

Duquesne University

Duquesne Scholarship Collection

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Spring 5-7-2021

Circle of Circles: Rethinking Idealism through Hegel's Epistemology

Sila Ozkara

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dsc.duq.edu/etd>



Part of the [Continental Philosophy Commons](#), [Epistemology Commons](#), [History of Philosophy Commons](#), and the [Metaphysics Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ozkara, S. (2021). Circle of Circles: Rethinking Idealism through Hegel's Epistemology (Doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University). Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/etd/1990>

This One-year Embargo is brought to you for free and open access by Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Duquesne Scholarship Collection.

CIRCLE OF CIRCLES: RETHINKING IDEALISM THROUGH HEGEL'S
EPISTEMOLOGY
(KREIS VON KREISEN: ÜBERARBEITUNG DES IDEALISMUS DURCH
HEGELSche ERKENNTNISTHEORIE)

A Dissertation submitted to
The McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts &
Philosophische Fakultät, Philosophisches Seminar, Universität Heidelberg

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
Sıla Özkara

May 2021

Copyright by

Sıla Özkara

2021

CIRCLE OF CIRCLES:
RETHINKING IDEALISM THROUGH HEGEL'S EPISTEMOLOGY
(KREIS VON KREISEN: ÜBERARBEITUNG DES IDEALISMUS DURCH
HEGELSICHE ERKENNTNISTHEORIE)

By

Sıla Özkara

Approved April 7, 2021

Tom Rockmore
Humanities Chair Professor, Professor of
Philosophy, Peking University
(formerly Duquesne)
(Dissertation Co-Director)

Anton Friedrich Koch
Professor of Philosophy,
Universität Heidelberg
(Dissertation Co-Director)

James Swindal
Professor of Philosophy and Henry Koren,
C.S.Sp Endowed Chair in Scholarly
Excellence, Duquesne
(Committee Chair)

Jennifer Bates
Professor of Philosophy,
Duquesne
(Committee Member)

Christian Martin
Privat Dozent, Philosophy,
Universität Heidelberg
(Vorsitzender)

Kristine Blair
Dean, McAnulty College and Graduate
School of Liberal Arts
Professor of English

Daniel Selcer
Chair, Department of Philosophy
Associate Professor of Philosophy

ABSTRACT

CIRCLE OF CIRCLES:

RETHINKING IDEALISM THROUGH HEGEL'S EPISTEMOLOGY

(KREIS VON KREISEN: ÜBERARBEITUNG DES IDEALISMUS DURCH HEGELSICHE ERKENNTNISTHEORIE)

By

Sıla Özkara

May 2021

Dissertation co-supervised by Tom Rockmore and Anton Friedrich Koch

This dissertation's central thesis is that Hegel's approach to knowledge and philosophy is "circular". A "circle of circles", *Kreis von Kreisen*, an image Hegel regularly uses throughout his corpus, has sustained a steady wonder in his commentators. Nevertheless, it has not been studied with rigor adequate to its extensive importance, which spans his philosophical career and frames his engagement with the history of philosophy and the philosophy of his time. Due attention to Hegel's concept of circles provides a robust frame for grasping his philosophical project, idealism, and account of knowledge. The content of each of Hegel's works is the totality of the historically-determined knowledge specific to the science in question in that work: each a circle that

constitutes a whole. The whole is the truth. The circle closes when the end point reaches back to the beginning and becomes one with it, justifying the whole circle. This end point, which Hegel calls an “absolute” in each work, indicates limits. As opposed to the infinite progress of the “spurious” infinite, his “true” infinite found at the closing point of the circle, namely at the absolute, indicates that knowledge is *infinitely limited* – and *that* is the truth. Truth is limited to what we can/may know in a given context and development. Recognizing the limits of our current framework by seeing it absolutely, i.e., in its entirety, provides the perspective for us to progress further. Accordingly, I argue Hegel provides an alternative to 1) the epistemologies of his contemporaries, 2) the central historical epistemologies of the Western philosophical tradition, and 3) some epistemologies dominant today. Hegel’s circular epistemology answers, on the one hand, the skeptical worry about justification, and, on the other, concerns regarding foundations raised by German idealist thinkers in the wake of Kant’s critical philosophy – mainly by Reinhold, Schulze, Fichte, and Schelling. Through detailed readings of the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, and *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* I argue for a novel way Hegel’s epistemology addresses the perennial philosophical problems of how we, as knowing subjects, begin systematic inquiries, justify what we claim to know, and attain knowledge.

ABSTRACT

(Deutsch)

Die zentrale These dieser Dissertation ist, dass Hegels Zugang zu Wissen und Philosophie "zirkulär" ist. Ein "Kreis von Kreisen", ein Motiv, das Hegel in seinem gesamten Werk regelmäßig verwendet, hat bei seinen Kommentatoren ein ständiges Staunen hervorgerufen. Dennoch ist er nicht mit der Strenge untersucht worden, die seiner umfassenden Bedeutung angemessen ist, die seine philosophische Karriere umspannt und seine Auseinandersetzung mit der Geschichte der Philosophie und der Philosophie seiner Zeit einrahmt. Die gebührende Aufmerksamkeit für Hegels Konzept der Kreise bietet einen robusten Rahmen für das Verständnis seines philosophischen Projekts, seines Idealismus und seiner Darstellung des Wissens. Der Inhalt jedes von Hegels Werken ist die Gesamtheit des historisch bedingten Wissens, das für die betreffende Wissenschaft in diesem Werk spezifisch ist: jeweils ein Kreis, der ein Ganzes bildet. Das Ganze ist die Wahrheit. Der Kreis schließt sich, wenn der Endpunkt zum Anfang zurückreicht und mit ihm eins wird und den ganzen Kreis rechtfertigt. Dieser Endpunkt, den Hegel in jedem Werk ein "Absolutes" nennt, zeigt Grenzen an. Im Gegensatz zum unendlichen Fortschritt des "schlechten" Unendlichen zeigt sein "wahrhaftes" Unendliches, das sich am Schlusspunkt des Kreises, nämlich am Absoluten, findet, dass das Wissen unendlich begrenzt ist - und das ist die Wahrheit. Wahrheit ist begrenzt auf das, was wir in einem gegebenen Kontext und einer gegebenen Entwicklung wissen können/dürfen. Das Erkennen der Grenzen unseres gegenwärtigen Rahmens, indem wir ihn absolut, d.h. in seiner Gesamtheit sehen, bietet uns die Perspektive, weiter voranzukommen. Dementsprechend argumentiere ich, dass Hegel eine Alternative bietet

zu 1) den Erkenntnistheorien seiner Zeitgenossen, 2) den zentralen historischen Erkenntnistheorien der westlichen philosophischen Tradition und 3) einigen heute dominierenden Erkenntnistheorien. Hegels zirkuläre Erkenntnistheorie antwortet einerseits auf die skeptische Sorge um die Rechtfertigung und andererseits auf die Bedenken hinsichtlich der Grundlagen, die von deutschen idealistischen Denkern im Gefolge von Kants kritischer Philosophie - hauptsächlich von Reinhold, Schulze, Fichte und Schelling - geäußert wurden. Durch detaillierte Lektüre der Phänomenologie des Geistes, der Wissenschaft der Logik und der Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften argumentiere ich für eine neue Art und Weise, wie Hegels Erkenntnistheorie die immerwährenden philosophischen Probleme angeht, wie wir als wissende Subjekte systematische Untersuchungen beginnen, rechtfertigen, was wir zu wissen behaupten, und Wissen erlangen.

DEDICATION

For my dear parents, Asuman and Şeref Özkara,
who gifted me a sense of curiosity and wonder (and an education to match),
which led me on the path of philosophy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

During the years of my doctoral studies, I learned much from and received the support of many people. I am very thankful to everyone who has been a teacher, friend, companion, or assisted me in some form or other during this time.

I would like to thank the Philosophy Department and McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts of Duquesne University for the stipends and fellowships they have granted me, including summer language study grants from Ron Polansky. I would like to thank the Philosophy Faculty of the University of Heidelberg for a Dissertation Bridging Grant.

I am infinitely thankful to my dissertation committee. I could not have been luckier, and I cannot imagine a better committee to have had the privilege to write my dissertation under. I am very thankful to James Swindal for his insights on my work, his guidance through the years, and for making the structure of the committee possible. I read Hegel in detail for the first time with Jennifer Bates. She has been a great and generous mentor, has pushed me intellectually in ways that made me grow immensely. I also cannot thank her enough for creating the opportunity for me to go to Heidelberg for an exchange semester which resulted in my academic work with Anton Koch and the cotutelle agreement for my doctorate. I want to thank from the bottom of my heart to Anton Koch and Tom Rockmore. I am proud and so honored to have worked with them, to be their disciple. My Doktorvaters have both taught me an incredible amount. I am thankful for all that I have learned from them, the rigorous academic standards to which they held me, their generosity, their intellectual richness as well as their sense of humor, their infinite support, and the freedom they gave me to explore many different ideas.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	iv
1. In English.....	iv
2. In German	vi
Dedication.....	viii
Acknowledgement.....	ix
List of Abbreviations.....	xiv
Introduction.....	xvi
1. Overview	xvi
2. Outline of Chapters.....	xviii
3. Discussions of Hegel’s “Circularity” in Secondary Literature	xxi
I. Framing the Issue: The Quest for Truth and the Skeptical Münchhausen-Trilemma	1
1. The Münchhausen-Trilemma	2
2. Infinite Regress	4
3. Foundationalism.....	5
3.1. Why Foundationalism?.....	6
3.2. Kinds of Foundationalism Used Historically	9
3.3. Methodological Basis vs. Epistemic Foundation.....	9
3.4. ‘Foundation’ vs. ‘Ground’	10
3.5. Different Kinds of Epistemic Foundationalism	16
4. Vicious Circularity	19
5. The Question of Systematicity and Truth: Framing the Issue.....	19
6. The Importance of the Question of Truth for German Idealism.....	20
7. Idealism	26
7.1. Kant’s Transcendental Idealism and Reconception of Empiricism.....	28
7.2. Hegel’s Critique of Empiricism	31
7.3. Empirical and Philosophical Knowledge	34
8. Conclusion.....	35

II. Cognition (<i>Erkenntnis</i>) and Foundations in Classical German Philosophy.....	36
1. Kant.....	38
1.1. The <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> and an a priori Account	38
1.2. Cognition and the Standpoint of Reason	44
1.3. The Transcendental Unity of Apperception	45
2. Reinhold.....	50
3. Schulze.....	57
4. Fichte	66
5. Schelling	79
6. Conclusion.....	87
III. The Role of Knowledge and Epistemology in Hegel’s Philosophy.....	90
1. The Meaning of Epistemology.....	91
2. Hegel’s Models for Epistemology	95
2.1. Kant.....	97
2.2. Fichte.....	100
2.3. Schelling	103
3. Hegel’s Epistemology.....	105
3.1. Preliminary Remarks	106
3.1.1. A Non-Traditional Epistemology	106
3.1.2. An Account of What Kind of Knowledge?.....	107
3.1.3. <i>Erkenntnis</i> : Knowledge and Cognition	110
3.1.4. Relativism and Objectivity, Historicism and Truth.....	114
3.2. <i>Phänomenologie des Geistes</i>	121
3.2.1. Natural vs. Scientific Consciousness.....	127
3.2.2. The Kinds of Truth	132
3.2.3. An Historical Approach to Truth.....	133
3.2.4. Truth and the Whole.....	134
3.3. <i>Wissenschaft der Logik</i>	138
3.3.1. The Non-Standard Character of the WL	139
3.3.2. The Idea of Cognition.....	149

3.3.3. Additional Arguments	160
4. Idealism	173
4.1. <i>Erkenntnis</i> and Idealism	173
4.2. Idealism and the Kantian Problem	180
5. Conclusion.....	181
IV. Circularity and Anti-Foundationalism in Hegel’s Philosophy.....	185
1. Circle as a Geometric Figure.....	187
2. Key Characteristics of Hegel’s Notion of a Circular Epistemology.....	189
3. Hegel’s Initial Conception of Circular Epistemology in the <i>Differenzschrift</i>	192
4. “Infinity” as a Circle and Its Relation to Idealism.....	195
4.1. Overview.....	196
4.2. The Transition from the Finite to the Infinite.....	198
4.3. The Spurious (or “False”) Infinite: The Progress to Infinity.....	200
4.4. The Transition to the Genuine (or “True”) Infinite.....	203
4.5. The Genuine (or “True”) Infinite as a Circle	205
4.6. Causality and Infinity.....	209
4.7. Real and Ideal, Finite and Infinite.....	212
4.8. Infinity and Idealism.....	222
4.9. Infinity, Idealism, and Speculative Philosophy.....	228
5. Conclusion.....	231
V. The Non-Vicious Character of Hegel’s Circularity	233
1. Definition of Vicious Circularity and “Frictionless Spinning in a Void”	235
1.1. The Common Definition.....	235
1.2. The Myth of the Given.....	236
1.3. Frictionless Spinning in a Void.....	241
2. Why Hegel’s Circularity is Not Vicious: Three Arguments	244
2.1. First Argument: The Role of Beginnings	247
2.2. Second Argument: Idealism and Truth in Hegel’s Circular Epistemology..	260
2.3. Third Argument: Concept, and Form and Content	263

3. Conclusion.....	271
VI. Circular Epistemology in <i>Wissenschaft der Logik, Phenomenologie des Geistes,</i> and the Three Parts of the <i>Enzyklopaedie</i>	273
1. <i>Wissenschaft der Logik</i>	274
2. <i>Phenomenologie des Geistes</i>	314
3. <i>Enzyklopaedie des philosophischen Wissenschaften</i>	338
3.1. The Circular Structure of the Three Parts of the Encyclopaedia	340
3.2. Part 1: Logic	340
3.3. Part 2: Nature.....	343
3.4. Part 3: Geist	346
4. Conclusion.....	348
Conclusion	352
Bibliography	358

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPR	Kant, Immanuel. <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> . Trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
Differenzschrift	Hegel, G.W. F. <i>Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie</i> . In <i>Jenaer Schriften 1801-1807</i> . Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2016. English translation: <i>The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy</i> . Trans. H.S. Harris and Walter Cerf. Albany: SUNY Press, 1977.
EL	Hegel, G.W. F. <i>Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften</i> , I. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2014. English translation: <i>The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze</i> . Trans. T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, and H.S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991.
EPM	Sellars, Wilfrid. <i>Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind</i> . Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.
Enzyklopaedie	EL, Naturphilosophie, and Geistesphilosophie
Geistesphilosophie	Hegel, G.W. F. <i>Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften</i> , III. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2016. English translation: <i>Hegel's Philosophy of Mind</i> . Trans. William Wallace, together with the Zusätze in Boumann's Text (1845) trans. A.V. Miller, with Foreword by J.N. Findlay. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.
LHP	Hegel, G. W. F. <i>Lectures on the History of Philosophy</i> , Vol 3. Trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1986.
Logic	WL and/or EL
Naturphilosophie	Hegel, G.W. F. <i>Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften</i> , II. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2014. English translation: <i>Hegel's Philosophy of Nature</i> . Trans. A.V. Miller with Foreword by J.N. Findlay. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
PhG	Hegel, G. W. F. <i>Phänomenologie des Geistes</i> . Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2014. English translation: <i>Phenomenology of Spirit</i> . Trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
SK	Fichte, J.G. <i>Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre</i> . Stuttgart: Reclam, 1972.

- SoTI Schelling, F.W.J. *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Trans. Peter Heath. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978.
- ÜBW Fichte, J.G. *The Science of Knowledge*. Ed. and trans. Peter Heath and John Lachs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- WL Hegel, G. W. F. *Wissenschaft der Logik*, I & II. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2014. English translation: *Science of Logic*. Trans. A.V. Miller. Ed. H.D. Lewis. New York: Humanity Books, 1998.

INTRODUCTION

1. Overview

A circle of circles, *Kreis von Kreisen*, an image which Hegel regularly uses throughout his corpus, has sustained a steady wonder in his readers and commentators. One can find some passing remark or other about Hegel's circles in almost every book published about his philosophy. Although many of Hegel's commentators take up the concepts of circles and circularity in Hegel's philosophy, very few give an account of what Hegel means by these terms, and even fewer develop an account of circularity in relation to Hegel's epistemological project that spans his career. The notion of circularity in Hegel's philosophy remains seemingly obscure and often misunderstood.

It is fair to say that circular epistemology is an aspect of the Hegelian position that is scarcely known but central to his view. More work needs to be done to grasp Hegel's circular position in order to make sense of Hegel's philosophy successfully. This dissertation is written with the aim to develop an account of Hegel's circular epistemology in order to clarify it and show its importance historically, systematically, and with an eye to its relevance for our philosophical work today. Though there is much more work to be done on Hegel's circular epistemology and its import, I explore in detail in this dissertation some of the key elements of it.

Circularity, I argue, provides us with not only a robust frame through which we may grasp Hegel's overall philosophical project, but also a path to decipher Hegel's account of knowledge. Specifically, the circularity of his view is closely related to his view of dialectic (or progression through the logical work of inadequacies and

contradictions) as a continued approximation to what is acceptable, namely, as a claim to know as an ongoing progression. Accordingly, absolute knowledge (or any other absolute in his works) is not a totalizing point at which all claims to further knowledge are absolutely exhausted. In contrast, the absolute for Hegel, according to the circular view, is the recognition of the limits of the conceptual/ideal framework within which one has been working (Spirit, Being, Idea, Nature, and so on).

There is much to consider when attempting to grasp circularity, as this dissertation shows. In order to begin to make sense of what the curious allusion to the figure of a circle that appears repeatedly in Hegel's works means, we need to consider the relevant historical context and the philosophical discussions happening around Hegel to which he is responding and with which he is coming to grips. Throughout the dissertation, though especially in the first four chapters, I devote a great deal of space to just such considerations, working across thinkers and different philosophical works to trace the path to Hegel's arguments. If Hegel teaches us anything, it is first and foremost the importance of history and its development insofar as they affect and determine the development of our own ideas today and our ideas about Hegel (though, as I discuss in Chapter 3, this is distinct from relativism).

Alongside such historical considerations, it is crucial to also systematically frame the issue at hand according to the concepts with which Hegel was working and the philosophical problems with which he was grappling. Given the span of his use of circular epistemology throughout the extent of his career, there are many concepts and philosophical problems which, we see when we study closely, Hegel developed in direct relation to his circular epistemology. His idealism, philosophical systematicity and

method, and his notions of truth, infinity, finitude, ideality, reality, metaphysics, and epistemology, to name a few, are directly related to his notion of circularity. As I show throughout the dissertation, reading Hegel's works with a grasp of circular epistemology opens up many exciting avenues for fruitful exploration regarding these notions and issues.

What should make Hegel's circular epistemology of further interest to Hegel scholars and, in fact, to philosophers working in the fields of metaphysics and epistemology in general today is its relevance to some current philosophical debates in fields not often associated closely with German Idealism. In Chapter 5, my argument against vicious circularity as a proper characterization of Hegel's circular epistemology demonstrates the ease with which Hegel's circular epistemology can immediately be brought into dialogue with influential philosophers like Sellars, Davidson, Quine, and McDowell and the debates surrounding their work (McDowell does work on Hegel's philosophy, but not on his circular epistemology). My position is that Hegel's circular epistemology provides a strong alternative to dominant accounts of knowledge today. However, much more work can be undertaken in the future to explore the relevance of Hegel's circular epistemology to current debates.

2. Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1 begins with an initial conceptual frame of the project: I present Hans Albert's Münchhausen-trilemma to present the skeptical worry about the problem of justification in epistemology. According to the trilemma, the only possible options for

justifying any claim is through either infinite regress, foundationalism, or vicious circularity (all three of which I explain in this chapter). I argue that Hegel answers this trilemma with his circular epistemology. This problem of justification is a concern for Hegel and his contemporaries who are working in the wake of Kant's philosophy. I claim that by revealing that we do not have direct cognitive access to reality, Kant's Copernican revolution generated a crisis of truth in philosophy and evoked the skeptic concern among Kant's immediate commentators of how to secure truth and justify knowledge. I explore Kant's reconception of empiricism through his transcendental idealism and Hegel's critique of empiricism.

In Chapter 2, in order to establish a context for relating Hegel's theory to his contemporaries, I provide necessary historical analyses to demonstrate a little-recognized idea: German Idealism is framed by the task of finding an adequate foundation for Kant's system. I consider works by Kant, K.L. Reinhold, G.E. Schulze, J.G. Fichte, and F.W.J Schelling. The rest of the dissertation includes an extended argument for my view that Hegel's circular epistemology solves this problem in a distinct way.

Many scholars suggest that Hegel's main works are solely metaphysical. I argue in Chapter 3, however, that this view is mistaken: they are first and foremost epistemological. Though there are a variety of books on Hegel's epistemology (e.g., Westphal, 2003), none sufficiently establish this point. My third chapter makes this argument, focusing on Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807), *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1817), and *Wissenschaft der Logik* (1832). I further argue through an historical analysis that Hegel follows the trajectory of cognitive strategies built by Kant, Fichte, and Schelling.

Having demonstrated that epistemology is at the heart of Hegel's thought, I am able start exploring in detail the notion of circularity in Hegel's philosophy and epistemology in Chapter 4. Here I give an in-depth exposition of Hegel's circular epistemology: all knowledge claims depend on one another equally, while the end of the system refers back to its beginning, producing a systematic reflexivity. Most traditional epistemologists have understood knowledge in a foundationalist framework. By contrast, Hegel's circular epistemology is developed through a critique of foundationalism. For Hegel, knowledge claims are justified by and refer to other knowledge claims, which are consequently interdependent, forming a connected system that establishes truth. Moreover, the notion of circularity explains some other key concepts in Hegel's works, such as infinity and ideality. True infinity, as opposed to the mistaken ("spurious") conception of infinity, takes the shape of a circle, is ideal, and is the model for philosophy. By focusing on this, I argue for a way to understand knowledge that challenges the epistemological paradigms dominant in the field today.

In Chapter 5, I tackle the criticism that since circular reasoning is vicious, Hegel's circular epistemology must also not be a feasible cognitive strategy. In order to make my argument, I frame the potential criticism of Hegel's circularity in the terms used by John McDowell (1994) in his criticism of Donald Davidson's anti-foundationalist and coherentist theory as "frictionless spinning in a void" (borrowing the term from Wilfrid Sellars). I defend Hegel's circular epistemology against this charge of vicious "frictionless spinning in a void" by focusing on the hypothetical yet grounding character of different elements of Hegel's system. In doing so, I not only show that Hegel's circular epistemology is not vicious, but also that it can provide a useful alternative to the

influential coherentist theories today (for instance, those of Davidson, Sellars, and Quine).

To conclude my dissertation, I explore in Chapter 6 the circular epistemology of Hegel's *Phänomenologie*, *Enzyklopädie*, and *Wissenschaft der Logik*. Moreover, in this exploration that spans across Hegel's philosophical career, I address an issue that hitherto has been ignored by commentators, but that is decisive throughout Hegel's corpus: his reaction to Reinhold's reading of Kant. I argue that this shapes essential aspects of the context in which Hegel develops his account of anti-foundationalist circular epistemology throughout his career, starting with his first philosophical publication, *Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie* (1801). Very little historical work has been done on Reinhold's philosophy in general, and much less on Hegel's relation to it. Through my arguments in this final chapter, I am able to draw further conclusions about how the circular and anti-foundationalist character of Hegel's epistemology transforms our understanding of his philosophical *oeuvre* as a whole.

3. Discussions of “Circularity” in Hegel Scholarship

As mentioned above, many discussions on Hegel's notion of “circle” often take for granted the exact meaning of the term and do not come close to analyzing the significance of circularity for Hegel's philosophical project overall. In advance of starting my own account of Hegel's circles, I want to briefly review some main references to Hegel – though this review is not meant to be exhaustive, for many scholars make passing remarks to circularity in Hegel's thought without explaining it satisfactorily.

It is crucial to note that none of the various references to and accounts of Hegelian circles (except a brief explanation of the center by Rockmore) pay attention to the center of the circle, which is a crucial element in Hegel's. These accounts focus on the reflexive nature of the circle of the end returning to the beginning, i.e. these two points matching. Without keeping the middle point in view as that around which the circle is developed, we could very well be speaking of any other shape, as long as it is a closed shape: triangle, ellipse, heptagon, etc. would all satisfy this criterion of having the point where we start drawing connect with the point where we end drawing. Thus we need a further criterion that sets circles apart, namely, that any point on the circumference of the circle is equidistant from its center point. This, I argue, is a significant element of Hegel's circular epistemology. As I argue in Chapter 4, the center of the circle constitutes the philosophical concept or problem around which each circle is constructed.

Tom Rockmore's *Hegel's Circular Epistemology* (1986) remains the only book written in the English language which takes up the issue in considerable detail. Since then he has written several articles about the notion of circularity in Hegel's work. He also has an article titled "Hegel's Circular Epistemology as Antifoundationalism" (1989). I wrote my Master's Thesis on this subject. Though there are many references to Hegel's views of circles and notion of circularity in passing, to the best of my knowledge no other scholar discusses the epistemic import of circular epistemology with serious attention.

Rockmore's *Hegel's Circular Epistemology* is a serious book-length introduction to the topic. In his work, Rockmore provides a historical overview of Hegel's circular epistemology in relation to the history of philosophy discussing Plato, Descartes, Kant, and others. He also discusses circularity in an exploration ranging from a geometric shape

to a pattern in philosophy. His account of Hegel's notion of circularity revolves heavily around the historical setting of Hegel's works. He argues that Hegel's circular epistemology arises in response to the discussions of his time. He discusses circularity in detail in Hegel's work. Furthermore, he devotes a chapter to the relation of Hegel's philosophy to the later debate. In *On Hegel's Epistemology and Contemporary Philosophy* Rockmore presents a series of papers that range from the circularity of Hegel's epistemology to the relevance of Hegel's epistemology to contemporary epistemological debates.

More than 30 years after the publication of this work, not much has been done in the scholarship in taking further Rockmore's insights about Hegel's notion of circularity and its relation to epistemology. My dissertation is a revisiting of the material Rockmore worked with and my account here builds on Rockmore's by focusing on the import of circularity for Hegel's idealism, exploring some of the historical relations in more detail and identifying new ones, showing the significance of the role of circular epistemology for various key concepts in Hegel's thought, and so on. If Rockmore and I are correct in our claim that circularity is central in defining Hegel's philosophy and approach, then not one but many books should be written on the subject in order to explore and figure out what it means for various aspects of Hegel's philosophy, his contemporaries, the history of philosophy in general, and how we do philosophy today. Thus, my dissertation is intended to be a modest addition to a topic that I think ought to have a vast amount of scholarship dedicated to it.

Rockmore devotes a chapter to the historical context in which Hegel's notion of circularity as a cognitive strategy was formulated. I do the same but go further as I

provide more in-depth analyses of specific passages of various philosophers (I focus on fewer in number but provide more detail and depth in my analyses). I also explain the importance of the overarching historical moment that prompts the need for Kant's immediate commentators to seek complete systems and to debate the requirements for having complete systems.

Perhaps most importantly, my dissertation, as its title *Circle of Circles: Rethinking Idealism through Hegel's Epistemology* indicates, makes the unique contribution that Hegel's notion of a circular epistemology provides a new conception of idealism. Rockmore does not specifically discuss idealism in his work. By making the connection between Hegel's approach to epistemology and idealism, my dissertation goes beyond Rockmore's work.

Rockmore's position in *German Idealism as Constructivism* is that Hegel's view of *a posteriori* justification provides an *a posteriori* reformulation of Kant's *a priori* justification. I build on Rockmore's view by suggesting that this turn to the *a posteriori* indicates something important for the idealism of German Idealism which is so often associated with the *a priori*. Idealism has historically been associated with the *a priori* (except in the case of Berkeley). Hegel's twist on Kant's constructivism that Rockmore identifies, in my analysis, turns out to be significant for understanding the importance of Hegel for a renewed conception of idealism.

I present a detailed exploration of why Hegel's works are chiefly concerned with epistemology and my formulation of Hegel's non-standard epistemology. I provide a historical analysis of the emergence of the term "epistemology" and connect it with Hegel. Rockmore mentions the epistemological character of Hegel's works briefly in the

Introduction of his book, but does not devote a chapter-length study for *why* they are epistemological. Furthermore, unlike Rockmore, I have various brief discussions relating Hegel's epistemology to contemporary epistemology.

After Rockmore, Michael J Inwood is perhaps the scholar that undertakes the most detailed discussion of circles and circularity in Hegel's system. In *Hegel*, he devotes several passages and two sections to the discussion of circularity. He writes that "the circularity of Hegel's system is one of its most remarkable features" (Inwood 317). Furthermore, according to Inwood, "there are in fact several circles. Each of the three main parts of the system, as well as the system as a whole, forms a circle" (Inwood 317-318). Inwood describes these circles under four headings. The first one is that each of the parts of Hegel's system (Logic, Nature, Spirit) is a circle (Inwood 320); the second one is that the system as a whole with its three parts forms a circle; the third is that the Logic forms a "distinct" circle in that the last point of the Logic not only directs us to Nature but also back to its beginning (though it is unclear to me how this is different from the other circles in Hegel's system); and finally the fourth is that "the circularity of the *Logic* is, however, also a consequence of" the circularity explained by the second point, and that "logic is meant to prefigure its own applications" (Inwood 321).

According to Inwood, Hegel's philosophy "forms a circle and it does not have a starting-point at which decisions have to be made about our procedures. Our procedures emerge and justify themselves within the system" (Inwood 112). Furthermore, Inwood remarks that one way in which we can interpret the circularity is that when we come to the ends of Hegel's works with grandiose section titles such as "absolute knowing" or the "absolute Idea", what we find is not something that is distinct from what we have so far

seen, but rather a “recapitulation of the whole series together with an account of the method by which it was generated” (Inwood 151). Inwood also explains Hegel’s discussion of infinity as a circle found in his *Logic* (Inwood 150-154). Accordingly, a circle is nevertheless a line, and therefore linear (Inwood 150). This I find to be a strange claim, given that a circular account is opposed to a linear account.

I agree with Inwood’s claims so far except for the final point. In fact, I find them to be a reiteration of what Rockmore has already done two decades earlier. Inwood further criticizes Hegel’s circularity. He writes “how does the end of the system, or of the *Logic*, legitimate the beginning? Sometimes it seems as if it explains or justifies the beginning only in the sense in which an element, a proposition, for example, or the opening of a play, becomes clearer when we see what is or can be derived from it” and “Hegel’s epistemic circle may be a circle in no more stringent a sense than that in which the first type of circle is, namely that the last term of the series is a survey of the series as a whole. In such a survey, we see the place of the beginning in the whole system, but it does not follow that the beginning we chose is fully vindicated” (Inwood 153). He further notes that simply being in a circle does not justify their epistemic validity (Inwood 154). In other words, Inwood fails to see that as a theory is worked out it progressively justifies its claims. Furthermore, according to Inwood, we may not enter the circle at any point we please since the circle is not “homogeneous” (Inwood 153-4).

Inwood recognizes that the circle may be an epistemic one. However, I show that he is not exactly accurate in claiming we cannot enter the circle at any point we please. It is true that we cannot enter the circle at a point we choose, but nevertheless the beginning is presuppositionless and thus not mediated. Accordingly, it could very well be any point

whatsoever from our perspective, because the beginning is indeterminate. Furthermore, I also show that Inwood's criticism that the circle does not justify its beginning point to not be a problem for Hegel based on my discussions related to Hegel's idealism.

H. S. Harris takes the notion of circles in Hegel's philosophy very seriously – so seriously that he refers to circles in his explanation of at least 33 of the paragraphs of the *Encyclopaedia Logic* in his Lecture Notes on Hegel's *Encyclopedia Logic* (1830) or a course during the academic year 1993-1994 at Glendon College, York University, Toronto. Although these notes were not intended to be published, they are nevertheless a useful resource for grasping Harris's views about Hegel's *Logic*. Harris refers to circles, or characterizes a certain movement in the *Logic* in at least §§ 15, 16, 19, 86, 88, 121, 133, 136, 147, 148, 149, 153, 155, 185, 186, 187, 187, 188, 189, 190, 204, 209, 213, 214, 220, 223, 229, 238, 239, 241, 242, 243, and 244. Harris applies the terms “circle” and “circular” to various topics such as force (§136), causality as reciprocity of action and reaction (§153), quality and quantity (§155), and movements regarding the syllogism of universal (U), singular (S), and particular (P) (§§186-190). Although Harris discusses circles and circularity regarding the more usual themes of the end returning to the beginning (§§242-244), the presuppositionless beginning and how it entails a circle (§19), and the good infinity in the shape of a circle (§133), his frequent references to circles is unusual to find in Hegel scholarship.

I am sympathetic to an approach of seeking circles and circularity everywhere in Hegel who takes them very seriously. However, Harris fails to differentiate between what he calls “circle” and “circular”. He interchangeably uses the term “circle” for various logical moves such as reciprocity, reflection, inwardization and externalization, return to

the beginning at the end, foreseeing the end from the beginning, presuppositionless beginning, and so on. Regardless of the inaccuracies on circularity, Harris's works on Hegel are insightful in clarifying many aspects of Hegel's thought.

At various points throughout her book *Memory, History, Justice in Hegel*, Angelica Nuzzo discusses Hegel's circles. The first time she mentions the circular structure found in the *PhG* is when she is making reference to the non-foundational structure of Hegel's works. She refers to this structure as a "net of correspondences", which take the shape of a circle in the *PhG* (Nuzzo 40). Since 'memory' is its central theme, Nuzzo's book discusses circles in relation to memory. In a section called "The circle of the last *Erinnerung* and the present – (*DD*) *Das absolute Wissen*", Nuzzo writes that after the *Religion* chapter of the *PhG*, the final chapter, "'absolute knowing' introduces a circular model of history that attempts to link memory with the dimension of *Gegenwart* – the presence of the eternal as well as the historical present. Thereby the end of the work is brought back to its beginning" (Nuzzo 43). Insofar as Nuzzo is relating the circularity found in Hegel's system to the notion of 'memory', she is making some relation to epistemology. However she does not go into a detailed discussion of the circularity, but remains focused on her main topic, which is 'memory'.

Nuzzo explains that the *Logic*, as it progresses, moves away yet at the same time gets closer to the beginning. She writes "In the last pages of the *Logic*, Hegel shows that every step in the progressive advancement of determination, by getting further and further away from the beginning, defines at the same time the movement that gets closer and closer to the beginning. In this way, the logical process viewed from its end is both the 'regressive foundation of the beginning and its progressive further determination'"

(Nuzzo 67-8). Speaking of the end point of the Logic, she writes “Although the absolute idea’s return to being seems to connect it to a different being than the pure immediate being with which the beginning is made (hence, hardly seems to be a proper ‘return’), the absolute method, into which the idea develops is explicitly presented as the circular movement whereby thinking, in the end of the logical process, connects back to the beginning” (Nuzzo 76). Nuzzo is here making a distinction between “absolute idea” and “absolute method” which could be a fruitful approach in identifying the nature of what follows the circular pattern exactly in Hegel’s system.

She connects the circularity of the absolute method with her focus on memory (Nuzzo 78-9). She explains what she calls “dialectical memory” as that “which is based on the Logic, is foundational with regard to all other forms of memory, implies the circular and reflexive moment of thinking onto itself ... ” (Nuzzo 94).

Stephen Houlgate discusses circles in Hegel’s *Wissenschaft der Logik* in his *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic: From Being to Infinity*. In his discussion of Hegel’s presuppositionless beginning, he claims that it constitutes a circle. According to Houlgate, the Logic is a circle insofar as the beginning of pure Being and the end of absolute Idea are indeterminate and immediate in the same way and thus absolute Idea returns to the beginning (Houlgate 50, 59). Yet I disagree with his view that the presuppositionless beginning is a “ground” as a circle (Houlgate 50). I argue that since Hegel’s system is anti-foundational, the whole circle founds and grounds itself. Though the presuppositionless beginning is important in the whole circle being the ground (as I explain later), it is by itself not a ground by any means.

Jean Hyppolite writes in *Logic and Existence* that "[o]n the one hand, absolute knowledge has no pre-existing base; on the other hand, it is necessarily circular. And these two characteristics are strictly connected" (Hyppolite 68). Hyppolite is here referring to the presuppositionless, indeterminate, immediate beginning to any pursuit or account of knowledge, and how this necessarily entails a circularity since the beginning must then already be the end in some sense. This claim is similar to Houlgate's observation that the presuppositionless beginning is also the same as the end point which has returned to it. I agree with Hyppolite's claim, and explain this point further in the body of this dissertation.

Howard P Kainz, in *Paradox, Dialectic and System*, in a section titled "Hegel's System as Paradox: The Circle of Circles" points out that the word 'Encyclopedia' has the Greek root *κυκλός*, "circle" (Kainz 93). He labels Hegel's use of the term "circle" to characterize his whole system as a "geometrical analogy" (ibid) and claims that it is "problematic" (Kainz 94). He notes that "it is not immediately obvious what is entailed by a "circle of circles," which could mean concentric circles, a spiral, etc." (ibid). However, this characterization of Hegel's use as "problematic" is a lazy concession to not engage in the level of analysis needed to decipher Hegel's view.

According to Kainz, the good infinite in the shape of a circle runs into the problem of vicious circularity (Kainz 109). He writes that "systematic circularity in Hegel is of a special sort—the dialectical circularity of philosophical paradox, in which two opposed or contradictory ideas are joined together in such a way that they complement and confirm each other, and transform themselves into each other" (ibid). In this way, putting aside the paradox language, Kainz can be seen to hold Harris's view

about the circularity of the specific moments of Hegel's system. What I mentioned about Harris's use of the term "circle" applies to Kainz's description of circularity.

Kainz is not alone in preferring the image of a spiral to an image of a circle when attempting to explain Hegel's circles. Anton Koch, in a series of lectures, recently referred to Hegel's "circle of circles" as a "loop of loops" as in the loops of a roller-coaster (Koch 2020). The image of the spiral was also Vladimir Lenin's preferred interpretation. In "On the Question of Dialectics" (*Philosophical Notebooks*, 1915), Lenin writes "Knowledge is represented in the form of a series of circles ... by Hegel. ... Human knowledge is not (or does not follow) a straight line, but a curve, which endlessly approximates a series of circles, a spiral" (Lenin 357-61). We can see here that Lenin makes the connection between circularity, knowledge, and accounts of knowledge. However, his attribution of the image of a spiral to the circles has no textual basis in Hegel's works (though there are repeated references to circles and circularity). He furthermore does not explain why he makes this characterization, but quickly moves to discussing another topic.

The motivation for interpreting Hegel's circles as a spiral is often based on the mistaken assumption that circularity is totalizing, that a circular system would purport to be all-containing and create no room for what cannot fit into the circle. A spiral would supposedly answer this concern. As I show in my dissertation (though more work can be done on this issue), because (1) Hegel's circles are not metaphysical but epistemological, and (2) he has an historicist view of knowledge, the circles are "complete" and total wholes to the extent that they represent a certain outlook. Once the limits of this outlook are reached, the circle is complete and one rises onto the next circle. Thus, although there

is more than one circle, this does not indicate a spiral – a spiral would be a “spurious” or “bad” infinite, i.e. an infinite regress, which Hegel definitively rejects as a viable cognitive strategy (I discuss infinity and its “spurious” as well as its “true”/“genuine” form in Chapter 4 in extensive detail).

In this vein, against the worry that Hegel’s system is totalizing and deterministic with no freedom, Slavoj Žižek in *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* makes the argument that, to the contrary, Hegel’s philosophy opens up the space between the two to present a way forward for us to continue doing philosophy. He writes “the subject is the operator of the Absolute’s (self-)finitization, and to “conceive the Absolute not only as Substance, but also as Subject” means to conceive the Absolute as failed, marked by an inherent impossibility” (Žižek 708). Through this and other similar remarks, Žižek explains clearly and convincingly that the Absolute does not indicate the culmination and collection of all possible knowledge, but rather that it is a collection of the knowledge had by the *subject* in accord with the limitations of the subject. The recognition of these limitations in each “absolute” in Hegel’s works thus generates a new circle.

Žižek devotes a section of his book to Hegel’s circularity with the title “The Hegelian circle of circles” (Žižek 232-40). Žižek writes here that through the circular form, Hegel shows the gap between “the transcendental standpoint [which] is in a sense irreducible, for one cannot look “objectively” at oneself and locate oneself in reality” and the view that “the task is to think this impossibility itself as an ontological fact, not only as an epistemological limitation. In other words, the task is to think this impossibility not

as a limit, but as a positive fact—and this, perhaps, is what at his most radical Hegel does” (Žižek 239).

He reaches this conclusion after an investigation of Hegel’s circularity in his philosophy of religion and philosophy of nature (the latter of which I reference in Chapter 6) following an initial conundrum: how can we determine if Hegel is a philosopher of “potentiality” or “virtuality” (Žižek 231)? He writes that “there is massive evidence that Hegel is *the* philosopher of potentiality: is not the whole point of the dialectical process as the development from In-itself to For-itself that, in the process of becoming, things merely “become what they already are” (or were from all eternity)? Is not the dialectical process the temporal deployment of an eternal set of potentialities, which is why the Hegelian System is a self-enclosed set of necessary passages” (ibid.)? But this evidence is limited to make the claim about potentiality because of “the radical retroactivity of the dialectical process: the process of becoming is not in itself necessary, but is the becoming (the gradual contingent emergence) of necessity itself” (ibid.).

His answer is based on an argument that hinges on Hegel’s circles, indicating that “Hegel’s description ... seems to evoke a full circle in which a thing merely becomes what it is” (Žižek 236). Žižek doesn’t go into detail in explaining the meaning of this circularity. He indicates that it demonstrates an ontological commitment, but he also, rather oddly, suggests that the “circle” for Hegel is in fact an “inside-inverted eight” figure, that is, a circle that undermines itself at its very end and thus has to go back in to draw an additional internal circle (ibid.). Žižek discusses Hegel’s circularity as “fully and explicitly accept[ing] the gap which manifests” between the “transcendental standpoint” and the thought of the “epistemological limitation ... not as a limit but as a positive fact”

(Žižek 239). Accordingly, Žižek argues against “the absurd image of Hegel as the “absolute idealist” who “pretended to know everything,” to possess Absolute Knowledge, to read the mind of God, to deduce the whole of reality out of the self-movement of (his) Mind” (ibid.).

Various French thinkers are potentially implicated by Žižek’s criticism of viewing Hegel in this absurd image. Gilles Deleuze, for instance, claims that Hegel’s philosophy relies on a circle of identity and negativity, which thereby leaves no room for difference and multiplicity either within itself or beyond in philosophy in general. Deleuze makes frequent references to “Hegel’s circles” in his *Difference and Repetition*. His discussion of them is embedded in his criticism of Hegel’s account of difference. Deleuze refers to “the monocentrism of circles” in Hegel’s work such that “infinite representation invokes a foundation” (Deleuze 49). He criticizes Hegel’s account of difference that, according to Deleuze, is ultimately based on “the principle of identity” (ibid.). Putting aside the issue of identity and difference, which is not directly relevant to the topic of my dissertation, I disagree with Deleuze in finding a foundational tendency in Hegel’s philosophy: difference and identity are mutually dependent in Hegel’s *Logic*, and neither founds the other. Deleuze further writes that “Hegel’s circle is not the eternal return, only the infinite circulation of the identical by means of negativity” (Deleuze 50). Deleuze’s discussion of Hegel’s circles and circularity does not go into detail about the structure or the significance of circularity or relate them to his epistemology of idealism, and more work would need to be done to explore his argument in detail.

Georges Bataille devotes a section of his *Inner Experience* to Hegel. His brief account, comprising of only a few pages, revolves around a criticism alleging that

Hegel's system is untrue to real everyday life with its ecstasies, losses, and blind spots – its unknowns and mysteries. Bataille claims that unknowability is ineliminable from experience, that there is always a movement from the known to the unknown that does not categorically eradicate this unknown. However, he sees Hegel's system to move only from the unknown to the known and not vice versa: the unknown will always move towards the known regardless of the circumstances. Bataille begins the section on Hegel with a definition of knowledge: "To know means: to relate to the known, to grasp that an unknown thing is the same as another thing known. Which supposes ... the circularity of knowledge" in the case of Hegel (Bataille 108).

I disagree with this analysis: Hegel's works are famously and intentionally riddled with contradictions and what we think we know turns into an unknown in unexpected ways throughout his corpus. Not only is the unknown (as Hegel and others characterize as "negativity" or "abstractness"/"one-sidedness") an integral part of the process of Hegel's philosophy, the circularity is also an affirmation of what we do not know (as I explained above). Furthermore, Bataille presupposes a foundational structure in Hegel's system by basing the unknown on what one already knows.

Because of its circular structure, Bataille views Hegel's system as totalizing: it is a system of knowledge at the completion of which nothing remains outside it, thus nothing is left unknown. Bataille writes that "satisfaction turns on the fact that a project for knowledge, which existed, has come to fruition, is accomplished, that nothing (at least nothing important) remains to be discovered" (Bataille 108). This completion has to do with the knowledge of all the important things that are available to one, but also the completion of oneself: "The unending chain of things known is for knowledge but the

completion of oneself” (ibid.). Thus there is no room for the unknown: one is complete together with one’s system of knowledge and philosophy. But Bataille is mistaken with his claim about the completion of one-self, because the completion of the circle is the sacrifice (or externalization) of the “self”.

Bataille characterizes this completion and totality, what he (and Hegel) calls “satisfaction”, as circularity. He writes that “this circular thought is dialectical” (Bataille 108). Bataille is correct in this characterization and I think Hegel would also agree. For, Hegel characterizes his system as circular with regard to his account of knowledge. When the circle is complete, it is self-justifying: as Hegel writes, “[t]he True is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development” (*PhG* 11, §20; Suhrkamp 24). Bataille’s statement following this quote, however, presents his criticism of Hegel. He writes that the dialectical circle of thought “brings with it the final contradiction (affecting the entire circle): circular, absolute knowledge is definitive non-knowledge. Even supposing that I were to attain it, I know that I would know nothing more than I know now” (Bataille 108). Bataille regards to be a serious problem that there appears to be no room for the unknown in Hegel’s system. The problem is not only with the lack of room for the unknown but also with the way in which Bataille sees the movement of knowing (relating the unknown to the known, and thereby forming new knowledge). Furthermore, problematic and worrisome for Bataille is that according to him, Hegel’s system excludes a group of certain artistic and pleasure-related aspects of life he finds to be important and related to one another.

Wilfrid Sellars has a similar characterization of Hegel’s philosophy as Deleuze and Bataille. He mentions “the picture of a great Hegelian serpent of knowledge with its

tail in its mouth (where does it begin?)” when presenting his views against foundationalism in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (EPM 156, §38). Here, although Sellars is against foundationalism as a viable explanation of justification and for an epistemology in general, he is also critical of the Hegelian circularity, as is evidenced by his question “where does it begin?” (ibid.). According to Sellars, the Hegelian view has a “static character” and cannot account for the dynamic nature of the way in which parts of knowledge interact and depend on one another. I will discuss an aspect of Sellars’s view in relation to Hegel’s in Chapter 5.

Beatrice Longuenesse, in her *Hegel’s Critique of Metaphysics* presents the “Hegelian circle” as a problem. For her, the *Science of Logic* does not have an object outside of itself; it is self-contained. She writes that Hegel “proclaims that philosophy does not have an object outside itself *about which* its theories are developed” and that “to defend Hegel’s project by thus invoking its radical singularity is hardly satisfactory” (Longuenesse 13). However, she explains that Hegel has good reason for why his philosophy does not have an object outside itself: “the novelty of Hegel’s position in philosophy lies in large part in the very status Hegel assigns to philosophical discourse. He proclaims that philosophy does not have an object outside itself *about which* its theories are developed. Thus philosophy is radically foreign to representational thinking” (ibid.). Nevertheless, not having an object means it becomes “a philosophy to which nothing can be objected” and that it “is of little interest” (ibid.). She continues by stating “The surest way to rob Hegel’s philosophy of its bite is to make of it a grandiose but self-contained enterprise” (ibid.). However, Longuenesse suggests that there is a solution, that “it is possible to get out of the Hegelian circle, by relating it back to its antecedents in the

history of philosophy” (ibid.). In this account Longuenesse develops an argument against the kind of reading of Hegel she found to be problematic (which she equates with the “Hegelian circle”) through reading Hegel’s philosophy in the context of Kant. In this argument, despite providing two passages in which Hegel makes reference to circles, she does not explain what Hegel means by circularity (Longuenesse 33, 34).

Cyril O’Regan, in *The Heterodox Hegel*, claims that Hegel “subsumes the process or ... character of Spirit under the meta-image of the circle (der Kreis)” (O’Regan 46). I disagree with O’Regan in his claim that the circle is a “meta-image”. Putting aside the lack of clarity involved with the term “meta-image”, I find that characterizing circularity in this manner trivializes Hegel’s epistemology that is intrinsically circular at several levels. Similarly, Glenn Alexander Magee characterizes Hegel’s use of the term “circle” as a “metaphor” in his *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition* (Magee 155). He presents this within his discussion of Hegel’s work in relation to the Kabbalah. I disagree with this characterization of circularity as a metaphor, since I argue that the argumentation, epistemology, and the whole system of Hegel literally follows a circle. I explain this in my account of circularity throughout the dissertation.

This overview of the scholarship on Hegel’s notion of circularity is not complete, but provides more or less the range of engagement with the topic. As I have shown in my brief accounts, none of these thinkers (except Rockmore) give a robust and detailed account of circularity or explain the importance of the center of the circle. My aim in this dissertation is to begin an account of circularity in Hegel’s philosophy that shows the extent to which it plays a significant role in structuring Hegel’s main positions in particular and corpus throughout most of his career in general.

Chapter I

Framing the Issue: The Quest for Truth and the Skeptical Münchhausen-Trilemma

Philosophy, as the discipline proverbially centered on the love of knowledge, is by its very nature essentially concerned with finding the truth and what knowing the truth means. This dissertation concerns Hegel's notion of circularity as a successful attempt at grappling with this essential concern. It is not a little known fact that Hegel referred to his philosophy as circular, and in certain places, as a circle of circles. I argue that Hegel's use of circularity is a strategy for epistemology. 'Why circularity?' is one of the questions we may ask. To answer it and to fully appreciate the importance of circularity, not only do we need to explain what circularity as an epistemological strategy is, but also, to what it constitutes an alternative.

In this first chapter, my two central goals are: 1) to discuss the three main approaches to truth as presented by the Münchhausen-trilemma thought experiment (and how all three of them are problematic), and 2) to illustrate the position to which Kant's philosophy with its Copernican revolution brought thinkers with regard to seeking knowledge or truth such that they needed to reevaluate their epistemological and ontological approaches.

I begin by presenting an overview of the alternatives to a circular epistemology using the Münchhausen-Trilemma – a thought experiment formulated by Hans Albert in 1968 that reaches the conclusion that there are three ways to truth (each of which is a cognitive strategy) and all three of them are problematic. Though circularity is one of these three ways, I argue later in this dissertation that it is at least potentially an acceptable strategy (when it is not vicious), if not the

correct approach. Below, in my account of foundationalism, I identify a difference between an epistemic foundation and a methodological basis, then I distinguish between the terms ‘foundation’ and ‘ground’ and explore Hegel’s treatment of ‘ground’, and I provide overviews of different kinds of foundationalism. I then go on to explore the question of systematicity and truth that arose anew, sparked by Kant’s Copernican revolution, which I then discuss. I argue that the Copernican revolution requires a revision in our approach to knowledge, experience, and philosophy, and introduces a new form of idealism. I discuss this Kantian transcendental idealism with the support of Kant’s reconceptualization of empiricism and Hegel’s critique of it.

1. The Münchhausen-Trilemma

In *Traktat über kritische Vernunft* (1968) Albert presents the so-called Münchhausen-trilemma as a skeptical trilemma. It is named after the fictional character Baron Münchhausen who pulled himself and his horse out of a mire by pulling his own hair. The trilemma, taking its name from this tale, also suggests there are three possible strategies though none of them is acceptable. The trilemma is a 20th-century form of epistemic skepticism earlier raised by such ancient skeptics as Aenesidemus, the Pyrrhonist Sextus Empiricus, and Agrippa the Skeptic.

Albert frames the problem of the Münchhausen-trilemma in the following way: “Wenn man für *alles* eine Begründung verlangt, muss man auch für die Erkenntnisse, auf die man jeweils die zu begründende Auffassung – bzw. die betreffende Aussagen-Menge – zurückgeführt hat, wieder eine Begründung verlangen” (Albert 13). This, Albert claims, brings us to a situation with only three alternatives, all of which seem unacceptable. The three possibilities Albert identifies are the following:

- i. An infinite regress that cannot provide a secure foundation since it is not independent but rather dependent.
- ii. A logical or so-called vicious circle in the deduction that is logically problematic, or
- iii. A termination of the process [*Abbruch des Verfahrens*] through foundationalism (ibid.).

According to Albert, since both the infinite regress and the vicious circle are unacceptable, there is necessarily a tendency towards foundationalism (Albert 13). In the foundationalist strategy, the beginning point justifies the whole system following from it but does not itself require justification. However, to rely on a beginning point which does not itself need a justification, but nevertheless justifies everything else means, as Albert also claims, to introduce a dogma into the quest to know, i.e. to science (Albert 14). Thus, foundationalism is a “Rekurs auf ein Dogma” (ibid.). The adherence to a foundation as the justificatory point of a system of knowledge is dogmatic because the foundation stands outside the system it founds and does not follow the criteria that it sets forth for justification. In other words, the foundation is not itself justified and is taken as a given.

I agree with Albert that an infinite regress is an untenable position. In an infinite regress, truth cannot ever be established since there is always recourse to a further justificatory point. I also agree that the untenable nature of the infinite regress is why most thinkers choose foundationalism: it offers an easy and obvious solution to the problem posed by the infinite regress. However, I disagree that, as Albert claims, circularity is problematic. I explain and defend Hegel’s circular approach against the three alternative strategies Albert mentions in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

2. Infinite Regress

Infinite regress is formed in virtue of the need to keep referring to a prior principle for justification. This strategy fails since each principle referred to for justification will itself need its own justification, and so on *ad infinitum*. According to Albert in such a strategy “der durch die Notwendigkeit gegeben erscheint, [muß man] in der Suche nach Gründen immer weiter zurückzugehen, der aber praktisch nicht durchzuführen ist und daher keine sichere Grundlage liefert” (Albert 13).

The problem of regress is explained first and foremost by Aristotle in the *Posterior Analytics* 1.3, where Aristotle is concerned with the nature of demonstration. He makes a distinction between those who hold that all knowledge needs to be demonstrable, and those who do not. Of the former, he writes that they “hold that, owing to the necessity of knowing the primary premises, there is no scientific knowledge” (Aristotle 72b, 113). They,

assuming that there is no way of knowing other than by demonstration, maintain that an infinite regress is involved, on the ground that if behind the prior stands no primary, we could not know the posterior through the prior (wherein they are right, for one cannot traverse an infinite series): if on the other hand—they say—the series terminates and there are primary premises, yet these are unknowable because incapable of demonstration, which according to them is the only form of knowledge. (Aristotle 72b, 114)

However, Aristotle claims that this is an impasse, and that his own doctrine on the contrary is that not all knowledge is demonstrative: the “knowledge of the immediate premises is independent of demonstration” and “besides scientific knowledge there is its originative source which enables us to recognize the definitions” (ibid.) . This shows that in reaction to a model of infinite regress, Aristotle prefers a foundationalist model in which demonstration depends on the “primary premises” which functions as a foundation through which other knowledge is demonstrated.

In fact, for Aristotle, the foundation consists in one or more “premises prior to and better known than the conclusion” (Aristotle 72b, 114). For this reason, he claims that a “circular demonstration” is not possible. A circular demonstration, in Aristotle’s terms, requires an equivalence between the prior and the posterior terms. As a result of this equivalence, posterior and prior terms are no longer as such; if they are one and the same, they are no longer posterior and prior. Hence, to maintain this order, there needs to be a hierarchy of knowing. The knowledge upon whose basis we demonstrate other knowledge must be better known than the knowledge we demonstrate. I discuss this point further in the coming chapters.

3. Foundationalism

In simple terms, foundationalism is any form of the view that an epistemic belief depends on a prior belief that does not need to depend on anything else itself. The word ‘foundation’ is understood in different ways.

Albert refers to foundationalist structures as employing a termination of the process of justification. Instead of invoking a justificatory chain in an infinite regress, in a foundationalist model one stops at a certain point. He calls this “ein Abbruch des Verfahrens an einem bestimmten Punkt” that he explains as “der zwar prinzipiell durchführbar erscheint, aber eine willkürliche Suspendierung des Prinzips der zureichenden Begründung involvieren würde” (Albert 13). The foundation is set arbitrarily and thus is not itself subject to the criteria that are set for what it justifies.

A foundation is different from a cause or any justification. A foundation is specifically a beginning point which provides epistemic justification for what follows. In this sense it can be referred to as a cause, but not all causes are foundations. For, not all causes function as the

justificatory point that is itself exempt of justification, and stands at the beginning point beyond which we cannot go any further. Foundations, unlike some other kinds of causes, are without exception intended as the beginning points of systems which epistemically justify the rest of the system.

Kant's immediate commentators, who are commonly called German idealists,¹ were interested in the notion of foundationalism, and specifically in its role as a beginning point. I explain the meaning of "idealism" below. I discuss the complicated relationships of some of the major German Idealists to foundationalism in the second chapter. I argue that their discussions regarding foundations that he rejects motivated Hegel's formulation of a circular epistemology. I distinguish between the various meanings of 'foundation' as well as the function of the foundation in theories of knowledge, including German idealism. This is useful for situating the approaches to foundations in German idealism amidst the various other possible approaches, and thereby to have a better grasp of the discussions on foundations which took place among the German idealists.

3.1. Why Foundationalism?

Foundationalists, in broad terms, all hold that knowledge rests on some version of the view that knowledge depends on a 'foundation'. A foundation is a piece of knowledge that has justificatory power for other, linked items of knowledge that does not itself require a justification. But why foundationalism? The answer is often that foundationalist frameworks avoid certain issues regarding justification. Justification is deemed to be necessary if, for

¹ It is worth distinguishing between commentators on Kant's philosophy like Reinhold, original thinkers like Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, and those largely disinterested in Kant, such as Jacobi.

instance, knowledge is defined as ‘justified true belief’. Basing all knowledge on a justificatory principle (or principles) enables the justification of epistemic claims while avoiding the problems of regress and vicious circularity. The need and requirement for a justificatory beginning point or foundation is explained by Descartes in the *Meditations on First Philosophy*.

Descartes is often credited by scholars² for having formulated the canonical form of foundationalism – though it is a completely different question as to what extent, if at all, his own philosophical system is foundationalist one. He presents a version of epistemic foundationalism in his *Meditations on First Philosophy* in articulating the need for an epistemic foundation as a condition of knowledge. The *Meditations* is not a work that presents a system of philosophy, but rather an introduction to articulating and then dispelling skepticism.³ Descartes’s discussion for a need for a foundation in the *Meditations*, however, is significant for articulating my understanding of foundationalism for systems of philosophy.

Descartes requires a foundation for knowledge: an initial principle that meets the criteria of an epistemic foundation. In his *Meditations*, he asserts his need to “raze everything to the ground”, that is, to get rid of all of his previously held beliefs and possibly-false claims for knowledge in order to “begin again from the original foundations” (Descartes 59). The reason he gives the reader for this is that he had numerous false opinions in his youth and therefore all the opinions he had built upon them are now also dubious (ibid.). He writes “if [he] wanted to establish anything firm and lasting in the sciences” then he needed to find the true foundation, that is, a foundation that unlike previous efforts is not even possibly subject to doubt (ibid.). These may seem like innocent metaphors at first sight, however, when one reads further, one

² Notably Kim (1988), Taylor (2002), among others.

³ Furthermore, we could argue that not everything that Descartes does in his *Meditations* follows from the initial foundation that he establishes. A detailed discussion of Descartes’s philosophy is, however, not my goal here.

sees that Descartes is attempting to develop everything on the one foundation that he does find, which is that *he is a thinking thing* (Descartes 65).

He claims that investigating the truth of every single belief and knowledge claim will be too arduous and time consuming. In fact, it cannot be done. Therefore, he sees that it will suffice to doubt everything altogether, especially if he can doubt what lies at the foundation of all of his beliefs and knowledge. He states that “because undermining the foundations will cause whatever has been built upon them to crumble of its own accord, I will attack straightaway those principles which supported everything I once believed” (Descartes 60). This false foundation for him was his senses and sense perception (which could also mean that he had many foundations for his beliefs and knowledge if each sense perception is to be counted as a single founding point), because he once thought that all of his knowledge came from his senses. But since he now realizes that senses can be sometimes deceptive, sense perception can be mistaken, he needs to reevaluate the value of knowledge based on his senses (*ibid.*). If he claims that senses are not to be trusted, and if senses ground all knowledge as an epistemic foundation, then all knowledge based on this foundation will also possibly fail.⁴

There are two points to notice in this picture of Cartesian foundationalism: 1) knowledge, which builds necessarily upon other knowledge, begins by resting on a foundation, 2) knowledge is justified by and *only* by a foundation that also functions as the justification for all knowledge within a system. These two points function as the criteria for epistemic foundationalism.

⁴ Descartes likens his search for the one foundational piece of knowledge upon which to base all other knowledge to an Archimedean point: “Archimedes sought but one firm and immovable point in order to move the entire earth from one place to another. Just so, great things are also to be hoped for if I succeed in finding just one thing, however slight, that is certain and unshaken” (Descartes 63). He later establishes that the foundation upon which he will base all of his knowledge is the proposition “I am, I exist” and that he is “a thinking thing” (Descartes 64, 65).

3.2. Kinds of Foundationalism Used Historically

There are many different kinds of foundationalism. In this section, I explain some of the prominent ones. I initially distinguish between what I term ‘methodological basis’ where an initial principle that functions merely as the beginning point and nothing more (though it may play a role in the structure of the system – that is, beyond the role of being the beginning point) and what is commonly called ‘epistemic foundationalism’ where the foundation is deemed necessary for epistemic justification. This distinction is especially significant for the philosophers I discuss in the following chapter. I then go on to distinguish between various forms of epistemic foundationalism.

3.3. Methodological Basis vs. Epistemic Foundation

I call ‘methodological basis’ a system where the initial point does not epistemically justify the rest of the system. It may or may not bear on the systematic unfolding of the rest of the system, but regardless, such a bearing is only methodological in nature and not epistemological. Methodological here means that the beginning point is relevant not because of its content but merely because of its form *qua* beginning. It may be the case that there is little significance given to the initial point after the beginning of the system. Or alternatively, the initial point may play a role in the structuring of the system but does not epistemically justify other parts⁵ of the system. In such theories, the system is structured in a way that makes references to the initial point and utilizes it by referring back to it in explanations. An example to

⁵ One could claim that structuring a system effectively must involve all parts of the system, i.e. include the initial point as well. However, in foundationalist theories, the beginning point is often privileged and stands outside of the justificatory mechanism that it introduces: the beginning point does not need a justification.

a methodological basis is Schelling's "absolute I" as the ground of all knowledge in his early work, which I discuss in the next chapter.

In epistemic foundationalism, in contrast to using a methodological basis, the foundation functions as the supposedly unshakeable point from which the rest of the system follows. In epistemic foundationalism, the foundation is the guarantee for the whole theory. Thus, a lot hinges on the foundation. In a case with a methodological basis, the basis begins the theory, but is not necessary (nor sufficient) for the justification of the truth of the theory. The theory is built on this basis, but nevertheless, the justification is not based on the initial point. In epistemic foundationalism, the truth of all the points of knowledge in a given system are justified by virtue of the epistemic beginning point.⁶

3.4. 'Foundation' vs. 'Ground'

This distinction between a methodological basis and an epistemic foundation helps shed light on the difference between two terms that are routinely used to refer to the beginning points of systems: 'foundation' and 'ground'. The philosophers I discuss in the following chapter sometimes use the word 'ground' and sometimes 'foundation'. Although it seems as if these words could be interchangeable at first glance, they are not. This is further complicated in the English language since '*Grund*' is sometimes translated as 'foundation'. A foundation is first, but what is first is not always a foundation. In the sense that the German idealists use the terms, a foundation is almost always an epistemic foundation, whereas a ground has a closer meaning to a

⁶ For instance, in Descartes's *Meditations*, he proves God's existence based on his initial foundation that he exists as a thinking thing. Without his initial epistemic foundation, Descartes could not have proven the existence of a benevolent God and the non-existence of an evil genius who may be tricking him. Even though God's existence is not immediately evident at the beginning point of *cogito*, it is derived from this beginning point.

methodological basis (for instance in Schelling's use, as I explain in the following chapter).

Thus, an epistemic foundation can be referred to by both 'foundation' and occasionally, though much less frequently, as a 'ground', whereas a methodological basis is referred to as a 'ground' and never as a 'foundation'.

