

VII—THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS IN IDEALIST THEORIES OF LOGIC

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Among Kant's innovations in the understanding of logic ('general logic') were his claims that logic had no content of its own, but was the form of the thought of any possible content, and that the unit of meaning, the truth-bearer, judgement, was essentially apperceptive. Judging was implicitly the consciousness of judging. This was for Kant a logical truth. This article traces the influence of the latter claim on Fichte, and, for most of the discussion, on Hegel. The aim is to understand the relations among self-consciousness, reason and freedom in the Idealist tradition.

Sebastian Rödl has rightly identified the heart of German Idealism, the principle 'that self-consciousness, freedom and reason are one' (Rödl 2007, p. 105). The fact that this formulation requires abstractions of this magnitude, and that the formulation is an identification of concepts that seem different, not identical, is not accidental.

Arguably, the most ambitious and the most difficult single book in that post-Kantian Idealist tradition is Hegel's three-part, two-volume *Science of Logic*. (Arguably, because there are many other worthy contenders for the 'most difficult' title.) I propose to bring to bear Rödl's theory of self-consciousness on that book in a way that will demonstrate that what he identifies as the heart of German Idealism is certainly right. I am not sure that the uses to which I will put his theory in discussing the *Logic* are, at the end of the day, still recognizably his, but his account opens up a way of discussing the importance of the topic of self-consciousness for what both Kant and the post-Kantians called 'logic'.

This is of course an insane proposal. 'Difficult' does not begin to describe *The Science of Logic*. But I will use Rödl's thesis as a focus for a reasonably manageable topic: the significance of self-consciousness for the general enterprise of the book, as a 'logic'. Hegel's book can be said to stand in a tradition of 'philosophical logic'

that includes Kant's *Transcendental Logic*, Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, Frege's *Begriffsschrift*, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, and Husserl's *Logical Investigations*. (Actually the tradition could simply be called 'philosophy', given the importance of the *logos* to Parmenides, and works like Plato's *Sophist* and Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*.) But the key to understanding his approach concerns two innovations in Kant's theory of logic, and I should mention them at the outset. The first is that Kant does not understand logic as rules for well-formed formulae and rules for truth-preserving inferences. His theory of logic is *a theory of thinking*. (His logic is a judgemental, not a propositional, logic.) But it is not, as in the *Port Royale* logic, a theory of the rules for thinking, either descriptively or prescriptively, neither rules for how we do think and make inferences nor rules for how we should. For Kant, logic sets out the rules that constitute thinking as such, and so its scope is far wider than, say, Frege's, since it covers more than truth-bearers. It covers imperatives and aesthetic judgements (which have only 'subjective universal validity'). So, contrary to *Port Royale*, not 'following' those rules is not thinking poorly or thinking irrationally. It is not thinking at all. And Kant relies on a key thesis from his critical philosophy in defining that scope: it is absolutely unrestricted. Logic has no content (and so is not transparent to the ontological structure of reality, as in the post-Aristotelian and Wolffian accounts of logic). That thesis is that thinking is exclusively discursive, can provide itself with no content, and can have content only by means of sensible experience. Hegel will accept Kant's view about the constitutive status of logic, but will reject this premiss from Kant's transcendental philosophy. We shall return to this point in what follows.

But Kant's other innovation was to insist that the 'I think' must be able to accompany all my representations, all my judgements. Judging, believing, acting are all inherently and necessarily self-conscious. That is the notion I want to explore below.

There is no question that the notion is extremely important to the *Logic*, which could fairly be said to everywhere about, in one way or another, the problem Hegel calls 'the unity of the concept'. That is clear from a single, famous passage in which that phrase occurs.

It is one of the profoundest and truest insights to be found in the *Critique of Reason* that the unity which constitutes the essence of the concept is recognized as the original synthetic unity of apperception,

the unity of the 'I think', or of self-consciousness.—This proposition is all that there is to the so-called transcendental deduction of the categories which, from the beginning, has however been regarded as the most difficult piece of Kantian philosophy ... (SL 12.18)¹

Roughly, the thought behind such remarks is this. What Kant called the original synthetic unity of apperception is what Hegel calls 'the essence of the unity of the concept'. This could be understood initially in a formal sense. Both unities are classic cases of 'one over many'. Even an empirical concept like *red* remains identifiable as the same red, the same colour, even in all the many and various instances and shades in which it appears. Analogously, the manifold of experience counts as a unity among such a manifold in all being ascribable to one I, that identical, self-same I who has all such experiences. But both Hegel and Kant do not want to merely point out a structural analogy. The unity of apperception *is* the unity of a concept. That is, as Kant makes clear, to say that experience is always subject to the original synthetic unity of apperception is to say that it is always subject to the understanding, the power of conceiving. So this *is* the power to hold things together as one, necessary for experience to have a unity ascribable to an identical I. Discriminating what belongs together with what, what is connected to what in a temporal order, knowing that the successive perceptions of a house do not count as the perception of a succession in the world, requires an apperceptive unity; it does not just happen to consciousness. What happens is mere succession. Such a unity is possible only self-consciously and it is the actualization of the power of conceiving. But the unity effected by the power of conceiving (where 'conceiving' means conceiving, not merely thinking together) *is* the representational unity that makes reference to an object possible. Unifying by 'red' achieves the unity that says how things are. It, the rose, belongs with the red things; not with what has seemed red-like to me before. Without this ability to distinguish how things are from how they seem to me, there would be as many 'I's as arbitrarily associated seemings; and no unity of self-consciousness. Or, achieving the unity of self-consciousness *is* differentiating seeming from being,

