism receives food, but neither leaves what is given to it the way it found it.

Hegel next discusses the peculiar manner in which thinking takes up the content that is given to it in experience. Thinking “digests” the content of experience, so to speak, when immediate determinations of experience, by which it is initially mediated, are transformed into thought determinations that have the character of “universality, the overall being-at-home-with-itself of thinking.”⁴³¹ At this point, Hegel explains, “thinking’s own immediacy (that which is a priori) is inwardly reflected and hence inwardly mediated.”⁴³²


⁴³² Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 37
This explanation of the a priori and a posteriori sources of philosophical knowledge amounts to a clear acknowledgement on Hegel’s part of the essential role of experience in philosophical cognition. However, it does not yet refute Houlgate’s interpretation or show that Hegel’s position on this question is fundamentally different from Kant’s. One could simply imagine that Hegel’s use of the terms “a priori” and “a posteriori” is slightly different from Kant’s.

Recall that, according to the Kant, the categories and the forms of intuition (space and time), which are the most abstract and universal forms of this experienced content, do not depend on experience in order for them to be what they are, even though we are first prompted to think by means of these categories when we encounter the sensuous intuitions on which we impose them. Recall, in addition, that, for Kant, the a priori component of thinking not only does not at all depend on the raw material of experience, the sensuous manifold, but the structure of the categories and forms of intuition is also not at all intrinsic in the sensuous manifold. Rather, Kant holds that it is imposed on this manifold by the thinking subject. For Kant, a posteriori knowledge is knowledge that synthesizes these fundamentally heterogenous elements.

One could thus imagine that Hegel accepts Kant’s stance on this absolute distinction but holds that there are no empirical concepts that result from the combination of these heterogenous elements, but rather that all or at any rate a large number of the concepts whose emergence in consciousness is prompted by the sensuous manifold are a priori categories. On this interpretation, Hegel would be using the term a posteriori here only by way of an acknowledgement that it is experience that first calls up the a priori
categories in us. However, when I discuss Hegel’s response to Kant’s subjective idealism below, it will become clear why this is not the case.

“There is,” Hegel insists, “a correct and more fundamental sense in which the development of philosophy is due to experience.” The empirical sciences, he submits, “do not stop at the perception of single instances of appearance.” Rather, “they have prepared the material for philosophy by finding universal determinations, genera, and laws” and they have done so “through thinking.” Note that, in Hegel’s view, the sciences do not impose “universal determinations, genera, and laws” of their own on the material of nature, but “find” them there. These sciences, Hegel explains,

contain the invitation for thinking, to advance to these concrete determinations.

The assumption of this content, through which the immediacy that still clings to it, and its givenness, are sublated by thinking, is at the same time a developing of thinking out of itself.

For Hegel, cognition of the sublation of the immediacy of a content always entails the recognition that that content is not merely something immediate after all, even though it

\[ \text{\begin{footnotes}
433 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 37. 
434 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 37. 
435 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 37. 
436 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 37. 
\end{footnotes}} \]
at first appears that way to the thinking subject, because, as the understanding, the thinking subject rips an immediate content from its concrete context and holds it apart from the latter in the form of an abstraction. While this abstraction of the content from its context is an essential moment in grasping that content, to grasp the content in its truth is ultimately to grasp it in concretely articulated thought, that is, in this context.

Thus, Hegel’s point is that empirical scientific knowledge itself is implicitly philosophical in the sense that the empirical sciences begin to carry out the task of discovering the universal determinations and their relations that are implicit in the abstract particulars of experience. In Hegel’s view, the Logic is thus the more profound truth that is implicit in the empirical sciences.

In this way, “philosophy does owe its development to the empirical sciences,” Hegel acknowledges, “but,” he insists, it is philosophy that gives to their content the fully essential shape of the freedom of thinking (or what is a priori) as well as the validation of necessity (instead of the content being warranted because it is simply found to be present, and because it is a fact of experience.) In its necessity the fact becomes the presentation and imitation of the activity of thinking that is original and completely independent.\(^{437}\)

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\(^{437}\) Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 37.
That is, philosophy transforms a posteriori knowledge into a priori knowledge through a process of purification and conceptual deduction that exhibits the necessity of the content. The development from the origin is no longer the origin itself. Rather, it is precisely the living refutation of the semblance of the origin’s independence and immediacy. A representation that derives from an intuition is no longer the intuition. A thought that rises above a mere representation is no longer a mere representation.

When knowledge becomes ours, it ceases to be something merely external. When it becomes that which is ours, it remains that which was external but it is no less ours on account of this history of its independence that remains a part of it. Likewise, when a presuppositionless starting point develops beyond that starting point it becomes the presupposition of the development. It ceases to be a state of presuppositionlessness, but itself becomes the presupposition. To movement beyond the starting point refutes its immediacy and indeterminacy.

However, Houlgate simply ignores the passages in which Hegel explains the role of the a posteriori moment in philosophical thinking and insist that, in Hegel’s view, the categories of thought—whether it is ordinary thinking, the thinking of empirical scientists or his own philosophical thinking—are a priori categories.

The textual evidence presented above shows that Houlgate’s interpretation is incorrect.