A 'foundation' refers to what justifies a system of knowledge or theory. It is always: 1) a beginning point, 2) systemic, and 3) epistemically justifies the whole system. In contrast to a 'foundation', a 'ground' does not have justificatory power in the *systemic* sense. A ground: 1) can be a beginning point *or* found anywhere else in a system or theory, 2) is not systemic (unlike a foundation – perhaps this is the biggest contrast between the two terms), 3) can be a cause or the basis with respect to which we can make a cognitive claim or postulate some part of a theory, but it is not systemic, and 3) it is not necessarily a justification. The use of the term 'ground' is less stringent and less demanding than 'foundation'.

For instance, the *PhG* grounds the *WL* insofar as it comes before it and is the necessary journey of education that brings consciousness to the level of science (as I discuss in detail in Chapters 3 and 6), but is not its justification. The *WL* requires the *PhG* to precede it (or that we engage in our "own pure abstraction, the simplicity of thinking—in the resolve of the will to think purely" (*EL* 124, §78, Zusatz; Suhrkamp 168) – more on this in Chapter 3), but is not dependent on the *PhG* to justify it as a whole or any portion of it.⁷ Hegel writes in the *Enzyklopaedie* that the beginning point of the *Logic* as "the standpoint of philosophical knowing is at the same time inwardly the richest in basic import [*gehaltvollste*] and the most concrete one" (*EL* 64, §25, Zusatz; Suhrkamp 92). This standpoint emerges as a result of the development

⁷ I discuss this relation between the *PhG* and the *WL* in detail in Chapter 6.

of *PhG* and “presuppose[s] ... the concrete shapes of consciousness, such as morality, ethical life, art, and religion” (ibid.). Based on this presupposition, then, Hegel indicates that the development of these “content[s]” (i.e. morality, art, etc.) as “the subject matters of special parts of philosophical science, falls directly within that development of consciousness” (ibid.). Hegel means by this statement that the various shapes of consciousness in its phenomenological development in the *PhG* are the specific content of the specific philosophical sciences. Namely, each specific philosophical science will take up as its content the relevant specific shape of consciousness found in the *PhG*. Thus, consciousness is present throughout all of Hegel’s works on the specific philosophical sciences, but in a qualified way: the “development [of the specific philosophical sciences] has to take place behind the back of consciousness so to speak, inasmuch as the content is related to consciousness as what is *in-itself*” (ibid.). The *Enzyklopaedie*, including the *Logic*, Hegel informs us, has as “its principle aim ... to contribute to the insight that the questions about the nature of *cognition*, about *faith* and so on, that confront us in the [realm of] representation, and which we take to be fully *concrete*, are in point of fact reducible to *simple* determinations of thought, which only get their genuine treatment in the *Logic*” (*EL* 64-5, §25, Zusatz; Suhrkamp 92).

Another example to a ground can be seen in Kant’s statement that “apperception is itself the ground of the possibility of the categories, which for their part represent nothing other than the synthesis of the manifold of intuition, insofar as that manifold has unity in apperception” (*CPR* A401, 442). Though, it is important to note that Kant was not concerned with forming a

complete system. Foundations, insofar as they are systemic, occur in theories with an outlook to establish a complete system.⁸

A ‘ground’ can be thought of as a preface to a theory, or its beginning, but it can also be thought of as a cause. In German, the word *Begründung* and its verb form *begründen* mean ‘justification’ and ‘to justify’, respectively, though translated literally they mean ‘grounding’, ‘to ground’ or ‘to give/provide a ground’. In English as well, the word ‘ground’ can be used to mean ‘cause’. Although in the everyday English and German use the word ‘ground’ or ‘*Grund*’ indicates the cause of something, its technical use in theories of knowledge has a certain nuance. As a technical term, it does not hold the same justificatory strength that ‘foundation’ holds. Moreover, the German word *Grund* means ‘cause’ or ‘reason’ as much as it means ‘ground’ or ‘basis’, as in the ground of a house or building (a metaphor that Hegel also uses when discussing ‘ground’ (*WL* 463-4; Suhrkamp 105) – I discuss Hegel’s treatment of ‘ground’ below). *Grundlage* means ‘groundwork’: what is basic and comes prior to some other things in question. The use of ‘*Grund*’ as a technical term by some German idealists, for instance Schelling, reflects this other more spatial understanding of ground (as in earth, what is at the bottom) or basis.

A ground, insofar as it is a beginning, can *cause* what follows in a theory – in the very limited sense of ‘cause’ that suggests, restricted to only *indicating* what should follow the beginning point. However, this limited indicational causation is not an epistemic justification for the claims in the rest of the theory. A ground is the context in which a theory is presented, or the framework in which the axioms of a theory are placed. Hence, ‘foundation’ is a stronger term than ‘ground’ when considering epistemic justification.

⁸ I discuss Kant’s transcendental unity of apperception and his relation to systematicity in Chapter 2.

Hegel devotes a section to the notion of ‘Ground’ in the Doctrine of Essence in the *WL*. In this part of the *WL* Essence transitions from Contradiction to Ground when “*Essence determines itself as ground*” (*WL* 444; Suhrkamp 80). As such, ground is “*one of the reflected determinations of essence*” (*ibid.*). A very brief summary of the unfolding of this section can be given as follows. After receiving content for the form and matter that it is as “absolute ground” at first (*WL* 447-56; Suhrkamp 84-96), it becomes “determinate ground” for a determinate content (*WL* 456; Suhrkamp 96). Ground then transitions into “condition”, and we come to find that ground in its most developed form is the condition for Existence (*WL* 474-78; Suhrkamp 119-23).

Hegel’s treatment of the notion of ‘ground’ indicates, therefore, that “ground” is the condition for existence. However, Hegel is not using the term in the same sense as his contemporaries. There is a good reason for that, namely, Hegel’s critique of “the founding and grounding tendency” in philosophy (*Differenzschrift* 179). Hegel’s discussion of this founding and grounding tendency is aimed mainly at Reinhold, which I discuss in detail in Chapters 4 and 6. In this treatment of ‘ground’ in the *WL* he redefines what ‘ground’ means as a technical term by relating it to circularity in epistemology: he writes of determinate ground that “*there is nothing in the ground that is not in the grounded, and there is nothing in the grounded that is not in the ground*” (*WL* 457; Suhrkamp 97).

One of the key tenets of Hegel’s circular epistemology (which I discuss in detail in Chapter 4) is that the end returns to the beginning and in this way justifies the whole system and its contents. Since the whole is justified by this affirmative return of the end point to the beginning, the whole system in its development and completion (i.e. “the grounded”) is already contained in some way in the beginning (i.e. “the ground”) and vice versa, as Hegel’s statement

in the sentence just quoted. We can see this relation of reflection in effect in the *WL* as a circular system: “Being” (i.e. “the ground”) holds all of its further determinations within itself albeit yet as immediate and undetermined. The rest of the work (i.e. “the grounded”) is precisely all of Being’s determinations – hence, “the grounded” also has in it “the ground”.

Of course, “reflection” as a kind of movement in the *WL* is not complete, and hence the movement of only a certain portion of it, namely the Doctrine of Essence. Thus, saying that the “ground” and the “grounded” are in one another does not fully capture the import of Hegel’s circular epistemology (the nuances of which I discuss mainly in Chapter 4). Hegel is nevertheless redefining the epistemological/ontological use of the term ‘ground’ as a criticism of those who use it as a form of methodological basis.

Hegel does not begin the *WL* with a discussion of what the ground of the *WL* should be. In fact, quite the opposite is the case: Hegel goes to great lengths to assert the hypothetical nature of the presuppositionless beginning of the *WL*. This presuppositionless beginning is not to have any justificatory power for the rest of the system until we come to a point at which we find ourselves return to the beginning, which only then justifies this beginning and everything else in the system.⁹

Hegel does not discuss “ground” in the *WL* in order to determine the basis of a system. Hence, his use is different from those who employ ‘ground’ to refer to the basis or cause of their system. Hegel instead brings up the notion of “ground” about halfway through the Doctrine of Essence, as a determination of Essence. Thus, “ground” for Hegel is one of the many

⁹ I discuss the presuppositionless beginning in detail in Chapter 4, but also in Chapters 5 and 6.

determinations that Being has, and not any more privileged for a system than the other determinations.

Furthermore, as is the fate of any notion in Hegel's works, "ground" is *aufgehoben* because it can be further mediated and determined: as a result, we find its truth to be "condition", which then leads to "existence" (*WL* 469, 481; Suhrkamp 113, 125). "Ground" for Hegel then is not a complete whole, as with any other notion on its own in Hegel's works; it has developmental relations with what comes before and after it. This transition also means that "ground" is in effect the "condition" for "existence". Thus Hegel affirms the use of the term 'ground' as having the meaning of 'cause'. But he nevertheless redefines it by stating, as discussed above, that "*there is nothing in the ground that is not in the grounded, and there is nothing in the grounded that is not in the ground*" (*WL* 457; Suhrkamp 97). This is a form of causality that is itself also the effect – the ground that is the condition for existence is itself the existence rather than something separate. The ground, insofar as it includes everything in the grounded (and vice versa), also is the whole, and not something separate from the grounded.

3.5. Different Kinds of Epistemic Foundationalism

We can identify three main kinds of epistemic foundationalism. These are classical, internalist, and externalist forms of foundationalism.¹⁰ Classical foundationalism is the most common historical form of foundationalism. The above discussed positions which Aristotle and Descartes present fall into this category. It is the view that there is an infallible justificatory point

¹⁰ These positions are all dogmatic. I come back to this point later in the dissertation.

more basic than other points. The justificatory foundation point is more basic because it is not inferred from anything, but rather is used to infer the other points.

Classical foundationalism is criticized by various thinkers.¹¹ Some thinkers claim that classical foundationalism leads to skepticism,¹² and therefore amend it. This amendment is called internalist foundationalism and can be grouped under two headings: doxastic conservatism and phenomenal conservatism. Both of these are more conservative than the foundations which classical foundationalism accepts.

Doxastic conservatism takes beliefs as foundations for justifying knowledge. For doxastic conservatism, the mere fact of believing something to be true, in the absence of any reason to doubt this belief, is enough to make it function as a foundation. Phenomenal conservatism similarly takes as justification a so-called internal state, but this internal state is not a belief. It is rather a sensory, perceptual, or intellectual state which functions as a foundation.¹³

Externalist versions of foundationalism are presented as a reaction to both the classical foundationalisms and internalist foundationalisms. For the externalist, justification depends on something outside the mind:¹⁴ it is non-inferential and not a mental state, and is thought to exist regardless of any mental state. An example can be given within Alvin Goldman's (1979) theory of reliabilism, which is a kind of externalist foundationalism. According to Goldman, justified beliefs (i.e. knowledge) are reliable beliefs, that is, beliefs which have been acquired through

¹¹ See for instance Laurence Bonjour (1985), or Wilfrid Sellars's famous myth of the given argument (1963).

¹² I discuss in Chapter 2 that Schulze may be considered among these thinkers who take an issue with classical foundationalism. Though he shows foundationalist tendencies himself, he does not propose his own foundation.

¹³ Although these two positions are both called conservatisms, it is worth noting that phenomenal conservatism is more permissive and open than classical foundationalism since it accepts any mental state as possibly a valid foundation.

¹⁴ Such distinctions between 'inside' or 'outside' the mind do not make sense for the German idealists after Kantian philosophy has shown that we do not have access to things as they are in themselves wholly independent of us.

what Goldman calls reliable processes. The reliability of the process then functions as the external foundation for the belief to be justified, and to thereby count as knowledge. It is, for me, then an open question of what can be regarded as reliable and on what standard or criteria this reliability will be based. Regardless, in Goldman's view, the reliable process is something distinct from mere mental or internal states. Since the German idealists, following Kant, were interested in a priori knowledge and thought, their interest in foundations is not of an externalist kind.

Putting these more technical differences aside, it is worthwhile to note that if some x justifies y and x is non-inferentially justified, x does not have to be the only foundation in a system, since there can be more than one and even many foundations.¹⁵ However, the figures I discuss in the following chapter were mainly interested in the possibility of finding the single founding principle that could function as a non-inferential justification for all other knowledge. They were mostly not concerned with finding more than a single non-inferential point of justification.

There are, at this point, various ways in which one could go to justify claims to know, ranging from coherentism to relativism to Hegel's view of circularity. Foundationalism was and still is highly relevant in epistemology, for instance in considering claims to know, entire systems, and theories of knowledge.

¹⁵ For instance, if one were to take sense perceptions as foundational, there would be countless foundations.

4. Vicious Circularity

A logical circle in justification is also often called a vicious circle. It has been denounced as a problematic and unacceptable form of justification throughout the history of philosophy. Aristotle's remarks that I cited above are an example. Albert explains the logical circle "in the deduction" as follows: a logical circle in the deduction which "dadurch entsteht, dass man im Begründungsverfahren auf Aussagen zurückgreift, die vorher schon als begründungsbedürftig aufgetreten waren, und der, weil logisch fehlerhaft, ebenfalls zu keiner sicheren Grundlage führt" (Albert 13).

In a logical circle, one begins with a point which is not justified but which leads to a further point which leads to another further point, and so on, until the justification of the last point is achieved by referring to the initial point. One arrives at the last point through the progression of the previous points. This last point also happens to match the first point. Hence the first point is used to justify the last point, and thereby the first point itself also receives justification.

This model is different from Hegel's circular epistemology in various ways. I explain these in detail and show why Hegel's circular epistemology does not fall into a vicious circle in Chapter 5.

5. The Question of Systematicity and Truth: Framing the Issue

The theme of this dissertation is a difficulty found in various approaches to truth. If philosophy is the love of wisdom, at its core is the desire to know and to know the truth. The question of truth has plagued thinkers for millennia. In this dissertation, I present what I take to

be a strong answer for the search for truth against the background of the nineteenth century debate, above all in Hegel as well as in the recent views of Sellars, Quine, and Davidson.

Why ought we now to be concerned about the question of truth? Is there more to it than the historical value that we may find while doing historical philosophy within purely academic limits? In the present age we are still asking the same questions about truth – albeit after the Modern ambitions of forming complete and totalizing systematicity have supposedly failed. The concern is as relevant as ever, and I argue that Hegel’s theory provides a solution.

6. The Importance of the Question of Truth for German Idealism

Hegel’s theory arose at a time when the question of truth was especially significant. Ours is a moment fraught with a tendency to systematize, order, count, and structure in a totalizing manner – as partially a result of the advances made in the sciences in the 17th and early 18th centuries.¹⁶ The advances made in philosophy directly preceding Hegel led to uncertainty about knowledge and ourselves. I explain these two points and their effect in making the issue posed by the Münchhausen-trilemma (or the skeptical issue) a central one for Hegel and his contemporaries.

The tendency of modernity to systematize, order, count, and structure in a totalizing manner is clearly portrayed by Descartes. He can be considered the quintessential early modern philosopher who first voiced the problem of truth as a function of system or at the very least a

¹⁶ One need only think about advances such as the invention of the telescope, Kepler’s laws of planetary motion, Galileo’s observations, Hooke’s discovery of the cell, van Leeuwenhoek’s observation of microorganisms with a microscope, Descartes, Leibniz, and Newton’s work in calculus, Newton’s theory of gravity, the publication of Linnaeus’s system of classifying plants in *Systema Naturae*, Messier’s publication of a catalogue of astronomical objects, and so on.

method. Descartes thus shows a desire to reach truth and to do so in a systematic way that questions how one begins.

Kant and later thinkers confront a different question. Truth takes a different, and in a way more significant role in and after the Kantian critical philosophy.¹⁷ The main difference is the element of the cognizer that Kant brings into the picture, and the question of the extent of the role of the phenomenal aspect of cognition for claims to truth. In the Preface to his *CPR*, Kant writes that “[u]p to now it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects; but all attempts to find out something about them *a priori* through concepts that could extend our cognition have, on this presupposition, come to nothing” (*CPR* Bxvi, 110). Most thinkers prior to Kant assumed that we cognized things as they are, that is, our cognition conformed to and in fact grasped independent objects. (Most observers continue to support one or another version of this view after Kant.) This presupposes access to objects through cognition, where cognition grasps, knows or otherwise comprehends the world. However, Kant is claiming that this assumption does not allow us to understand cognition, and that attempts to explain cognition based on this assumption have failed.

Kant’s suggestion is that we observe whether we make more progress in our explanation of cognition if we do not assume that our cognition conforms to objects. He writes

Hence let us once try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition, which would agree better with the requested possibility of an *a priori* cognition of them, which is to establish something about objects before they are given to us. (*CPR* Bxvi, 110)

We should inquire whether we know only objects we construct, make, or otherwise produce through our very cognition as the alternative to the familiar but unworkable assumption that we

¹⁷ The label “pre-critical” is used for philosophical positions that came before and do not take into account the inversion that Kant establishes through his Copernican revolution (*CPR* Bxvi, 110).

know mind-independent objects as they are. Kant is suggesting that the change is necessary since the contrary assumption has “come to nothing” (ibid.). According to Kant there are only two possibilities: either cognition conforms to objects or objects conform to cognition. He thinks that the first option has failed to explain cognition, and that the only alternative to explain cognition is through the second option.

The *CPR* studies whether we can make more or perhaps better progress at all if we assume that objects conform to our cognition, rather than the other way around. He characterizes this shift as similar to Copernicus’s revolution when he writes that “[t]his would be just like the first thoughts of Copernicus, who, when he did not make good progress in the explanation of the celestial motions if he assumed that the entire celestial host revolves around the observer, tried to see if he might not have greater success if he made the observer revolve and left the stars at rest” (*CPR* Bxvi, 110).

Copernicus, through his revolutionary cognitive claim, reverses what thinkers until then had assumed about the movement of the Earth in relation to the other planets in the solar system. He discovers that contrary to what had been assumed, the Earth is not the center of the solar system, much less the center of the universe: the planets do not revolve around the Earth, rather the Earth revolves around the Sun along with the other planets in the solar system. This revelation revolutionized the way in which one approached the observer and the observer’s relation to the planets, and allowed for much more progress to be made in astronomy. Kant’s so-called Copernican revolution presents a similar reversal in our approach: rather than taking cognition to conform to objects, Kant suggests the revolutionary idea that we should take objects to conform to our cognition.

Through Kant's reversal, we take cognition and its apparatus to be central rather than the objects independent of this cognition. Kant and Copernicus are both inverting the assumptions regarding on what we should base what we know about cognition and the planets, respectively, and this is the reason why Kant calls his critical philosophy a Copernican revolution. They both introduce a change in orientation.

Nevertheless, there is one key difference: Copernicus is challenging the view that we are at the center, whereas Kant is doing the opposite by placing cognition at the center. However, this is an incomplete look at what the two thinkers are accomplishing. Both, Rockmore writes, "describe reality as it appears through the subject" (*German Idealism as Constructivism* 24): Copernicus "explains apparent motions of the planets through the motions of the observer" and Kant explains reality as it appears in the cognition of the subject. For both, the explanations are from the standpoint of the subject and to what the subject epistemically has access. In this sense, it is appropriate for Kant's revolutionary critical philosophy to be referred to as accomplishing a Copernican revolution.

Kant's goal in the *CPR* is two-fold: to know empirical objects, and to know them a priori, that is to "find out something about [objects] *a priori* through concepts that could extend our cognition", and the "possibility of an *a priori* cognition of [objects]" (*CPR* Bxvi, 110). *A priori* for Kant means with necessity and universality. The aspect of necessity comes from its relation to reason (though, he claims to have detected *a priori* structures in sensibility as well) and its non-contingency on empirical happenings unlike *a posteriori* things. *A priori* also has an aspect of universality because *a priori* things are not contingent but are of characteristics that are valid for all under the term. Kant's statement that the earlier accounts of cognition failed is based on the impossibility of finding necessary and universal rules for cognition if it must conform to

objects; in that case, cognition would be individualized to each object, which are all different, making cognition individual (not universal) and contingent on the object being cognized. Thus, it is impossible to come up with an *a priori* account of cognition if we assume that cognition conforms to objects.

Kant suggests in this passage in the Preface to the *CPR* (as he is about to demonstrate in the rest of his work) that we will be successful if we take objects to conform to our cognition instead. He writes in the same paragraph that “since experience itself is a kind of cognition requiring the understanding, whose rule I have to presuppose in myself before any object is given to me, hence *a priori*, which rule is expressed in concepts *a priori*, to which all objects of experience must therefore necessarily conform, and with which they must agree” (*CPR* Bxvii, 111).

That objects conform to our cognition, however, has implications about how we understand ‘objects’. Kant writes that “we can cognize of things *a priori* only what we ourselves have put into them” (*CPR* Bxviii, 111). In Kant’s framework, ‘objects’ are the objects of our cognition and within the bounds of cognition. This goes, for instance, against an understanding of the world in the Cartesian sense where there is a ‘mind-external’ world with which our thoughts must cohere for knowledge to be possible. Kant’s system attempts to get rid of this duality by placing the objects within cognition, through his claim that we can know things not as they are but as they conform to cognition.

Among the consequences of Kant’s Copernican revolution is, in my view, the need for systematicity, that is, in establishing a system through which truth may be found. Kant was concerned with answering dogmatism as well as skepticism (especially Humean skepticism). In

pre-critical (i.e. dogmatic) philosophy, access to truth was not the same kind of issue for philosophers because the widespread assumption – the widespread epistemological model – was that we have access to things as they are, independently of how our cognition is. In other words, we could see the truth once we looked at things carefully, and perhaps in some cases lifted a veil or two to really get to the heart of the matter. However, Kant showed us that this model is mistaken since we do not have a privileged access to the truth of things as they are in themselves, but rather that we only have access to how things appear to us. Thus, we know something about ourselves when we think we know something about the world as distinct from us. Thereby, Kant's discovery shattered all prior notions of truth. Even Hume's critique of causality did not go far enough to imagine the depths of the problem with what was taken to be the truth before Kant.

Hume in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* criticized the dogmatic notion of causality: the view that we can observe causation, or that causation is somehow found in the interactions between things such that we can definitively identify 'cause' and 'effect' through mere observation. He argued that we do not observe or otherwise perceive causal relations between things that follow one another. Rather, he stipulated that the causal relations that we ascribe to events that we call 'cause' and 'effect' are based on a "custom" or "habit" that we come to develop as a result of observing one thing follow the other repeatedly. As a result, we call the first thing the 'cause' and the second thing the 'effect' of that cause. In this ascription of the words 'cause' and 'effect', we come to think that there is some deeper relation –causality– between the two rather than mere repetition that forms a custom or habit in us to expect the same sequence or pattern.

For Kant, Hume's insight was significant; it woke him up from his dogmatic slumber. Regardless, Hume's skepticism, though astute, left Kant with two problems: 1) the need to go

deeper than Hume had done in putting into question different aspects of cognition, and not just causation (for, causality is just one of twelve categories, as Kant claims in his Table of Categories), and 2) the need to answer this skepticism to restore trust in cognition.

7. Idealism

Kant's philosophy revealed a crisis about how philosophy should proceed as an enterprise that at its very core is about truth. Now that philosophers had their assumptions turned upside down in a Copernican manner, they were finally unable to base claims for truth in the senses or in perceptions, but only in cognitions which nevertheless yielded nothing more than appearances.

This shift from thinking that we have access to the truth of the way things are in themselves to appearances is the reason for various important advances after Kant in philosophy:

- i. As mentioned above, Kant's immediate followers, focused around creating systems as a result of having been placed in a new position. This is a reason why the twenty-five years after Kant's publication of the *CPR* were such a rich period of philosophy in Germany;
- ii. After Kant, truth could only be sought in appearances but no longer in a world that is seemingly independent of cognition of rational beings. This led to a new form of idealism. When I refer to German idealism, or to German idealist philosophers in this dissertation, I have in mind philosophers interested in systematicity after Kant, in the immediate years after Kant's Copernican revolution. This is a kind of idealism because truth is no longer 'out there in the world', but rather rooted in our cognition if it is to be found anywhere at all;
- iii. Hegel's circular epistemology is formulated as a response to this crisis in philosophy's claims to truth and the resulting discussion by the German idealists following Kant, but

also conceived by Hegel as a response to questions about truth and knowledge which have been formulated since the pre-Socratics.

All three of these points are discussed in further detail in the following chapters. However, one point bears special interest to discuss here in connection with the topic of this chapter. As a result of Kant's Copernican revolution, many observers think, following a widespread and plausible reading of Kant's later view, that we can no longer speak of objects without reference to objects as they are in our cognition. There are two significant results of this change on which I now want to focus: (1) ontology is no longer simply ontology, but is deeply imbued with and is necessarily connected to epistemology – we can no longer separate the two, and (2) empiricism is refuted, and thus when speaking of epistemology and the object of knowledge, we can no longer speak of a distinction between empirical and philosophical knowledge; any discussion of an account of knowledge has to consider as its object philosophical knowledge. To make these two points, I now discuss Kant and Hegel's refutations of empiricism.

Empiricism, traditionally understood, is the view that knowledge comes exclusively from sensory experience. Empiricism, thus, is the view that all knowledge, and cognition, come through a posteriori means. Stuart Brown writes that “[t]he term ‘empiricist’ is used broadly of anyone who thinks that all knowledge *of the world* is based upon experience—or, slightly more narrowly, of anyone who thinks that all *substantive* knowledge is based upon experience” (Brown S. 10). As Locke famously claimed, we are born with our minds as blank slates, only to gain knowledge through our sensory experience of the outside world.¹⁸ Hume held a similar position with his view that all our ideas come from sense perceptions¹⁹ and his insistence on the

¹⁸ See Locke, J. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Books I and II.

¹⁹ See Hume, D. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Section 2: Of the Origin of Ideas.

point that we may not know causality outside of our reliance on custom.²⁰ Surely, there is a host of literature written on empiricism in the 20th century,²¹ but I will not delve into these debates here. Instead, I focus here on the form or forms of empiricism with which Kant and Hegel were acquainted.

7.1. Kant's Transcendental Idealism and Reconception of Empiricism

Kant defines logical paralogisms as “consist[ing] in the falsity of a syllogism due to its form, whatever its content may otherwise be” (*CPR* A341/B399, 411). His “fourth paralogism” in the *CPR* concerns ideality (*CPR* A366, 425). The result of this paralogism is that “the existence of all objects of outer sense is doubtful. This uncertainty I call the ideality of outer appearances, and the doctrine of this ideality is called **idealism**, in comparison with which the assertion of a possible certainty of objects of outer sense is called **dualism**” (*CPR* A367, 425). According to Kant's definition, Descartes, for instance, is a dualist, since he concludes in the existence of mind-independent objects in his Sixth Meditation. Aristotle is also, by this definition, a dualist. Kant himself, however, is an idealist, as well as his immediate commentators such as Reinhold, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel.

Since a paralogism is by definition dualist, it is false that idealism is opposed to dualism. The falsity in this case consists in a consequence that follows from the doubtful status of objects of outer sense for the idealist. Kant writes that “[b]y an **idealist**, therefore, one must understand

²⁰ See Hume, D. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Section 4: Skeptical Doubts Concerning the Operations of the Understanding.

²¹ This debate was considered by many to be concluded with Sellars's 1956 *EPM* in which he rejects the idea of a “given,” that we can have perceptual content without pre-established conceptual content. I discuss Sellars's “Myth of the Given” in Chapter 5. There is further significant discussion, however, also concerning Hegel, by John McDowell and Robert Brandom. See Redding 2011.

not someone who denies the existence of external objects of sense, but rather someone who only does not admit that it is cognized through immediate perception and infers from this that we can never be fully certain of their reality from any possible experience” (*CPR* A368-9, 426). He further claims of transcendental idealism the following: “I understand by the **transcendental idealism** of all appearances the doctrine that they are all together to be regarded as mere representations and not as things in themselves, and accordingly that space and time are only sensible forms of our intuition, but not determinations given for themselves or conditions of objects as things in themselves” (*CPR* A369, 426).

The doubt that the transcendental idealist has about the objects of outer sense makes the transcendental idealist take them as nothing more than appearances. The existence of objects of outer sense are thus not rejected by the transcendental idealist, but rather they are placed in cognition. Objects for the transcendental idealist are appearances regardless of whether they belong to the inner or the outer sense, and appearances are encountered in cognition itself. As a result, Kant argues that

The transcendental idealist ... can be an empirical realist, hence, as he is called, a **dualist**, i.e. he can concede the existence of matter without going beyond mere self-consciousness and assuming something more than the certainty of representations in me, hence the *cogito, ergo sum*. For because he allows this matter and even its inner possibility to be valid only for appearance – which, separated from our sensibility, is nothing – matter for him is only a species of representations (intuition), which are called external, not as if they related to objects that are external in themselves but because they relate perceptions to space, where all things are external to one another, but that space itself is in us. (*CPR* A370, 426)

For Kant, then, as this paralogism shows, the transcendental idealist becomes a dualist within the bounds of cognition. Thus in post-critical philosophy, when we speak of empirical knowledge (as an empirical realist would) we are speaking necessarily of knowledge that is not just empirical but categorical.

Kant thereby effectively removes the ground on which empiricism rests. The Copernican revolution and the resulting transcendental idealism require that anything which we can take as an object is an object of and in cognition and is no longer just a thing in itself. Sense perception is ideal and no longer empirical.

This rebuttal of empiricism as even possibly valid is also supported by Kant's distinction between "phaenomena" and "noumena". He defines "phaenomena" as appearances or objects of sense (*CPR* B306, 360). Kant writes that "we distinguish the way in which we intuit them [that is, objects] from their constitution in itself" (*ibid.*). Hence, to phenomena, we "oppose ... either other objects conceived in accordance with the latter constitution, even though we do not intuit it in them, or else other possible things, which are not objects of our senses at all" which Kant defines as "noumena" (*ibid.*).²² The concept of noumenon is what Kant calls "a boundary concept", by which he means that we cannot cognize its objective reality (*CPR* A254-5/B310, 362). However, our concept of phenomena indicates that noumena are at least conceptually necessary.

Kant claims that "the land of the pure understanding ... is an island, and enclosed in unalterable boundaries by nature itself" (*CPR* A235/B294, 354).²³ In experience we have access only to phenomena. From phenomena, we can deduce the conceptual existence of noumena. Furthermore, "everything that the understanding draws out of itself, without borrowing it from experience, it nevertheless has solely for the sake of use in experience" (*CPR* A236/B295, 355).

²² Kant writes "[t]hus all concepts and with them all principles however *a priori* they may be, are nevertheless related to empirical intuitions, i.e., to *data* for possible experience." (*CPR* A239/B298, 356).

²³ Kant writes "the understanding occupied merely with its empirical use, which does not reflect on the sources of its own cognition, may get along very well, but cannot accomplish one thing, namely, determining for itself the boundaries of its use and knowing what may lie within and what without its whole sphere; for to this end the deep inquiries that we have undertaken are requisite" (*CPR* A238/B297, 355).

Experience is, however, necessarily phenomenal. Thus, when we speak of experience and empirical matters, we can only speak of phenomena, which are opposed to noumena, as above defined. Empirical objects thus nevertheless fall within the boundaries of the understanding. For, “the object cannot be given to a concept otherwise than in intuition, and even if a pure intuition is possible *a priori* prior to the object, then even this can acquire its object, thus its objective validity, only through empirical intuition, of which it is the mere form” (*CPR* A239/B298, 356). Empiricism thus loses its meaning as a valid philosophical enterprise when considered outside transcendental idealism.

7.2. Hegel’s Critique of Empiricism

Hegel’s critiques of empiricism are the topic of much research in contemporary scholarship.²⁴ Hegel calls attention to empiricism in many places, especially in the first part of his *Enzyklopaedie*.

Although we can trace empiricist ideas back to Aristotle,²⁵ or perhaps even earlier, the views that are meant often when one speaks of empiricism are those that arose in the 18th century with figures such as Hume and Locke (whose views are also doubtlessly in affinity with the ancient philosophers’ views that tended towards empiricist ideas). Hegel differentiates between the ancient Greeks and the so-called empiricists such as Locke and Hume in the *EL*. According to Hegel empiricism does not seek “what is true in thought itself,” but nevertheless as a naïve posit “Empiricism proceeds to draw it from *experience*, from what is outwardly or inwardly present” (*EL* §37, 38; Suhrkamp 107-11). However, what really differentiates empiricism, for

²⁴ See, for instance, Deligiorgi 2011, Westphal 2011, Pinkard 2011.

²⁵ See Aristotle. *De Anima*, III.1-III.7.

Hegel, is the emphasis on “this or that single perception” as opposed to experience in general with its “form of universal notions, principles, and laws, etc.” (*EL* §38; Suhrkamp 107-8).

Empiricism, he claims, was “the initial result of a double need” for “a concrete content” and a “firm hold against the possibility of proving any claim at all in the field, and with the method, of finite determinations” (*EL* §37; Suhrkamp 106-7). Hegel remarks that neither of these needs can “be satisfied by the abstract metaphysics of the understanding” (*EL* §37 Zusatz; Suhrkamp 107). In order to satisfy this double need, empiricism arose to focus on single perceptions, pretending (or rather, ignoring) that they were determined by thought. Thinking alone had shown itself in the naïve philosophy to be unsatisfactory: “as mere understanding, thinking is restricted to the form of the abstract universal, and is unable to advance to the particularization of this universal” (*ibid.*). Thus, “[i]nstead of seeking what is true in thought itself, Empiricism proceeds to draw it from *experience*, from what is outwardly or inwardly present” (*EL* §37; Suhrkamp 107).

Hegel’s explanation of empiricism is more historical than Kant’s. Hegel highlights the needs and the circumstances that led to the development of the empiricist position rather than just focusing on what the empiricist position is in itself, separate from the context in which it arose. For Hegel, empiricism arose as a reaction to the naïve philosophy that took thought and truth to be “mere understanding”, as wholly distinct from perception (*EL* §37 Zusatz; Suhrkamp 107). Taking understanding merely on its own was abstract and one-sided – it did not sufficiently explain perception (at the very least). Thus, empiricism arose as a new metaphysical effort to answer these worries.

However, empiricism itself also remains abstract despite seeking to find something concrete. Hegel writes that “Empiricism falls into error in analyzing objects if it supposes that it leaves them as they are, for, in fact, it transforms what is concrete into something abstract” (*EL* §38, 78; Suhrkamp 108). In empiricism, Hegel remarks that “this or that single perception is distinct from experience, and Empiricism elevates the content that belongs to perception, feeling, and intuition into the form of universal notions, principles, and laws, etc.” (*ibid.*). However, this is misguided, and just as abstract as naïve philosophy was, because one cannot generalize to experience as a whole from single perceptions by focusing on the perceptions alone. When focusing on perceptions alone, empiricism takes for granted and does not realize that it is using metaphysical categories. He writes

The fundamental illusion in scientific empiricism is always that it uses the metaphysical categories of matter, force, as well as those of one, many, universality, and the infinite, etc., and it goes on to draw *conclusions*, guided by categories of this sort, presupposing and applying the forms of syllogizing in the process. It does all this without knowing that it thereby itself contains a metaphysics and is engaged in it, and that it is using those categories and their connections in a totally uncritical and unconscious manner. (*EL* §38, 78; Suhrkamp 108)

Speaking of empirical matters requires that one also employs metaphysical categories. It is impossible to separate ‘pure perceptions’ from the way in which we cognize them. As Kant successfully showed with the Copernican revolution, it is mistaken to think that we can cognize things as they are in themselves. At best, we can speak of a sensory manifold, but without the categories, as well as time and space, and the transcendental unity of apperception, this manifold is of no use to us.

Ignoring the role of thought and the understanding in empirical knowledge, empiricism runs into further issues. Without the categories, one cannot generalize knowledge from single perceptions – and single perceptions is all that empiricism has to work with. Hegel writes

More precisely, *perception* is the form in which comprehension was supposed to take place, and this is the defect of Empiricism. Perception as such is always something singular that passes away, but cognition does not stop at this stage. On the contrary, in the perceived singular it seeks what is universal and abides; and this is the advance from mere perception to experience. (*EL* §38 *Zusatz*, 78; Suhrkamp 108)

According to Empiricism, knowledge must depend on the here and the now, but the here and now is always fleeting; the here and now never stays stagnant and always changes into another here and now (*ibid.*). This is precisely the argument Hegel makes in the Sense-certainty chapter of the *PhG*.²⁶

7.3. Empirical and Philosophical Knowledge

As Kant's and Hegel's discussions of empiricism show, empirical knowledge changes character in post-Kantian philosophy. We can no longer speak of empirical knowledge in isolation from categorial knowledge. Empirical knowledge, after Kant, is in effect phenomenal knowledge – and phenomenal knowledge is inseparable from knowledge about thought and understanding.

Twentieth-century and contemporary epistemology²⁷ often takes empirical knowledge as its main concern, and often does so from a pre-critical, i.e. dogmatic, standpoint, effectively

²⁶ Tom Rockmore, in *Cognition: An Introduction to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (1997) claims that there are three kinds of empiricism, and that Hegel's view falls into the third kind. The first view, according to Rockmore, is that of the English Empiricists, who claim "direct knowledge of an independent object" (*Cognition* 197). The second kind of empiricism is the Kantian one; this "empiricism claims that we only experience and know dependent objects" (*ibid.*). The third kind of empiricism, "tertiary empiricism" in Rockmore's words, agrees with secondary empiricism in "restricting experience to dependent objects" but goes a step further and claims that we cannot "know objects independent of us" (*ibid.*). According to this kind of empiricism, then, we cannot know "anything else beyond experience," where, of course the term "experience" is qualified to mean our *Erlebnis* of the object, our cognizance of it. Rockmore writes, for Hegel "knowledge begins with but does not arise in experience, and does not refer to anything further than what is given in experience" (*ibid.*).

²⁷ Objectivism and realism in epistemology are both empiricist positions with pre-critical assumptions. They nevertheless have many proponents (see for instance G.E. Moore (1903), A.J. Ayer (1940), K. DeRose (2005), S. Schellenberg (2013), S. Siegel (2017)). There are also so-called externalist approaches to knowledge and justification (see for instance W.P. Alston (1985 and 1988), A.I. Goldman (1991), John Greco (2013)).

ignoring the position which Kant works out in the critical philosophy. It takes empirical knowledge in isolation from categorial understanding. I reject this form of epistemology as it falls into the errors of empiricism which Kant and Hegel, for good reason, both criticized and moved beyond.

8. Conclusion

In this chapter, in order to frame the issue of the dissertation, I considered the question of to what Hegel's circular epistemology is an alternative. I discussed Albert's Münchhausen-trilemma and the three problematic approaches to finding the truth it presents: infinite regress, foundationalism, and vicious circularity. I further discussed foundationalism and the notions of foundation and ground in detail given that they hold an important place in the views of Kant's immediate commentators to whom Hegel responds with his circular epistemology. I explained Kant's Copernican revolution and argued that by displacing the certainty which dogmatic philosophy had in things in themselves and our access to how they are in themselves Kant on the one hand engendered a novel need for an adequate approach to truth and knowledge, and on the other hand changed the terms by which we can speak about empirical knowledge. To illustrate the latter point, I discussed Kant's reconceptualization and Hegel's critique of empiricism. In the next chapter, I discuss the reception of Kant's revolutionary critical philosophy by his early commentators by tracing a tendency to require a foundation in the post-Kantian debate.

Chapter II

Cognition (*Erkenntnis*) and Foundations in Classical German Philosophy

Many commentators characterize Classical German Philosophy by its systematicity: the figures in this tradition often frame their work with a concern for formulating systems able to answer any and all philosophical questions that may be posed within the relevant philosophical fields. This systematicity, I argue, relies for the most part upon different ways of contending with various sorts of foundationalism or at the very least a significant concern with various methods of justification in order to reach truth. Epistemic foundationalism is the view that a system of knowledge depends and must depend on a foundational point or principle for its justification, as discussed in Chapter 1. Many major figures in the Classical German Philosophy tradition, like Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Schulze, Reinhold,²⁸ and Hegel, have some (positive or negative) relation to foundationalism.

I argue that the discussions regarding foundations, justification, and systems of truth are responses to Kant's view of cognition. These responses find their culmination in the theory of cognition that we may extract from Hegel's philosophy, namely his circular epistemology, which is a thorough critique and response to foundationalism. To have a clear idea of the trajectory of this conversation, we ought to read the tradition bearing this interest in mind. Accordingly, my aim and argument in this chapter is to highlight the concerns for systematicity in forming justificatory mechanisms in the works of some so-called German idealist philosophers. This gives us a frame through which to think about the notion of idealism, a way to grasp how the so-

²⁸ Though Schulze and Reinhold are not as widely known as the others, they had a significant influence in the discussions of their time, and thus are important for our considerations of German idealism today.

called German idealists understood it, and insight into the role of circularity in Hegel's epistemological view.

As discussed in Chapter 1, this concern with systematicity and foundations responds to Kant's Copernican revolution. This concern points to Hegel's conviction that pre-Kantian philosophers are wrong about the notion of truth and its justification. This chapter will trace the historical development of what Hegel calls "the founding and grounding tendency" from Kant until Hegel.²⁹ I first present Kant's views on cognition, and then critically analyze the responses and views of his immediate commentators (mainly Reinhold, Schulze, Fichte, and Schelling).³⁰ Reinhold and Schulze are both committed to epistemic foundationalism. In Fichte and Schelling, however, we see a development towards methodological bases. In Fichte's case, there is even the incorporation of the notion of circularity. This trajectory indicates a development towards Hegel's circular epistemology.

²⁹ My method here is mostly to recount through a selective lens the concern with the justification of systems the philosophers in the discussion have. This is a methodological choice as I will present them in order and in dialogue to narrate the story of this specific discussion, in aims of paving the ground for my argument which will follow in the subsequent chapters. In this sense, the main aim of this chapter is to set the stage for explaining the revolutionary character of Hegel's critique in the following chapters.

³⁰ One could perhaps see it as necessary that I also include a detailed discussion of Jacobi in this chapter, since I am discussing many of the major figures who were involved in the discussion about Kant's philosophy and the notion of systematization. However, I will not be devoting such a space to Jacobi, mainly because I see his philosophical efforts to, at the core, defy a philosophical system, given his *salto mortale*. Jacobi argues (or, in my view, merely states) that one ought to *believe*, and cannot be expected to do much else, in a life-giving creator (and put aside reason), which would function as the foundation and justificatory point for him (*Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (1785) 17, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn, vermehrte* (1789) 353). Though this idea may figure into a discussion of foundations as non-inferentially determined beginning points, because of limitations of space in this chapter that already deals with many topics and figures and because of Jacobi's peculiar un-philosophical form of presentation of his ideas, I have decided to leave him out of the discussion in this current project.

1. Kant

To understand German idealism, particularly Hegel, it is crucial to start with Kant, in particular, as noted, with what Hegel calls “the founding and grounding tendency” (*Differenzschrift* 179) in classical German philosophy.

Kant begins his critical project with an account of cognition that he continues to examine it in different ways throughout the three critiques. The *CPR* offers an account of *a priori* cognition by answering the question “How are synthetic a priori judgments possible?” The *Critique of Practical Reason* deals with Kant’s moral philosophy through the lens of cognition, including its structure and limits. The *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is Kant’s work on aesthetics and biological teleology, focusing on aesthetic judgment and feeling, as well as teleology in nature, again from the perspective of the structure and limits of cognition. I focus my discussion here on the *CPR* where Kant concentrates solely on cognition and where his Copernican revolution puts cognition at the center of philosophy (as discussed in the Chapter 1).

1.1. The *Critique of Pure Reason* and an a priori Account

Cognition is central for Kant’s philosophy especially since, in my view, the *CPR* functions as the ground for the other two critiques.³¹ Kant did not actively search for a foundation, and, unlike his commentators, was not concerned with the question of foundations.

³¹ The second *Critique* assumes that cognition is based on our reason, hence *a priori*, where objects conform to our cognition. Only on this basis is Kant then able to give an account of right actions based on reason. The third *Critique* takes aesthetic experience first and foremost to be related to reason and understanding, universal judgments, and the power of judgments. In this manner, the cognition of objects as *a priori* is again at the forefront. Hence, for the third *Critique* too, cognition plays the role of a foundation. There is more that can be explained and discussed regarding my view of this foundational nature of the first *Critique* for the other two, but this goes beyond the scope of this chapter.

According to Kant, connected to his main concern of giving an account of cognition, the main question in the *CPR* is “how are synthetic a priori judgments possible?” (*CPR* B73, 192).³² The answer provides us an account of reason. Kant writes in the B Introduction that there are “judgments of clarification”, that is, analytic judgments, and there are “judgments of amplification”, that is, synthetic judgments (*CPR* B11, 141). Kant begins the B Introduction with an explanation of *a priori* and *a posteriori* cognitions before explaining the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments. Cognition, he claims, begins with experience (*CPR* B1, 136). Cognition that is independent of all experience is *a priori*,³³ whereas cognition based on experience is empirical, therefore, *a posteriori* (*CPR* B2, B3, 136, 137). A priori cognitions are marked by “[n]ecessity and strict universality” (*CPR* B4, 137). There are pure *a priori* cognitions and *a priori* cognitions that are not pure. Pure *a priori* cognitions are those “with which nothing empirical is intermixed” (*CPR* B3, 137).

Kant remarks that “[j]udgments of experience, as such, are all synthetic” (*CPR* B11, 142). That is, all empirical, i.e. *a posteriori*, judgments are synthetic. He writes “it would be absurd to ground an analytic judgment on experience, since I do not need to go beyond my concept at all in order to formulate the judgment, and therefore need no testimony from experience for that” (*ibid.*). This indicates that the *ground* of these analytic judgments are to be found in cognition itself. What about *a priori* judgments? It is clear that *a priori* judgments can be analytic. Since analytic judgments are clarificatory, they do not rely on experience, as the passage just quoted

³² The next few pages will deal with some of the more technical aspects of Kant’s work that have been discussed many times over by his commentators (except for the discussion on foundations and grounds). My aim in repeating these is to show the central importance of cognition for Kant in many of the important details of his work.

³³ Some specific cognitions (*a priori* ones) can be independent of experience in terms of its content, despite all cognition in general beginning with experience.

suggests. It is also the case that *a priori* judgments can be synthetic – this is the question with which Kant is concerned.

He entitles section V of the B Introduction “Synthetic *a priori* judgments are contained as principles in all theoretical sciences of reason” (*CPR* B14, 143). Kant uses this section to list all the theoretical sciences of reason and to explain how each employs synthetic *a priori* judgments. “Mathematical judgments are all synthetic” and “mathematical propositions are always *a priori* judgments” (*CPR* B14, 143, 144). Then he writes that “[n]atural science (*Physica*) contains within itself synthetic *a priori* judgments as principles” (*CPR* B17, 145). Metaphysics also has synthetic *a priori* propositions, and “at least as far as its end is concerned, consists of purely synthetic *a priori* propositions” (*CPR* B18, 146), and “the entire final aim of our speculative *a priori* cognition rests on such synthetic, i.e., ampliative principles” (*CPR* B13, 143). Synthetic *a priori* judgments are judgments that are made by bringing together (i.e. synthesizing) *a priori* judgments. The resulting synthetic *a priori* judgment involves more content than any of the individual parts that construe it through their synthesis.

Having determined that synthetic *a priori* judgments hold a significant place in reason’s endeavors, Kant asks how it is that they are possible. He claims that this is “the real problem of pure reason” (*CPR* B19, 146). Accordingly, he states that “metaphysics now stands or falls” based on this question (*ibid.*). Since we know that the sciences which rely on synthetic *a priori* judgments are actual and given, we also know that these kinds of judgments are possible. Thus, human cognition is such that it can expand on its judgments that are not empirical and thus are *a priori*; cognition is such that it can expand on itself by itself. This is ultimately a question about the nature of cognition, if not *the* question that gets to the heart of the nature of cognition insofar

as it is able to create and sustain itself. Thus the critique of pure reason is chiefly concerned with the core of cognition.

That the *CPR* is concerned mainly with giving an account of cognition can be seen in the contents of the work. In answering the aforementioned question, Kant considers all aspects of reason thoroughly to give an account of how cognition works. The “Transcendental Aesthetic”, “Transcendental Logic”, “Transcendental Analytic” with its subsection “Transcendental Deduction” are, in my reading, the main parts of the *CPR*. The remainder of the *CPR* relies on the principles determined in these sections.

The Transcendental Aesthetic is the first part of the Transcendental Doctrine of Elements. Kant writes that it is “a science of all principles of *a priori* sensibility” (*CPR* B35, 156). Sensibility is “[t]he capacity (receptivity) to acquire representations through the way in which we are affected by objects” (*CPR* B33, 155). Thus, the transcendental aesthetic is the science of all principles of our *a priori* capacity to acquire representations through the way in which we are affected by objects. This means that there are *a priori* structures that determine our capacity to have representations through which we are affected by objects. Kant remarks that sensibility is different from understanding and its concepts (which will be discussed in the Transcendental Logic). Therefore, the transcendental aesthetic is not at all concerned with the understanding and its concepts but simply focuses on sensibility.

In the Preface Kant treats cognition as the basis through which everything else is justified. It functions, for instance, as the way in which Kant explains common metaphysical concepts such as space, time, quantity, quality, modality, and so on. Metaphysical and logical/sensible ideas such as space and time and the concepts that Kant presents as the twelve

categories grouped under four headings in his Table of the Categories (*CPR* B106, 212) are traditionally not explained through cognition, or those things by which we cognize. However, in Kant's case, they depend on cognition and in fact structure cognition in *a priori* terms. In this sense, we see that cognition is fundamental for Kant's metaphysics.

Time and space are "forms of intuition" according to Kant. In reacting to the Newtonian model of time and space as absolute structures independent of cognition, Kant presents time and space as *a priori* structures through which we have intuitions. We cannot have intuitions outside of, or independent from, time and space. In this sense, time and space are the conditions for all intuitions and appearances (*CPR* B39, 158 and B51, 164). All of our cognitions are temporal and spatial. Time is the "inner sense" and space is the "outer sense" (*CPR* B37, 157). We cannot conceive of cognitions without these inner and outer senses. As conditions for experience, they are required for any cognition to arise, for us to have any representations whatsoever. These are *a priori* structures that are presupposed for any cognition. They are not "empirical concept[s] that [have] been drawn from outer [or inner] experiences" (*CPR* B37, B46, 157, 162).

Kant's "categories" also function as *a priori* structures for cognition. They are different, however, from the forms of intuition, since they are concepts. He claims they are the "pure concepts of the understanding" (*CPR* B102, 210). On the one hand, time and space are the two great forms of "receptivity of our mind" (*ibid.*). They structure how we receive a cognitive input that is later worked up to yield appearances and representations. On the other hand, the categories, or the pure concepts of the understanding, have to do with the "spontaneity" of the combination of the "manifold" that gets cognized (*ibid.*). Kant calls this action "synthesis" (*ibid.*). Our cognition synthesizes the manifold through the pure concepts of the understanding

(CPR B103, 210-11). The manifold is given (or formed) *a priori* through space and time (CPR B103, 211).

These categories are: unity, plurality, totality (under quantity); reality, negation, limitation (under quality); of inherence and subsistence, of causality and dependence, of community (under relation); and possibility – impossibility, existence – non-existence, necessity – contingency (under modality) (CPR B106, 212). They are the *a priori* structures through which we cognize and judge things. Traditionally, these concepts are explained separately from cognition. However, since Kant showed that we do not know things as they are but only through the lens of our cognition, these concepts must belong to our cognition and cannot be distinct from it. They are the structures by which we have cognition to begin with. Cognition depends on, and is determined by, these *a priori* structures. We cannot have cognition without them. Thus, we see that for Kant, cognition is essential, (and perhaps central), in explaining (traditional) metaphysical structures.

The pure concepts of the understanding correspond to and are co-determinative with the logical forms of judgment. In the Transcendental Deduction, Kant shows that concepts that correspond to (and were derived from) the logical functions nevertheless are objectively valid, hence necessarily objectively valid of everything given to us in space and time. The pure concepts of the understanding are thereby the structures through which we cognize objects. Together, they provide the cognitive contents of “the transcendental unity of apperception”, i.e. Kant’s conception of the subject (which I discuss in a separate section below). The categories are the rules for synthesis. Kant does not make clear whether the objects exist prior to being brought under the categories or whether the content of the sensory manifold, or sensation, is directly

brought under the categories.³⁴ The categories are the conditions for our experience. This explains the name “transcendental unity of apperception” that Kant assumes even before he argues that the categories are objectively valid: the unity of our cognition relies upon the unity of the categories in their synthesizing act,³⁵ and their unity is constitutive of our consciousness. For we cannot have consciousness without such cognition, and cognition is a priori determined by the pure concepts of the understanding.

1.2. Cognition and the Standpoint of Reason

That objects conform to our cognition has implications for how we understand ‘objects’. Kant writes that “we can cognize of things *a priori* only what we ourselves have put into them” (*CPR* Bxviii, 111). In Kant’s framework, ‘objects’ are the objects of our cognition. When Kant speaks of objects, and when we speak of objects in Kantian terms, we are speaking only of objects that are within the bounds of cognition, and there is a good reason for that, namely our limitation to cognition (together with the judgments that cognition creates) and the rational standpoint. Things in themselves, on the contrary, do not count as cognitive objects, since objects are only what appear in cognition. Since things in themselves cannot be cognized, they are not objects.

Kant claims that we can cognize and comprehend things only through *a priori* reason, which he proves in the Transcendental Deduction. This has implications for philosophy. It means that Kant’s account of cognition will function as the lens through which we can approach anything. Since we are confined to the rational standpoint, we can make claims and advances in

³⁴ Though one could argue that Kant’s Schematism (*CPR* A137/B176 - A147/B187, 271-7) is supposed to solve this issue, it is not clear that it in fact does. However, an analysis of the Schematism is beyond the goals of this chapter.

³⁵ This synthesis through the categories provides the object of cognition.

philosophy and the sciences only within this standpoint. Thus, the account of cognition is prioritized and highly significant: this account is what will determine all our other endeavors for knowledge.

1.3. The Transcendental Unity of Apperception

Cognition for Kant has an important aspect to it, namely, the transcendental unity of apperception, which he discusses in the B Transcendental Deduction. Kant begins §16 of the Transcendental Deduction by stating that “[t]he **I think must be able** to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me that could not be thought at all, which is as much as to say that the representation would either be impossible or else at least would be nothing for me” (*CPR* B132, 246). In §18, he writes that “the **transcendental unity** of apperception is that unity through which all of the manifold given in an intuition is united in a concept of the object” (*CPR* B139, 250). Kant also calls this unity “the transcendental unity of self-consciousness” (*CPR* B132, 247) or “the synthetic unity” (*CPR* B132, 246). In a footnote, he claims that “the synthetic unity of apperception is the highest point to which one must affix all use of the understanding ... indeed this faculty is the understanding itself” (*CPR* B134, 247).

Clearly, the transcendental unity of apperception plays a crucial role for cognition. Kant claims that “[a]pperception is itself the ground of the possibility of the categories, which for their part represent nothing other than the synthesis of the manifold of intuition, insofar as that manifold has unity in apperception” (*CPR* A401, 442). What does it mean for apperception to be the ground for the possibility of the categories? In order for cognitions to be represented in *me*, they need to be represented as *my* cognitions. Therefore, we need to be self-conscious, and aware of our cognitions as ours in order to have them. Without the transcendental unity of

apperception, the categories would not exist as such, for they are categories only for an I that thinks and is aware of itself as thinking. Thus, it may be appropriate to claim that apperception is the ground insofar as it conditions the existence of the categories as what they are.

However, the crucial status of being a ground of the transcendental unity of apperception nevertheless does not make it a foundation for Kant's theory of cognition.³⁶ For something to constitute an epistemic foundation, it has to serve the purpose of a beginning point which justifies the other parts of the system. The transcendental unity of apperception does not precede and lay the foundation for the other aspects of cognition and Kant's philosophy. Rather, it unifies the manifold of sensibility to make it available as cognition. It does not justify them epistemically – it is yet another crucial part of the system of cognition that Kant formulates. In fact, as quoted above, Kant presents the transcendental unity of apperception as the “highest point” – hence, it is definitely not a foundational principle which by definition is at the foundation/beginning. The transcendental unity of apperception is the point we *reach* in Kant's formulation of a system for explaining cognition, and thus it is far from being the foundation upon which we build everything.³⁷ If the transcendental unity of apperception were the foundation, then Kant would have to explain all aspects of cognition by using the transcendental unity of apperception as their justification. This is far from being the case.

Moreover, Kant was not concerned with finding a foundation for his philosophy – at the very least, he was not concerned with it explicitly. Though he was systematic in his treatment of

³⁶ For a detailed discussion of the difference between ‘foundation’ and ‘ground’, please see Chapter 1. In short, a foundation is an epistemically justificatory beginning point for a system, whereas a ground is nothing more than a cause or condition and does not have a systemic character.

³⁷ Despite the spatial metaphor on height here, the main point is that for Kant, this “highest point” is something we reach in our account of cognition. It is not the concept with which we begin our analysis but we have to build our account to be able to introduce it as a part of this account.

the various notions with which he was concerned, there is no indication that he wanted to form a complete philosophical system. Thus, a foundation would be of no relevance for his goals. The discussion of foundations was started by Reinhold (as I explain shortly) who influenced the trajectory of how Kant was interpreted and the discussions surrounding the development of critical philosophy beyond Kant.

A supporting discussion for my claim that Kant was not concerned with founding his philosophy and that he was not a foundationalist can be argued based on Karl Ameriks's argument in the chapter titled "Kant's Transcendental Deduction as a Regressive Argument" in his *Interpreting Kant's Critiques* (2003). Ameriks convincingly argues against the interpretations of Peter Strawson, Jonathan Bennett, and Robert Paul Wolff that Kant does not offer a progressive argument in the transcendental deduction, but rather a regressive one (Ameriks 51, 52).

Ameriks defines a progressive argument in the context of the transcendental deduction as meaning that one would hold "that it [the transcendental deduction] presents arguments which do not merely assume synthetic a priori knowledge and demonstrate its presuppositions but which have synthetic a priori principles as their conclusions" (Ameriks 52). If Kant were presenting a progressive argument, then, he would not begin with the presupposition of synthetic a priori judgments, but rather build his argument to reach the result of synthetic a priori judgments only at the end. Ameriks writes that the interpretations of Strawson, Bennett, and Wolff "see the transcendental deduction as showing that one can be self-conscious only if there is an objective world of which one is aware" (Ameriks 54). These interpretations thus assume that an objective world becomes the basis on which Kant develops his notion of apperception and the transcendental deduction.

In contrast, Ameriks claims that Kant presents a regressive argument based on Kant's definition of a transcendental argument. A transcendental argument is defined as deducing the necessary and sufficient conditions for the existence of some knowledge (Ameriks 51). Ameriks writes that "Kant declares a transcendental account of a particular representation (*B*) to be one which shows how *B* explains the possibility of a kind of synthetic a priori knowledge (*A*)" (ibid.). He writes that such an account has two parts, and quotes Kant B40: "(1) For this purpose it is required that such knowledge does really flow from the given concept, (2) that this knowledge is possible only on the assumption of a given mode of explaining the concept" (ibid.). A regressive argument follows this account in the sense that (1) it begins with the concept and explores the knowledge that "flows" from it, and (2) since "this knowledge is possible only on the assumption of a given mode of explaining the concept", the way in which the knowledge flows is predetermined by the concept itself. Thus, in a transcendental argument, we analyze the concept regressively, by tracing the "given mode of explaining the concept" and the knowledge that flows from it.³⁸

The progressive form of argument is similar to a foundationalist account in that they both begin from a point of knowledge (this is the foundation in the foundationalists' case) and build on that knowledge progressively. By a regressive argument, in contrast, he means that Kant is looking for the necessary and sufficient conditions for experience. Ameriks claims that Kant's regressive argument has a logical form of "A if only B. B." (Ameriks 52). Ameriks does not discuss the validity or the characteristics of this logical form (other than to say that it is

³⁸ It follows from this that Kant claims that there can be only two forms of intuition (space and time) and 12 categories. A detailed discussion of this point is beyond the scope of this chapter. For some discussion on this matter in the literature see Till Hoepfner (2011), Klaus Reich (1992), Lorenz Krüger (1968), Bernhard Thöle (2001). Isabelle Thomas-Fogiel (2019) also points out that Fichte brought up the issue of "how could Kant know that we have only twelve categories and not thirty".

regressive). Nevertheless, we can extrapolate to say that this formulation is something between a *modus ponens* and a *modus tollens* argument where we are moving from the consequent to the antecedent (as in *modus tollens*) but without a negation (as in *modus ponens*).

Ameriks writes that there are “significant formal correspondences between the Aesthetic and the Analytic” (Ameriks 53). In the Aesthetic, the central argument with regard to space, he claims, has the regressive structure and is paralleled by the Analytic. I formulate these arguments following Ameriks’s discussion in the following way:

Regressive logical form:

A \rightarrow ³⁹ B
 B
 \therefore A is possible

Aesthetic:

The science of geometry \rightarrow synthetic a priori propositions Synthetic a priori propositions \rightarrow pure intuitions	\rightarrow transcendental idealism is true
--	---

Analytic:

Experience ⁴⁰ \rightarrow apperception applies to experience Apperception applies to experience \rightarrow pure concepts have validity Pure concepts have validity \rightarrow transcendental idealism is true	\rightarrow representations of a certain kind
--	---

Thus, as Ameriks’s account shown in this formulation indicates, Kant follows a regressive argument in the Deduction. Furthermore, this formulation lays bare that neither apperception nor cognition (“experience”) are of a foundational nature for Kant. Rather, they are made possible, in

³⁹ I use this sign to mean “if only”.

⁴⁰ Ameriks calls this “empirical knowledge”. However, for the issues I indicate in Chapter 1, I will not use the term “empirical”, but rather refer to it as “experience” (which Ameriks also does in parentheses).

turn, by transcendental idealism, which itself is made possible by representations of a certain kind.

2. Reinhold

Reinhold was the first thinker to provide a simplified account of Kant's theory as well as to show how to reformulate it. In that sense, he invented German Idealism. Reinhold read Kant's work and gave a commentary on it in *Der Teutsche Merkur*, a then widely read journal. As a result, attention was drawn to it and Kant's obscure work was made more accessible. Reinhold praised Kant's critical philosophy for its practical and moral implications in his *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*. In his commentary called "Elementary Philosophy", although Reinhold praised Kant and suggested that his work be read widely, he also indicated the need for a foundation to Kant's critical system. Kant's system did not have a foundation. In response, Reinhold claimed that it needed a foundation upon which it could stand in order for it to be a complete project and system. Thus, Reinhold is a quasi-Cartesian foundationalist, regarding the system to stand or fall depending on its foundation, unlike Kant.

Although Kant did not have an explicit concern for founding his philosophy, Reinhold states that we need to find a firm foundation upon which Kant's system can stand. In this sense, his view is similar to Descartes' claim that knowledge requires a firm foundation. His effort to work out the so-called philosophy from the founding principle significantly influenced the early reception of Kant's philosophy.

Reinhold approaches this issue from the angle of the principle of contradiction and the notion of causation. He shows how Kant answered the dogmatic skeptic (Hume's view),⁴¹ the empiricist (Locke's view), and the rationalist (Leibniz's view). Following these discussions, he claims that, although Kant took philosophy further than his predecessors, his approach is nevertheless not complete because it lacks a foundation. Reinhold begins by complaining that many philosophers assume that "the proposition 'all that comes to be must have a cause or (what amounts to the same thing) must be an effect'" can be demonstrated through the principle of contradiction (Reinhold 53). He claims these philosophers assume that an effect can be analytically deduced from a cause, that, in other words, a cause implies its effect and we can reason from the effect to its cause (Reinhold 55). The principle of contradiction applies in the following way: it would be a contradiction to think of something that comes to be (i.e. an effect) without thinking of its cause. They presuppose that "the concept 'effect' is already contained in the concept 'coming to be'" (Reinhold 53).⁴²

Reinhold claims that Leibnizians hold this view. Spinoza, Crusius, Hume, and Kant, for respective reasons, do not think that the concept of effect is included in the concept of coming to be (Reinhold 54). Regardless of their reasons, their positions show, Reinhold maintains, that "the principle of contradiction cannot supply the right concept of 'coming to be'; rather it presupposes it. For all the proofs by which each disputing party wants to establish the necessity or non-necessity of thinking 'coming to be' as 'effect' are derived in each case from the party's concept of 'coming to be'" (ibid.). Hence, since the concept 'coming to be' is different for each, the assumptions made on that basis cannot found philosophy in the same way that they take the

⁴¹ I discuss below that Schulze disagreed with Reinhold on the point that Kant was able to successfully answer Hume's skepticism.

⁴² The discussion of cause and effect is clearly related to the notions of ground and foundation. Both of these notions function as a form of cause. For a detailed discussion of these terms, refer to my discussion in Chapter 1.

principle of sufficient reason to found philosophy. Reinhold suggests that even if one concept were contained in the other, and therefore an analysis of the containing concept yielded the contained concept, “if I have no reason to justify my concept save the *fact* that I have it—if there is no ground for it besides the concept itself, then the principle of contradiction will be of no help to me to prove it is *real*” (Reinhold 55).

