

Reflected being

1. Essence and the problem of idealism

The "Logic of Being" had been an account of the interrelated concepts necessarily involved in the attempt to think being as it is in itself, immediately. It had been, that is, a logic of the concepts and the relation among concepts involved in the attempt to think determinately about reality, when reality is generally construed within a certain kind of theory, a precritical realism. However, aside from a "bad," infinite list of qualities, or a quantitative specification that turns out to be "indifferently" related to its qualitative implications, determinacy is just what the project of being had not achieved. (If the object of thought is so stipulated, there could not be thought of such an object, and so in the idealist sense of the claim as I am attributing it to Hegel, there could not "be" such an "actual" object.) Such determination, it was argued, required more than the specification of directly apprehended qualities, qualities that one object had and another did not. The object itself would not be picked out unless it were (impossibly) distinguished from literally everything by such a procedure. We need to know the ground by virtue of which we can claim that having such properties distinguishes this thing as such and can be used to contrast a "qualitative thing" (a kind of thing) with its contraries. And such a basis for the contrastive use of properties involves more than attention to the properties themselves; it involves, we now hear, what Hegel calls an "act of reflection." Some kind of independent reflective activity (logically and causally independent of what can be directly apprehended), thought's own projection of the structure within which the determinacy of its objects can be fixed, is required in order for thought to have objects (i.e., to be able to make cognitive claims about objects). It is, Hegel now wants to argue, due to thought's reflective activity that a thing can be known to have an identity (to be a possible object of experience, in more Kantian terms) through its different appearances, and the terms of this identity-fixing activity thus need to be analyzed. It is simply such an activist, theorizing "approach to the Absolute," as Hegel might put it, that is the subject matter of Book II.

Initially, however, such a sweeping topic seems to take in so much as to be very nearly unintelligible, and the situation is made more complicated still by the place of such an account in Hegel's overall argument. Again informally, this analysis is supposed to contribute to the claim that, in some sense to be specified in Book III, this self-examination of spontaneous

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thought is gradually coming to understand that the "origin" of the notions fundamentally necessary for it to think a world reflectively can only be somehow internal to the autonomous development of thought itself, understood as a dialectically interrelated, historically progressive, socially mediated activity. However, in Book II, such a fully idealist claim is still only implicit in the determinations of reflection. And this intermediary status for the "Logic of Essence" can often cause serious interpretive problems as one tries to figure out what Hegel is trying to affirm and deny (or dialectically overcome) in his account of these issues. For one thing, although reflection introduces a large number of Cartesian, Lockean, and Kantian themes, themes that appear deeply connected with the "subjective" term in philosophy, this is still what Hegel calls an "objective" logic. That does not mean that it is, like Book I, an "entity" logic. Essence and appearance, say, are not understood as separate beings, but as "moments" of any being that reflection can identify and understand. But the activity of thinking under examination is still governed by an assumption of dependence, an orientation toward its objects that separates and categorizes the dual moments of "being itself." "Essence," Hegel notes at the beginning of the section in *EL*, "is the Notion as posited (*gesetzter*) Notion, the determinations in essence are only relative, not yet simply reflected in itself; accordingly the Notion is not yet the Notion for itself" (*EL*, 231; *EnL*, 162).¹ As we shall see, it is often the case that reflection's misunderstanding of its own ground (in *the* Notion) and the status of its results is what leads it into paradoxes and dilemmas that force revisions in its self-understanding until a speculative, nonreflective account can begin to be given. As he notes, again in the *EL*:

The sphere of essence thus turns out to be a still imperfect combination of immediacy and mediation. . . . And so it is also the sphere of the posited contradiction, which was only implicit in the sphere of Being. (*EL*, 235; *EnL*, 165)

It should also be part of the task of this section to introduce such a final speculative dimension carefully enough, with enough attention to the problem of determinate appearances, the contingent world of "nonthought," that this final claim about the truly independent self-determination of thought loses its extravagant tone, its wildly idealist indifference to the world as, in *some* sense at least, the ultimate reference and arbiter of our notions. If, that is, as I have been arguing, Hegel's position is not simply wildly idealistic.

Such a general sketch of Hegel's project in Book II can, however broad-brushed, now give us a way to introduce the major problems his account must deal with. As noted earlier, we have supposedly come to understand the insufficiencies of a realist conception of "positive" being, somehow inherently determinate, accessible either to sensation or to pure reason as it is in itself. Contrary to the *PbG*, this has been demonstrated not by an analysis of the kind of experience such a Notion would entail, but by attention to the conceptual coherence of the Notion itself, to the question of whether the account of determinacy implied therein is adequate or requires presuppositions other than those defensible within the Notion itself. Hegel

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now wants to explain what these new presuppositions are, and so is introducing and proposing to analyze a revolutionary reorientation in Western philosophy. Historically, he is trying to account for and then explore the modern Cartesian and skeptical attack on the reliability of the commonsense orientation from the given, sensible looks of things so important for classical thought. Merely "being there," the immediate, must now be viewed as only an *appearance*, as other than what there really or essentially is. As is well known, however, Hegel does not believe in incommensurable, revolutionary paradigm shifts (in philosophy or science), and so tries to connect the insurmountable problems created in the "Being Logic" with the determinate reorientation proposed in the "Essence Logic." He does so in what is for him a typical way. He announces that the results of the "Being Logic" should be characterized first in the strictly negative terms we actually end up with: What had been *Sein*, "being itself," is now indistinguishable from *Schein*, "illusory being." That is, all we end up with in thinking through the implications of the logic of being are negative results, insufficiencies. That is what *Schein* means. What there *immediately* is cannot *be* what there is; it is only illusory being, a mere show of determinacy, or a vanishing determinacy. As we shall see, Hegel's next move, the one that is supposed to establish a dialectical, necessary connection between these fundamental notions, is to argue that this very "negativity," or indeterminacy, or insufficiency, is *itself* impossible (in the sense of incoherent, impossible to understand) unless that "inherent negativity" is understood as itself already dependent on a further condition, ultimately the activity of reflection itself. Presumably, we wouldn't be able to understand the results of the "Logic of Being," we couldn't understand its insufficiency, unless we were already able to use (or now find that we can use and have been using) the basic appearance/essence distinction.²

There is certainly a great deal packed into these opening transitions in Book II, especially since this first major transition in the book clearly reveals something of how Hegel thinks the "teleology" of the Notion, the internal self-development of thought, works. But aside from that issue (which comes up explicitly as a theme in Book III), this kind of approach to what Hegel considers the modern philosophy of reflection, introduces a number of problems just in its own terms. First, what precisely does Hegel mean by "appearances"? To view any directly apprehended (i.e., nonreflectively or nontheoretically determined) object as an appearance might mean any number of things. Modernity aside for the moment, the notion itself has such a long history that Hegel's use of it could refer to appearance or *ta phainomena* as wholly "unreal," as in Parmenides, as of a lower degree of reality, as in Plato, as not yet fully real, as in Aristotle; or it might mean an object on one side of the "veil of perception," a mental state or phenomenon; or it might mean a nonmental object, but one known only in terms of subjective, finite forms of knowledge, as in Kant; or it might simply mean that we know only illusions, as in mirages and hallucinations.

It is hard to identify where Hegel fits into such a possible spectrum because

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his introduction of the problem with a discussion of *Schein* is so abstract and idiosyncratic. In initially describing the problem he thinks he is working on, he portrays *Schein* in a wholly conceptual way, in terms of his logical terminology alone, as a kind of "immediately self-canceling object of thought," an object that cannot be grasped without being "negated," or referred beyond itself to a mediated, thought-determined structure of explanation. As Henrich puts it, Hegel now shifts his notion of an immediate object of thought, shifts the meaning of immediacy away from the relationless positivity of the logic of being to a notion of "immediate self-relation."³ This is, I think, true, but at this point in Hegel's presentation, it is extremely hard to figure out just what it means.⁴

The self-relation in question is the negative one noted earlier: the immediate insufficiency of such an object, its elusiveness when considered apart from reflective determination. But this is still such an abstract characterization that it is not clear how we are to understand this "insufficiency." We have seen, from the beginning of the *Logic*, that Hegel accepts as his central problem an adequate understanding of "determinacy." In fact, this looms as a problem as soon as he accepts wholesale so many of Fichte's revisions of Kant's understanding/sensibility distinction but rejects Fichte's solution. The project of a speculative logic, as we have seen throughout, had been to show how thought can and must "determine itself." For Hegel, the way this problem is formulated is by reference to the problem of "differentiation," or, in his logical terms, the "negative." An object of thought is determinate if the terms of its determination can successfully pick it out as other than all others, as not what it is not. (Again, all of this is, of course, what Kant thought impossible for thought. Only logically possible, not real, determinacy, could be achieved by thought alone.) Here Hegel wants to understand the possibility of determinacy in a more satisfactory way than as a specification by contingent properties or by an external relation to an other. Now determinacy is supposed to be "self-relating," or to be originally due to the thing's "internal" essence, or primary qualities, or substance and substance modifications. The idea of an object being, directly and *immediately*, only a "partial" or insufficient manifestation of what the object truly is, is, I take it, what Henrich is trying to capture with this notion of a self-relating negativity. Hegel is thus beginning to point to the constitutive role of reflection in such an apprehension of "illusory being" by noting the inadequacy of any realist construal of *Schein*. Consequently, he ends up with his incredibly compressed formulations of what *Schein* logically involves. He is trying to say everything at once (again), and so describes its insufficiency in ways that cannot possibly be clear on this point and will require much explanation later. Here is one of Hegel's typical formulations of the unusual character of this immediacy:

Or, since the self-relation is precisely this negating of negation, the *negation as negation* is present in such wise that it has its being in its negatedness, as illusory being. Here, therefore, the other is not *being with a negation*, or limit, but *negation with the negation*.
(WL, II, 13; SL, 399)

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Second, *how* is the mediated ground of such immediacy, the essence of appearances, to be determined? Hegel himself states this problem in the introductory remarks in *SL*:

Essence as the completed return of being into itself is at first indeterminate essence. The determinations of being are sublated in it; they are contained in essence in principle [*an sich*] but are not posited in it. Absolute essence in this simplicity with itself has no determinate being [*Dasein*]. But it must develop determinate being, for it is both in and for itself, i.e., it differentiates the determinations which it contains in itself. (WL, II, 4–5; SL, 390)

How we are to “develop” these determinations (or “go over to *Dasein*,” as the passage literally reads) will be one of the major issues of the section.