**C. Representations and Conceptual Thought**

Hegel’s discussion of the relationship between representation and thought is of paramount importance for grasping how in general, according to Hegel, philosophy—in
particular his philosophy—reworks the thought content belonging to ordinary thinking and the empirical sciences and transforms it into philosophical thinking.

Hegel explains that there are two kinds of representations, or, rather, “two cases” of representation.\(^{438}\) What both cases have in common is that they join together a thought with something that is not a thought. In one case it is “the content” that “is something thought,” that is, which has “has sprung from self-conscious thinking,” whereas in the other case “the form” is the part of the representation that is “something thought.”\(^{439}\)

The part of a representation that is a thought is a thought insofar as it expresses the form or alternatively the content as a universal. Whereas Hegel holds that universals are intrinsic not only in our thinking but in nature and society as such, it is the task of subjective cognition, whether in the empirical sciences or in ordinary life, to find the universal in what appears immediately singular and the result of carrying out this task is a thought, a universal.

Hegel explains the two cases in terms of several examples:

If I say, e.g., “anger,” “rose,” “hope,” I am familiar with all this through feeling, but I express this content in a universal way, in the form of thought; I have left out a good deal of what is particular about it, and given only the content as universal, but that content remains sensible. Conversely, if I represent God to myself, then

\(^{438}\) Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 58.

\(^{439}\) Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 58.
certainly the content is purely something thought, but the form is still sensible, just as I already find it immediately within me.\textsuperscript{440}

A representation is thus a hybrid of a thought content and a content that does not properly belong to thinking but is nevertheless joined together with the thought content. However, Hegel also explains that such thoughts are deficient. Thinking tends to be “inwardly contented” with its universals (37). Thus, when thinking leaves a part of the representation as a feeling or a sensible content, this is a result of its tendency of thinking to be “indifferen[t] towards particularization, and hence toward its development” (37). Nevertheless, Hegel maintains that thinking should progress beyond representation to thinking that includes the particular articulated within it.

Hegel elaborates on the nature of representation when he distinguishes it from thought. He explains that “the content” of a representation, unlike the content of thought per se “stands … in isolation.”\textsuperscript{441} This is the case even when the content is itself a product of thought, for instance, “right, duty, [or] God,” which “do not stand in the sensible mutual externality of space.”\textsuperscript{442} These representations, like the representations of the content of the natural world “do appear somehow in time, one after the other, though

\textsuperscript{440} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 58.

\textsuperscript{441} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 50.

\textsuperscript{442} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 50.
“their content is not itself represented as affected by time, as passing away and changing in it.” However, just like representations of the objects of physical nature,

these determinations, which are in themselves spiritual, stand at the same time in isolation upon the broad field of the inner, abstract universality of representation in general. In this isolation they are simple: right, duty, God.

Simple propositions, for example “right is right,” or “God is God,” or “God is the Creator of the world, that he is all-wise, almighty, etc.” also count for Hegel as representations, and, although “several isolated and simple determinations are strung together” in these simple propositions, these propositions, like the simple determinations “right, duty, God,” “remain external to each other, in spite of the link that is allotted to them in their subject.”

According to Hegel, the understanding differs from representation only insofar as it posits relationships of universal and particular, or of cause and effect, etc., and therefore necessary relations between the isolated determinations of

443 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 50.

444 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 50.

445 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 50.
representation—whereas representation leaves them side by side in its undetermined space, linked only by the simple “and.”

However, like representation, the understanding abstracts and separates its thoughts from other thoughts and takes its abstractions for truths in their isolation. This places Hegel’s criticism of the standpoint of the understanding in a new light as well. For Hegel, though the thoughts of the understanding are more complete than those of representation, they do not go far enough if the ultimate aim is comprehension.

Hegel insists that this “distinction between representation and thought” (which is not fully grasped by the understanding) is of paramount importance, in particular because “philosophy does nothing but transform representations into thoughts.” It follows from this that, in Hegel’s view, his *Logic*, which is a part of his philosophy, transforms representations into thoughts.

As I explained in Part 1, following the thought of pure being, each stage, each thought determination in the *Logic* is fundamentally a result of the prior deduction. However, our initial familiarity with these thoughts in the form of representation allows us to recognize these thoughts when they are deduced in the *Logic*. But in order to think philosophically, i.e., dialectically, we have to be willing to break with our prior habits of thought, since our prior habits of thought tempt us to interrupt this motion of the

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446 Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 50.

deduction and view individual thought determinations as mere representations, or from the standpoint of the understanding, which goes beyond representation but not very far beyond it. Hegel’s frequent injunctions to leave behind our presuppositions, prejudices, habits, etc., all refer to this tendency.