¹ *The Science of Logic (SL)* is cited by volume and page number of the standard German edition of Hegel's collected works; translations are from the Cambridge edition by George di Giovanni. Citations of Hegel's *Encyclopedia (E)* are given by paragraph number. Publication details are given in the References section below.

and so the rules for that distinction, categories, are constitutive of such unity. In other words, the ‘conditions of the possibility of experience are at the same time the conditions of the possibility of objects of experience’.² Kant proposed an argument to show that any unity that could be said to be a product of affection alone, like an associative unity, presupposed what he called ‘a transcendental affinity’, that is, a power to distinguish a mere succession of representations from a representation of objective succession. Without that power, there could be no ‘one over many’, no manifold belonging to one I, one experiencer. Hegel does not rely on the subjective form of inner sense like this, and argued, as above, that if we understand correctly that the unity of any concept is the unity of apperception, and that such a unity is what establishes a possible relation to an object, then the categories, as the moments of any such possible unifying power, will thereby be shown to be actual, to make possible representation of objects. Or, a rigorous Metaphysical Deduction, *properly conceived*, is the only deduction we need.

With this brief background, the first task is to give some general overview of what *The Science of Logic* is about, more or less. This will lead naturally into Rödl’s account of self-consciousness. Then I will try to draw out some implications of this sort of focus for the structure and movement of the book.

I

Although Hegel devotes surprisingly little space to any discussion of what he is doing in the book (in effect, he just does it),³ the ambition of the treatise as a ‘logic’ appears to concern the very possibility of rendering anything intelligible, where that could mean a number of things—offering a satisfying explanation,⁴ giving an account, *ton*

² Henrich (1982) has suggested two other ways in which objectivity, the possibility of true subject–predicate predication, depends on self-consciousness. Such predication is the ascription of a general term to a particular. But the successful identification of the particular requires the use of indexicals, which in turn require the mastery of the first-person pronoun and all that entails. Any subject that can refer must also have identified itself (Henrich 1982, p. 135). And, in way close to that described here, the intelligibility of any proposition presupposes the possibility of propositional assertion (*Satzbehauptung*), which requires differentiating how it seems to me from how it is. Necessarily, anyone capable of such a distinction is self-aware (Henrich 1982, p. 136).

³ Compare with Theunissen (1978, pp. 88 ff.), and Jäschke’s response (2010, p. 222).

⁴ ‘Satisfying’ in the sense mentioned in *E* §17.

logon didonai, or justifying a deed. What is in question at such a level of attempted comprehensiveness in *The Science of Logic* is, or at least appears to be, something like *an account of all possible account-givings*, a scope that would include everything from ethical justifications to empirical judgements to the concept of explanation presupposed by the Second Law of Thermodynamics.⁵ (This signals his acceptance of Kant's first innovation.) The most ambitious goal of Hegel's *Logic* is to show that the variety of accounts is finite and that not only are these forms of account-giving not incommensurable but they are in some way interdependent. Thinking, on such an account, is not a perceiving or a grasping, although a perceiving or grasping can be the ground of having understood something or the ground of claiming something to be the case. A thinking is aimed at getting something in some sense right; paradigmatically in a knowing. Of course, what it is to get something right, holding to be so appropriately, rendering successfully intelligible, is also one of the contents we want to get right. This creates the self-reflective paradox of what Hegel calls the Logic of the Concept, or the concept of the concept.

This will clearly require a theory of conceptuality, the heart of the determinate generality presumed in account-giving formulated whatever way one likes: judging (asserting), explaining, understanding.⁶ In an assumption Hegel shares with Kant, any such account-giving or rendering intelligible is always necessarily discursive. Any determinate concept is itself some sort of 'result' of a determination involving other concepts. So in the *Logic*, an array of concepts (or concept kinds)—being, nothing, becoming, something, other, finitude, infinitude, the one, the many, continuity, discrete magnitude, number, measure, essence, appearance, identity, difference, contra-

⁵ The basic claim is that Hegel's *Encyclopedia* is best understood as a theory of *explanatory adequacy*, an enterprise that must presuppose a general account of any possible account-giving. See also Pippin (2008, ch. 2), which is a later version of an article written in 1999. That work concentrated on the implications of such an approach for Hegel's account of 'nature' and 'spirit' and the relation between them, and did not address the ambitions of a Science of Logic. A preliminary account of what that (the *Logic* as about possible intelligibility, explanatory adequacy) *might* look like was presented in Pippin (1989, p. 40) on an 'account of all account giving', but that was sketchy and programmatic. (And I am certainly not the only one defending the centrality of explanation and explanatory success in understanding the *Logic*. See Pinkard (1988) on 'the explanation of possibility'.) It seems to have left the impression with some that the position attributed to Hegel was: an investigation of 'how we have to think about things', what the requirements for pure thinking of anything are, be the world as it may. That was certainly not the position attributed.

diction, ground, relation, concept, judgement, syllogism, life; even ‘the idea of the true’ and ‘the idea of the good’, and many others—make appearances like characters in some fast-paced drama, struggle to make a case for themselves, as if trying ‘to say what they are’,⁷ only to fail in some unusual way, and to give way to putatively more successful successors, which themselves give way in turn. It is clear enough that the central problem seems to be how to account for the *determinacy* of these basic rules for possible sense-makings, or the right account of their conceptual content. (In the *Encyclopedia*, knowing in the general sense of intending intelligible content is said to be ‘determining and determinate thinking’ (E §48).)