I should also note here something clearly assumed in the preceding interpretation of Hegel’s problem: We ought not to be misled by the relatively archaic language of “essence” and, later, “identity,” and “form.” As is manifest throughout the text, Hegel uses *Wesen* as his designation for “reflected being” in general, that is, to specify the issue of the contributions made to the possibility of a determinate object of thought by thought itself, by reflection. The fact that “essence” is understood as a product of reflection, and that Hegel discusses the issue from the start in terms of the (for him) Kantian problematic of “immediacy” and “mediation,” supports the interpretation here presented – that Hegel is introducing his version of “subjective conditions” for objects, the fundamental, purely determined conceptual structure indispensable in the differentiation, the qualitative identification, necessary for there to be determinate objects of cognition. Like Kant, he is interested in demonstrating that such essences are neither merely subjective (“posited” is his word), be the world as it may, nor derived in all cases empirically (“externally reflected” is his term). If it would not explain the obscure by the more obscure, it would be appropriate to characterize the Hegelian problem of essence as the Kantian problem of the “a priori synthesis.”⁵

But these are familiar and obvious problems in any division of being into appearing and true being. Explaining what we mean by attributing a “negative” or illusory status to the world as it immediately appears, full of “whole” objects that are not really whole but parts, solid objects that are not solid, apparently linked events that are not linked, an “inner life” that is not really inner, and so forth, and explaining what status the nonappearing, or essential, should be understood to have (as truly real, most useful to believe, best confirmed, and so on) are not new to Hegel’s inquiry. The Hegelian version of such issues is quickly apparent in the comprehensive solution to both, and to the whole division, that Hegel announces in the beginning and pursues throughout. Although he maintains from the beginning that essence is “posited” (*gesetztes*) and “mediated” (*vermitteltes*), and so “confronts illusory being,” he also claims throughout the section that what we must finally understand is that reflection’s duality of essence and appearance can be overcome, that “illusory being is, however, essence’s own

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positing" (*WL*, II, 7; *SL*, 393).⁶ Or, "illusory being (*Schein*) is not something external to or other than essence; on the contrary it is essence's own illusory being. The showing (*Scheinen*) of essence in illusory being is reflection" (*WL*, II, 7; *SL*, 394). As is typical with Hegel, we begin with this putative separation (or "standing over against," *gegenüberstehen*) of essence and appearance, somehow come to understand the insufficiency of their separation and the true dialectical nature of their unity, comprehensively articulated in the category of "actuality," *Wirklichkeit*. Then, in turn, we shall come to understand the truth of that unity in the Notion's self-determination. Thus the simplest version of the entire argument of the *Logic*: For there to be determinate being, objects about which possibly true or false claims can be made, we must be able to distinguish a reflected essence from the illusory being that immediately appears. This essence, even though somehow subjective, a product of reflection, is not imposed on appearances or merely posited, a Hegelian claim much in the fashion of Kant's (usual) claim that his "subjective conditions" are not merely imposed on a manifold. And yet, the basic essential structure of possible appearances is not fixed, or knowable transcendently, a priori. What will count as such an essential structure depends on the development of thought's self-consciousness about itself, and especially on the "ends" or purposes that thought sets for itself, whatever such a teleology will turn out to be.

The basic claim in this argument (basic, anyway, for the view of idealism I am attributing to Hegel), the identity of essence and appearance, although couched in what Hegel admits to be the most difficult language of his philosophy, and although paradoxical and peculiar, could easily qualify as that single claim in the *Logic* most important for properly understanding everything else Hegel wants to say. Indeed, contrary to many popular interpretations of Hegel (the ones with world spirit behind the scenes, pulling the historical strings), it appears that the major point of this section is to argue that there is literally *nothing* "beyond" or "behind" or responsible for the human experience of the world of appearances, and certainly not an Absolute Spirit. There must be some way of understanding the totality of appearances themselves as "absolute," without reliance on the familiar representations from traditional metaphysics or theology, if this unusual identity claim is to be properly understood.⁷

Thus, in one of his few informal characterizations of the problem he takes himself to be solving, Hegel states in the *EL*, that he agrees with those who insist that a man's conduct cannot be adequately understood simply by noticing what he does. His character, or inner self, is not necessarily revealed in these acts. Because, say, he performs unjust acts, it does not follow that he is essentially an unjust man. The concept we have to construct, his character (or essence), cannot be adequately constructed by simply adding together, synthesizing, the external appearances. Yet, Hegel says, he also believes that "the only means by which the essence and the inner self can be verified is their appearance in outward reality," and he expresses his usual

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suspicion that those who retreat too far into the unobserved inner life do so only to elude responsibility for the consequences of their acts. The fact that this character or essence depends on reflection, is not immediately given, does not mean that we are free to determine that essence independently of one's acts. All of this certainly sounds like the position one would like to defend (say, somewhere between Kant on the primacy of intention and Sartre on the primacy of action in the world, but without the theoretical vagueness of Aristotle), but *how* can such a "dialectical" position be defended?

This central thesis, that essence "shows itself in its appearances," also returns us to a familiar problem in Hegel's idealism. For one thing, the topic of reflection raises again the central issue in this interpretation of that idealism: the self-conscious spontaneity of thought. "Reflection" is simply the *Logic's* name for that topic, and this discussion of it is one of the most comprehensive, if most abstract, that Hegel provides. Accordingly, since essence is a product of reflection, a thought determination, any claim for a unity or even identity between such a wholly theoretical construct and the world of existing appearances returns us again to what has been throughout a constant suspicion about Hegel's idealism. Given that Hegel calls his final position on "actuality" "the unity of essence and existence" (*WL*, II, 156; *SL*, 529), it would appear again that Hegel is either defending some kind of pre-Kantian rationalism, and so, in Kant's specific terminology, "amphibolously" confusing the conditions of thought with the conditions of existence,⁸ or he is appealing to a notion of metaphysical dependence between existence and essence, a view of existing things as created by, or posited by, Absolute Spirit, assuring that the results of Absolute Spirit's rational reflection coincide with what exists. At least, it is this dimension of the many problems raised by Hegel's account of reflective thought that I want to pursue in the following discussion.

In sum, Hegel believes that he has formulated a comprehensive perspective on the activity of reflection and its chief dualism, essence and appearance, and can show us a way out of the paradoxes created by such a dualism, can reveal the true identity of essence and appearance. Since, I have argued, Hegel is also clearly progressing toward a claim about the final origin of reflective determinations of reality in thought alone, this problem of essence and its relation to existence or appearance should be understood in terms of the idealism problematic; here in terms of the problem of reconciling what Hegel says about the independence and purity of thought's self-determination with its objectivity, with the claim that such results can finally be understood as "standing over against" what there simply and contingently is, but "showing itself" within such appearances. What is such a showing? How are appearances understood? How does reflection, according to Hegel, determine what is at first merely an indeterminate essence? And can the final unity of essence and existence in actuality be understood as something other than an amphibolous version of what Kant criticized in Leibniz and Spinoza?

2. Reflection and immediacy

As just noted, the theme of "reflection" stretches so far back into Hegel's early philosophical career that his elaborate treatment of it in the *SL* has been understandably much commented on. But it is not just for historical reasons that so much interpretive energy has been invested in this book of the *Logic*. As we shall see, virtually all of the major problems raised by Hegel's idealism begin to receive here what Hegel himself clearly regards as a final, decisive hearing. Most important is the theme introduced earlier, where Hegel had claimed that essence must be understood not as an indeterminate *je ne sais quoi* but as determinate. From the perspective on Hegel defended in this study, this issue of determinacy is indeed decisive. Simply put, if we follow Hegel (and Fichte) in arguing that the spontaneous self-relation inherent in all conscious apprehending makes impossible a secure separation between the activity of pure thought and some a priori form of the given, we face not only Kant's Deduction problem anew (the objective validity of pure thought determinations) but a different version of problems he confronted in the Metaphysical Deduction and Schematism. In Kant, the pure functions of thought, the rules of judgment, can only be understood as determinate concepts of objects by means of a detailed reflection on the possibility of experience, and that reflection is everywhere guided by consequences implied by the existence of pure forms of sensible intuition. Ultimately, for Kant, formal functions of judgment can be determinately understood as the "essence" of the appearing world of objects thanks *only* to a unique kind of representation of all possible objects given to thought, schemata, yet another reincarnation of those problematic pure intuitions.⁹ It is only by reference to such a formal determination of all possible objects of thought that the objective determinacy of specific categories can be defended.¹⁰ As we have seen in many different ways by now, Hegel does not believe that such a "mediated" representation of immediacy is possible. But if that is so, how can reflection "determine itself," produce a determinate "essence" of appearances, if not by reference to independent conditions of immediacy or to the immediately given itself, as in empiricist theories of abstraction or induction? We know by now that Hegel proposes some kind of "intraconceptual" theory of such determination; that he believes a concept's determinate role in fixing the thought of *objects* is in some way a function of its relation to other *concepts* and of the proper understanding of the status of that conceptual system's objectivity; but that abstract program needs much more explanation in this book and the next. If, in other words, we abandon all of Kant's gestures in the direction of the *theoretical* role of immediacy in the determinations of pure reflection, whence such determinacy and why claim that we have still saved rather than simply ignored the appearances (indeed, that we can *identify* reflection's results with appearances)?