In one place in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel addresses this kind of difficulty in the way that it arises in relation to the thought of the unity of being and nothing. He explains that “to comprehend their unity” means nothing more than to grasp “the concept of both.” This concept is the product of the deduction that I discussed in Chapter 3. Nevertheless, even in the face of this deduction, some might insist that “we do not comprehend the unity of being and nothing.” In this case, what is understood by “comprehension” is often something more than the concept in the proper sense; what is desired is a more diversified, a richer consciousness, a notion such that this sort of “concept” can be presented as a concrete case of it, with which thinking in its ordinary practice would be more familiar. Insofar as the inability to comprehend only expresses the fact that one is not used to holding onto abstract thoughts without any sensible admixture or to the grasping of speculative propositions, all we can say is that philosophical knowing is indeed quite diverse in kind from the knowing that we are used to in everyday life, just as

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it is diverse from what prevails in the other sciences too. But if noncomprehension only means that one cannot represent the unity of being and nothing, this is really so far from being the case, that on the contrary everyone has an infinite supply of notions of this unity; saying that one has none can only mean that one does not [re]cognise the present concept in any of those notions, and one does not know them to be examples of it.\textsuperscript{450}

As I argued in Part 1, Houlgate’s references to the allegedly presuppositionless character of the \textit{Logic} are inadequate to explain in what the dialectical logical necessity of its development is supposed to consist. Likewise, in the absence of any determinate explanation of dialectical logical necessity, Houlgate’s references to the allegedly superior clarity of Hegel’s philosophical categories as opposed to ordinary categories, which is also supposed to result from the presuppositionless character of the philosophical thinking, fail to provide any determinate criterion of relative clarity, let alone do justice to Hegel’s distinction between representation and conceptual thought. What this would-be explanation leaves out is the fact that, for Hegel, the transformation of representations into conceptual thought by philosophy transforms an a posteriori sensible content into a fully conceptual a priori deduction of the intrinsically necessary universal determinations of a thing.

\textsuperscript{450} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 143.
D. Hegel on Kant’s Subjective Idealism and Things in Themselves

In the previous two sections, I focused on Hegel’s own texts and I only briefly mentioned the implications of these texts for Houlgate’s interpretation. In this section I break with this procedure and give equal attention to Hegel’s own texts and Houlgate’s interpretation.

a. Subjective Idealism

Recall that, according to Houlgate, Hegel approves of Kant’s “insight” that the “fundamental categories” of thought “are a priori concepts generated ‘spontaneously’ and independently by pure thought.”\textsuperscript{451} In support of this claim, Houlgate provides a quote from the *Encyclopedia Logic*: “the thought-determinations have their source in the I (Ich)’ and the I alone.”\textsuperscript{452}

Houlgate makes it sound as though, in the passage in question, Hegel not only explains Kant’s position, but expresses his complete agreement with it. However, if one reads the actual context of this quote, it becomes clear that Hegel’s position is fundamentally opposed to Kant’s.

Hegel does say that Kant is correct insofar as his position “expresses the nature of all consciousness,” which “strive[s] to appropriate” and “to conquer” the world for cognition and make it “ideal.”\textsuperscript{453} However, Hegel immediately qualifies this claim by

\textsuperscript{451} Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 12.

\textsuperscript{452} Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 12.

\textsuperscript{453} Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 85.
insisting “it is not the subjective activity of self-consciousness that introduces absolute
unity into the multiplicity in question.”454 In other words, Hegel is insisting that it would
not be correct to say, as Kant does, that self-consciousness is responsible for imposing a
category on the sensuous manifold and thereby unifying a collection of diverse
sensations.

Instead, Hegel insists, “it is the goodness of the Absolute, so to speak, that lets
singular [beings] enjoy their own selves, and it is just this that drives them back into
absolute unity.”455 Despite the semi-religious language Hegel employs here, his meaning
is not at all mystical. In Hegel’s Logic, the final result is the developed system, the
developed unity, of thought determinations in the form of a single necessary deduction.
Hegel calls this result the Absolute. This Absolute is not only the rational structure of
thinking as such, but also the inner nature of the things of this world that are initially
beyond the grasp of subjective cognition. It is this inner nature of the world, this inner
unity immanent in things, that thinking appropriates in the form of its own universal
cognitions. That this is what Hegel has in mind will become clearer shortly.

Hegel insists that while Kant is right in supposing that “the categories are not
contained in immediate sensation,” he is wrong in supposing that the categories belong

454 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 85.

455 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 85.
“only to us.” Hegel illustrates the point that immediate sensation does not contain the categories by means of several examples:

Consider, for example, a piece of sugar. It is hard, white, sweet, etc. We say that all these properties are united in one object, and this unity is not found in sensation. The situation is the same when we regard two events as standing to one another in the relationship of cause and effect; what is perceived here is the two isolated events, which succeed one another in time. But that one is the cause and the other the effect (the causal nexus between them) is not perceived; on the contrary, it is present merely for our thinking.

However, Hegel insists, these examples do not show what Kant believes they show. The categories of “unity, cause and effect, etc.” do “pertain to thinking as such,” Hegel acknowledges. However, he contends, “it does not at all follow from this” that these categories “must therefore be merely something of ours, and not also determinations of objects themselves.”

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Hegel recounts, “this is what is supposed to be the case.” He then calls Kant’s philosophy “subjective idealism,” by which he means that “the Ego (the knowing subject) furnishes both the form and also the material of knowing—the former as thinking and the latter as sensing subject.”

In another passage, Hegel once again summarizes and criticizes Kant’s position on the categories. According to Kant, “the categories have their source in the unity of self-consciousness.”