In Reinhold’s view, the principle of contradiction cannot be the foundation, or the first principle, of philosophy such that we can explain everything else through it, because it “presupposes a ground different from it” “for its correct application” (Reinhold 55). Thus, the foundation that rationalists such as Leibniz suggest is false. What the empiricists and the skeptics suggest is also problematic. Reinhold states that they argue that “representation is nothing other than the *impression* itself” (Reinhold 57). This is correct from a Kantian perspective. Though for Leibniz there was a distinction, the representation *came to be* through the impression, which was the cause. Reinhold claims that for empiricists and skeptics impressions are foundational when he writes “I can never reach out to a rose which would be different from my impression of it, which would not occur in my representation” (ibid.). Reinhold shows that Kant proved both to be wrong. He writes that Kant showed that “in no way can every effect of the mind’s activity be, or be taken to be, just an inner impression” and thus that their foundation was “arbitrary” (Reinhold 62). Furthermore, the claim put forth by empiricists that “representations are derived exclusively from experience” cannot be the case and is again an “arbitrary” claim because “the *connection* between objects cannot be sensed, it cannot be produced from sensations”, and therefore “must be thought to be determined (i.e., subject to immutable laws)” (ibid.).

Accordingly, Kant, while furnishing these criticisms, also provided a better foundation, albeit still not an adequate one, according to Reinhold. Reinhold writes about Kant that he

“discovered a new *foundation of philosophical knowledge* that includes the truth found scattered, in one-sided forms, in the previous expositions of that knowledge, yet excludes their falsity” (Reinhold 61). Kant was not satisfied with “a statement in general about the *possibility of experience* as the ultimate foundation without offering a criterion by which to conclude *how, by which means, and to what extent*, this is so. He showed ‘*in what* the possibility of experience consists’ through an extensive analysis of the *faculty of cognition*” (ibid.). Thus this analysis of cognition becomes the foundation insofar as it provides the possibility of experience (Reinhold 63).⁴³

Reinhold’s main criticism lies in his view that Kant devised only a foundation for metaphysics and not for all of philosophy, “as constituting the *doctrine of the elements of philosophy*” (Reinhold 64). What does Reinhold mean by this? The answer to this question betrays the specific way in which Reinhold reads Kant, which in some ways is quite unfair to Kant.

First of all, Reinhold speaks of “elements” and “elementary” aspects of philosophy to mean foundational aspects for all of philosophy and not only a sub-branch of it such as metaphysics. Secondly, Reinhold saw the Kantian project as requiring a systematicity with which Kant was not specifically concerned: Reinhold’s criticism is mainly based on this point. Even though Kant is very rigorous and systematic in his own right, his concern is not the totalizing systematicity that Reinhold is striving for. This is a kind of systematicity that presents a

⁴³ Since Reinhold adheres to a Cartesian foundationalism, he is a kind of neo-Cartesian. As explained in Chapter 1, Cartesian foundationalism necessitates that the justification of an entire system of knowledge depend on a single indubitable foundation. This is exactly what Reinhold seeks and he does not accept a Kantian system that does not satisfy this criterion.

philosophical theory as a complete system that has a non-inferentially determined foundation and which does not omit anything in its explanatory capacity.

Kant's main concern was not to build a totalizing theory, but rather to explain cognition and the human capacity for representation and reason. His *critique* of pure reason⁴⁴ is just that—a critique of the way in which human reason has been understood, while giving a detailed account of cognition. Reinhold's concerns, and thus his criticism, go beyond this initially humble yet in practice quite extensive project.

Reinhold reframes Kant's intentions as he interprets Kant's philosophy. He claims that Kant was able to provide a foundation for metaphysics, and not for philosophy in general. Kant's intention, however, was not to find a foundation for a system. Although one could claim, as the German Idealists that came after Kant did, that for Kant cognition was foundational, this was not by any means a methodological or epistemic concern and did not arise from a desire to base his whole philosophy on an initial justification point. In fact, for Kant, the goal was to explain cognition from the perspective of synthetic a priori judgments (which would then prove to be a critique of reason as it had been understood). Cognition was never the basis for justification for Kant; in fact it was quite the opposite. Kant's arguments are all intended to justify his account of cognition. If anything, Kant calls apperception the ground, as discussed above. However, this is not a foundation, as I argued.

Since today Reinhold has receded into the history of philosophy, it is useful to consider his criticism in more detail. Kant found a way to base philosophy on certain general principles, such as the categories, but not to provide a stronger, epistemic foundation of the kind that

⁴⁴ Reason, despite being of utmost importance for Kant, is not epistemically foundational, since his notion of 'reason' does not begin his theory to then justify all other aspects of it.

Reinhold intends to provide in reworking the critical philosophy. Kant's system is limited to knowable objects: "the *CPR* proclaimed, and also demonstrated, that any metaphysics not meant to be the science of objects of possible experience is untenable, unfounded and contradictory" (Reinhold 65). This is, as noted above, the limitation of the human standpoint. Reinhold shrewdly notices this as a limitation of Kant's philosophy. For Kant, we can find "metaphysical truth" only in objects knowable *a posteriori*, through *a priori* cognitions (ibid.). Reinhold claims that this satisfies the needs of Hume, Locke, and Leibniz (ibid.). The difference is that by "knowable object" each of those three philosophers understands the "thing in itself", not its representation. Yet for Kant, the thing in itself is not knowable/cognizable but only representable (ibid.). To represent is to know or grasp correctly (as far as is possible within the limits of cognition, which leaves out things as they are in themselves). Thus, the things in themselves, the objects independent of our representations, are not the foundation. Rather, "the synthetic unity of the manifold of intuition in a possible experience", that is, cognition, is the foundation for Kant according to Reinhold (Reinhold 66). Sensibility and reason, taken together, are "the science of the *entire faculty of cognition*" (Reinhold 67).

However, Reinhold is not satisfied. In Kant's philosophy, sensibility and understanding constitute the empirical⁴⁵ faculty of cognition, and reason is the pure faculty. These three taken together are the science of the *entire faculty of representation* (ibid.). But they need a foundation. Cognition with its representing power is central (though not foundational) for Kant, but Reinhold argues that there is something even more foundational, which is "the science of the *a priori* form of representing through sensibility, understanding and reason ... it would be the science of the *entire faculty of representation as such*" (Reinhold 67). Reinhold calls this science the

⁴⁵ Though, as discussed in Chapter 1, "empirical" has a renewed meaning in and after Kant's philosophy.

Philosophy of Elements (*Elementarphilosophie*), “because it serves as the common foundation to both *theoretical* and *practical* philosophy” (Reinhold 68). He states that this is the only way to properly found and ground philosophy. He takes what Kant has done in his philosophy as valid and true, and then further grounds it in a way he understands as completing the Kantian project and system through an epistemic foundation. Space and time, the twelve categories, etc., are “the properties of mere representations” (*ibid.*), and through Reinhold’s foundation, they will no longer be understood as the foundation.

Reinhold writes “from the concept of *representation in general, qua* generic concept, we cannot derive the concept of *sensible representation*, or that of *concept* itself, or that of *idea*” (Reinhold 69). And from specific sensible representations too, we cannot get knowledge of things in themselves “because *a thing* cannot be known *in-itself* through *any representation* simply *qua* representation” (*ibid.*). Thus we see that representations, as cognitions, cannot be the foundation for logical and philosophical knowledge/cognition. Instead, Reinhold claims, the *CPR* deals only with “the specifying characteristics of the various kinds of representations” (*ibid.*). Furthermore, “the concept of representation *qua representation* can no more be derived from these specifications than the concept ‘triangle’ can be derived from ‘equal sides’ and ‘unequal sides’” (Reinhold 69-70).

The foundation for Reinhold is the principle of consciousness [*Satz des Bewusstseins*] (Reinhold 70). Reinhold states that this foundation cannot be proven by philosophy itself, but can be shown in it: “the concept of representation can only be drawn from the CONSCIOUSNESS of an *actual fact*” (*ibid.*). There is however, a difference between the *principle* of consciousness and the *fact* of consciousness. The principle, for Reinhold, is the foundation, and the fact follows from that. This principle founds and grounds philosophy: the principle of our consciousness

ensures the fact that we are, and hence is the only possible foundation. Representation and all the parts of Kant's system depend on this "principle of consciousness" (ibid.). Thus consciousness is fundamental to and presupposed by any representation. Though the object of knowledge appears in each and any representation, Reinhold wants to say that there is something that is deeper and more fundamental about our being conscious of it in the first place, and that this is the principle that ought to stand outside the system as the foundation. Reinhold's effort to find a foundation for Kant's philosophy, and thereby an adequate beginning for philosophy prompted philosophers like Schelling and Fichte to also consider the notions of founding and grounding.

3. Schulze

Schulze was active around the same time as Kant and Reinhold. He is known for his skepticism, in particular for his criticism of Kant's project and Reinhold's efforts to improve Kant's project. His skepticism is revealed at the onset by his pseudonym: Aenesidemus, the name of a skeptic from antiquity. In the text which he wrote under this pseudonym, he focuses on whether Kant's critical philosophy is able to answer David Hume's worries, and displays a skeptical view towards what the German Idealists call the dogmatism of pre-critical philosophy. Kant wrote that Hume woke him up from his dogmatic slumber. But, if so, then Kant's critical philosophy should not fall prey to the same mistakes that Hume had criticized through his skepticism. Schulze asks: Is Kant's philosophy able to give an account of cognition while responding to Hume's worries about dogmatic philosophy?

Schulze claims that "it is the thesis of critical philosophy that a large portion of the determinations and characteristics with which the representations of certain objects [*Gegenstände*] occur in us are to be grounded in the essence of our *faculty of representation*"

(Schulze 106). According to Schulze, this view combines the views of Locke and Leibniz: at once combining empiricism and rationalism; “it establishes that there is in our knowledge something determined *a priori* by the mind, and that this something constitutes the form of the material given to our knowledge *a posteriori*” (ibid.). Schulze’s adherence to skepticism leads him to ask whether Kant’s philosophy actually answers Hume’s skepticism, especially when most of Kant’s followers see Kant’s view as having “in fact conquered *all* of David Hume’s doubts” “by deriving a certain part of human cognition from the faculty of representation” (Schulze 106).

Schulze considers the philosophy of Reinhold. He writes that “the Philosophy of Elements has followed a course of its own” (Schulze 107) that differs from the *Critique of Pure Reason*. He places the two works at the same level of importance and tells the reader that we need to evaluate both equally carefully to see which one we agree with or which one is more dangerous in leading us astray. For Schulze, then, we need to examine “the proofs by which the Philosophy of the Elements establishes that much of what is in a representation is determined by the mind” as well as the proofs in the *Critique of Pure Reason* for the same purpose (ibid.).

According to Schulze, Reinhold argues that representations are, as effects, caused by a faculty of representations. This faculty is the “ground” and the “cause”. It is prior to all representations, and is different “from representation as cause from effect” (Schulze 107). Yet, we can infer the existence of this faculty only from representations themselves (ibid.). Schulze remarks that Reinhold shows only the existence of the “concept” of the faculty of representation, not the existence of an actual faculty. Yet, Reinhold nevertheless implies that “an objectively something”, that is a faculty and not just its concept, exists by implication (ibid.). So, Schulze writes that the question we need to be asking is the following: “by which means has the

Philosophy of the Elements [*Elementarphilosophie*] come to its extravagant cognition of the objective existence of this something, and with which argument does it justify it?" (ibid.). He claims that Reinhold fails to provide the necessary proof.

The important point to mark here is that Schulze provides a criticism of the founding principle of Reinhold's philosophy. The faculty of representation for Reinhold functions as the epistemic foundation to explain representations. Yet he gives no sound proof of the existence of such a faculty, except for its concept. One may argue that this is fine for Reinhold since non-inferentially determined foundations are accepted in epistemic foundationalism. For Schulze, however, concepts do not imply the existence of actual somethings. For Reinhold too though, Schulze points out, this is the case. Schulze writes that for Reinhold "*thought* is distinguished from *being*" (Schulze 108). Nevertheless, the argument that Reinhold gives, according to Schulze, is that "any two things that cannot be thought apart from one another can also not be apart from one another" (ibid.). If we cannot think of representations apart from thinking about a faculty of representation that makes the representations themselves possible, and if representations exist (which Schulze claims no one disputes (Schulze 107-8)), then a faculty of representation must also exist (Schulze 108).

Reinhold's mistake is that "in the proof a conclusion is actually being drawn from the *constitution of representations and thoughts in us* to the constitution of objects [*Sachen*] in themselves, outside us" (Schulze 108). For Schulze, such a claim does not constitute a proof, and is furthermore not in the spirit of critical philosophy. It is regressive, given the advance made by critical philosophy against dogmatism. Schulze argues that if Reinhold's argument were to hold, "if this syllogism were right, then Spinozism would be invulnerable to attack, as well as the Leibnizian system and idealism – in fact, the whole of dogmatism in all its diverse and

contradictory claims about the thing-in-itself' would be invulnerable (ibid.). Schulze's critique of Reinhold, then, centers on Reinhold's claim about the existence of objects outside us, as well as the existence of a faculty within us. This dual claim is based on the existence of representations and the notion that some ideas cannot be thought separately from one another, as remarked above. However, Kant has already given a criticism of Leibniz and Spinoza for such a view. If one wants to think in *critical* terms, then one must advance from the point to which Kant has brought philosophy, and not regress, unless one is criticizing Kant's philosophy. Kant has already asserted "the inability of the understanding and of reason to discover by thought the nature of things-in-themselves" (Schulze 108).

Reinhold, thus, from Schulze's skeptical point of view, has not demonstrated that there is a faculty of representations from which representations arise. Schulze claims that no skeptic denies the existence of intuitions, concepts, or ideas. A skeptic rather maintains that "whether or not the thought of something that ought to make [them] possible in us in the first place is totally void of objective value" and "where the representation of this something might originate ... [are] totally *undecided issues*" (Schulze 108, 109). Hence, according to Schulze, the problem with Kant's philosophy that Schulze had initially identified remains despite Reinhold's reworking of Kant's philosophy.

However, Schulze is seeking a foundation in the epistemic sense. He writes that in order to solve this problem, we need to either (1) "have established on adequate grounds how far the employment of the real principle of sufficient reason extends – whether it may be applied to things as they are in-themselves or in the representations by which we refer to them," or (2) "have established the connection between our representations and the objects outside them in accordance with some other undeniable principle, and also that this connection is knowable to

us” (Schulze 109). Both options call for epistemic foundations, which in this case is the existence of a faculty of representation. This foundation for Schulze will justify the existence of such a faculty as well as how we come to know it. Without such a foundation, he remains a skeptic. Though, we could ask, how he can demand a foundation from the point of view of the skeptic in the first place: as we saw in the first chapter with the discussion of the Münchhausen-trilemma, historically the skeptical position lies in rejecting any possibility of reaching truth (save, perhaps, the truth of the skeptical position itself), and can even be charged with the dogmatic attitude itself.

If we go back to Schulze’s critique of Reinhold, we see that Schulze’s foundationalist argument continues. He writes that Reinhold has illegitimately “altered or otherwise defined the restrictions to the employment of the categories stipulated by the *Critique*,” especially “the categories of *cause* and *actuality*” (Schulze 110). Such a claim shows that Schulze sees Kant’s categories as epistemologically foundational. They need to be employed correctly if they are to found knowledge. In fact, Schulze goes as far as to say that it is “simply incomprehensible whence the Philosophy of Elements obtains the right, in laying down its foundations” (ibid.), that Reinhold does not have a justifiable epistemic foundation. Reinhold claims that the “faculty of representation” is in fact just representation itself and fails to justify satisfactorily why it should have the “title of *power* or *faculty*” (Schulze 111). For Schulze, Reinhold’s use of these titles are “empty”, because he does not in fact explain anything other than of what they are a faculty.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Hegel also claims that most explanations in natural sciences amount to no more than an enumeration of tautologies and do not in fact explain the *essential connections*. In a remark in the Real Measure section of the *WL*, for instance, Hegel claims that “the attempt to explain coming-to-be or ceasing-to-be on the basis of the gradualness of the alteration is tedious like any tautology; what comes to be or ceases to be is assumed as already complete and in existence beforehand and the alteration is turned into a mere change of an external difference, with the result that the explanation is in fact a mere tautology” (*WL* 370; Suhrkamp 441). Later on in the work, in The Determinate Relation of Causality part of the Absolute Relation section, he remarks of causality that there is a “*tautology* in the relation of causality”, that explaining cause-effect relations are tautological (*WL* 561; Suhrkamp 227). He writes

In a way similar to how Hegel later criticizes natural sciences, Schulze writes that “the Philosophy of Elements does not really make the presence of representations in us, nor in their nature, any more comprehensible than they already are on their own” (Schulze 111). Following the same line of thinking in his discussion regarding dogmatism, Schulze adds that Reinhold “arbitrarily assumes the being of a faculty of representation, and attributes to it as its property and mode of operation what, according to experience, ought to be found in representations instead” (ibid.). In this manner, Schulze rejects Reinhold’s explanation for representations.

Now that he has refuted the possibility of the validity of Reinhold’s reworking of Kant’s philosophy, Schulze can continue his main effort to explore whether Kant has successfully answered Hume’s skepticism. First of all, in my discussion of Schulze’s analysis of Kant, it is important to point out that Schulze takes Kant to be attempting to provide “the foundation of a system of philosophy” with his *CPR* (Schulze 113) but does not think that he succeeds given what he thinks would be objections in a Humean vein. As I have pointed out above, Kant did not in fact concern himself with finding the foundation of a system of philosophy (and it is also debatable whether he was at all concerned with having a complete system), but was rather interested in explaining how it is that we can have synthetic a priori judgments.

According to Schulze, “the deduction of the necessary synthetic judgments from the mind, and the determination of their connection to the cognition of empirical objects” is the main principle of Kant’s system (Schulze 112). He claims that it is an “undeniable conscious fact” that

“through this *identity of content*, this causality is an *analytic* proposition. It is the *same fact* which presents itself once as cause and again as effect, there as something subsisting on its own account and here as positedness or determination in an other. Since these determinations of form are an *external* reflection, it is, *in point of fact*, the tautological consideration of a *subjective* understanding to determine a phenomenon as effect and from this to ascend to its cause in order to comprehend and explain it; it is merely a repetition of one and the same content; there is nothing else in the cause but what is in the effect” (*WL* 560; Suhrkamp 226).

there are certain synthetic judgments in human cognition (ibid.). However, he has concerns, in a Humean spirit, about whether we have any justification to say that, just because we have “joined certain representations together once, or several times,” this produces “the effect that we must, necessarily, so join them every time” (ibid.). This is an attack on the Kantian system claiming that Kant does not have a justification for how the categories function. The categories he enumerates that create certain syntheses do not have any grounds by which they necessarily should produce the same synthesis each time. Just because we have seen in experience that certain syntheses happen in certain ways does not provide us with a satisfactory proof for the production of all the future possible syntheses. Schulze writes that “the necessity that attaches to certain synthetic judgements in our knowledge cannot be made comprehensible to us on the basis of mere experience, or from our perception of the presence of such judgments in us” (ibid.).

Schulze gives credit to Kant by saying that he tried to refute Humean skepticism in the *CPR* “by assuming as already unquestionably certain the very propositions against whose *legitimacy* Hume directed all his skeptical doubts” (Schulze 112-3). By this, Schulze means that Kant wanted to present the Humean problem as not even worth considering by suggesting that the categories and causality are in fact at the core of the capacities through which we could criticize and put them into question. This is also a way of ignoring Hume’s problem by underhandedly pushing it aside. However, ignoring Hume’s problematization of the artificial connections is no refutation. Kant assumes that these propositions are already unquestionable by claiming that “the original determinations of the human mind are the real *ground* or source of the necessary synthetic judgments found in our knowledge” (Schulze 113, my emphasis). Kant is inferring that since “we can only *think* of the faculty of representation as the ground of these judgments, ... the mind must *be* their ground *in actual fact* too” (ibid.). This is similar to the

problem that Schulze had highlighted in Reinhold's reworking of Kant's philosophy: Reinhold's assumption that thinking of a faculty implies the existence of this faculty, especially when one cannot think of an alternative. However, this is precisely the problem that Hume had with dogmatic philosophy. Schulze is, therefore, skeptical about such a foundation.

Coming from a Humean standpoint, however, Schulze fails to see that Kant does in fact already answer his worries. While Hume sees causation and associations as only habits of the mind, Kant argues that *all* appearances and representations are no more than a mere "habit" of the mind if we are to use Humean terminology. Kant demonstrates that there is nothing privileged about causality compared to the other aspects of human cognition. By Hume's reasoning, we ought to fall into skepticism about our cognition and all of its appearances *per se* and *in toto*, but Kant shows quite elegantly through his Copernican revolution that all the objects of cognition are just that, objects of cognition; and that these do not indicate necessary connections among things at all as they are in themselves separate of our cognition of them. Thus, we cannot speak of these objects in any other way anyway, and must accept that the connections are in our cognition does not admit of skepticism about them. It rather reinforces Kant's point that we can know things only through the rational standpoint.⁴⁷

Schulze also considers a possible defense of Kant's philosophy in the following form:

the *Critique of Reason* has first presented Hume's objection in general terms, showing that the concepts of the cause-effect link is by no means the only one by which the understanding conceives links between things *a priori*. Then it has provided a complete deduction of all the concepts in question which shows that they do not originate from

⁴⁷ If we can know things only through the rational standpoint, the issue becomes whether truth is relative (subjective) based on experiences we have had. However, this issue can be solved by pointing out what Kant means by reason and the standpoint that reason affords rational beings. Reason is governed by a priori principles, and thus it is universal, despite being expressed through the subject. Any rational being that has the same experiences will have the same access to truth: truth does not get shaped by the various experiences one has or has had, but various experiences provide windows for the rational being to the truth that stands independent of the perspectives that subjects may be afforded. Judgments based on experience can always be falsified (as in inductive judgments) whereas the a priori work of reason is constant and is not subject to change (as in deductive judgments).

experience, but have arisen from pure understanding instead. ... From the necessity and universality that attaches to those concepts and their respective principles, the *Critique of Reason* incontrovertibly proves that their cause is to be sought in the human mind. (Schulze 114)

This, Schulze finds, is, however, not a valid argument against Hume's worries. Kant answers his main question "How are necessary synthetic propositions possible in us?", Schulze claims, "simply by applying the principle of causality to certain judgments that occur in us after experience" (Schulze 115). The mind, in this case, is the effective cause of the synthetic propositions. Based on this, he makes the assumption that "each segment of human knowledge has a real *ground* that causes it" (ibid., my emphasis). Schulze claims that without this assumption, nothing in the *CPR* makes sense. This point needs to function as the ground on which human knowledge rests. This ground is the principle of causality applied to the relation between synthetic judgments and a faculty in the mind. Hence, Schulze not only finds fault in Kant's statement that causality is just one of many other relations that cognition consists of, but also shows that Kant requires the principle of causality to be able to explain causality as a principle within the mind in the form of one of the twelve categories. However, my explanation in the above paragraph also provides a defense of Kant's position against this worry.

In Schulze's interpretation, causality is a founding principle for Kant's philosophy. The mind is also a foundation for all cognitions. Kant "thus infers the objective and real constitution of what is to be found outside our representations, from the constitution of the representations and thoughts present in us ... because it cannot be thought otherwise" (Schulze 116). However, for Schulze, this is exactly the point against which Hume was arguing and Kant fails to give a successful explanation for cognition that is able address Hume's worries. Furthermore, according to Schulze, Kant's system lacks a proper foundation that is its main issue. Although Schulze's main goal is to discuss whether Kant satisfactorily answers Hume's worries, we can see that

Schulze is centrally concerned with an epistemic foundationalism which will hold up against his skeptical scrutiny.

Schulze wants to be a skeptic. Yet he also demands a foundation (or rather dares philosophers to find a foundation) which will justify the theory and provide truth. Given that these two positions are seemingly incompatible, and since Schulze's main demand is a proper foundation and not a resolution-proof skepticism, I conclude that Schulze is a foundationalist who employs skepticism and skeptical arguments to illustrate his demand for a foundation. Thus, regardless of his critique of Reinhold, Schulze ascribes to the idea of a founding principle as necessary in the same way as Reinhold does. Accordingly, Schulze's reading of Kant is more similar to Reinhold's than those of the other German idealists'.

4. Fichte

Fichte's most famous work is his *Wissenschaftslehre (SK)*, the written version of his main lectures during his post at the University of Jena. When he was offered the post, he was not yet ready to present his system; he had just begun to formulate it fully and felt that he needed more time. However, for his post, he needed to start lecturing soon (Braun 8). So he hesitantly accepted to do so, which led to his sixteen revisions of the *Wissenschaftslehre* throughout the rest of his career (ibid.). Before he began the *Wissenschaftslehre*, however, he wrote a shorter document called *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre (ÜBW)* published earlier than his 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre*, in which he explained the foundations of his system.

Our concern here in this section is with this document, as well as with Fichte's principles for his system in the first version of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. We shall see that in both texts,

Fichte had a complicated stance with regard to foundations. It appears that he was concerned with building a foundation for his system at various points. He was also interested in providing a ground for his philosophical system understood as an account of all knowledge.⁴⁸

Before starting the analysis of *ÜBW*, it will be useful to present a number of passages from Fichte's letters to his friends and colleagues that outline the importance of this text for founding his system. We know from his letters that he had just read Schulze. The study of Schulze's views led Fichte to rethink his views on Reinhold and Kant, and more broadly to turn to the vexed problem of the foundations of philosophy. He wrote to Professor of Philosophy Johann Friedrich Flatt in Tübingen at the end of 1793 the following: "Aenesidemus, whom I count among our decade's noteworthy products, has convinced me of what I already well before intuited regarding Kant's and Reinhold's works that they are not yet at the level of a science", and "that only through the development from a single principle can philosophy become a science, ... that there is such a principle, which as such however is not yet erected" (Gesamtausgabe, Hrsg. Lauth/Jacob, Bd. III 2, S. 18, Brief Nr. 168, my translation). This letter shows that after reading Schulze, Fichte had become more encouraged to, in his own view, properly found a system of philosophy, following Kant's critical revolution. Furthermore, it is clear from his letter that Fichte is entertaining the possibility that such a foundation is supposed to be a single principle from which the rest of the system follows.

Around the same time, he wrote to his friend Heinrich Stephani to ask whether he had read Aenesidemus and to share with him that Aenesidemus' views had affected him. He wrote

[Aenesidemus] has confused for me a fairly long time,⁴⁹ overturned Reinhold for me, made Kant suspicious for me, and toppled my whole system from the ground. Life is

⁴⁸ What used to be considered empirical knowledge by the dogmatic pre-critical philosophy falls under philosophical knowledge for Fichte. See my discussion of the transcendental idealism and empiricism in Chapter 1.

⁴⁹ By this, he is referring to a period of time, a period of philosophy.

impossible under open sky! So it [my whole system] helped nothing; it had to be rebuilt. I am doing that now, since about 6 weeks, faithfully. Enjoy with me the harvest: I have discovered a new foundation from which the entire philosophy lets itself be developed. – Kant had in general the right philosophy; but only in its results, not for its grounds. (Gesamtausgabe, Hrsg. Lauth/Jacob, Bd. III 2, 1970, S. 28, Brief Nr. 171, my translation)

These sentences written to a colleague may be a more honest portrayal of Fichte's view of Aenesidemus compared to the passages from the letter to a friend. Here, Fichte confesses that Schulze destroyed Fichte's own system that he needs to rebuild it. His description and use of words are akin to Descartes's use of the imagery of architecture and buildings when discussing his own views about knowledge. However, it is not clear whether his understanding of a foundation here is an epistemic foundation upon which everything else may be built, or simply a ground by which he may start his system to then develop it. Regardless, it is clear that the questions of how to begin philosophy and the different strategies of justification related to systematicity are at the foreground in his considerations of how to proceed with his philosophy.

Fichte begins his *ÜBW* indeed with stating that philosophy is a science [*Wissenschaft*]. No more than two paragraphs into the body of the work, he makes an important statement regarding the requirement of a foundation or initial principle for philosophy. He writes that “a science has systematic form; all propositions [*Sätze*] in it depend on a single principle [*Grundsatz*] and unite it to a whole [*Ganzen*]” (*ÜBW* 31, my translation). Later on he repeats the point that “a science should be one, a unity [*Ganzes*]” (*ÜBW* 33, my translation). Based on the initial statement, this unity must be composed of propositions that are all based on one founding principle.

However, the initial founding principle for Fichte is not the only important factor in having a successful science [*Wissenschaft*]. For him, in order for us to have certainty in our

knowledge and science, we need certainty in all the propositions of the *whole* science. We need to consider how these propositions fit together in order to say that they are part of “the science”:

There is no doubt that the individual propositions could not at all be *science*; rather that they can become science first in the whole, through their place in the whole, and through their relation to the whole. *Now*, however, through the mere putting together [*Zusammensetzung*] of parts, there can *never* emerge something which may not be applied in one part of the whole (*ÜBW* 33, my translation).

Thus, we see in Fichte an adherence to an initial principle, or a ground (with an act, which I explain below) that also supports a coherentism, or a kind of system that forms a whole where each part of this system is significant for the whole. In other words, the system must create a coherent whole for it to be considered a science.

Although there is a coherentism at play, Fichte adheres to a linear approach to epistemic justification that privileges the beginning point. From this initial point, the contradictions that arise are resolved through synthetically developing the point at hand. In this manner, the *Wissenschaftslehre* gets its direction and content. The synthetic development for Fichte is dialectical in contrast to Kant. This is the crucial move that Fichte offers to German idealism. Though the development is synthetic, it begins from an initial point that is significant for epistemic justification. He explains that once we are certain of a first proposition, then a second proposition will follow from this. For, the first proposition, although it is a founding principle, is incomplete. Thus the second proposition is also a founding principle for Fichte. Once we are certain of the second proposition and know its deficiency as well, then the third proposition will follow (*ÜBW* 33). The third proposition is also a founding principle.

The three principles together are without a deficiency. According to Fichte, once we reach the third principle, we can move to the principles of the science. Since they are a complete whole only when presented together, the three principles together form the foundation of the

science. We can, in this manner, build a whole science by basing one proposition on another after the initial founding principles. Fichte calls this “the systematic form of the whole” (*ÜBW* 35, my translation). He stresses the importance of “certainty [*Gewißheit*]” for each of these propositions. In such a system of propositions, he claims that all propositions will have “*the same certainty*”, thus guaranteeing that there will be only one science (*ÜBW* 33, my translation).

The first principle needs to be certain for Fichte. It is the only one that is certain to begin with (*ÜBW* 33-4).⁵⁰ This certainty is necessary for a science as Fichte sees it, for he writes that “the *certain* proposition ... can first obtain its certainty not through the connection [*Verbindung*] with all the rest, but must have it before these; because from a union [*Vereinigung*] of several parts nothing can emerge which is not in one of the parts” (*ÜBW* 34, my translation). However, all the other parts must emerge from this initial principle and its certainty (*ibid.*). In a science, “only one proposition can exist, which is already certain and arranged before the connection [*Verbindung*]” (*ibid.*). Such a proposition, single and existing with certainty before the connection of all other propositions in a science, is called a *principle* [*Grundsatz*], and “each science must have a principle” (*ibid.*). However, a science may not have more than one principle, “because otherwise it would constitute not one but multiple sciences” (*ibid.*).⁵¹

The propositions that make up a science all rest on the certainty of the principle and they are also connected with one another not randomly but based on an end [*Zweck*] (*ÜBW* 35). Echoing Descartes’s metaphor, he writes “Science is a building; the main end [*Hauptzweck*] of it is cohesiveness [*Festigkeit*]” (*ibid.*, my translation). He continues to use this metaphor while

⁵⁰ Later we will see that Hegel will pose the question of how we can be certain of anything to begin with before we have the science (and the criteria it brings) by which we can assert certainty.

⁵¹ He must have changed his mind by the time he was writing the *Wissenschaftslehre*, which has three initial principles.

explaining that for the whole to be cohesive, strong, and fully “merged,” it needs to be based on a strong ground [*Grund*] (ibid.). Furthermore, “the ground is strong, and it is not on new ground, but is grounded [*gegründet*] on the strong ground [*Erboden*]” (ibid.). The ground needs to be certain already before the system; “but from what then does its own certainty follow?” (ibid.).⁵²

He also remarks that one can ask “if the principle is certain, so is also a certain other proposition. Upon what does that ground itself then? ... In short, how is the certainty of the principle itself possible *per se*; how is the authority of a certain kind from it make possible the following, grounding of the certainty of other propositions from it?” (*ÜBW* 36, my translation). Fichte claims that what would answer this question would itself be a science. The *content* of the Science is the principle and the propositions that follow from it, and the *form* of the science is how these propositions unfold (ibid.).

There is much to say about what it means to call “Science” the process through which the preceding questions may be answered. This, as Fichte calls it, would be a science of a science, or a *Wissenschaftslehre* (*ÜBW* 37). This science of knowledge would then have as its goal to explain how we come to have any knowledge, that is, knowledge based on a principle, and which unfolds in the form of propositions that follow from this principle.

Based on this account in the *ÜBW*, the whole system is linear, hence foundational. It is foundational insofar as it depends on an initial principle, and linear insofar as it proceeds in a dialectical synthesis⁵³ through solving inconsistencies (not merely analytically), through

⁵² It is important to note that although here in the *ÜBW* Fichte is using the terms “foundation” and “ground” interchangeably to refer to his initial principle, he has in mind an epistemic foundation. As discussed in Chapter 1, “foundation” and “ground” can both be used to refer to epistemic foundations, but only “ground” is used to refer to a methodological basis. “Foundation” is a stronger term than “ground” in indicating epistemic justification.

⁵³ As mentioned earlier, Fichte’s synthesis is very different from Kant’s insofar as Fichte employs a dialectical form of synthesis.

deduction. Nevertheless, there is an element of circularity at play. In order to explain how a principle is the principle to begin with and how it is possible that propositions follow from it, we need to have another principle and propositions that follow. This is circular because in order to explain the authority of a principle, we return to another principle that is structurally of the same kind. Since the foundational principle of the *Wissenschaftslehre* explains and legislates the authority of all propositions, it will be the ultimate foundation not just of itself, but of all human knowledge. For, if our knowledge has a ground, then all questions may be answered (*ÜBW* 36). If all propositions (hence, all knowledge) follow from a single principle, then they must all have their grounds in that principle and be able to be explained by it.

We can turn to the 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre* itself to find what Fichte identifies as the principle of all knowledge. Fichte claimed that he himself above all others had understood Kant correctly and knew how to explain and improve Kant's philosophy (*SK* 3). Since he begins his work by making such claims in the Introduction about Kant and his own work's relation to Kant, we need to understand his work as an effort to respond to and ground Kant's project.

Fichte claims that critical idealism "may deduce the system of the necessary modes of operation, and with it concurrently the objective presentations created thereby, from the fundamental laws of intellect, and so allow the whole compass of our presentations to come gradually into being before the eyes of its readers or listeners" (*SK* 22). He emphasizes that "the object itself arises" before our eyes in such a way that we ought to form our laws of thought in accordance with it, and not before it (*SK* 23). Such statements about how critical idealism should proceed capture Fichte's notion of dialectical thinking, which we see in his three principles. The three principles arise and develop gradually before our eyes through what Fichte calls "synthesis" (*ibid.*).

Fichte's notion of synthesis follows Kant's, meaning the bringing together of two or more things through an act of reason. He defines synthesis as an act of unification by the imagination (SK 23). He writes that "the thing comes into being surely through an action in accord with these laws [laws of reason], that it is nothing else but the *totality of these relations unified by the imagination*, and that all these relations together constitute the thing; the object is surely the original synthesis of all these concepts" (ibid.). He contrasts the philosopher's synthesis to a chemist's:

The chemist synthesizes a body, say a certain metal, from its elements. The ordinary man sees the metal familiar to him; the chemist, the union of these specific elements. ... They see the same thing, though in different ways. What the chemist sees is the a priori, for he sees the individual elements: what the common man sees is the a posteriori, for he sees the whole. –But there is this difference here: the chemist must first analyze the whole before he can compound it, since he is dealing with an object whose rule of composition he cannot know prior to the analysis; but the philosopher can synthesize without prior analysis, because he already knows the rule that governs his object, reason. (SK 28)

Based on this comparison, we can deduce that synthesis for Fichte is the way in which knowledge about reality is built. He states that the philosopher already knows reason, which is the rule that governs the object of the philosopher's enquiry. Using reason, the philosopher synthesizes different elements of what makes up the object. Unlike the chemist, the philosopher does not need to first know the whole and to analyze it into its parts before she can do synthesis.

Synthesis is the core of Fichte's dialectical method. Fichte writes the following about how idealism proceeds:

It shows that what is first set up as fundamental principle and directly demonstrated in consciousness, is impossible unless something else occurs along with it, and that this something else is impossible unless a third something also takes place, and so on until the conditions of what was first exhibited are completely exhausted, and this latter is, with respect to its possibility, fully intelligible. Its course is an unbroken progression from conditioned to condition; each condition becomes, in turn, a conditioned whose condition must be sought out. (SK 25, Fichte's emphasis)

The fundamental principle depends on something else that occurs alongside it – we determine this other thing through synthesis. But we find that this second thing is also dependent on something else, which we also determine through synthesis. We continue in this manner until we come to a point where we no longer need a further condition and synthesis. Thus, the original synthesis turns into something other than what it originally was: the simple act of synthesis turns into a dialectical progression.

This movement through the act of synthesis is dialectical because, as Fichte puts it, “each condition becomes, in turn, a conditioned” (ibid.) and propels a movement through synthesis. As Fichte’s initial three principles show (as I discuss below), a principle, though seeming at first to be only a condition, turns out to be conditioned through the introduction of another principle that exists alongside it, and this second principle becomes the condition. This same pattern takes place with the second and third principles when the third principle is posited.

N.G. Limnatis writes that “Fichte’s anticipation of Hegel is at times astonishing” (Limnatis 106). Fichte, in the quote above, presents a proto-Hegelian notion of circularity.

Fichte’s three principles form a circle. Fichte himself also claims this to be so:

The laws (of common logic) whereby one must straightway think this Act as the foundation for human knowledge, or—what amounts to the same thing—the rules whereby this reflection is initiated, have not yet been proved to be valid, but are tacitly assumed to be familiar and established. Only at a later point will they be derived from that proposition whose assertion is warranted only if they are warranted also. This is a *circle*, though an unavoidable one. But since it is unavoidable, and openly acknowledged, we may appeal to all the laws of common logic even in establishing the highest fundamental principle. (SK 93-4, my emphasis)

Accordingly, we begin with the first principle, which “must” be “some proposition that everyone will grant us without dispute” (SK 94). The three principles all together justify one another, and

furthermore they are the ground of Fichte's system. Hegel goes further to make the whole system circular, and not just its beginning ground.

Fichte went further than Kant by using a dialectical form of thinking. Limnatis writes that “[p]ressing forward a dialectic that is more substantial and far more reaching than Kant’s, Fichte essentially ‘discovered the method of speculative thinking, which ten years later received the name ‘dialectical method’” (Limnatis 106-7).⁵⁴ Limnatis also mentions Hegel’s notion of circularity but does not go further in explaining it: “Fichte’s dialectic may be seen as the ‘limitative dialectic’ of the human subject (as opposed to the speculative Hegelian dialectic, which is based on a circularly presupposed actual infinity)” (Limnatis 107). Regardless, he is correct in stating that Fichte advanced “the Kantian dialectic in a decisively new way” and that he “both anticipated and stimulated the development of German idealism toward Hegel” (ibid.).

Fichte presents three principles at the beginning of this lecture series. In order to describe Fichte role in the early reception of Kant, I begin with a short summary of the three principles and then present them in detail. The first principle⁵⁵ is that the I *posits* itself. This positing is an *act* and it presents identity: I=I.⁵⁶ Given I=I, another self-evident proposition is that I does not equal not-I. This is the second principle, and is the principle of difference. Once one acknowledges identity as a principle, one has to also recognize difference.⁵⁷ Fichte, after

⁵⁴ Here Limnatis is quoting T.M. Seebohm from page 17 of “Fichte’s Discovery of Dialectical Method” in *Fichte, Historical Concepts/Contemporary Controversies*.

⁵⁵ Schelling’s unconditional beginning, which I discuss below, is modeled after this. However, although Schelling remains at the I=I as a ground upon which to develop all categories, Fichte does not. Fichte’s three principles all together end up being a ground.

⁵⁶ This seems to contradict what Fichte says in the *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre* about the requirement that a system of knowledge have one and no more than one principle. However, Fichte presents all three principles as just that, as *Grundsätze*. They are together meant to form a foundation and rely on one another for their validity and justification. We may then assume that Fichte changed his mind about the detail that a system may not have more than one principle by the time he started forming his own system. Such a change of mind is not surprising since he kept revising his work over the years too, suggesting the continual evolution of his views on his system.

⁵⁷ Schelling makes note of this too but remains at the self-positing absolute I as the foundation.

presenting difference as the second principle, goes on to show that there is a third principle. This is the connection between identity and difference, that is, what makes both identity and difference possible and rely on one another. We reach this third principle only after seeing the first and the second, because the third principle is simply the relation between the two. Thus, although we do not get to the third principle until we go through the arduous descriptions of the first two, the third principle becomes the ground for the other two. These other two principles rely on the third principle. And the three principles are to be the principles of the metaphysics that he is about to build in his *Science of Knowledge*.

Fichte's three principles can be read as belonging to the overall attempt to grapple with the Kantian problem of things in themselves, and by virtue of the ongoing conversation among Kant's commentators, a foundationalist approach to cognition. In Fichte's three principles, the cognizing subject finds within itself what is other to it, of what it has cognition, to wit, either itself or what is not itself. Fichte himself writes that "[his] system frees [man] from the fetters of things in themselves, which is to say, from those external influences with which all previous systems—including the Kantian—have more or less fettered man" (draft of a letter from Fichte to Jens Baggessen, April/May 1795). Thus, in the following more detailed explanation of the three principles, it is important to consider this goal. From his statement, we can infer that Fichte's aim is to give an account of cognition that does not encounter what many in his time saw to be a deep problem in Kant's account.

Fichte, by locating otherness (or the so-called not-self) within identity (or self) eliminates any form of otherness located outside the subject: he transforms otherness into an integral part of identity. The import is twofold: difference is "sourced" from within identity (the self generates its other, not-self, within itself, and the self is also other to itself) and there is nothing other than

the self and its other (that is generated by virtue of the self-identity of the self, and that in turn is responsible for the existence of the self as its other); nothing other than the subject and the difference it encounters. The self generates what it encounters insofar as its existence through positing generates the otherness as posited against it. This is the core of Fichte's dialectical thought.

The first principle is "the first[,] primordial, absolutely unconditioned first principle of all human knowledge" (SK 93). It is an "Act" that asserts a self-relation, the fundamental self-identity of everything and "the basis of all consciousness" (ibid.). It begins with "A = A" which is "A is A" (SK 94). Through the realization of the "connection" of A to itself, which Fichte calls "X" (SK 95), the self that does this positing of A as connected to itself is asserted in the form of "I" (SK 96). Fichte then reasons that "X that is absolutely posited can also be expressed as I = I; I am I" (ibid.). Furthermore, "the *self posits itself* and by virtue of this mere self-assertion it *exists*" and vice versa (SK 97) and "[t]he *self exists for the self*" (SK 99).

The second principle shows difference, and can be seen as the opposite of the first principle, which shows identity (SK 103). Difference is entailed by identity; the second principle follows from, and, in a way, explains the first principle. The second principle is "~A is not equal to A" (SK 102). Opposition, or difference "in general is posited absolutely by the self" (SK 103). Thus, the self asserts what is distinct from it, as precisely not being *it*. Hence, in Fichte's words, "[i]f any ~A is to be posited, an A must be posited" (ibid.).

The third principle brings the first two principles together dialectically (SK 106). Although when the "not-self is posited, the self is not posited" because they negate one another, nevertheless "the not-self is posited in the *self*; for it is counterposited" (ibid.). And "insofar as

the not-self is to be posited in this consciousness, the self must also be posited therein” (ibid.). This synthesis of the two principles is dialectical because we see the negation within the positive, and vice versa. Thus, we retain an opposition within the self: “the identity of consciousness, the sole absolute foundation of our knowledge is itself eliminated” (SK 107). With the unification of opposites in consciousness, X is also in consciousness. X is necessary in counterpositing, and thus “itself must be a product ... of an original act of the self” which is the “Y,” “an act of the human mind”. By this, “the opposed self and not-self are unified...in one consciousness” (ibid.). We can think of A and \sim A as existing together in a single whole without “mutual elimination and destruction” by recognizing that they act as “limits” for one another: in this mutual limiting, “the act Y will be a *limiting* of each opposite by the other; and X will denote the *limits*” (SK 108). By virtue of Y, “*both the self and the not-self are absolutely posited as divisible*” (ibid.). Hence, Fichte asserts that difference is implicit in identity: “The self is to be equated with, and yet opposed to, itself” and thus “all these oppositions are united” (SK 109). This principle is expressed in summary in the statement, “[i]n the self I oppose a divisible not-self to the divisible self” (SK 110).

The act Y is thus crucial for Fichte’s insight of dialectical thinking insofar as difference is found in identity through this dividing and limiting act. In this act, the structure of judgment formation is altered from a synthesis to a copula “is” with a dialectical character: the copula moves through its own difference by finding difference within its own positing of identity. Fichte thus formulates a subjective idealism since the act Y is found in the self as an act of the self, which brings the three principles together as the ground of science: an act in the self grounds reality and knowledge. Thus, Fichte, in attempting to avoid the Kantian problem of the thing-in-

itself formulates a theory that is based in the subject. Hegel's circular epistemology remedies this full dependence on subjectivity, as I discuss in Chapter 4.

Fichte thinks that through these three principles he has "discovered the way in which philosophy must raise itself to the level of a manifest science" (SK 89). Fichte also holds that once he lays out the three principles, we will arrive at "the area in which everything can be proved" (SK 105). This shows that he takes the three principles to be basic structures upon which everything else may be explained, though as in the case of Schelling (as I present in what follows) and unlike in the cases of Reinhold and Schelling, not epistemologically foundational in the Cartesian sense.⁵⁸

5. Schelling

Schelling provides two different approaches to finding a form of justification for a system, mostly with attention to beginning points as grounds. In his earlier work, he presents "the unconditional I" as the beginning of all philosophy. In what could be considered his masterpiece and part of his more mature work, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, however, he also takes into consideration nature as a possible ground along with the self. In this section on Schelling, I will discuss these two views.

Schelling, in his earliest major work titled *Of the I as Principle of Philosophy*, published a year after Fichte's first *Wissenschaftslehre* lectures, seeks to find what he calls 'the unconditional' in human knowledge or cognition. His conclusions are very similar to Fichte's (he was young, and at the time still a fan of Fichte's work) though he does not go as far as Fichte

⁵⁸ Commentators remark on the basic nature of the three principles. Günter Zöller, for instance, claims that the three principles underlie and are responsible for "the basic structures of all knowledge and mental life" (Zöller 44).

does. His reason for seeking the unconditional in human knowledge is that he thinks it has not yet been established. He is an avid reader of Kant and aims often, just as in this work, to address the current discussions surrounding Kant's work. He thinks (similarly to Reinhold and Fichte) that what Kant's philosophy offers us is significant, but does not reach the level of what he calls the unconditioned. For everything in Kant's system, even aspects that Schelling would say Kant would take to be most basic, are conditioned, and do not meet Schelling's standard for unconditionality.

As I discussed earlier, according to Kant, space and time are the forms of intuition and the conditions for experience. Schelling writes, however, that "space and time, which are supposed to be only forms of intuition, cannot possibly precede all synthesis and therefore must themselves depend on a higher form of synthesis" (Schelling 65). Schelling continues to say something similar about Kant's "categories" which are "the pure concepts of the understanding", which structure our understanding and on which our cognition depends just like it depends on space and time. Schelling then writes "Kant's deductions tell us at first glance that they presuppose superior principles" (Schelling 65).

Schelling's idea is that "[t]here must be something in which and through which everything that is reaches existence, everything that is being thought reaches reality, and thought itself reaches the form of unity and immutability. ... as an original ground (*Urgrund*) of all reality" (Schelling 71). So, Schelling is looking for a ground, not an epistemic foundation.⁵⁹

In Schelling's view, Kant's system presupposed a foundation which it did not deliver, and hence is incomplete. Schelling sees this foundation in Kant's system as cognition, but

⁵⁹ This ground will give reality to everything else; however, it is not necessary for all epistemological justification.

cognition is conditioned insofar as it depends on things-in-themselves. Not only is cognition conditioned by things-in-themselves, but it has further conditions such as the a priori structures of time, space, and the pure concepts of the understanding.

According to Schelling, Kant's system presupposes objects beyond the reach of cognition, or "in themselves". However, cognition does not have access to things as they are in themselves, but only to their appearances, that is, to the objects of cognition. Things-in-themselves, as "limit" concepts, can be thought but cannot be cognized. Schelling sees this as a weakness in Kant's system and argues that there needs to be something unconditioned that grounds philosophy.⁶⁰ Kant's account of cognition, since it requires things-in-themselves, does not meet this standard. Furthermore, cognition has conditions within it as well which are the a priori structures of time, space, and the pure concepts of the understanding.

Schelling is making a distinction with regard to foundations in Kant's work. This distinction is between cognitions themselves (that is, the appearances or the objects of consciousness) and the operation of cognition. Thus, when Schelling criticizes Kant's view of cognition to depend on other things that condition it, he has in mind the appearances of cognition being conditioned by the *a priori* structures that make cognition possible. Schelling is looking for a foundation that will encompass both the conditions of its own existence and itself: "the principle of its being and the principle of its being known must coincide, must be one, since it can be thought only because it itself is, not because there is something else" (Schelling 72).

⁶⁰ For Schelling, the foundation that is required for a system of philosophy needs to not depend on anything other than itself, for then it would be conditioned: "If there is any genuine knowledge at all, there must be knowledge which I do not reach by way of some other knowledge but through which alone all other knowledge is knowledge" (Schelling 71). This will be "the real ground of all our knowledge" (ibid.). Schelling writes "[e]ither our knowledge has no reality at all and must be an eternal round of propositions, each dissolving in its opposite, a chaos in which no element can crystallize – or there must be an ultimate point of reality on which everything depends, from which all firmness and all form of our knowledge springs" (ibid.).

Schelling's concern is what philosophy requires as a science. According to him, philosophy "must at least *assume* an ultimate principle and, with it, something unconditional" (Schelling 73). He states that all things are objects of knowing at the same time (*ibid.*). However, all objects must have a cause, for "no object ever realizes itself" (*ibid.*). Thus, we must go beyond the concept of object to find its existence. Objects are always determined by something else, that is, they are conditioned by something else, so they do not carry their own necessity within themselves (*ibid.*). Thus, we need a subject, which the object presupposes. Subjects and objects can be determinable only in relation to one another (*ibid.*). Since they are "conditioned reciprocally" in this sense, neither of them can contain the unconditional (Schelling 74).

Schelling reasons that we need "to find something that cannot be thought of a thing at all" to avoid it being a subject or an object (Schelling 74). For, the unconditional cannot be in a thing, because a thing is always an object or has the possibility of being a subject (*ibid.*). Schelling's conclusion from this is that "[i]t can lie only in that which cannot become a thing at all; that is, if there is an absolute *I*, it can lie only in the *absolute I*" (Schelling 74-5).

Earlier he had stated that one cannot turn a subject or an object into an unconditional (Schelling 74), so this resort to the "absolute I" is a break from subjects and objects. The absolute I is "that which can never become an object at all", for "the absolute can only be given by the absolute" (Schelling 75). It must be self-realizing if it is to be unconditional, not determined by anything else (*ibid.*). The object and the subject are both inadequate because they are conceivable only in relation to an object. Thus they both need something unconditional, something absolute that guarantees their existence by an "absolute contrast" (Schelling 76). Schelling states that whatever is in a chain of conditioned things "can be conceived only by presupposing the absolute condition" (Schelling 77).

This unconditioned beginning point, the “absolute I”, the ground of all knowledge, must be “I” because the self (i.e. I) is the only thing that can posit itself since it is self-identical. The I thinks itself as “I am” and “I am, because I am” (Schelling 75). “Thus the I is determined as unconditional only through itself” (Schelling 76). Since the I is identical with I, since I=I, the I is the first unconditional beginning to all knowledge and philosophy. In this sense, there has to be an “absolute I” which is self-positing. The “absolute I” is not just any I which can be contrasted to a not-I which are mutually conditioning (Schelling 77-79).

Schelling’s adherence to a single point that grounds his system is a step backward towards dogmatism after Fichte’s advances in establishing a dialectical foundation. Fichte’s three principles exhibit a dialectical unfolding and relation. Through his postulation of the three principles, it becomes clear that we cannot have one of these principles without the other two, and this necessity of the dependence of the three principles on one another emerges only through their dialectical development in relation to one another. Schelling, who remains at the level of the “absolute I” as self-identical, ignores Fichte’s turn away from dogmatism.

Fichte couched his principles in the framework of subjectivity. In moving beyond the objective and the subjective Schelling goes beyond Fichte’s model in attempting to reject both. He is nevertheless not able to go as far as Fichte in terms of the development in the trajectory regarding foundations and grounds. Fichte introduced dialectical thinking and an element of circularity into his philosophy. Schelling, who does not pick up on these, rather focuses on the interplay between and the limitations of subjectivity and objectivity.

The Kantian “*thing-in-itself*” is the not-I posited as antecedent to any I” (Schelling 79). We need to transcend any not-I to reach an “absolute I”. Schelling goes on to derive the

categories that Kant had listed in his Table of Categories from the absolute I,⁶¹ making the absolute I the condition for all cognition; it precedes all cognition and is the unconditioned condition for all cognition. In this manner, Schelling finds an initial principle for philosophy as a science, and he also finds a ground for the Kantian philosophy that Kant himself failed to discover. The absolute I is distinguished from the thing-in-itself, the categories and other conditions for experience, the absolute I stands as both separate as well as the guarantor of these conditions.

In Schelling's early view the initial point plays a role in the structuring of the system but does not justify other parts of the system. Reinhold calls for an epistemic foundation. Unlike Reinhold, Schelling refers to and relies on the initial point throughout. But he does not bestow upon it the function of justifying the rest of the system. The absolute I is not the epistemic justification for the rest of the system.

In his later work, we still see this kind of utilization of an initial point. In fact, despite the significance of initial points and beginnings for his system, perhaps his later philosophy is better for showing why he is not an epistemic foundationalist like Reinhold. For, in his later work, Schelling accords importance to *Naturphilosophie* as much as he does to transcendental philosophy. Both nature and transcendental ideas are important for explaining reality, hence for metaphysics. Furthermore, in his later philosophy, Schelling is of the view that we cannot get a complete picture of reality and have a satisfactory metaphysics without both philosophies. But having said this, it is also the case that *Naturphilosophie* and transcendental philosophy are both explanations for the same thing, but seen from different positions: in both endeavors we are

⁶¹ I will not discuss here the details of how Schelling derives the categories and some of the problems he faces and solves since this chapter is concerned with analyzing the various foundations and grounds some of Kant's immediate commentators formulated and not their theories that followed these foundations.

explaining *what is*. This is similar to Spinoza's understanding of the attributes of extension and of thought. Both refer to the same one thing, or substance, but in two distinct attributes.

Schelling begins the *System of Transcendental Idealism* with this statement: "All knowledge is *founded* upon the coincidence of an objective with a subjective" (*SoTI* 5, my emphasis). He then explains the "objective" as corresponding to "nature", and the "subjective" as meaning "the self, or the intelligence", and that "the two concepts are mutually opposed" (*ibid.*). When we put the two statements together, we find that according to Schelling in this work, all knowledge is founded on the coincidence of nature with the self. What does this mean? For him, nature means "what can be represented", intelligence means "the purely representative" (*ibid.*). Though this required coincidence of nature and intelligence bears a resemblance to dialectical thinking, it nevertheless is not dialectical because there is no movement to a third element (the first two are nature and intelligence, or objectivity and subjectivity) which then generates further movement.

Schelling writes that in knowledge the two "are so united that one cannot say which of the two has priority" (*SoTI* 5). Hence, they are both equally important for a foundation. Furthermore, they are exclusive of and not contained in one another. He claims that the subjective and the objective exclude one another. According to Schelling, "the subjective must therefore *be annexed* to the objective" since the concept of nature can exist without an intelligence, and does not need an intelligence to be aware of it (*ibid.*). Schelling seems to assume here that intelligence requires the existence of nature.⁶² This addition of intelligence to nature is a problem for Schelling. Since it seems as if nature can exist without intelligence, i.e.

⁶² He does not explicitly write this.

“even if there were nothing that was aware of it” (ibid.). The problem can be formulated in the form of the question “how does intelligence come to be added to nature, or how does nature come to be presented?” (ibid.). This “problem assumes nature or the *objective* to be *primary*” and that we must begin with the objective (ibid.).

Schelling resolves this problem from within the perspective of natural science itself, which is plagued with this theme. He writes that the more advanced natural science gets, the more towards the mental it moves (*SoTI* 6). Moreover, this is not only the case with the science of nature but also with nature itself. Schelling claims that

nature’s highest goal, to become wholly an object to herself, is achieved only through the last and highest order of reflection, which is none other than man; or more generally, it is what we call reason, whereby nature first completely returns into herself, and by which it becomes apparent that nature is identical from the first with what we recognize in ourselves as the intelligent and the conscious (ibid.).

This excerpt shows that nature transitions into intelligence at its highest form, and we know from the earlier claims that knowledge requires the correspondence of nature with intelligence. Yet, given this transition, how can we make sense of the two corresponding to one another? What does such correspondence even mean?⁶³ For Schelling, it is the foundation of all knowledge, and hence it is a beginning point.⁶⁴

Schelling also considers the other option of beginning with intelligence instead of with nature (*SoTI* 6). But, then we have the problem of “how an objective supervenes, which coincides with it” (ibid.). He then writes, in line with my question about the possibility and meaning of the correspondence above, that “if all knowledge rests upon the coincidence of these

⁶³ This is a similar stance to Hegel’s notion of “absolute knowing” which will be discussed in detail in the following chapters of this dissertation.

⁶⁴ If so, then the last point of nature is the beginning point of philosophy. But in this case, have we not already began doing philosophy before we declared its beginning point? So do we return to the beginning at the end somehow?

two, then the problem of explaining this coincidence is undoubtedly the supreme problem of all knowledge” (*SoTI* 6-7). Thus the problem regarding knowledge should not be whether nature or intelligence comes first, but rather how they coincide; this is the main question that needs to be answered for a foundation, and not whether one of these is more foundational than the other. Furthermore, “since the two opposites are mutually necessary to each other, the result of the operation is bound to be the same, whichever point we set out from” (*SoTI* 7).

Hence, we see that in later Schelling, the ground for philosophy has changed from the absolute unconditioned I to a correspondence between intelligence and nature. This has to do with the introduction of nature as a significant theme in Schelling’s philosophy as his thought matures, and demonstrates his adherence to an idealism that brings into the picture the place of nature in the system of philosophy: nature for Schelling is at the ground and throughout. In later Schelling too, we see that the beginning is not an epistemic foundation. The correspondence between nature and intelligence does not epistemologically justify all the other knowledge we have, yet all knowledge we have begins from this correspondence.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has described aspects of the turn of selected classical German thinkers to views of grounds and foundations in the early Kant reception. For Kant, the epistemic foundation is cognition. Reinhold, Schulze, Fichte, and Schelling all seek to improve the Kantian system by founding or grounding it on certain principles in a series of different readings of the ideas of foundation and grounds.

For Reinhold, the foundation is Cartesian in its epistemic import. The foundation is the epistemic justification for the rest of the system. Schulze does not give a suggestion for a foundation. Yet his critical remarks about Kant and Reinhold indicate that any foundation must be a variation on the Cartesian theme.

Fichte calls for an epistemic foundation, a single principle for a system, in his *ÜBW*, a kind of *Wissenschaftslehre* preceding his composition of that text.⁶⁵ All the propositions in Fichte's system can be explained through the foundation from which they follow. However, by the time he writes his 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre* several months later, he is no longer as committed to the initial principle as an epistemic foundation, nor still wedded to the idea that there needs to be only one principle. Here he forms three interdependent principles for his philosophy, which are not foundations but principles or grounds [*Grundsätze*]. Fichte also incorporates dialectical thought and a circular element to his three principles, and thereby foreshadows Hegel's circular epistemology.

Schelling does not build upon the developments Fichte makes in the trajectory regarding the interest in foundations and grounds. Schelling's thought is not dialectical in the way Fichte's is. Schelling also does not develop Fichte's notion of a circular ground. He finally does not go beyond Reinhold and Schulze's calls for an epistemic foundation since his beginning point is a methodological basis at best, i.e. a ground. For the early Schelling, the ground is simply a beginning point that is important for the initial development of the system but does not have the

⁶⁵ Though Fichte's three principles have an epistemic character insofar as they are the grounds to the science of knowledge, they are also deeply ontological. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, the distinction between epistemology and ontology becomes blurry after Kant's Copernican revolution since ontology and its objects become the topic of how we come to cognize them to begin with.

epistemic significance that a Cartesian foundation does. Later Schelling gives attention to nature together with the self as the grounding principles of philosophy and knowledge.

Despite these differences in the various views of foundations and beginning points, the concerns of the early post-Kantians are often very similar. Each of the post-Kantians who reacts to Kant desires a complete system improves on the Kantian revolution, in other words a completion of the significant Kantian project through the establishment of a foundation by which the whole project will be reframed and a complete system will emerge. In this sense, they are all committed to complete systems and systematicity in their explanations.

For each of them the beginning point is of higher significance than the rest of the system. It often stands outside the system insofar as it constitutes a foundation or ground; and the rest of the system, as distinct from the foundation or ground, is built upon it. This points towards a linear understanding of systems of knowledge where the whole depends in different ways on the beginning point.

In the following chapters, I present Hegel's alternative to the construction of such systems. Opposing a foundational linear understanding, Hegel formulates a circular system, and proposes a strong and interesting alternative. In this sense, Hegel does not only solve the issue with which all of the German idealists are concerned in forming their systems and improving Kant's philosophy. He also presents his own revolution (which I argue is just as important as Kant's Copernican revolution) for the way in which we understand knowledge, cognition, systematicity, and the formulation of acceptable philosophy theories in general.

Chapter III

The Role of Knowledge and Epistemology in Hegel's Philosophy

Hegel's view of knowledge as inherently circular has profound implications for his overall project. To explain the use of the notion of circularity as an epistemological strategy requires showing that his overall philosophical project is chiefly concerned with epistemology. In Hegel scholarship, commentators often remark on the epistemological nature of his works, but take for granted⁶⁶ *how* he presents an epistemology or a position with obvious epistemic features. After all, there is no specific section of any of his works dedicated solely to a theory of knowledge, or an epistemology, with a title that overtly proclaims it as such. Nevertheless, the Introduction to the *PhG* is strongly focused on epistemic concepts following from the direct analysis and rejection of a Kantian approach to knowledge that is in full swing as early as the initial paragraph. As I argue, we find an epistemology diffused throughout his works.

In Chapter 2, I explored the preoccupation of Hegel's contemporaries, following Kant, with Kant's central view on the notion of a priori cognition and their ensuing discussion regarding the goal of finding a foundation or a ground for the entire system of philosophy. Such an occupation with foundations for knowledge and cognition is an epistemological effort. In this chapter I argue that Hegel's works are inherently epistemological. Thereby I situate Hegel within the discussion of his contemporaries presented in Chapter 2. To that end, in this chapter I explore what "cognition" [*Erkenntnis*] and "knowledge" [*Wissen*] mean for Hegel, their role in his

⁶⁶ For instance, scholars such as Pinkard, Ameriks, Westphal, and Solomon, to name a few, all recognize the epistemological nature of some of Hegel's works, though they do not give arguments for why these works can be regarded as epistemological and in what precise ways.

philosophy as well as its role in his engagement with other philosophers' works. I argue that cognition is a central concern of Hegel's, and this will make way for my claim in Chapter 4 that he advances a circular theory of epistemology.

In this chapter, I begin by exploring the meaning and history of the term 'epistemology'. Then I consider Hegel's models for epistemology: Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. This leads me to my account of Hegel's epistemology: it is a non-standard epistemology that is explored mainly in his *PhG* and *WL*. To conclude, I discuss the relation of Hegel's notion of non-standard epistemology to his idealism.

1. The Meaning of Epistemology

'Epistemology' comes from the words 'episteme' and 'logos': an epistemology is a 'logos' of 'episteme', that is, an explanation or account of knowledge. A theory of knowledge is also an account of the nature of knowledge. Thus, I will be using 'epistemology' and 'theory of knowledge' interchangeably. Hegel uses "*Erkenntnis*" and various related verbs such as *erkennen*, *kennen*, *anerkennen*, and so on. They refer to philosophical explanations of knowledge. Thus, an epistemology (or theory of knowledge) is a philosophical presentation of the nature of knowledge, and how we are to make sense of ways in which we have (or fail to have) knowledge. However, this is not how the term 'epistemology' has always been understood and neither has it always figured into philosophical discussions in the way it regularly does today.