The key to Hegel's answer, of course, must involve his own understanding

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of immediacy and its relation to reflective activity. (In less logical terminology, such a theme introduces how Hegel wants to reinterpret the fundamental notions of truth, objectivity, and rationality, all now understood in Fichtean terms: the nature of the constraint imposed by thought or theorizing on its own spontaneous activity.) And that is another reason why this section is so important. We now get a chance to ask directly a question that has come up in different ways a number of times: If Hegel is to be understood as a thoroughgoing critic of any reliance on the immediate in grounding or directing or determining knowledge, if he challenges the very possibility of a purely given, an exclusively self-presenting manifold, an immediately certain experience, and so forth, what then is the role of immediacy, even if not pure or exclusive or independent, *within* his systematic account? From the critique of Fichte on in his career, Hegel has been clearly struggling to find a satisfactory way of understanding "mediated immediacy" rather than abandoning the notion in some wholesale way. He takes another stab at the issue, his most important, I think, with the notion of *Schein* and the relation between *Schein* and reflection.¹¹

Hegel wants to characterize immediate being, what putatively should be just "there" for thought (*Dasein*), as itself immediately insufficient, or, as noted previously, as somehow immediately self-negating or self-canceling. His complex formulations in his introduction of the notion of *Schein* all point toward such a new notion of the indeterminacy of the immediate, new because now not the result of the inadequacy of Book I's ontological realism, but an immediate being in which that indeterminacy is itself an immediate characteristic. So, he writes:

The being of illusory being consists solely in the sublatedness of being, in its nothingness; this nothingness it has in essence and apart from essence, illusory being is not. It is the negative posited as negative. (WL, II, 9; SL, 395)

The paradoxical nature of such a claim is even clearer in other formulations, as when he writes that "illusory being is this immediate not-qualitative being (*nicht Dasein*) in the determinateness of being" or when, a few lines later, summing up the paradox pointedly, *Schein* is said to be "reflected immediacy, that is, immediacy which is only by means of its negation" (WL, II, 9; SL, 395-6).

If we adopt here the most plausible reading of this claim, it is hard to see how we have done much more than restate Kant's founding claim in a perversely dense way. That is, if we attempt to categorize any possible object of thought (as usual, throughout, construed quite broadly as cognitive consciousness, a possibly true or false intending) as an "indeterminate appearance" or a self-canceling immediate being, one that cannot be determined as such, in its immediacy, it appears that we have just restated as an impossible alternative Kant's claim that intuitions without concepts are blind (in Hegelian language, "indeterminate," or "the immediate *nicht Dasein* in the determinateness of being"). There *are* intuitions, according to Kant; he

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does not claim that they are impossible. But although components of the determinate thought of anything objective, they are not themselves possible objects of thought.¹²

But this interpretation would just restate a reflective claim about the impossibility of intuitional or immediate knowledge. We will seem to have only a programmatic statement of what Hegel wants – some new version of the post-Kantian immediacy/mediation problem, a way of understanding the mediating activity of reflection that involves neither the metaphor of subjective imposition, and so estrangement from the world in itself, nor the rationalist metaphor of the mind's eye, in which the mediated structure of the immediate is intellectually (more "clearly") intuited. Perhaps the account of reflection itself will make this clearer.

There are two important components in Hegel's initial account of reflection; he distinguishes three basic types of reflective activity (positing, external, and determining reflection), and he identifies what he calls the "essentialities" of reflection, basically, the "laws" of all reflective thought, as they were sometimes called (identity, difference, and contradiction). In the first discussion, we begin to see what Hegel had meant by calling *Schein* a kind of self-negating immediacy. First, despite the extreme generality of his earlier remarks, he now tells us that by "illusory being" he had simply meant to refer to "the phenomenon of skepticism," and so to an object that was rightly characterized as an "immediacy," but "not an indifferent being that would still be, apart from its determinateness and connection with the subject" (*WL*, II, 9; *SL*, 396). This remark and the paragraph that follows it help considerably to clarify the object of Hegel's attention here. For although a "subjective" skepticism considers the immediate objects of experience illusory because somehow subject dependent (and the consequence of Book I had been to insist on the unavoidability of this subject dependence, and so to raise the problem of skepticism), it also admits that such appearances are *determinate*, even if determined by exclusively mentalistic, ideational, or phenomenal predicates. For Hegel this means that they are "immediately" determinate, and that is the source of all the problems, since according to Hegel, determinacy must be a result, or mediated, a negation of the immediate. Hence skepticism's correct insistence on the "phenomenal" nature of all experience, or the "subjective" character of experience, nevertheless does not go far enough in exploring the potential contradiction in its own formulations; it leaves unexplained the conditions under which any immediate datum can be determinately identified as such, whether as this impression, or empirical manifold, or monadic representation.¹³ Indeed, using Leibniz as an example, Hegel points to the unexplained nature of the determinate origin of a monad's immediate representations; they seem to arise simply "like bubbles" (*WL*, II, 10; *SL*, 396).¹⁴

This is why he refers to illusory being in the incredibly opaque way quoted on page 204; it is a "negating of its own negation." Its original "negativity" refers to the illusion problem inherent in the skeptic's charge (the appearances are not or cannot be known to be, what there is). But these immediate

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objects, supposedly the only origin and ultimate arbiter of reflective thought, are also *self*-negating in Hegel's sense because their supposed independence and ultimacy are self-defeating, cannot be maintained successfully by the skeptic. The "other" of this immediate illusory being (here the mediated or reflected) is thus not external to it, as another object (e.g., as was the case with "limit"), but a characteristic of the immediacy itself. In this case, that means that the determinacy of any immediate *Schein* already ensures that, put as paradoxically as Hegel does, *Schein* only appears to be *Schein*, the immediate subjective content of consciousness.¹⁵ As a determinate content it cannot but be mediated, requiring an account of what turn out yet again to be reflective or spontaneous mediations. [Again, in Hegel's language: "Here therefore the other is not being with a negation, or limit, but negation with the negation" (*WL*, II, 13; *SL*, 399). He then goes on to say, somewhat more clearly, that this means that *Schein* is *not*, as claimed by skeptics and subjective idealists, "a first from which a beginning was made and which passed over into its negation, nor is it an affirmatively present substrate that moves through reflection."] Put one final way, skepticism as Hegel understands it is simply correct; there are no "essences" beyond or behind the appearances, at least none that can do any cognitive work. There are just the appearances; but the necessary determinacy of these supposedly immediate appearances indicates that essence, or some fixed structure that will allow identification and so determinacy, already "shines through" such appearances, is an inherent, necessary characteristic for illusory being just to be, and so requires its own account. That is, illusory being, immediate appearances, themselves can be said to be determinate only as a moment of the subject's *self*-determining. Or "Illusory being is the same thing as reflection." [To be sure, Hegel's casual use of the language of essence and reflection at this point is incredibly premature. He begins here flirting with a problem that emerges often throughout Book II, what we might call a conflation of an argument for the necessity of "mediation" in general (conceptual activity, *überhaupt*) with a case for *essential* mediation, the determinate categorial conditions required for there to be determinate "thought objects." He will have something to say about this issue later, but I do not think it is satisfactory.]

Indeed, as Hegel moves further into his account of reflection, he becomes clearer that the immediacy of subjective appearances should not be understood as their incorrigibility, or noninferentially warranted status. Their determinacy means that they cannot be immediate in that sense. As putative objects of consciousness, they are mediated. The particular immediacy they point to is *reflection's* immediate *self*-determination.¹⁶ And this will pose its own problems as Hegel tries to account for what appears to be a kind of ungrounded, self-generated determinacy. He puts all this in his usually infelicitous way by telling us that "the self-relation of the negative is, therefore, its return into itself," and so we have a "self-sublating immediacy" (*WL*, II, 14; *SL*, 401). Because of this self-sublating quality, it is the originary self-determination of reflection that

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is that immediacy which constitutes the determinateness of illusory being and which previously seemed to be the starting point of the reflective movement. But this immediacy, instead of being able to form the starting point is, on the contrary, immediacy only as the return or as reflection itself. (WL, II, 15; SL, 401)

According to this claim, we have "returned" from the supposed immediacy of *Schein*, as a putative object, to the "immediacy of reflection" itself, Hegel's term for its causal and epistemic autonomy with respect to the given. In other words, the necessary determinacy of any appearing object requires an explanation of the terms of such determining, the classifying structure by virtue of which a reflective subject can identify and discriminate. He refers to the "immediacy" of reflection as a way of indicating that such a subjective condition cannot be understood as "mediated" by the given. *Schein* cannot be such a "starting point" because its determinacy is a result, and so the determining activity itself is, initially at least, immediately self-determined. (It is only initially so, since it itself is finally conditioned by the system of reflective possibilities, or the Notion.)