Hegel sides with “naïve consciousness” against Kant on this question. Naïve consciousness, Hegel explains, “has rightly taken exception to [Kant’s] subjective idealism, according to which the content of our consciousness is something that is only ours, something posited only through us.” Hegel explains that there is indeed something wrong with subjective idealism, since “the things of which we have immediate knowledge are mere appearances, not only for us, but also in-themselves” in that they “have[e] the ground of their being not within themselves but in the universal divine

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460 Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 86.
461 Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 86.
462 Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 89.
Hegel explains that this doctrine “must also be called idealism, but, as distinct from the subjective idealism of the Critical Philosophy, it is absolute idealism.”

**b. Hegel on the Thing in Itself**

Recall that, according to Kant, the appearances found in our experience presuppose something that appears. He calls these theoretically necessary unconditioned conditions of our experience things in themselves. According to Kant, it is only possible to have knowledge of appearances, not of things in themselves.

Houlgate’s reduction of Hegel’s absolute idealism to Kantian subjective idealism prompts him to misinterpret Hegel’s attitude toward these Kantian things in themselves. Moreover, he bases his account of Hegel’s attitude toward them on a highly selective reading of Hegel’s writings on this question.

Recall that, according to Houlgate, Hegel’s *Logic* “does not describe a putative noumenal realm ‘beyond’ everyday experience but reveals the ultimate structure of the very world we inhabit every day of our lives.” This distinction is somewhat ambiguous in that how we interpret its meaning is dependent on how we interpret the phrase “the very world we inhabit every day of our lives.” However, the only meaning this phrase can have that is consistent with the rest of Houlgate’s interpretation is the following: “the very world we inhabit every day of our lives” is the very totality of our

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466 Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 89.

experience constituted by the combination of our own categories and sensations. Thus, according to Houlgate, Hegel’s philosophy is even more subjectivist than Kant’s. In Houlgate’s view, for Hegel, there is no unconditioned condition of our experience, but only experience itself.

Houlgate comes up with this interpretation on the basis of some remarks Hegel makes in the course of his exposition of “determinate being” in the *Science of Logic*. Hegel says there that the thing in itself

is a very simple abstraction but for some while it counted as a very important determination, something superior, as it were, just as the proposition that we do not know what things are in themselves ranked as a profound piece of wisdom. Things are called ‘in themselves’ in so far as abstraction is made from all being-for-other, which means simply, in so far as they are thought devoid of all determination, as nothings. In this sense, it is of course impossible to know what the thing-in-itself is. For since the things of which they are to be assigned are at the same time supposed to be things in-themselves, which means, in effect, to be without any determinations, the question is thoughtlessly made impossible to answer, or else only an absurd answer is given.468

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Since the Kantian thing in itself is supposed to be thought “in abstraction from all
relations,” Houlgate explains, Hegel reasons that it is therefore “too abstract to count as
any possible or actual something.” Houlgate then concludes that Hegel therefore denies
that there is anything about it to be known.

But this is not what Hegel actually says in the cited passage. What he says is that
if the question is asked what determinations belong to something that by definition is
wholly indeterminate, then this question has no answer. There is no determinate
knowledge to be had of something that is not at all determinate.

However, the fact that Hegel thinks that it is nonsensical to ask what determinacy
belongs to something indeterminate does not at all imply that he thinks that Kant’s idea
of the thing in itself is nonsensical. Houlgate falsely takes this passage to be the whole of
Hegel’s response to Kant’s idea of the thing in itself and he misinterprets it at that.

Another passage, which Houlgate ignores, refutes his interpretation. In this
passage, Hegel explains that nothing is easier to know than the thing in itself:

The thing-in-itself (and here “thing” embraces God, or the spirit, as well)
expresses the object, inasmuch as abstraction is made of all that it is for
consciousness, of all determinations of feeling, as well as of all determinate
thoughts about it. It is easy to see what is left, namely, what is completely
abstract, or totally empty, and determined only as what is “beyond”; the negative

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of representation, of feeling, of determinate thinking, etc. But it is just as simple to reflect that this *caput mortuum* is itself only the *product* of thinking, and precisely of the thinking that has gone to the extreme of pure abstraction, the product of the empty “I” that makes its own self-*identity* into its *object*. The *negative* determination that contains this abstract identity as [its] *object* is likewise entered among the Kantian categories, and, like that empty identity, it is something quite familiar. We must be quite surprised, therefore, to read so often that one does not know what the *thing-in-itself* is; for nothing is easier to know than this.\(^470\)

Thus, Hegel’s fundamental criticism of Kant’s idea of the thing in itself is that Kant fails to recognize that, in articulating an opposition between thinking that is confined to appearances and the unconditioned condition of these appearances, he has himself already overcome this opposition in thought.

According to Hegel there is a specific reason why Kant does not recognize this, and it is one that I have already discussed in Part 1. As Hegel recounts, Kant discovers that there are unavoidable, that is, “essential and necessary,” contradictions in our cognitions through the categories. Again, according Hegel, this insight of Kant’s is “one of the most important and profound advances of the philosophy of modern times.”\(^471\)

\(^{470}\) Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 87.

\(^{471}\) Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 92.
Interestingly, in his account of the “insights” for which Hegel supposedly admires Kant, Houlgate leaves this one out.