This is just a first pass at familiarizing ourselves with the topic. It will recur in different forms constantly throughout. Summarized very crudely, these ‘kinds’ of determinacy are expressed in three different ‘logics’ in basic assertion types. Said in terms of predicative forms, Hegel wants to argue for the indispensability, irreducibility and inter-relatedness of the forms, ‘*a* is *F*’; ‘*a* is essentially or necessarily *F*’; and ‘*a* is a good *F*’.

Various higher-order concepts are said to be presupposed in such possible determinations, ranging from ‘finitude’ to ‘essence’ and ‘law’, to ‘universality’, ‘life’ and ‘the idea of the good’. None of these concepts can be understood to be derived empirically. The idea is clearly that they can be shown to be presupposed in any empirical determination (in different ways, in the different logical contexts) and their content is a matter of both ‘internal’, self-related ‘moments’ and ‘external’ dependence on relations to contrary or otherwise ‘negative’ ‘moments’.

For Hegel as for many others, the content of a true assertion is

⁶ The relations between concept, judgement, syllogism and system, or the various elements of an ‘account’, will emerge frequently in what follows. Another analogue to Hegel’s enterprise comes from Frege, when, in *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, he noted that the laws of logic were not like the laws of nature, but were ‘the laws of the laws of nature’ (Frege 1980, §87). As we shall see, Hegel too wants to say that that the truths of his logic do not apply to things or objects, but to the ‘*Sache*’ or the ‘*Wesenheiten*’ of things. Throughout passages like this, Hegel is distinguishing the question of actuality, the proper subject matter of the *Logic*, from questions about existence. It is the kind of issue that arises when we ask if some practice is ‘really’ religious; peyote smoking, say. We don’t doubt that the practice exists; we want to know its ‘essentiality’, *Wert, Sache an sich selbst*, and so forth. We don’t doubt that animals exist; we want to know if they are actually rights-bearers. As Quine pointed out, the answer to the question ‘What is there?’ is easy: everything. Hegel would then note that not everything is an actuality.

⁷ Hegel speaks often of the ‘inner drive’ propelling the *Logic* forward.

what is the case, and so these constitutive moments of any possible intelligible assertion are the ‘forms of reality’. This marks his break with Kant. Any assertable claim (of various sorts) must be an expression of such conceptual specifications of possible intelligibility, and these intelligibility conditions constitute the possibility of intelligible bearers of truth (judgements). The forms of intelligibility are the forms of what could be true, and so of what possibly is, although they do not settle the question of what, in particular, is true. What we want to know is both something about the material relations of exclusion necessary to differentiate and render contentful these higher-order concepts (this is the famous topic of dialectical negation), and why there should be some inherent problem, some unavoidable inconsistency or antinomy, under the specific assumptions of each ‘logic’, in specifying those internal and external relations.

Here is a summary claim by Hegel that begins to indicate the bearing of Rödl’s topic on the *Logic*: ‘As science, truth is pure self-consciousness as it develops itself and has the shape of the self, so that that which exists in and for itself is the known [*gewußte*] concept and the concept as such is that which exists in and for itself’ (*SL* 21.33, my emphasis).⁸

A strange and complicated double identity: first, science, developing self-consciousness, in the shape of a self, and truth all form one identity; all of which is supposed to allow us to conclude a second identity: being in and for itself and the ‘known’ concept. In the first edition of the *Logic*, he simply says that ‘*truth* [the truth of being, the determination of what things truly are] is *self-consciousness* [the forms of self-conscious judgement]’.⁹ To understand this, we need to understand more of Hegel’s relation to Kant.

⁸ There are passages like this from the *Philosophy of Spirit*: ‘Was *gedacht* ist, *ist*; und daß, was *ist*, nur *ist*, insofern es *Gedanke* ist’ (*E* §465). But it is clear that by this point in the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel is not talking about what merely exists, and suddenly turning into Bishop Berkeley by claiming *esse est percipi*. (He says ‘*Gedanke*’, not ‘*gedacht*’.) What a thing truly or actually is, is its concept, and a concept is not a self-standing ‘thought’ but a moment in a network of mutually interdefining rules of determination.

⁹ ‘*Oder der Begriff der Wahrheit ist, daß die Wahrheit das reine Selbstbewußtsein sey ...*’ (*SL* 11.21).

II

The vast disagreements between Kant and Hegel are well known, especially about such issues as idealism and the thing in itself. But there is deeper agreement than disagreement between Kant and Hegel on ‘the logic of possible thinking’ when one notes how much of what Kant wants to distinguish as general logic already relies, in his own words, on his transcendental theory, and that has to mean: on the transcendental determination of possible content. To mention the point on which the heart of the theoretical issue between Kant and Hegel turns, in the *Critique* Kant writes, ‘And thus the synthetic unity of apperception is the highest point to which one must affix all use of the understanding, even the whole of logic and, after it, transcendental philosophy; indeed this faculty is the understanding itself’ (B134n.). This is tied to an even more general point:

I find that a judgment is nothing other than the way to bring given cognitions to the *objective* unity of apperception. That is, the aim of the copula is in them: to distinguish the objective unity of representations from the subjective. For this word designates the relation of the representations to the original apperception and its *necessary unity*, even if the judgment itself is empirical, hence contingent, e.g. ‘Bodies are heavy’. By that, to be sure, I do not mean to say that these representations *necessarily* belong to one another in the empirical intuition, but rather that they belong to one another *in virtue of the necessary unity* of the apperception in the synthesis of intuitions, i.e. in accordance with the principles of the objective determination of all representations insofar as cognition can come from them, which principles are all derived from the principle of the transcendental unity of apperception. (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* B142)

This is a new theory of judgement, and accordingly grounds a new understanding of logic, especially the logic of concepts and judgement. Such an interpretative claim makes clear that, somewhat contrary to Kant’s own presentation, general logic is *an abstraction from* a more original and basic theory, in Kant’s language a transcendental theory of the possible conceptual determination of an object (the ‘logic’ that ‘coincides with metaphysics’ in Hegel’s account), and not some basic, ‘empty’ form to which ‘content’ is added.