Lest we get lost in the incredible detail of this section, I should mention here that we have already seen enough of Hegel's project to suspect that what we quoted earlier as his solution to the problem of essence/appearance will, as with so many other aspects of his enterprise, begin to look, however radically revised, decidedly Kantian. Clearly, the passages discussed previously indicate that for Hegel, once we argue for the necessity of the determinations of reflection in any "science of objects," the problem with "essence" (*the* determination of reflection) is the problem of objectivity. And the claim that there is an identity between essence and appearance will mean something very similar to the early constructions of his "identity theory," where he took as his guide Kant's "Highest Principle of Synthetic Judgments." In this case, that will mean that ultimately we come to see that there can be no conflict between the products of reflection (initially essence, later ground, and finally "absolute relation") and what we apprehend "immediately," or even, say, empirical truth, because the possibility of such apprehension or of empirical truth depends on such products. The key points Hegel must discuss thus include a demonstration that this claim is so, an account of how there can be, speaking simply, a genuinely two-sided "identity" involved in "thought" as the ground of appearance, rather than some imposition, constitution, or production relation, and how within that identity, understood as the claim that any direct empirical apprehension depends for its possibility on the subject's reflective activity, there can nevertheless by a way of ensuring that reflection's activity is not wholly and in all cases simply self-determined, but self-determined in being related to "what appears."¹⁷

Hegel has varying success with each of these claims. As is typical of much of the *Logic*, most of them emerge quickly, right at the beginning of his discussion, and then reappear in much the same, though more developed, form later. In this case, the impossibility of a purely *self*-determined reflective condition is discussed under the rubric of "positing reflection"; the

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impossibility of reflection simply *being* determined by the immediate, or the empirically given (or, say, of reflected scientific laws required to explain and determine the appearances themselves being the logical product of atomic sentences), is discussed as “external” reflection; and the balanced position that avoids both extremes is introduced, and then explored in the rest of Book II, as “determining reflection.”

To add to the problems, there is a scholarly issue that must also be mentioned here, although a full discussion of it would require an independent chapter. The difficulty is the following: When writing his first version of the *EL* a few years after the *SL*, Hegel radically altered the organization of Book II, eliminating almost all of his discussion of “illusory being” and the three kinds of reflection (Section One, Chapter I in *SL*), and significantly reorganizing his discussion of “existence” and “the thing.” There are some, chief among them McTaggart, who argue that this alteration represents a great improvement in Hegel’s exposition, particularly since the *SL*’s discussion of reflection is, as we have already seen, probably the most obscure section in all of Hegel.¹⁸ Others, Henrich most prominently (Rohs in the most detail),¹⁹ have argued persuasively that although Hegel’s theory itself might be more clearly *stated* in the *EL*, Hegel’s *defense* of the position is virtually lost in what is, after all, a textbook summary. As is already clear, I side with the latter commentators. Since Hegel, when writing the second edition (1831), did not alter the presentation of the original *SL*, despite his frequent versions of a different presentation in *EL*, there is strong *prima facie* evidence that he regarded the passages I discuss subsequently as essential to the full defense of his case. And since I have argued that, in all cases of this kind of dispute about architectonic descriptions, transitions, and so on, the most important issues involve the details of the best existing Hegelian argument, I simply propose to see how much of the position outlined previously he can defend in his fullest presentation of his case, the greater *Logic*.

So, to come the issue at hand, given the problem of reflection as sketched earlier, what is “positing reflection” and why does it fail to “determine essence” fully? In the concluding section of the Chapter I, Hegel writes that “External reflection starts from immediate being, positing reflection *from nothing*” (*WL*, II, 20; *SL*, 405; my emphasis). And in his discussion of positing reflection, Hegel makes a great deal of this relation to “nothing,” so much so that the text often threatens to disintegrate under the opprobrious weight of the “nothings,” “negations,” “nonbeings,” and “negatives.” One of Hegel’s summary accounts of this form of reflection is as follows:

Reflection, as sublating the negative, is a sublating of its other, of immediacy. Since, therefore, it is immediacy as a returning movement, as a coincidence of the negative with itself, it is equally a negative of the negative as negative. Thus it is presupposing.
(*WL*, II, 15; *SL*, 401)

The “Thus” (“So”) in this passage introduces the conclusion that Hegel thinks the mysterious prior claim establishes, and it is in fact the central claim of the section. It is *because* positing reflection is a “presupposing”

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that it is insufficient; in this case, it is *not* wholly “positing,” it depends on an “externality” it seeks to deny, and we are thus led next to consider the “logic” of “external reflection.”

In the key claim about the self-sublating character of positing reflection, Hegel is, I think, trying to point to an internal tension in the attempt to explain qualitative determinacy wholly in terms of the projecting, theorizing activity of any subject of knowledge. Such a positing act, whether it refers to a Fichtean, transcendental activity (as it undoubtedly does throughout),²⁰ or to a collective social practice (what theoretical structures “we” constitute and then allow each other to make use of), or to a radically observation-independent scientific theory (to cite two more modern examples), must all explain why *such* projective activities are determinately required in the first place. And this requirement is, Hegel thinks, where all the problems start, since such a necessity *presupposes* a certain determinate view of the “nothing” one would have without such a specifying, explanatory structure. The original “negative” (here Hegel’s even more abstract term for *Schein*) is not simply a kind of epistemic “absence,” as if we start off in some sort of Fichtean void, projecting an indeterminate number of possible identifying systems. The fact that the “given” is always already theoretically or at least minimally conceptually determined, is not available as an incorrigible foundation, does *not* mean, we now see asserted quite clearly, that the activity of thought (theorizing, reflection) should be regarded as a pure positing, as an autonomous, Fichtean *Tätigkeit*. When Hegel had claimed, then, that the immediacy of illusory being was spurious (because always already determinate) and thus introduced the immediacy of reflection itself, the independent self-determinations of autonomous thought, he was, we now find, only provisionally describing such activity. It is not a pure or immediate positing, because it is also a “presupposing,” it always involves an orientation from a certain presupposed given insufficiency and toward a certain presupposed goal. The identification of illusory being with reflection thus has its dialectical counterpart: that the conceptual specifications of any possible manifold presuppose a specific *kind* of “conceptualizing” requirement, a notion of what specifically would be required if the otherwise uninformed, illusory being (the negative) *is* to be essentially determined. The immediacy of the self-determining act of reflection, its initial autonomy, is thus “self-sublated.” Or, in less Hegelian terms, all such reflective activity already presupposes a certain goal (we don’t just start “reflecting” and then stop periodically to see which “posits” we ought to prefer among those we’ve got), and this goal must be already informed by the nature of the (paradoxically) original “nothing.” Stated in more specific ways, only given a presupposed theory of, say, sensation will the sensory given *be* insufficient for the possibility of experience; only given a certain theory of observation will some theories be observationally equivalent; only given a certain theoretical claim about the discreteness of impressions will experience be unable to support what the mind constructs. (We thus have here a repetition of the kind of argument presented in Book I. The alleged independence of “being

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itself” as the origin of determinate thought was undercut, or sublated, in a way similar to what is now claimed about the possibility of an allegedly independent thought positing itself. The moment of postivism, we might say, in both realism and idealism, is being denied; in the former through the resulting indeterminacy, in the latter by pointing to the presupposing inherent in such positing.)

To return to Hegel’s (even more) infelicitous language, “reflection into self is essentially the presupposing of that from which it is the return” (*WL*, II, 16; *SL*, 401). In a somewhat fuller statement of the same point:

Reflection therefore finds before it an immediate which it transcends and from which it is the return. But this return is only the presupposing of *what reflection finds before it*. What is thus found only comes to be through being left behind; its immediacy is sublated immediacy. (*WL*, II, 16; *SL*, 401; my emphasis)

Thus, when Hegel had said that this kind of reflection was a “negative (1) of the negative (2) as negative (3),” he was claiming that the reflective, self-determined activity, as a *negating* of immediacy (1), overcomes the *insufficiencies* of the appearances as such, of *Schein* (2), but only as those appearances are already understood to be insufficient in a certain way, *as negative* (3). And this does not mean that Hegel is trying to argue that such reflective activity is, despite its own claims, still tied to some pretheoretical given, since it also turns out that what reflection here presupposes as some other is also, itself, a result of a “positing.”

Before he can explain what this interrelation of positing and presupposing involves, though, he pauses to consider a much more straightforward version of how reflection works: external reflection. This version ties reflective possibilities to the immediate and interprets the activity by virtue of which we reach the required theoretical structure as either a version of abstraction or of empirical induction. To make his point against the sufficiency of this approach, he turns though to Kant and uses his *Third Critique* example of “reflective judgment” to press the very general issue he is trying to raise. Here the discussion is brief and more familiar, since Hegel is replaying a number of themes established in Book I and seems to include them here only because of some architectural obsession with threeness.²¹

Kant had generally defined external reflection (what he called “reflective judgment”) as the attempt to determine the appropriate “universal” for a “given particular.” (This was contrasted with “determining judgment,” the attempt to apply a “given universal” properly.) What Hegel objects to in Kant’s presentation, which he treats as paradigmatic for all external reflection, is that the specification of this universal (a qualitative essence in Hegel’s terms) is taken to be due to exclusively “subjective” or regulative interests; it is “external” to the particular itself, and cannot be derived from it. But if the (in Kant’s case, say) aesthetic or teleological universal is “indifferent” to the particular, is only what the subject finds for itself indispensably necessary, then there is no longer any determinate connection, even a putatively external one, between the universal and the particular. Precisely to

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the extent that reflection is successful *in any sense* in identifying *the* determinately *appropriate* universal for some particular, "the externality of reflection over against the immediate is sublated" (WL, II, 18; SL, 404). In a way intended to be symmetrical to what occurred in positing reflection, just as there the attempt to determine a "negative" immediacy by a positing activity was shown to involve a "return" to a determinate presupposition from which reflection was oriented, so here the attempt to determine a particular externally involves a "return" to the particular in a way that connects the results of reflection to that particular, as its essence, and so sublates the presumed externality.