Klaus Christian Köhnke (an established Cultural Studies and Philosophy of Culture scholar focusing on the post-Kantian era), in his article "Über den Ursprung des Wortes Erkenntnistheorie – und Desen [sic] Vermeintliche Synonyme" in the *Archiv für*

Begriffsgeschichte, traces our current use of the terms “epistemology” and “theory of knowledge” (in the form of their German equivalents “*Erkenntnislehre*” and “*Erkenntnistheorie*”) back to the reception of Hegelian philosophy in the 1830s. Köhnke remarks that even though the Latin term *gnoseologia*⁶⁷ had been used for a long time (Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten also used it), neither it (Köhnke 196) nor the uses of “*Erkenntnislehre*” and “*Erkenntnistheorie*” in the pre-critical philosophy had the same meaning as the current term “epistemology”.

Furthermore, even during the very early years of the 19th century, in the uses of these terms, for instance, by Wilhelm Traugott Krug they referred to another concept (Köhnke 196, 197). According to Köhnke, Krug’s term “*Erkenntnislehre*” could not have the same meaning as our use of the term has today because it is not concerned with the method of cognition, is not a “*Grundlegungsdisziplin*”, does not have a critical character, does not concern itself with determining the boundaries of metaphysics but wants to be metaphysics itself, and cannot fulfill a propaedeutic function (Köhnke 196). Aside from Krug’s use of the term, there was also the tendency to use “*Erkenntnistheorie*” as a shorthand or abbreviation for all that fell under the explanation of Locke’s notion of “Idea”, and these had to do with belief, meaning, and knowing (Köhnke 200). We can add Descartes’s notion of “idea” too⁶⁸ (though Köhnke does not mention him here). Hence, instead of presenting a systematic discipline that concerned itself with the critical project of explaining human cognition, these earlier uses of the terms referred to something other than ours today.

⁶⁷ Köhnke does not mention this but the term “*gnoseologia*”, as well as “*epistemologia*”, are originally Greek words that have been taken into Latin.

⁶⁸ Descartes clarifies his notion of “idea” in his *Meditations*, and also discusses the “reality” included in ideas through his notion of “objective reality” (Descartes 40-3). However, these are still limited and do not fully take on the explanation of human cognition as a whole.

Likewise, Baumgarten's view which was Kant's standard, as Hegel well knew, was not in itself an epistemology in our sense today either. The work of his on which Kant wrote extensive notes was his *Metaphysics* (1739), which did not specifically concern itself with cognition or knowledge. The term *cognitio* is not mentioned in the book in the way in which Kant uses the term (otherwise, it appears only once), yet Kant's comments in the margins of his own copy take up Baumgarten's ideas in relation to cognition and the ideas he develops in his critical philosophy. Baumgarten was concerned with following Wolff's logic while reformulating aspects of it.

Only as a reflection on Hegel and his work on Kant alongside Fichte, Schelling, and Reinhold, were the terms "*Erkenntnislehre*" and "*Erkenntnistheorie*" first used to refer to what we understand by 'epistemology' today. Köhnke writes that the second volume of Ernst Reinhold's (Karl Leonhard Reinhold's son) *Handbuch der allgemeinen Geschichte der Philosophie für alle wissenschaftlich Gebildete* (1829) is the first place where the systematic and historical meanings of the concept were brought together, and thus this is the first document where this concept is first used in its history (Köhnke 204). Thus 1829 is the year the term is first used with the meaning we attribute to it today. The meaning we attribute to epistemology today, I would argue, is the science and study of knowledge/cognition and what it means to know.⁶⁹

What is more curious than the concept's coming about right around the time of Hegel's death, however, is how quickly commentators on his philosophy used epistemology with regard to that philosophy. Köhnke writes that "[v]ier Monate nach dem Tode Hegels tritt der Begriff Erkenntnistheorie im Zusammenhang der Hegel-Kritik bei Immanuel Hermann Fichte und

⁶⁹ Though the parameters and scope of this science and what count as 'knowledge' changes based on whom you ask. A discussion of contemporary epistemology is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Christian Hermann Weisse erstmals auf; im selben Jahre 1832 wird er bei Ernst Reinhold bereits mit großer Selbstverständlichkeit und Geläufigkeit verwendet” (Köhnke 190). Thus it was clear in the immediate reception of Hegel’s philosophy, very shortly after his death, that he presented an epistemology in the way in which we understand it today.

When thinking about a philosopher’s ‘epistemology’, or ‘theory of knowledge’, we are traditionally used to reading a work or a part of a work that is dedicated to expounding the philosopher’s views on the topic, that is mostly, if not solely, focused on the account of knowledge. Furthermore, we are also used to seeing titles of works or sections of works that indicate that such an account will be the topic. Nevertheless, there is no single universally accepted account of what an epistemology ought to be, other than a *logos of episteme*, an account of knowledge. It is also no surprise that when one mentions ‘Hegel’s epistemology’, or makes claims regarding it, there may be confusion about what exactly is being referred to. After all, Hegel does not have any works or sections of works dedicated solely to epistemology; he never stops and declares that now, at this point, he will give an account of knowledge (except his remarks in the Introduction to the *PhG* which I discuss below). And perhaps this is the reason why not many scholars think to do their research on Hegel’s epistemology – it is not presented in a traditionally expected and neatly packaged form.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, as I show, it is very much central to his work.

⁷⁰ Hegel treats epistemological topics such as sensibility, imagination, perception, and reason in various different ways, and there are scholars who explore these theories. However, these investigations are often not thought of as epistemological *per se*. For instance, though in the Introduction of *Hegel’s Theory of Imagination* Jennifer Bates expresses that the notion of imagination falls within the domain of epistemology (and metaphysics) when considered in the context of philosophy (Bates xxiii-xxiv), she does not treat her work as an epistemological account of imagination in Hegel overall. In *Hegel’s Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* Terry Pinkard writes “Understanding the general goal of the *Phenomenology* therefore requires us to see how Hegel takes the theory of knowledge to be connected with all these other issues” such as “the formation of character in early modern Europe, Kantian ethics, and the history and philosophy of religion” (Pinkard 4). Pinkard makes the claim, and I agree with him, that the *PhG* “is concerned with the theory of knowledge” (Pinkard 3). However, Pinkard limits his exploration

2. Hegel's Models for Epistemology

There is no canonical view of epistemology itself; the term has meant different things to different philosophers. The history of the use of the term discussed above also confirms this. Hegel models his view of epistemology after Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. I will give quick overviews of their respective approaches to cognition and knowledge as they form the trajectory to the development of Hegel's view, and then discuss Hegel's non-traditional epistemology.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I discussed the need for a search for truth prompted by Kant's Copernican revolution. In the second chapter, I discussed the occupation with foundations that various German Idealists had, which included Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. Now, in returning to these thinkers, I consider their theories in a different light: insofar as they present a model for Hegel's circular epistemology.

Rockmore argues the same point in *German Idealism as Constructivism*, showing ways Hegel's epistemology is profoundly influenced by Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. But he furthermore argues that the thread that connects this influence most strongly is Kant's constructivism. By constructivism, he means a specific cognitive approach, one in which the subject constructs knowledge: it is "the view that we can claim to know only what we in some sense construct" (Rockmore 7, 12). For Rockmore, "understood broadly, [cognitive constructivism] includes various aspects of German idealist epistemology. From a narrower perspective, it refers to a specific strategy for cognition running throughout German idealism" (Rockmore 1).

of Hegel's epistemology to a single chapter in which he limits himself to an analysis of the first three chapters of the *PhG* in relation to "the claims to self-sufficient knowledge" (Pinkard 20).

Rockmore presents constructivism as the cognitive strategy in which one cognizes what one in some sense constructs. However, he leaves open how exactly this “construction” happens – and rightly so, because it is different for each philosopher he discusses. In fact, Kant presents his form of what Rockmore calls “constructivism” as he moves away from his previous position of representationalism with his Copernican revolution (which I explain below), and Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel each formulate a cognitive strategy of his own in order to develop and build on the Copernican revolution started. Rockmore considers each of these strategies to be a form of “constructivism” insofar as each purports that we know only what we in some sense construct.⁷¹ Thus, the connecting thread of development among these philosophers is not only their concern with providing an answer to the skeptic worry that arises through Kant’s Copernican revolution (as I discussed in Chapter 1), or the concern with foundations to a system of philosophy (as I discussed in Chapter 2), but also, according to Rockmore’s main thesis in *German Idealism as Constructivism*, the constructivist nature of their cognitive strategies.

While I agree with Rockmore on the main trajectory of the influence we can trace from Kant to Fichte, Schelling, and then to Hegel, I will not take up the notion of constructivism in detail here. As I mentioned above, Rockmore does not make the construction in constructivism specific. It is the task for a future project to analyze in detail the constructivism in each of these philosophers’ theories, or whether Rockmore is justified in leaving the term “constructivism” relatively open as he does. Regardless, I find his approach to tracing the influence from Kant to Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel helpful for my own task of explaining Hegel’s epistemology, i.e.

⁷¹ Kant’s point in the transcendental deduction is to prove that the way we construct our knowledge of spatiotemporal reality is categorially identical to the way spatiotemporal reality is constituted in and by itself.

cognitive strategy. Thus, I will use his accounts of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling to guide my discussion here.

2.1. Kant

Kant's cognitive strategy changes. He starts out championing representationalism, which had, as Rockmore notes, been the popular approach among philosophers during the modern period (Rockmore 15). However, by the time he writes the first *Critique*, he has moved away from representationalism. This is evidenced by his remarks in his Letter to Marcus Herz of February 21, 1772. Beatrice Longuenesse in *Kant and the Capacity to Judge* explains the shift in Kant's approach to cognition as follows: "While the Letter to Herz presents the relation between a representation and its object as a causal relation between two heterogeneous entities, the representation that is "within" the mind and the object which is "outside" it, the *Critique* internalizes the relation between the representation and the object *within representation itself*, so that the problem assumes a new meaning" (Longuenesse 17). Thus, although Kant uses the term "representation" frequently throughout the *CPR*, what he means by the term is different from what he meant by it before.⁷²

Earlier, Kant took 'representation' in the traditional sense of the term, as the way in which the object, which is independent of our cognition, is shown in our cognition. Rockmore argues that this way of approaching cognition is a reaction to the theory of forms ascribed to Plato (Rockmore 14). Rockmore characterizes the theory of forms as holding that "things are appearances that imitate, or participate in, concepts or mind-independent reality, which can only

⁷² That is, before he adopted the language of the Copernican revolution, i.e. before the B edition of the *CPR*.

be known through cognitive intuition, hence directly” (ibid.). For Plato, appearances are not knowledge (one needs to access forms for knowledge). However, as Rockmore remarks, “an anti-Platonic approach to knowledge through representation is extremely widespread in the seventeenth century”, hence before Kant (Rockmore 15).

Kant’s version of representationalism is confusing to say the least. He does not give a direct definition of representation anywhere, though he refers to qualities and aspects of representations regularly. It is a vast task to analyze each instance of Kant’s use of the term. However, in the Transcendental Dialectic he groups perceptions, sensations, and cognitions (intuitions and concepts) under the term representation when he writes:

The genus is **representation** in general (*repraesentatio*). Under it stands the representation with consciousness (*perceptio*). A **perception** that refers to the subject as a modification of its state is a **sensation** (*sensatio*); an objective perception is a **cognition** (*cognitio*). The latter is either an **intuition** or a **concept** (*intuitus vel conceptus*). The former is immediately related to the object and is singular; the latter is mediate, by means of a mark, which can be common to several things. (*CPR* A320/B376-7, 398)

This is a grouping of various notions under ‘representation’ and not a definition of the term. His other claims about ‘representation’ in the *CPR* are also not definitive. Rockmore notes that Kant “sometimes seems to favor representation; he also insists on a constructivist approach in passages about the Copernican revolution and elsewhere. It is possible that Kant, who often seems to hesitate between alternative solutions, is simultaneously attracted to different possibilities” (Rockmore 14). Furthermore, “Kant’s evolving view of representation is convoluted, unclear, and perhaps inconsistent” (Rockmore 15).

Rockmore also pulls attention to Kant’s statements about the difficulties regarding ‘representation’ in other texts: in the pre-critical *Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God* (1763) he reports that Kant writes “the word ‘representation’ is understood with sufficient precision and employed with confidence, even

though its meaning can never be analyzed by means of definition” (Rockmore 15).⁷³ Moreover, Rockmore points out that in the Dohna-Wundlacken *Logic* (1790s) Kant “states that “representation cannot be explained at all”” (ibid.).⁷⁴ This stance of not analyzing representation through a definition has, in my view, carried over into the *CPR*.

These claims by Kant, especially the second one, are important because although he is employing the term “representation” throughout the *CPR*, his theory is no longer representationalist. I want to return to Longuenesse’s analysis for this position. Longuenesse writes that Kant uses the vocabulary of causality in his Letter to Herz. This indicates that he is speaking in relation to the Humean problem, and Kant states famously that Hume woke him up from his dogmatic slumber. However, in section 14 of the Transcendental Deduction, while “formulat[ing] alternatives analogous to those he stated in the Letter to Herz [...] [h]e no longer speaks of a causal relation between the object and the representation, but of a relation where the former “makes [the latter] possible,” or conversely, where the latter “makes [the former] possible”” (Longuenesse 20). And she goes on to make the claim that this shift is indicative of an even more significant change in his view, namely:

Kant is no longer examining the relation of two heterogeneous elements (one "within" and the other "outside" representation), but the relation of two elements both internal to representation. We are thus no longer faced with an alternative between two causal relations opposite in direction, but with the cooperation of two complementary relations,

⁷³ Kant does not explain why we cannot analyze the meaning of ‘representation’ through a definition, but only states that that is the case. He writes “[e]ven in the profoundest of treatises, the rule of thoroughness does not always demand that every concept employed should be developed or defined. No such requirement exists, namely, if one is assured that the clear and ordinary concept by itself can occasion no misunderstanding in the context in which it is employed. ... And such is also the case in the deepest science of all [meaning metaphysics]” (*Only Possible Argument* 2:70, 116).

⁷⁴ Here also Kant does not explain why it is that ‘representation’ cannot be explained. “The general thing that lies at the basis of all cognition is *representation* — a fundamental concept that cannot be explained. *Cognition* is relation of representation to an object - combined with an *action* in the mind - consciousness (representation of our representation), which is lacking in obscure representations” (Dohna-Wundlacken *Logic* 701, 440).

which together constitute the "relation of a representation to its object." (Longuenesse 20-21)

This makes the term "representation" in effect equivalent to "cognition" in Kant's critical philosophy. If the representation is no longer a representation of a mind-independent or "outside" object, then it must be conditioned by cognition itself in order to then form the cognition. For if it is the case that "either if the object alone makes the representation possible, or the representation the object [*entweder wenn der Gegenstand die Vorstellung, oder diese den Gegenstand allein möglich macht*]" (Longuenesse 21), then the cognition does not depend on anything outside the mind, and also does not indicate an 'inside-outside' distinction.⁷⁵

For Rockmore, Kant's constructivism is to be understood inseparably from his Copernican revolution (Rockmore 12). Since I have discussed the Copernican revolution in detail in Chapter 1, I will not repeat it here. However, it will suffice to say that Kant changes his view from taking cognition to be mimesis-based, as in the representationalist model, to being based in the subject herself. Rockmore claims that Kant shows, through the Copernican revolution, that one has knowledge of only what one constructs through cognition (nonetheless, a cognition that ought to answer to what is there objectively). Importantly, as I claimed in Chapter 1, Kant's Copernican revolution starts the German idealist concern with forming cognitive strategies and complete systems.

2.2. Fichte

Fichte takes Kant's general approach to cognition (regardless of its inconsistencies and changes) and develops his own cognitive strategy based on it. Rockmore regards this effort,

⁷⁵ For Rockmore, this is the reason why the object is "constructed". However, as I indicated above, I will not go into a detailed exploration of the notion of constructivism in this project.

which he calls “Fichte’s so-called orthodox Kantianism” as “less an effort to call attention to the critical philosophy – though it is that as well – than a highly original effort to provide a further formulation of the critical philosophy that will solve deep difficulties by bringing the Copernican revolution to an end” (Rockmore 62-63). By “bringing the Copernican revolution to an end”, I interpret Rockmore to mean completing what Kant started but was not successful (in his immediate commentators’ view) in bringing to completion. Although Kant laid down the revolutionary conceptual shift we need in order to give a successful account of cognition, his actual account of cognition fell short of the expectations of his commentators of what the Copernican revolution warranted. Rockmore also remarks that although Fichte claims that he is “merely restat[ing] the critical philosophy in different terms”, he is actually “transform[ing] Kant’s position in rejecting doctrines inconsistent with its Copernican thrust” (Rockmore 63).

As I mentioned in the Chapter 2, Fichte takes himself to be the only one who really understands Kant. And Rockmore rightfully states that “Fichte’s claim to be a faithful Kantian provides an important hint about what he intends to do in his own writings” (Rockmore 61). Fichte’s intention is to explain Kant’s critical philosophy while taking it further. Getting rid of the inconsistencies in Kant’s account (such as problems revolving around how we can know of things-in-themselves if all we can know is within the limits of our very cognition), in Fichte’s version of critical philosophy, means to get rid of the thing-in-itself, or a mind-independent reality (while maintaining reality in some way).

Fichte’s three principles which ground all reality, which I detailed in the preceding chapter, are also his rendition of an account of cognition. In this account, Fichte leaves out any mind-independent reality by basing all difference on how the difference in question is determined in relation to the subject. In effect, the subject and the object are mutually

determining for Fichte (as Rockmore remarks, “Fichte concludes that the subject and object mutually determine each other” (Rockmore 69)), and this is the way in which he explains subjectivity. Cognition depends on the self [*das Ich*], the self’s identity with itself (the first principle), the difference of what is not the self from the self (the second principle, as independent from the first principle), and the mutual counter-positing of the self and its object, hence their interdependence (the third principle).

Within the three principles, nowhere does one find a mind-external reality or things-in-themselves. The three principles are all self-contained within the terms of the self: the “I” and “A”. The first principle is the identity of A with A from which Fichte deduces I=I. The second principle works with the same terms: A and \sim A or I and \sim I. Although this principle refers to what is *not* A or I, this reference occurs by using the terms A and I; one does not need to use any other term to refer to them. Staying with the same terms used in identity also in difference allows us to place difference solely within the terms of identity, and hence to not rely on anything outside the initial self-positing I.

Rockmore identifies “three consequences for [Fichte’s] view of cognition” that result from “Fichte’s turn away from the Kantian thing in itself” (Rockmore 68). These are the following: 1) “following Kant, he gives up metaphysical realism for empirical realism”, 2) “despite Fichte’s retention of Kantian terminology [...] he abandons representation in any form, and hence gives up any form of representationalism”(Rockmore 68), 3) “in ruling out a mind-independent cognitive object as an explanatory principle, Fichte’s only remaining recourse, on pain of falling into skepticism, is to appeal to the subject, or in his terminology, the self [*das Ich*]” (Rockmore 68-9).

Thus, Fichte's cognitive strategy rests on the idea of the Copernican revolution and is fully loyal to it, more so than Kant was. Rockmore remarks that Fichte has "a new understanding of objectivity from the perspective of subjectivity" (Rockmore 67):

In the critical philosophy, objectivity takes two incompatible forms: as the mind-independent external object, or the thing in itself, as well as the mind-dependent cognitive object of experience and knowledge. In Fichte's view, objectivity takes the single form of what is experienced in practice but understood theoretically as the result of the subject's activity. (Rockmore 67)

The fact that Fichte eliminates mind-independent reality results in fully centering cognition and any epistemic endeavor within the subject. This is, in a sense, the spirit of critical philosophy, as I discuss with regard to Hegel below.

2.3. Schelling

Schelling offers a unique approach to cognition and epistemology which in various ways follows from and breaks away from those of Kant and Fichte. Rockmore characterizes Schelling's position as follows: "[i]n reacting to Kant, Fichte, and others, Schelling does not abandon but rather transforms the constructivism arising in different ways in the critical philosophy and its Fichtean restatement" (Rockmore 79). One of the main innovations Schelling introduces into his system is his philosophy of nature (as discussed in Chapter 2): his formulation of philosophy requires the two equally important branches of transcendental philosophy on the one hand and philosophy of nature on the other. These two branches together, i.e. his philosophy's dualism, "[point] to a single overall theory of what Schelling, in echoing Fichtean terminology, calls the absolute" (Rockmore 80). As I discuss in Chapter 2, we see this starting even in his earlier works where Schelling claims that his transcendental philosophy must begin with an absolute.

Schelling employs an approach similar to Spinoza's parallelism of thought and extension by holding nature with the same importance as transcendental ideas. In this way of "renewing the philosophy of nature, Schelling reaches back behind Fichte to Kant in taking natural scientific investigation a step further" (Rockmore 81). This renewal of the philosophy of nature is a reaction to Kant's claim in the *CPR* that objects must conform to our intuition, which in Rockmore's words "suggests we cannot know nature as it is, or again, as it is in itself" (ibid.). Schelling's claim of the need to have the philosophy of nature be separate from, yet parallel to, transcendental philosophy thus accomplishes two things: (1) his transcendental philosophy, by being separate from nature and thus excluding nature, is on the same trajectory as Kant's and Fichte's brand of idealism, and (2) by having a separate philosophy of nature, he is going beyond Kant's philosophy in solving the issue of the thing-in-itself being inaccessible to cognition.

Rockmore writes of Schelling's philosophy of nature that it "takes shape as an attempt literally to "construct" (or to "deduce") nature not on quasi-Fichtean *a posteriori* but rather on quasi-Kantian *a priori* grounds, where "nature" is understood as what is in fact presupposed in the empirical investigations of the natural sciences as a so-called "objective system of reason" (ibid.). By bringing nature into the domain of the *a priori*, Schelling answers the problem regarding an unknowable 'outside world' that is separate from cognition. This answers the perceived problem in Kant's philosophy if the separate unknowable nature of the things-in-themselves. For, if nature is *a priori*, then the problem of access to nature or an 'outside world' is resolved. We can deduce nature through *a priori* reasoning – nature is no longer a realm of things-in-themselves. In this sense, Schelling's philosophy of nature is a reaction to Kant, and in Rockmore's words also "a critique of—as well as an alternative to—mechanistic, reductionist, or

material accounts of nature” of which Kant’s is a strong example (Rockmore 82).⁷⁶ As Rockmore puts it, Schelling “seeks to rehabilitate nature objectively in making a transition, in Hegelian language, from subjective idealism to objective idealism” (ibid.).⁷⁷

Schelling’s philosophy of nature then, is a critique and attempt to improve Kant’s philosophy. It is however also the main move Schelling makes in differentiating his philosophy from Fichte’s, as he had been a follower of Fichte’s philosophy prior to his work on the philosophy of nature. Rockmore writes on this point that “in working out a philosophy of nature he differentiates his position from Fichte’s in providing an empirical dimension to transcendental philosophy” (Rockmore 83). There is much more that can be said about the nuances of Schelling’s philosophy, however, suffice it here to say that we can see the trajectory of the development of an account of cognition and knowledge from Kant to Fichte to Schelling in a way that then culminates in Hegel’s epistemology.

3. Hegel’s Epistemology

Hegel forms his system as a response to the theories discussed in Chapter 2, but also in the trajectory of the endeavor to formulate an account of cognition by Kant, Fichte, and Schelling discussed above. Hegel is chiefly concerned with epistemology in his two major works, the *PhG* and *WL*, and these constitute the two main pillars of his overall conception of cognition and knowledge. Before I start discussing the details of these two works, I want to make a few preliminary remarks regarding Hegel’s epistemology in general: (1) Hegel has a non-

⁷⁶ For a discussion of the mechanistic character of Kant’s account of nature, see A. Breitenbach’s “Mechanical explanation of nature and its limits in Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*”, *Studies in the History of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, Dec. 2006; 37(4), pp. 694-711.

⁷⁷ Whether this Schellingian reconstitution of nature from the Kantian mechanistic account is fair to Kant may be useful to discuss. However, such a discussion is beyond the scope of the project of this chapter.

traditional epistemology, (2) he is concerned with a post-Kantian critical notion of knowledge unlike most epistemologies which tend to be dogmatically empiricist, (3) the use of “knowledge” and “cognition” as translations for the term “*Erkenntnis*” indicate an interesting point regarding the historical nature of knowledge for Hegel, and (4) Hegel’s epistemology is not relativistic, though it is historicist.

3.1. Preliminary Remarks

3.1.1. A Non-Traditional Epistemology

It is clear to any serious reader of the *PhG* that that the work critically revolves around the notions of education (*Bildung*), truth, and what it means to know. Furthermore, he uses the terms knowledge (*Wissen*) and cognition/knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) with high frequency at critical points of his works, such as their Introduction sections.⁷⁸ His epistemology is nevertheless constructed differently from how epistemologies are traditionally understood and constructed. I argue that Hegel presents a theory of knowledge, albeit in a non-traditional way, and, quite appropriately, since ‘epistemology’ had not been used before Hegel in the sense in which we use it today, as I discussed earlier in this chapter. I argue further that Hegel’s works are chiefly epistemological given the ways in which the terms knowledge and cognition are used to frame the entire project of his key works – the *PhG* and the *Logic*⁷⁹ – and because of the specific character of these works. Hegel’s view of knowledge is bound to his non-standard presentation of it and here I explore this relation.

⁷⁸ The German word for science, *Wissenschaft*, also includes *Wissen*, knowledge, prominently.

⁷⁹ Hegel wrote two versions of his *Logic*: the *WL* and the *EL*. For my purposes here I will focus mostly on the *WL* since it is more detailed and was published in a new edition after the *EL*.

When I claim that Hegel's works are epistemological in nature, I am claiming that he presents an account of knowledge: what knowledge is and how it is developed. Even though his mode of presenting this epistemology and its content are non-standard, they are nevertheless an account of knowledge. The non-traditionalism of its content is specifically bound up with its circular nature (the overarching topic of this dissertation) which I detail in the next chapter. In the next chapter, I explain that Hegel's epistemology follows a circular pattern in which the end point of a system of knowledge is a return to the beginning point, such that the end also legitimately justifies the beginning.

The non-traditional character of Hegel's epistemology is a product of the dialectical character of his works. Neither the *PhG* nor the *WL* present their content in the form of chapters that focus on different aspects of a theory that are independent from one another and where the content is independent from the form of presentation. Instead, the form and content of these works determine one another and are inseparable – a characteristic Hegel discusses in detail in the *WL* (which I also address below). The form and content develop together in a progressive manner through the logical unfolding of each moment in the text. Furthermore, the texts present contradictions which arise through the logical unfolding of the moments but these contradictions are resolved through further developments. One does not find this sort of appearance and resolution of contradictions in texts regarded as presenting traditional epistemologies.

3.1.2. An Account of What Kind of Knowledge?

In Chapter 1, I discussed in detail the Kantian critique and redefinition of empirical knowledge. There I argued that through his Copernican revolution, Kant removes the ground on which empiricism rests. By successfully showing that we do not cognize objects as they are in

themselves but that objects conform to our cognition, Kant removes the basis on which one could make the claim that empirical knowledge (when understood as the knowledge of things as they are in themselves) gives us an accurate view of the way the world is. Kant thus displaces the notion of ‘empirical’ from its place where it applies to a supposed cognitive access to things as they are to a use applying only to objects of cognition. Accordingly, after Kant’s Copernican revolution, ‘empirical’ can mean nothing other than the sensible content organized through time, space, and the categories within our cognition.

Hegel, following Kant’s Copernican revolution, also treats empirical knowledge in a similar critical manner. However, there is a difference between Kant and Hegel in their focus. Kant’s view of cognition is *a priori*, independent of experience,⁸⁰ whereas Hegel’s is *a posteriori*, dependent on experience. At every step in Hegel’s works, the empirical (though transcendental) *a posteriori* is interwoven with the *a priori*. For instance, when considering the cube of salt in the *PhG*, or mass in the *WL*, Hegel is dealing in an *a priori* way with the phenomenological structure of these *a posteriori* things. He does not separate the logic from the empirical but rather reinterprets them together through phenomenological categories of conscious experience.

Thus Hegel’s account of knowledge, i.e. his epistemology, is informed by Kant’s work (insofar as the empirical is no longer approached naïvely as in dogmatic pre-critical philosophy). This means for Hegel’s epistemology that he is giving an account of knowledge in the way in which we account for it after Kant. Yet, Hegel’s account is also different from Kant’s approach with its phenomenological character and interest in the *a posteriori*. Hegel’s conception of

⁸⁰ Though cognition requires its phenomenal aspect too for Kant, his account does not focus on the empirical side of cognition. As discussed in Chapter 1, Kant is primarily interested in giving a transcendental account.

knowledge is phenomenologically based. It involves inner contradictions that involve the interplay between the subjective and the objective. These contradictions are resolved through the unfolding development, and thereby knowledge is historically situated (including the truth and the falsity that opposes the truth). For Hegel, knowledge constitutes reality insofar as it is historical, phenomenal, and unfolding in a manner that includes the contradictions and their resolution, the falsities as opposing the truths. Accordingly, philosophical knowledge is subjective and objective at once while retaining the distinction between these terms.

Hegel is interested in forming a philosophical system, and his theory of knowledge is intricately connected to the formation of this system: how he accounts for knowledge and cognition is the defining factor in the formation of his system. Through the system, we may further down the line have knowledge pertaining to the strictly empirical sciences, but this is a separate concern. Hegel is concerned with establishing a speculative [*begreifende*] science.⁸¹ With speculative science, the old dogmatic understanding of the distinction between logic and the empirical is sublated (that is, negated, yet preserved as a moment).

Since Hegel is concerned with giving an account of knowledge in this speculative science where he is beyond the distinction between the logical and the empirical, what we may

⁸¹ Hegel writes that as opposed to “adopt[ing] a negative attitude towards the content it apprehends” and “know[ing] how to refute it and destroy it”, “in speculative [*begreifenden*] thinking ... the negative belongs to the content itself, and is the *positive*, both as the *immanent* movement and determination of the content, and as the whole of this process” (*PhG* §59, 36; Suhrkamp 56). Furthermore, “[s]peculative [*begreifendes*] thinking behaves in” the following way: “Since the Notion is the object’s own self, which presents itself as the *coming-to-be of the object*, it is not a passive Subject inertly supporting the Accidents; it is, on the contrary, the self-moving Notion which takes its determinations back into itself. In this movement the passive Subject itself perishes; it enters into the differences and the content, and constitutes the determinateness, i.e. the differentiated content and its movement, instead of remaining inertly over against it” (*PhG* §60, 37; Suhrkamp 57). More significantly, Hegel sharpens his definition of the speculative science in what follows: “The sublation of the form of the proposition must not happen only in an *immediate* manner, through the mere content of the proposition. On the contrary, this opposite movement must find explicit expression ... This return of the Notion into itself must be *set forth*. This movement which constitutes what formerly the proof was supposed to accomplish, is the dialectical movement of the proposition itself. This alone is the speculative *in act*, and only the expression of this movement is a speculative exposition” (*PhG* §65, 39-40; Suhrkamp 61).

understand by his epistemology should be qualified in the following manner: it is an epistemology of this new philosophical knowledge that is beyond the logical-empirical distinction and it gives us an account of the world and the knowledge of this world through this philosophical approach. In so doing, it presents us the limits and the conditions of a philosophical system: what philosophical knowledge can and ought to provide us, how far it can go, its architecture, its contents, its method and structure, and its limits. In this sense, by presenting an epistemology of philosophical knowledge, Hegel is detailing what philosophy is and can be in the utmost scientifically philosophical manner. Furthermore, this account is within philosophy itself: this epistemology is a self-reflecting account of its own knowledge. Thus, it is not surprising that we return to the beginning at the end to form a circle when we complete the system; for, the system, from the beginning, is self-referential and self-contained.

3.1.3. *Erkenntnis*: Knowledge and Cognition

Even though the German word '*Erkenntnis*' is translated into English as either 'knowledge' or 'cognition',⁸² neither of these words fully captures the meaning of the term. Moreover, there are important differences between the meanings of these two English terms. There is a necessity of truth involved in *knowledge*, whereas judgment based on the use of our faculties is enough for *cognition*. The sense of contradiction in 'false knowledge' is stronger than in 'false cognition'. But how, then, can we think of *Erkenntnis* as meaning both of these things at the same time?

Putting these two terms together, as Hegel's *Erkenntnistheorie* does, suggests something interesting about how to understand knowledge and our place in the world. For us to understand

⁸² An added complication is that *Wissen* also means 'knowledge'.

Erkenntnis as Hegel does, we need to reconcile the differences between cognition and knowledge. One could say this is of course the case for all philosophers who write in the German language about the term *Erkenntnis*. Nevertheless, I want to propose that this indicates something specifically interesting about Hegel's philosophy.

I propose that the way to reconcile the differences between cognition and knowledge in this context is the following. For Hegel, knowledge, in a certain sense, is something historical and for this reason it is fallible (I discuss this in detail later on in this chapter). Thus, for Hegel, it is absurd to think that consciousness's cognition at a certain stage, which a later stage shows to be in fact mistaken, is not knowledge. For, that cognition as such is consciousness's grasping of the stage at which it is in its own specific contextual historical setting. Whichever error may be found in the antecedent stage (such as consciousness's initial conviction in sense-certainty that "Here" and "Now" captures meaning beyond the current time and place) is something additional to be considered – it just means that our knowledge is not "absolute", but it is nevertheless a form of knowledge given our context and situation. Thus, for Hegel, this notion of knowledge is not one that is based on strict correspondence, but on historicity. Cognitive claims are fallible because they are historical.

Correspondence theories of truth, while having their origins in Plato⁸³ and Aristotle⁸⁴, can be clearly summed up by Aquinas's claim "veritas est adaequatio intellectus et rei" which can be translated as 'truth is the adequation of intellect and thing' (my translation).⁸⁵ This

⁸³ See Plato's *Cratylus*, 385b2.

⁸⁴ See Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Book IV, 1011b25: "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true; so that he who says of anything that it is, or that it is not, will say either what is true or what is false; but neither what is nor what is not is said to be or not to be."

⁸⁵ Aquinas has three definitions of truth: (1) the true is what is, (2) adequation of intellect and thing, and (3) expressing what exists. See Aquinas's *De Veritate*, I, a. 1. A detailed analysis of all three of these is beyond the

position suggests that there needs to be a correspondence between a notion and the thing it is a notion of in order for there to be truth. Without such a correspondence, there is no truth. The relation between a notion and an object or thing needs to be one of adequate correspondence.

Kant himself takes correspondence theory for granted (CPR A58/B82). Nevertheless, the immediate discussion of his work sparked concerns around the foundations required for such a claim, which commentators argued Kant's system does not provide or provides inadequately (as I discussed in Chapter 2). For Hegel as well, a follower of the Kantian Copernican revolution, a correspondence theory of truth (at least in its basic traditional form as presented here) does not make sense.⁸⁶ The reason is twofold. First, according to followers of Kant (Hegel included), we cannot know what things independent of our consciousness are like (after Kant), hence it makes no sense to speak of a correspondence between things and our cognition of them.⁸⁷ Our cognition of things is the truth of those things for us. Second, a correspondence theory of truth ignores the dynamic nature of things as well as knowledge, both of which are altered through contexts (more on this below). Rockmore holds a similar position about Hegel's rejection of a correspondence theory of truth, and claims that Hegel had an "antirepresentationalist approach to cognition"⁸⁸. He argues that Hegel's position is based on Kant's when Kant turns away from

scope of my current project. However, it is worth noting here that Hegel's view of knowledge is similar to Aquinas's third definition of truth.

⁸⁶ See H. S. Harris's "Hegel's Correspondence Theory of Truth" and Kenneth R. Westphal's "Harris, Hegel, and the Truth about the Truth", both in *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Reappraisal* (Garry, K. Browning ed., 1997).

⁸⁷ At least, we cannot speak sensibly of a correspondence between things and our cognition of them in the regular sense in which correspondence theorists of truth speak of a correspondence. H.S. Harris makes this claim in "Hegel's Correspondence Theory of Truth" (published in *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Reappraisal*, 1997) when he writes the following: "Hegel's theory of 'truth' is not independent of his theory of 'correctness'. He has a 'correspondence theory' of 'truth'; but 'Truth' is a property of assertions about 'knowledge', not of assertions about 'the world.' For this reason, the theory of 'truth' becomes a complex and interesting topic in Hegel's view, and not the boringly simple matter already disposed of in the formal definition of 'correctness'. What is called 'the correspondence theory' does not deserve the honorific name of 'theory' at all. Only in Hegel's theory of 'experience' does 'correspondence' become, for the first time, *interesting*" (Harris 11).

⁸⁸ Rockmore, Tom. "Analytic Philosophy and the Hegelian Turn". *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (Dec., 2001), pp. 339-370. p 365.

representationalism to constructivism in his Copernican phase, as I discussed above. In this view, the claim to know depends not on cognizing the real but on cognizing the real for us (as individuals and as a society; as individuals *in/of* a society) that we construct.

By contexts and the dynamic nature of things and how they affect our knowledge, I do not mean (and neither would Hegel) the issue posed by indexicals and occasion sentences in capturing meaning. As Hegel quickly shows in *Sense-certainty* at the beginning of the *PhG*, the fact that an indexical like “I” not picking out the same one individual in each use or the sentence “Now is night” being true or false based on the time of the day in which it is uttered is inherent in to the way that these kinds of words and sentences function. What I mean here is that we count as knowledge those beliefs which we can determine to be true with what we recognize as sufficient evidence. And for our purposes, these beliefs may very well function for us as true knowledge. However, it is possible they may be revised in light of further evidence. This is the case with induction.

In the development of Hegel’s works, there is also something similar happening, though it is not induction. We begin with an indeterminate immediacy which then gets further determined and mediated, more and more specific yet complex as we progress along the circumference of what turns out to be a circle when we reach the end. In this process, we come to see repeatedly that previous accounts that seemed correct or at least complete at the time turn out to be incorrect, or contradictory, and/or one-sided by virtue of their incompleteness, and in some cases we revise them to be more determinate and concrete, and less one-sided and abstract, and in other cases we move on to a different concept or topic. This development that guides itself through its own inner negativity, difference, limitation, or indeterminacy is what is called Hegel’s dialectic.

Since the dialectic (see *WL* 831-3 for a detailed account of “dialectic”) operates mostly with *a priori* reasoning, and since our knowledge grows through the ongoing determination and mediation brought about by the development in each of Hegel’s work, and given Hegel’s account of synthetic cognition in the final sections of the *WL* (793-818), I suspect Hegel has in mind to *demonstrate* the answer to Kant’s question “how are synthetic *a priori* judgments possible?”, precisely by synthesizing *a priori* his system and its various parts. It is beyond my scope here to explore this idea further. However, Hegel writes the following in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* the following, which supports my suspicion: “Synthetic judgments *a priori* are nothing else than a connection of opposites through themselves, or the absolute Notion, i.e. the relations of different determinations such as those of cause and effect, given not through experience but through thought” (*LHP* 430).⁸⁹

3.1.4. Relativism and Objectivity, Historicism and Truth

Before I progress further, I want to note that by giving an account of knowledge for Hegel that is based on historicity, I do not at all mean to say he has a relativistic sense of knowledge. Knowledge can be relative to time and place insofar as there are always historically-dependent limitations to the extent to which we have cognitive access to the form and content of

⁸⁹ Hegel makes this claim in the following context: “Kant considers thought as in great measure a synthetic activity, and hence he represents the main question of Philosophy to be this, “How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible?” Judgment signifies the combination of thought-determinations as subject and predicate. Synthetic judgments *a priori* are nothing else than a connection of opposites through themselves, or the absolute Notion, i.e. the relations of different determinations such as those of cause and effect, given not through experience but through thought. Space and time likewise form the connecting element; they are thus *a priori*, i.e. in self-consciousness. Since Kant shows that thought has synthetic judgments *a priori* which are not derived from perception, he shows that thought is so to speak concrete in itself. The idea which is present here is a great one, but, on the other hand, quite an ordinary signification is given it, for it is worked out from points of view which are inherently rude and empirical, and a scientific form is the last thing that can be claimed for it. In the presentation of it there is a lack of philosophical abstraction, and it is expressed in the most commonplace way; to say nothing more of the barbarous terminology, Kant remains restricted and confined by his psychological point of view and empirical methods” (*LHP* 430).

knowledge. However, this is different from relativism regarding knowledge. Cognition and (as I explain below) the *notion* of knowledge may be relative to one's context (for, as we know since Kant, we do not cognize things as they are in themselves), however, *truth* is different from these. Since, for Hegel, there is an absolute Truth and this is not relative to context, I specifically do not want to propose that Hegel is a relativist. By 'absolute', Hegel means the true or the real; hence, absolute knowledge is the knowledge of truth or of reality. This does not allow for relativism. Let me explain.

Relativism is the view about knowledge and truth which Richard Bernstein writes has traditionally been contrasted with objectivism (Bernstein 2).⁹⁰ If objectivism is the view that truth is accessible by everyone and exists independently of subjects, then relativism is the view that embeds truth in the subject. Accordingly, for the relativist, truth and knowledge are matters of opinion, and one's belief in any claim in dispute can function as an element in the justification of that claim.

Richard Rorty, somewhat in contrast, explains the notion of objectivity as one that can be contrasted with solidarity when one considers the "two principal ways in which reflective human beings try, by placing their lives in a larger context, to give sense to those lives" (Rorty 21). Rorty then places these two principle ways, which he identifies as relativism and solidarity, in the context of the Western philosophical tradition. He defines 'solidarity' as the way to give meaning to one's life "by telling the story of [one's] contribution to humanity" (ibid.). The person seeking solidarity "does not ask about the relation between the practices of the chosen community and something outside of that community" (ibid.). In contrast, the person seeking

⁹⁰ Bernstein is opposed to this strict dichotomy. His book *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, as the title suggests, explores his position against this dichotomy.

objectivity “attaches herself to something which can be described without reference to any particular human beings” (ibid.). Importantly, “[t]he tradition in Western culture which centers around the notion of the search for Truth, a tradition which runs from the Greek philosophers through the Enlightenment, is the clearest example of the attempt to find a sense in one’s existence by turning away from solidarity to objectivity” (ibid.). Rorty thus places the pursuit of Truth as the central element of the Western philosophical tradition, and contrasts it with his notion of solidarity. Solidarity becomes the condition in which one is “confined within the horizons of the group into which one happens to be born”, a condition out of which Socrates tries repeatedly to snap his interlocutors by showing them the situation “with the eyes of a stranger” (ibid.).

Rorty likens the distinction between objectivity and solidarity to how “Plato developed the idea of such an intellectual [someone who is not tethered by the opinions of his community] by means of distinctions between knowledge and opinion, and between appearance and reality” (Rorty 22). Hence, it is fair to claim that Rorty’s account of solidarity is akin to relativism, or in fact highlights a significant aspect of an adherence to relativism (though Rorty may not be a relativist himself).⁹¹ The aspect is namely, that relativism is a view that takes ‘truth’ to be based on opinions of a community, on appearances, and on positions that are isolated from the

⁹¹ Though Rorty characterizes himself as an ethnocentrist, this ascription of relativism holds. Bjørn Ramberg writes that Rorty’s view “looks to many readers like a version of cultural relativism. True, Rorty does not say that what is true, what is good, and what is right is relative to some particular ethnos, and so in that sense he is no relativist. But the worry about relativism, that it leaves us with no rational way to adjudicate conflict, seems to apply equally to Rorty’s ethnocentric view” (Ramberg). A potential response by Rorty, Ramberg claims, is that in his view, rational debate over opposing or differing views is acceptable and may sway parties to change their positions. This may present an argument against relativism as an absolute theory, namely that the way things are objectively yields different parties in different positions to have different observations. However, it doesn’t definitively answer a weaker form of relativism in which the defining element is the absence of an objective criterion for truth independent of one’s position. A more detailed analysis of Rorty’s view is beyond my scope here.

challenges of more developed or even conflicting positions. For Hegel, such isolated opinions would be characterized as “abstract”, “one-sided”, and incomplete.

It is clear to careful readers of Hegel that he is far from a relativist. John W. Burbidge writes that in the *PhG* Hegel “shows how we move from ordinary ways of interacting with the world to one which transcends all relativism—one which is absolute” (Burbidge 24). In the *PhG*, Hegel shows how consciousness can move beyond “abstract” or “one-sided” views of things and situations by coming to know them in more well-rounded (and hence not abstract or one-sided) ways, the culmination of which results in absolute knowing. At the position of absolute knowing, one is beyond any relative or subjective knowledge, but has grasped concepts objectively. This is why Hegel calls absolute knowing the “standpoint of Science” (*PhG* 50, §78; Suhrkamp 73).

When it comes to historicism and the historical nature of truth, however, the situation is a bit different. Hegel’s notion of truth, though against relativism, is nevertheless historical. For Hegel, knowledge occurs through a development and unfolding in time or history. Yet, the truth is the whole (I discuss this in detail in a separate section below). Hence, it appears that if we take time and the totality of time literally, we can only reach truth at the end of time (whatever or whenever that may be, or if it may be) with the whole history of existence before us (however this may happen – more on this shortly below). He cannot be so pessimistic about knowledge and truth. Thus, we ought to examine what Hegel means and the nature of historicism in his approach to truth and knowledge from a different angle.

William Desmond writes “Hegel is frequently credited with being one of the first of thinkers to acknowledge the crucial importance of history, not only for philosophy itself, but for all areas of human significance” (Desmond 173). Hegel understood that we can think of truth and

knowledge only as they are tied to the historical context in which they arise.⁹² History and its progression are, thus, crucial determining factors for knowledge and truth. At a given point in history, there is a certain articulation of the way the world is and how things are that is proper to the internal configuration of that point of history. This specific articulation may be inconsistent with the articulation of truth at another point in history (which articulation will be determined according to the internal configuration of *that* point in history). This historicist view stands in contrast to relativism (for which there can be conflicting articulations that are taken to be each true at one and the same time) because: (1) within any given point in history it is not that any given account of reality is equally true, there is one account which is correct (given the circumstances at that point in history), and (2) there is an overarching rule governing the progression and unfolding of history and spirit, therefore the different points of history will be consistent with one another according to that rule even if inconsistent internally with one to the other. Thus the overarching rule will be the logic⁹³ of the unfolding of history, and in turn, history reflects the evolution of logical space.⁹⁴

⁹² This is also the claim that Rockmore makes in his paper “Analytic Philosophy and the Hegelian Turn”. He writes “Hegel denies that claims for truth and knowledge depend on grasping facts in independence of a conceptual framework, perspective, point of view, or conceptual scheme. He further denies that knowledge claims can be defended apart from and prior to experience. Knowledge claims are based on spirit, that is, on impure, or social, reason, namely, on the standards, norms, or values adopted by a particular society in various cognitive and other domains in a given historical moment. In a word, particular constative or evaluative claims can only be accepted or rejected in terms of the wider set of views prevailing in a given historical time and place” (*Analytic Philosophy* 366).

⁹³ Karin de Boer notes in her article “Hegel’s Account of the Present” that “Hegel never purports to construct the successive stages of world history by means of reason alone” (de Boer 53). However, “constructing” retrospectively in the form of a philosophical narrative is different from the actual progression itself as it was happening. Hegel himself writes that there is a necessity in the progression and development: “The necessary progression and interconnection of the forms of unreal consciousness will by itself bring to pass the *completion* of the series” (*PhG* §79, 50; Suhrkamp 73).

⁹⁴ My interpretation in this paragraph is based mostly on the *PhG* and the *Enzyklopaedie*. Detailed work on Hegel’s *Philosophy of History* is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but would certainly be fruitful in a future project.

Though it may be argued by some that the philosophical “end of time” or the “absolute time” might be reached by the French revolution and in Hegel’s philosophy,⁹⁵ this would be correct in a trivial sense but mistaken in a more significant one. If we read Hegel’s works as metaphysics, then we can take his writing and the various stages of the development of his works at face value, and that would include the interpretation of Hegel’s claims about the French Revolution (and many other matters, for instance Christianity, his problematic claims about hierarchies of different cultures, and so on) to be claims about reality *in itself*. However, as I argue throughout this dissertation, Hegel’s view about his own philosophy, knowledge, and what he (or any other philosopher) may achieve, is significantly more humble. As I argue here, Hegel is not presenting a metaphysics but an epistemology. That means, he’s giving an account of cognitive strategies for various “circles” of knowledge (more on this shortly) and not making strictly ontological claims. In the *PhG* where Hegel’s famous discussions of the French Revolution are found, they take place in the context of consciousness’s journey where consciousness is exploring its own phenomenal experience.

Absolute Knowing is the recognition of the limits of phenomenal experience (as I argue below and in more detail in Chapter 6). One journeys through various aspects of phenomenal experience in the specific context of one’s historical time and place (hence the stations appointed for consciousness are necessary for that consciousness, but contingent upon consciousness being there and then) until one finds that its *for-it* matches its *in-itself* and thereby closes the circle. This circle is a total account of phenomenal experience that is limited insofar as it is a single

⁹⁵ End of history is a topic discussed extensively in the Hegel scholarship on history. It is beyond my scope here to treat it fully. Pinkard writes, “[i]n one of the most celebrated interpretations of the *Phenomenology*, the Russian émigré to France, Alexandre Kojève, interpreted the book as giving philosophical voice to the “end of history” that was being given political voice by Napoleon’s soldiers” (Pinkard 1). For various treatments of the notion of the end of history in Hegel, see; H.S. Harris’s “The End of History in Hegel”, *Hegel Bulletin*, 1991; and R. Bubner’s “Hegel and the End of History”, *Hegel Bulletin*, 1991.

circle, the journey of one consciousness with the stages of its journey appointed for it. For Hegel (and for us), the French Revolution is an event of utmost significance and consequence. But this is also the case for anyone living in Western Europe and beyond during that time. Hence, one's phenomenal experience would also reflect this to the extent that they participate in society as *Spirit*. This is an epistemological claim. It is only secondarily an ontological claim insofar as it says something about the way that the epistemology is. We, living two centuries after Hegel, certainly recognize the importance of the French Revolution, but it is not so apparent that we would take it to be the end of time or history.⁹⁶

If we go back to the relation of truth as a whole to history, we can now identify two different senses of the word 'whole' when considering Hegel's statement that the true is the whole in relation to his historicism. The first sense refers to all of history. Truth according to this first sense can be achieved or grasped only at the end of history. The second sense refers to the totality of the configuration of a historical moment (including its present state, its knowledge about the past, and projections about the future). The second sense is the sense in which we use truth on an everyday basis, when not having in sight the end of history and the totality of existence. Accordingly, truth is determined according to the whole of the historical moment, for Hegel. Furthermore, these truths (despite their possible contradictions with one another) come together to create the absolute knowledge of history as a whole.

⁹⁶ Susan Buck-Morss reveals through meticulous research in *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* that Hegel was keeping up to date on and was moved by the Haitian Revolution that took place during 1791-1803 (Buck-Morss 45). She makes the striking argument that the Haitian Revolution was in fact the likely basis for Hegel's conception of the Lordship and Bondage section of the Self-consciousness chapter of the *PhG* (Buck-Morss 48-9). As Buck-Morss indicates, Hegel does not mention the Haitian Revolution in the *PhG* at all, though he is documented to have followed the unfolding events closely. In the future, it would be an interesting project to consider Hegel's notion of self-knowledge and consciousness of historical events as portrayed in the *PhG* in light of Buck-Morss's revelation that Hegel was likely remarkably inspired by the Haitian Revolution, yet made no mention of it in his work.

3.2. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*

The *PhG* constitutes one of the two main pillars of Hegel's epistemology. Here, he gives an account of knowledge: what it means to know and how one comes to know. Furthermore he provides detailed accounts of what "Science" means, by which he means proper philosophy, and of how one can come to have truth. The Introduction to the *PhG* is an outline of Hegel's approach to cognition and epistemology. Accordingly, in this section I focus on the Introduction and present the epistemology Hegel offers in it along with this epistemology's relation to the development of theories of knowledge by Kant, Fichte, and Schelling.

Hegel begins the Introduction to the *PhG* (and it is useful to note here that he began writing the work with the Introduction, while the Preface was written at the end) with a sentence that is at once a statement regarding the epistemological nature of his philosophy and the start of a critique of Kant and the commentators on Kant (including Reinhold, Schulze, Fichte, and Schelling) who were concerned with foundations:

It is a natural assumption that in philosophy, before we start to deal with its proper subject-matter, viz. the actual cognition [*Erkennen*] of what truly is, one must first of all come to an understanding about cognition, which is regarded as the instrument to get hold of the Absolute, or as the medium through which one discovers it. A certain uneasiness seems justified. ... This feeling of uneasiness is surely bound to be transformed into the conviction that the whole project of securing consciousness through conviction that it exists in itself is absurd, and that there is a boundary between cognition and the Absolute that completely separates them. (*PhG* 46, §73, Suhrkamp 68)

This statement is mainly a critique. Nevertheless, in it, he states that the "proper subject-matter" of philosophy is "the actual cognition [*Erkennen*] of what truly is", thereby implying that philosophy concerns itself with cognition (*PhG* 46, §73, Suhrkamp 68). This statement at the outset of the work functions to establish that Hegel is concerned chiefly with epistemology – giving an account of cognition of truth – when he is doing philosophy. The other aspect of the first sentence, and in fact of the whole first paragraph (§73), presents the following: though it

may seem natural to give an account of cognition before we deal with the “proper subject-matter” of philosophy (“viz. the actual cognition of what truly is”), this would nevertheless be a mistaken approach (ibid.).⁹⁷

There are various reasons for why this would be mistaken approach. The uneasiness Hegel mentions “seems justified” because “there are different types of cognition” and “cognition is a faculty of a definite kind and scope” (*PhG* 46, §73, Suhrkamp 68). Furthermore, regarding cognition as an instrument or a medium to grasp the absolute is problematic (I discuss this below). Accordingly, both approaches to cognition undermine the goal of understanding cognition.

Additionally to this criticism of the tendency to regard cognition as an instrument or a medium, Hegel is also giving a criticism of the tendency to seek foundations or the proper beginning point for philosophy before knowing the content of philosophy or what philosophy even is. Seeking to define cognition first before recognizing that one must define cognition through the work of cognition itself (that is, before doing the work of bringing cognition to the standpoint of Science) is nothing other than a foundationalist or grounding tendency. For in this approach of attempting to define cognition first, the goal is to establish the instrument or medium as a foundation through which one can then do philosophy. The hope is to use cognition as the foundation that is established at the outset to justify the rest of the philosophical endeavor, insofar as cognition is to be the instrument or medium.

This criticism of seeking foundations is a criticism of the commentators on Kant’s philosophy and of Kant himself, whose first systematic goal is to give an account of cognition in

⁹⁷ Though, it is important to note here that in the Introduction Hegel is not yet arguing for this claim but mentioning it in order to make clear what he continues on to accomplish in the body of his work.

abstract terms, independently of its place embedded in the world in a subject. It is also a critique of Fichte who presents his three principles as the ground for all philosophy and cognition, before considering what cognition is or even claiming to do philosophy.

Hegel claims that if one does indeed think that “one must first of all come to an understanding about cognition, which is regarded either as the instrument to get hold of the Absolute, or as the medium through which one discovers it”, before one can deal with the proper subject-matter of philosophy, then one will also be convinced, falsely, that “there is a boundary between cognition and the Absolute that completely separates them” (*PhG* 46, §73; Suhrkamp 68). By “Absolute”, Hegel here means reality, true knowledge, or cognition of what truly is (he writes a couple of paragraphs later that “the Absolute alone is true, or the truth alone is Absolute” (*PhG* 47, §75; Suhrkamp 70)). The two approaches to cognition where one takes cognition to be either an instrument or a medium, are problematic and fail to actually deliver the Absolute. Hegel writes:

For, if cognition [*Erkennen*] is the instrument for getting hold of absolute being, it is obvious that the use of an instrument on a thing certainly does not let it be what it is for itself but rather sets out to reshape and alter it. If, on the other hand, cognition [*Erkennen*] is not an instrument of our activity but a more or less passive medium through which the light of truth reaches us, then again we do not receive the truth as it is in itself, but only as it exists through and in this medium. Either way we employ a means which immediately brings about the opposite of its own end; or rather what is really absurd is that we should make use of a means at all. (*PhG* 46, §73; Suhrkamp 68)

Thus, if both of these approaches to cognition (each of which can be understood as Kantian and post-Kantian approaches) fail at what they are designed to explain, i.e. how we may come to have true knowledge or knowledge of what is real, then they are bad approaches. Hegel’s alternative is presented in the form of the *PhG* as an account of cognition, that is, an epistemology.

The question arises here as to what an account of cognition is. To claim that cognition is either an instrument or a medium fails to give a successful account of true knowledge. For, it assumes that we ought to have access to true knowledge and be able to give an account of it. Accordingly, it further assumes that any position that does not meet this standard of giving an account of access to true knowledge must thereby be false. Hence, does an account of cognition already assume that we have access to true knowledge? What if the correct account of cognition is to present it as an instrument or a medium and indeed show that it cannot have access to the absolute? The answer to these questions lies within them: in order to have a *correct* account, i.e. an account that is true and absolute, we need to know that we can indeed cognize the truth, or the Absolute. Otherwise, all our philosophical endeavors could be futile and frivolous. To be able to even ask the question of whether we have the correct account of something would perhaps mean that we presuppose that we have the ability to know/cognize the truth. This is precisely Hegel's point in his critical remarks at the beginning of his Introduction. This potential criticism is in line with the worries that Fichte and Schelling both had about the presence of an unknowable thing-in-itself in Kant's theory. Fichte and Schelling were both concerned that we are faced with an issue if our theory for knowing/cognizing the truth includes the presence of an unknowable thing-in-itself as integral to this truth (thereby jeopardizing access to complete knowledge of the truth).

Hegel dismisses the views that regard cognition as an instrument or a medium by claiming that they are "adventitious and arbitrary, and the words associated with them like 'absolute', 'cognition', 'objective' and 'subjective', and countless others whose meaning is assumed to be generally familiar, could even be regarded as so much deception", since giving the false impression that their meaning is generally known avoids "the main problem, which is

precisely to provide this Notion” (*PhG* 48, §76; Suhrkamp 70-1). Hegel writes that the moment we recognize these false approaches to cognition and knowledge as false, we see that they are mere appearances. These ideas “constitute merely an empty appearance of knowing, which vanishes immediately as soon as Science comes on the scene” (*ibid.*).⁹⁸ However, he is quick to claim that “Science, just because it comes on the scene, is itself an appearance”, it is not yet “in its developed and unfolded truth” (*ibid.*). Hegel thereby announces that Science must then be unfolded and developed in the body of his work that follows in order to show its truth,⁹⁹ and this point is at the heart of defining Hegel’s epistemology. The *PhG* is about knowledge and how we come to arrive at truth, and Hegel writes that “[i]t is for this reason that an exposition of how knowledge [*Wissen*] makes its appearance will here be undertaken” (*PhG* 49, §76, Suhrkamp 72).

The *PhG* is the detailed account of the *Bildung*¹⁰⁰ of consciousness to a point where consciousness is ready for Science (i.e. “the exposition of how knowledge [*Wissen*] makes its appearance”). The *Bildung* is complete at the point in which consciousness comes to grasp its own phenomenal experience for what it is, concretely. This is the point at which the *in-itself* of the object matches its appearance *for* consciousness (*PhG* 56, §87; Suhrkamp 80). This is the point at which consciousness grasps the movement within its phenomenal experience as well as the limits of it, insofar as consciousness grasps the object of its experience for what it is, namely something *in-itself* and *for-it* at once (more on this point shortly below). This *Bildung* is

⁹⁸ This Hegel can say because he knows better thanks to his completed theory.

⁹⁹ One could argue this is similar to Aquinas’s third definition of truth. An analysis of this, however, is beyond the scope of my dissertation.

¹⁰⁰ Miller uses the term “education” to translate this term which Hegel uses. However, this is inaccurate. “Education” has the connotation of a relation of an educator and a student. However, in the *PhG* there is no such relation: consciousness develops its knowledge by itself, and without the guidance of an educator. Thus, I will use the term *Bildung* in my writing. John McDowell also chooses to use *Bildung* in his *Mind and World* when referring to this notion.

accordingly a journey of coming to grasp with the nature of consciousness and its limits, as well as a journey to the point at which “when consciousness itself grasps its own essence, it will signify the nature of absolute knowledge itself” (*PhG* 57, §89; Suhrkamp 81).

Hegel writes that “the series of configurations which consciousness goes through along this road [of the *PhG*] is, in reality, the detailed history of the *education* [*Bildung*] of consciousness itself to the standpoint of Science” (*PhG* 50, §78; Suhrkamp 73). By Science, Hegel means a certain kind of rigorous philosophy that meets the criteria that he expounds (such as not starting with a definition of the philosophical work itself ahead of doing the philosophical work, or having the form of the work be seen as separate from its content). He thinks that Kant, for instance, falls below this level. Since “the way to Science is itself already *Science*” (*PhG* 56, §88; Suhrkamp 80), Hegel’s view of the *PhG* as an epistemology presupposes that Kant’s view of philosophy falls short. Kant seeks to explain cognition before the recognition that this explanation can occur only within cognition itself. Kant’s “transcendental” view also does not meet the standards of a science. For instance, he fails to deduce properly the categories that are finally deduced by Fichte. For Hegel then, the *Bildung* and the account of this *Bildung*, i.e. the account of knowledge specifically in how it is acquired, is already something philosophical. This means that the topic which the *PhG* undertakes is a philosophical account of *Bildung*. One can determine this from a careful reading of the Introduction of the *PhG*.

In the Introduction of the *PhG*, Hegel gives a general overview of what the reader is to see in the body of the work itself. The Introduction has an important role in this case since the *PhG* is written and structured very differently from a traditional work of philosophy: it follows the journey of consciousness first, and then Spirit, whom one could see as the main ‘characters’ that are depicted in various situations or stages with different objects and problematics.

Nevertheless, Hegel is systematically presenting philosophy; the *PhG* is not a fiction novel after all. What makes it a work of philosophy is made clear especially through what Hegel presents in the Introduction: the *PhG* is the account of a journey of *Bildung*, and this journey itself as well as its ultimate goal is philosophy. In this sense, it is clear that Hegel presents first and foremost an epistemology in the *PhG*.

3.2.1. Natural vs. Scientific Consciousness

Perhaps one of the most fruitful ways of approaching the *PhG* is through an account of the difference between natural and scientific consciousness, especially when it comes to *Erkenntnis*. Such an account not only provides us with the essential framework of the *PhG*, but also gives us a useful way in which to interpret the movements within the work. This account shows that at the heart of the *PhG* is a theory to explain *Erkenntnis*, i.e. an epistemology in our sense of the term. Hegel's *PhG* is an extremely rich philosophical work, and there is no doubt that it deals with a variety of important philosophical concerns. Nevertheless, it is at the core, I argue, concerned with explaining knowledge and cognition. In the difference that I explore below, we see that Hegel distinguishes between natural consciousness, which takes what it cognizes to be true, and scientific consciousness, that is mindful of the whole (that is, *the whole* structure of possible knowledge in which each cognition constitutes a part), which Hegel calls the truth.

Natural consciousness, to put it simply, is consciousness we have on an everyday basis when we are not engaging in philosophical reflection. It is the relation of some specific object that is *in-itself* to a corresponding object as it is *for*-consciousness. This *in-itself* is not consciousness's but merely a candidate *in-itself* at each stage, because we don't know/grasp (at

least not correctly) what is *for-us* until the end of the journey – for, consciousness’s *for-it* does not match the *in-itself*, and hence we do not know it. At each stage except the last, this object *for-consciousness* turns out to be not specific or complete enough to match the object *in-itself*. For instance, in the Sense-certainty chapter, the in-itself is distinct entities (like Humean sense impressions) and they are *for-consciousness* “This”, “Here”, “Now” and so on. As they are *for-consciousness* turns out to be completely general, and thus wrong as compared with their *in-itself*. Even with reflection, natural consciousness operates in a different framework than a consciousness that is in the standpoint of Science. This difference pertains to experience, knowledge, and truth.

Natural consciousness does not have the view of the whole of truth yet, namely, its *for-it* does not match its *in-itself*. Therefore, its approach to phenomenal experience is from a limited standpoint. This is the form of consciousness of the main character of *PhG*, who goes through the various stages and settings in the text, each concerned with a different object and problem. Hegel writes in the Introduction to the *PhG* that “natural consciousness will show itself to be only the Notion of knowledge [*Wissen*], or in other words, not to be real knowledge [*Wissen*]” (*PhG* 49, §78; Suhrkamp 72). That natural consciousness is only the “Notion of knowledge [*Begriff des Wissens*]” and not real knowledge means that consciousness (which is in this state) takes this conscious state to be the truth and to count as true knowledge. However, it is not true knowledge because it can be falsified upon further reflection. Hence, it is only the Notion,¹⁰¹ the concept of knowledge, and not real knowledge. Even though natural consciousness is not real knowledge, it nevertheless “directly takes itself to be real knowledge [*das reale Wissen*]” (ibid.).

¹⁰¹ “Notion” here is not taken in its complete form but rather as merely formal and incomplete notion.

Throughout consciousness's path, consciousness experiences doubt and despair¹⁰² since what it takes to be true is discovered not in fact to be how things *really are* independently of the way consciousness understands them. That is, consciousness's *for-it* does not match its *in-itself*.¹⁰³ The problem in each case is the notion of knowledge and not the content of that notion: the content is neutral (that is, as in itself) and is affected by the notion and how the notion relates to the content. In this manner, consciousness is able to get on its path of *Bildung*: "The skepticism that is directed against the whole range of phenomenal consciousness ... renders the spirit for the first time competent to examine what truth is. For it brings about a state of despair about all the so-called natural ideas, thoughts, and opinions" (*PhG* 50, §78; Suhrkamp 73).