It all also entails that what we have to call Kant’s ‘theory of thinking’ (‘account-giving’, judging) has a component that is not something merely supplemental to the basic features of his general

or content-less logic as rules for valid judgments and inferences. It is, rather, *the* basic feature: judging is apperceptive. This is a logical truth, a truth in, of, general logic, as the B134 passage insisted. And that has to mean, in a very peculiar sense important to Hegel, but which will take some time to unpack, that such judgments are necessarily and inherently reflexive, and so at the very least are self-referential, even if such a reflected content is not substantive, does not refer to a subject's focusing on her judging activity, as if a second consciousness of the event of thinking.

That is, to judge is not only to be aware of what one is judging, but that one is judging, asserting, claiming something. If it were not apperceptive like this, it would be indistinguishable from the differential responsiveness of a thermometer, and thermometers cannot *defend* their claims or readings. But one is not, cannot be, simultaneously judging that one is judging. Rather, judgement somehow *is* the consciousness of judging. These are not two acts, but one. As Rödl puts it, 'The spontaneity of thought is of a special kind: it is a spontaneity whose acts are knowledge of these very acts' (2007, p. 14).¹⁰ (We should note that in this tradition, propositional structure, considered on its own, represents nothing, because it claims nothing.)

Kant was well aware that with this notion of apperceptive judging he was breaking with the rationalist (and Lockean) notion of reflection as inner perception, and as we shall see, Hegel's language is everywhere carefully Kantian in this respect.¹¹ Since self-conscious-

¹⁰ This principle has implications for action as well; for example, that I know what I am doing by being the person who does it; that I know that I believe something by believing it; that 'My knowing that *p* includes and is included in my knowing that I know it, which latter knowledge therefore is unmediated first person knowledge' (Rödl 2007, p. 139); that 'actions do not point to a state of mind as to their cause. Acting intentionally *is* being of a certain mind' (Rödl 2007, p. 49). This latter is a Hegelian thought, albeit with implications others than those Rödl draws. See Pippin (2008, pp. 147–79).

¹¹ For example, when discussing Fichte, he says, 'If other Kantians have expanded on the determining of the intended object by the "I" by saying that the objectifying of the "I" is to be regarded as an original and necessary deed of consciousness, so that in this original deed there is not yet the representation of the "I"—which would be only a consciousness of that consciousness, or itself an objectifying of that consciousness—then this objectifying deed, liberated from the opposition of consciousness, is closer to what may be taken simply as thinking as such. But this deed should no longer be called consciousness; for consciousness holds within itself the opposition of the "I" and its intended object *which is not to be found in that original deed*. The name "consciousness" gives it more of a semblance of subjectivity than does the term "thought", which here, however, is to be taken in the absolute sense of infinite thought, not as encumbered by the finitude of consciousness; in short, thought as such' (SL 21.47–8).

ness is the form of all possible knowledge and action, a great deal will hang on what we should call the appropriate 'logic' of this self-relation, where we mean not what we intend when we turn our attention to ourselves, but in what relation to ourselves we are when we claim something or act.

It is, however, extremely difficult to formulate this point properly. Rödl says: not two acts but one. I know what I believe, know of my beliefs, by being the believer, by being identical with one who believes. But the grammar of the formulation that I quoted says: acts of theoretical knowledge are *also*, besides being knowledge of some state of affairs, 'knowledge of these very acts'. (Even the formulation: 'judgement *is*, is identical with, is the same thing as, the consciousness of judgement' introduces the language of consciousness and object into the apperceptive dimension in a way that can be confusing.) In knowing that the book is red, if I say that I know something about the book *and* something about my acts of knowledge, *why* are there not two acts? (There certainly can be contexts in which my assertion itself could be the object of an intentional attitude, in response, say, to someone asking, 'Just think about that claim!' But that is a special circumstance and a special act of attentiveness.) I cannot be a believer unless I know that I am believing, and I know that by being the believer. But, besides what I believe, what exactly do I know by being the believer? I don't know that the proposition 'I am the believer' is true, and I am not somehow acquainted with a special object, myself, in coming to believe something. Again, that formulation, 'knowledge of my acts' of belief, would seem to mean: I also *know* that I have knowledge of my acts; but then we would be off to the regresses. (These same potential misapprehensions pertain to the formulations Rödl uses elsewhere to analyse a genuine unity of disparate elements in consciousness. That unity is nothing but the consciousness of that unity; and the consciousness of that unity is nothing other than the unity of which it is conscious.)