But in external reflection there is also implicit the notion of absolute reflection; for the universal, the principle or rule and law to which it advances in its determining, counts as the essence of that immediate which forms the starting point; and the immediate therefore counts as a nullity, and it is only the return from it, its determining by reflection, that is the positing of the immediate in accordance with its true being. Therefore, what reflection does to the immediate, and the determinations which issue from reflection, are not anything external to the immediate but are its own proper being. (WL, II, 19; SL, 405)

Such a positing that presupposes something "external," or not-positing, and a reflection on such externality that "sublates" its externality, form the basis of Hegel's account of "determining reflection." And in a way, this "solution" to the antinomies of reflection is already familiar to us as a central claim in all of Hegel's idealism and is clearly present in the last sentence of the preceding quotation. The necessity of self-conscious reflection for any possible determinacy does not mean either (1) that being itself thus proves inaccessible, that reflection is always "external" (that standard of "being itself" which we supposedly cannot meet is in itself incoherent), or (2) that reflection is itself unconstrained, a pure positing, and that epistemological anarchy is around the corner (that notion of a purely positing reflection is, again in itself, incoherent). There is and must be a kind of spontaneous, positing reflection necessary for the determinacy of any determinate being to be accounted for, but it is not "external" to such being or self-generated in some mysterious way from its own *nihil*. This is, in a nutshell, Hegel's idealism; he takes himself to have argued that this is the possible position we are led to by the failure of its competitors, and, since it is obviously still quite programmatic, he starts trying to fill it out in describing "determining reflection."²²

To be sure, he does keep trying to explain what he means by determining reflection by repeating the "neither-nor" account summarized previously: There must be reflection, a self-conscious determination of essence, and it cannot be positing or external reflection, so it must be "that form of reflection that is neither the one nor the other." And although it is, I think, fair to argue that it is a typical, serious deficiency of all Hegel's philosophy that he is better at telling us what cannot be an acceptable solution to a problem than he is at describing the details of what can be and is (and that, with his account of "determinate negation," he sometimes seems to think

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that the positive answer just *is* the realization of such determinate insufficiency),²³ in this case we need much more than such a programmatic outline of what *would* be an acceptable position. Hegel concentrates on claiming that the “posited” character of the results of reflection should not and cannot be characterized as mere positedness, that the positing of reflection must be understood as the “reflection into self” of being, but there are only faint indications of how this resolution is to be concretely understood. (Especially, again, there is surprisingly little discussion of how we are to distinguish a correct or appropriate “reflection of essence,” or objectively valid category, from an incorrect one.) Hegel either just asserts, without explaining very much, the possibility of a position like this:

In so far, therefore, as it is the positedness that is at the same time reflection-into-self, the determinateness of reflection is *the relation to its otherness within itself*.

(WL, II, 22; SL, 408)

or he makes use of a strikingly odd metaphor to suggest how this is all supposed to be possible:

The determination of reflection, on the other hand, has taken its otherness back into itself. It is *positedness*, negation, which however bends back into itself the relation to other, and negation which is equal to itself, the unity of itself and its other, and only through this is an *essentiality*.

(WL, II, 23; SL, 408)

Of course, it is only fair to note that Hegel is just beginning to try to motivate such claims, to explain and further defend them. In fine, that is what all the rest of Book II is supposed to do. In the terms that will emerge shortly, Hegel commits himself to demonstrating that various candidates for reflective conditions, “ground,” “form,” and “condition,” *can* be understood as having a determinate “relation to other,” and so can be a “*real* ground,” a “*form of*,” or a “*condition for*.” At least we already know, not just from the *SL* but from everything else we have seen so far, that Hegel’s solution to this problem, in trying to avoid the “imposition” and “intuition” alternatives (including the Schellingean self-intuition often confused with Hegel’s position), will not try to offer simply a third alternative for understanding the relation between “thought” and its “other.” A complete reformulation of the way the terms of the problem are usually posed is being proposed, such that the intraconceptually determined “essence,” if properly understood, *is* the self-reflection of what is “other than thought” (is all that it could be understood to be).

Everything thus comes down to how such self-determination is to be properly understood and how its results are to be evaluated. These two problems dominate the rest of Hegel’s discussion, and they introduce far more than can be dealt with adequately here. In lieu of a complete commentary, I discuss in the rest of this chapter the two most obvious problems Hegel’s account generates and see what he has to say about them. The first is: How does he understand reflection, since it is not a mere positing, to constrain itself, to determine essence *determinately*? Whence such deter-

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minacy without external reflection, without some reliance on an independent foundation? The second is: What entitles Hegel to say that such results *count* as the essence of the appearances, such that when this relation of essence to appearance is understood, "actuality" itself (*Wirklichkeit*) will have been understood? The second problem will obviously be incomplete (obviously because otherwise the *Logic's* job would be finished), and will lead to the set of topics Hegel discusses in Book III.

3. Grounded appearances

In his discussion of what he calls the "essentialities" of reflection, Hegel to a large extent repeats much of the analysis he had given in regard to "illusory being." However, he advances his discussion significantly because, while discussing the identifying (or essence-identifying) function of positing reflection, and the differentiating introduced by what is "external" to reflection, he introduces the notion of determining reflection now as "opposition" (*Gegensatz*), and so discusses the whole reflective process by invoking the greatest bugbear of Hegelian terminology, "contradiction" (*Widerspruch*). [In the *SL*, he tells us that "In opposition, the *determinate reflection*, difference, finds its completion" (*WL*, II, 40; *SL*, 424).] What this development will help reveal is that the "resolution" suggested by determining reflection is not really a resolution at all, as if we should, on understanding it, go forth and determine, specify methodically, the essences of appearances. In fact, the very notion of opposition begins to suggest that a lack of a final resolution is part of what Hegel wants to argue for, that a reflective (scientific or philosophic) attempt to "identify" a "differentiating" essence is always, necessarily, indeterminate, incomplete on its own terms, all in a way that will eventually lead to an "absolute reflection" *about* or "Notion" of such continual "movement" in thought. He begins, that is, to make his case that the issue of the adequacy of reflective determination, given this perpetual opposition, can be understood only within the movement of the historicity of thought, internal to that constant "opposition."

In the much shorter presentation of the *EL*, Hegel gives us a kind of map for where he thinks the turning points in this argument are. He remarks that,

as will be seen, it [concrete identity] is first possible as ground, and then in the higher truth of the Notion. (*EL*, 237; *EnL*, 167)

That is, there is a kind of insufficiency prominent in the discussion of reflective identity, provisionally addressed by the Notion of ground, but finally only comprehensible in the final section of the *Logic*. Our task now is to find this key "insufficiency" in the central argument of Book II.

The problem of identity, the insufficiency that is to lead us through the rest of Book II, is, initially at least, a familiar one. It has been with us from the early Jena discussions of identity and the limitations of reflection. What Hegel proposes to do again is to break down the apparent independence

(from each other) and foundational autonomy of the basic "axioms" of reflective thought, the logical "laws" of identity, difference (excluded middle), and noncontradiction. All such principles are just restatements, for Hegel, of reflection's attempt to "posit" identities, or essences, in a way that is not merely positing but tied to the presupposed external diversity that originally required such specification. First, he notes that a *purely* "posited" or reflectively "pure" identification of a thing's essence could only be a tautologous definition, one that excluded "difference" or differentia, and pronounced that "A planet is a planet; Magnetism is magnetism; Mind is mind" (*EL*, 237; *EnL*, 167). Such "abstract identity," Hegel claims in *SL*, "immediately collapses within itself" (*WL*, II, 27; *SL*, 412) or cannot count as establishing a thing's identity, since nothing is excluded. In Hegel's understanding of the terms, we need genuinely synthetic identities, reflected categories that do differentiate all possible objects. For that differentiation to occur, the categories or principles must embody such a concretely differentiating function, or must "contain difference," as Hegel says.

However, if the interpretation developed thus far is correct, the most standard gloss on his explanation of this relation between identity and difference is completely wrong. It is often assumed that this section of the *Logic* is where we find *the* argument in support of Hegel's rhetorical association of himself with Heraclitus and a "metaphysics of becoming." Here is where Hegel is supposed to argue for the necessity of a realist ontology of ceaseless change, in which all putatively stable things are shown to be mere moments in the development of Absolute Mind and thus never (except in reflection's falsified representation) to be what they are, but always in the process of becoming what they are not, and so "in contradiction." As we have already seen, though, identity for Hegel is a concept of reflection, of self-conscious active thought, not a category of determinate being. This would already seem to imply that Hegel's topic in this discussion is not qualitative metaphysical identity simpliciter, but the conditions of qualitative identification, of what is involved in our constructing a schema for identifying, that the former issue cannot be adequately understood except as a result of the resolution of the latter. And if this is true, it will further shift the question at issue for Hegel away from an "objective logic" altogether toward the relative autonomy of "thought's" own generation of its criteria of identity and the larger theoretical structure such criteria depend on, toward a "subjective logic." Not only is such an interpretation confirmed by the very organization of the book (the two-part structure of "Objective and Subjective Logic") and by what we have already seen in the first two books, Hegel's own discussion here and in his accounts of "appearance" and especially "actuality" confirm this idealist direction.²⁴

His discussion revolves continually around a pair of typical claims, each of which occurs after some attempt to show why the notions of identity and difference cannot be understood in isolation from each other. Having made such a claim, Hegel then turns to the consequences of this interdependence. A representative claim about identity is the following:

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In other words, identity is the reflection-into-self, that is identity only as internal repulsion, and is this repulsion as reflection-into-self, repulsion which immediately takes itself back into itself. Thus it is identity as difference that is identical with itself. (WL, II, 27–8; SL, 413)

The same kind of dialectical flourish characterizes his remarks about difference:

Difference is therefore itself and identity. Both together constitute difference; it is the whole, and its moment. It can equally be said that difference, as simple, is now difference; it is this only when it is in relation with identity, but the truth is rather that, as difference, it contains equally identity and this relation itself.