In contrast to natural consciousness is consciousness at "the standpoint of Science" (*PhG* 50, §78; Suhrkamp 73). Hegel makes a distinction between "we" the readers of the *PhG* and "consciousness" whose journey of *Bildung* we are watching unfold. "Consciousness" is the generic individual that is going through the journey of education in the *PhG*. "Consciousness" is different from "cognition" in the *PhG*: consciousness is the individual that cognizes and thereby has cognitions. Consciousness then turns into "Spirit" about halfway through the text. "Spirit" refers to a community of individual consciousnesses who are going through the journey together. My interpretation is that consciousness and Spirit are the amalgamation of the various stages of cognitive (and socio-cognitive) development of humanity. The *PhG* is then an account of

¹⁰² Hegel writes that "[n]atural consciousness will show itself to be only the Notion of knowledge, or in other words, not to be real knowledge. But since it takes itself to be real knowledge, this path has a negative significance for it, and what is in fact the realization of the Notion, counts for it rather as the loss of its own self; for it does lose its truth on this path. The road can therefore be regarded as the pathway of *doubt*, or more precisely as the way of despair" (*PhG* 49, §78; Suhrkamp 72).

¹⁰³ Though this sounds like a correspondence theory of truth, it is not. Consciousness and its object co-determine each other through dialectical mediation.

knowledge and cognition as we have it as a result of the development of human faculties and society. A detailed and precise discussion of this topic is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

We, the readers of the *PhG* and the followers of consciousness in its journey, are already at the standpoint of Science. Consciousness, however, has to go through its journey to reach this point. Hegel refers to “us” as the observers of consciousness as it is on this path. In this exercise, we do not need to do anything: “since what consciousness examines is its own self, all that is left for *us* [*uns*] to do is simply to look on” (*PhG* 54, §85, my emphasis; Suhrkamp 77).

One reaches the standpoint of Science only through the phenomenal experience and *Bildung* of natural consciousness through what Hegel calls various stages of consciousness: He writes that “the series of configurations which consciousness goes through along this road is, in reality, the detailed history of the *education* of consciousness itself to the standpoint of Science” (*PhG* 50, §78; Suhrkamp 73). Natural consciousness, through these stages experiences “the loss of its own self; for it does lose its truth on this path” (*PhG* 49, §78; Suhrkamp 72). I take this to mean the following. Natural consciousness exists at each moment in its progression towards the standpoint of Science as the consciousness *that it is* or *of which* it is: how and of what it is conscious is precisely the *what* of this consciousness. Thus, we can define the consciousness at each stage according to the conscious content and form of its stage. Accordingly, consciousness *is* what it takes to be true, what it takes to know, at each stage of its path. If, then, what consciousness takes to be true is in fact not true (i.e. not real knowledge), then it will lose its own self (i.e. what it took to be itself and to be true as the consciousness that it is at that stage) and its truth.

Only at the standpoint of Science, after going through all the different stages of itself, i.e. of consciousness, does consciousness reach a point of truth: “the path of the natural

consciousness which presses forward to true knowledge [*wahren Wissen*] ... which journeys through the series of its own configurations as though they were stations appointed for it by its own nature, so that it may ... achieve finally, through a completed experience of itself, the awareness [*Kenntnis*] of what it really is in itself" (*PhG* 49, §77; Suhrkamp 72). Consciousness will only then have truth, and real knowledge. This is the point at which consciousness sees its whole journey in its entirety. Anything that consciousness takes to be knowledge before that will only be knowledge's concept and not real knowledge [*wahre Wissen*].¹⁰⁴ Real knowledge, in this sense, is the most developed form of knowledge. There are earlier and later, hence more and less developed conceptions of knowledge that arise as stations on the way to real knowledge. Though consciousness has absolute knowledge at the end of the *PhG*, there is still a need for the *WL*. The *PhG* is a work on the structure and development of conscious cognition whereas the *WL* is the science of the cognitive strategy in our grasp of the logical structure of reality (more on this below in the section on the *WL*).

Each stage before consciousness reaches the final truth ends "when ... the result is conceived as it is in truth, namely, as a *determinate* negation" and at that point "a new form has thereby immediately arisen" (*PhG* 51, §79; Suhrkamp 74). Through such movement from stage to stage, in which consciousness sees the untruth in its own shape and thereby loses itself, consciousness reaches the standpoint of science where there is no longer anything it holds to be knowledge that can also be taken to be false. Each stage is then "the exposition of the untrue consciousness in its untruth" (*PhG* 50, §79; Suhrkamp 73). But, as a part of *Bildung* this exposition of the untruth is a necessary aspect of *Aufhebung* and truth as a whole.

¹⁰⁴ However, this is *Bildung* for Hegel. Consciousness is educated through its failures; it does not simply negate in a way that leaves behind all of its failures, but rather each negation turns eventually into a double-negation in order to be *Bildung* proper. I discuss this further below.

3.2.2. The Kinds of Truth

Although there are mistakes in cognition all the way until the end of the progression of consciousness through its various shapes, Hegel nevertheless finds a conception of truth in each stage. I identify three kinds of truth for Hegel in the *PhG*. The first is found in the *Aufhebung* of each respective stage through the recognition of what was mistakenly taken to be knowledge in it. Thus, truth is the moment of recognition of the untruth.

The second kind of truth is found in the following conception of knowledge. Hegel writes “consciousness simultaneously *distinguishes* itself from something, and at the same time *relates* itself to it, or, as it is said, this something exists *for* consciousness; and the determinate aspect of this *relating*, or of the *being* of something for a consciousness, is *knowing* [*Wissen*]” (*PhG* 52, §82; Suhrkamp 76).¹⁰⁵ As a general account of consciousness, as that which relates to an object, the journey has various stages at which consciousness takes various shapes. In these shapes, consciousness whose *for-it* does not match its *in-itself* is false consciousness which is about to be reversed by its own dynamics. The reversal is an integral part of the learning process (*Bildung*) of consciousness. However, prior to the reversal, this consciousness appears (falsely) to consciousness to be true.

The third kind of truth, which is truth in its real (or “ideal”, as I discuss in Chapter 4) meaning, is absolute truth, which consciousness reaches only at the point of absolute knowing [*absolute Wissen*]. This is the standpoint of Science, as discussed earlier. These three kinds of truth as found in the *PhG* correspond to my discussion of the ways in which idealism is approached by Hegel at the end of this chapter.

¹⁰⁵ This statement is akin to Reinhold’s *Grundsatz* that states what consciousness is, in a very general and abstract way as the “Satz des Bewusstseins”.

3.2.3. An Historical Approach to Truth

In relation to the discussion on historicism above, for Hegel, knowledge is historically situated. What does this mean? One could say it is the basic hermeneutic idea that one always interprets things from one's own standpoint. But Hegel goes a step further. He presents an argument about how to approach the notions of "right" and "wrong" in philosophy and the historical development of ideas. We can understand Hegel's insight by looking at his position in terms of his account of right and wrong in philosophy, and also by looking at his system and its development, with what could be called errors within it, and how Hegel presents these errors.

At the beginning of the Preface to the *PhG*, Hegel presents a rather striking view regarding different and sometimes opposing positions in philosophy. He writes:

The more conventional opinion gets fixated on the antithesis of truth and falsity, the more it tends to expect a given philosophical system to be either accepted or contradicted; and hence finds only acceptance or rejection. It does not comprehend the diversity of philosophical systems as the progressive unfolding of truth, but rather sees in it simple disagreements. ... But he who rejects a philosophical system [i.e. the new philosopher] does not usually comprehend what he is doing in this way; and he who grasps the contradiction between them [i.e. the historian of philosophy] does not, as a general rule, know [*weiß*] how to free it from its one-sidedness, or maintain it in its freedom by recognizing [*erkennen*] the reciprocally necessary moments that take shape as a conflict and seeming incompatibility. (*PhG* 2, §2, Suhrkamp 12)

We see in this passage that Hegel is critical of the kind of philosophical work that seeks to form antitheses between those philosophical systems it regards as true and those it regards as false. Setting different views against one another and rejecting certain views completely is not a good way of doing philosophy. A successful study of different philosophies will seek to understand the historical development of ideas: how and from where the seemingly different and contradictory ideas and philosophical systems arose, and in what ways they developed with regard to their historical and material context. This is the real work of a philosopher: to understand the reasons and the conditions of ideas, and not to reject them and label them as

“false”. All philosophical systems have a place from which they originated, and this is significant for Hegel for understanding thinking as a whole. If thought and cognition can produce what one may deem as ‘false’, it is nevertheless a part of thought that originated from a certain way of thinking which is the product of a certain philosophical system (which in turn arose in a specific historical context). Understanding this certain way of thinking can also illuminate other ways of thinking that are unlike it. This is how one avoids being one-sided.

This opening discussion in the Preface to the *PhG* highlights Hegel’s views about falsity in the larger scale of philosophical systems.¹⁰⁶ I propose that Hegel’s view regarding philosophical systems as a whole and his rejection of setting philosophies and philosophical systems against one another as true and false gives us a framework through which we may understand his view of *Erkenntnis* as including within it the contradictions that arise through it albeit together with their resolution.

3.2.4. Truth and the Whole

As philosophical systems and ideas are products of the historical structure in which they are formed (insofar as the historical structure echoes the logical structure), they are a part of a whole. Insofar as thought has evolved through various historical developments, understanding the development and succession of philosophical systems is, thus, valuable in understanding thought as a whole. For the same reason, error in cognition or claims of knowledge is not to be taken as grounds to toss aside the cognition in which this error is found. The error should rather

¹⁰⁶ At the beginning of the Introduction to the *PhG*, he also mentions that Science comes on the scene as appearance alongside false ideas. Science is merely an appearance at the beginning because we cannot know the truth of the Science before it actually demonstrates this through its own unfolding. Thus, we cannot distinguish it from the other false ones. The remedy for this is only in seeing Science through its unfolding in order for it to demonstrate its legitimacy.

also be considered as a part of the whole of knowledge. Thus, falsity, for Hegel, is something different than what is commonly thought: that which is false is not something to be discarded, but rather has value for what is absolutely true. This is the main insight behind Hegel's notion of *Aufhebung*: a proverbial 'lifting up' by negating yet preserving.

For Hegel, a single particular piece of knowledge or cognition is not capable of being true or false (in the absolute sense); it merely fits into the whole in its own way. He writes,

Since philosophy moves essentially in the element of universality, which includes within itself the particular, it might seem that here more than in any of the other sciences the subject-matter itself, and even in its complete nature, were expressed in the aim and the final results, the execution being by contrast really the unessential factor. (*PhG* 1, §1; Suhrkamp 11)

However, it is not the case that the execution is "really the unessential factor". For Hegel the execution, i.e. the development of the system is of utmost importance. The progress and dialectical unfolding are ineliminable parts of the whole of Hegel's system. Furthermore, (as I discuss more below with regard to the *WL*) the dialectical unfolding is the form of Hegel's works and this unfolding happens in a specific way for its precise content. Consequently, the form and content of Hegel's works form a whole and cannot be separated from one another. Similarly, in Hegel's works one cannot see the whole picture and the truth from just one part of the whole.

For Hegel, the whole is the truth as he remarks later on when he writes "[t]he True is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development" (*PhG* 11, §20; Suhrkamp 24). Hence, for Hegel, it does not make sense for us to call a cognition 'true' or 'false' in the grand scheme. We need to rather consider individual cognitions within the context of the whole and as a part of the whole.

Let's consider an example from the *PhG* in which the initial cognition turns out to be mistaken upon further consideration, and see how this initial mistake fits into the overall whole.

In the Culture section of the Spirit chapter consciousness as Spirit cognizes its situation as absolute freedom when in reality it is terror. At this point in the *PhG*, absolute freedom results in meaningless death "with no more significance than cutting off a head of cabbage or swallowing a mouthful of water" (*PhG* 360, §590; Suhrkamp 436). The initial cognition of absolute freedom turns out to be at least partially mistaken. There is a mistake regarding the correspondence of *consciousness's judgment* about what consciousness cognizes with *what consciousness cognizes*. However, what consciousness cognizes and claims to know (not the cognition but the object on which the cognition is based) remains the same regardless of what consciousness judges it to be. Sometimes these judgments can be significant enough to make a difference, but sometimes not.

When consciousness first finds itself as absolute freedom (*PhG* 356, §584; Suhrkamp 432), it does not yet know that the truth of absolute freedom will culminate in meaningless death (*PhG* 360, §590; Suhrkamp 436). This indicates that consciousness was mistaken in its initial judgment about the nature of absolute freedom, insofar as consciousness did not at first realize its truth as that of terror. Regardless of whether consciousness realized the potential of terror in absolute freedom, that potential was there from the beginning and simply had to unfold to be cognized by consciousness as the truth of absolute freedom. We see the effects of the mistakes in judgment especially in the *PhG* when they are the main factor propelling the movement of the work from beginning to end, creating the philosophical "process" and "progress".

Hegel writes in the Introduction of the *PhG* that the road to Absolute Knowing, the standpoint of Science, is "the way of despair" (*PhG* 49, §78; Suhrkamp 72): consciousness (and later, Spirit) runs into contradiction after contradiction that need to be resolved and sublated and only at the end Spirit arrives at the stage of Absolute Knowing, the final stage of its *Bildung*. Hegel, presents Absolute Knowing as the stage which "is the movement of *consciousness*, and in

that movement consciousness is the totality of its moments” (*PhG* 479, §788; Suhrkamp 575). But curiously, the shape which this takes at the end is a gallery of images, *Galerie von Bildern* (*PhG* 492, §808; Suhrkamp 590): thus, *Bildung* is completed by compiling a series of *Bilder*. The totality of these *Bilder* together create the whole which comprises the *Bildung* of consciousness to the standpoint of Science.

Consciousness’s *Bildung* consists in the *Bilder* of each stage of its journey that it has gathered and culminates in Absolute Knowing which is a looking back over these *Bilder*. The *PhG* as a journey of *Bildung*, is an account of how consciousness comes to gather knowledge and what this knowledge consists in (that is, the specific contents and the form of unfolding of the stages of the *Bildung*). It is also worthy to note that *Einbildung*¹⁰⁷ and *Einbildungskraft* also have the same root, and mean ‘imagination’, and ‘faculty of imagination’ respectively.¹⁰⁸

In this section on the *PhG*, I argued that the fact that this journey is an account of knowledge and what it means to know is supported by the difference between the natural consciousness and scientific consciousness. Scientific consciousness observes natural consciousness engage in Science until it reaches the standpoint of Science itself. Along the way, it finds out about what I identify to be three kinds of Truth: the truth found in the existence of falsity and mistakes, the truth found in overcoming these mistakes though nevertheless retaining

¹⁰⁷ It is worth noting that there is a German idiomatic way to comment critically on an arrogant or vain (“*eingebildet*”) person: “*Einbildung ist auch eine Bildung!*” (“Vanity is a form of education too!”).

¹⁰⁸ Given that the final stage of the *PhG* is a gallery of images, this morphological relation to imagination and the faculty of imagination could indicate that Hegel is presenting his own take on the Kantian notion of imagination and its role in cognition. Jennifer Bates in *Hegel’s Theory of Imagination* makes a similar argument, but with less of an emphasis on the relation of these words. She writes “When the Concept is finally realized to have been at work throughout the *Vorstellungen* and their transitions up the phenomenological ladder, the subsuming work of the imagination becomes explicit, and we pass beyond merely representing our experience (*Vorstellen*) to full speculative comprehension of it” (Bates 137). Without relating the gallery of images [*Bilder*] to *Einbildungskraft*, she nevertheless indicates that short of Absolute Knowing, consciousness moves beyond (sublates) representations, which are inadequate. This moving beyond happens through the work of the *Einbildungskraft*. Thus, it is no surprise that we end up at a gallery of images at the end.

them through *Aufhebung*, and the truth of Absolute Knowing which is the Truth found in the whole. These three kinds of truth present the Hegelian approach to knowledge which takes false and mistaken cognitions (as long as they have a certain necessity to their emergence, i.e. if they have a locus in logical evolution) to be just as integral as other cognitions to the Truth as a whole. The importance of *Aufhebung* and the equal value of rights and wrongs for Absolute Knowing indicate Hegel's historical approach to knowledge. For Hegel, cognitions have to be regarded as they are found in their specific historical context, and the value of Truth should be ascribed ultimately to the whole.

3.3. *Wissenschaft der Logik*

The *WL* is the other main pillar of Hegel's epistemology (though they are not on equal footing, as I explain below). The *WL*, unlike the *PhG* is not a path of *Bildung* for any consciousness or any saliently identifiable character. Thus, the case I made above for a *Bildung* presenting the reader with an account and development of knowledge does not apply in the same way, at least not so readily, to the *WL*. The *WL* follows a development of knowledge like the *PhG*. However, it is not a *Bildung*, though it is "science" and "logic". In this section, I argue that the *WL* is chiefly concerned with presenting an epistemology through two main theses: (1) the *WL* is written and must be read as a book that discursively unfolds knowledge, and (2) the reason for its discursive unfolding is in the dialectic nature of its contents, hence the epistemological character is in its contents. However, before presenting the arguments for these theses, first I will situate the *WL* in relation to the *PhG* and discuss its non-standard character.

3.3.1. The Non-Standard Character of the *WL*

As in the *PhG*, it is also useful to consider the Introduction in the *WL*. The *WL* is the Science for which the consciousness in the *PhG* has prepared itself with its *Bildung*. To emphasize this, Hegel writes “[t]he *Notion* of pure science and its deduction is therefore presupposed in the present work in so far as the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is nothing other than the deduction of it” (*WL* 49). The term deduction means something specific for Hegel. For Kant, who used the notion of a *transcendental* deduction, ‘transcendental deduction’ means “the explanation of the way in which concepts can relate to objects *a priori*” (*CPR* A85/B117).

Dieter Henrich, Anton Koch, and Ulrich Seeberg argue that Kant uses legal terminology to explain his transcendental deduction.¹⁰⁹ This is a point Hegel seems to miss completely. The practice of legal deductions ended with the Holy Roman Empire in 1806 and had already been fading for some decades before. Hegel did not grasp the point of Kant’s technical sense of “deduction”. Thus, Hegel interprets “deduction” in a different way than the technical legal structure of argument Kant had in mind.

¹⁰⁹ See Dieter Henrich (1989), Anton Koch (2017, 2019), and Ulrich Seeberg (2006). Koch explains the legal matter in question as follows: “Out of curiosity, Hegel (like Fichte and Schelling) wanted to develop a complete theory of thinking and being, but all we can get in a scientifically communicable form are deductions that prove our *de facto* possessions of pure concepts as cases of *de jure* ownership. Consider a museum in possession of an impressionist painting claimed by someone on the grounds that until 1938 it belonged to her grandparents, who were then expropriated of it by the National Socialist administration. If the grandparents' ownership is undisputed and if the museum's lawyers were to write a deduction (but the practice ended with the Holy Roman Empire in 1806), they would not need to go further back than 1938. The painter's biography and the early purchases and sales of the painting from the 1870s to 1938 would be irrelevant at court. This is what made deductions appealing to Kant. They reduce the theoretical ballast and thus the burden of proof and are sufficient to secure justified ownership claims. Against an idealized empiricist skepticism and an idealized rationalist dogmatism the metaphysical deduction was designed to show that certain concepts, the categories, owed their contents neither to habits based on associations of empirical representations nor to rational acquaintance with innate representational structures, but to logic. The starting point of the deduction thus had to be a truism not disputed by any relevant party” (Koch 2019, p 1). Koch presents this argument here against Pippin to show how Kant would argue against Hegel’s criticisms and the Hegelian perspective Koch claims Pippin has adopted in *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*. Though Hegel may not have been well-versed in this old legal practice, he would (and, I would argue, indeed does) argue against the assumption that we can take for granted so-called “truisms not disputed by any relevant party”. For Hegel, such truisms are precisely what we need to put into question, otherwise we would remain blind to the most pernicious of our dogmas – so pernicious that they are taken as truisms!

For Hegel, however, a deduction is a dialectical unfolding and development of a concept through various stages of determination and mediation. Through the emergence and resolution of contradictions at each stage, the system gets formed as a whole, and the whole is the truth for Hegel. This formulation of truth is then a deduction. Hegel writes in the Preface to the First Edition of the *WL* that “it is this self-construing method alone which enables philosophy to be an objective, demonstrated science” (*WL* 28; Suhrkamp 17).

The *PhG* is the preparation of consciousness for the Science (the journey of the *PhG* is also *Science* (*PhG* 56, §88; Suhrkamp 80)): one can reach the Logic only by reaching certainty and truth (as one does at the end of the *PhG*). In this sense, the *PhG* is an account of knowledge because it details the acquisition of knowledge in a categorial-manner through the illustration of a path of *Bildung*. It is the science of *conscious* experience, thus a phenomenology (not speculative science as a logic). However, the *WL* is an independent work and is not a continuation of the *PhG*. The standpoint of Science to which the *PhG* brings consciousness allows it engage in the *Logic* by beginning without presuppositions. One may reach this same position of “total *presuppositionlessness*” also “by the freedom that abstracts from everything, and grasps its own pure abstraction, the simplicity of thinking—in the resolve of *the will to think purely*” (*EL* 124, §78, Zusatz, Suhrkamp 168). To set these two positions (namely, the immediacy at the end of the *PhG* and the immediacy achieved through the resolve of the will) as opposing one another would itself be a presupposition.¹¹⁰

As I discussed in Chapter 1, Hegel claims in the *EL* that the subject matter of the various philosophical sciences are nothing other than the various concrete shapes of consciousness, and

¹¹⁰ Hegel writes: “The antithesis between an independent immediacy of the content or of knowing, and, on the other side, an equally independent mediation that is irreconcilable with it, must be put aside, first of all, because it is a mere *presupposition* and an arbitrary *assurance*” (*EL* 124, §78, Suhrkamp 168).

thus consciousness is found in all philosophical sciences even if not overtly: “the subject matters of special parts of philosophical science, falls directly within that development of consciousness”, namely the *Bildung* exhibited in the *PhG* (*EL* 64, §25, Zusatz; Suhrkamp 92). The stages of consciousness’s *Bildung* can each be taken to be explored as a separate part of philosophical science. I claimed that this indicates that consciousness is present throughout all of Hegel’s works on the specific philosophical sciences, but in a qualified way: the “development [of the specific philosophical sciences] has to take place behind the back of consciousness so to speak, inasmuch as the content is related to consciousness as what is *in-itself*” (*ibid.*).

Although they are taking “behind the back of consciousness”, the key insight here is the fact that they are the scientific study of the developmental parts of consciousness. Thus, consciousness does not engage in these sciences by *experiencing* them and learning in that way, but rather, we are giving accounts of various specific aspects of consciousness.¹¹¹ Consciousness is characterized by its cognition (the relating of *in-itself* and *for-it*) and it is not possible to conceive of consciousness without some form of cognition. Hence, if we are scientifically studying the various specific aspects of consciousness in specific philosophical sciences, then we are also thereby studying the *cognition* of these aspects. Consequently, the accounts of the specific aspects of consciousness in each particular science will be each be an *account of cognition* (i.e. *Erkenntnistheorie*) of consciousness in that aspect or with regard to that aspect.

Though we are investigating “the content [that] is related to consciousness as what is *in-itself*” in these sciences, it is “behind the back of consciousness” because there is no *for-it* at play, unlike in the *PhG* (*EL* 64, §25, Zusatz; Suhrkamp 92). Since we are already at the

¹¹¹ Koch’s distinction between a background logic and a foreground logic in Hegel’s *Logic* is helpful for making sense of this difference. I explain this distinction shortly below in this chapter.

standpoint of Science, there is no longer a distinction between the *in-itself* and the *for-it*, and therefore a study of the *in-itself* is no different from (and already contains in it as a logical moment) its matching *for-it*.

At the end of the *PhG* consciousness/Spirit sacrifices itself because it knows itself and its own limits (*PhG* 492, §807; Suhrkamp 590), that is, it reaches the limits of what is *for-it* when the *for-it* is no longer different from the *in-itself*. Accordingly, Spirit “externalizes” itself as Time, Space, Nature and History (ibid.). It is beyond itself by virtue of having reached the end of appearances, i.e. the various *for-itself* that did not match the *in-itself*. Thus, finding the limits of appearance is to reach real knowledge, namely, the point at which the science is no longer about appearances but about knowledge proper. Accordingly, in the last sentences of the *PhG* Hegel characterizes this complete view of the *PhG* as “the Science of Knowing in the sphere of appearance” as well as “History” (*PhG* 493, §808; Suhrkamp 591). *PhG*, then, as “regarded from the side of their [Spirits’] [philosophically] comprehended organization” is an epistemology. It is an epistemology (“Science of Knowing”) focusing on appearance. Given the externalization of Spirit into Time and Space to form History when the journey is complete, we can say in retrospect that the *PhG* is also an account of a contingent historical development.

PhG is a preparation for the *WL* insofar as it details the path through which consciousness goes in order to shed its own self-limitation (being bound by deceptive representations when its *for-it* does not match its *in-itself*). But in the process, consciousness in fact discovers its limits, i.e. the limits of its possibility of phenomenal experience. In this sense, the *PhG* is a self-sacrifice. We begin the *WL* with consciousness having recognized its limitations *qua* consciousness/Spirit and thereby shed itself as that *for* whom objects *appear*. Thus, we begin the

WL without presuppositions, having left behind the limitations of Spirit and consciousness by the very act of this recognition.

Consequently, *WL*¹¹² is pure thinking without the tethers of being *for* a consciousness. It is pure thinking of thinking, which is an account of being. At the outset, we are faced with a double-approach: a science of thinking and being at once. Whereas the *PhG* was a science of the experience of *Bildung* and (as we find out at the end) of History, the *WL* is the science of Logic as the intersection of thought and being. We approach being through speculative thought in this science.

In the 1812 Preface to the *WL*, Hegel claims that “the science of logic which constitutes metaphysics proper or purely has hitherto still been much neglected” (*WL* 27), thereby indicating that the *WL* is a metaphysics. Nevertheless, this is not the end of the story. For what Hegel understands by “metaphysics”, as well as by “logic” is significantly different from their traditional conceptions. About the way in which he transforms “metaphysics” he writes that “[t]he essential point of view is that what is involved is an altogether new concept of scientific procedure” (ibid.). This procedure is that the science of logic unfolds in a quasi-phenomenological form: one moment follows after another through a logico-temporal development of the details of each moment (more on this below). This development is a logico-temporal unfolding akin to a phenomenological unfolding of events, yet is not *only* temporal and is not experienced by a subject.

In the *WL*, Hegel presents an ontology or metaphysics which details what Anton Koch calls “die Theorie des logischen Raumes” (Koch 1) in his *Die Evolution des logischen Raumes*:

¹¹² This is also the case for the *EL*, as another articulation of Hegel’s *Logic*.

Aufsätze zu Hegels Nichtstandard-Metaphysik. Although the content of the Science is this metaphysics, insofar as it is a Science which unfolds logico-temporally and quasi-phenomenologically, it is at its core an epistemology. For Hegel, it does not make sense to speak of something without the knowledge of it – this is Hegel’s idealism (I explain this below). Koch presents Hegel’s *WL* as a non-standard *metaphysics*, and thus my view may seem to oppose his, however this is not the case: I agree with Koch that Hegel does present a non-standard metaphysics, but that is not all that Hegel does in the *WL*. More importantly, in Hegel’s unique form of idealism, which is found specifically in the *PhG* and the *WL*, it is not possible clearly to separate epistemology from metaphysics.

To do metaphysics for Hegel is to engage in the Science of metaphysics – and for Hegel, engaging in Science is a speculative activity which expands knowledge at one and the same time as it (1) engages in the activity and (2) reports this activity that is also the knowledge. Hegel’s metaphysics, then, in contrast to traditional metaphysics, has an element that focuses on how the science itself and its process are one and the same as the content of the science, i.e. the knowledge to be gained from it. The very doing of this science is also our account of how we come to develop pure knowledge about reality. Doing metaphysics in this way means that there is no longer a distinction between the Science itself, its content, its method, and its delivery. Metaphysics thus becomes an account of knowledge, more specifically, an account of the knowledge of its domain, i.e. “forms of thought” (*WL* 31).

This unique idealism found in Hegel’s works is precisely what I think makes his metaphysics or his epistemology non-standard. Koch writes of metaphysics that “[w]as der logische Raum ist, wird man verbindlich also erst von ihr, nicht *vor* ihr, erfahren” (Koch 1). This sentence captures not only Hegel’s reaction to, as he put it, learning to swim before jumping in

the water, or to foundationalism, but it also highlights in a positive sense what is unique about Hegel's metaphysics/epistemology: we *erfahren* (learn as we experience) the logical space not before it but from/through it. Science does not come before itself,¹¹³ but comes about only through its own exposition.

Koch characterizes Hegel's unique epistemology as his non-standard metaphysics, and distinguishes it from what he deems to be standard-metaphysics, that is, the metaphysics that was dominant until Hegel (though he also says that Kant and Fichte made some ventures towards the non-standard¹¹⁴). He defines the standard-metaphysics as follows:

Was nun diese und überhaupt alle metaphysischen Theorien vor Hegel zu Standard-Metaphysiken stempelt, ist bei allem Dissens die geteilte Ansicht, der logische Raum oder das Absolute sei eine fertige, statische, ewige Gegebenheit: das reine Sein, der Ideenkosmos, die substantiellen Formen, die singuläre unendliche Substanz, das vollkommene Wesen nebst dem Inhalt seines Verstandes, die Menge der Welten (usw.). (Koch 4)

Hence, these standard-metaphysics, among which he counts those of Plato, Aristotle, Leibniz, and Spinoza, all have a singular absolute given reality which is static and unchanging. Koch further claims that based on Hegel's diagnosis a metaphysically standard-theory would be "im idealisierten Grenzfall die zutreffende, aber widerspruchsvolle Beschreibung, zwar nicht des ganzen logischen Raumes, wohl aber einer bestimmten Entwicklungsstufe in dessen Evolution"

¹¹³ The fact that the *PhG* is the journey of consciousness to the standpoint of Science, and that "the way to Science is itself already *Science*" (*PhG* 56, §88; Suhrkamp 80) may seem at odds with this claim that the Science itself does not come before itself. The Science that consciousness is engaging on its way to the standpoint of Science it reaches at the end of the *PhG* (namely, the standpoint at which it can engage in the *Science of Logic*) is a phenomenological science that prepares consciousness for the Science of Logic. These are two difference sciences. As I discuss at various points in this chapter, it is important for Hegel that Science develops with its own content, and is not sought to be defined ahead of its own actual unfolding and development. Thus, the claim that Science does not come before itself, but comes about only through its own exposition merely states this stance of Hegel's.

¹¹⁴ Koch writes "Natürlich, sind auch Hegels unmittelbare Vorgänger, namentlich Kant und Fichte, hier schon zu rühmen. ... Kant entdeckte formale Fehlschlüsse und Antinomien der reinen Vernunft, die er aber noch mit konservativen Mitteln beheben zu können glaubte. ... [B]ei Fichte wird Sache dann ernster, sogar bitterernst ... Das Festeste, die Logik selber, sah Fichte mit besten, auch ganz unabhängig von seiner eigenen Darstellung nachvollziehbaren Gründen wanken, und sie kann, glaubte er, nur durch einen Machtspruch der Vernunft, dessen Beziehung tendenziell über ihre Kräfte geht, durch ihre heroische Selbstinkraftsetzung, die Selbstsetzung des Ich, mehr schlecht denn recht befestigt werden" (Koch 4-5).

(Koch 5). This constitution of only a certain level of the evolution of the logical space fits in with Hegel's remarks at the beginning of the Preface to the *PhG* that concern the falsity of philosophical theories which I discussed above. Similarly to how he sees truth and falsity as coming together to form a complete whole (a historical one in the context of the *PhG*), his notion of a metaphysics as Koch puts it (or an epistemology) is one that includes within it the mistaken and one-sided views to form a complete whole.

In contrast to the versions of this standard-metaphysics, Hegel presents reality in its dynamic nature that includes and requires difference within all of its identities. Koch writes that "Hegel ist demgegenüber der Entdecker der Evolution und Prozessualität des logischen Raumes, und seine neue oder Nichtstandard-Metaphysik ist die zugehörige Evolutionstheorie, eine, wenn man so will, evolutionäre Logik" (Koch 5). Koch continues with claiming that Hegel's philosophy is not standard, but nevertheless still metaphysics: "Nichtstandard weil sie die unvermeidlichen Widersprüche der metaphysischen Theoriebildung als unvermeidliche anerkennt und in Prozessualität auflöst, Metaphysik, weil sie sah sich nach wie vor als theoretische Wissenschaft im Sinne der klassischen Aristotelischen Einteilung versteht, die auch heute noch mit Gewinn auf die Wissenschaften anwendbar ist" (ibid.). Furthermore, he writes:

[d]emgemäß endet die Wissenschaft der Logik mit einem Kapitel über ihre Methode, in dem ex post der Weg des Denkens über die ganze logische Entwicklung hinweg zusammenfassend dargestellt wird. Diesen Weg und diese Bewegung meint Hegel, wenn er sagt, das Wahre sei das Ganze. Keinesfalls denkt er an ein statisches und totalitäres System von Kategorien, die dem Denken und dem Sein den Entfaltungsspielraum beschnitten (Koch 6).

While I agree with Koch regarding the non-standard character of Hegel's metaphysics, I think his insights can be taken a step further when we recognize the epistemological nature of Hegel's metaphysics, and read his *WL* as an epistemology. When we do this, we not only find ourselves in a position to grasp the truth of Hegel's non-standard approach compared to the

standard approach, but also gain a rare insight about the idealistic character of what his work accomplishes. In rejecting a static model of reality, Hegel embraces a view of reality that recognizes the dynamic structure of the movement of the process: “being” and “nothing” weave reality in a constant movement between various ever-changing categories including identity and diversity, universal-singular-particular, subjective and objective, and so on. However, the catch here is not that there is this constant movement between these various aspects and categories. Rather, the catch is that these aspects and categories are *within the things as well as our approach towards the things* through which we cognize and account for them in the *Logic* itself.¹¹⁵ We thereby do Science, and have the *WL*. It is precisely in this entanglement of the process that unfolds the logic with the logic itself that makes Hegel’s *WL* not only a metaphysics but at its core an epistemology.¹¹⁶

The *Logic* is different from other sciences since its form and its content cannot be separated: its subject matter is thinking, and it handles this subject matter through pure thought. Hegel writes in the Introduction to the *WL* that “as thinking and the rules of thinking are supposed to be the subject matter of logic, these directly constitute its peculiar content; in them, logic has that second constituent, a matter, about the nature of which it is concerned” (*WL* 44, Suhrkamp 36). This also attests to the epistemological nature of Hegel’s metaphysics: thinking and the rules of thinking (logic) are precisely in the domain of an account of knowledge as logic

¹¹⁵ Koch distinguishes between a background and a foreground logic in accounting for the difference between how we, finite conscious individuals, grasp the development of the *Logic* and the pure development of the *Logic* itself that is not about a single concrete individual but about thinking in general. I discuss this distinction more fully later in this chapter.

¹¹⁶ This interconnection between metaphysics and epistemology can be said to have its roots in Ancient Greek philosophy. Consider for instance the first sentence of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*: “All men by nature desire to know” (*Metaphysics* 980a). Beginning his work on metaphysics with a statement about knowledge indicates an interest in the notion of knowledge as integral to metaphysics.

(I discuss this further below). Thus, it does not make sense for Hegel to speak of a separation between metaphysics and epistemology. I discuss this in more detail shortly.

Hegel compares the *WL* to “the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and a finite mind” (*WL* 50). Again, one could ask what this has to do with an epistemology. The answer is found in exploring what Hegel can be taken to mean when he makes this statement. What I decipher from this sentence is the following, and this will be significant for how we understand Hegel to be continuing his epistemological project in the *WL*: 1) the Logic presents the reader with a metaphysics, insofar as it is “the exposition of God”, 2) this metaphysics that is presented is absolute,¹¹⁷ unchangeable *in its totality*, and universal, insofar as it is “God as he is in his *eternal essence*” (my emphasis), 3) the Logic is independent and prior to any consciousness, or “finite mind”, as well as “nature”. In this sense, the Science of Logic is the Science that explains reality as it is independent of and prior to anything else. Nevertheless, it is not so easy to simply state what the Logic is. Hegel writes that “what logic is cannot be stated beforehand, rather does this knowledge [*Wissen*] of what it is first emerge as the final outcome and consummation of the whole exposition” (*WL* 43, Suhrkamp 35). Thus, we can consider the Logic as a whole, in abstract terms as I have so far done, or we can go into the details of its development. But to go into the details means, again, taking all of the details together, i.e. reading the book. This, in fact, is a very significant aspect of the Logic when considering it as an epistemology. Before discussing the role of discursivity in the *WL*, however,

¹¹⁷ Regarding this second point, the absoluteness of the logic is witnessed by the fact that the *WL* follows after the *PhG*, after Spirit has reached the point of Absolute Knowing. Hegel is responding to Fichte and Schelling who both used the term “absolute” in a significant way. Koch recognizes this as well when he writes “besonders wenn man Fichte, Schelling und Hegel vor Augen hat, und ebenso wohlfeil wie vermutlich zutreffend wäre die Auskunft, der logische Raum sei das Absolute”; and “das Absolute sei das Reale insgesamt oder sei all das zusammengenommen, was unabhängig von anderem der Fall sei oder existiere. Vom logischen Raum wird man in ähnlicher, wenn auch nicht ganz gleicher Weise sagen dürfen oder wollen, er sei die Gesamtheit dessen, was der Fall sein und gedacht werden könne” (Koch 1).

it is crucial for us to turn our attention to the chapter of the *WL* on the Idea of Cognition, which provides not only Hegel's account of cognition in the *WL* but also a framework in which we may account for his epistemology in the *WL*.

3.3.2. The Idea of Cognition

The chapter of the *WL* on the Idea of Cognition [*Idee des Erkennens*] comes at the end of the work, right before Absolute Idea. By considering this chapter, we can glean insight into the structure of the entire work as being about thinking that in its most developed logical determination (short of Absolute Idea) is cognition. As I discussed earlier in this chapter, Hegel explains in the *Enzyklopaedie* that the specific philosophical sciences are each a stage found in consciousness's *Bildung* in the *PhG* – namely, they are each the science of a shape of consciousness (*EL* 64, §25; Suhrkamp 91). Given that the *WL* is a specific philosophical science and has as its main object of inquiry¹¹⁸ Logic, i.e. Being as Thought and Thought as Being, it (and the *EL*) is the specific philosophical science that gives an account of the Thought and Being belonging to consciousness. At their most determined stage, Thought and Being are Absolute Idea. As the penultimate moment, The Idea of Cognition, is nevertheless of utmost significance. For, the full development and determination of cognition is the Absolute Idea (*WL* 823).

The Idea of Cognition holds within it the opposition of the subjective and the objective. This is the distinction of the *in-itself* and *for-it* we encountered in the cognition of consciousness the *PhG* at all stages except Absolute Knowing – here, we have this distinction in the cognition of the Notion as *in-itself* and *for-it*. Only at the end of the Idea of Cognition chapter is this distinction finally overcome, and Cognition becomes Absolute Idea. This is just like in the

¹¹⁸ In other words, this is the center of the circle of the *Logic*.

PhG when consciousness overcomes the limitation it has in cognition, namely, the inner opposition it has is overcome when its *in-itself* and *for-it* finally match and consciousness has Absolute Knowing. Hegel presents the transition from Cognition to Absolute Idea by pointing out the parallel between the *WL* and *PhG* in the following passage:

There are still two worlds in opposition, one a realm of subjectivity in the pure regions of transparent thought, the other a realm of objectivity in the element of an externally manifold actuality that is an undisclosed realm of darkness. The complete elaboration of the unresolved contradiction between that *absolute* end and the *limitation* of this actuality that *insuperably* opposes it, has been considered in detail in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. As the Idea contains within itself the moment of complete determinateness, the other Notion with which the Notion enters into relation in the Idea, possesses in its subjectivity also the moment of an object; consequently the Idea enters here into the *shape of self-consciousness* and in this one aspect coincides with the exposition of the same. (*WL* 820)

Though we have been doing the Logic “behind the back of consciousness” (*EL* 64, §25, Zusatz; Suhrkamp 92), in coming to Absolute Idea from Cognition, we come to the *shape of self-consciousness*. Hegel is quick to point out, however, that “what is still lacking in the practical Idea is the moment of consciousness proper itself” (*WL* 821).

But how can there be self-consciousness without consciousness proper? The answer to this question reveals the epistemological character of the *WL*. Self-consciousness is self-cognition.¹¹⁹ This self-cognition recognizes itself as itself, i.e. its subject and object match. Thus, it is an internal self-relation that is a cognition. Self-consciousness does not refer to something outside, but is a recognition of one’s inner self-identity. In the *WL* where the “development [takes] place behind the back of consciousness so to speak, inasmuch as the content is related to consciousness as what is *in-itself*” (*EL* 64, §25, Zusatz; Suhrkamp 92). Since the *Logic* has as its content that which is related to consciousness as what is *in-itself*, namely, Thought that culminates in the Idea, consciousness proper does not have to be present. All we

¹¹⁹ A detailed analysis of self-consciousness is beyond my scope in this dissertation. Hegel’s famous treatment of this topic is in the chapter titled Self-Consciousness in the *PhG*.

need is the content and structure of what takes place *in* consciousness. A scientific study of Thought as Being that culminates in Cognition and self-cognition (as self-consciousness) is an epistemology, and does not require an account of consciousness proper.

Koch presents a useful distinction in making sense of the *WL* that is important to explain here: a distinction between two perspectives which he calls the “background logic” and the “foreground logic” (Koch 2019, 1050). These are, respectively, the perspective of “the author or a reader of the *Logic*” and the perspective of “the idealized limiting subject of pure thought” (ibid.). Koch writes that if the latter

“could speak—but he, she, it is not yet a discursive thinker, it would utter the one-word-sentence “Being!” at best, and this is what Hegel has it say, before he, in the role of [the author], goes on to explain what is going on. He does so by using normal philosophical shoptalk, which includes using terms naively that will later gain center stage in various chapters of the *Logic* and can thenceforth be used terminologically” (ibid.).

Koch explains the distinction in more detail as follows:

The foreground logic is pure thinking proper, the presuppositionless theory. The background logic is Hegel's and our philosophical theory of pure thinking, expressed throughout in the mode of external reflection. The background logic is all judgments, all discursive thinking. The foreground logic on the other hand proceeds by way of an idealized impossible limiting case of judging. (Koch 2019, 1051)

The subject of pure thought is not consciousness proper, and hence *qua* pure thought does not have discursive thinking. The discursive unfolding and development of the *Logic* happens from our perspective as the readers insofar as we engage with the *Logic* in time and space.

Based on these insights about the distinction between the background and the foreground logic and the role of discursivity, we can make two additional arguments for the claim that *WL* presents an epistemology (alongside a metaphysics). One of these arguments is regarding the discursive character of the background logic – I present this argument in the following section of

this chapter below. The other argument is about the non-discursive character of the foreground logic.

Henry Allison defines discursivity as “human cognition ... [which] requires both concepts and *sensible* intuition” (Allison 13). Allison points out that Kant expresses the need for both in our cognition with the “oft-cited phrase” (ibid.): “Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind” (*CPR* A51/B76).¹²⁰ Consciousness is discursive; we cognize things discursively and that includes the way we cognize (and do) philosophy. On the other hand, the subject of the *Logic*, that is, pure thinking itself *could* be (though not necessarily) discursive only starting from the stage of Judgment (second chapter of the first section of the Subjective Logic), where we have the subject-predicate division due to the concept’s *Ur-Teilung*¹²¹ (i.e., original division) (*WL* 623, 625). However, it need not be so given that the pure thinking as *Notion* is not itself unfolding in time, and thus the division that occurs judgment needs to a division as a logical moment not a temporal one.

The chapter on Judgment in Hegel’s *WL* is in the Subjective Logic, in the Doctrine of Notion. This chapter is significant because it is here that Hegel expounds on and details the elements of Kant’s Table of Judgments. In Hegel’s exposition, there is a dialectical progression inherent in the totality of these judgments insofar as they are presented one after another. For the

¹²⁰ Allison notes Strawson’s interpretation of this “discursivity thesis” is that it indicates “the inescapable necessity in any philosophical thinking about experience or empirical knowledge to assume a “duality of general concepts, on the one hand, and particular instances of general concepts, encountered in experience, on the other”” (Allison 13). However, Allison is critical of Strawson’s account. He characterizes it as a “dismissive treatment [which] ignores certain essential features of Kant’s account” and that the discursivity thesis “cannot be the innocuous, non-controversial thesis that Strawson takes it to be” (ibid.).

¹²¹ Hegel characterizes the judgment as “the self-diremption of the Notion; *this unity* is, therefore, the ground from which the consideration of the judgment in accordance with its true *objectivity* begins. It is thus the *original division* [*Teilung*] of what is originally one; thus the word *Urteil* refers to what judgement is in and for itself” (*WL* 625). Moreover, “[f]rom this standpoint, the act of judgment involves the reflection, whether this or that predicate which is in someone’s *head* can and should be *attached* to the *object* which exists on its own account *outside*” (ibid.).

background logic, this presentation is discursive (no different from any other section of the *WL*). However, the foreground logic “partitions” itself in judgment, which Hegel characterizes as “the absolute, original *partition of itself* [Notion]” (*WL* 622).

Allison states that Kant “tends to argue from rather than for the discursivity thesis, thereby suggesting that he viewed it as an unquestioned presupposition or starting point rather than as something that itself stands in need of justification” (Allison 13). Koch’s distinction of background and foreground logic indicates that Hegel is providing a solution to the issue in Kant’s philosophy that Allison identifies. By presenting both a background and a foreground logic, Hegel is arguing for and from the discursivity thesis at once. He argues for the discursivity thesis insofar as the only way in which *we* can engage in science is externally, that is discursively: in the *PhG* as consciousness undergoing the journey of *Bildung* or the scientists who are observing consciousness’s journey, and in the *Logic* as the background logic. Since the background logic is set against (yet alongside) the foreground logic by virtue of its discursive and external character, Hegel is indicating that there is a necessity of discursivity when engaging in science.

In order to make my argument that the non-discursive character of the foreground logic supports my claim that *WL* presents an epistemology, we need to consider the following two points. (1) The foreground logic, as the non-discursive aspect of the *Logic* indicates that the moments of the logic are not temporal but rather logical moments. This means that what we in our external reflection of the background logic see as unfolding in a temporal succession is for the foreground logic non-temporal. (2) The Idea of Cognition is found at the end of the *Logic*, and its truth is the Absolute Idea, i.e. “an objective world whose inner ground and actual subsistence is the Notion” (*WL* 823). The Absolute Idea is “the identity of the theoretical and the

practical Idea” which are the two determinations of the Idea of Cognition as the Idea of the True and the Idea of the Good (*WL* 824). Thus, Absolute Idea is the totality of the Idea of Cognition without its separation. Hegel writes that “Idea alone is *being*, imperishable *life*, *self-knowing truth*, and is all truth” in its shape of Absolute Idea.

Moreover, it is worth noting that in the preview of the Idea section immediately before he begins to discuss Life, Hegel characterizes the Absolute Idea as follows: “spirit cognizes the Idea as its *absolute truth*, as the truth that is in and for itself; the infinite Idea in which cognition and action are equalized, and which is the *absolute knowledge of itself*” (*WL* 760). The “cognition and action” to which he refers here are the two moments in the Idea of Cognition chapter, namely, the Idea of the True (i.e. theoretical cognition) and the Idea of the Good (i.e. practical cognition), respectively.

Based on these two points, we can claim that the *Logic* is the science of Cognition in its complete form, namely, Absolute Idea. A science of Cognition as such is an *Erkenntnistheorie*. However, at the same time, it is also metaphysical, because for Hegel an account of the Idea as a cognitive notion is an element of reality (though this is, of course, reality as ideality, which I explain in Chapter 4). Though the *Logic* may concern many other topics, these fall under the wide net of Hegel’s approach to any philosophical issue, which makes his works not only especially rich, but in his terms not “one-sided and abstract”. Hegel is a philosopher of concreteness and thus provides thorough and well-rounded (pun intended!) philosophical approaches to our philosophical issues.

In addition to the second point above, I would also like to suggest the following. When we consider the three moments (chapters) of the section on The Idea, we can see that the

Absolute Idea is a separate chapter but can easily double as the third subsection of the chapter on the Idea of Cognition:

1. Life
2. The Idea of Cognition
 - i. The Idea of the True (theoretical cognition)
 - ii. The Idea of the Good (practical cognition)
3. (iii.)¹²² The Absolute Idea (identity of theoretical and practical cognition)

As can be seen in this division of chapters, rather unusually for Hegel, the Idea of Cognition appears to have only two moments, unlike his typical three. However, it would not be inconceivable for the Absolute Idea to be the third moment of Cognition, especially since it is cognition as the unity of its two moments.

At the end of the Idea of Cognition, we have the most determined shape of *thought as being* that brings about the Absolute Idea. Hence, all other moments in the *Logic* are less determined and mediated versions of the Idea of Cognition and the Absolute Idea. In our discursive background perspective, we scientifically study these moments as those logical moments that develop into the idea of cognition. Since cognition, knowledge ("True Cognition", one of the forms of the Idea of Cognition), and ideas are the subjects of epistemology, the science that studies them is by definition an epistemology.

At this point, I would like to return to the start of the Idea of Cognition chapter to examine what I argue is evidence for the epistemological character of Hegel's *Logic*. Here, we can clearly see that Hegel's account of cognition as a moment in the *Logic* arises from a notion that is at once ontological and epistemological for him, namely, the notion of death. At the end of

¹²² This designation as iii. is my addition (or suggestion). That is why it is in parantheses.

the chapter preceding the Idea of Cognition, namely the section on Genus in the chapter on Life, Hegel writes:

In copulation the immediacy of the living individuality perishes; the **death** of this life is the procession of spirit. The Idea ... has sublated its particularity which constituted the living species, and has thereby given itself a **reality** that is *itself simple universality*. As such, it is the Idea that *relates itself to itself as Idea*, the universal that has universality for its determinateness and existence—the Idea of **cognition**. (WL 774, bold emphases mine).

This passage shows how we transition from Life to the Idea of **Cognition** by virtue of the individual's **death** which is necessary for the **reality** of the Idea (and of the individual as a sublated moment in it). For, without the death of the individual, there is no life either. The cycle of life and the survival of the species includes the death of its individual members just as much as it includes the “germ” of new life (ibid.). The universal category of life exists concretely (that is, without one-sidedness, abstractness) only alongside the death of the individual. Through the death of the individual, the Idea sublates the particular and thus becomes *real* in simple universality. The particular individual dies but the cycle of life (“procession of spirit” (ibid.)) continues on as the Idea that is real and simply universal. In this simple universality, the Idea, as universal, “*relates itself to itself as Idea*” (ibid.). In other words, Idea thinks itself as Idea, which is the Idea of **cognition**. Hence, death is related to cognition insofar as it triggers the Idea of cognition's emergence as a logical moment in our account.

Not only in this passage, but at various points in his corpus, Hegel suggests that death is related strongly to both self-knowledge and natural constitution.¹²³ These relations in each case indicate an overlapping of epistemology and metaphysics. In the case of the section on the Idea of Cognition, this overlap is especially pronounced given that we are dealing with the metaphysical structure of cognition by giving an account of it (i.e. the chapter on the Idea of

¹²³ See for instance *PhG* §32, §80, §807, or *Enzyklopaedie* §375.

Cognition) in the context of a larger account of categories and aspects of knowledge (i.e. the *WL*).

The Idea of Cognition chapter is an account of the Idea of cognition. Though this statement may seem tautologically trivial, a lot hinges on the meaning of “Idea” for Hegel.¹²⁴ A close look at the import of the meaning of “Idea”, and its significance for the Idea of Cognition chapter indicates the difference in the non-standard epistemologies of the *PhG* and the *Logic* (and the relation of these epistemologies to metaphysics).

Hegel writes at the beginning of the section on the Idea that “[t]he Idea is the *adequate Notion*, that which is objectively *true*, or the *true as such*. When anything whatever possesses truth, it possesses it through its Idea, or, *something possesses truth only in so far as it is Idea*” (*WL* 755). Hence, Idea is distinct from mere cognition insofar as in cognition (as we see in the *PhG*) the *for-itself* does not always match the *in-itself* – when it does, that cognition is *knowledge* [*Wissen*], but when mere appearance [*Vorstellung*] it does not. As I discuss in detail in Chapter 4, while what is ideal is real (in fact, the most real) insofar as the real is a moment in the ideal and the ideal is a complete circle of “true infinity”, what is real is not always ideal, for it may fall short of ideality. Hegel develops this argument more fully in the section on the Idea:

Reserving then the expression ‘Idea’ for the objective or real Notion and distinguishing it from the Notion itself and still more from pictorial thought, we must also reject even more vigorously that estimate of the Idea according to which it is not anything actual, and true thoughts are said to be *only ideas*. If *thoughts* are merely *subjective* and contingent, they certainly have no further value; but in this respect they are not inferior to temporal and contingent *actualities* which likewise have no further value than that of contingencies and phenomena. On the other hand if, conversely, the Idea is not to have the value of truth, because in regard to phenomena it is *transcendent*, and no congruent object can be assigned to it in the world of sense, this is an odd misunderstanding that would deny objective validity to the Idea because it lacks that which constitutes Appearance, namely, the *untrue being* of the objective world. (*WL* 755-6)

¹²⁴ I discuss the notion of “ideal” and “ideality” in the chapter on Determinate Being in the *Seinslogik* in detail in Chapter 4. Hegel’s use of these notions there is the initial detailed treatment of these terms in the *WL*.

However, this is not the end of the story. Hegel writes (in his preliminary remarks for the Idea section) that at the end of the Idea of Cognition chapter, the Idea's "reality is for it the objective world, or conversely, the objective world is the ideality in which it cognizes itself" (*WL* 760). Furthermore, as I quoted above, Hegel claims that in the Absolute Idea "spirit cognizes the Idea as its *absolute truth*, as the truth that is in and for itself; the infinite Idea in which cognition and action are equalized, and which is the *absolute knowledge of itself*" (*ibid.*).

According to this account, Ideas are actual and have objective validity. They are not merely subjective and contingent, for then they would be temporal and the contingencies of phenomena. Moreover, "[w]e must recognize that everything actual *is* only in so far as it possesses the Idea and expresses it" (*WL* 756). The Idea is actual and objectively valid, and anything that is objectively valid and actual *is so* and *exists* because of its possession and expression of the Idea.

Based on this definition of the Idea, we can claim that the *PhG*, as the circle encapsulating the *Bildung* of consciousness – i.e., a temporally contingent finite being – and as giving accounts of phenomenal experience in which consciousness struggles with its subjectivity and seeks to adequate what is *for it* with its *in-itself*. The Idea is absent in the experience of consciousness throughout the various parts of its journey. However, consciousness reaches the Idea when it finally grasps truth, namely when it (as Spirit) knows how to sacrifice itself to go beyond itself, by knowing its own limit (*PhG* 492, §807; Suhrkamp 590). Hegel writes that at this point of Absolute Knowing (no longer mere cognition but *knowledge*) the contingent journey is, as philosophically "comprehended organization, it is the Science of Knowing in the sphere of appearance" (*PhG* 493, §808; Suhrkamp 591).

In the *WL*, “the Idea has not merely the more general meaning of the *true being*, of the unity of *Notion* and *reality*, but the more specific one of the unity of *subjective Notion* and *objectivity*” (*WL* 758). At Absolute Idea, the subjective and objective have merged. I propose we consider this point alongside Hegel’s discussion in the chapter on Infinity (which I discuss extensively in Chapter 4) that the Real has to be also Ideal when properly grasped because it is a moment of the Ideal. Furthermore, the real, taken one-sidedly on its own does not measure up to the true infinite, which is the Ideal and is the correct account of concrete finitude and is in the shape of a circle (thus providing us a blueprint for the entire *Logic*). Given these connections between the Real and the Ideal, Absolute Idea and Being (and Being’s many determinations, including Absolute Idea), and the connection of the theoretical and the practical cognition in Absolute Idea as a whole, I argue we can find epistemology and metaphysics alongside one another in the *Logic*. For, given Hegel’s idealism, Being and ontology cannot be thought of separately from cognition and knowledge, and the account of either requires the other.

Discussing the dialectic, Hegel writes:

[A]ll the oppositions that are assumed as fixed, as for example finite and infinite, individual and universal, are not in contradiction through, say, an external connection; on the contrary, as an examination of their nature has shown, they are in and for themselves a transition; the synthesis and the subject in which they appear is the product of their Notion's own reflection. (*WL* 833)

If we consider Being to be *in itself* and Knowledge / Absolute Idea to be *for us* (us as conscious discursively reasoning beings), then we can see that these two “subject matters” oppose one another. However, as Hegel’s account of dialectic shows, they are not in contradiction but both appear in transition from one to the other and vice versa.¹²⁵ Accordingly, we find both as well as their account in the *WL*, hence we find both a metaphysics and an epistemology.

¹²⁵ Hegel’s account of the dialectic can be found in *WL* pp. 831-3.

3.3.3. Additional Arguments

To support my position that the *WL* is epistemological (alongside its metaphysics), I shall add to my above arguments. First I shall suggest that focusing on the background logic, we need to step outside the work itself and take it for what it is: a book. The *WL* is a book written sentence after sentence, page after page, and it explains moment by moment what Hegel calls “the Logic”. He explores each moment and presents them successively. We understand that moments precede and succeed one another in the *Logic* not temporally but logically. However, the fact that we have to say that there is logical and not temporal succession is already a testament to the key factor here: the work is written in a manner such that *we*, the readers, with our discursive and temporal reason and understanding, can read and learn from it. It is an exposition and an account of knowledge insofar as it shows how we are to know reality: it analyzes reality into its logical moments as reality unfolds itself.

As I see it, there are two main things happening in the *WL* when we look at it through an epistemological lens. On the one hand, there is the exposition of the logic with all its moments as they unfold – this is a metaphysics or ontology (corresponding to the foreground logic). On the other hand, the exposition of the logic and its moments are being narrated to a reader (corresponding to the background logic), i.e. Hegel is breaking down the account of reality into its moments for the reader in the ways that the reader can learn and follow along – this is an account of knowledge, what it means to know the logic and this kind of knowledge.

The epistemology is salient in the structure and the presentation of the work and the meaning this structure has for the content. It is impossible to separate one from the other. The structure of the *WL* thus is also very much the content, and is itself a form of accounting for knowledge. Thus, for Hegel, the presentation of the ontology is at the same time an

epistemology; the two cannot be separated. This inseparability in the case of Hegel's *PhG*, *WL*, and the *Enzyklopaedie* is different than any other random work (including Hegel's earlier works, such as the *Differenzschrift*) given the co-determination and co-mediation of the form and content in Hegel's works mentioned above. The account in the *WL* is unfolded by the very thing ("Thought" as "Being" and then "Essence" and "Notion") of which this account is an account. Insofar as the methodology and approach of the account is *Logic*, it is distinct from neither the subject matter itself nor the subject matter's account. Furthermore, in the *WL* the subject matter, the account of the subject matter, and the approach to this account are one and the same.

A significant element of Hegel's *WL* is that as we read the work, we are going along with Hegel and directly engaging in this very science itself. Since the form and content of his works are integrally entangled and mutually determining, they are different from other works of philosophy as well as other sciences. Traditionally, the author presents arguments and findings in a form that can be distinguished from the form in which those arguments were really formulated by the author. I mean by this 'form in which the arguments were really formulated' the dialectical speculative character inherent in all thought and being (but which the traditional thinkers, even today, do not reflect in their writing).

As Hegel shows, thinking is at its core dialectical and does not proceed in lifeless forms and static formulations. Internal immanent change guides all movements and development of thought. However, traditional presentations of philosophical science would have us assume otherwise with their norms of philosophical/scientific presentation: these are lifeless and static reports of their contents. This is the external reflection on the work. The internal reflection brings the work to life, and the external reflection is what the reader is presented with. The reader is

detached from the real process whereby the author came to determine their arguments. Reading any book and learning about any science is done via external reflection.

However, Hegel's works are a case in point to his argument found throughout his works that the philosophy's mode of presentation should match its internal speculative and dialectical character. In other words, the internal and the external presentation should be integrally related and co-determining. Thus, in stark contrast to the traditional modes of presentation of works of epistemology and metaphysics, in Hegel's works (especially in the three parts of his encyclopedic system where there is no consciousness who is on a journey), this external reflection takes on a different meaning. External reflection is integral to the internal reflection. Consequently, as we read Hegel's works, we are really engaging in the science alongside Hegel, rather than sitting, so to say, in the audience and externally reflecting from a distance on his report of his philosophy that is distinct from the very philosophical work itself.¹²⁶

Jennifer Bates in *Hegel's Theory of Imagination* considers this distinction of Hegel's work as a matter about time. She writes that even the *WL* must be read in time, and therefore is a work of consciousness. In a trivial sense, this claim applies to all written works. However, Hegel's *WL* is different in the sense that in it pure thinking is exposed in its development and the reading of this exposition (despite having the added element of reading) is the employment of pure thinking by the reader in the same manner as Hegel as he was writing the work. Bates writes regarding a discussion on the changing of consciousness from *bestehende* (subsisting) to

¹²⁶ In an empirical science, the internal and the external reflection need to be distinct by virtue of the very distinction between the a posteriori gathering of data and the a priori reasoning and analysis required to do the science, which then in yet another separate reflection needs to be organized in a presentable form. This is not the case with the categorical reasoning by which philosophy unfolds and is developed.

vergehende (passing away) and vice versa (meaning, the characteristic of the cognition that develops through *Aufhebung*)¹²⁷ that it

is an important point for anyone who wants to argue that Hegel's *Logic* takes place outside of time. I agree that the movement, for instance, from Being to Nothing to Becoming, *can* be analytically understood and thus appears outside of time. But its *truth* is just as much temporal. Time and space are not just external, they are the very process of cognition. Becoming is equally disappearing, *vergehen*. There is no good reason to limit one's reading of the *Logic* to a purely analytic reading. Such a reading is one-sided and causes Hegel's philosophy to appear to have internal contradictions. The first movement from Being to Nothing to Becoming is evidently also a *synthetic* a priori truth. (Bates 43n12)

Accordingly, it is in the very nature of the content of Hegel's logic that it must be read and expounded in a temporal manner (moreover, the same temporal development applies equally to Hegel's internal reflection and our external one). A temporal unfolding of an account of logic is an account of knowledge for the reader precisely because it demonstrates the way in which this knowledge is acquired through the dialectical development. As Hegel expounds in detail in the section on the Idea of the True, cognition and its theoretical endeavors are neither solely analytic nor solely synthetic, but both (though synthetic cognition is the mediated form of the abstract identity that is analytic cognition (*WL* 793)).

A significant point to add to my previous arguments about discursivity is one that proceeds on the basis of the fact that this discursive exposition and development of the logic. Namely, the way that Hegel has written the book *WL* is based on the nature of the material of the logic itself. There is *movement already inherent* in each moment¹²⁸ of the logic such that time

¹²⁷ Bates is referring to Hegel's claim in the following passage: "Appearance is the arising [*Entstehen*] and passing away [*Vergehen*] that does not itself arise and pass away, but is 'in itself' [i.e. subsists intrinsically], and constitutes the actuality and the movement of life and truth. The True is the Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunk; yet because each member collapses as soon as he drops out, the revel is just as much transparent and simple repose" (*PhG* 27, §47). Accordingly, each moment of the *Bildung* of consciousness is *bestehende/entstehende* and at the same time *vergehende*.

¹²⁸ Hegel writes "as an examination of their nature [that of oppositions] has shown, they are in and for themselves a transition; the synthesis and the subject in which they appear is the product of their Notion's own reflection" (*WL* 833).

and development are inextricable from it. Thus, the exposition Hegel lays out in the book that must be read in time is a crucial aspect of what its content is. In fact, Hegel makes this point in the Introduction of the *WL* when discussing the form and content of the logic and how the two cannot be separated.¹²⁹ There he writes that (as quoted earlier) “what logic is cannot be stated beforehand, rather does this knowledge [*Wissen*] of what it is first emerge as the final outcome and consummation of the whole exposition” (*WL* 43, Suhrkamp 35). From this statement, it is clear that logic is not something that may be summarized in a neat definition. Rather to really grasp what the logic is, one must read the logic through the development of its form and content. I want to explore this claim through two points: (a) that form and content are inseparable for Hegel’s logic, and (b) that discursivity is inherent in the presentation of the logical content.¹³⁰ What follows in the next several paragraphs is a discussion of these two points together.