There must be some way of saying that the self-conscious dimension of thought and action is a matter of the way a claim is made or a belief avowed, or an action undertaken. To borrow the approach to many similar problems taken by Ryle, they are accomplished 'self-consciously', rather than accompanied by or even identical with, another act of consciousness. There is only one act; action, for example, is the consciousness of action. There is not an acting and

also a being conscious of what one is doing. Acting is being conscious of what one is doing. So there is a self-referential component in any judgement or action ('I think this, I act thusly'), but it can be misleading to think that this is the same problem as, for example, 'How does the first-person pronoun have sense, and thereby pick me out uniquely?'.¹²

I understand this adverbial qualification to be suggested by Rödl in his discussion of what he calls an unmediated way of knowing, 'from the inside', not of some 'other' or by any inner perception. Knowing from the inside (by being the knower) is 'a way of knowing such that my first-person reference is constituted by a relation I bear to the object—identity—by which I know it *in this way*' (Rödl 2007, p. 10; my emphasis). Or by the precision of his saying, 'when I know an object *in a first-person way*, I know it by being that object' (Rödl 2007, p. 98).

This question ('What exactly do I know besides what I believe by being the believer?') is the same question as 'How can the self-relation inherent in all cognitive relation to the world announced by Kant, and in all action, which self-relation certainly *has* the grammatical form of a dyadic relation, *not* be a dyadic relation, but be the expression of an identity?' Since self-consciousness is the basic structural feature of knowledge and action according to Rödl, the supreme necessary condition for anything *being* believing or acting, everything depends on the right formulation and drawing the right implications. I don't know what I am doing by *identifying myself* with the one acting, but by *being* the one acting. So how can such a Two also be One? We are in the middle of everything of significance in Hegel's *Logic*, not to mention Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* and Schelling's early idealism. We are at the heart of the problem they called *Identitätstheorie*. (For example, in Fichte's early versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, the possibility of the I's or ego's identification of itself in all its experiences mirrors the 'division' at the heart of any statement of identity, a division that is also somehow not a division, as in the difference between 'A is A' and simply 'A'. In fact, he

¹² See Ryle (1979, p. 24): 'To X, thinking what one is doing, is not to be doing both some X-ing and some separately do-able Y-ing; it is to be X-ing under a variety of qualifications, such as X-ing on purpose, with some tentativeness, some vigilance against some known hazards, some perseverance and with at least a modicum of intended or unintended self-training. It is to X intentionally, experimentally, circumspectly and practisingly, and these by themselves are not additional things that he is doing or might be doing.'

argues, the very intelligibility of any statement of the law of identity presupposes the I's self-identity and self-differentiation. A cannot be identified as A unless the 'I' of the 'first' A is the same as the 'I' of the second A and knows it is. And since identity is the first principle of any possible intelligibility, the issue is, in the systematic sense, primordial.)

This too is important to state carefully. Hegel scholars often assume that Hegel inherits 'identity philosophy' from Schelling, and that it means 'the identity of subject and object'. They then formulate various philosophically implausible versions of such an identity, such as that true reality is divine thought thinking itself, that objects are moments of this thought's 'intellectual intuition of itself'. But the *Logic* is not committed to anything remotely like this. As we shall see in more detail in a moment, in thinking of identity, Hegel is first of all thinking of self-consciousness in any consciousness, where the subject of knowledge is identical with itself, where there is no difference between the subject and the object of its knowledge; all of this as Rödl formulates it in his own terms. And Rödl is expressing a Hegelian thought when he says that this is not just a feature of an isolated problematic, a theory of self-consciousness. This unusual identity is constitutive of 'theoretical thought' as such. Theoretical thought, he says, 'is a reality that includes its subject's knowledge of it' (Rödl 2007, p. 101). So a subject's knowledge 'that and why she believes what she does, which she expresses in giving the explanation, is not a separate existence from what it represents. It includes and is included in the reality of which it is knowledge' (Rödl 2007, p. 101).

This has an important implication. The theoretical thought of any content cannot be understood as the momentary or punctuated grasp of a solitary item. The thought of the content is also, is identical with, the thought of whatever reasons there are to delimit a concept in such a way and not some other; for example, the thought of discreteness, in its contrast with continuity, or the thought of essence in its contrast with appearances. We are not thinking of discreteness if we cannot think of what such a notion excludes, presupposes, requires, if we have no idea how such discrete magnitudes could form a continuum. These are, for Hegel, reasons which differentiate it from its contrary. Reasons that allow success in distinguishing the content from its complements or contraries. That the thought of the content is also the thought of my thinking it has this implication, is

what that apperceptive element amounts to.

But now we can try to explain something that can sound very extreme, which Rödl alludes to but does not develop. In a swipe at empiricism, he notes that thought has the power *to be the principle of the existence of its objects*. He does not say one object, thought itself, but all its proper objects. To some this will sound like Fichte, that the *Ich*, in positing itself, posits the *Nicht-Ich*. That is absolutely right, but not in the sense in which it is usually understood. Consider this passage from ‘The Second Introduction’ to the 1796/1799 *Wissenschaftslehre (nova methodo)*, translated as *Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy*. The passage I am interested in follows a general claim that ‘The idealist observes that experience in its entirety is nothing but an acting on the part of a rational being’ (Fichte 1998, p. 105). There then follows a gloss on ‘the viewpoint of idealism’:

The idealist observes how there must come to be things for the individual. Thus the situation is different for the [observed] individual than it is for the philosopher. The individual is confronted with things, men, etc., that are independent of him. But the idealist says, ‘There are no things outside me and present independently of me’. Though the two say opposite things, they do not contradict each other. For the idealist, from his own viewpoint, displays the necessity of the individual’s view. When the idealist says, ‘outside of me’, he means ‘outside of reason’; when the individual says the same thing, he means ‘outside of my person’. (Fichte 1998, pp. 105–6).

So to bring all this together:

Judgement *is* the consciousness of judgement.

But one is ‘conscious of judging’ in an unusual way, by *being* the judger. Being the judger, believer or thinker of anything is as if in answer to the question what ought to be judged, believed or thought in that way.