(WL, II, 33; SL, 417)

As noted such claims repeat, somewhat more abstractly, the earlier account of the limitations of an exclusively positing and external reflection. No identity (or identifying rule of reflection, categorial ground rule of qualitative identity) is simply posited; it is “reflected” in the light of the determinate differences “presupposed” to require it and it alone. Yet the differences taken to require some sort of conceptual “identification” are themselves always apprehended *as such*, in a way that already depends on the identification of such differences. His reasons for this introductory defense of what will be his claim about the “moving,” internally interdependent nature of categorial thought have already been sketched in his original account of the limitations of reflection. What is significant now are the conclusions he draws.

We should note two assumptions of the approach taken here to Hegel’s discussion. First, I have obviously been assuming throughout that Hegel is interested in the conditions for the possibility of *qualitative* identification, not numerical identification. The issue for him is not how we formulate the means to refer successfully to numerically individual objects. A variety of descriptions, indexicals, or combinations will do that job without the issue of reflective *knowledge* necessarily arising. As has been clear since the relevant discussion in the *PhG*, in an appropriate context, “That over there” is sufficient for a particular to be identified without our having to answer “what” that is. (Of course, explaining adequately successful reference to particulars is, as the twentieth century attests, no small feat. And Hegel has his own enormous problems with the issue. But those touch on the status of space and time in his philosophy of nature and cannot be pursued here.)²⁵ And again, as in the *PhG*, Hegel’s view is clearly that the “context” in such an example can allow for such successful reference because of an already achieved, perhaps unexpressed, qualitative differentiation that needs its own account. If “That over there” is, say, ambiguous, it is so because of a schema already assumed to be in place, one that identifies tables and books and computer terminals as *the* “different” kinds of things and so provides the relevant structure within which “that” is insufficiently informative; if it is not ambiguous, it is because the appropriate qualitative constraints are as-

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sumed in a way that makes direct reference clear. And again, such a constraint requires its own explanation.

Indeed, we can see that it is the issue of qualitative identity (the issue of the ground for claiming that things "are" of the same categorial kind) that Hegel is interested in (what will become the problem of "universal and particular" in Book III) by noting how the lack of an adequate account of the relation between identification and differentiation leaves us with what he calls mere "diversity" (*Verschiedenheit*), or qualitatively undifferentiated particularity, and that he regards this as a wholly unsatisfactory result (or that such numerical identity cannot be understood on its own, is parasitic on some qualitatively identifying scheme). That is, in the text, the first consequence Hegel draws from the impossibility of keeping separate posited identity and external difference is that there just is mere diversity, diverse moments "indifferent to one another and to their determinateness" (*WL*, II, 24; *SL*, 419). In this context, conceptual classification is wholly "external" (as we predictably begin to repeat the Hegelian dialectic again), a matter of mere "likeness" or relative likeness and unlikeness of diverse particulars. Again predictably, Hegel denies that there can be such diversity "indifferent" to its own determinateness. He attacks the so-called law of diversity (Leibniz's law), which holds that any thing is utterly unlike any other, as an insufficient formulation; it leaves unaccounted for the original conditions for the thing being taken to be a *thing* in the first place. This leaf may be unlike any other leaf, but its distinctness clearly already depends on its qualitative identification as a "leaf." "Two things are not merely two . . . but they are different *through a determination*" (*WL*, II, 39; *SL*, 422; my emphasis), and what Hegel continues to pursue is how such an original "determination" (*Bestimmung*) can occur.²⁶

Second, given this context, it is clear that Hegel is not stupidly confusing the issues of predication and identification. Although his language is far from precise, and he can seem to be claiming that because a thing is differentiated by a predicate with which, qua predicate, it is not identical, a thing is what it is (predicatively) by not being (not being identical with) what it is not (a universal term). As I have argued elsewhere, Hegel is interested throughout in essential predication²⁷; in the Kantian terms I have used to interpret that interest, this means that he is interested in the requirement that there be a structure for identification in place before the actual qualitative determination of experience proceeds. Such a structure can neither be wholly posited, indifferent to the differentiations it can or cannot effect in experience; nor wholly "reflected externally," as if such qualitative identification results abstractively or inductively. It is *this tension between the identifying and differentiating functions of reflection* (as necessary conditions for the determinate thought of any object) that Hegel begins to discuss as producing a kind of "opposition" (*Gegensatz*) and finally a "contradiction."

"Opposition," Hegel now tells us, is "determination in general" (*WL*, II, 41; *SL*, 424). Or, any such determining (as I am interpreting *Bestimmung*)

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can occur only by introducing what Hegel is here calling an opposition between "positive" and "negative," between the always required spontaneous positing of thought and "the negative," the differences that externally require such positing. There is an "opposition" because there is no way, within the self-understanding of reflection, to specify what is posited and what is external to positing. A qualitative identity can be posited that will differentiate the fundamental kinds from all others only if all others are *already* understood in a certain way, as the negative of that kind. And they can be such only if the required qualitative identification has already gone on.²⁸ Hegel also continues his alteration of the fixity of the Kantian picture of this relation between spontaneity and receptivity by recalling again that any such positing is already a presupposing of the differences that require it, and such differences are apprehensible as such only by means of prior "posited" concepts. This state of affairs introduces what turns out to be the signal problem of reflective adequacy. Just as "indifference" was the concluding problem of the "Logic of Being" (the failure to distinguish, except indifferently, something and other), so now a complete *relativity* attends the opposed relation between position and what is assumed to negate that position.²⁹

In non-Hegelian terms, the basic idea is that what turns out to be a constraint on theorizing or conceptualizing (i.e., reflection), a limit on what can be a successful "essential determining," is itself a *product* of some prior reflection; and the theorizing or conceptualizing is itself already guided by some presupposed sense of the determinate "differences" that constrain it. Hegel introduces here this sense of the relativity of positive and negative, I think, to begin to show the *dependence* of the identification he is interested in (again the equivalent of what Kant would call the a priori synthesis) on some comprehensive, developing theory, one that can ground and defend the way in which this potential relativity is overcome, in which the constantly relative distinctions of reflection can be, at least in some sense, fixed. In somewhat broader terms, what Hegel is trying to do here is to demonstrate the rationale for an oft-repeated claim of his, that "thought" is in a kind of perpetual "opposition" to itself. As we have seen throughout, given the unavailability of the Kantian "anchor" in empirical or pure intuition, this is exactly the conclusion we should expect. Far from its being the case that such an alteration in Kantian theory opens the door to a purely posited dogmatism, a kind of self-satisfaction unchallenged by the world, the reflective or self-conscious nature of thought for Hegel makes that option impossible. Any "positing" or identifying is possible only by its "presupposing" or the "differences" it determinately assumes. It must then "negate" or undercut its results constantly, since it is self-conscious of such a limitation, at least at this stage of reflection, without some criterion to determine how such contradiction or instability shall be overcome. And, as we have also seen, and will examine in more detail in the next chapter, Hegel's understanding of the progressive nature of the development of this opposition involves a growing self-consciousness about *itself*, about thought itself

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and the nature of its development. The line of development, through various forms of insufficient realisms and positing and external idealisms, is such a "meta-line." Or so I am claiming, Hegel will try to show in Book III.

Here what I am claiming is that Hegel's notion of contradiction is meant to refer to the relativity and so indeterminacy that attends any reflective attempt to specify the differentia for a posited determination, or qualitative identification (or Kantian concept). That is, to review, given a claim that a reflected view of being is required, a "mediation" of the "immediate" for the immediate to be determinate, and that such a specification of "essence" is in some sense independent of such immediacy, autonomous, a condition of determinacy, the topic in Book II was the nature of this reflective mediation. Any such classification or posited law, though, required informative differentia, a differentiation that can effectively contrast such a class of events from *all* others, from all possible kinds of objects of experience (a causal series, say, and not an objective, though causally unconnected, series). But this can occur only if it is presupposed that the relevant kinds are already specified, and, put simply, we don't know yet how that occurs. Without that account, we are always "contradicting" ourselves: Any presumed positing is really only a presupposing; any presumed differentiating rests on some hidden positing. Or, Hegel goes on, what must be explored further is the insufficiency of the idea of the "self-subsistence" of essence. What counts as the reflected essence of appearances, in a word, changes. This introduces "contradiction" because Hegel is *so* relativizing the truth of claims about essence to the comprehensive theory (what he will introduce as the "grounding" theory in a moment) that makes reflection possible. That is, Hegel's account of how we end up apparently committing ourselves to something like "S is P" and "S is not P" depends on his reading each proposition to have the "logical form" "*S is reflectively determined as P,*" and this essentially, as providing the identifying marks of S qua S. But given the inaccessibility of a complete ground, Hegel is assuming that S can also be reflectively determined as non-P, given some other grounding theory. Since there is no appeal to S itself outside some reflective structure, S itself must be said to be (to be reflectively, essentially determinable as) P and non-P. And, even though Hegel likes to trumpet his fondness for instability and contradiction, such rhetorical passages should not obscure the fact that Hegel regards this result as a *problem*, an unacceptable crisis in his ideal reconstruction of the possibility of determinate thought.³⁰ In the almost unintelligible passage where he introduces this "advance," he writes:

The excluding reflection of the self-subsistent opposition converts this into a negative, into something posited; it thereby reduces its primarily self-subsistent determinations, the positive and the negative, to the status of mere determinations; and the positedness, being thus made into a positedness, has simply returned into its unity with itself; it is simple essence, but essence as ground. (WL, II, 52; SL, 434)

To *avoid* what Hegel is calling "mere positedness," the instability of equally possible, inconsistent determinations, essence must be understood as

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ground. In the *EL*, Hegel puts this in a different way by claiming that essence is not now "abstract reflection into self, but into *an other*" (*EL*, 248; *EnL*, 175; my emphasis). Or, a thing, we have found, cannot be qualitatively identified, and so cannot be a possible object of experience, when considered in isolation ("reflected into self") or by virtue simply of some classificatory schema posited by pure reason. That schema succeeds by virtue of the differentia it identifies as relevant to that thing's identity and those differentia ground the thing's identity, function as a basis of a reflective articulation of its possible relation to others.

As usual, this claim is so abstract that it is only dimly possible to see what Hegel is driving at. Despite the scholastic tone of the remarks, though, it is again possible to make some sense out of these claims if we keep in mind (1) that the remainder of Hegel's argument intends to present a theory of "existent things" as always grounded in some determinate way in another, just to be conceivable as this sort of existing thing. So, consistent with the approach taken here throughout, it is not some other event or thing that counts as an object's ground, but what Hegel will ultimately call the law or principle by virtue of which it can be "thought" as this-such a thing; (2) that a grounded existent is an "appearance" (*Erscheinung*), a somehow not fully "actual" manifestation of its ground; and (3) that a full comprehension of essence and appearance, of ground as condition and grounded as conditioned or limited appearance, is what "actuality" (*Wirklichkeit*) is. That is, keeping in mind the direction of the rest of Book II raises again the familiar Kantian tone, however altered, of Hegel's case: The "groundedness" of existence in certain conditions renders them "appearances," though a proper understanding of the objectivity of such conditions, such as the causal principle, allows us to avoid the inference that such appearances are not real; in fact, they constitute the only possible "actuality" (necessary connection according to laws) there is. And presumably, if an adequate ground can be determined, the relativity of reflection's results, its contradictoriness, can be in some way "sublated." (That is, the necessarily developing nature of thought can be done justice to without resulting in simple relativity.)

Given this general sketch of Hegel's presentation of the remainder of his remarks on essence, we can see that his introduction of ground in this context draws on a number of themes that have been important to his idealism since the earliest Jena formulations. All this occurs even though such a claim about the idealist dimensions of these passages might sound strange, given the standard metaphysical reading of this section. I am claiming that the passages are misread if the preceding direction of Hegel's case is not kept firmly in mind. That is, although much of Book II continues to make heavy use of "objectivist" notions of ground (as if Hegel were speculating a priori on the in-itself nature of form, force, etc.), the conditionedness of such grounds in *grounding principles* is more and more prominent in the text as a way of preparing for the transition to "the Notion" as the only true or "absolute" ground. And, as we have seen from the very beginning of this

study, Hegel describes *that* ground in distinctly Kantian terms, as the transcendental unity of apperception (and not as Absolute Spirit's creative act).

What such a direction means for the account of ground is that we ought, I think, to view it *from the start* in Kantian terms, suitably altered in terms of the Jena modifications. That is, as Hegel makes clear only much later (*WL*, II, 227; *SL*, 589), ground here has the same status as the Kantian pure synthesis, and so ground is *ultimately* (though certainly not initially) a kind of necessary subjective activity.³¹ [Indeed, unless interpreted this way, there would be no coherent way to understand Hegel's frequent references to the "activity" (*Tätigkeit*) of form or to the "movement" (*Bewegung*) of form and matter (*WL*, II, 73; *SL*, 453).]³² Or, a thing is grounded in the conceptual conditions of its possibility. (Again, this is already different from Kant, as Rohs points out. For Kant, a pure synthesis must itself be grounded in pure intuition. For Hegel, the only ground of a synthesis is the result of another synthesis. Or, as has come up frequently before, Hegel is trying to replace the Kantian reliance on pure intuition with a self-grounding conception of thought.)³³ Throughout, I have taken that to refer to a reliance on the concrete negation of *prior* attempts at "pure syntheses." To reflection, or the fixed oppositions of the understanding, this claim can seem an insoluble contradiction, a contradiction between the "external" and the "posited," "differences" and "identities," "intuitions" and "concepts," or "appearances" and "essences." (A contradiction because such *oppositions* are *identified* in statements of ground, as in Kant's highest "grounding" principle – "the conditions of the possibility of experience are at the same time the conditions of the possibility of objects of experience.") And the breakdown of such reflective oppositions means the beginning of the possibility of understanding such oppositions as identities, even while admitting such differences.

Hegel himself indicates that such speculative identity is where he wants to be able to end up by beginning his discussion of ground with a reference to the vacuousness of a claim for a ground that rests on a purely reflective or abstract identity. In such a case, the ground for a man drowning is that man is so constituted (*ingerichtet*) that he cannot live under water (*EL*, 249; *EnL*, 176). On the other hand, when difference is introduced into such claims, when the ground is genuinely other than the grounded, and so proffers a genuine explanation, the same kind of relativity discussed earlier is also introduced. To make this point, Hegel uses the example of the "grounds" of a theft, and notes how many factors might be relevant to explaining or grounding it as theft. He notes:

The violation of property is unquestionably the decisive point of view before which the others must give way; but this decision cannot be made on the basis of the law of ground itself. (*EL*, 250; *EnL*, 177)

(I note that in his example, Hegel immediately assumes that the question of the right ground is, as interpreted earlier, the question of the right "con-

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ceptual ground,” the description essential to the act being rightly understood as “theft.”) He goes on to sum up and point out the direction of the rest of Book II – what will finally, justifiably, allow such a decision – in the terms we suggested previously:

On the one hand, any ground suffices; on the other, no ground suffices as mere ground; because, as already said, it is yet void of a content in and for itself determined, and is therefore not self-acting [*selbstätig*] and productive. A content thus in and for itself determined, and hence self-acting, will hereafter come before us as the notion. (EL, 250; EnL, 177)³⁴

Such a reference to the “self-acting” clearly links the account of ground to the long-standing Hegelian claim about the spontaneity of intellect and all the “self-determining” problems that claim has raised for us throughout.

But before he addresses the issue explicitly, he develops the consequences of the basic logic of essence in ways that confirm and extend the interpretation suggested earlier. Since I believe that the interpretation advanced thus far represents the core of what Hegel wants to claim throughout Book II, I want now only to indicate briefly how the course of the rest of the book proceeds.

4. Actuality

Hegel begins the second section of Book II by summarizing the results with a new term: “existence.” We now know that “whatever exists has a ground and is conditioned,” that “existence cannot be considered merely as immediate” (WL, II, 102, 103; SL, 481, 482). But it is also not the case that just because we have no access to an “immediate” ground in itself, the mediation of ground is indeterminate, either wholly posited or externally reflected, and in either case collapsing into its other, or contradictory. (Hegel plays around with the notion of a “downfall,” *Untergang*, of ground into an “abyss,” or *Abgrund*, as a way of introducing the need to consider the topic of how we determine the nature of the relation between a putative ground and the determinate existent it is to ground.) Hegel begins, that is, to explore whether there are constraints on what could count as such a general grounding relation. In doing so, he considers in an interesting way the idea of the “thing in itself” as a ground of existent objects. What is important about his comments is how they help reveal the direction of Hegel’s investigation into this topic. In rejecting the idea of a thing in itself as a ground, arguing that it is either unknowable and so wholly “indifferent” to the determinations it is supposed to ground, or not indifferent, but the concrete ground of these determinations and so neither unknowable nor wholly “in-itself” (since concrete, such a ground is itself grounded), he makes two remarks that are suggestive about his own self-understanding. He contrasts the subjective idealism of Kant with what he calls (and clearly means to affirm) “the consciousness of freedom,” about which he says

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according to which I know myself rather as the universal and undetermined, and separate off from myself those manifold and necessary determinations, recognizing them as something external for me and belonging only to things. In this consciousness of its freedom, the ego is to itself that true identity reflected into itself, which the thing in itself was supposed to be. (WL, II, 111–12; SL, 489)

Here Hegel again points to what he regards as the finally acceptable candidate for ground, the self's relation to itself. This "free" self-relation functions as the thing in itself was meant to (e.g., as "ungrounded ground"). But Hegel also, significantly, distinguishes between the universal and (initially) undetermined character of this freedom and the manifold and necessary determinations of the external, "belonging only to things." As with his rejection of a wholly positing reflection, Hegel is rejecting the idea of the self as some productive ground of immediately existing objects; it is only a ground of the essence "shining forth" in existence, or of appearances, *Erscheinungen*, and by being such a ground is not in any sense responsible for all the manifold characteristics of the grounded.