Of course, as I also explained in Part 1, Hegel thinks that Kant is ultimately limited by a prejudice against contradictions. Because of this prejudice, Kant refuses to believe that the “object in and for itself” is contradictory and his “solution” to the essential and necessary contradictions in the categories is a retreat into subjectivism.\textsuperscript{472} According to Kant, Hegel recounts, the contradiction is contained in “reason and its cognition of the object” instead of in the object itself, i.e., instead of in the thing in itself.\textsuperscript{473} Kant achieves this solution by reducing the object to something subjective, a mere combination of categories and intuitions, and simultaneously emptying the real object, the object in and for itself, of all content, reducing it to an empty thing in itself, an unconditioned condition that is fundamentally cut off from what it conditions.

In Part 1, I already discussed Hegel’s assessment of Kant’s motivations as he presents it in the \textit{Science of Logic}. Again, he says there that Kant shares in that “usual tenderness for things, whose only care is that they do not contradict themselves.”\textsuperscript{474} Hegel says essentially the same thing in the \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}. He claims there that Kant’s way of solving the problem produced by these unavoidable contradictions “is as trivial as the viewpoint [i.e., his insight into the necessity of the contradictions] is

\textsuperscript{472} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 92.

\textsuperscript{473} Hegel, \textit{Encyclopedia Logic}, 91.

\textsuperscript{474} Hegel, \textit{Science of Logic}, 423.
profound.” Once again, Hegel insists that this would-be solution arises “merely” out of “a tenderness for the things of this world.” Hegel elaborates on this point as follows:

The stain of contradiction ought not to be in the essence of what is in the world; it has to belong only to thinking reason, to the essence of the spirit. It is not considered at all objectionable that the world as it appears shows contradictions to the spirit that observes it; the way the world is for subjective spirit, for sensibility, and for the understanding, is the world as it appears. But when the essence of what is in the world is compared with the essence of spirit, it may surprise us to see how naively the humble affirmation has been advanced, and repeated, that what is inwardly contradictory is not the essence of the world, but belongs to reason, the thinking essence.

Again, Hegel does not think that this drastic solution actually resolves the contradiction successfully. As Hegel puts it in the Encyclopedia Logic,

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475 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 91.

476 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 91.

477 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 91.
it does not help at all to express this by saying that reason only falls into contradiction through the application of the categories,” because Kant also claims that “this application is necessary, and that, for the purpose of cognition, reason has no determinations other than the categories.478

Or, again, as Hegel puts it in the Science of Logic, Kant “forgets” in employing this strategy that he has not resolved the contradiction, but only shifted it to the thinking subject.479

These passages thoroughly refute Houlgate’s claim that Hegel’s criticism of the Kantian thing in itself “focuses on Kant’s concept in the abstract” rather than considering it within its Kantian “epistemic context.”480

Recall that, according to Houlgate, that “there is without doubt some merit to [the] Kantian rejoinder” that, by disregarding Kant’s “doctrine of sensibility,” Hegel “seriously … distort[s] Kant’s position” and “indulge[s] in a distinctively Hegelian form of abstraction.”481

Houlgate imagines he is correcting Hegel’s mistake by pointing out that “Kant does not start from the concept of the thing in itself but begins, rather from a certain

478 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 91.
479 Hegel, Science of Logic, 423.
480 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 344.
481 Houlgate, Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 342
understanding of sensibility,” but, as I have shown, Hegel was never confused on this score.482

Hegel has not failed to notice that, for Kant, as Houlgate puts it, the “concept” of the thing in itself “plays a definite epistemic role” in “remind[ing] us that the conditions under which we intuit things are merely the conditions under which we intuit things and may not be regarded as the ontological conditions of things as they truly are.”483 Far from being confused on this point, Hegel offers a refutation of the “epistemic context” of Kant’s claim that the thing in itself is unknowable.

It is as though, rather than trying to refute Hegel’s position, Houlgate tries to save Hegel from himself by pretending these passages do not exist, while at the same time criticizing Hegel for ignoring what Hegel does not in fact ignore. It is indeed possible that Houlgate minimizes Hegel’s differences with Kant and reduces the former to a Kantian subjective idealist in a misguided effort to defend Hegel, though it is debatable whether a drastic misinterpretation is compatible with the aim of defense.

If, on the other hand, our aim is to comprehend Hegel’s *Logic*, whether Hegel is ultimately right or wrong, textual accuracy ought to be our paramount concern.

I have shown that the careful consideration of those passages that Houlgate either ignores or misinterprets as lending support to a subjective idealist interpretation of Hegel in fact supports a radically different interpretation than Houlgate’s.

482 Houlgate, *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 342

In summary, on the basis of the textual evidence I have presented, my interpretation of Hegel’s stance on logical necessity in relation to the a priori and a posteriori modes of knowing is the following.

For Hegel, thinking begins as representation in which a universal is joined with feeling or a sensible content. Our representations are not the product of an imposition of ready-made a priori categories of our own on sensation or feeling. Rather, they result from the work of finding these universals in their subject matter.

Of course, in the Logic, Hegel does not elaborate the manner in which these universals are found, so for a more precise account of how this is supposed to take place, one would have to turn to his Philosophy of Mind and examine the manner in which he believes human intelligence transforms immediate intuition into representation before it transforms representation into thought. However, Hegel does indicate in the Logic what, in a general sense, he thinks enables the human mind, which first encounters the world as immediate sensation, to arrive at universal determinations. For Hegel, this is only possible if the world itself in itself is governed by dialectical logic, and no one, including Kant, has proven that it is not.