This means, at the highest abstraction, that the thought (belief, assertion) of some content (like finitude or causality) is at the same time the thought of the reasons that are required for such an ‘answer’.

If the thought of *objects* (as a successful thought) is identical in this way with the thought of what is presupposed and required for such a determination, then there is a way of stating the identity of subject and object, or the *Ich*’s determination of the

Nicht-Ich in its positing of itself that is captured in the quotation from Fichte just given.

The determination of the object as that object or that kind of object is at the same time the determination of the reasons (the subject's reasons) to so determine it.

Finally, thought can also investigate what is generally presupposed, what is required, in order to judge anything, to think determinately any content. It does not learn these from experience; does not apprehend them as ideal objects.

It has to be said to give them to itself.

The record of some such attempts is *The Science of Logic*.

Since these meta-concepts are the forms of whatever can be truly said, and what is truly said is what is the case, they are the forms of reality.

Herein lies another lesson, though, in the difficulty of finding the right formulation. Rödl, in discussing the main features of this order, inferential relations, believing q because I believe p and p implies q , argues that such inferences themselves reveal that there must be a reason it is right to believe something *other than* because of an inference from something else one believes. This different way 'will reveal the order under which I bring myself in asking what to believe' (Rödl 2007, p. 70). He recalls his previous chapter on action, where he had shown that a chain of practical instrumental reasoning terminates 'in a finite end that no longer falls under the normative order under which the conclusion is brought, but is that order' (p. 70). Likewise, he says now, in theoretical knowledge, 'a chain of inferences must terminate in beliefs that no longer conform to, but are the order to which beliefs inferred from them conform' (p. 71). Later he will say that 'the order of inference is not self-standing' (p. 88). Rather, 'inference is governed by an order to which one conforms in acts of believing that something is the case that manifests a power of knowledge' (p. 88). This is a difficult sentence. The last 'that' clause could modify 'order' or 'acts of believing'. The ambiguity does not affect the point I want to make, which is the following.

It cannot be the case that this moment that defines the rightness of the whole order of inferences is itself the content of a separate be-

lief or representation. We would be heading straight for Carroll's paradoxes of Achilles and the tortoise. It must be that *what it is* to determine what it is right to believe because of what else one believes is *itself*, just thereby, 'to reveal the order under which I bring myself in asking what to believe'. And this in the same difficult-to-state way that judgement is the consciousness of judgement. And in just the same way that, being committed to the truth of a proposition, I am just thereby committed to the denial of everything inconsistent with it. The latter is not a separate inference I draw, on the basis of my first commitment. It is a dimension of the content of my first commitment. This is not to say I must be conscious of these implications and incompatibilities. Just that I could not be thinking that content were I not able to be responsive to such considerations. This is all so just as someone's believing something and her thought that it is something right to believe '*are the same reality*' (Rödl 2007, p. 92).¹³

Reflection on these features of judging or believing or doing brings us back to our starting point.¹⁴ Their all being undertaken self-consciously means no one could be said to 'just' assert, or just believe or just act. Any such undertaking, if self-conscious, must be potentially responsive to the question of 'Why?'; that is, to reasons. (An assertion *is* such a responsiveness; the latter is not a secondary or even distinct dimension of the former.) And it is at least plausible to say that the greater the extent of such potential responsiveness (or said another way, the greater the self-understanding), the 'freer' the activity, the more I can be said to redeem the action as genuinely mine, back it, stand behind it, as mine. (We thus have that heart of German Idealism cited at the outset, the principle 'that self-consciousness, freedom and reason are one'—Rödl 2007, p. 105.)

¹³ Or see Rödl (2007, p. 96). His view is that the thought 'I believe that p because ____' and the thought 'It is right to believe p because ____' stand in a relation such that the former represents the latter, the theoretical reasoning. But these are not two thoughts. He says, 'In fact, her thinking the thought that represents the causality is her thinking the thought that is the causality'. Or (p. 97) the 'causality of the [belief] explanation contains the subject's representation of this very causality'.

¹⁴ Believing is more complicated, because there can be several things I believe that I don't know I believe. But in determining what you believe, you are not searching in an inner mental inventory; you are determining what you take to be true, what you could apperceptively affirm.

III

At this point, we have to note that Hegel adds his own unusual spin to this trio of abstractions. A proper understanding of the self's relation to itself in thinking, the form of any conceiving, and thereby of any concept understood as a moment of conceiving, and thereby any inferential relation, is also the core meaning of the what Hegel calls the 'infinity' treated by speculative philosophy (*E* §28A),¹⁵ all in contradistinction to (traditional) metaphysics, the domain of *Verstand* and finitude (*E* §27). Later in the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel states Kant's point in his own speculative language: 'What is here called object of reason, the unconditioned or infinite, is nothing but the self-equivalent [*das Sich-selbst-Gleiche*]; in other words, it is the original identity of the I in thinking' (*E* §45).