Hegel writes that the form and the content of logic are inseparable. He criticizes the conventional approach to logic for abstracting from all content. He writes:

When logic is taken as the science of thinking in general, it is understood that this thinking constitutes the *mere form* of a cognition [*Erkenntnis*], that logic abstracts from all *content* and that the so-called second *constituent* belonging to cognition [*Erkenntnis*], namely its *matter*, must come from elsewhere; and that since this matter is absolutely independent of logic, this latter can provide only the formal conditions of genuine cognition [*wahrhafter Erkenntnis*] and cannot in its own self contain any real truth, nor even be the *pathway* to real truth because just that which is essential in truth, its content, lies outside logic. (*WL* 43-44; Suhrkamp 36)

And then also:

Hitherto, the Notion of logic has rested on the separation, presupposed once and for all in the ordinary consciousness, of the *content* of cognition [*Erkenntnis*] and its *form*, or of *truth* and *certainty*. ... [T]he object is regarded as something complete and finished on its own account, something which can entirely dispense with thought for its actuality, while

¹²⁹ I explore Hegel’s discussion of form and content in the Introduction of the *WL* in detail in Chapter 4.

¹³⁰ Though this presentation of the logical content may be called our external reflections by some, I think that would be mistaken. For Hegel, it is a significant matter whether the logical content can be anything other than our external reflections. Given that thought is being and the development of the logic is also the science of it, it is not so clear that we have a distinction here that mirrors the *in-itself* and *for-it* distinction we had in the *PhG*, which distinction we moved beyond.

thought on the other hand is regarded as defective because it has to complete itself with a material and moreover, as a pliable indeterminate form, has to adapt itself to its material. Truth is the agreement of thought with the object,¹³¹ and in order to bring about this agreement—for it does not exist on its own account—thinking is supposed to adapt and accommodate itself to the object. (*WL* 44; Suhrkamp 36)

It is mistaken to think that logic provides the formal features and structures of reality. Such a position on logic takes logic as an abstract set of rules that can then be applied artificially and indeed synthetically to material.

John Burbidge in *The Logic of Hegel's 'Logic'* also notes that Hegel's logic was in effect a critique of the way logic had been previously approached. Moreover, Hegel (affirming the sentiment of many of Kant's successors, as Burbidge claims) was also reacting to Kant's subsuming of traditional logical categories into a table of judgments and categories: "[p]icking out the table of judgements that happened to emerge from the history of logic as the critical clue to the basic categories looks to be an arbitrary and contingent act" (Burbidge 22). What Burbidge means here is that there is not sufficient justification for the "basic" categories Kant adopts for his table of categories. However, regardless of his criticism of this arbitrariness in Kant's choice, Hegel's logic is an effort to develop what Kant had started with respect to how we approach the relation of logic and cognition. Burbidge writes that "Kant suggests that the pure concepts of the understanding can be organized into a systematic pattern that would show the underlying structure of both the world we experience and the moral realm in which we act. Hegel, it would seem, took up this challenge in his *Science of Logic*" (ibid.). This statement by Burbidge supports my position on the discursive character of Hegel's background logic. However, as I

¹³¹ Though this statement may sound like the "adeaquo intellectus et rei", i.e. as if Hegel is presenting a correspondence theory of truth, in actuality (pun intended), the situation is different. When we consider Hegel's claim about the Idea and truth I quoted above, namely that "[w]e must recognize that everything actual *is* only in so far as it possesses the Idea and expresses it" (*WL* 756), we may see that truth is about the possession and expression of the Idea. When the Idea is expressed in something, then that thing is real, actual, and true. Cognition and knowledge, for Hegel, on the other hand, do rely on a form of correspondence, as I explored in detail above.

explained above, the foreground logic is not necessarily discursive, and when it could be is only starting at the chapter on Judgment.

Hegel was “dissatisfied with an approach that limits the logic to the analysis of traditional operations, that develops an a priori metaphysics, and that uses construction and proof for the philosophy of nature”,¹³² hence his works have “quite a different procedure” (Burbidge 24).¹³³ In contrast to these previous approaches, Hegel points out that logic as the science of thinking develops *with* its content that is specific to and inseparable from this development. He writes that “it is quite inept to say that logic abstracts from all *content* ... For as thinking and the rules of thinking are supposed to be the subject matter of logic, these directly constitute its peculiar content; in them, logic has that second constituent, a matter, about the nature of which it is concerned” (*WL* 44; Suhrkamp 36).

This approach which takes logic as the science of the development of thought with its proper content is epistemological. For, an account of thought is an account of *Erkenntnis* (insofar as Idea is a kind of Cognition and vice versa). This is evidenced in Hegel’s *WL* by the fact that the final point before Absolute Idea in the *WL* is the Idea of Cognition. Cognition [*Erkennens* / *Erkenntnis*] is thus the most determined and mediated shape of Being, Essence, and Concept.

¹³² Burbidge writes “[t]hus the objective logic which completes the transcendental logic needs to be supplemented by a logic of subjectivity or of conceiving” (Burbidge 23fn8). Also, “[i]f we are to approach anything like the truth, thinking also needs to transcend subjectivity and become objective—able to comprehend the structure of the world we experience” (Burbidge 23-4).

¹³³ Kant follows the skeptic tradition “when he uses the antinomies to show how unreliable reason is once it abandons the anchorage of experience. Hegel, however, suspects that something more significant is going on. For Kant and the skeptics are using reason to demonstrate its own unreliability. ... What happens suggests Hegel, is that each premise is isolated from its context and considered on its own. The paradoxical conclusion follows from this isolation, since each concept contains in its basic sense implicit relationships with other terms; once these have been excluded from consideration the original term is no longer internally consistent. ... Once we grasp the total picture, and consider both contrary inferences at the same time, we see that there is an underlying significance that has been overlooked—a larger perspective in which the two original terms are not isolated units, but moments of a larger whole and, like all moments, come to be and pass away. They cannot be separated off and made permanent” (Burbidge 26).

When we determine the Idea any further, we reach Absolute Idea which returns to the beginning to the indeterminacy of *Being, pure being* (and, at the same time, moves on to *Naturphilosophie*).

WL begins at the point of Absolute Knowing,¹³⁴ it starts its own development and unfolding *within* the standpoint and framework of absolute knowing. In this sense and insofar as it is an unfolding of its own content through its own form, it unfolds and develops Absolute Knowing, i.e. knowledge itself in its purest, most complete form. Namely, if thinking is knowing, then logic qua theory of thinking is epistemology.

But then why would Hegel not call *WL* instead “Science of Knowledge” like Fichte? In addition to the undesirability of using the same title for his work as Fichte’s, I think the answer is simple. For Hegel, the epistemology of the *WL* is a transformation of traditional metaphysics as well as how we understand traditional logic. Furthermore, Hegel’s *Logic* is also in direct conversation with Kant’s Transcendental Logic as well as Fichte’s *SK*.

Perhaps more crucial, however, is the following point. At the end of the *PhG*, he claims that from the perspective of Absolute Knowing, the *PhG* is History when considered in their contingent appearing in recollection and Science of Knowing (i.e. an epistemology) in the sphere of appearance when considered “from the side of their [philosophically] comprehended organization” (*PhG* 493, §808; Suhrkamp 591). In other words, the *PhG* is History and epistemology. As a “phenomenology”, the *PhG* is indeed the “Science of Knowing in the sphere of appearance”, i.e. a phenomenology. The case in the *Logic* is parallel to this. The *Science of Logic*, is metaphysics and epistemology. However, the epistemology in the *WL* is a Science of Knowing *in the sphere of truth, i.e. logic*. This truth is expressed through the logic in the

¹³⁴ Hegel writes “[a]bsolute knowing is the *truth* of every mode of consciousness because, as the course of the *Phenomenology* showed, it is only in absolute knowing that the separation of the *object* from the *certainty of itself* is completely eliminated: truth is now equated with certainty and this certainty with truth” (*WL* 49).

movement of the notion through the various determinations of Being which is really Idea.¹³⁵ And just as the *PhG* is also History alongside an epistemology, the *Logic* is metaphysics (albeit, a non-traditional one) alongside an epistemology. Phenomenal experience (with its appearances) and history are contingent whereas truth as logic and metaphysics is absolute.

Hegel writes that “pure science presupposes liberation from the opposition of consciousness” (*WL* 49). The opposition of consciousness was present in all stages of the *PhG* before Absolute Knowing, showing an opposition within consciousness between its object and its notion. In Absolute Knowing, consciousness finally sublates and transcends this opposition and is at the standpoint of the science of logic. Hegel writes

Thus pure science presupposes liberation from the opposition of consciousness. It contains *thought in so far as this is just as much the object in its own self, or the object in its own self in so far as it is equally pure thought*. As science truth is pure self-consciousness in its self-development and has the shape of the self, so that the absolute truth of being is the known Notion [*gewußter Begriff*] and the Notion as such is the absolute truth of being. ... This objective thinking, then, is the content of pure science. (*WL* 49, Suhrkamp 43)

Hence, the standpoint of the science of logic is Absolute Knowing, and the science of logic is an exploration of its own form and content (“known Notion”), i.e. an exploration of absolute knowing as logic, an exploration of true *Erkenntnis*. That the *WL* is the exposition of true cognition (i.e. knowledge) becomes clear at the end of the *WL* when we come to the Idea of Cognition which finds its truth, i.e. the sublation of the opposition of its subjective and objective sides (thereby mirroring the end of the *PhG*), in the Absolute Idea.

As quoted above, Hegel claims that “[t]ruth is the agreement of thought with the object” (*WL* 44, Suhrkamp 36). That means truth is brought about neither solely through thought nor through the object, but rather through the development of both together. Truth thus unfolds

¹³⁵ That Being is Idea in its absolute configuration indicates Hegel’s idealism.

solely in cognition as the place where thought and object coincide through logic. The objects of logic (such as Being, Limit, Magnitude, Infinity, Measure, Identity, Ground, Appearance, Force, Actuality, Notion, Syllogism, Mechanism, Life, and also the Idea of Cognition¹³⁶ to name a few of the Hegelian logical “objects”) cannot be separated from the way in which they determine and form thought, and how thought determines and forms them in the science of logic, if we want to know them in their truth.

In pure thinking, subject and object are one.¹³⁷ The opposition of consciousness is overcome at the end of the *PhG*, but will reappear in the *Realphilosophie*. Hegel writes that “logic is to be understood as the system of pure reason, as the realm of pure thought. This realm is truth as it is without veil and in its own absolute nature. It can therefore be said that this content is the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and a finite mind” (*WL* 50). This characterization of the logic as the exposition of God before the creation of space and time and finite minds within them further supports (alongside the content of the logic itself and the passages from *EL* I quoted earlier, namely §25 and §78) that there is no conscious finite mind present and active in the *WL* (save that of the reader and author). This goes to show that for Hegel, cognition and knowledge are not limited to finite minds.

To return to the point about the inseparability of the form and content of the logic, we should consider Hegel’s position that we cannot say what the logic is, that is give a precise comprehensive definition, before we *do* the logic. Hegel writes that “[i]n this method of beginning a science with its definition, no mention is made of the need to demonstrate the

¹³⁶ The Idea of Cognition, as the moment of the logic immediately preceding the Absolute Idea, i.e. the closing of the circle where the whole is complete, further supports my point that cognition is in fact what ultimately brings together the rest of the moments of the logic into a full circle.

¹³⁷ Hegel writes that “logical reason itself is the substantial or real being which holds together within itself every abstract determination and is their substantial, absolutely concrete unity” (*WL* 48).

necessity of its *subject matter* and therefore of the science itself” (*WL* 49). This is similar to Hegel’s criticism in the *EL* of the “absurd ... wise resolve of Scholasticus to learn to *swim before he ventured into the water*” (*EL* §10, 34, Suhrkamp 54). The way to understand logic is to do it, to have it unfold through its development. This is in contrast to the critical philosophy that Hegel claims asserts that “[w]e should first get to know about [*kennenlernen*] the *instrument*, before undertaking the task that is supposed to be accomplished by means of it” (*EL* §10, 34, Suhrkamp 53).¹³⁸ In the case of the science of logic, we need to be doing the science in the manner that *creates* its content in order to *know* the content of it.

At the beginning of the *Logic*, we do not even know what the subject matter of the *Logic* will be. The *Logic* has to find its subject matter along the way of its unfolding. We, alongside the *Logic*, also figure out the subject matter with the unfolding of the inseparable form and content: “[t]he truth is rather that the insubstantial nature of logical forms originates solely in the way in which they are considered and dealt with” (*WL* 48).¹³⁹ As I discussed earlier, when we complete the *Logic* and reach its truth, we see that it has been about Cognition in its absolute form of the Absolute Idea (“absolute knowledge of itself” or that which “completes its self-liberation in the *science of spirit*, and that finds the supreme Notion of itself in the science of logic as the self-

¹³⁸ On this point, Burbidge writes “[n]o longer, then, do we need to follow Kant in limiting pure thought to being the handmaid of experience and imagination; it can itself generate diversity and synthesis: an isolated concept leads over into its antithesis; a simple beginning produces diversity. Since that antithesis leads back to the original thought, both belong to the same perspective; they are thereby brought together into a synthesis” (Burbidge 26-7).

¹³⁹ Hegel further writes “what is commonly understood by logic is considered without any reference whatever to metaphysical significance. This science in its present state has, it must be admitted, no content of a kind which the ordinary consciousness would regard as a reality and as a genuine subject matter. But it is not for this reason a *formal* science lacking significant truth. Moreover, the region of truth is not to be sought in that matter which is missing in logic, a deficiency to which the unsatisfactoriness of the science is usually attributed. The truth is rather that the insubstantial nature of logical forms originates solely in the way in which they are considered and dealt with. When they are taken as fixed determinations and consequently in their separation from each other and not as held together in an organic unity, then they are dead forms and the spirit which is their living, concrete unity does not dwell in them” (*WL* 47-8).

comprehending pure Notion” (*WL* 760, 844)). Hence, the science of logic is an account of the *self-knowledge* (as Idea and truth) of the logic – its form and its content.

The *co*-development and *co*-unfolding of the form and content of the logic is integral to the form and content themselves. This integral role of the development *together* of the form and content is clear when we consider various pivotal parts of the *WL*. In the Doctrine of Essence, we find *difference* inherent in *identity*. Identity reflects into itself to find itself as different. We had already seen a similar movement at the beginning of the *WL* in the Doctrine of Being where *Being* found *Nothing* within it which lead to *Becoming*. Becoming was the factor that propelled the dialectical movement, in a way like difference coming out of identity. Nothing is the absolute indeterminate opposite of Being (and as such they are identical), but in retrospect when we are at the standpoint of the Doctrine of Essence, we can look back and say that Nothing was different from Being, and thus was engendered from the concept of Being through a determination of Being.

Finding Something’s Other in that Something-that-is-identical-to-itself and Difference in Identity (and so on) shows that the dialectical movement is inherent in the logic. Stephen Houlgate writes that “[a]ccording to Hegel, by contrast, it is absolutely impossible for being to remain pure under any circumstances because the purity of being undermines itself, causes itself to vanish” (Houlgate 113).¹⁴⁰ The unfolding is inherent to the content and the form of the logic.

¹⁴⁰ This quote from Houlgate from *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic: From being to Infinity* is found within this larger discussion: “It has become a commonplace among many Continental philosophers that there is no “purity” in the world—no pure immediacy, no pure self-presence, no pure reason—but that everything is in some way conditioned, contaminated, and compromised by what it appears to exclude. Such arguments depend upon showing that a certain irreducible, prior “alterity” always inhabits or haunts self-consciousness or reason and prevents it from being purely what it “is.” Similar arguments can be adduced to show that there is no such thing as pure being because being is always conditioned by, for example, difference or time. Such arguments fall short of Hegel’s however, to the extent that they do not show difference or time to be immanent in the very purity of being itself but to be a condition of the possibility of being—a condition that informs all being and every idea of being but that is logically prior to being. The reason these arguments fall short of Hegel’s is that they unwittingly leave open the possibility that being *would*

The unfolding is also an instruction on how thought works and how we or non-finite cognition can come to grasp reality. The *WL* is a work on metaphysics but this metaphysics is very much an epistemology because of the nature of the dialectical unfolding. This unfolding happens on both sides, equally on the side of the epistemology as well as the metaphysics since the subjective and the objective are not yet separate while we are in the *Logic*. This point is supported by Bates's position discussed above. As quoted above, she writes that "the movement, for instance, from Being to Nothing to Becoming, *can* be analytically understood and thus appears outside of time. But its *truth* is just as much temporal. Time and space are not just external, they are the very process of cognition" (Bates 43n12). Our transitions from Being to Nothing to Becoming happen discursively in what Koch calls our background logic, that is, in time, as a necessity of the development of the logic for us in our external reflection.¹⁴¹

The *WL* is hence a non-traditional epistemology, as can so far be seen, but it is also a non-traditional logic insofar as it brings together a metaphysics with an epistemology. Hegel intended it to be that way, as is clear when he writes that "the conceptions on which the Notion of logic has rested hitherto have in part already been discarded, and for the rest, it is time that they disappeared entirely and that this science were *grasped*¹⁴² from a higher standpoint and received a completely changed shape" (*WL* 44; Suhrkamp 36, my emphasis).¹⁴³

remain pure if difference or time—*per impossibile* (their proponents would claim)—were left out of account. According to Hegel, by contrast, it is absolutely impossible for being to remain pure under any circumstances because the purity of being undermines itself, causes itself to vanish. This is a much more profound challenge to the Parmenidean conception of sheer being than that mounted by Nietzsche, Heidegger, or Derrida because it does away with even the impossible dream of an enduring purity of being. The paradox, of course, is that Hegel can show that the purity of being undermines itself only by beginning with the idea of pure being in total abstraction from time and difference" (Houlgate 113).

¹⁴¹ This is, however, distinct from the foreground logic as I explained above.

¹⁴² The verb 'to grasp' is '*greifen*' in German, which is related to the term '*Begriff*', translated as 'Concept' or 'Notion'.

¹⁴³ I will not extend these claims to apply to Hegel's philosophy of nature and philosophy of spirit. However, I think it would prove to be a fruitful, albeit a lengthy project to explore whether Hegel is following a similar strategy regarding knowledge in those works as in the *WL*. Although the topics in these works are mainly Nature and

4. Idealism

4.1. *Erkenntnis* and Idealism

To go back to an earlier question, then: what does *Erkenntnis* mean for Hegel? On the one hand, we have *Erkenntnis* as the peculiar combination of ‘cognition’ and ‘knowledge’. On the other hand, we have the Kantian legacy of accounting for *Erkenntnis* through the twelve Kantian Categories and how the different faculties of the mind make use of them. For Kant, this is how we create cognitions of objects as they appear. This is also knowledge in the sense that we are making a judgment. As Kant remarks, all thinking is judgment (*CPR* B141-2).¹⁴⁴

As discussed in detail in Chapters 1 and 2 and also earlier in this chapter, Kant’s immediate commentators found Kant’s approach to be revolutionary at best and mostly right but incomplete at worst. For Fichte and Schelling, Kant’s Copernican revolution was correct but could be developed further to fully achieve its own goals. According to both of these thinkers, Kant had done well to have moved grounded cognition in the subject. However, for them, the things-in-themselves as unknowable uncognizable aspects in the system stood in the way of Kant’s completion of his system. Fichte sought to solve this perceived issue through grounding all aspects of cognition within the subject (by a self-positing of difference within the identity of the subject) and eliminating things-in-themselves by not having a need for them as a limit concept in the first place. Schelling, in turn, introduced a *Naturphilosophie* to be on par with his transcendental idealism, and thereby brought nature into the realm of the *a priori* (though, arguably, nature was already present in Kant’s philosophy), effectively eliminating any otherness

Spirit/Mind, Hegel is nevertheless presenting the logical unfolding of the knowledge pertaining to both in the same manner outlined for the *WL*. Thus, it would be interesting to explore whether the argument given regarding epistemology for the *WL* applies to these works as well.

¹⁴⁴ This is determinant judgment, and is separate from the syllogism with which reason works.

to the subject in the form of unknowable things-in-themselves. Thus, Fichte and Schelling both exalted the subject in cognition and sought to logically ground all aspects of cognition in the subject.

Hegel's view of cognition is a development of Kant's, inasmuch as it is also a development of Fichte and Schelling's respective views. Hegel's view of cognition puts the emphasis on neither the subject nor the object. He rather formulates cognition as a dialectical development between the subject and the object in a way that both are mutually affected in the phenomenal interaction.¹⁴⁵ The various stages of the *PhG* are this development of cognition through the phenomenal dialectical interplay between the subject and the object and the subjective and the objective in experience. In this development, neither the subject nor the object have dominance. He writes "this dialectical movement which consciousness exercises on itself and which affects both its knowledge [*Wissen*] and its object, is precisely what is called *experience* [*Erfahrung*]" (*PhG* 55, §86, Suhrkamp 78). Thought and cognition arise in this co-development.

Consequently, Hegel avoids the problem of both the things-in-themselves and the position of grounding his notion of cognition in the subject. As I discuss in Chapter 4, Hegel avoids all grounding by presenting a circular epistemology.¹⁴⁶ The subject in the *PhG* goes through the various stages of its *Bildung* until the point where its Notion and object finally match

¹⁴⁵ They interact in this sense in what Hegel calls the Idea at the end of the *WL*.

¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, by avoiding making cognition the ground through his circular system, he also avoids Reinhold's critique of Kant who Reinhold claimed sought unsuccessfully to make cognition foundational, as I discussed in Chapter 2. When doing an epistemology, knowledge and the criteria for truth are found in consciousness itself. Hegel writes: "Now, if we inquire into the truth of knowledge, it seems that we are asking what knowledge is *in itself*. Yet in this inquiry knowledge is *our* object, something that exists *for us*; and the *in-itself* that would supposedly result from it would rather be the being of knowledge *for us*. What we asserted to be its essence would be not so much its truth but rather just our knowledge of it. The essence or criterion would lie within ourselves and that which was to be compared with it and about which a decision would be reached through this comparison would not have to recognize the validity of such a standard" (*PhG* 53, §83).

one another. He writes that “the *goal* is as necessarily fixed for knowledge [*Wissen*] as the serial progression; it is the point where knowledge [*Wissen*] no longer needs to go beyond itself, where knowledge [*Wissen*] finds itself, where Notion [*Begriff*] corresponds [*entspricht*] to object and object to Notion” (*PhG* 51, §80, Suhrkamp 74). However, unlike a correspondence theory of truth (as discussed earlier), Hegel’s notion of correspondence is one in which the *Begriff* and the object co-determine one another to the point where they finally correspond to one another. Hence, the cognizing subject, having the *Begriff*, is active as much as the object. The object changes as well with the development of the *Begriff* of the subject.

Cognition is thus complete when its *Begriff* corresponds to its object. When we cognize something, we also attest that we know it to be true (at least to the best of our abilities). I mean that we take the cognition itself at the very least as the idea that it forms for us to be true (so long as we are not hallucinating or otherwise have impaired judgment). Let me explain this further. I can cognize an empirical object such as a cube of salt (just as it is consciousness’s object in the Perception chapter of the *PhG*). My cognition of this cube of salt, with whichever properties and determinations through which I mediate the cube of salt as the object of my cognition, is true insofar as this cognition exists. At another time, I may have another cognition of this same cube of salt – it may be another cognition because I may mediate the cube of salt as the object of my cognition through different determinations at that time. Yet these two cognitions of the cube of salt are both true (despite falling short of absolute knowledge).

For Hegel, in this sense, the meaning of *Erkenntnis* points towards his idealism: what we cognize is what is true (*ideally*, for us) and hence real. Our reality, what we take to be the case, i.e. how the world is, is constructed in the interaction of the categorial structure of the *in-itself* (i.e. object) and the categorial structure of the *for-it* (i.e. cognition). This cognition is short of

knowledge until Absolute Knowing where cognition finally matches object and is thus true knowledge. Hegel presents his own interpretation of the Kantian categories in the *WL*. However, such a comparative discussion of their specific categories is not my goal here beyond the comparison above. Nevertheless, a main difference is the deduction of the categories. As I discussed above, Hegel likens Kant's method of deduction to be akin to doing science ahead of the science itself.¹⁴⁷

In the history of philosophy the term 'idealism' has been used for a long time and often vaguely. There is currently a lot of literature detailing what one could mean by idealism. I use Karl Ameriks's approach to present my view that Hegel's theory of *Erkenntnis*, i.e. his epistemology, constitutes a certain idealism. In his introduction to the *Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, Ameriks differentiates two interpretations of the term "idealism". The first is a kind of anti-realism, "the thesis that matter, *or* the external world, is not independently real, *or* at least that it cannot be known, *or* known with certainty, as real" (Ameriks 8). He contrasts this with the idealism that starts with Plato for whom "the "ideal" was precisely the real, the most real" and claims that "from Leibniz through Kant, Schelling, and Hegel", Plato had a heavy influence (*ibid.*). Thus, according to Ameriks's analysis, the idealism of German Idealists was different from the first kind of idealism in that Plato and the Platonists saw the ideal as what is most real.

But what precisely is meant by "the ideal"? To begin explaining, Ameriks designates the two kinds of idealism as "the negative meaning of 'idealism'" and "the positive interpretation of

¹⁴⁷ As discussed above, Kant uses "deduction" in a legal sense referring to a practice in the Roman Empire. In his interpretation of Kant, Hegel misses this point. It is likely that Kant would have found Hegel's criticisms to be misdirected. Nevertheless, we can take Hegel's criticism of this view in general, but also keep it in mind when analyzing the validity of his response to Kant's deduction.

‘idealism’”, respectively (Ameriks 8). The negative meaning suggests that most things that have been assumed to exist do not in fact exist or do not exist in the manner assumed. This corresponds to the anti-realist interpretation. The positive meaning “in contrast, involves seeing the term as *adding* rather than subtracting significance”, that is, adding “a higher, a more “ideal” nature” to entities (ibid.). Ameriks implies that this addition in German Idealism is one of a higher structure whereby we explain things (Ameriks 9). He writes that “the disputes among these German philosophers have to do primarily with *identifying* specific philosophical categories, the genuinely ideal structures that provide the most illuminating general account of how all experience, history, and nature hang together” (ibid.). Thus, according to Ameriks, the German Idealists had a completely opposite view to “negative metaphysical idealism” (ibid.).¹⁴⁸

Within the framework that Ameriks has identified for the German Idealists’ and thus for Hegel’s idealism (i.e. the ideal not as anti-matter but rather as the real, the most real), I argue, we can extrapolate that Hegel (given his historical view of truth) has an idealist view of knowledge in two distinct ways. Firstly, certainty and knowledge is found in what Hegel calls the absolute. It is the “unity of inner and outer” and as such, the absolute is “absolute actuality” (*WL* 529). He takes this term from Fichte and Schelling, but uses it differently. For Hegel, the absolute is better grasped as actuality (ibid.). Since it is the unity of inner and outer, and (except for the section on the Absolute in the *Wesenslogik* of the *WL*) is found at the final moment of Hegel’s works where the final opposition (whatever it may be in the work we are dealing with) is sublated and we return to the beginning by completing the circle. Thus, the absolute indicates truth, as what we know when we know. One reaches this absolute truth only when one has in view all the mistakes

¹⁴⁸ However, this does not mean that according to Ameriks German Idealism has structures that are external to cognition. Ameriks is showing the difference in the emphasis of approach to what ‘ideal’ means: either ideal as the anti-real or ideal as the most real. He contends that German Idealism did not concern itself with being anti-matter or anti-real – rather, German Idealists took ideal structures to be the most (for some) or the only (for others) real.

one has made and could make and understands the relation between them. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Hegel's account of *Bildung* integrates the provisional takes on the way to truth as necessary building blocks of conscious experience. This point at which one can view the whole is an *ideal* state¹⁴⁹ to be in: this truth is the real truth, irrespective of any state or context in which one may be. *Erkenntnis* at its highest, most real point, is the point at which it is absolute, and therefore, this is ideal.

Secondly, however, when we are not at this *ideal* standpoint¹⁵⁰ where we have absolute knowledge [*Wissen*], we are at various other states of consciousness with different cognitions and knowledge. Since these are particular cognitions, they cannot be called true in the sense of the absolute truth. Nevertheless, they are correct *for* the case and situation *within* which they are developed. Knowledge in this everyday sense, regardless of its correspondence to reality independent of the subject, is the highest reality for the subject as it presents itself. For instance, consciousness's 'truth' in sense-certainty turns out to be false later. Although the recognition that it is false is a part of absolute knowledge, so is the recognition that it was true for consciousness at the stage of sense-certainty at which consciousness was. The 'truth' consciousness saw in sense-certainty while it was in that initial stage was the reality of consciousness then. What one takes to be a true cognition (no matter how false it may be with regard to the broader picture) is more real to one at that moment irrespective of its correspondence to the way the world is objectively. Hence, even this usual everyday use of the term knowledge is idealist in this sense for Hegel. For, the 'truth' at each stage (despite being falsified subsequently) is 'true' as knowledge within the framework of that stage in its development. This framework (regardless of

¹⁴⁹ An ideal state, as in a state which has an idealistic character of the kind of idealism I identify Hegel to hold.

¹⁵⁰ Same as in fn149.

its subsequent falsification) is an ideal construct of consciousness through its phenomenal interaction with its environment. Thus the ‘truth’ we can ascribe to each stage is only ideal.

There are various ways in which we can talk about truth, especially as they are found in the *PhG*, according to which worlds are allowed to be constructed for the individual consciousness based on how things appear to this consciousness. If the individual does not have access to the whole, absolute truth, they still have their own world which is true for them, though only abstractly and one-sidedly true when taken in comparison with the absolute truth, the whole.¹⁵¹ This is why and how individuals (in a community) can continue to learn and grow.

Hence, something especially interesting in this combination of cognition and knowledge in *Erkenntnis* is the status of truth, as I have pointed out, but especially so when it comes to thinking about Hegel’s idealism. We take what we cognize to be (at least trivially) true. This is what Hegel calls the “natural consciousness”. He explains natural consciousness in his *PhG* and also explains what he conceptualizes as our path beyond this natural consciousness to “absolute knowing” [*absolutes Wissen*]. In this sense, he is already going beyond the Kantian project.

4.2. Idealism and the Kantian problem

Let us briefly consider the following assertion by Hegel: “if we inquire into the truth of knowledge [*Wahrheit des Wissens*], it seems that we are asking what knowledge [*Wissen*] is *in itself*. Yet in this inquiry knowledge [*Wissen*] is *our* object, something that exists *for us*” (*PhG* 53, §83; Suhrkamp 76). For us to be able to say this knowledge is indeed true independently of our cognition, we would be assuming that we can stand outside ourselves with regard to our

¹⁵¹ However, as discussed above in the section on historicism, truth is absolute when it is the whole, but this whole is historically determined.

cognition and have a view of things not as they are for us but as they are in themselves. This was Kant's problem, and in the post-Kantian world of philosophy, we can no longer pretend simply to have access to truth independently of ourselves, but must rethink how we understand truth.

Hegel does have an answer to this Kantian issue, however, and it is based on the different views regarding truth that can be found in Hegel's theory of knowledge in the *PhG*. To begin with, Hegel writes that "in consciousness one thing exists *for* another, i.e. consciousness regularly contains the determinateness of the moment of knowledge [*Wissen*]; at the same time, this other is to consciousness not merely *for it*, but is also outside of this relationship, or exists *in itself*: the moment of truth" (*PhG* 53, §84; Suhrkamp 76-77). Consciousness's cognition is relational insofar as it continually seeks to grasp what is *for consciousness* as not merely that but as *in-itself*. Short of the truth found in Absolute Knowing, consciousness "regularly contains the determinateness of the moment of knowledge [*Wissen*]" but this determinateness (as *in-itself*) does not match what is *for consciousness*.

Each stage of the *PhG* as a different shape of consciousness is another one of these "false" consciousnesses. But each of them holds a significant moment in the totality of the *PhG* as a journey of *Bildung* because (1) each false cognition results in the change of the shape of cognition and these changes (though not the falsities themselves) guide the development of the phenomenological science, (2) each false consciousness teaches consciousness something about its cognition, namely, they teach consciousness what is incomplete, one-sided, and abstract, which consciousness needs to move beyond and onwards onto a new stage (while retaining the information from the experience in *Aufhebung*), (3) and, accordingly, in order to have concrete and true knowledge, consciousness needs to have worked through all of the false consciousnesses and recognized their falsity. Absolute Knowing is the truth insofar as it is the

knowledge of the limits of phenomenal experience and cognition. By virtue of the knowledge of these limits, consciousness (as Spirit) knows itself and its limits and can thus go beyond itself: “the self-knowing Spirit knows not only itself but also the negative of itself, or its limit: to know one’s limit is to know how to sacrifice oneself” (*PhG* 492, §807; Suhrkamp 590). Thus, for Hegel, truth is not cognition but rather the knowledge of the limits of cognition as historically constructed.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the role and relations of *Erkenntnis* and the theory of knowledge in Hegel’s work. I have claimed that his central concern in the *PhG* and the *WL* is to give an account of knowledge, that is, provide an epistemology, albeit a non-standard one. I argued that Hegel’s works are specific accounts of knowledge and of ways of acquiring knowledge. My main argument supporting these claims rested on an analysis of the relevant parts and aspects of the *PhG* and the *WL*.

I began with an exploration and analysis of the meaning of the term ‘epistemology’ in order to situate Hegel’s work vis à vis the normal understanding we have of this term. I presented an historical analysis of the term and its use from around the seventeenth century onward. I concluded that the term has come to be used with the meaning we ascribe to it today only starting around the time of Hegel’s death. More significantly perhaps, it has come to be used in this way in relation to his work. I showed that as a result his philosophy played a significant role in how the term has come to be defined. This significant role of Hegel’s philosophy indicates that Hegel’s philosophy at the very least has something to offer to epistemological endeavors. But I go on to show that his philosophy in fact does more.

I then established that Hegel's models for epistemology are Kant, Fichte, and Schelling's respective approaches to cognition and knowledge. After a brief discussion of the influence of these thinkers on Hegel, I moved on to explore certain characteristics of Hegel's epistemology which are important to consider when situating Hegel's epistemology in the historical development of an account of cognition. I argued that Hegel's epistemology is non-traditional and works with the post-Kantian critical notion of knowledge and not a dogmatically empiricist one. I claimed that the historical nature of knowledge in Hegel's philosophy is revealed through the term '*Erkenntnis*', meaning both 'knowledge' and 'cognition', and discussed how Hegel's theory differs from a correspondence theory of truth. Finally in this exploration of certain characteristics of Hegel's epistemology overall, I presented an argument that Hegel's epistemology is not relativistic but historicist, building on my discussions of the role of history and historical development for Hegel.

Following these overall investigations of Hegel's epistemology I moved on to discussing the specifics of what I identified as the two main pillars of Hegel's epistemology: *PhG* and *WL*. I claimed that the Introduction of *PhG* is especially important for understanding his epistemology, since there he establishes his notion of knowledge, of an *account* of knowledge, and of education/*Bildung*. Furthermore, cognition and truth are not only the subject-matter of philosophy but also form the specific development of philosophy in the journey of consciousness through various stages of its *Bildung*. Accordingly, this contributes to demonstrating my thesis that this journey is an account of knowledge, i.e. an epistemology.

I argued that in the journey of consciousness to find true knowledge, natural consciousness and scientific consciousness present two different perspectives on the account of knowledge: one on its way to the standpoint of Science and the other in this standpoint. Through

the discussion of these two perspectives, I established that the whole journey is a science that is an account of knowledge, i.e. an epistemology. In this epistemology, throughout the journey, I identified and distinguished three kinds of truth: the truth found in the existence of falsity and mistakes, the truth found in overcoming these mistakes though nevertheless retaining them through *Aufhebung*, and the truth of Absolute Knowing which is the Truth found in the whole. I showed that these three kinds of truth, by integrating mistakes and false cognitions in to the whole as necessary parts of the progression towards finding absolute knowledge, add an historical dimension to Hegel's approach to truth (thus relating the whole *PhG* to my earlier discussions of historicism). Consequently, I established that Hegel's view of Truth and knowledge rely on his whole system. This notion of the "whole" will become significant in my argument for Hegel's circular epistemology in Chapter 5.

After detailing the epistemology in *PhG*, I argued that *WL* is the second pillar of Hegel's epistemology. I claimed that *WL* presents a non-standard epistemology through its non-standard metaphysics. Because of its non-standard character, this metaphysics is first and foremost an epistemology. To establish why precisely *WL* constitutes an epistemology, I made arguments based on the structure of the *Logic* by making use of Koch's distinction between the background and the foreground logic, focusing on the chapter on the Idea of Cognition, and presenting the role of the co-development of the form and content of the *Logic* alongside the revelation that Absolute Idea is self-knowledge. These arguments indicate that the *WL* is an unfolding of knowledge and an account of this unfolding, i.e. an epistemology.

To conclude, I presented an upshot of my argument for the epistemological character of Hegel's philosophy, namely its implications for his unique notion of idealism. I contextualized this by presenting different meanings of idealism for different thinkers in the history of

philosophy. On this basis, I argued that Hegel's non-standard epistemology redefines 'idealism' in a unique way: the co-development of cognition (in *PhG*) or thought (in *WL*) and its object in the quest for knowledge and truth situates truth and the real in thought (as opposed to, for instance, empirical objects as they were understood in pre-critical philosophy).

When we consider Hegel as presenting an idealism in a world of post-critical philosophy, we can see that the inner difference of *Erkenntnis* (as 'knowledge' and as 'cognition') opens avenues for various conceptions of truth and a view of phenomenal experience prior to the whole and absolute truth. These avenues for truth take into account the contextuality and specific abilities of the individual who is a knower. In so doing, Hegel's epistemology accounts for an 'ideal' absolute truth as well as an 'ideal' world for individuals who are short of having reached the absolute but are on the path of *Bildung*. Furthermore, Hegel's notion of idealism, which does not allow metaphysics to be done without first and foremost constituting an epistemology, indicates that *WL* is by definition epistemological.

Chapter IV

Circularity and Anti-Foundationalism in Hegel's Philosophy

Circularity is a key concept for Hegel, and, as I argue through this dissertation, one that frames his entire system. Yet, an overview of how Hegel's commentators so far have taken up circularity makes apparent that not enough attention has been given to circularity in Hegel's work by a long shot.¹⁵² While many scholars make reference to circularity in Hegel's philosophy, few provide any conceptual account or definition of the concept. In the first three chapters of this dissertation, I laid the groundwork for considering Hegel's notion of circularity with its full historical and conceptual impact as an epistemological notion. In this chapter, I begin to explore the meaning of the notion of circularity in Hegel's philosophy.

In Chapter 3 I argued that Hegel is indispensably concerned with epistemological questions and that his two major works, *PhG* and *WL* are chiefly concerned with epistemology. The epistemological character of these two works, I argued, rests integrally within the development of their dialectical unfolding and the interrelation and co-dependence of their form and content. Given that Hegel writes of circles when describing his system in crucial parts (such as the introductions, prefaces, and final few paragraphs) of these works and of the *Enzyklopaedie* and the *Differenzschrift* (the epistemological arguments hold also in these works as I show below and in Chapter 6), I argue that circularity is an epistemological notion for Hegel.

By refining the notion of circularity to characterize his system, Hegel is accomplishing (at least) five things. He is (1) declaring his system and ontology to be epistemological (taking

¹⁵² For a detailed overview of many commentators' discussions of circularity in the scholarship on Hegel, please see the Introduction.

Kant's Copernican revolution further – the implications of Kant's Copernican revolution, when followed through to their conclusion are that ontology is first and foremost epistemology); (2) responding to the foundationalist tendencies of his predecessors; (3) developing the circular notion found in Fichte's dialectical thought (which was a development on Kant's work as discussed in Chapter 2); (4) providing an alternative to the skeptic worry of the Münchhausen-trilemma (discussed in Chapter 1) by giving a feasible path for justification and truth; and (5) redefining circularity in argumentation from being "vicious" to not being vicious.

In this chapter and in Chapters 5 and 6, I explore these five accomplishments. This chapter provides a detailed overview of Hegel's notion of circular epistemology and its various facets, whereas Chapter 5 focuses on analyzing the circular epistemology of the *WL*, *PhG*, and the *Enzyklopaedie*.

I begin this chapter with an exploration of the circle as a geometric figure. Then I discuss various key characteristics of circular epistemology. I then turn to the *Differenzschrift* where Hegel first presents his views on a circular epistemology and his criticism of foundationalism. This text is significant to consider here because it provides a view onto Hegel's early conception (at the beginning of his philosophical career) of his system as an anti-foundationalist circular epistemology before he had formulated this system. Following my account of Hegel's early conceptualization of his circular system, I turn to his account of infinity in the *WL*, where he claims that "true infinity" is in the shape of a circle and is also related to "ideality". I argue that this notion of true infinity is a model for his circular epistemology.

1. Circle as a Geometric Figure

Euclid defines the term ‘circle’ in the Book I of his *Elements* as follows: “A circle is a plane figure bounded by one line, and such that all right lines drawn from a certain point within it to the bounding line, are equal. The bounding line is called its circumference and the point, its centre”. A circle is a closed figure. It is a line all points on which are equidistant¹⁵³ from a single point, which thereby constitutes the midpoint of the resulting shape. There is no beginning or end to it, and as one continues along its curve, one returns to where one started. This can be distinguished from a straight line which has a beginning point from which it “moves” further away.

Circles are often seen as a symbol of perfection. Not only does the circle hold a significant place in mathematics and physics, it also acts as a basic symbol pragmatically: ranging from the use of the wheel as a circle to the recurrence of circles in nature. One can observe circular patterns in plants and animal bodies and movements, but also what has fascinated thinkers (including notably Plato and Aristotle) since antiquity is the circularity of the celestial bodies and their (seemingly) circular patterns of movement. For these reasons, circles have been given a status of a symbol that is divine. Alchemical symbols that refer to completion, life, afterlife, renewal and transformation, and perfection such as the ouroboros and the famous philosopher’s stone both feature the shape of the circle prominently. Hegel’s system resembles

¹⁵³ According to Hegel in the *Philosophy of Nature* “[t]hat the line does not consist of points ... follows from [its] Notion” (*Enzyklopaedie* §256). Hence, it is not exactly correct to speak of points that make up a line, for a point is “negativity” (ibid.). A circle, made of a line, is not made up of a certain number of points but is divisible into infinitely many segments. Furthermore, a circle is made of a curved line. Hegel remarks of curved lines that they are “in themselves at once in two dimensions” (ibid.). And “[i]n the circle we have the line raised to the second power” (ibid.). The implications of these remarks for understanding Hegel’s philosophy within its circular framework could be a useful endeavor in a future project, however, it is beyond my scope here.

the ouroboros symbol, a snake eating its tail in a circular pattern, where the beginning and end intertwine and the end signifies transformation and new life through its own flesh and blood.

Nevertheless, Hegel warns us against the temptation to approach symbols (mentioning the circle among them) to mean more than what thought can grasp. He writes in the *WL*:

To take numbers and geometrical figures (as the circle triangle etc., have often been taken), simply as *symbols* (the circle, for example, as a symbol of eternity, the triangle, of the trinity), is so far harmless enough; but, on the other hand, it is foolish to fancy that in this way more is expressed than can be grasped [*griffen*] and expressed by thought. Whatever profound wisdom may be supposed to lie in such meagre symbols or in those richer products of fantasy in the mythology of peoples and in poetry generally, it is properly for thought alone to make explicit for consciousness the wisdom that lies only *in* them; and not only *in* symbols but *in* nature and *in* mind. In symbols the truth is dimmed and veiled by the sensuous element; only in the form of thought is it fully revealed to consciousness: the *meaning* is only the thought itself. (*WL* 215)

It would be wrong to ascribe meaning to numerical or geometrical symbols that go *beyond* what “can be grasped and expressed in thought”. Hence, symbols should not refer to what goes beyond the realm of concepts [*Begriff*], since what can be *grasped* [*griffen*] and expressed in thought is conceptual [*begrifflich*]. Strikingly enough, as I argue below in the section on Infinity, Hegel will argue that while an infinitely progressing line cannot be grasped completely by thought, a circle can and is the appropriate expression for ideality. Idea, as the last moment of the *WL* and thereby also the last moment of the Doctrine of the Notion [*Begriff*], is the highest expression of *Begriff*.

Circularity as an epistemological notion¹⁵⁴ relates to its geometrical definition.¹⁵⁵ To match the geometrical understanding of circles and lines to the epistemological notions, we can say that a linear epistemology is one in which the knowledge (that the epistemology is an

¹⁵⁴ From a pre-critical and dogmatic perspective, circularity would be first and foremost ontological and not epistemological. However, after Kant’s Copernican revolution, and as I argued in Chapter 3 that Hegel shows, what *is* is no longer simply as it is but *as we cognize/know it*. Consequently, ontology comes secondary to an epistemology. How we know things comes *priori* to what these things that we know *are*.

¹⁵⁵ Tom Rockmore, in his *Hegel’s Circular Epistemology*, notes this (Rockmore 1).

epistemology for) is justified as based on a foundation, which is the beginning point. A linear epistemology then holds that each step of the justification (by virtue of which the epistemology claims that the knowledge it is an epistemology for is knowledge) is dependent on the step that comes before it, just like the points of a line. I provided examples and detailed discussions of linear systems in chapters 1 and 2.

2. Key Characteristics of Hegel's Notion of a Circular Epistemology

There are certain essential features of circularity: beginning without presuppositions, non-linearity, anti-foundationalism, and self-justification. An account of these essential features paint a picture of what the Hegelian circular epistemology means.

A circular epistemology begins without presuppositions. In it, there is no presupposition of what comes before, and its beginning point does not involve some 'knowledge' the justification of which it takes for granted, i.e. presupposes. A circular epistemology, accordingly, does not rest upon pieces of knowledge that would serve as a foundation for what is to come. For, those pieces of knowledge, if they are to act as a foundation, would not be justified through the criteria of the system for which they would be purported to be the foundation. Being justified through the criteria of the science before the science itself establishes the criteria would suggest that the science refers to something outside itself (at its outset and continued throughout).

Rather, a circular epistemology is self-enclosed and does not refer to anything outside itself. It thereby forms a self-sufficient whole, for it does not presuppose an account of knowledge before the account of knowledge that it, as a circle, is set to establish. Were it to begin with presuppositions, there would be knowledge on which it relies that rests beyond its own boundaries, the justification of which it would be taking for granted.

Beginning with presuppositions would mean that there would be a foundation upon which the system rests: the presuppositions would be this foundation. We saw in Chapter 1 that the foundations in a foundationalist system provide justification for the rest of the system, but are themselves freed of such need for a justification. If they were to require justification, they could not be foundational by definition, because there would be other pieces of knowledge that would come prior to the foundation which would function as the justification of the foundation – however, this is an infinite regress (as also discussed in Chapter 1).

In a foundational epistemology, the founding point (or the presuppositions) of the system serves as the justifying factor for the system that follows. A circular epistemology, on the other hand, is self-justifying because it depends only on its own circular progression. Its justification is independent of its starting point. Anything that is taken as having any justificatory value is found within the system, unlike in a foundational system where the justification remains necessarily outside the system.

In a circular epistemology, an instance of knowledge does not depend on the previous or the first instance of knowledge for its justification, but rather, in seeking justification, moves forward to the next instance of knowledge which does the same, and so on until we come to an instance of knowledge that relies for justification on the whole process of getting to that last instance, and thereby is a return to the beginning. The line of knowledge in a circular epistemology is curved so that it forms a circle. In proceeding, the justification of the past points is not important in the development of the process. Rather, what is important is that we keep pressing on with the progression until we reach a point at which we have the whole picture of the system in sight.

The proper way to begin an inquiry for knowledge is not based on a foundational beginning point but rather can be anywhere¹⁵⁶ that does not hold a special founding value. In a circular epistemology what forms the circle is not only the dependence of one point upon another but also the relation of each point to the center and thereby to each other point (as well as the closing of the circle).¹⁵⁷ The center of the circle constitutes the problem, i.e. the object of knowledge. The surrounding circle of which the center is a center is the knowledge and the way this knowledge is established. Thus every part of the epistemology is at an equal distance from the problem which the knowledge is knowledge of.

Hegel writes about the center of the circle in his *Differenzschrift* (which I quote and discuss further below). In that work, he is still conceptualizing what a proper system of philosophy should look like while analyzing the philosophy of Fichte and Schelling. Once he begins the work on his own system, we can see his concepts of the circle and the center of the circle in effect.

The center, i.e. the problem, in the *PhG*, for instance, is cognition/phenomenological experience in its totality or with all of its possibilities and facets. Consciousness comes to understand cognition and true knowledge by going through a series of stages with different issues which when brought together as a whole constitute a correct view of knowledge.

¹⁵⁶ In Chapter 5, I discuss this beginning point in relation to the notion of a presuppositionless beginning in the section on the *WL*. Though it can be said that this beginning point can be anywhere, there are various qualifications which need to be met.

¹⁵⁷ Hegel writes the following about the relation of number and the equidistance of all possible points on the circumference of the circle to the center: “Geometry as such does not *measure* spatial figures (it is not mensuration), but only *compares* them. In its definitions, too, the determinations are in part derived from the *equality* of the sides and angles, or from *equidistance*. Thus the circle, because it is based solely on the *equidistance* of all possible points in it from a centre, does not require number for its determination. These determinations based on equality or inequality are genuinely geometrical. But they are not sufficient, and for other figures, for example, the triangle or rectangle, number is requisite; this in its principle, the one, contains a self-determinedness, it is determined without the aid of an other and therefore not through comparison” (*WL* 205).

Consciousness grasps the center point by forming a circle around this center point as a result of going through the stages of the journey of *Bildung*. This journey develops in the form of a circle because the end point returns to the beginning to grasp the whole journey. In so doing, the curve of the circular development forms around the central problem of consciousness. Only through grasping the center by encircling it with its journey of *Bildung* can consciousness come to complete the task of the *PhG* which is to come to the standpoint of Science.

In the *WL*, the problem that constitutes the center is thought. The science of logic is the science of thinking and of the different aspects and facets of thought. The progression of the *WL*, then, is the progression of the different aspects of thought and the structure of thought in its own unfolding.

Hegel uses the term “circle” (*Kreis*) often at the introductory parts of his works when he is providing preliminary explanations, such as in the Introduction of the *Enzyklopaedie* or in *WL*. In these places he mentions circularity as the way in which philosophy progresses. Since *PhG*, the *Enzyklopaedie*, and *WL* are accounts of acquisition (in the case of *PhG*) or development (in the case of the *Enzyklopaedie* and *WL*) of knowledge (among other things) as I argued in Chapter 3, Hegel’s discussions of circularity suggest that he uses the notion of circularity to refer not only to his system as a whole but also to his epistemology.

3. Hegel’s Initial Conception of Circular Epistemology in the *Differenzschrift*

Hegel first introduces the notion of circularity in his initial philosophical publication, the *Differenzschrift*, where he sharply attacks Reinhold’s view of philosophy and philosophical system (though we shall see that he changes his mind later about Reinhold’s philosophy when he writes the *WL*). He criticizes Reinhold for seeking a foundation for philosophy before beginning

philosophy. He mentions that Reinhold thinks Kantian philosophy has come to an end¹⁵⁸ (even though Hegel disagrees) and its “bad consequences ... will persist for some time” (*Differenzschrift* 179). Nevertheless, the effort to find a foundation for Kant’s philosophy will prove to be a beginning for philosophy. Hegel writes of Reinhold’s stance that “[t]he founding and grounding tendency, the tendency to philosophize before getting to philosophy has here finally succeeded in expressing itself completely” (ibid.).

According to Hegel, Reinhold worries about setting a foundation for philosophy before beginning a philosophical investigation. Reinhold’s desire for a foundation, Hegel holds, is caused by his worry about beginning in a wrong fashion. Since the beginning holds such an importance in Reinhold’s view of philosophy how and where one begins is significant for him, “every investigation is premature, every beginning is rashness, and every philosophy is a mere preparatory exercise” (*Differenzschrift* 180). For this reason, Hegel claims that for Reinhold, all beginnings are hypothetical and philosophy is an exercise that hopes to stumble upon the “arch-true”. For Reinhold “all the foundations are supposed to be only problematic and hypothetical until such time as, in the progress through the problematic and hypothetical, we stumble upon the arch-true in our truth and upon truth through the arch-true” (ibid.). Hence, on this view, philosophy does not know what it is looking for and is also not sure of its beginning. Philosophy constantly questions its beginning and what it should seek without being able to move further, while in the meantime hoping to stumble upon the arch-true.

In Hegel’s view, “nothing at all is ever founded by way of the hypothetical and the problematic” (*Differenzschrift* 181).¹⁵⁹ Hegel’s view of a science [*Wissenschaft*], however,

¹⁵⁸ The philosophy that is referred to here that has come to an end is Kantian philosophy. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss this in further detail.

¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, he adopts the language of “hypothetical” beginnings in his later *WL*. I discuss this below.

avoids the problem of Reinhold's philosophy which Hegel identifies in this text. For Hegel, who has yet to form his own philosophical system at the point of writing this work, science should "found itself upon itself by positing each one of its parts absolutely, and thereby constituting identity and knowledge at the beginning and at every single point" (*Differenzschrift* 180). Of course, this is a mere promissory note at that time in the *Differenzschrift*. Nevertheless, it indicates how Hegel conceived of a science before he started to formulate (at least in a published work) his own. Accordingly, the Hegelian notion of science does not face the doubt and worry which plague the philosophy which Reinhold seeks to have. Furthermore, rather than hoping to discern some "arch-true" along the way, knowledge "founds itself more effectively the more it grows" (*ibid.*).

It is in this context of a criticism of Reinhold's foundationalist desires for Kantian philosophy that Hegel presents his thoughts on circularity for the first time in his corpus:

Center and circle are so connected with each other that the first beginning of the circle is already a connection with the center, and the center is not completely a center unless the whole circle, with all of its connections, is completed: a whole that is as little in need of a particular handle to attach the founding to as the earth is in need of a particular handle to attach the force to that guides it around the sun and at the same time sustains it in the whole living manifold of its shapes. (*Differenzschrift* 180)

This is Hegel's conception of his own Copernican revolution (to be). Following Kant, he seeks to introduce his own philosophical system which answers the difficulties of the philosophy before him. His target here is Reinhold's philosophy, which he deems to be the highest expression of "the founding and grounding tendency" of philosophy.¹⁶⁰ His Copernican revolution is proposing an anti-foundational, circular epistemology.

¹⁶⁰ Although Hegel presents Reinhold's philosophy as the highest expression of "the founding and grounding tendency" of philosophy, Reinhold's philosophy is nevertheless not linear. For, Reinhold does not found and ground his philosophy at the beginning but rather turns his philosophy into seeking such a foundation before he begins anything else. Thus, although Reinhold's philosophy (in the way that Hegel portrays it here) is not linear, it is nevertheless foundational.

The center of the circle constitutes the object of knowledge. The curved line that forms the circle is “connected” to the center by the radius from the beginning and constitutes knowledge. From the beginning the circle is connected to the center even if the circle can only be recognized as a circle when it is completed. The knowledge that develops in a circular pattern is an effort to come to grips with a concept adequate to match the object. As the knowledge develops it increasingly justifies itself. The circle is self-founding and self-sufficient, therefore it does not need a “handle” whereby it will be attached to a founding and grounding principle, like in Reinhold’s approach (*Differenzschrift* 180). Hegel is against the idea that philosophy should be grounded in a principle that comes before philosophy because he holds that “[p]hilosophy as a whole grounds itself and the reality of its cognition, both as to form and as to content, within itself” (*Differenzschrift* 179). The *PhG* demonstrates the grounding of “the reality of its cognition” and the *WL* shows how this pertains to “form” and “content”.

In the *WL*, that is, Hegel’s mature work, Hegel returns to the notion of circularity to explore it in detail. I discuss the details of how circularity is in effect in the structure of the *WL* in Chapter 6. However, there is another interesting way in which Hegel takes up the notion of circularity in the *WL*, which is through an exploration of the notion of infinity.

4. “Infinity” as a Circle and Its Relation to Idealism

In the *WL* and *EL* Hegel relates the notion of circles and circularity to infinity and idealism – he explains what he calls genuine infinity through the structure of circularity. This explanation is significant for understanding Hegel’s notion of circularity and circular epistemology because it is the only place in Hegel’s corpus where he takes up the notion of the circle in such detail in the body of a work, explaining it metaphysically and connecting it with

reason, understanding, and the general movement of thought. Furthermore, in this account of infinity as a circle, he also gives an account of ideality and idealism, a significant defining characteristic for his philosophy as a whole, thereby indicating the importance of infinity for his circular epistemology and systematic circularity. The significance of idealism for his philosophy in general is something I discuss at various points in this dissertation (most thoroughly in Chapters 1, 3, and 6). Here, however, I connect Hegel's notion of idealism to its role for infinity, circularity, and determination in the *WL*. Given that the development of the *WL* culminates in the Idea (as the most advanced and determined form of thought in the logic, and yet also a return to the beginning, i.e. to Being), we ought to pay special attention to his discussion of ideality in the body of this work, which rather tellingly appears in tandem with his account of infinity as a circle, and in distinction from a linear form of thought (i.e. the spurious infinite).

In this section, I give an exegetical and critical analysis of the sections of *WL* on infinity with references to finitude and some other preceding sections of the *WL* to explain infinity and its relation to the notion of circularity. In order to fully appreciate how it is that true infinity is circular, we need to look in detail at how we arrive there. To that end, I order into the subsections of this section the various movements Hegel makes in his long and detailed argument for how we get to true infinity in the science of logic and what the true infinity is.

4.1. Overview

Hegel's notion of infinity in the *WL* and *EL*¹⁶¹ provides a useful and important account of circles and circularity in relation to Hegel's epistemology and idealism. His exploration of

¹⁶¹ My analysis here is based mostly on the *WL* because the section on "infinity" in the *WL* is more detailed than in the *EL*.

infinity highlights the problematic nature of the linear epistemology which ensues from the “founding and grounding tendency” Hegel criticizes in the *Differenzschrift* which I just explored above, and presents circularity as the superior alternative. “Infinity” is one of the determinations of *being* in the logic. It is one of the places in which he takes up the figure of the circle, and what is more, he presents true infinity as a circle which is also related to ideality. This true infinity is in contrast to the false “spurious” infinity which is an ever-growing straight line. I argue that true infinity is an adequate model¹⁶² for understanding Hegel’s notion of a circular epistemology and philosophical system. I base this argument on Hegel’s association of infinity to a juxtaposition of circles and straight lines in relation to truth as well as his discussion of idealism in relation to infinity.

Burbidge points out that in the 1831 version of the *WL* includes “a much expanded discussion of qualitative infinity” (*Hegel’s Logic* 165). In fact, the expansion of the discussion on infinity is of a considerable length compared to the other changes he made from the 1812 version. This indicates the importance ‘infinity’ had for Hegel and that ‘infinity’ was a concept he continued to develop through the years. Lauer states that “[t]here is scarcely a term in Hegel’s philosophical (“speculative”) vocabulary that he repeats with more bewildering frequency than the term “infinite” (unendlich)” (*Hegel on Infinity* 287). As I demonstrate below, ‘infinity’ is further significant for Hegel’s conception of circularity and ideality. And as such, his apparent attention to ‘infinity’ through his mature work shows his continual interest in and development of circularity in relation to his philosophical endeavors as a whole.

¹⁶² We must take any part of Hegel’s works always in consideration in the context of the whole in which they are found, as I have argued. Accordingly, the notion of infinity shall also be approached not as an absolute on its own but as a part in the unfolding of the moments of the logic. Nevertheless, what finitude and infinity reveal with regard to circularity as well as to reality and ideality have overarching ramifications for not only the *WL* but Hegel’s other systematic works which have a circular form.

Infinity is the third and final determination of “determinate being” and comes right before “being-for-self” in the Quality section of the Doctrine of Being, in the progression of the science of logic. It follows “finitude”. Hegel begins with explicating the infinite in general and then he presents the two kinds of infinity: “the spurious infinite” and “the true or genuine infinite” (*WL* 137; Suhrkamp 149). He writes “the main point is to distinguish the genuine Notion of infinity from spurious infinity, the infinite of reason from the infinite of the understanding;¹⁶³ yet the latter is the *finitized* infinite, and it will be found that in the very act of keeping the infinite pure and aloof from the finite, the infinite is only made finite” (*ibid.*). He characterizes the spurious infinite as an infinite progression of the same thing as a result of being only a reflection of the finite, and the true or genuine infinite as a circle. I shall explain these in detail and make a case for their relations to Hegel’s epistemology and approach to cognition.

4.2. The Transition from the Finite to the Infinite

One arrives at the infinite in general as a result of a recognition of finitude. The recognition of finitude takes one beyond that finitude. The infinite in its initial form is “determinate being [*Dasein*] in its being-in-itself determines itself as finite and transcends the limitation. It is the very nature of the finite to transcend itself, to negate its negation and to become infinite” (*WL* 138; Suhrkamp 150). Since the finite is limited, Hegel characterizes it as a “negation”. He writes “[t]he infinite is the negation of the negation, affirmation, *being* which has restored itself out of limitedness” (*WL* 137; Suhrkamp 150). However, the infinite is not “complete above and superior to the finite”, but “the truth is rather that the finite is only this,

¹⁶³ This distinction between the understanding and reason is something that was significant for Kant. For instance, the sublime comes about as a result of the clash in certain experiences of the limited nature of the understanding and the unlimited nature of reason (*Critique of Judgment* §27, §29).

through its own nature to become itself the infinite” (*WL* 138; Suhrkamp 150). Thus, the finite is sublated and consequently preserved as a moment in the infinite. This presence of the finite in the concept of the infinite is important for understanding the two kinds of infinite and their relation to the linear and circular models of epistemology.¹⁶⁴

The infinite, in its first determinate form (after being the infinite *in general*) is the spurious infinite. It becomes determinate because when it comes about “in the form of simple being” it is also at the same time “the *non-being* of an *other*”. As such, the infinite as simple being is *determined* as the non-being of an other. This determination of the infinite makes it “[fall] back into the category of *something* as a determinate being in general—more precisely, into the category of something with a limit” (*WL* 138; Suhrkamp 151). However, as determined and limited, “the infinite is determinate being reflected into itself, resulting from the sublation of determinateness in general, and hence is determinate being *posited* as distinguished from its determinateness” (*ibid.*). The infinite is what the finite “ought to be” and what the finite is “*in itself*” and thus “it is a purely self-related, wholly affirmative being” (*WL* 139; Suhrkamp 151).

As is usual in Hegel’s accounts of things and concepts that are purely self-related and within themselves, this form of the finite turns out to be abstract and one-sided, leading to contradictions. He writes of this form of the infinite and its contradictions the following:

The infinite as thus posited over against the finite, in a relation wherein they are as qualitatively distinct others, is to be called the *spurious infinite*, the infinite of the understanding, for which it has the value of the highest, the absolute Truth. The understanding is satisfied that it has truly reconciled these two, but the truth is that it is entangled in unreconciled, unresolved, absolute contradiction; it can only be brought to a

¹⁶⁴ In another project, it may be worthwhile to explore the transition from the finite to the infinite as analogous to a transition from non-philosophical to philosophical thought. As I quote and discuss below, Hegel writes about the progress to spurious infinity from the finite that “[t]his progress is the *external* aspect of this unity at which ordinary thinking halts” (*WL* 142). Also, see fn165.

consciousness of this fact by the contradictions into which it falls on every side when it ventures to apply and to explicate these its categories. (*WL* 139; Suhrkamp 151-2)

The spurious infinite is opposed to the finite and is separated from it, thereby creating “two worlds, one infinite and one finite” (*WL* 139-40; Suhrkamp 152). In the relationship of the infinite and the finite, “the infinite is only the *limit* of the finite and is thus only a determinate infinite, an *infinite which is itself finite*” (*WL* 140; Suhrkamp 152). Thus, the infinite “set *above* or *beyond* the finite” has a “*distinct* place” and is “beyond in the dim, inaccessible distance, *outside*” the finite (*ibid.*).

Furthermore, “the finite, although persisting as a determinate being [*Dasein*], is at the same time *also* determined as *in itself* nothing and therefore as destined to bring about its own dissolution” (*WL* 140; Suhrkamp 153). However, since the finite and the infinite are each “in its own self and through its own determination the positing of its other, they are *inseparable*”, though this “unity is *concealed* in their *qualitative* otherness” (*WL* 141; Suhrkamp 153-4). This unity results in a “changing or transition of the finite into the infinite, and vice versa; so that the infinite only *emerges* in the finite and the finite in the infinite, the other in the other” (*ibid.*). Their connection is external, since they determine one another only as limitation and hence as transition.

4.3. The Spurious (or “False”) Infinite: The Progress to Infinity

Hegel characterizes what is beyond the finite as a “void” (*WL* 141; Suhrkamp 154). He describes the transition from the finite to the infinite and vice versa as follows:

This transcending of the finite appears as an external act. In this void beyond the finite, what arises? What is the positive element in it? Owing to the inseparability of the infinite and the finite—or because this infinite remaining aloof on its own side is itself limited—there arises a limit; the infinite has vanished and its other, the finite, has entered. But this

entrance of the finite appears as a happening external to the infinite, and the new limit as something that does not arise from the infinite itself but is likewise found as given. And so we are faced with a relapse into the previous determination which has been sublated in vain. But this new limit is itself only something which has to be sublated or transcended. And so again there arises the void, the nothing, in which similarly the said determinateness, a new limit, is encountered-and *so on to infinity*. (ibid.)