As I discussed in Part 1, according to Hegel, “everything logically real” and “everything true in general” exhibits the moments of the concept. Hegel thinks that this enables thinking to appropriate a content that is initially external to it so that the thought determinations, the universal content, in things become thoughts as such. Thinking at first

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484 Hegel, Encyclopedia Logic, 125.
appropriates the universal content in the form of a representation, which is only an incomplete thought joined together with a form or content that is initially heterogenous with thinking. The task of thinking, in particular philosophical thinking, is then to articulate the entirety of the form or content in the medium of thought, leaving nothing to feeling or the memory or imagination of sensation. Once this is accomplished, once thinking has taken what is external into itself so that it is no longer merely external, one may say that thinking is self-mediating rather than being mediated by something external. That is to say, once this has taken place, the a posteriori moment is subordinate to the a priori moment and subsumed under it.

For Hegel, what is appropriated and subsumed under thinking is not just appearances, but also the thing in itself. As Kant insists, appearances presuppose something that appears. In Hegel’s view, there is no content and no form that is fundamentally ungraspable by thinking and, far from grasping only appearances, it is precisely thinking that grasps the idea of the thing in itself and its relationship with appearances. Insofar as things in themselves are responsible for appearances, these appearances enter into what the things in themselves are, and in this sense Houlgate is right in supposing that Hegel’s approach to things in themselves is more concrete than Kant’s. Hegel does not, like Kant, stop at the mere abstraction. But this does not at all imply that Houlgate is right that Hegel does not think that “we can after all reach a realm of being beyond our sensuous experience that Kant deems to be inaccessible.”\footnote{Houlgate, \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 125.} This is precisely what Hegel thinks. The thought of the thing in itself is a thought, albeit a
thought of something that is not a thought. And while it is the thought of something that is responsible for sensuous experience, it is not merely reducible to the latter.

Moreover, according to Hegel, the only reason that Kant thinks that there is something ungraspable by thinking is that Kant realizes that thinking necessarily involves itself in contradictions. Because Kant abhors the idea that things in themselves might contradict themselves, he concludes that our way of knowing is unsuitable for grasping things in themselves. Hegel insists that Kant fails to prove that things in themselves cannot be contradictory and his abhorrence for contradiction is therefore simply a prejudice.

There is of course room for disagreement on the precise meaning of the passages I have discussed in this chapter. However, such disagreement ought to proceed from agreement that they must somehow be taken into account. There is also room for disagreement with Hegel’s absolute idealism, as I have presented it. However, one ought to test it on its own terms, not as though it were a version of Kantian subjective idealism.

I now put Hegel’s absolute idealism to the test by bring my interpretation of it to bear on Trendelenburg’s criticisms of Hegelian necessity.

**E. Trendelenburg**

Unlike Houlgate, who tries to minimize Hegel’s differences with Kant, Trendelenburg disagrees with Hegel *because* he recognizes that Hegel has serious differences with Kant. However, as I showed in the previous section, Hegel does not simply disregard Kant’s point of view. Rather, he offers a refutation of Kant’s subjective idealism by showing that it rests on nothing more than a prejudice of the understanding. Trendelenburg, much like
Schelling, and much like Houlgate for that matter, ignores this refutation. Instead, as I show in this section, Trendelenburg seems to believe that the mere fact that Hegel’s position is different from Kant’s position constitutes a refutation.

Recall that, according to Trendelenburg, Hegel twists words when he claims that what his Logic achieves a priori knowledge.\(^{486}\) Even though Trendelenburg agrees with Hegel that the world grasped by the empirical sciences is a product of “the prius of divine reason,” he does not think that this justifies calling knowledge that results from the appropriation of this knowledge by philosophy a priori knowledge.\(^{487}\)

In one of the passages I quoted above, Hegel does indeed claim that, when philosophy cognizes the “necessity” of the content first won for thinking by the empirical sciences, this content “becomes the presentation and imitation of the activity of thinking that is original and completely independent.”\(^{488}\) This appears to be a reference to divine thinking of the sort that Trendelenburg has in mind when he refers to “the prius of divine reason.” As I showed in parts B and C, Hegel also holds that, for human beings, a priori knowledge comes after a posteriori knowledge and results from the appropriation by philosophy of knowledge first gained in experience or else by the activity of natural science. From a Kantian point of view, to claim that a priori knowledge comes after and

\(^{486}\) Trendelenburg, *Logische Untersuchungen*, 90.

\(^{487}\) Trendelenburg, *Logische Untersuchungen*, 90.

\(^{488}\) Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 37.
results from a posteriori knowledge is of course a complete perversion of the meaning of the term “a priori” and this is why Trendelenburg says that Hegel twists words.

Recall, however, that words are not all that are at stake here for Trendelenburg. Even if he thinks that Hegel justifies his position on the “origin and procedure of human knowing” through verbal trickery, this actual position is the problem.\(^{489}\)

For Kantians, on the other hand, there is always something left over that cannot be fully grasped by thinking, and this is the substance of Trendelenburg’s most serious objections to Hegel’s philosophy as well.