By "appearances," Hegel is careful to point out, we should not understand illusory being, or some subject-dependent state. It is the reflected object itself that must be considered an appearance, not the state the object might produce. Any object can be apprehended as such an object only as reflected; as "essentially identified," ultimately, as we have seen, as grounded, conditioned by thought. Since such a reflective condition is a necessary conceptual condition for the object's being an apprehensible object at all (the condition is a "determining reflection"), it is not "external" to the object, an essence behind or underneath the appearances. But since objects are apprehensible only as subject to these conditions, *and* since such conditions are, at this point, themselves incompletely determined, the object is "only" an appearance. Thus the general definition of appearance is "existence as essential existence is appearance," and the *limitation* implied in the very notion of appearance is explained this way:

Something is only appearance – in the sense that existence as such is only a posited being, not a being in and for itself (*an-und-für-sich-Seindes*). This constitutes its essentiality, to have within itself the negativity of reflection, the nature of essence. (WL, II, 122–3; SL, 498)

This reference to a kind of transcending of the "appearing" character of objects by finally understanding them as beings in and for themselves introduces again the final theme of the *Logic* – the full Hegelian story of the "free self-relation" of thought and its objectivity – and the reference to the "negativity" of reflection is a reference to the fact that reflection is still everywhere conditioned by presuppositions it has not discharged. [Much later in the text, Hegel distinguishes what he means by the appearing or phenomenal character of "objects conditioned by thought" by contrasting Kant's position – which he claims defines such phenomenality as a result of this conditionedness *alone*, because categories are "merely determinations

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originating in self-consciousness" – with his own view, which is that "intellectual cognition and experience" has an "appearing content" (*erscheinenden Inhalt*) "because the categories themselves are only *finite*" (WL, II, 227; SL, 589).]

All of this seems to make the resolution of this dispute between Kant on the conditioned, finite, and so, in that sense, ideal character of experience, and Hegel on the completeness, "infinity," and absolute character of "thought" as "ground" turn on their differing understanding of the "unconditioned" *in* experience. In the next chapter, that is exactly what we shall find: that the structure of Hegel's entire discussion is determined by Kant's analysis of the "subjective necessity" of reason's ascent to the unconditioned.

Prior to moving to that topic, however, Hegel finally begins to provide a much clearer, more direct interpretation of what has become, to pack everything into one phrase, the "required, determinately reflected essential ground." It is clearer because the idealist, conceptual character of ground comes to the fore; more direct because the topic shifts to issues less specific to Hegel's unique terminology.

Having understood all possible objects of cognitive representation, of thought, as "appearances" because necessarily apprehended as "grounded," or conditioned by a conceptual structure neither wholly posited nor externally reflected, and so, at this point in the analysis, indeterminate, finite, Hegel now proceeds:

Appearance now determines itself further. It is essential existence; the latter's essentiality is distinguished from appearance as unessential and these two sides enter into relation with each other. (WL, II, 123–4; SL, 50)

It is this introduction of the notion of a "relation" between the essential and unessential "sides" (*Seiten*) of an appearance that is supposed to move Hegel's account further along. Without such a relation, the actual determination of the essence of appearances would have to involve some *posited* "form" or "species" or qualitatively identical substrate that could only function as a ground of determinate appearances, the particular existence of the object, as an indifferent "beyond." The way in which such a ground could *ground*, could account for, say, this water's forming a compound with this liquid, would only be because it is of the essence of water to be able to do so. Or such an essence would be wholly *externally* reflected, a mere sum of observed appearances, and essence as explicans would amount only to the claim that no water has ever been observed to be incapable of forming such a compound. Since Hegel takes himself to have shown that neither option can count as the required ground, he now notes that what is lacking in them is an account of the determinate relation between the "essential" and "unessential," and so introduces the two notions that dominate the rest of his discussion in Book II – "law" and "relation." It is, he now argues, only when ground is understood as law, and law is conceived in terms of the actual, possible, and necessary relations among objects, that the required

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conceptual ground for a consistent, determinate thought of an object can be understood.

It is this introduction of “lawful relation among appearances” as essence that is supposed to return us to all the earlier formulations of the problem of essence and suggest their resolution. That is, with essence now understood as relational law, Hegel can claim that “appearance and law have one and the same content. Law is the reflection of appearance into identity-with-self” (*WL*, II, 127; *SL*, 503). Or, he has now formulated his version of the initially abstract claim that appearance is the “showing” of essence and that essence is its showing in appearance. An essential conceptual condition or ground for an object or event being what it is is the *law*; a thing is *understood as what it is* (in the now familiar idealist turn from realist essence talk) by being understood in its possible, actual, and necessary relations with other things, by virtue of the law that accounts for these relations. Such an essence, law, is not some substrate behind or always “in” the appearances; there *are* just appearances, but they are determinate by virtue of the determinate ways they are understood in law like relations to others. (And, again, the incompleteness and potential relativity of such laws are what render the appearances mere appearances.) Or:

Accordingly, law is not beyond appearance but is immediately present [*gegenwärtig*] in it; the realm of law is the stable image of the world of existence or appearance. But the fact is rather that both form a single totality, and the existent world is itself the realm of laws. (*WL*, II, 127; *SL*, 503)³⁵

(Thus, attempting to understand the ground of someone’s actions by reference to his character should not be understood as a reference to an independent substrate. It is necessary to understand him in terms of a character or “substrate,” but that character can be understood by understanding the relation among his actions; he is not simply identical with his actions, but he is identical with the totality of those actions insofar as those actions themselves reveal a pattern or law that can be used to construct a possible determinate totality.)

As Hegel proceeds to examine possible specifications of such “essential relations,” in terms of whole/parts relations, “force” and its expression, and, later, substantiality, causality, and reciprocity, and as he tries to demonstrate the unity of the modal relations such notions help specify, it is important to note, in concluding this interpretation of Book II, how many of the previously identified idealist themes Hegel takes himself to have established. As we have noted throughout, the fact that such relational laws, functioning as essential ground or condition for the determinate representing of objects, are products of reflection, of the self-conscious spontaneity of thought, does not mean that Hegel considers such results as, to use his terminology, “indifferent” to the *relata* so comprehended. In the first place, Hegel explicitly rejects the model of a wholly positing reflection and continually insists that “actuality” involves the determinate identity of essence

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and appearance, or some concrete relation between some projected law and its actual success in accounting for "existing" objects and events. As we shall see in Book III, Hegel's idealism is still quite radical in that it argues that what will count as "success" is itself a "self-determined Notion," but this will not mean that the products of some theoretical projection, although underdetermined by empirically contingent particulars, possesses some autonomous status, indifferent to the "real" world of appearances. In the first place, there *is* such a determinate world only as conditioned by such a ground; but in the second place, although such a condition is necessary for the "identification" of some object, any putative particular condition is, at this stage, "finite," only incompletely successful in its grounding function. Since Hegel has so tied together appearances and essences in his language, identifying them, the nature of this insufficiency, or internal self-negation, cannot be straightforward empirical inadequacy, but however much his explanation of this inadequacy will still involve all the language of the "self-relation of thought" and so forth, we now know that it is the self-relation of thought *in it being able* to relate concrete appearances to one another. Exactly what this means has yet to be determined but his long argument about the inseparability of essence and appearance throughout Book II must be kept in mind in exploring that notion.

All of this simply returns us to the central issue in all of Hegel's idealism. How can he argue for any kind of autonomy or self-determination of "thought," and still explain (1) the determinacy of such "thinkings" and (2) the objectivity of such determinations? I have been arguing that he has adopted an essentially Kantian strategy with regard to (2), both in the *PhG*'s rejection of a skeptical-realist alternative to idealism and in the argument for the conceptual incoherence of a realist ontology in Book I. But such an interpretation does not, of course, commit Hegel simply to the view that *any* nonderived, conceptually interrelated structure, at a sufficiently fundamental level, accomplishing a certain kind of determinacy in thought, can be said to be objective. We may now know that he envisions this autonomy of thought not as some sort of positing reflection but as self-determining *in* its attempt to ground successfully the totality of actual appearances, an attempt that must somehow be capable of being restrained by "existence," but all of that still does not tell us how such a requirement for reflection is to be fulfilled. It is clear by now why Kant's reliance on the forms of intuition and his schematism are not acceptable for Hegel, and that some sort of internalism or holism about the determinacy of concepts is envisioned, but thus far, all this is still quite programmatic.

In the latter sections of both the *EL* and the *SL*, this problem is introduced by explicit reference to the problem of the purposiveness or teleological development of thought, a reference that yet again introduces Kantian themes, this time the notion of the "unconditioned." In his discussion in *EL* of the logic of the relational law of "force and its expression," Hegel begins to indicate what he regards as a fully satisfactory conceptual condition when he criticizes the "defectiveness" of the form of this relation, suggesting

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that the always conditioned nature of some particular force, its being the product itself of some other force's expression, limits the explanatory power of such a notion. For a full explanation, Hegel implies, we need a notion that is "in and for itself determinate," or a "notion" (*Begriff*) and an "end" (*Zweck*) (*EL*, 270; *EnL*, 193). For the latter unconditioned condition, we need again an end or *Zweck* that is not itself conditioned but "self-determining" (*das sich in sich selbst Bestimmende*) (*EL*, 271; *EnL*, 194). As in Kant then, reason is said to seek inevitably (as a goal or *Zweck*) the unconditioned; unlike Kant, such a search does not terminate in antinomies and paralogisms, but in the "Notion, the realm of subjectivity or of freedom" (*WL*, II, 205; *SL*, 571) that constitutes an absolute, not illusory, "ascent."