I think that Rödl's formulations have given us some hope that we might understand why Hegel equates the 'object of reason' with 'the original identity of the I in thinking'. (Or why he calls 'truth' 'self-consciousness'.) But Hegel's formulations about the infinite character of this self-relation are difficult. He has invoked a self-relation that is something like a circular structure, in which the self's self-relation never terminates in a distinct object or determinate posit (and so, despite appearances, is never dyadic), but in so attending, returns to itself as the thinker of such a thought. It would have to, since the subject *is* the object it is aware of. The relation is to a 'self' that is the original subject of the relation; a relation, or a difference, even with such an identity, to insert Hegel's frequent way of framing the issue. This is 'infinity' in the proper sense, Hegel tells us frequently,¹⁶ and, as he says in his discussion of 'Being-for-self', 'Self-consciousness is thus the nearest example of the presence of infinity' (*SL* 21.145).¹⁷

¹⁵ The idea, which will recur frequently, of thought, in its relation to itself in any relation to an object, not being limited by its object, does not mean that subjects ultimately just decide what to affirm. 'Can' in this sense means that thought as such can be delimited (assert this, and not that) only by thought, not by non-thought. An essentially Fichtean point.

¹⁶ See Horstmann's discussion of this claim in Horstmann (2006, pp. 69–84). Horstmann demonstrates that Hegel means by infinity 'self-related subjectivity' in this sense, but without more detail about what makes such 'subjectivity' *subjective*, there is a danger of reifying the *Logic*'s object, as if some self-moving categorical structure in itself, or 'the logical process' (Horstmann 2006, p. 83). One can avoid attributing to Hegel a so-called subjectivistic, impositionist, noumenally ignorant idealism, without such a mystified 'objectivism'. For that matter, that characterization is unfair to Kant as well.

¹⁷ This is of course not the only concept of the infinite that Hegel treats in the *Logic*. In the section on Quantity in the *Logic*, for example, he discusses the mathematical infinite as it

There has to be something of this thought in Rödl's position. The believer knows of her acts of believing not by inner perception or inference but by being the believer. But this 'identity' is not something like the identification of one thing with another, the way a reductionist would identify mental states with brain states (that is, claim there are only brain states). So occasionally Rödl must formulate more metaphorically. As we saw before, he says: a subject's knowledge 'that and why she believes what she does, which she expresses in giving the explanation, is not a separate existence from what it represents. It includes and is included in the reality of which it is knowledge' (Rödl 2007, p. 101).

'Includes' and especially 'included in' a reality of which she has knowledge sound metaphorically an idealist note (what is it for reasons to be included in a reality?), and also evinces some aspects of the 'identity and non-identity' language the idealists were fond of. (One can note the problem by comparing this language of 'including' with what he had said before. 'Her believing it and her thought that it is something right to believe are *the same reality*'—Rödl 2007, p. 92; italics in original.)

Hegel had said that the subject matter of the Logic is thinking (*Denken*), understood as an activity (*Tätigkeit*) which means it, thinking, is the 'active universal' (*das tätige Allgemeine*) (E §20) or the 'self-activating' (*sich betätigende*) universal, because the deed (*Tat*) or that brought about (*Hervorgebrachte*) is the universal (*das Allgemeine*). At the beginning of *The Logic of the Concept*, Hegel glosses this activity in a way that also expresses a Kantian thought. That is, he rejects the idea of the judgement as the combination of independent concepts, subjects and predicates, and insists instead that the relation between the determinacy of concepts and their roles in judgements is in effect one of identity; their determinacy is their role in judging. He has his own way of putting this, but I think the point is clear. He is trying to explain here what he means by saying that 'the Concept as such does not abide within itself [*prozeßlos in sich verharrend*] without development' (E §166Z), calling the concept instead 'totally active' in that it is always 'distinguishing it-

appears in the differential and integral calculus, and he engages in a critique of the notion of the 'infinitesimal'. (His general claim is that the ordinary notion of the infinite is 'contradictory' because it treats the infinite as finite, as the concept of what totality one would reach by conceiving of some endless series as a whole. The infinite is treated as a thing and not as the principle of the extension, as a function.) For the best discussion of Hegel's treatment of the mathematically infinite, see Pinkard (1988, pp. 45–54).

self from itself' (*E* §166Z). 'This sundering [*Diremption*] of the Concept into the distinction of its moments that is posited by its own activity is *the judgment*, the significance of which must accordingly be conveyed as the particularization [*Besonderung*] of the Concept' (*E* §166Z; my emphasis).¹⁸

In Kant as well as in Hegel, concepts are predicates of possible judgements, even the concepts or the categories, dependence on which is necessary for any empirical conceptual determination to be possible. This means that concepts cannot be independently 'grasped' as determinate entities. Thinking that they could be produces what Hegel is forever calling 'dead', lifeless, static, 'untrue' concepts. (This truth is part of what we are learning in the *Seinslogik*; learning that it is not possible to understand conceptual determinacy this way, all by assuming it is, and failing.) And this means that the *Seinslogik* can be deeply misleading, as if we *are* simply entertaining concepts as such, one by one.¹⁹ In trying to understand this claim, we can recall here the passage where Hegel had claimed that the Gestalt, the form, of concepts was the *form of the self*, that in science, the truth is self-consciousness.

Concepts have the form of a self in this sense, are moments of apperceptive predication, self-conscious judging. They have this reflective structure—knowledge of their determinate content is also knowledge of the considerations for just such a delimitation. And they are what they are (in this reflective way) taken to be, determined to be, necessarily in the interconnected practices of conceptual determination. This alone will be the source of the claim for 'logical movement' in the greater *Logic*, and through such logical movement, a finally determinate logical order. Judgement is said to be the 'determining of the Concept through itself' (*SL* 12.53) and is said to be 'the realisation [*Realisierung*] of the concept, for reality [*Realität*] denotes in general the entry into existence as determinate being' (*SL* 12.53) Or: concepts are only determinate by virtue of

¹⁸ His own paraphrase of this claim will require some preparation to understand properly: 'If we advance from this to the judging of the object, the judgment is not our subjective doing, by which this or that predicate is ascribed to the object; on the contrary, we are considering the object in the determinacy that is posited by the concept' (*E* §166Z).