Recall, once again, the dilemma that Trendelenburg poses to Hegel’s philosophy:

Either the dialectical development is independent and determined only by itself; then it must actually know everything from its own self. Or it presupposes the finite sciences and empirical knowledge; then the immanent progress and the seamless connection is broken by what is taken up externally; and it behaves uncritically toward experience at that. The dialectic may choose. We see no third possibility.\(^{490}\)

\(^{489}\) Trendelenburg, *Logische Untersuchungen*, 90.

Again, according to Trendelenburg, what Hegel’s philosophy is forced to take up externally, insofar as it presupposes the empirical sciences, is the “manner of justification” of these sciences “without which they themselves are nothing.”\textsuperscript{491} For this reason, Trendelenburg objects to Hegel’s supposition that philosophical thinking can grasp a priori the content that was first won for thinking by the empirical sciences.

Thus, in Trendelenburg’s view, Hegel’s \textit{Logic} fails to provide a necessary deduction of any a priori content because it \textit{cannot} do so. Consequently, Trendelenburg thinks that thinking cannot ever make the content its own full possession. However, like Schelling’s argument that Hegel’s \textit{Logic} could not possibly have a necessary development because it could not possibly be presuppositionless, this is not a direct refutation, but an effort to dispute the very \textit{possibility} of a seamless necessary connection in the \textit{Logic}.

Moreover, Trendelenburg’s objection to the very \textit{possibility} of a seamless necessary connection in the \textit{Logic} is ultimately based on the Kantian supposition that our cognitions are a combination of fundamentally heterogenous elements: a priori categories and forms of intuition together with sensory intuitions. If the “manner of justification” of the empirical sciences delivered this content to philosophy in a form that could be made conceptual throughout, the manner of justification would not in any way break the “seamless connection” of Hegel’s logical deduction. But, in Trendelenburg’s view,

\textsuperscript{491} Trendelenburg, \textit{Logische Untersuchungen}, 91.
intuitions are a part of our cognitions, and the latter are therefore not at all amenable to conceptual articulation.

That this is Trendelenburg’s real concern is revealed in his specific objection to the deduction of the concept of becoming at the very beginning of Hegel’s *Logic*.

Again, on this question, Trendelenburg argues:

Pure being is the empty, and the empty the pure. In this complete equalization, every impulse to progress or transition is expired. Logical reflection of the equality is realized as a real unity. Who would believe in becoming, if it only came from there?  

In addition, recall Trendelenburg’s claim that even though Hegel wants to remain in the “simplicity” of “pure thought,” his thought is forced to go “beyond itself,” since, in the very “first step” beyond empty being, thought “has grown together with a representation, in which one recognizes space and time as moments.”  

Because Hegel’s thought combines itself in this way with a representation, according to Trendelenburg, it is no longer “pure thought, completely unchained from external being.”

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Thus, in Trendelenburg’s view, we may have a representation of motion or even a representation of becoming (as motion), but this representation joins a fundamentally heterogenous element with thinking, namely intuitions of space and time. Hegel is therefore wrong, in Trendelenburg’s view, in supposing that we have a pure concept of becoming.

Let us now examine these claims from a Hegelian point of view. Every concept in Hegel’s Logic presupposes representations in the sense that it is these representations that Hegel claims his Logic transforms into thoughts. To do this, Hegel must be able to recognize when the represented content is fully articulated in the form of thought.

In section C of this chapter, I noted that Hegel addresses several skeptical objections to the deduction of the concept of becoming at the beginning of the Logic. As I noted there, in the face of this deduction, some people may nevertheless insist that “we do not comprehend the unity of being and nothing.”

In this case, Hegel insists, “what is understood by “comprehension” is often something more than the concept in the proper sense.” In such cases, the claim that we do “not comprehend the unity of being and nothing” as a result of a logical deduction of it amounts to the complaint that the logical deduction of it does not provide us with “a

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496 Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, 143.
concrete case of it, with which thinking in its ordinary practice would be more familiar."

Hegel then answers this complaint by acknowledging that, in everyday life, “one is not used to holding onto abstract thoughts without any sensible admixture,” and that “philosophical knowing”—as he presents it—“is indeed quite diverse in kind from the knowing that we are used to in everyday life.” In everyday life, of course, Hegel thinks we tend to be contented with representations. If one still objects to the logical deduction of the unity of being and nothing, claiming that we do not have any representations of this unity, then this, Hegel insists, “can only mean that one does not [re]cognise the present concept in any of those notions, and one does not know them to be examples of it.” We have, he insists, “an infinite supply” of such representations of the unity of being and nothing in everyday life.

Part of Trendelenburg’s objection to Hegel’s claim that he has a pure concept of becoming amounts to the claim that Hegel implicitly imbues his concept of the unity of being and nothing with just the sort of sensible admixture that Hegel insists does not belong in the concept proper. This follows from Trendelenburg’s claim that no one “would believe in becoming” if it came only from the deduction of the unity of being and nothing. The problem with this is that Hegel never claimed that anyone must “believe

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in becoming” without having had any concrete experiences of becoming, since it is quite implausible in any case that one would read Hegel’s *Logic* prior to having any such experiences. But even more importantly, it does not at all follow that Hegel has failed to articulate the conceptual essence of those experiences.