This constant oscillation from one to the other and vice versa “*to infinity*” explains the spurious character of this infinite. The infinite arose as a negation of the negation of the finite. But now the infinite vanishes as a result of its own limitation over against the finite. But the finite is finite by virtue of its limitation against the “void” where the infinite arises. And thus the finite encounters this new limit over and over again to infinity.

Hegel writes that “[i]t is this alternating determination negating both its own self and its negation, which appears as the *progress to infinity*” (WL 142; Suhrkamp 155). This progress to infinity is the spurious infinite, and it is “a progress which in so many forms and applications is accepted as something ultimate beyond which thought does not go but, having got as far as this 'and so on to infinity', has usually reached its goal” (ibid.). Consequently, there is a contradiction in this progress to infinity: it is at the same time infinite and yet has reached its goal. As a moment in the science of logic, it is a determination of being as thought (since the logic is the exposition of thought), but it is at the same time “accepted as something ultimate beyond which thought does not go” (ibid.). Thus, “[t]he progress is, consequently, a *contradiction* which is not resolved but is always only enunciated as *present*” (ibid.). The spurious infinite “is an abstract transcending of a limit” because it is an “incomplete” transcending (ibid.). We find the progress to infinity as a form of the infinite but thought is posited as a limit:

Before us is the infinite; it is of course transcended, for a new limit is posited, but the result is rather only a return to the finite. This spurious infinity is in itself the same thing as the perennial ought; it is the negation of the finite it is true, but it cannot in truth free itself therefrom. The finite reappears *in the infinite itself* as its other, because it is only in its *connection* with its other, the finite, that the infinite is. The progress to infinity is,

consequently, only the perpetual repetition of one and the same content, one and the same tedious *alternation* of this finite and infinite. ... This progress is the *external* aspect of this unity at which ordinary thinking halts, at this perpetual repetition of one and the same alternation, of the vain unrest of advancing beyond the limit to infinity, only to *find* in this infinite a new limit in which, however, it is as little able to rest as in the infinite. This infinite has the fixed determination of a *beyond*, which cannot be reached, for the very reason that *it is not meant* to be reached, because the determinateness of the beyond, of the *affirmative* negation, is not let go. (*WL* 142; Suhrkamp 156)

Infinite progress as a model of infinity is limited because it is infinite by virtue of constantly moving beyond the finite at every step of its progression as the “perpetual repetition of one and the same alternation” (*ibid.*). Since this progress is infinite, “*it is not meant* to be reached” (*ibid.*). Otherwise, it would not be infinite. Thus, it contains a contradiction in it. The externality of the limit along which the alternation occurs repeatedly is the reason for the spurious nature of this infinity. It *extends* itself since “[t]his progress is the *external* aspect of this unity at which ordinary thinking halts” (*ibid.*). Thus, ordinary thinking (i.e. understanding) cannot reach the infinity of this progression, despite engendering it through a one-sided “external” positing.

As quoted above, Hegel writes that “the main point is to distinguish the genuine Notion of infinity from spurious infinity, the infinite of reason from the infinite of the understanding” (*WL* 137; Suhrkamp 149). The spurious infinity is the infinite of the understanding because understanding is limited and spurious infinite is the false conception of infinity.¹⁶⁵ The alternation between the finite and the infinite, that is, “[t]his transition from one to the other and

¹⁶⁵ Here, we could further extend my earlier claim (see fn164) about the transition from the finite to the infinite constituting a transition from “ordinary thinking” to philosophy to incorporate the transition from the *PhG* to the *WL*. As I discuss in Chapter 6, the *PhG* prepares consciousness to be able to engage in the science of logic by bringing consciousness to the “standpoint of Science” (*PhG* 50, §78). One could potentially make the argument that consciousness in the *PhG* is engaging in “ordinary thinking” when at the beginning it is “natural consciousness”. Then it progresses onto gain “understanding” (especially in the Force and the Understanding chapter) which could be argued to parallel the understanding which dominates the spurious infinite (which I explain below). A further claim in this argument would be that following the Reason chapter of the *PhG* consciousness progresses towards and arrives at the genuine infinite (which one grasps with reason, as I explain below) with the completion of the circle of the *PhG*. The *WL*, as pure thought, is already a genuine infinite as a whole. The details of this argument are, however, can be determined in a future project.

back again constitutes the external realization of the Notion” (*WL* 143). The alternation between the finite and the infinite shows that “[i]n *each*, therefore, there lies the *determinateness of the other*, although according to the standpoint of the infinite progress these two are supposed to be shut out from each other and only to follow each other alternately” (*ibid.*). This means that though they are supposed to exclude one another from the standpoint of the infinite progress, in fact they are not “shut out” from one another insofar as they determine one another as one another’s *other* (and hence one another’s *limit*), and thus form a unity in the alternation. This unity of the finite and the infinite is “the one-sided expression for the unity as it is in truth” (*ibid.*). Hegel writes that this one-sidedness “must lie in the externalization of the Notion” and must be eliminated (*ibid.*). This is how he starts the section titled Affirmative Infinity which is concerned with the “true or genuine infinite”.

4.4. The Transition to the Genuine (or “True”) Infinite

Hegel characterizes the spurious infinite as “the *finite infinite*” since it stands over against the finite externally: “It is precisely this holding of the infinite *apart* from the finite, thus giving it a *one-sided* character, which constitutes its finitude and, therefore, its unity with the finite” (*WL* 144). To claim that infinity is completely separate, “apart”, from the finite is what gives it its finite character, because through this claim infinity limits itself over against the finite.

The finite and the infinite are externally connected and this connection is “essential to them, without which neither is what it is” (*WL* 144). They are each other’s “other” and “each, taken *on its own account*, considered *in its own self*, has its other present within it as its own moment” (*ibid.*). Since they are externally posited as negating one another, and “since each is supposed to be what it is in its distinction from the other; in their unity, therefore, they lose their

qualitative nature” (ibid.). The reason for this loss of their qualitative nature is because they are determined based on their distinction from and negation of one another. Rather than being determined based on their qualitative nature, the emphasis is in the distinction – not how their qualities are distinct, but on the *distinction* itself as a logical move, and their mutual negation.

Consequently, it is false to see in their “unity *only* contradiction” (WL 144-5). The infinite is “*finitized infinite*” and the finite is “*infinitized finite*” (WL 145). In fact, Hegel’s crucially insightful claim (which we shall shortly come to see is in fact about the true infinite) is that the unity of the finite and the infinite “is itself the infinite” (WL 144). However, understanding makes the mistake of seeing only contradiction in this unity, and “[j]ust as before, the simple unity of the infinite and finite was falsified by the understanding, so too is the double unity [i.e. the finitized infinite and infinitized finite]” (WL 145). Hegel further explains the mistakes of the understanding as follows:

The falsification of the finite and infinite by the understanding which holds fast to a qualitatively distinct relation between them and asserts that each in its own nature is separate, in fact absolutely separate from the other, comes from forgetting what the Notion of these moments is for the understanding itself. According to this, the unity of the finite and infinite is not an external bringing together of them, nor an incongruous combination alien to their own nature in which there would be joined together determinations inherently separate and opposed, each having a simple affirmative being independent of the other and incompatible with it; but each is in its own self this unity, and this only as a *sublating* of its own self in which neither would have the advantage over the other of having an in-itself and an affirmative determinate being [*Dasein*]. (WL 145)

This criticism of the understanding is significant here, especially because Hegel characterized the spurious infinite as the infinite of the understanding as well as the wrong way to conceive of infinity. Furthermore, as I explain below and as is the main point of the discussion here on the infinite, infinity for Hegel signifies more than just another moment in the logic but reflects significantly on systematic philosophy and how Hegel thinks one ought to approach systematic

philosophy. Thus, his criticisms of the spurious infinite in relation to the understanding and the understanding's mistakes in grasping infinity in its truth are in fact criticisms of a certain conception of philosophy.

In contrast to understanding's mistaken conception of finitude and infinity, "finitude *is* only as a transcending of itself; it therefore contains infinity, the other of itself" and "infinity *is* only as a transcending of the finite" (*WL* 145-6). "The finite is not sublated by the infinite as by a power existing outside it" but rather "infinity consists in sublating its own self" and thereby removes the external limit (*WL* 146). In this move from the external mutual co-limiting of finitude and infinity (which resulted in infinite progress) to the internal mutual co-containment of finitude and infinity, we are on our way to arriving at true infinity.

4.5. The Genuine (or "True") Infinite as a Circle

True infinity starts to take shape following the discussion on the co-containment of finitude and infinity that arose as a reaction to the exclusionary (one-sided) distinction between the finite and the infinite, the distinction which resulted in the alternation between the two that is the infinite progression of spurious infinity. The co-containment of the finite and the infinite put us on the right track to get a full account of true infinity.

True infinity arises as an affirmation. The negation (which was present in the external co-limitation of the finite and the infinite) "*sublates* itself in the *negation*" and is therefore "*in itself* self-relation, affirmation, but as return to itself, that is through the *mediation* which the negation of negation is" (*WL* 146). These determinations, Hegel claims, "are also *posited* in the infinite

progress ... namely, as not yet in their ultimate truth” (ibid.). At this point there is a connection between them that is posited.

We can consider the moments that we passed through: first the infinite and the finite are both negated in the infinite progress and are thus “transcended” (*WL* 146). Then they are posited as distinct from one another, and thus as positive. We can compare the finite and the infinite as two separate determinations that are connected by virtue of their determination and also separate on their own account. Furthermore, there is also their posited connection as “still only a transition and alternation” (ibid.). In this consideration of these moments, we saw the following. We began with the finite, which is transcended by the infinite as that which is beyond it. The infinite is the negation of the finite and “this negation is again transcended, so that there arises a new limit, a *finite* again” (*WL* 147). Short of mentioning the figure of the circle yet, Hegel writes that

This is the complete, **self-closing movement** which has arrived at that which constituted the beginning; **what arises is the same as that from which the movement began**, that is, the finite is restored; it has therefore united *with itself*, has in its beyond only found *itself* again. (*WL* 147, bold emphases mine)

We see this not only with the finite but also in the movement of the infinite. Since the finite and the infinite are others to each other, limit one another, and alternate to result in the infinite progress, it is not unexpected that here they follow the same movement. Hegel writes

In the infinite, the beyond of the limit, there arises only another limit which has the same fate, namely, that as finite it must be negated. Thus what is present again is the *same* infinite which had previously disappeared in the new limit; the infinite, therefore, through its sublation, through its transcending of the new limit, is not removed any further either from the finite—for the finite is only this, to pass over into the infinite—or from itself, for it has arrived *at its own self*. (ibid.)

The finite and the infinite both “are this *movement* in which each returns to itself through its negation ... and the affirmative of each contains the negative of each and is the negation of the negation” (ibid.).

In both of the movements of the finite and the infinite, we see the same pattern of negation and a return to self in affirmation. However, there is “an error which is connected with the one-sidedness just criticized” (*WL* 147-8), i.e. the one-sidedness of the infinite progression which was the result of the external negation and the consequent alternation of the finite and the infinite as negatives of one another. As taken distinctly from one another “first the finite and then the infinite is taken as the *starting point* and it is only this that gives rise to *two* results” and not one (*WL* 148). This “*double* result disappears” because of “a matter of complete indifference which is taken as the beginning” since they each follow the same pattern of a return to oneself and each is the negative of the other and result in an alternation (ibid.). Hence the finite and the infinite, in their self-returning movement, lose this duplicity.

Thus we reach the true infinite: “The infinite, therefore, as now before us is, in fact, the process in which it is deposed to being only *one* of its determinations, the opposite of the finite, and so to being itself only one of the finites, and then raising this its difference from itself into the affirmation of itself and through this mediation becoming the *true* infinite” (*WL* 148). The true infinite, however, “cannot be expressed in the *formula*, already criticized, of a *unity* of the finite and infinite; *unity* is abstract, inert self-sameness, and the moments are similarly only in the form of inert, simply affirmative being” (ibid.). In contrast to this inert self-sameness of abstract unity, the true infinite is “a *becoming*” (ibid.).¹⁶⁶ Hegel writes of the true infinite that it,

¹⁶⁶ Hegel writes that “[t]he infinite, however, like its two moments, is essentially only as a *becoming*, but a becoming now *further determined* in its moments. Becoming, in the first instance, has abstract being and nothing for

“as the consummated return into self, the relation of itself to itself, is *being*—but not indeterminate, abstract being, for it is posited as negating the negation; it is, therefore, also *determinate* being [*Dasein*] for it contains negation in general and hence determinateness. It *is* and *is there*, present before us” (*WL* 148-9). Hegel thus designates the true infinite as *being*, akin to the beginning of the logic (though mediated here), yet also as *becoming* because it cannot be formalized as a unity, i.e. as something static and one-sided.

Hegel discusses the difference between the spurious infinite and the true infinite at this point. He thereby emphasizes the problematic nature of the spurious infinite and crucially relates the two kinds of infinite to two approaches to philosophy and epistemology: a linear and a circular approach. He writes that the unattainability of the spurious infinite “is not its grandeur but its defect” (*WL* 149). Accordingly, “[i]t is what is untrue that is unattainable, and such an infinite must be seen as a falsity” (*WL* 149). In contrast, the true infinite does not progress infinitely, but rather returns to itself to where it began. It is thus in the shape of a circle. Hegel thus relates the images of the line and the circle to the two infinities:

The image of the progress to infinity is the *straight line*, at the two limits of which alone the infinite is, and always only is where the line—which is determinate being [*Dasein*]—is not, and which goes *out beyond* to this negation of its determinate being, that is, to the indeterminate; the image of true infinity, bent back into itself, becomes the **circle**, the line which has reached itself, which is closed and wholly present, without *beginning* and *end*. (*WL* 149, my bold emphasis).

The spurious infinite is the straight line whereas the true infinite is the *circle* which is bent back into itself and thus closed, thereby without beginning and end.

This comparison of the spurious and the true infinite to a straight line and a circle respectively is striking because of how cognitive strategies are traditionally characterized also in

its determinations; as alteration, its moments possess determinate being, something and other; now, as the infinite, they are the finite and the infinite, which are themselves in process of becoming (*WL* 148).

a similar fashion. As discussed earlier (and also in Chapters 1 and 2), foundationalist systems and systems that begin with grounds are in the form of straight lines. They begin with an initial point that is the foundation or the ground and progress onwards ever so distant from the beginning point. Hegel adds here to this picture of the linear forms of epistemology that as instances of attempts at infinite progress, they cannot attain what they set out to accomplish – understanding cannot reach the end of this infinite progress and grasp it. This form of the infinite (and of philosophy) is spurious because it creates a “beyond”, an excess.

4.6. Causality and Infinity

In the first remark that follows this section on infinity Hegel discusses causality in relation to the spurious infinite. He writes:

[I]n the causal relation, cause and effect are inseparable; a cause which had no effect would not be a cause, just as an effect which had no cause would no longer be an effect. This relation yields, therefore, the infinite progress of causes and effects; something is determined as cause, but as finite (and it is finite for the very reason that it is separated from its effect) it, too, has a cause, that is, it is also an effect; hence the *same thing* that was determined as cause is also determined as effect—the *unity* of cause and effect; now that which is determined as effect again has a cause, that is, the cause has to be separated from its effect and posited as a different something; but this fresh cause is itself only an effect the *unity* of cause and effect; it has an other for its cause—the separation of both determinations, and so on to *infinity*. (*WL* 151, Remark)

This passage is significant for Hegel’s criticism of linear epistemologies and philosophical systems since Kant presents this problem of infinite regress and linearity with his third antinomy which is about causality (*CPR* 484-5, A444-7/B472-5) and since Reinhold’s basis for his call for a foundation for Kant’s philosophy stems from a discussion of the relation of cause and effect (Reinhold 53).

Kant’s third antinomy presents the issue that if nature is governed by cause and effect, then we run into the problem of an infinite regress. Kant’s solution to the infinite regress is the

suggestion of “an **absolute** causal **spontaneity** beginning **from itself** a series of appearances that runs according to natural laws, hence transcendental freedom, without which even in the course of nature the series of appearances is never complete on the side of the causes” (*CPR* 484, A446/B474). However, this creates an antinomy because, Kant points out, “one cannot say that in place of the laws of nature, laws of freedom enter into the course of the world, because if freedom were determined according to laws, it would not be freedom, but nothing other than nature” (*CPR* 485, A447/B475). Carlson comments on this antinomy and its relation to Hegel’s notion of bad infinity by claiming that in Kant’s third antinomy, cause and effect is either “a bad infinity that never gets resolved or a finite chain that is resolved by a first cause (which ends up being the Kantian autonomous subject)” (Carlson 100).

As I explored in Chapter 2, Reinhold writes that many philosophers hold that “the proposition ‘all that comes to be must have a cause or (what amounts to the same thing) must be an effect’” can be demonstrated through the principle of contradiction (Reinhold 53). There I explained that Reinhold claims that since the notion of “coming to be” is different for each of the philosophers who hold this view, their attempts to found philosophy on the basis of this relation of causality to the principle of contradiction fails. This is an important step in Reinhold’s own suggestion for a foundation for philosophy which is the “principle of consciousness” [*Satz des Bewusstseins*] (Reinhold 70).

Given the significance of causality for Kant, and for Reinhold’s call for a foundation (which call Hegel nevertheless reinterprets in his *WL* as I discuss in Chapter 6) and given Hegel’s critique of linear and foundationalist systems as well as infinite progress here, it is certainly relevant for Hegel’s position on circular epistemology that Hegel is discussing causality in relation to the infinite progress of the spurious infinite. What is more, I shall make the

argument that his claims about causality in the passage quoted above get to the heart of the distinction between spurious and true infinity and the relation of these two to cognitive strategies.

Shortly before the passage on causality, Hegel writes that the spurious infinite “is a first elevation of sensuous conception above the finite into thought” and is an “*incomplete reflection*” (WL 150, Remark). As an incomplete reflection, it is the wrong way of looking at the matter at hand. Thus, grasping the truth of the matter at hand requires a shift in perspective to a *complete reflection*. In other words, “[t]he question as to the truth of the said infinite and finite involves a *change of standpoint*” (WL 154, Remark, my emphasis). Hegel brings up the notion of causality because of the alternation between the finite and the infinite causing one another in an infinite progress, where one is the cause of the other which is thereby the effect, but then this effect causes the other and is thus cause and effect at once, and so on (WL 151, Remark). Thus, they alternate between being cause and being effect, but also between the unity and separation of the notions of cause and effect on the one hand and the notions of finite and infinite on the other.

This connection between an infinitely progressing straight line and the notions of cause and effect is exactly the connection Reinhold had brought up in his discussion of the efforts to find the beginning foundation for philosophy. Hegel’s characterization of true infinity in the form of a circle as the correct alternative to the mistaken and “incomplete reflection” of the spurious infinite which leads to an infinite alternation between cause and effect is clearly a response to the foundationalist models of epistemology and philosophy. He explains the solution to the infinitely progressing chain of cause and effect as follows:

What is required in order to see into the nature of the infinite is nothing difficult: it is to be aware that the infinite progress, the developed infinite of the understanding, is so constituted as to be the *alternation* of the two determinations, of the *unity* and the

separation of both moments and also to be aware that this unity and this separation are themselves inseparable.

The resolution of this contradiction is not the recognition of the equal correctness and equal incorrectness of the two assertions—this is only another form of the abiding contradiction—but the *ideality* of both, in which as distinct, reciprocal negations, they are only *moments*. (*WL* 151, Remark)

He states in this passage that the infinite progress relies on the alternation of the unity and separation of the finite and the infinite (or cause and effect). However, it stops short at realizing that this unity and separation are inseparable. Once we grasp that the finite and the infinite are united and separate, and not one or the other but both, i.e. both united and separate, only then can we grasp the truth in these notions. Grasping that the unity and separation of the finite and the infinite (and of cause and effect) results in realizing that they form a circle as opposed to a straight line.

4.7. Real and Ideal, Finite and Infinite

Hegel writes in the passage quoted above, crucially, that “the resolution of the contradiction is ... the recognition of the ... *ideality* of both [finite and infinite, or cause and effect], in which as distinct, reciprocal negations, they are only *moments*” (*WL* 151, Remark).

His evoking of “ideality” here is related to his statement later (quoted earlier) that “[t]he question as to the truth of the said infinite and finite involves a change of standpoint” (*WL* 154, Remark).

Our approach to grasping the relation of the infinite and the finite and the true nature of infinity is based on our standpoint and perspective. The finite and the infinite and their relation does not change, rather our *approach* to them changes. Our recognition of the circular nature of their relation and of infinity is thus a matter of ideality.

Prior to this remark, that is, at the end of the section on true infinity, Hegel introduces the notions of reality and ideality in relation to the circularity of true infinity. He had first introduced

reality in the section on Determinate Being as Such (prior to Finitude and Infinity) in the remark titled “Quality and Negation” to the subsection on Quality. There he defines reality in relation to the role negation plays in determining being through quality. He writes that “[q]uality, taken in the distinct character of *being*, is *reality*; as burdened with a negative it is *negation* in general” (WL 111). In this first introduction of the concept of reality, Hegel is examining the relation of quality and negation, and in this relation reality arises as a notion of significance. In order for being to be determined, being needs to have negation and the negative as a part of itself. Only then can it have quality and be determinate being [*Dasein*], and hence *real*. Otherwise, it would only be abstract nebulous being without determination. In order to be determinate, then, quality requires negation, and as a result of this negation it is real: “Both [quality and being] are determinate being [*Dasein*], but in *reality* as quality with the accent on *being*, the fact is concealed that it contains determinateness and therefore also negation” (ibid.).

Following the initial quote where he introduces reality as quality, Hegel claims that this quality “further on is determined as limit, limitation” (WL 111). Quality as reality is determined as limit. In other words, limit is reality. This connection Hegel draws here between limit and reality is interesting since Kant designates things-in-themselves or noumena as limit concepts (CPR 362, A254/B310-A255/B311). For Kant, since things-in-themselves are the limits to cognition, and are thereby unknowable, reality for Kant is anything within cognition up until this limit.¹⁶⁷ By placing negation in determinate being [*Dasein*] and calling this determinate being *real* as a result of this *qualification*¹⁶⁸ (as a *quality*), and further determining it as the *limit*, Hegel

¹⁶⁷ Kant writes that “[t]he concept of a noumenon is therefore merely a **boundary concept**, in order to limit the pretension of sensibility, and therefore only of negative use. But it is nevertheless not invented arbitrarily, but is rather connected with the limitation of sensibility, yet without being able to posit anything positive outside the domain of the latter” (CPR 362, A255/B311).

¹⁶⁸ Hegel mentions that the word ‘quality’ shares the same root as the German word for torture ‘*Qual*’ by making reference to Boehme. He writes: “‘*Qualierung*’ or ‘*Inqualierung*’, an expression of Jacob Boehme’s, whose

is changing the location of the real from where Kant placed it. For Kant, the real is in cognition because that is what we can know. For Hegel, the real is here the quality of being as being determined through negation, and thus a limit. Since the *WL* is an exploration of thought, however, Hegel avoids the problematic distinction between cognition and things-in-themselves that Kant's system engendered.

The relation of *being-as-limit* to *reality* within *thought* (insofar as the *WL* is the detailed science of thought as logic) as a critique against Kant advances the position that thought (and cognition), being, and reality are not separated. This is not to mention that thought transcends limits. In the section on the Ought, Hegel makes his implicit criticism of Kant above (regarding the real and limits) explicit when he exclaims “[b]ut it is reason, thought, which is supposed to be unable to transcend limitation—reason, which is the *universal* explicitly beyond particularity *as such* (that is, *all* particularity), which is nothing but the overcoming of limitation!” (*WL* 135). In this claim, Hegel is expressing that although reason (thought) is supposed to (according to Kant) be unable to transcend the limitation posed by cognition in the form of things-in-themselves, the fact that cognition posits this limitation and asserts the existence of things-in-themselves is “nothing but the overcoming of limitation” (*ibid.*). For, claiming that reason is universal and is beyond *all* particularity in effect universalizes the particularity. Hence, the limitation is transcended by the very action of positing the limitation.

Accordingly, he writes “[t]he philosophy of Kant and Fichte sets up the ought as the highest point of the resolution of the contradictions of Reason; but the truth is that the ought is

philosophy goes deep, but into a turbid depth, signifies the movement of a quality (of sourness, bitterness, fieriness, etc.) within itself in so far as it posits and establishes itself in its negative nature (in its '*Qual*' or torment) from out of an other -signifies in general the quality's own internal unrest by which it produces and maintains itself only in conflict” (*WL* 114).

only the standpoint which clings to finitude and thus to contradiction” (*WL* 136). Kant’s ought is in his moral theory under the heading of duties and the categorical imperative and Fichte’s ought is with regard to action in his *Wissenschaftslehre*, where he claims that “I *ought* in my thinking to set out from the pure self, and to think of the latter as absolutely self-active; not determined by things, but as determining them” (*Wissenschaftslehre* 41).¹⁶⁹ Hegel’s definition of the “ought” as a concept of logic brings attention to Kant and Fichte’s notion of the subject to whom “ought” applies.

For Hegel, the “ought” is a concept that arises directly from “limit” and “limitation”. “Something” as determinate being [*Dasein*] has a “limit” which it posits itself “as a negative which is at the same time essential, is not merely limit as such, but *limitation*” (*WL* 132). Something posits “as negated ... the *limit*, and this is in general what is common to both something and other”, thus something and other both posit a limit whereby they are limited from one another (*ibid.*). This limit “is also a determinateness of the *in-itself* of the determination as such” (*ibid.*). This makes sense since for something to be determined, it needs to be *in-itself* limited according to its determination. The *in-itself* of the determination of the something as well as its other are both a limit and are limited. As such the *in-itself* has a negative relation to its limit since it is limited by it. This is where the ought comes in: “This *in-itself*, therefore, as the negative relation to its limit (which is also distinguished from it), to itself as limitation, is the *ought*” (*ibid.*).

¹⁶⁹ A detailed account of the role of the “ought” for Kant and Fichte is beyond my scope in this dissertation. However, it should suffice here to say that for both Kant and Fichte, the “ought” plays a role in ensuring autonomy and freedom for the subject. A detailed analysis of this idea of freedom arising from the *ought* and its relation to Hegel’s discussion here could be the topic of a future project. After all, the ought for Hegel plays an important role for infinity and circularity, which, I could in a future project argue, are related to autonomy and freedom.

The ought and the limit are both “moments of the finite and hence are themselves finite” (ibid.). There is a difference, however: “only the limitation is *posited* as finite; the ought is limited only in itself, that is, for us. It is limited through its relation to the limit which is already immanent in the ought itself, but this its restriction is enveloped in the in-itself” (ibid.). The ought has a limitation because “[w]hat ought to be *is*, and at the same time *is not*. If it *were*, we could not say that it *ought merely to be*” (WL 132-3). With this claim that the ought has a limitation, Hegel shows the finite nature of the ought. He is building a larger argument against Kant (and to an extent Fichte). This argument revolves around the notions of reality and ideality, and I argue, will ultimately present his circular epistemology as an alternative cognitive strategy to what he deems to be the problematic cognitive approaches of Kant and Fichte. This is exhibited in Hegel’s claim that “In the ought the transcendence of finitude, that is, infinity, begins. The ought is that which, in the further development, *exhibits itself in accordance with the said impossibility as the progress to infinity*” (WL 134, my emphasis).

Regardless of any preconceived notions anyone may have about Hegel as a so-called ‘idealist thinker’, it is clear from these sections of the *WL* on Determinate Being that the topic of the real and the ideal is of great importance for Hegel. As much is exhibited by the culmination of the chapter on Determinate Being in a discussion of circularity and then finally a remark titled “Idealism”. His analysis of the terms ‘reality’ and ‘ideality’ are inextricably connected to his notion of a circular epistemology and approach to philosophy. This connection to circularity is exhibited in Hegel’s notion of ‘infinity’. His passing explicit criticism of Kant and Fichte and his ongoing implicit criticism of various aspects of the philosophies of Kant and his immediate commentators in his discussions of ‘reality’, ‘ideality’, ‘finitude’, and ‘infinite’ indicate that these concepts have an especially significant role to play for Hegel’s philosophy and this

philosophy's formation—insofar as his philosophy is proposing an alternative to the shortcomings (at least as Hegel sees them) of the philosophies of Kant and his immediate commentators.

The finite (that is, 'the ought' of Kant and Fichte) is at first determinate being but then when we progress through the moments of the science of logic, it turns out that true infinity is actually determinate being (this becomes apparent with the evolution of finitude into infinity and ultimately into true infinity within the discussion of determinate being). This development and reassignment of the character of determinate being from the finite to the true infinite is Hegel's way of presenting his notion of true infinity, that is, a circular epistemology, as his alternative to the Kantian and Fichtean models of conceptualizing cognition (insofar as cognition predominantly applies to determinate being [*Dasein*] as the cognizer and the cognized). Let's then return to Hegel's discussion of the real and the ideal, and realism and idealism in relation to infinity as a circle.

I explained earlier that Hegel's notion of the real or reality depends on having negativity within it which assures determination – the determination as such ensures the reality. To emphasize this point, he writes that “[r]eality is quality, determinate being [*Dasein*]; consequently, it contains the moment of the negative and is through this alone the determinate being that it is” (*WL* 112).¹⁷⁰ Reality is often thought alongside ideality, and the ‘real’ and the ‘ideal’ are compared to one another in terms of their *reality*. ‘Reality’ is often confused with

¹⁷⁰ In the section on “Something” he writes similarly that “[r]eality itself contains negation, is determinate being, not indeterminate, abstract being. Similarly, negation is determinate being, not the supposedly abstract nothing but posited here as it is in itself, as affirmatively present [*als seiend*], belonging to the sphere of determinate being. Thus quality is completely unseparated from determinate being, which is simply determinate, qualitative being” (*WL* 115).

‘actuality’ and with ‘truth’. With an implicit reference to Aristotle’s initial sentence¹⁷¹ in

Metaphysics Book IV Chapter 2, Hegel writes:

Reality may seem to be a word of various meanings because it is used of different, indeed of opposed determinations. In philosophy one may perhaps speak of a *merely empirical* reality as of a worthless existence. But when it is said that thoughts, concepts, theories *have no reality*, this means that they do not possess *actuality; in itself* or in its notion, the idea of a Platonic Republic, for example, may well be true. Here the worth of the idea is not denied and it is left its place *alongside* the reality. But as against *mere* ideas, *mere* notions, the real alone counts as true. (*WL* 111-2)

According to this passage thoughts, concepts, and theories have *reality in themselves*, as *ideas*.

Their possible lack of actuality does not make them any less real as ideas. Thus, they take their

“place *alongside* the reality”, but only when considered *in themselves* (*WL* 112).¹⁷² When

considered as “*mere* ideas” and not just as in themselves, however, they do not have truth. In

order to have truth, an idea must have reality beyond just *in itself*. Hence, “as against *mere* ideas,

mere notions, the real alone counts as true” (*ibid.*). However, it is not the case that “outer

existence” (that is, existence independent of ideas) has unabated claim to reality (*ibid.*). Hegel

writes following the passage above that:

The sense in which, on the one hand, outer existence is made the criterion of the truth of a content is no less one-sided than when the idea, essential being, or even inner feeling is represented as indifferent to outer existence and is even held to be the more excellent the more remote it is from reality. (*WL* 112)

In other words, outer existence and ideas are both one-sided and incomplete when taken on their

own independently of one another. Moreover, they are distant from truth when in this one-sided

state. Truth can be found only in the whole, as I discussed in Chapter 3 (*PhG* 11, §20; Suhrkamp

24). The “real alone counts as true” because what is real requires being beyond an one-sidedness.

¹⁷¹ Aristotle writes: “There are many senses in which a thing may be said to ‘be’, but all that ‘is’ is related to one central point, one definite kind of thing, and is not said to ‘be’ by a mere ambiguity” (Aristotle 1003a33-5).

¹⁷² This approach to ideas is akin to Descartes’s notion of objective reality (Descartes 28-9).

Although reality and what is real is defined by Hegel as determinate being, i.e. that which has negation in it which gives it quality, it is also the case that “[n]egation stands directly opposed to reality” (*WL* 114). The sense in which negation is opposed to reality is the sense in which reality is not one-sided, thereby has truth and is affirmative – consequently, it is opposed to negation.

At first, finite things appear to be the real. The ought as finite, for instance, appeared to be reality to Kant and Fichte, as discussed above. Just as the negativity present in the real as determinate being, finite things are also characterized by Hegel through a negation. However, this negation in finitude is precisely what makes finite things *finite*, i.e. brings about their end. Hegel writes that “[f]inite things *are*, but their relation to themselves is that they are *negatively* self-related and in this very self-relation send themselves away beyond themselves, beyond their being. They *are*, but the truth of this being is their *end*” (*WL* 129). Moreover, “the being as such of finite things is to have the germ of decease as their being-within-self: the hour of their birth is the hour of their death” (*ibid.*).

In contrast to finitude (and the concepts associated with it such as the ought, the limit, finite things as empirical outside existence, and so on), Hegel shows that in fact true infinity, that is the infinity in the form of a circle, “is *reality* in a higher sense” (*WL* 149). He gives a hint of this in a subsection of the section on “Finitude” entitled “The Immediacy of Finitude” when he criticizes the approach of the “understanding” to the ever-transient finite things:

The determination or destiny of finite things takes them no further than their *end*. The understanding persists in this sadness of finitude by making non-being the determination of things and at the same time making it *imperishable* and *absolute*. Their transitoriness could only pass away or perish in their other, in the affirmative; their finitude would then be parted from them; but it is their unalterable quality, that is, their quality which does not pass over into its other, that is, into its affirmative; *it is thus eternal*. (*WL* 130)

Finite things, by virtue of their finitude, have their own negation (their impending end) already within them. Their reality as *actual* finite things lasts only as long as they remain actual, and this reality of their specific determination “pass[es] away or perish[es]” when they come to an end, as they are bound to by definition. He writes of true infinity’s relation to reality the following:

True infinity taken thus generally as *determinate* being which is posited as *affirmative* in contrast to the abstract negation, is *reality* in a higher sense than the former reality which was *simply* determinate; for here it has acquired a concrete content. It is not the finite which is the real, but the infinite. (*WL* 149)

There is much to unpack in this passage. I group my discussion under four main points.

Firstly, as stated earlier and confirmed again in this quote, determinate being is shown (as a result of the development of the science of logic) to be in fact true infinity more so than the previous determinations of determinate being. These previous determinations of determinate being such as the finite, the limit, and the ought have all in one way or another played a role in the logic of the spurious infinite (which itself is also a determination of determinate being prior to the true infinite). Furthermore, Hegel has related them to the philosophies of Kant and his immediate commentators to which he aims to present an epistemological alternative.

Secondly, true infinity “is posited as *affirmative* in contrast to the abstract negation” (*WL* 149). Abstract negation, as we know from having followed along the *WL* thus far, is “nothing”. Abstract negation is abstract precisely because it is not determined. Since it does not have a determination as a specific negation, it is the negative, nothingness. In contrast to this “nothing”, true infinity is posited as affirmative. As contrasting *nothing*, true infinity is *being*—but this is not *being* that has an end and passes away, rather it is *true infinite being*.

This affirmation belonging to the positing of true infinity as a contrast to abstract negation, and the consequent emergence of true infinity as *true infinite being* brings us to the

third point. Hegel claims that true infinity taken as such (that is, “as *determinate* being which is posited as *affirmative* in contrast to the abstract negation”) “is *reality* in a higher sense than the former reality which was *simply* determinate” (*WL* 149). The “former reality” is the reality he previously ascribed to finite things and finitude in the section on “Quality”. Accordingly, true infinity has reality in a higher sense than the reality that was originally ascribed to finitude—and consequently “It is not the finite which is the real, but the infinite” (*ibid.*). Whereas the true infinite “is posited as *affirmative*”, the finite is defined by negation. In fact, the finite is laden with negativity from within and without. As explained earlier, the finite (1) is determined as the determinate being that it is (as quality) insofar as it is limited through negation, and (2) carries its own negation within it insofar as it will come to an end. The affirmative positing of the true infinite sets the true infinite apart from the finite which carries within and expresses outside itself negation. This distinction based on affirmation and negation in relation to positing is significant since Hegel introduces the topic of the “real” and “reality” first in relation to the finite and then returns to it in the discussion on the true infinite.

My fourth point is what Hegel means by “concrete content” in the passage above when he claims that, furthermore, the reason why true infinity has reality in a higher sense is that “for here [that is, in true infinity] it [reality] has acquired a concrete content” (*WL* 149). “[C]oncrete content” here rests on the circular characteristic of the true infinity. He writes that “[t]his infinite, as the consummated return into self, the relation of itself to itself, is *being*—but not indeterminate abstract being, for it is posited as negating the negation” (*WL* 148). By returning to itself in this circular movement it is *determinate being*.

Furthermore, its character of not being abstract but rather concrete is emphasized even more when we compare it to the spurious infinite. True infinity, Hegel writes, “*is* and *is there*,

present before us. It is only the spurious infinite which is the *beyond*, because it is *only* the negation of the finite posited as *real*—as such it is the abstract, first negation” (*WL* 149). The true infinite, in the shape of a circle, is indeed “*there*, present before us”. We can grasp it in its totality. In contrast, the spurious infinite is an infinite progress by the very definition and nature of which we cannot grasp in totality. For this reason it is only abstract and remains as a *mere* idea, not actualized. David Carlson writes of the spurious infinite that it requires understanding to sustain it (Carlson 101).¹⁷³ For understanding has to accompany the alternation at every step which takes the shape of an infinite progress. The spurious infinite can thus be real only insofar as it is posited by the understanding. As quoted above, the spurious infinite “is *only* the negation of the finite posited as *real*” (*WL* 149). This negation of the finite posited as real sustains the alternation between the finite and the infinite which results in the infinite progress. But whereas the true infinite is complete in itself (as a circle), the spurious infinite is the *beyond* and is abstract. This completeness in itself of the true infinite is characterized by Carlson as “beginning of ideality and the end of reality” (Carlson 101).

4.8. Infinity and Idealism

So far, we have seen ‘reality’ ascribed to finitude, but then this changed when true infinity came to the scene with reality in an even “higher sense” than the reality ascribed to finitude as a simple determination. Thus, the true infinite, and not the finite, turned out to be the

¹⁷³ Carlson further writes of the spurious infinite the following: “The “Infinite” is portrayed as never present in the line. If we extend the line to reach Infinity, we only find that Infinity has relocated and is still a beyond. Travelers know Spurious Infinity in the form of the horizon. The traveler heads for it, but never reaches it. The horizon stubbornly relocates itself as we approach it. Hegel warns that it is a mistake to view the Infinite as the unconnected “beyond” of the Finite. There *is* a connection.” (Carlson 95)

real. In the final paragraph of the section entitled “Affirmative Infinity” on the true infinite, Hegel introduces the concept of “ideality”. He writes:

The more precise reason for recalling the category of reality here is that the negation to which it is opposed as the affirmative is here negation of the negation; as such it is itself opposed to that reality which finite determinate being is. The negation is thus determined as ideality; ideal being [*das Ideelle*] is the finite as it is in the true infinite—as a determination, a content, which is distinct but is not an *independent, self-subsistent* being, but only a *moment*. (*WL* 149-50)

In this passage Hegel establishes that the affirmative (i.e. the true infinite) is opposed to negation—but not just any negation, rather the negation of negation. The negation of negation came up earlier as the finite and also the spurious infinite (which features the finite prominently in its infinitely progressing alternation). Thus the true infinite is opposed to the finite and the spurious infinite. Hegel had just established that the true infinite has reality in a “higher sense” one paragraph before this passage. Here, he is specifying that the “more precise reason for recalling the category of reality here” is the opposition of the affirmative to the negation, the opposition of the true infinite to the finite. This opposition brings to light the concept of “ideality”. Let me explain.

Since the true infinite is what is real, since the true infinite is opposed to the finite, and since the finite is negation (as opposed to the affirmative true infinite), “[t]he negation is thus determined as ideality” (*WL* 149). Here the finite becomes “ideal being [*das Ideelle*]”, but it is “the finite as it is in the true infinite”, as “only a *moment*” of the true infinite (*WL* 150). If we take the true infinite to be the essential characteristic of Hegel’s circular system as a circular epistemology, we can infer three important conclusions about Hegel’s system and approach to existence (as an epistemological notion insofar as this existence is considered within the confines of thought, as is the whole *WL*): (1) the system as a circle is real, (2) finite things as moments/parts of the systemic whole are ideal insofar as their existence is transitory and limited,

but they can be grasped ideally; their existence can only be actual in idea, and (3) as parts of the whole which is the real, finite things have reality only in passing (that is, until they pass away), but they can continue their existence in idea.

There is another aspect to these three conclusions, however, and this aspect is key in grasping what Hegel presents next. Hegel claims that the finite is the ideal only insofar as it is a *moment* and “not an *independent, self-subsistent* being” in the true infinite which is the real (*WL* 150). He writes, as quoted above, that “ideal being is the finite *as it is* in the true infinite” (*ibid.*, my emphasis). And here is precisely the twist: by virtue of this specification of the exact quality of the ideal being, “[i]deality has this more concrete signification which is not fully expressed by the negation of finite determinate being” (*ibid.*).

If we recall, it had become clear earlier that true infinity is the real precisely because it was more concrete than the finite (*WL* 149). If, however, ideality has an even more concrete signification than reality, it would be more appropriate for the true infinite to be the ideal and the finite in contrast to be the real, especially if “the negation of finite determinate being” does not fully express this more concrete signification of ideality (*WL* 150). This is the explanation for why the initial designation of the finite as the ideal and the true infinite as the real is reversed when Hegel claims that

With reference to reality and ideality, however, the opposition of finite and infinite is grasped in such a manner that the finite ranks as the real but the infinite as the 'ideal' [*das Ideelle*]; in the same way that further on the Notion, too, is regarded as an 'ideal', that is, as a *mere* 'ideal', in contrast to determinate being as such which is regarded as the real. (*WL* 150)

Through this claim, Hegel establishes that the finite is in fact the real and the infinite is the ideal. Furthermore, there is a parallel between the Notion (as ideal) contrasted with Being (as real) and the true infinite (as ideal) and the finite (as real).

The parallel between the Notion and true infinity supports my argument for a circular epistemology. True infinity is in the shape of a circle. The Notion runs through the entire *WL* almost as a thread or line which follows along the many determinations and mediations of thought. Idea is the last section of the *WL* where the logic closes in on itself and returns to the beginning in the shape of a circle.¹⁷⁴ Ideality as a category without a doubt pertains to the Idea of this last section of the *WL* – for, otherwise, why would Hegel have chosen the same root word for this term? If the Notion parallels true infinity with regard to ideality, since the Idea is in the shape of a circle, then the Notion as the thread running through the development of the logic is also in the shape of a circle.

The finite is the real as a moment in the (ideal) true infinite. Accordingly, the true infinite, as the ideal and as containing the finite in it as a moment, can *account for* the finite. As we saw in the determination of the true infinite and how it came about in the development of the science of logic, the true infinite holds the finite and the infinite and the alternation between the two within itself and thus returns onto itself as a circle. In other words, as one of its moments, the circle of idealism can account for and explain reality.

My argument about the true infinite has been that as a circle it is the model for the Hegelian system. Here we see that circularity is also connected to the notion of idealism. However, if we stopped at this point in our analysis of Hegel's discussion of ideality, we would miss a crucial point, which is expressed in Hegel's next sentence following the last passage quoted above. He writes the following:

When they [i.e., real and ideal] are contrasted in this way, it is pointless to reserve the term 'ideal' for the concrete determination of negation in question; in that opposition we return once more to the one-sidedness of the abstract negative which is characteristic of

¹⁷⁴ I discuss relevant passages in this section on the Idea in detail in Chapter 6.

the spurious infinite, and perpetuate the affirmative determinate being of the finite. (*WL* 150)

According to this claim, we do not need to (for “it is pointless to”) designate only the true infinite as ‘ideal’. When we characterize only the true infinite as ‘ideal’ and its moments (which all turn out to be different iterations of the finite) as ‘real’, then “we return once more to the one-sidedness” of opposition as an abstract negative which we found in the spurious infinite. To explain, an opposition between the concrete determination of negation (the true infinite) and the abstract determination of negation (the finite) turns into the abstract negative that is characteristic of the spurious infinite because this opposition does not take into account the developmental and enclosing (meaning, that one is a moment of the other) relation between the finite and the true infinite *qua* opposition. *Qua* opposition, it rather sets them *against* one another as distinct and separate, as opposed—one is the negation of the other, and vice versa.

Given that the infinite develops from the finite, and consequently holds the finite within it as a moment, it is mistaken to oppose them against one another. Hegel emphasizes this interdependence and inseparability (“*this inseparability is their Notion*” (*WL* 153)) in the following passage in a remark:

[*T*here is not an infinite which is first of all infinite and only subsequently has need to become finite, to go forth into finitude; on the contrary, it is on its own account just as much finite as infinite. [It is wrong to assume] that the infinite, on the one side, exists by itself, and that the finite which has gone forth from it into a separate existence—or from whatever source it might have come—is in its separation from the infinite truly real; but it should rather be said that this separation is *incomprehensible*. Neither such a finite nor such an infinite has truth; and what is untrue is incomprehensible. (*WL* 153)

It is clear, then, that we cannot comprehend the finite and the infinite as opposed and completely separate from one another. This was in fact the issue with the spurious infinite. An abstract negation that assigns the characteristics of ‘real’ and ‘ideal’ in an opposing fashion to the finite

and the true infinite would be separating the finite and the infinite in a manner similar to that of the spurious infinite.

The spurious infinite was incomprehensible beyond the understanding because it required the continual sustenance by the understanding of the alternation between the finite and the infinite to progress to infinity—yet this was not possible because of the limited nature of the understanding, and thus the spurious infinite (not able to sustain itself) remained finite. At the current stage, if we were to designate the true infinite as ideal and opposed to it the finite as the real, then this opposition would create a new kind of spurious infinite with its abstract negation. It would lead to an infinite progress of alternation between the spurious infinite and the *true infinite as incomplete* if we do not take this final step of completing the true infinite. The completion of the true infinite accordingly requires that we do not “reserve the term 'ideal' for the concrete determination of negation in question” as quoted above, but bring the finite under the designation of the ideal together with the true infinite (*WL* 150). Only in this way is the true infinite complete and *true*. And as such, it is comprehensible.

As quoted above, Hegel expresses about a conception of the finite and the infinite as isolated and separate from one another that “[n]either such a finite nor such an infinite has truth; and what is untrue is incomprehensible” (*WL* 153). Truth is, in contrast, moving beyond this opposition and ascribing ideality to both the finite and the infinite, i.e. to cognitions and objects (the finite) and to reason/thought/logic (the infinite). Consequently, ideality as circular is the truth. This is Hegel’s idealism. It embeds the real, or what amounts to the traditionally ascribed domain of ontology, within the bounds of ideas and ideality. Insofar as the real is embedded in the ideal, he is presenting an epistemology—one which has ontology embedded in it as a

moment. Furthermore, this ideality (as the true infinite) is a circle. Hence, we have in front of us Hegel's circular epistemology.

4.9. Infinity, Idealism, and Speculative Philosophy

In *EL*, Hegel discusses “the ideality of the finite” as being “the most important proposition of philosophy, and for that reason every genuine philosophy is *Idealism*” (*EL* 152, §95 Remark). This claim summarizes Hegel’s approach to the finite: the finite such as independent cognitions, objects, and so on, are all ideal. This means that they exist in thought and in Idea (Idea as the final determination in the logic, including all of its previous determinations within it), and that is all there is to them. Their reality is subsumed under the ideality, for reality is a moment of the ideal. And consequently, every genuine philosophy has to be Idealism in order to truly account for the finite. Thus, “[e]verything depends on not mistaking for the Infinite that which is at once reduced in its determination to what is particular and infinite. ... the basic concept of philosophy, the genuine Infinite, depends on it” (*EL* 152, §95 Remark). Thereby Hegel explicitly declares that the true or genuine infinite which is the epitome of ideality and is in the form of a circle is “the basic concept of philosophy”. H.S. Harris, in a footnote later on in the *EL*, writes, that “‘Ideality’ is the truth of what is finite, of reality; and the recognition of this ideality is ‘Idealism’ in Hegel’s sense” (*EL* 350, n29).

What is more, Hegel connects the notion of ideality to speculative thought and speculative philosophy. This connection further strengthens my argument that true infinity as a circle is an account for Hegel’s epistemological system and idealism. Speculative thought and philosophy is the thought that deals with concepts and their inner development. For Hegel, it is not tethered by the limitations and one-sidedness that plague the Understanding. Let us examine

the two passages in the Determinate Being chapter of the *WL* where Hegel explicitly mentions speculative thought and speculative philosophy.

The first passage mentions speculative philosophy and is in the Remark on “Quality and Negation” I discussed earlier. Here Hegel makes a significant claim about speculative philosophy, reality, and truth:

Determinateness is negation posited as affirmative and is the proposition of Spinoza: *omnis determinatio est negatio* [every determination is negation]. This proposition is infinitely important; only, negation as such is formless abstraction. However, **speculative philosophy** [*der spekulativen Philosophie*] must not be charged with making negation or nothing an ultimate: negation is as little an ultimate for philosophy as reality is for it truth. (*WL* 113, Suhrkamp 121, my translation from Latin of the Spinoza quote, my bold emphasis)

As we saw in the discussions earlier about the finite that in order for something to be determined it needs to have negation. This negation determines the specific quality of determined being. Thus, Hegel quotes Spinoza’s proposition *omnis determinatio est negatio* to echo his conception. However, he qualifies it by stating that “negation as such is formless abstraction”. He adds that negation for speculative philosophy is not “an ultimate”. More significantly for my argument here, he then states that reality is not truth for speculative philosophy. This revelatory claim in this early remark foreshadows the importance of ideality for Hegel’s philosophy that comes about through the exposition of the circular true infinity.

The second passage is in the first Remark after the section on “Affirmative Infinity” entitled “The Infinite Progress”. Hegel highlights here the fact that in the ideality of the true infinite and its moments the specific nature of speculative thought is revealed:

In this being which is thus the *ideality* of the distinct moments, the contradiction has not vanished abstractly, but is resolved and reconciled, and the thoughts are not only complete, but they are also *brought together*. In this detailed example, there is revealed the specific nature of **speculative thought** [*das spekulativen Denkens*], which consists solely in grasping [*in dem Auffassen*] the opposed moments in their unity. Each moment

actually shows that it contains its opposite within itself and that in this opposite it is united with itself; thus the affirmative truth is this immanently active unity, the taking together of both thoughts, their infinity—the relation to self which is not immediate but infinite. (*WL* 152, Suhrkamp 168, my bold emphasis)

Here Hegel is expressing that true infinity reveals the specific nature of speculative thought insofar as in true infinity opposing moments are brought together in their own unity with one another, and insofar as each of these opposing moments contains its opposing other within itself, thereby revealing “the relation to self which is not immediate but infinite” (*WL* 152). This passage is significant because it confirms my claim that ideality as it is expressed in true infinity is characteristic of Hegel’s overall philosophical system and project. Ideality as revelatory of the specific nature of speculative thought connects circularity to speculative thought. It furthermore emphasizes the importance of the notion of true infinity and circular epistemology for Hegel’s thought in general.

The notion of infinity is important for grasping Hegel’s circular epistemology. It contrasts the circular notion to the model of the infinite progress, thereby proposing circularity as an alternative to the foundationalist models of philosophy that rely on infinite progress. Hegel ascribes the notion of truth to the self-contained circle (while at the same time arguing for the incomprehensibility of the infinite progress model of the spurious infinite). Moreover, Hegel’s ascription of the notion of ideality to the circle and to its mode of handling the relations of negation and finitude and his embedding of the notion of reality *in* ideality as a moment of ideality show Hegel’s commitment to idealism for his system which is circular. The ascription of truth to the circle (and untruth to its alternative, the infinite progress) plays a significant role in my argument for why Hegel’s circularity is different from viciously circular arguments in the following section of this chapter.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I explained the meaning of Hegel's circular epistemology and his initial conception of it, and also outlined some of the essential elements of a circular epistemology. I began with an explanation of the circle as a geometric figure. Then I outlined the key characteristics of Hegel's notion of a circular epistemology. Some significant features I identified are beginning without presuppositions, non-linearity, anti-foundationalism, and self-justification. Through the discussion of these essential features, I began to situate his notion of circular epistemology within the historical framework I identified in Chapter 2.

Following this initial exploration of the notion of circularity and circular epistemology in general for Hegel, I presented his initial conception of circular epistemology in the *Differenzschrift*, prior to his actual formulation of his circular system in his works. In this section, I showed that Hegel framed his initial conception of circular epistemology as a reaction to Reinhold's philosophy which I discussed in Chapter 2. I show in Chapter 6 that Hegel returns in *WL* to this discussion of Reinhold's philosophy in relation to circular epistemology with a renewed approach to Reinhold.

I dedicated the majority of this chapter to Hegel's notion of infinity. I provided a detailed exegesis as well as a critical analysis of the progression in the *WL* to what Hegel calls "true infinity". Through this account, I showed that true infinity for Hegel is a circle and is in fact Hegel's model for a philosophical system. I argued for this latter point through the account of his notion of ideality which he expounds in relation to infinity and the circularity of true infinity, as well as through my analyses of Hegel's various implicit references and responses to Kant and Fichte's philosophies and to the overall historical framework in which I have been situating

Hegel in this dissertation. Thus, I demonstrated through this detailed account and analysis of Hegel's notion of infinity that circularity is intricately connected to his conception of idealism and his speculative philosophy.

Chapter V

The Non-Vicious Character of Hegel's Circularity

The common assumption about circularity in reasoning and philosophy is that it is always *vicious* circularity. However, Hegel's circularity is not vicious. I argue that Hegel's notion of circularity, as associated with the notion of ideality (as shown in Chapter 4 in the discussion of true infinity), may be mistakenly characterized as vicious only if one has a mistaken view of Hegel's notion of ideality. Hegel's notion of circularity shows the problematic nature of both the ascription of viciousness circular epistemology and the mistaken view of ideality.

In this chapter, I distinguish Hegel's notion of circularity from vicious circularity. In Chapter 1 I presented the Münchhausen-trilemma as a way to frame the broad epistemological issue to which I take Hegel's circular epistemology to respond. Given my following argument in that chapter of how Kant's Copernican revolution created a crisis in knowledge akin to the crisis presented by the Münchhausen-Trilemma, in Chapter 2, I presented the specific historical framework for epistemology in which Hegel develops his theory. The Münchhausen-trilemma presents three possible cognitive strategies—foundationalism, infinite regress, and (vicious) circularity—all of which fail to provide satisfactory justification for knowledge. In Chapters 3 and 4, I argued that Hegel has a robust epistemology and explained the circular character of this epistemology, respectively. In doing so, in Chapters 3 and 4 I also addressed how Hegel's circular epistemology provides an effective alternative to foundationalism and infinite regress.

However, I have not yet explained how Hegel's notion of circularity differs from the vicious circularity that the Münchhausen-trilemma shows to be inadequate (alongside

foundationalism and infinite regress). Münchhausen-trilemma has shown, along with the other two options, vicious circularity is not a viable strategy for cognition. Hegel's circular epistemology, as distinct from vicious circularity, provides a solution for the trilemma. Thus, my aim in this chapter is to distinguish Hegel's circularity from vicious circularity and to show how Hegel's circularity is not problematic in the manner of vicious circularity.

Making the argument for why Hegel's circularity is not vicious gives me a chance to explore Hegel's circular epistemology and its role for Hegel's philosophy in more detail. Moreover, this argument provides an occasion for me to introduce the possibility of presenting Hegel's circular epistemology in relation to and as a similar alternative to 20th-century coherentism – and alternative which answers certain worries about these coherentism. It is not my intention here to provide a thorough comparison and analysis of Hegel's circularity with 20th-century coherentist theories. Nevertheless, I intend for my argument (and the frame through which I present it, which I explain below) to indicate and provide a basis for a more developed future account of the relevance of Hegel's circular epistemology for contemporary epistemology (insofar as 20th-century coherentist theories, such as Davidson's, play a significant role for contemporary epistemology).

I begin this chapter by explaining the meaning of vicious circularity. I then give an interpretation of how one may (mistakenly) charge Hegel's circularity of being vicious. I explain and use John McDowell's phrase "frictionless spinning in a void" to characterize coherentist theories as a frame in which to explain how it is that one may (though mistakenly) regard Hegel's circularity to be of a vicious kind. I explain the Sellarsian character of McDowell's phrase "frictionless spinning in a void" which McDowell uses to criticize to Donald Davidson's

coherentism which aimed to avoid Wilfrid Sellars's so-called "Myth of the Given". Then I present my argument against the charge that Hegel's circularity is vicious.

My argument for the non-vicious character of Hegel's circularity has three main parts. The first part highlights the importance and the specific characteristics of the beginning point of a circle for Hegel. The second part focuses on Hegel's notion of ideality and the relation of this notion to truth. The third part develops the discussion of truth started in the first part of the argument by explaining the interdependence of subjectivity and objectivity for Hegel. Each of the three parts of my argument shows that Hegel's notion of circularity is much more complex and significantly different from vicious circularity, and that unlike vicious circularity Hegel's circularity can lay claim to truth.

1. Definition of Vicious Circularity and "Frictionless Spinning in a Void"

1.1. The Common Definition

A vicious circle is commonly viewed as a form of argumentation where the conclusion of the argument rests for its justification on one of the principles it is supposed to prove. This is commonly referred to as 'begging the question' or 'arguing in a circle'. A vicious circle can also apply to a system of philosophy, where the justification of the system would rest on a principle that the system was meant to justify. This is problematic because the justification is not satisfactory if it rests on itself.

Another way to view a vicious circle and its problematic nature is by considering a worry John McDowell presents in *Mind and World* against some attempts to avoid the Myth of the Given (referring to Wilfrid Sellars's notion in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*

(henceforth *EPM*), which I explain below). First, I shall explain the Myth of the Given since it figures prominently in McDowell's work I draw on here and is an important element of Sellars's own coherentism (which is a significant coherentist theory in the 20th century). Then I will discuss McDowell's criticism I mentioned above to approach vicious circularity.

1.2. The Myth of the Given

In *EPM*, Sellars argues against the Myth of the Given.¹⁷⁵ At the same time, however, as McDowell also remarks in a book chapter titled "Avoiding the Myth of the Given",¹⁷⁶ Sellars "notoriously neglects to explain in general terms what he means by it" (*Avoiding* 1). Sellars claims that "[m]any things have been said to be "given": sense contents, material objects, universals, propositions, real connections, first principles, even givenness itself" (*EPM* §1,2). These things are regarded by various philosophers to be "Given" insofar as they have a privileged point in our epistemological endeavors. Namely, they are taken to not require inference and justification for our knowledge of them (hence, they are simply "Given") unlike other knowledge. According to the philosophers who fall for the Myth of the Given, these Givens form the basis or foundation for our other epistemic judgments and inferences.

Sellars sees this Myth to be a pervasive problem in philosophy and claims that many philosophers have fallen prey to it. He writes: "It has, indeed, been so pervasive that few, if any, philosophers have been altogether free of it; certainly not Kant, and I would argue, not even Hegel, the great foe of "immediacy"" (*EPM* §1,2).

¹⁷⁵ Though Sellars does not capitalize 'Myth' and 'Given', I will follow McDowell's use of capitalizations in referring to Sellars's notion of the Myth of the Given, except for in instances when I directly quote Sellars.

¹⁷⁶ *John McDowell: Experience, Norm, and Nature*, Ed. Jakob Lindgaard, 2008.

Having stated that Sellars does not explain in general terms what he means by “Given”, McDowell seeks to explain the term himself. His suggestion of a pernicious kind of Givenness is the following: “Givenness in the sense of the Myth would be an availability for cognition to subjects whose getting what is supposedly Given to them does not draw on capacities required for the sort of cognition in question” (*Avoiding* 1). Hence, it would be a kind of Given that is a cognition that is had separately of the capacities required to have that kind of cognition – hence, a Myth. McDowell continues, “Having something Given to one would be being Given something for knowledge without needing to have capacities that would be necessary for one to be able to get to know it. And that is incoherent” (*ibid.*).

In other words, according to McDowell, the Given is something that is said to be cognized without relying on the capacities of cognition that would be required to cognize this Given. McDowell’s interpretation of “Myth” here rests on the recognition of this incoherence. If it is incoherent (and contradictory) to take a cognition to be a Given, then it is a Myth that it is Given. McDowell asks, then, how the Myth of the Given could be a pitfall if it is incoherent. His answer is that “one could fall into it if one did not realize that knowledge of some kind requires certain capacities” (*ibid.*).

McDowell’s interpretation here rests on taking the Given (pun intended) as by definition requiring the capacities of cognition, and he takes capacities required for knowledge to be central for the problematic nature of the Myth. McDowell, working in a Kantian framework, takes cognitive capacities and in accordance cognitions themselves to be active. Since Givenness implies passivity, it cannot be that cognition (which is active) is Given. It is true that sensibility is passive, but sensibility alone does not yield cognitions—cognition inextricably involves the work of the imagination and the categories which are themselves active. McDowell writes,

“Sellars’s dictum implies that it is a form of the Myth to think sensibility by itself, without any involvement of capacities that belong to our rationality, can make things available for our cognition. That coincides with a basic doctrine of Kant” (McDowell 2).

If McDowell is right, then it seems that Sellars is mistaken in his critique of Kant here. Cognitive capacities are active, so they cannot be “Given”. Kant’s theory of sensibility is such that receptivity alone is not cognition. Thus, for Sellars to suggest (as McDowell takes him to be doing so) that there is a Given in the sensibility side of cognition which makes Kant fall for the Myth of the Given would indicate that Sellars is focusing only on the Transcendental Aesthetic, and doing so poorly (since the Transcendental Aesthetic is not limited to receptivity).

However, McDowell’s interpretation seems to me to be missing a crucial aspect of Sellars’s critique of Kant, or rather focusing on the wrong aspect of Kant’s theory of cognition. In his interpretation of what the “Given” in Kant’s philosophy is, McDowell focuses on the character of the Given as the object of cognitive capacities in relation to activity/passivity,¹⁷⁷ and consequently does not consider another possibility. In contrast, it would make more sense to interpret Sellars as referring to the Kantian cognitive capacities themselves as the Given when Sellars claims that Kant was not free of the Myth (as quoted above). Namely, I argue that Sellars can very well be taken to indicate that Kant’s assignment of the twelve *a priori* concepts of the understanding, the categories, as a structure for our cognitive capacities is itself a Given. With

¹⁷⁷ Here we may think of Aristotle’s remarks in *Metaphysics* 9.2 regarding rational and non-rational capacities. Non-rational capacities can be regarded as “one way capacities” and rational capacities as “two way capacities” (Makin 144). Two way capacities are those had only by rational beings. One way capacities are not limited to rational beings, but can be had by non-rational living things and also non-living things. Hume’s notion of sense impressions, for instance, would be a one way capacity. Though one way capacities do not require the active intentional action of those who hold these capacities, they are nevertheless capacities. Thus, there could be a case to be made here that McDowell’s emphasis on the distinction between passivity and activity in order to base his argument regarding capacities is not adequate to the task at hand. However, that can be a topic for a future project.

my interpretation, regardless of whether cognition has passive elements or can be taken as fully active, Sellars's critique would stand.

In contrast to McDowell's inadequate distinction between cognitions and cognitive capacities in his assumption that cognitions (as indistinct from and as the result of the *cognizing*) are the Given, my interpretation takes only Kant's specific account of the cognitive capacities to be Given.¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, there is an added shift in my approach: McDowell's interpretation of Sellars's theory's implication to Kant is centered on an *application* of Kant's theory (for, he is speaking of a cognition and how it occurs based on Kant's system), whereas my interpretation is centered on the very theory itself and how the theory is formulated.

In my interpretation, the Myth of the Given is the belief, taken on by many philosophers, that there are foundational epistemic factors for our cognition.¹⁷⁹ The relation of these to any capacities is irrelevant to this definition because any Given would have to be prior to any capacities to truly be Given, because otherwise the capacities themselves would be the Given. More importantly, one has cognition and knowledge only as interrelated parts of a system or various elements which form a coherent whole. Just as it would be nonsensical to assume that one could know the meaning of a sentence without knowing any language whatsoever, it also does not make sense to have a piece of knowledge independent of any knowledge of the system in which it is found. This coherentism can be exemplified by the following passage from *EPM*:

¹⁷⁸ Eric Watkins makes a similar case to mine which also presents a similar critique of McDowellian interpretations of the application of the Myth of the Given to Kant's philosophy in his paper "Kant and the Myth of the Given" (2008). He uses the terminology of "normative" and "normativity" in regard to the *a priori* cognitive frameworks in question.