¹⁹ So the idea that one sometimes hears, that if we can figure out the 'dialectical method' at the beginning, in the first transitions, we will have a fix on the 'method' and understand it later in the work, is misguided. Nothing could be further from the Hegelian truth. Compare to Henrich's clear statement of the problems we get into when we take such an approach (Henrich 1971a, p. 81).

their roles in judgement, the ‘bringing to the objective unity of apperception’, in Kant’s definition.

So a concept like ‘essence’, for example, can be said to be delimitable as just that concept by virtue of its possible uses in various contrasts with ‘appearance’, or by virtue of its negation (in the grand structure of the *Logic*) of the concept ‘being’ or its role in distinguishing accidental from essential predicates. These are all roles in judgements (and are thereby tied to judgemental roles in inferences). Any of these uses, though, involves any such claim in a network of justifications, a normative order. The application of any such concept in judgement, since apperceptive, self-consciously applied, must be, just thereby, responsive to its possible misapplication, and the question of the general contours of its correct use implicates any one notion in the normative proprieties governing many others. Hence the course of the ‘movement’ of the *Logic*.

With this topic of ‘infinity’, though, we are at the very limits now of being able to follow Hegel, at least at my limits. We still need some non-metaphorical sense of how, in non-empirical cases, settling on some determination of conceptual content, because necessarily self-conscious, is a settling on, at the same time, much more than an isolated or punctuated grasp of anything. That the self-relation involved in such a full determination, in effect, thought’s determination of its own possibility (the possibility of rendering determinately intelligible at all), should be understood as ‘infinity’, does not seem very helpful. It might help us understand why Hegel sometimes seems to say that knowing or determining one content would be to know or determine everything, but that does not advance our understanding of the issue itself.

It would be reasonable to say that, formulated this way, the prospect of understanding the structure of this self-relation in some systematic way (and by hypothesis that would mean understanding the possibility of intelligible knowing and acting) is impossible, and the impossibility represents the failure of German Idealism. This is Dieter Henrich’s claim. We could conclude from this either that we have made a wrong turn somewhere and must begin anew or that the issue itself—or the complex of issues, self-relation in relation to the world, practical self-knowledge in action that involves no strange inner eye—does not allow a systematic, only an ‘approximate’ or indirect, articulation of value as a weapon against naturalism. (The latter is Henrich’s position; merely ‘approximate’ is his term.) Or we

could hope that the problem in formulating this structure stems from the limitations inherent in a kind of formulation, what Hegel calls the formulations of *Verstand*, and that a different conception of the ‘logic of thought’, of intelligibility, might be possible, and adequate to this infinite self-relation. This is, of course, Hegel’s position in *The Science of Logic*. Said more simply, understanding this self-relation in thinking and acting is the most important element to understand in understanding ourselves as thinkers and agents, and, Hegel in effect claims, we are captured by a largely empiricist picture of how to achieve this understanding, a picture of ‘consciousness’ and ‘objects’. The *Phenomenology* was supposed to have helped us, therapeutically, break the hold of this picture. In the *Logic* the one thing required is that we understand, by contrast with this empiricist picture, that thought, the Concept, does not acquire content, but ‘gives itself’ its own content. This is very similar as well to Rödl’s formulation, and it is the final element we need in understanding ‘the heart of German Idealism’.

That is, we need to begin by realizing that the determination of the conceptual content involved in the thinking of anything at all consists of determinate attempts at predicative specification. At the level of abstraction of the *Logic*, the level of meta-conceptual functions that have empirical, scientific and ethical concepts as their arguments, the role of self-consciousness in the possibility and shape of such an enterprise has a distinct feature. Any such determining is at the same time conscious of such determining in the way specified: just by *being* the act of determination. But then the determination is implicated in a normative order, the reasons which require or prohibit some such determination, but ultimately the full exposition of which would be needed for a successful determination. In that sense we have to say that the I’s being itself in its thinking and acting is at the same time it’s not being fully or wholly itself. Its reasons, under some finite set of assumptions about qualitative predication or essential predication, run out. Being itself and not being itself, that is, not being able to fulfil the intention resolved (to adequately determine content), places me in a state of opposition with myself that Hegel calls a contradiction, not at all in the formal logical sense (i.e. something logically false), but in the ordinary sense when we say to someone, ‘You’re contradicting yourself’.

It is clear enough what is at stake for Hegel in such a self-determination, and it is clear in another register in Rödl’s book. The culmi-

nation of the course of the demonstration in the *Logic* is the Logic of the Concept (or the concept of the concept, thought's determination of its own possibility), about which Hegel says that having reached this realm we have reached the realm of subjectivity and freedom. Later, in the account of the Logic of the Concept itself, he says that 'In the concept, therefore, the kingdom of freedom is disclosed' (*SL* 12.15). In the Addition to §31 of the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel waxes poetic over such 'logical' freedom, using a dramatic image to characterize the achievement of such a logic. Using his technical term for freedom, *Beisichsein*, being with oneself, he says, 'This being with self [*Beisichsein*] belongs to free thinking, a free voyaging, where, with nothing under us and nothing over us, in solitude, alone by ourselves, we are purely at home with ourselves' (*E* 98).²⁰ This sets the bar pretty high for a poor commentator, but, if these considerations are right, then at least we can have some sense what stakes we are playing for and what the game is.

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²⁰ He explains the freedom theme a bit more in *E* §23.

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