Of course, Trendelenburg’s objection to Hegel’s conceptual deduction of the concept of a pure concept of becoming is not just a general objection to abstract concepts. Rather, the specific problem with Hegel’s allegedly pure concept of becoming is, in Trendelenburg’s view, that it must involve “space and time as moments” and, in supposing that his concept is pure, Trendelenburg thinks that Hegel ignores this fact.\(^{501}\)

By way of a reply to this objection, it is in the first place worth noting that it is not even plausible that becoming must involve space, since one can, for example, become *more contemplative* or *more virtuous*, and space is not directly involved in either one of these instances of becoming. But, in the second place, even if one were to acknowledge that everything that becomes becomes in time, pointing this out still does not constitute a refutation of Hegel’s deduction. When Hegel deduces the concept of becoming, he has not yet deduced the concept of *what* becoming becomes. The concept of becoming is thus deficient even in Hegel’s own view, since the idea of becoming that does not become anything is self-contradictory. But the remedy, for Hegel, is not to abandon thinking and content oneself with representation. Rather, for Hegel, the inner deficiency, the inner

contradiction, in the concept of becoming is what ultimately leads to the deduction of more concrete concepts including ultimately the concept of time.

Trendelenburg does not refute this deduction but criticizes Hegel for not presupposing, with Kant, that space and time and the content of sensory intuitions are not amenable to full conceptual articulation, and he therefore disputes that Hegel has articulated this much more abstract concept from which Hegel develops the concepts of space and time.

Moreover, even though Hegel certainly does not fully accept Kant’s use of the terms a priori and a posteriori, Trendelenburg is also mistaken in supposing that he justifies his rationalist optimism through terminological trickery. Rather, as I have explained in Part 1, he shows that (1) the abstract thought determinations of the understanding are intrinsically self-contradictory, and (2) concrete thoughts result from the deductions of these contradictions. As I indicated there, in Hegel’s view, if one does not adopt the prejudice of the understanding, according to which there is nothing that is in itself intrinsically contradictory, a great source of mystery disappears, because then one does not have to suppose that whatever is beyond the understanding must remain mysterious.

For Hegel, thinking that is self-mediating, that is, thinking that has appropriated the entirety of the conceptual content of a thing, is a priori thinking. Hegel considers such thinking to be an “imitation of the activity of thinking that is original and completely independent” because, in Hegel’s view, there is nothing fundamentally mysterious for thinking as such, only for the understanding. Thus, because the human mind can grasp
the intrinsic nature of things, there is no knowledge that is accessible only to God and not to human beings. Whether one thinks that there is actually a God has no direct relevance to whether Hegel is right about the power of the human mind.

Hegel’s point is that no one has provided genuinely unassailable proof that there is anything fundamentally unknowable, that is, conceptually inarticulable. In Hegel’s view, nothing must in principle remain fundamentally mysterious to the human mind so long as it does not adhere dogmatically to the standpoint of the understanding. Therefore, any truly worthy attempt at a refutation of Hegel’s position on this question should proceed not from a dogmatic adherence to the standpoint of the understanding but should attempt to show that something must remain fundamentally mysterious to the human mind even if one rejects this standpoint. This has not yet been done.

**F. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have shown that Hegel conceives the a priori and a posteriori modes of knowing dialectically, that is, as moments of one and the same development in which a posteriori knowledge becomes a priori knowledge through a process of purification and conceptual deduction that exhibits the necessity of the content.

In both Part 1 and Part 2 of this study I have sought to show that Schelling and Trendelenburg, two of the most prominent philosophers in Germany following Hegel’s death, fail to refute Hegel’s claim that the development of his *Logic* is necessary. For both philosophers, this is bound up with their opposition to what they take to be the overly ambitious rationalist claims of his philosophy.
Here, in Part 2, I have shown that Trendelenburg is correct in supposing that, for Hegel, the role of the a priori and a posteriori modes of knowing is essential, and I have refuted Houlgate’s subjective idealist interpretation of Hegel, according to which Hegel holds that the a posteriori moment plays no role in the development of philosophy, because the “categories” of Hegel’s Logic are an independent product of a priori human subjectivity alone.

It may be possible to raise objections to Hegel’s theoretical philosophy in general or his view of necessity in particular that I have not considered here.

For instance, as I noted in Part 1, a thorough examination of the entirety of Hegel’s deduction as he presents it in the Encyclopedia Logic and the Science of Logic was beyond the scope of the present study. I only sought to show there that the general forms of necessity that Hegel outlines in the section of the Encyclopedia Logic entitled “More Precise Conception and Division of the Logic” applies to at least one part of Hegel’s deduction, namely the very beginning. Again, it may well be that in one or another place in the subsequent development of the Logic, Hegel mistakenly presents a non-necessary transition as necessary.

As another example, here in Part 2, I mentioned that Hegel’s own detailed account of the manner in which thinking appropriates for itself a content that is initially external is to be found in his Philosophy of Mind. This account is rather complex and may well be erroneous in one or another respect. However, this may well be the case without implying that Hegel’s general point is false. As I have presented it in this chapter, Hegel’s general point is that human intelligence progresses from sensory intuition to representation, in
which that sensory intuition becomes the possession of human intelligence, and then on to conceptual cognition, in which thinking is purified of the givenness that is still a part of thinking in the form of representation.
Bibliography