¹⁷⁹ My interpretation is further supported by Sellars's interest in avoiding an infinite regress in epistemological accounts about language and action in his article "Some Reflections on Language Games" (1959). Significantly, in this article, he gives an account of what he calls "language entry transitions" (*Some Reflections* 210) to address an issue that he identifies in common accounts of normativity and rule following in language and action. More work on the connection of language entry transitions and Sellars's strategies for avoiding infinite regresses can be explored in a future project.

if the ability to recognize that x looks green presupposes the concept of *being green*, and if this in turn involves knowing in what circumstances to view an object to ascertain its color, then, since one can scarcely determine what the circumstances are without noticing that certain objects have certain perceptible characteristics—including colors—it would seem that one could not form the concept of *being green*, and, by parity of reasoning, of the other colors, unless he already had them. ... And while this does not imply that one must have concepts before one has them, it does imply that one can have the concept of green only by having a whole battery of concepts of which it is one element. (*EPM* §19, 54-55)

For one to have the concept of a specific color (i.e. to have the knowledge of this concept which allows one to make judgments about this specific color), to be able to successfully identify what one sees as this specific color, one needs to know other colors, the concept of color, and a host of other concepts; it is impossible to even know what it would mean for something to *be green* without this coherent conceptual apparatus. Thus, color, or greenness, are not *Given* to us independently of or prior to the building of a whole conceptual apparatus, but exists alongside it. Concepts are not non-inferentially present, and they are not foundational: we infer them as a part of a coherent whole of concepts, as fitting into a certain epistemological structure.

Consequently, as Sellars claims, it is impossible to say “that anything is, in this sense, “given” without flying in the face of reason” (*EPM* §1,1). For, falling for the Myth of the Given entails that one ignores the necessity of a coherent whole for any cognition and knowledge. In this section, I explained Sellars’s basic account of the Myth of the Given, and presented McDowell’s clarification of the Myth of the Given by aligning Sellars with Kant on what I argued to be a mistaken basis. In showing why McDowell’s account is not entirely faithful to Sellars’s position, I affirmed Sellars’s critique of Kant to be valid through a brief account of Sellars’s coherentism. Now that we have explored Sellars’s Myth of the Given, we can turn to McDowell’s notion of the frictionless spinning in a void.

1.3. Frictionless Spinning in a Void

McDowell writes of the theories of cognition which depend only on a conceptual scheme, i.e. ‘spontaneity’ in the Kantian sense, while excluding the possibility of access to empirical data, i.e. ‘receptivity’ in the Kantian sense, that they risk falling into “a frictionless spinning in a void”¹⁸⁰ (McDowell 11). He writes “[w]e need to conceive this expensive spontaneity as subject to control from outside our thinking, on pain of representing the operations of spontaneity as a frictionless spinning in a void. The Given seems to supply that external control” (ibid.).

He writes that “[i]f we focus on the freedom implied by the notion of spontaneity, what was meant to be a picture of thinking with empirical content threatens to degenerate into a picture of a frictionless spinning in a void” (McDowell 50). “The craving for external friction” could be satisfied by the Myth of the Given, as the “ground” that would provide justification for our cognitions (just like Kant’s things-in-themselves the existence of which we infer from the fact that we have representations), if it were not for it being an Myth (McDowell 11): “The trouble about the Myth of the Given is that it offers us at best exculpations where we wanted justifications” (McDowell 13). He further emphasizes this point with the claim that “[c]oherentist rhetoric”, which McDowell identifies with the frictionless spinning in a void, “suggests images of confinement within the sphere of thinking, as opposed to being in touch with something outside it. To one who finds such imagery both appropriate and worrying, the idea of the Given can give the appearance of reinstating thought’s bearing on reality” (McDowell 15).

When presenting the danger of frictionless spinning in a void, though McDowell does not have in mind a complete system but rather an approach to epistemology and knowledge, what he

¹⁸⁰ The “void” here could itself be something that McDowell is taking as a “Given”.

calls “the way concepts mediate the relation between minds and the world” (McDowell 3), his characterization is nevertheless applicable to conceiving a vicious circle in our context. This is especially so since he is considering the notions of cognition and judgment using Kantian terminology (*ibid.*). A vicious circle spins frictionless in a void insofar as it does not have any grounding relation to anything outside this circle, and since the contents of the circle are not such that they can provide a grounding “friction” to themselves. Thus, by only answering and answerable to itself in its justificatory mechanism,¹⁸¹ it spins without any friction in a void of its own. Something that would cause friction would allow for it to have some ground on which it can latch and justify itself independently of itself, *or* as I will argue in Hegel’s case can justify itself on the basis of itself such that it also thereby grounds itself.

Interestingly, McDowell’s own explanation for how “concepts mediate the relation between minds and the world” and for how to avoid the Myth of the Given provides a good approach for my argument for why Hegel’s circular epistemology is not a vicious circle.¹⁸² McDowell’s argument is that “when we enjoy experience conceptual capacities are drawn on *in* receptivity, not exercised *on* some supposedly prior deliverances of receptivity”, and “even though experience is passive, it draws into operation capacities that genuinely belong to spontaneity”, where he means “receptivity and “spontaneity” in the Kantian sense (McDowell 10, 13). Moreover, he claims that “[w]e should understand what Kant calls “intuition”—

¹⁸¹ The accusation here is that the “friction” of justification that should be outside the spinning whole is in fact within the whole itself. Hence, it is not that there is no friction of justification at all, but it seems that it is not located where McDowell would like it to be.

¹⁸² Furthermore my exploration here is useful for future projects on Davidson and Quine because here McDowell is engaging with Davidson directly, and many of his claims can also be said to implicate Quine. But that is a discussion for another time.

experiential intake—not as a bare getting of an extra-conceptual Given, but as a kind of occurrence or state that already has conceptual content.” (McDowell 9).

Thus, McDowell’s position is that we can avoid the two extremes, i.e. “a pair of opposing pitfalls”, if we recognize that empirical intuition is already conceptually laden. These two opposing pitfalls are “a coherentism that does not acknowledge an external rational constraint on thinking and therefore ... cannot genuinely make room for empirical content at all” and “a recoil into the Myth of the Given, which offers at best exculpations where what we need is justifications” (McDowell 46). The latter is akin to (or at least a form of) the foundationalist positions or tendencies with which Hegel takes issue. The former, however, could be alleged of Hegel’s circular epistemology by someone who does not see its differences from coherentist theories (such as that of Donald Davidson’s, which McDowell is criticizing here).¹⁸³

It is important to point out that McDowell is speaking strictly of empirical experience and how the conceptual capacities yield cognitions of empirical objects. Nevertheless what he means by “empirical experience” is akin to Kant and Hegel’s meaning for the term which I discussed in detail for Kant in Chapter 1. According to this meaning, empirical experience is never of the objects they involve *as they are in themselves*, but rather empirical experience is already shaped by the constraints and faculties of sensibility together with and inseparable from those of cognition. Thus, empirical experience is not a mere Given, which is also one of McDowell’s central claims. He writes that “we need a conception of experiences as states or occurrences that are *passive but reflect conceptual capacities*, capacities that belong to spontaneity, in operation” (McDowell 23, my emphasis). Rejecting the Given as a Myth, McDowell claims that we need to

¹⁸³ Though, arguably, Davidson occasionally employed elements of correspondence in his theory.

reconceive empirical experience as not purely passive, but already involving conceptual capacities “that belong to spontaneity” (ibid.).

McDowell’s concern is similar to Hegel’s, for whom the categories of reason are intertwined with and develop alongside phenomenal content. In the *WL* Hegel is considering cognition as pure thought, moving through different categories of thought, having these categories unfold almost phenomenally. Though there is no specific empirical object in the sense of physical objects in the *WL*, thought itself comes to have a phenomenal character by virtue of its discursive unfolding (as I discussed in Chapter 3). The *PhG* deals with consciousness’s trial and error in approaching and characterizing phenomenal experience. Hegel’s *Naturphilosophie* and *Geistesphilosophie* in the *Enzyklopaedie* are both unfolding developments of the concepts in nature and *Geist*, respectively, and these developments emphasize the conceptual character of any empirical content of these works. However, as mentioned previously, I do not treat Hegel’s *Naturphilosophie* and *Geistesphilosophie* in detail in this dissertation for concerns of length and scope, thus my analysis here will focus on the *PhG* and the *WL*.

2. Why Hegel’s Circularity is Not Vicious: Three Arguments

As I explain in detail in Chapter 6, in the *PhG* consciousness’s journey to the standpoint of Science is complete only at the point of Absolute knowledge, which is nothing other than a return to the beginning to recall and recollect the entire process of the journey as a gallery of images in the form of a circle. In the *WL*, one instance of knowledge leads to the next instance of knowledge through the former’s mere unfolding, and so on until the last instance of knowledge which reaches back to the first instance of knowledge by finding its truth to in fact be one with that of the immediate indeterminate beginning point’s. This is also the case in the Nature and

Spirit volumes of the *Enzyklopaedie*. The whole system is built in such a way that it justifies itself. However, the circle that is formed by the end point reaching back to the beginning in each of these cases does not constitute a vicious circle. Now I shall first explain in what sense it may be alleged that Hegel's works present vicious circles, and then I shall present my tripartite argument for why such allegations are misguided.

One could mistakenly allege that the *PhG* is a vicious circle. *PhG* begins with sense-certainty, at which point consciousness is pure natural consciousness. The knowledge at the beginning is immediate and indeterminate and the object of this knowledge is "immediate knowledge itself" (*PhG* 58, §90). In sense-certainty, at the beginning, "[b]ecause of its concrete content, sense-certainty immediately appears as the *richest* kind of knowledge, indeed a knowledge of infinite wealth for which no bounds can be found" (*PhG* 58, §91). Starting from this point with the immediate knowledge of the concrete¹⁸⁴ object that appears as the richest kind of knowledge, consciousness goes on a journey of *Bildung* (as discussed in Chapters 3 and 5 in detail) which culminates in Absolute Knowing. Absolute Knowing is a return to the beginning point since Absolute Knowing is *in fact* the richest knowledge (insofar as it is the limit of consciousness's cognition where its *for-itself* matches its *in-itself*). Absolute Knowing's return to the beginning closes the circle of the *PhG* and affirms the journey of consciousness as a circle.¹⁸⁵ It could be alleged that this circle is vicious. For, if consciousness begins its journey of *Bildung* without a foundation upon which knowledge can be built and Hegel claims that the totality of the journey (which is a circle) yields true ("absolute") knowledge, then this knowledge could be seen

¹⁸⁴ It is interesting to note the role of being "concrete" in circularity. In infinity, as I discussed earlier, concreteness plays a role in determining the truth and ideality of the true infinite as a circle. Furthermore, at first the finite is determined to be concrete but then it becomes clear that in fact it is the infinite in its circular form that is more concrete. It could be fruitful in a future project to explore the role of concreteness in the circularity of the *PhG* alongside a consideration of the relation of concreteness to reality and ideality.

¹⁸⁵ I discuss the return to the beginning and the circular pattern of the *PhG* in detail in Chapter 6.

(I argue, it would be seen mistakenly,) as justifying its claims through its very own content, spinning frictionless in a void.

In the *WL* Hegel is solely concerned with pure cognition and pure thought where thought is its own object as the very logic of the science of logic. In this sense it could be alleged that Hegel's *WL* is spinning even more frictionlessly in a void, for in McDowell's Kantian terms, we are dealing in the *WL* with spontaneity in its total freedom within the sole realm of spontaneity. As a circular epistemology in which the end returns to the beginning and the whole justifies itself, there may appear to be no "friction" – the ground is the whole and thus rests upon nothing other than itself. In this sense, Hegel's *WL* could be alleged to be a vicious circle and as frictionless spinning in a void.

Such arguments alleging that Hegel's circles are vicious could be further developed. However, such an effort would not contribute much value to my argument that Hegel's circularity is not vicious, and the detail in the potential allegations above shall suffice for my purposes. These arguments claiming that Hegel's circularity is vicious would fail to account for the complexity of Hegel's notion of circularity from viciousness. Hegel's notion of circularity is his novel alternative to what he saw to be the failings of cognitive strategies before him. If one does not recognize its crucial role for Hegel's cognitive strategy, general philosophical endeavors, and philosophical interaction with his predecessors and contemporaries, then it would not be surprising that one also may not recognize the significant difference of Hegel's notion of circularity from vicious circularity.

2.1. First Argument: The Role of Beginnings

Unlike for a vicious circle, for Hegel's circularity the beginning point holds great importance. In a superficial sense, it may look as though there is hardly any difference between a vicious circle and Hegel's circularity with regard to their beginning point, since on the surface, they both look as though they justify their beginning point and any other claim through the means of the beginning point and these claims only. While this description of a vicious circle is accurate, it fails to capture the specific role of the beginning point and how it comes to be the beginning point for Hegel's circles.

In both the *PhG* and the *WL*, Hegel goes into considerable depth to explain the beginning points and why they are the beginning points that they are. Although these explanations prior to the beginning show the reasoning behind why the beginning points are what they actually are, these explanations do not constitute a part of the system of philosophy that Hegel expounds in these works. In fact, in the discussion on the nature of these beginnings he argues the opposite claim that one should not begin to philosophize before actually *beginning*.

As I quoted in Chapter 3, Hegel mentions in the *EL* the "absurd ... wise resolve of Scholasticus to learn to *swim before he ventured into the water*" (*EL* §10, 34, Suhrkamp 54). The situation of Scholasticus is similar, for Hegel, to the situation of those philosophers who seek foundations for their philosophy before beginning said philosophy. This, for Hegel, is self-contradictory since one is already philosophizing when one is seeking the foundation for the philosophy, and thus the foundation ceases to be the beginning point which these philosophers would like to secure, but rather just another point in the philosophy or system. The point at which they began seeking this foundation is in effect the beginning. Hegel's discussions of what

the beginning point should be, in both the *PhG* and the *WL*, concerns these issues one can run into when one tries to learn to swim before venturing into the water. For this reason, he argues that the beginning must be immediate and indeterminate.

Perhaps Hegel's longest and most involved discussion of beginnings is in the *WL*. I explore this discussion in more detail in Chapter 6, but here it is also crucial for my argument to bring it up. Before the *WL* begins with *being, pure being*, Hegel explains in detail that the science of logic must begin without presuppositions in the section at the beginning of the Doctrine of Being titled "With What Must the Science Begin?". Following this discussion, when Hegel begins the *WL* with *being*, it is clear to the reader that *being* is indeed the beginning of this science proper.

Only a presuppositionless beginning can save the science from running into the contradiction of philosophizing ahead of (supposedly) beginning philosophy. For, if one were to begin with presuppositions,¹⁸⁶ one would already be importing into the system of philosophy arguments and positions that the philosophy itself had not had a chance to scientifically render. In such a case, the philosophy and its system would be to an extent pre-determined, and very much not autonomous. Presuppositions import standards into the philosophy which the philosophy itself did not set but is nevertheless made to follow. If philosophy were to follow a standard that preceded it, then this philosophy could not purport to be a science, since it would be following standards that it could not test and establish the validity and soundness of. For, if philosophy simply followed standards which were prescribed to philosophy ahead of the

¹⁸⁶ Presuppositions can be understood in two ways: either as temporally preceding the beginning or as transcendently being deduced after being at the beginning without preceding justification. The latter, as a transcendental form, is not vicious. This is related to the change in how Hegel viewed Reinhold's philosophy, which I mentioned briefly in Chapter 1 and consider more fully in Chapter 6.

philosophy, then philosophy would simply adopt these standards uncritically and dogmatically, and thus would not have the tools to demonstrate why these standards should be adopted in the first place.

A presuppositionless beginning, for Hegel, is like a hypothesis which is then confirmed. Of course, this terminology of “hypothesis” or “hypothetical beginning” belongs to Reinhold (as I discussed in Chapter 2). As I discuss in detail in Chapter 6, Hegel adopts this language of the hypothetical beginning from Reinhold in the *WL*, despite having been critical of him in his earlier *Differenzschrift*, as I discussed in Chapter 4. A presuppositionless beginning, as a hypothesis, can be tested as the philosophical system or science develops and can test this hypothesis. Thus, far from being a vicious circle, Hegel’s circularity constitutes a return to the beginning that is the result of the only non-dogmatic scientific strategy. However, this is only one aspect to the argument for why Hegel’s circularity is not vicious, and does not on its own suffice as a proof for the non-viciousness of Hegel’s circularity (for, one could still claim that Hegel’s non-reliance of any argument or thought-content preceding the system for justification is the very reason for the allegation that it is vicious circularity). The character of the presuppositionless beginning and the unfolding of the science from this beginning are crucial for the proof that Hegel’s circularity is not vicious.

A presuppositionless beginning ensures that the standard by which philosophy abides is the standard it sets for itself through its own scientific endeavors. The science can thus justify these standards and its upholding of them in its development, without dogmatically accepting any standard external to and independent from it. But what exactly is a presuppositionless beginning? How can a beginning be completely presuppositionless? What are its characteristics?

For a beginning to be presuppositionless, it cannot take anything for granted. It may not be determined in any way, for determination is a differentiation and assumes already a step that has been taken in argumentation preceding it. A presuppositionless beginning may have no such parts of argumentation preceding it. Furthermore, this beginning may not hold any content whatsoever since any content it holds would be determinate, and determination indicates differentiation. As I discussed in Chapter 4, determinate being is being with quality which is determined as a result of a negation. All determination is of this character: determination involves negation which relates that which is determined to another which it is determined over against and in relation. Thus, any determination in the content of the beginning point would indicate a host of preceding logical movements which would not be included in the logic itself since they would be prior to the beginning of the logic. Consequently, as Hegel states, “only in what is simple is there nothing more than the pure beginning; only the immediate is simple, for only in the immediate has no advance been made from a *one* to an *other*” (*WL* 78). Thus the beginning must be simple, immediate, and indeterminate. Only then can it be presuppositionless.¹⁸⁷

What fulfills these requirements of presuppositionlessness, Hegel calls “*being, pure being*” (*WL* 82; Suhrkamp 82). This pure being has no further determination. It is fully simple, immediate, and indeterminate. In fact it is so pure and so indeterminate that it is no different from *nothing*. Hegel writes of it that “it has no diversity within itself nor any with a reference outwards” (*ibid.*).¹⁸⁸ Since it is not determined in any way, it has no limits. Since it is limitless, it is everything all at once, without distinction and determination.

¹⁸⁷ I explore the presuppositionless nature of the beginning of the *WL* further in Chapter 6.

¹⁸⁸ The beginning as such engenders what follows it in the following manner. *Being, pure being* is so indeterminate and immediate that it is no different than *nothing*, i.e. *pure being* is *nothing*. But *nothing* is *not being*, but given how

These characteristics of the beginning point of the *WL* are significant for distinguishing the circularity in the *WL* from vicious circularity. Let me explain. In a vicious circle argument, the circle closes with the affirmation of the conclusion of the argument based on the initial principles in the argument which the conclusion was supposed to prove and/or justify. Thus, the circle is vicious because it relies for its justification that which it was supposed to justify, and thereby results in a paradox. In contrast, since the beginning point of the *WL* is simple immediate indeterminateness that is akin to nothing and everything without distinction, the return to this beginning point with the closing of the circle is not an affirmation of just any statement, but rather a return to the immediacy of *being* as a result of determining *being* to the limits of its possible determination.¹⁸⁹ The determinations of *being* are already implicitly present in *being*, and hence the return to the beginning at the end is merely an affirmation of this fact. This character of the beginning point, along with my argument below related to Hegel's claim that the whole constitutes the truth show that Hegel's system is in fact grounded and not frictionless spinning in a void.

PhG, similarly to the *WL*, begins with an immediate, indeterminate, and simple beginning point which at the same time encompasses implicitly the rest of what unfolds in the work. *PhG* is, however, markedly different from the *WL* insofar as the *PhG* features consciousness which goes from one stage to another in the development of the work. The *PhG* is the journey of the *Bildung* of consciousness to the point at which consciousness may be able to engage in the *WL* as Science. Thus, rather than simply portraying the system of a specialized science such as the

nothing and being are so indeterminate, this *not being* is *not not being* (to borrow Koch's way of describing on p1052, Koch 2019), namely *being* and *not nothing*, yet it is *nothing*. Thus, *being* and *nothing* bring about *becoming*, which in turn introduces *Dasein* ("determinate being").

¹⁸⁹ I explain the details of how the end of the *WL* is a return to the beginning when I discuss the circularity of *WL* in detail in Chapter 6.

science of logic, the *PhG* portrays the systematic *Bildung* of consciousness. This journey of *Bildung* is itself a scientific endeavor, for consciousness is engaging in science on its way to Science (that is, the science of logic): “the way to Science is itself already *Science*, and hence, in virtue of its content, is the Science of the *experience of consciousness*” (*PhG* 56, §88; Suhrkamp 80) and “has phenomenal knowledge for its object” (*PhG* 49, §77; Suhrkamp 72).

Despite the scientific character of both the *PhG* and the *WL*, the *PhG* is centered on the phenomenal experience of consciousness, while for the *WL* there is an apparent absence of a specific consciousness.¹⁹⁰ This difference is also reflected in the beginning point of the *PhG*: consciousness begins its journey of *Bildung* with “sense-certainty”. Sense-certainty at the very beginning of the *PhG* is immediate and indeterminate phenomenal experience. It is akin to *WL*’s *being, pure being* insofar as it is simple in this way. He begins the body of the *PhG* in the chapter on Sense-Certainty with the claim that “[t]he knowledge or knowing which is at the start or is immediately our object cannot be anything else but immediate knowledge itself, a knowledge of the immediate or of what simply *is*” (*PhG* 58, §90). The emphasis on “is” at the end of this first sentence already indicates a parallel to *WL*’s beginning.

As the science of the experience of *Bildung*, the *PhG* has an explicit emphasis on knowledge and cognition. Thus, just as the *WL*, as the science examining patterns of thought began with the most immediate and indeterminate *thought*, it makes sense for the *PhG* to begin with immediate and indeterminate *knowledge*. Moreover, another similarity based on this immediacy and indeterminacy is the all-encompassing¹⁹¹ nature of the immediate beginnings.

¹⁹⁰ Though, as I argued in Chapter 3, the discursive character of the development of the dialectic in the *WL* nevertheless gives it a phenomenal character.

¹⁹¹ All-encompassing in this sense is immediate because it is all-encompassing precisely because of its immediacy and indeterminacy.

WL's being, pure being which is so immediate and indeterminate that it captures everything and nothing at once indeterminately is mirrored in the immediate and indeterminate knowledge consciousness has at the beginning of the *PhG*: “sense-certainty immediately appears as the *richest* kind of knowledge, indeed a knowledge of infinite wealth for which no bounds can be found, either when we *reach out* into space and time in which it is dispersed, or when we take a bit of this wealth, and by division *enter into* it” (*PhG* 58, §91). Although sense-certainty seems to be the “*truest* knowledge”, “this very *certainty* proves itself to be the most abstract and poorest *truth*” because “[a]ll that it says about what it knows is just that it *is*” (*ibid.*).

Thus, sense-certainty as the richest and the poorest knowledge, the knowledge of simply what *is* without any further determination is the beginning point of the journey of consciousness in the *PhG*.¹⁹² Similar to the beginning of the *WL*, then, it is difference from a vicious circle since this beginning point already implicitly includes in itself what steps follow from it. Nevertheless, it does not determine these following steps, because it is itself completely undetermined and immediate. The vastness of possibilities implicit in its breadth are there by virtue of its immediate simplicity. Hegel expresses the implicitness of the whole progression of the journey of *Bildung* in the following manner:

[B]ecause it has phenomenal knowledge for its object, this exposition seems not to be Science, free and self-moving in its own peculiar shape; yet from this standpoint it can be regarded as the path of the natural consciousness which presses forward to true knowledge; or as the way of the Soul which journeys through *the series of its own configurations* as though they were the stations *appointed for it by its own nature*, so that it may purify itself for the life of the Spirit, and achieve finally, through a completed experience of itself, the awareness of what it really is in itself. (*PhG* 49, §77; Suhrkamp 72, my emphases)

¹⁹² This is an appropriate starting point for the *PhG* as the science of the experience of consciousness, insofar as sense-perception is the initial immediate knowledge: consciousness is consciousness at first simply of what *is* as *what is immediately before one* in one's consciousness. However, since *self-consciousness* is not yet on the scene, consciousness cannot differentiate between what it is conscious of and what it is itself, i.e. that which is conscious of an object which for it (consciousness) appears as what it (consciousness) is conscious of.

The necessity of the progression is owing to the nature of cognition itself: consciousness learns through phenomenal experience the various dialectical intricacies of cognition by following where cognition itself takes consciousness.¹⁹³

In contrast to a vicious circle, the end of the *PhG* is a return to the beginning in the shape of a circle without being justified by the earlier parts of the journey it is supposed to justify. For Hegel in the *PhG*, there is no such relation of justification between the stages of the journey, but rather the whole journey justifies itself. This justification is the result of the completion of the education of consciousness to the standpoint of Science. At the beginning, consciousness is pure “natural consciousness” that has yet to be scientific in any way. Through engaging in science along the journey, it becomes more and more scientifically educated, such that at the end of the *PhG* it is fully “scientific consciousness”.

At the end of the *PhG*, Absolute Knowing as the final stage of the *Bildung* closes the *PhG* as a circle in two distinct ways. Firstly, the final stage of the *PhG* is a kind of gallery of images comprised of “images” of each of the stages of the journey in order, in order to revisit the whole journey (*PhG* 492, §808; Suhrkamp 590). This gallery of images then brings us back to the beginning of the journey and carries us through its images to the end again, tracing a circle. However, this gallery of images does not suffice for absolute knowing, since pictorial thinking is insufficient for true *grasping* [*griffen*] of the Notion [*Begriff*] (ibid.).

This brings us to the second way in which the circle of the *PhG* is completed. As a result of completing its *Bildung* and thereby becoming scientific consciousness and in fact finding the richest of all knowledge in Absolute Knowing, consciousness returns to the beginning of the

¹⁹³ I discuss the content and form of this development below.

journey. Natural consciousness had at the beginning thought it had the richest of all knowledge in sense-certainty, and now, as scientific consciousness, it is able to scientifically render it. In other words, scientific consciousness at Absolute Knowing can finally successfully grasp “a knowledge of the immediate or of what simply *is*” (*PhG* 58, §90) for what it is. It can grasp that what simply *is* from the natural consciousness’s standpoint is for the scientific consciousness the poorest of knowledge for all the reasons consciousness found out through its journey (not just those that consciousness found in its struggles in the Sense-Certainty chapter). It can also grasp that at the scientific standpoint it can, when able to set aside the *experience* of *Bildung* (because it has undergone this *Bildung* already), begin the *WL* in which it explores “what *is*” starting with *being, pure being*.¹⁹⁴

Hegel writes that “the *goal* is as necessarily fixed for knowledge as the serial progression; it is the point where knowledge no longer needs to go beyond itself, where knowledge finds itself, where Notion corresponds to object and object to Notion” (*PhG* 51, §80). This necessarily fixed goal for consciousness distinguishes the circularity of the whole of the journey of *PhG* from vicious circularity insofar as the justification of the end is not based on the beginning which the end was supposed to justify. There is in fact, no such justificatory relation (i.e. one justifying another) between one point of the circle to another single point in Hegel’s *PhG* unlike in a vicious circle, because there is no justification independent of the whole totality of the journey, i.e. the circle.

A claim by Hegel on the “logical necessity” of the “organic whole” of the journey further helps emphasize this distinction between Hegel’s circularity and a vicious circle: “It is in this

¹⁹⁴ In the last pages of the *PhG* natural consciousness reappears as Absolute Knowing of time, space, nature, and conceptual *Aufhebung*. I discuss these pages in detail in Chapter 6, in my detailed account of the circularity in the *PhG*.

nature of what is to be in its being its own Notion, that *logical necessity* in general consists. This alone is the rational element and the rhythm of the organic whole; it is as much *knowledge* of the content, as the content is the Notion and essence—in other words, it alone is *speculative philosophy*” (*PhG* 34, §56). According to this claim, the logical necessity of the specific development of consciousness’s journey is brought about by the conceptual requirements of each of the stages and their objects. The content of each stage is also the Notion (i.e. concept, [*Begriff*]) of the contents of this stage. I discuss the role of content and form in the *PhG* (and also the *WL*) below, but I want to highlight the mention of speculative philosophy here.

According to the claim above, speculative philosophy is the organic whole that is guided by the *Begriff* as the “rational element”—the *Begriff* which is also the content and the logical necessity of the progression of the journey of *Bildung* in the *PhG*. Speculative philosophy, as I discussed in Chapter 4 in the section on infinity, deals with concepts and their inner development as the guiding principle of development.

Before I proceed with my argument for why Hegel’s circular epistemology is not vicious circularity, I shall first give a brief account of the relevant part of the historical development of the term *Begriff* in order to explain speculative philosophy. The reason for this brief digression is that Hegel’s notion of speculative philosophy plays an important role for my second argument for why Hegel’s circular epistemology is not vicious circularity.

The relation of speculative philosophy to concepts and their “grasping” nature is evident in the German word Hegel used to express ‘speculative’, namely ‘*begreifend*’. The verb ‘*greifen*’ meaning ‘to grasp’ is modified by the prefix ‘*be-*’ to yield ‘*begreifen*’ meaning ‘to comprehend’. ‘*Begriff*’ is the substantive noun form of ‘*begreifen*’, and it is formed based on the past participle

of the verb, thus indicating the meaning of ‘that which is/can be comprehended or grasped’, i.e. ‘concept’. The present participle form (the form commonly used to turn verbs into adjectives) of ‘*begreifen*’ however yields ‘*begreifend*’—the word which is translated into English as ‘*speculative*’ in Hegel scholarship and in the translations of Hegel’s works.

In the entry on *Begriff* in the *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, the entry’s authors Philippe Büttgen, Marc Crépon, and Sandra Laugier argue that “It was with Immanuel Kant that *Begriff* acquired a specific philosophical meaning far removed from the general meaning forged by Christian Wolff (cf. Wolff, *Vernünfftige Gedanken*, 1.4: “any representation of a thing in our ideas [*jede Vorstellung einer Sache in unseren Vorstellungen*]”)” (*Dictionary of Untranslatables* 90). For Kant, they explain that “the *Begriff* becomes a function of the understanding (as opposed to the object of an intuition)” and that “[t]he *Begriff* is what gathers together, unites, and synthesizes the empirical manifold” (ibid.). Furthermore, there is a plurality of *Begriffe*. For Hegel, however, *Begriff* is exclusively singular as a technical term, and his “philosophy is a philosophy of the Concept, the *Begriff*, without further determination” (ibid.).¹⁹⁵ The authors remark that therefore “[t]he Concept is thus considered to be a figure of knowledge: it is the absolutely simple and pure element in which truth has its existence ... and only its deployment, also called “the work of the concept” (*Arbeit des Begriffs*), provides access to “scientific understanding” (*wissenschaftliche Einsicht*)” (*Dictionary of Untranslatables* 92).¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ A more detailed analysis of what *Begriff* means for Hegel is beyond my scope here.

¹⁹⁶ The authors of the entry furthermore make the following remark: “Thus in Kant and Hegel, the specificity of *Begriff* and *begreifen* resides in each case in grammatical peculiarities: the different uses that make the nominal form (*Begriff*) and the verbal form (*begreifen*) possible in Kant, and the singular and the plural of *Begriff* possible in Hegel. From one author to the other, the play on etymology shifts from the verb (Kant plays mainly on *begreifen*) to the noun (Hegel’s play on the majesty of the singular). In both cases, however, the theory of knowledge and the speculative doctrine of science are deployed in a close relationship with ordinary language, or at least with the phantasmal version provided by the etymology” (*Dictionary of Untranslatables* 92).

This transformation of the meaning of *Begriff* from Wolff to Kant to Hegel which Büttgen, Crépon, and Laugier trace provides an insight into Hegel's speculative philosophy and its idealist nature. The transition in the meaning of *Begriff* from Wolff to Kant, that is, from 'the object of an intuition' ("any representation of a thing in our ideas") to 'the functions of the understanding which gather together, unite, and synthesize the empirical manifold', indicate the gist of Kant's Copernican revolution: concepts (as *a priori*) are on the side of the cognizing subject rather than the objects the cognizing subject cognizes. The change in the meaning of *Begriff* from Kant to Hegel is from 'the functions of the understanding which gather together, unite, and synthesize the empirical manifold' to 'the self-moving principle of knowledge, cognition, and philosophy'.

This change from Kant to Hegel in the meaning of *Begriff* shows the speculative nature of Hegel's philosophy and its idealism. *Begriff* is the first chapter of the Subjective Logic or The Doctrine of the Notion [*Begriff*] of the *WL*.¹⁹⁷ Hegel begins this chapter with the following remark:

Understanding is the term usually employed to express the faculty of notions [*Begriffe*]; as so used, it is distinguished from the *faculty of judgement* and the faculty of syllogisms, of the formal *reason*. But it is with *reason* that it is especially contrasted; in that case, however, it does not signify the faculty of the notion in general, but of *determinate* notions, and the idea prevails that the notion is *only a determinate* notion. (*WL* 600)

In this passage he is referring to Kant's use of *Begriff* (though it does not name Kant) since for Kant concepts are subsumed under the faculty of understanding. He is also highlighting that Kant has various determinate concepts [*Begriffe*] and not a faculty of the *Begriff* in general. Therefore, Hegel contends, Kant's *Begriff* is "*only a determinate* notion [*Begriff*]". For Hegel, reason is

¹⁹⁷ The two other doctrines, Being and Essence, also have their first chapters entitled with the name of the doctrine itself, respectively. The Doctrine of Concept [*Begriff*] is just as important as those of Being and Essence, but as the third one of them, it retains the previous two within it.

governed by the *Begriff*, in contrast to Kant's distinction which subsumes the concepts as a plurality of determinates under the faculty of understanding. In Kant's model, Hegel claims that "the judgement and the syllogism or reason are, as formal, only a *product of the understanding* [*ein Verständiges*] since they stand under the form of the abstract determinateness of the Notion" (ibid.). The judgment and the syllogism and reason are *understood*.

Hegel reacts to Kant's apparent subsuming of reason under an abstract determinate *Begriff* which falls under the understanding through his redefinition of the *Begriff*. He writes that in contrast, in the *WL*, "the Notion emphatically does not rank as [*gilt überhaupt nicht als*] something merely abstractly determinate [*bloß abstrakt Bestimmtes*]; consequently, the understanding is to be distinguished from reason only in the sense that the former is merely the faculty of the Notion in general" (ibid.). Furthermore, this Notion in general [*allgemeine Begriff*] has the three moments of universality [*Allgemeinheit*], particularity [*Besonderheit*], and individuality [*Einzelheit*], a detailed exposition of which is beyond my scope here.

Hegel's ascription of singularity to the *Begriff* and the resulting change in how the *Begriff* relates to reason and understanding guides the development of Hegel's works. Speculative philosophy, which Hegel refers to sometimes as *begreifende* and sometimes as *speculative*,¹⁹⁸ is based on "the specific nature of speculative thought [*das spekulativen Denkens*], which consists solely in grasping [*in dem Auffassen*] the opposed moments in their unity" (*WL* 152, Suhrkamp 168). The *Begriff* (with its "pure self-movements" and "rhythm" (*PhG* 35-6, §58)) works as a thread which moves through the unfolding of the moments of Hegel's works and hence it is the guiding principle behind speculative thought—or what is often referred to as Hegel's dialectic—

¹⁹⁸ Strikingly, in the Preface to the *PhG*, starting at §59 he switches from *spekulativ* to *begreifende* to refer to the same speculative thinking/philosophy which he had been referring to as *speculative* in the preceding paragraphs of the Preface.

which sees opposing moments in their unity. Their unity is found in *Begriff* itself, and hence *begreifende* philosophy is given this name. He writes that “[i]t is in this dialectic as it is here understood, that is, in the grasping of opposites in their unity or of the positive in the negative, that speculative thought consists. It is the most important aspect of dialectic” (*WL* 56).¹⁹⁹ Earlier, in the *PhG*, he makes a similar remark with the statement that “in speculative [*begreifenden*] thinking ... the negative belongs to the content itself, and is the *positive*, both as the *immanent* movement and determination of the content, and as the whole of this process. Looked at as a result, what emerges from this process is the *determinate* negative which is consequently a positive content as well” (*PhG* 35-6, §59).

2.2. Second Argument: Idealism and Truth in Hegel’s Circular Epistemology

My second argument for why Hegel’s circularity is not vicious is based on Hegel’s idealism and view on ideality (i.e. that which is ideal [*Ideel*]), specifically the relation of the notion of ideality to truth. As I showed in the section on infinity in Chapter 4, the notion of ideality is inextricably connected to truth for Hegel. Furthermore, he argues that ideality should be attributed to a circular pattern in the account of finite things, i.e. a circular epistemology insofar as he is dealing with the knowledge of determinate being where this discussion of ideality and circularity appears.

¹⁹⁹ Above, I discussed the opening passage to the chapter on *Begriff* in the *WL*. There, Hegel presents a criticism of Kant’s view of *Begriff* and its relation to and implications for ‘judgment’ and ‘syllogism’. Elsewhere in the *WL* he writes the following: “the proposition in the *form of a judgement* is not suited to express speculative truths; a familiarity with this fact is likely to remove many misunderstandings of speculative truths. Judgment is an *identical* relation between subject and predicate; in it we abstract from the fact that the subject has a number of determinatenesses other than that of the predicate, and also that the predicate is more extensive than the subject. Now if the content is speculative, the *non-identical* aspect of subject and predicate is also an essential moment, but in the judgement this is not expressed” (*WL* 90-1). The implications of this statement for Kant’s philosophy would be fruitful future project, especially in relation to Hegel’s discussions of Judgment and Syllogism in the *WL*. However, such a discussion is beyond my scope here.

Since the science of logic is the exploration of thought in a systematic philosophical science, the culmination of *being* in *Idea* (the final determination in the *WL*) and the resulting insight that *Idea* is a qualified return to *being* is markedly different from a vicious circle. First of all, it is no surprise that in the exploration of *thought* and *logic* what starts out as the broadest possible way to characterize the realm of thought (i.e. the presuppositionless beginning with *being*) turns out to be *Idea* when explored thoroughly. This point is especially salient when considering Hegel's *idealism*: the *WL*, as a part of Hegel's idealist project, is the account of logic "understood as the system of pure reason, as the realm of pure thought" (*WL* 50) and thus culminates in *Idea* in its most concrete and determined state.

If we recall Chapter 4's discussion on true infinity, true infinity is ascribed ideality because it is the most concrete conception in the exposition of determinate being and the relation of finitude. True infinity, as the shape of Hegel's idealism (as discussed in Chapter 4) is able to hold the two opposing sides in a unity, and that is how it returns to itself to form a circle. In this manner, true infinity is also an accurate conception of speculative philosophy. Since speculative philosophy has the *Begriff* operating in it to guide the development of opposing sides to their unity ultimately in the shape of a circle as in true infinity, ideality is related through the circularity of Hegel's epistemology to the *Begriff* and speculative philosophy. This relation of ideality to circularity and the *Begriff* is applicable to the *WL* and the *PhG* which I discuss here, but also to the *Enzyklopaedie*.

What distinguishes this circularity from a vicious circularity with regard to idealism is based on idealism's speculative nature which brings opposing sides into unity while also preserving their opposition in this unity. The fact that ideality includes reality in it (as discussed in Chapter 4) is a case in point. As I explained in how we get to true infinity in the *WL* in

Chapter 4, in order for the two opposing sides to be brought together in unity, there needs to be a circular structure, otherwise we would be stuck in a spurious infinite, alternating between the two opposing sides in an infinite progress without ever recognizing their unity. The recognition of the unity is *truth*, in contrast to the false and unattainable infinite progress. Since the recognition of the unity of the opposing sides means a return to oneself, this unity (*qua* return to oneself) also indicates totality. And, as Hegel states, “The True, is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development” (*PhG* 11, §20).²⁰⁰

Since it is in *Idea* where the oppositions can fully be *grasped* [*begriffen*] in their unity, and since *Idea* is the return to the beginning of the *WL* to complete the circle, truth can only be found in such circular epistemology. In contrast, a vicious circle does not have such a fundamental relation to truth, but rather claims truth based on a faulty claim to justification. Hegel’s circular epistemology is the only feasible method to recognize the oppositions found in unity and to account for them—which account is the return to the beginning to close the circle.

Incidentally, insofar as *Idea* is the most concrete determination in the *WL*, it is only to be expected that it finds its unity with *Being*, i.e. fully undetermined and immediate beginning point (which also makes it the least concrete point in the *WL*) as its opposite at the end, thereby closing the circle of the *WL*. *PhG* forms its circle in a similar way: the opposition of the concreteness of *Absolute Knowing* of the scientific consciousness to the abstract one-sidedness of *Sense-Certainty* of the natural consciousness results in the return of the former to the latter as the recognition of their unity.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ As I discussed in Chapter 4, he also writes in the *Differenzschrift* that “[p]hilosophy as a whole grounds itself and the reality of its cognition, both as to form and as to content, within itself” (*Differenzschrift* 179).

²⁰¹ I discuss the specific nature of this unity in the *PhG* in Chapter 6.

Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 4, ideality includes reality in it, the real is within the ideal as a moment of it. In other words, for us to know the reality of something, we need to have the idea of the reality of this something. Reality and ideality are both categories of thought insofar as they are moments in the science of logic. For Hegel, and I agree, in order to even ascribe the predicate or notion of reality to something, we need to be able to *think* about this something, and to *cognize* it as real. This cognition or thought is itself an *ideal* act since we think in and through ideas. The reality of a determinate being is simply another idea, and thus resides as a part of ideality. Consequently, reality has its justification for *realness* in ideality, which itself follows a circular pattern. We ascribe reality from within ideality and from within the framework of the totality of our cognition. As a category of thought, reality is already ideal, and this gets at the heart of Hegel's speculative philosophy and idealism.²⁰²

2.3. Third Argument: Concept, and Form and Content

In this third part of my argument for distinguishing Hegel's notion of circularity from vicious circularity, I develop the discussion about truth started in the first part of the argument, this time by explaining the interdependence of subjectivity and objectivity for Hegel. This interdependence of subjectivity and objectivity is akin to the co-dependence and co-determination of form and content in Hegel's works that is essential to the circular structure of his epistemology.

²⁰² It is useful here to note that *WL* as the science of all categories of thought and cognition, and as beginning with being, shows through its development and completion that thought and being are structured in the co-determined way that *WL* portrays. We could extend this argument with an account of the *WL* as a treatise of the various categories of cognition, with the "real" as constituting one of these categories. However, I will leave this discussion for a future project.

Explaining what Hegel (or any other thinker) means specifically by “subjective” and “objective” is worth a lengthy study of its own, but for my purposes here (which are to focus on their interdependence and the implications this has for Hegel’s circularity) I will provide a brief account. Hegel’s understanding and use of the notions of subjectivity and objectivity are within the same frame as Kant’s use of these notions – though in the section on critical philosophy in the “Three Positions of Thought with Respect to Objectivity” of the *EL* Hegel criticizes Kant for the inadequacy of his distinction between subjectivity and objectivity *in effect* in his philosophy (*EL* 81-3, §41). This criticism can aid in shedding light on the meaning of these two terms.

Roughly, ‘subjective’ means what is related to the subject, and ‘objective’ means what is related to the object. ‘Objective’ has a sense of universality: it has the connotation of being the same for every subject, regardless of the differences between the subjects. These differences between subjects are attributed to ‘subjectivity’. ‘Subjective’ approaches to an object are approaches which differ based on the subject. Something that is ‘subjective’ is thus based on the interpretation of subjects, whereas something that is ‘objective’ is not.

Hegel identifies that Kant’s approach through Kant’s Copernican revolution resulted in a reevaluation of the meaning and relation of ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’. Since for Kant a subject cognizes objects through categories which operate on *a priori*, i.e. universal, principles, then cognition is objective. This is trivially true in the sense that all cognitions have an object. But in a non-trivial sense, this ascription of objectivity to cognition – that is, to something that happens (for lack of a better word) *in or on the side of the subject* – shows for Hegel the problematic nature of the tendency preceding Kant to separate the subjective and the objective from one another through the ascription of universality and individuality (*EL* 81-3, §41).

In the spirit of having identified the subjective nature of what is deemed by Kant to be objective in Kant's philosophy, in his own philosophy Hegel goes beyond Kant and fully embraces the interrelation and interdependence of subjectivity and objectivity. As Stanley Rosen in *G.W.F. Hegel: An Introduction to the Science of Wisdom* (1974) writes "the [subjective] Idealist fails to account for nature or *objectivity*, whereas the Realist cannot explain *subjectivity*. The problem, then is to overcome the separation between the subject and the object, without dissolving their intrinsic characteristics" (Rosen 48). Kant and Fichte are, for Hegel, subjective idealists, whereas realists would be thinkers like Hume and Locke.

Hegel significantly partitions his *WL* into the two volumes of "Objective Logic" and "Subjective Logic". Given that the *WL* is an elaboration and scientific study of categories of thought, placing both subjectivity and objectivity within this study as the two main organizing headings of the categories of thought indicates Hegel's placement of them both within thought. Furthermore, given that (1) the *WL* is a development and an unfolding of thinking through its own means, (2) all moments contain within them the previous moments as *aufgehoben*, and (3) the volume on objective logic precedes the volume on subjective logic, we can conclude that for Hegel objectivity is retained in subjectivity. Another way to look at this is to say that for Hegel subjectivity always has an element of objectivity within it, and that *subjectivity* (when properly regarded) *is objective*, but at the same time subjectivity is more developed and advanced than objectivity insofar as it comes after objectivity in the *WL*.

Hegel's implication that subjectivity includes objectivity within it, and that subjectivity is objective is along the same trajectory as Hegel's account of Kant's unwitting fall into subjectivity when he meant to ascribe *a priori* objective thought to the cognition of the subject, i.e. ascribe objectivity to the subject (*EL* 81-3, §41). But in Hegel's case, in contrast to Kant's (as

Hegel's critique of Kant in the *EL* makes clear), this envelopment of objectivity within subjectivity is of utmost importance for his "speculative philosophy" (which is non-viciously circular), and Hegel embraces it for being so.

In the Preface to the *PhG* Hegel argues that the distinction between the "Subject and Predicate", which he claims is "the general nature of the judgment or proposition", "is destroyed by the speculative proposition" (*PhG* 38, §61). This statement becomes important for considering the interrelation of subjectivity and objectivity. In the "Perception" section of the *PhG*, Hegel presents the interrelation of the subject and the object in a problem about perception. Consciousness (the subject) views a cube of salt (the object), and struggles to define precisely *what* exactly this object is (*PhG* 67-79, §§111-131). Consciousness considers whether the salt is different from what can be predicated of it (that it is white, cubical, tart, etc.), or is one and the same as these predicates (*PhG* 68, §113). Furthermore, consciousness is perplexed by a predicate *of the* predicates themselves, namely that the predicates are 'many' (Hegel refers to this as "Also") and the cube of salt is 'One': how can the cube of salt be 'one' but also 'many' at the same time (*PhG* 69, §113-4)? This complication with the predicates 'one' and 'many' illustrates the issue with the strict distinction between the subject and the predicate. For the subject of salt is one, and has the many predicated of it, yet it is all of these many predicates as well: it is white and hard and tart, and so on. Furthermore, the same is true for each of these predicates as well. They are one and many, but also one through many: the cube of salt is one by virtue of being many, that is, being white, and *also* hard, and *also* tart, etc. all at once, and vice versa (namely, for instance, the white cube is also tart and hard). To express this, Hegel writes that "the differentiation of the properties, in so far as it is not an indifferent differentiation but is exclusive, each property negating the others, thus falls outside of this simple medium: and the medium,

therefore, is not merely an Also, an indifferent unity, but a *One* as well, a unity which *excludes* an other” (*PhG* 69, §114).

The point at which this exploration of an object (subject of an inquiry, i.e. the cube of salt) and its predicates becomes relevant for our discussion of the interrelation of the subject and the object (and, in turn, subjectivity and objectivity) is when consciousness (our subject) asks whether the predicates of the cube of salt are objective, meaning they belong to the cube irrespective of consciousness’s perception, or if they are subjective, meaning they exist only for consciousness and not as essential parts of the cube of salt itself (*PhG* 70-9, §117-31). What we ought to gather from consciousness’s conundrum in “Perception” is that the cube of salt is neither *solely* subjectively nor *solely* objectively white and hard and tart. Rather, the cube of salt is white and hard and tart *in itself and for us*, that is objectively and subjectively. In fact, there is no possible way to separate this interrelatedness of subjectivity and objectivity. It would be an abstraction to consider the whiteness, hardness, and tartness of the salt separately from the cube of salt itself, or the cube of salt separately from its whiteness, hardness, and tartness.

However, it would be mistaken to think of this subjectivity and objectivity as one and the same or in terms of a correspondence or representation theory. Despite our inability in “Perception” to think of the subjective elements without the objective elements, this interdependence is not mere correspondence or representation. The interdependence is rather characterized by a dialectical movement back and forth between one and the other, indicating that the moment we grasp the truth about the subjective, we find that it has become objective, and vice versa. One side turns into the other as a result of being grasped, but it is not one and the same or corresponding to or representing the other.

There is a dialectical movement already present in the object that takes the object from being *in and for itself* what it is to being *for an other* insofar as it appears as a thing – but these are two distinct logical moments that are each subjective and objective in this dialectically reflecting movement. To express this, Hegel writes: “The Thing is a One, reflected into itself; it is *for itself*, but it is also *for an other*; and moreover, it is an *other* on its own account, just *because* it is for an other. Accordingly, the Thing for itself and *also* for an other, a being that is *doubly* differentiated but *also* a One” (*PhG* 74, §123).

Furthermore, this inner subjectivity and objectivity are also taken up by another subject (in this case, consciousness) in the same dialectical manner such that the movement between subjectivity and objectivity is reflected on the side of the subject as well. Hegel asserts that there is a “conceptual necessity of the experience through which consciousness discovers that the Thing is demolished by the very determinateness that constitutes its essence and its being-for-self” (*PhG* 76, §126). Moreover, “the object is *in one and the same respect the opposite of itself: it is for itself, so far as it is for another, and it is for another, so far as it is for itself*” (*PhG* 76, §128). Not recognizing these dialectical movements and the interdependence that results amounts to approaching the matter at hand abstractly.

Strikingly, when speaking of these abstractions at the end of the “Perception” section, Hegel gives an argument precisely against spinning in a void. He writes

It is ‘sound common sense’ that is the prey of these abstractions, which **spin it round and round in their whirling circle**. When common sense tries to make them true by at one time making itself responsible for their truth, while at another time it calls their deceptiveness a semblance of the unreliability of Things, and separates what is essential from what is necessary to them yet supposedly unessential, holding the former to be their truth as against the latter—when it does this, it does not secure them *their* truth, but convicts *itself* of untruth. (*PhG* 79, §131, bold emphasis mine)

When we artificially separate what is subjective from what is objective, we are in effect approaching each abstractly, and not seeing the dialectical relationship. As Hegel points out, this results in a spinning “round and round in a whirring circle”, in the same way of McDowell’s characterization of frictionlessly spinning in a void. Hegel’s circular system is specifically circular because it eliminates all abstractness, as discussed in detail earlier. As such, it does not spin in a vicious circle.

Hegel’s enmeshing of subjectivity and objectivity is one instance of remedying abstractness in a systemic scale. Another significant instance is the co-development of form and content in Hegel’s works: as I discuss at various points in this dissertation (mainly Chapters 3 and 6), for Hegel the content determines the form and the form determines the content. They develop and unfold together. The content is the specific content of the specific form and vice versa.²⁰³ This co-development and co-determination of form and content means that we do not apply the form one-sidedly to content, that is, we cannot abstract the content or the form from one another. Accordingly, Hegel’s circles are not abstract forms that are independent of reality (and ideality, since reality is just a moment of ideality) and truth – quite the opposite. The co-determination of form and content precisely ensures that Hegel’s circularity is a *true* account of what is real (ideal – insofar as what is really real finds its truth in the ideal) and true.²⁰⁴ Hence, Hegel’s circles are not vicious.

²⁰³ In relation to the above discussion of the *in itself* [*an sich*] and *for itself* [*für es*] we can point out that form and content in *PhG* are the dialectical interplay between *an sich* and *für es*. The content of the *PhG* is that of the structure of cognition independent of any specific consciousness, and the form is determined through this content as inseparable from it.

²⁰⁴ Carlson brings the notions of infinity, ideality, abstractness, objectivity and subjectivity, and form and content together in the following astute statement: “His [Hegel’s] ideal is *objective*. For the reduction of ideality to subjective fancy Hegel reserves the name *subjective idealism*. Subjective idealism {i.e., Kantianism} “concerns only the *form* of a conception according to which a content is mine; in the systematic idealism of subjectivity this form is declared to be the only true exclusive form in opposition to the form of objectivity or reality.” (155-6) Subjective idealism keeps separate the thought of a thing (form) and the thing-in-itself (content). Content is allowed to remain wholly within Finitude. Such philosophizing never gets beyond the Spurious Infinite” (Carlson 102).

Let's return to McDowell's criticism discussed earlier. For, ultimately my argument for why Hegel's circularity is not a frictionless spinning in a void ironically has the same mechanism as McDowell's solution to the problem he perceives in those who fall for the Myth of the Given and those who propose coherentist theories of cognition without what McDowell perceives as an adequate ground. To avoid the frictionless spinning in a void, McDowell suggests the revision of these thinkers' epistemological assumptions. McDowell's proposal is that there is already conceptual content in the content of intuitions. He writes that

In experience one finds oneself saddled with content. One's conceptual capacities have already been brought into play, in the content's being available to one, before one has any choice in the matter. The content is not something one has put together oneself, as when one decides what to say about something. In fact it is precisely because experience is passive, a case of receptivity in operation, that the conception of experience I am recommending can satisfy the craving for a limit to freedom that underlies the Myth of the Given. (McDowell 10)²⁰⁵

For Hegel, in a similar vein, form and content co-determine one another. Conceptual content exists alongside any non-conceptual content as a necessary co-developing factor.

There is a conceptual form to any empirical experience as integral to and inextricable from that experience for Hegel, so much so that the empirical experience itself for Hegel is in effect conceptual.²⁰⁶ In matters of pure thought too, the form of the thought is inextricable from and integral to the contents of the thought.²⁰⁷ Hence, all cognition (empirical and non-empirical) is at once conceptual and material – with form and content intertwined. This connection of form and content in all experience and thought (i.e. in all cognition) attests to the connection Hegel's

²⁰⁵ Later on, he adds: "A genuine escape would require that we avoid the Myth of the Given without renouncing the claim that experience is a rational constraint on thinking. I have suggested that we can do that if we recognize that the world's impressions on our senses are already possessed of conceptual content" (McDowell 18).

²⁰⁶ My discussion of empiricism and empirical knowledge in Chapter 1 addresses this point.

²⁰⁷ He expresses this in the *PhG* with the claim that "[w]hat, therefore, is important in the *study* of *Science*, is that one should take on oneself the strenuous effort of the Notion. This requires attention to the Notion as such, to the simple determinations, e.g. of Being-in-itself, Being-for-itself, Self-identity, etc.; for these are pure self-movements such as could be called souls if their Notion did not designate something higher than soul" (*PhG* 35, §58).

circularity has to truth. For Hegel's system is not developed arbitrarily where the conclusion of the system rests for its justification on one of the principles it is supposed to prove in an arbitrary manner. In Hegel's circular epistemology, rather, the principles and their justification are developed alongside one another as form and content where the justification is completed only when the system as a whole is as well, insofar as the justification depends on the formulation of the system and all its contents in totality. As such, the whole provides the Truth, and there is nothing left behind or in excess. Far from spinning frictionless in a void, Hegel's circles ground themselves through the specific nature of their own form and content.

3. Conclusion

In this chapter I explained the notion of vicious circularity, explained how one may mistakenly charge Hegel's circular epistemology with viciousness, and argued for why this charge would be mistaken. In order to explain vicious circularity, I used McDowell's notion of "frictionless spinning in a void" as a criticism of certain coherentist theories. In order to explain McDowell's criticism, I first presented Sellars's notion of the "Myth of the Given". After briefly explaining how one may charge Hegel's circular epistemology with viciousness, I presented three arguments to show that Hegel's circular epistemology is not vicious, and thus presents a clear alternative to the Münchhausen-Trilemma. In my first argument, I highlighted the importance and the specific characteristics of the beginning point of a circle for Hegel, and showed how this differentiates Hegel's circularity from vicious circularity. In my second argument, I focused on the inextricable relation between Hegel's notions of ideality and circularity and the notion to truth. My claim in this argument was that this relation to truth differentiates Hegel's circularity from vicious circularity. In my third and final argument, I

developed the discussion of truth by explaining the interdependence of subjectivity and objectivity for Hegel.

My arguments in this chapter not only show that Hegel's cognitive strategy of a circular epistemology answers the crisis for truth in the wake of Kant's Copernican revolution I presented in Chapter 1 through the frame of the Münchhausen-trilemma, but they also indicate Hegel's relevance for twentieth-century and contemporary epistemology (especially the discussions surrounding coherentism and foundationalism). Having explained Hegel's notion of circularity and its relation to idealism and infinity in Chapter 4, and having addressed the charges of vicious circularity in this chapter, in Chapter 6 I explore the specific circular nature of the *WL* and the *PhG*.

Chapter VI

Circular Epistemology in *Wissenschaft der Logik*, *Phenomenologie des Geistes*, and the Three Parts of the *Enzyklopaedie*

This final chapter explores the specific formulation of the circular epistemology of some of Hegel's key works, namely, *WL*, *PhG*, and the *Enzyklopaedie*. In Chapters 4 and 5 I gave an overall account of Hegel's circular epistemology. In Chapter 4 this overall account focused on what circularity and a circular epistemology means in general, followed by a detailed exploration of Hegel's notion of infinity, specifically true infinity which Hegel characterizes as a circle. In Chapter 5, I explained how one could mistakenly attribute viciousness to Hegel's circular epistemology, then I presented several arguments to counter this false attribution. I thereby showed that Hegel's circular epistemology is a valid alternative to the skeptical worry I presented in Chapter 1 and the discussions in and around Kant's philosophy I presented in Chapter 2.

As the final chapter in this dissertation, the discussion here builds on the previous five chapters and serves to present the details in Hegel's *WL*, *PhG*, and *Enzyklopaedie*. Though significantly more work can be done in analyzing the circular epistemology in these works than a single dissertation chapter could provide, here I provide the basis of an analysis of the circular epistemology as exemplified in these works. To that end, I discuss *WL*, *PhG*, and *Enzyklopaedie* here, respectively.

1. *Wissenschaft der Logik*

I discussed in Chapter 4 how Hegel presents the first conception of a circular epistemology in his early work *Differenzschrift*. Now, let's fast forward to Hegel's mature work, *WL*, in order to begin the analysis in this chapter with the fully developed form of his circular epistemology. Here, Hegel is still committed to a circular epistemology, which shows that circularity played indeed an important role for him throughout his career. In *WL*, Hegel returns to Reinhold, but this time he has a different view of Reinhold's philosophy. Through a discussion of Reinhold, we see the continued commitment Hegel has to circularity despite a change in his position on Reinhold.

Hegel's first discussion of circularity in the *WL* is in the preliminary section called "With What Must the Science Begin?" of the Doctrine of Being. The introduction of the notion of circularity is here again in the context of a discussion of Reinhold's philosophy, though he has a decisively different tone about Reinhold now. He states that a discussion and understanding of Reinhold's view will give insight into the progression of the logic of *WL* (*WL* 70). Hegel begins this discussion by first remarking that "the thought that philosophy can only begin with a *hypothetical* and *problematical* truth and therefore philosophizing can at first be only a quest" stems from "the insight that absolute truth must be a result" and that "a result presupposes a prior truth" (*WL* 70). Hegel is using the language of a "hypothetical" beginning which he is taking from Reinhold. This is a remarkable development because Hegel had criticized in the *Differenzschrift* Reinhold's approach to the beginning point of a philosophical system (as I showed above).²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ It would be worthwhile to explore the exact reason for this change in a future project.

Hegel notes that Reinhold “much stressed” this view of beginning with a “*hypothetical* and *problematical* truth” and thereby making philosophy a quest (*WL* 70). However, instead of criticizing Reinhold harshly as he did in the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel starts by stating that we must give Reinhold “credit for the genuine interest on which [his later philosophical work] is based, an interest which concerns the speculative nature of the philosophical *beginning*” (*ibid.*). Hegel reevaluates Reinhold’s position, suggesting it to be more similar to his own, and adopts it as a way of explaining his system in *WL*.

Hegel presents the circular pattern for a philosophical science and knowledge which he wants to defend in the *WL* by giving a renewed reading of Reinhold. In contrast to his reading of Reinhold in the *Differenzschrift*, in *WL* Hegel summarizes Reinhold’s position as follows: progress in philosophy is marked by starting with a hypothetical beginning, and then after making enough progress, coming back to the beginning to affirm it with the knowledge that has been gained through the progress, thereby being able to say “that what we began with is not something merely arbitrarily assumed but is in fact the *truth*, and also the *primary truth*” (*WL* 70-71).

What counts as progress here is development in philosophical investigation, and this depends on the nature of the question of the investigation. The more progress we make, the further back we go to the first point. This means that the further we progress forward the closer we will be to the justification of the initial point (at least after the first half of the circle’s circumference). Let me explain. As discussed earlier, though Hegel does not mention it in the *WL*, the center of the circle is the problem around which the system is developed as a circle. How far one moves along the circumference of a circle changes the distance at which one is away from the beginning point. In the case of a straight line, the further one goes, the farther away

from the beginning point one gets. In a circle however, this is not the case. After going halfway through the circumference, the more progress one makes the closer one is to the point at which one began. One could ask which exact point in the progression of the text is the halfway point in the progression, but this is not the point. Rather the point is that we are progressing along a curved line which remains equidistant from a certain point which is the problem (the center). The center is the problem insofar as it is in the focal point of the whole consideration or the developing theory (the circle).

Identifying the center point in each circle through a careful analysis is beyond my scope here for limitations of space. However, we can provisionally claim the following as the center points. The *PhG* centers on the phenomenal experience of the object of consciousness and the circumference of the circle is the path of *Bildung*. The *Logic* (*WL* and *EL*) centers on the Idea and the circumference is the path that Logic takes while it scientifically renders cognition [*Erkenntnis*] in its elements of Being [*Sein*], Essence [*Wesem*], and Concept [*Begriff*]. In the *Philosophy of Nature*, the center is Nature and the circumference is the exploration through reason and with the guidance of the Idea of the “immediate existence” of “God” (*Enzyklopaedie* 446, §376, *Zusatz*) in Nature through Mechanics, Physics, and Organics. As for the *Philosophy of Geist*, the center is *Geist*, and the circumference is the development of the various determinations of *Geist* as subjective, objective, and absolute.

Furthermore, I think we could be granted a certain amount of vagueness as to where exactly the halfway point of the circumference is in the progression. For, Hegel does not state that the circle is a *perfect* circle, but rather that we progress along a circle. I can walk around “in a circle” without that circle having to be perfect. Thus, I am inclined to think that Hegel is less concerned about the geometric precision than he is about the completion of a circular structure. If

we require that Hegel's model of a circle is a *perfect* circle, then the exact distance of each point in the circle from the center would be at stake, when that is not necessarily the concern here.²⁰⁹ My concern, rather, is that there is a process of development in the form of a circle focusing on a certain philosophical problem. That the various parts of the process relate to the problem in a similar and not drastically (i.e. irreconcilably) divergent way from one another along a circular path.

The circular structure of the progression takes shape through the progression constantly keeping an (roughly) equal distance from the center: the progression of the philosophical work is always related to the philosophical problem that the system as a whole is set out to address. In going along the trajectory of a curved line in this manner, the system forms a circle around the problem – it grasps the issue. To form a complete whole in the form of a curved line around a center point, at some point the end of the line will meet the beginning point. Consequently, the first point will thereby be the last.

The beginning point (which was hypothetical to begin with) will be affirmed at the end as the beginning point, which will then only at the last point be shown to be true, i.e. justified. It will be justified alongside the rest of the system, as a part of the whole. As discussed in Chapter 3, the True is the whole, and we can speak of justification only within the context of a completed system. Hegel writes that “the advance is a *retreat into the ground* [*Rückgang in der Grund*], to what is *primary* and *true*, on which it depends and, in fact, from which it originates, that with which the beginning is made” (*WL* 71; Suhrkamp 70). Hegel was critical of the “grounding tendency” in the *Differenzschrift*. However, we see him adopting the “ground” language here.

²⁰⁹ At the very least, this is not my concern in this dissertation.

Through his circular epistemology, Hegel is redefining “ground” to refer to the whole. The whole circle justifies and grounds itself through its completion.

Hegel’s description of the advance as a “retreat into the ground” has a specific significance for the *WL*. The beginning of *WL* is “*Being, pure being*, without any further determination” (*WL* 82; Suhrkamp 82). There is not much more that can be said about being, pure being, because it is indeterminate and immediate, without any diversity within itself, and “is also not unequal relatively to an other” (*ibid.*). Starting from that moment, however, the logic unfolds this being by determining and mediating it through the determinations and mediations that are generated from it. In this sense, “being, pure being” already contains in itself all of the determinations and mediations that we come to find in the rest of the science of logic (even though at this beginning point these various determinations are not yet present in their various determined and mediated states we come to find them in their relative places in the science – in fact, as I discuss below, pure being is empty and devoid of all content). Consequently, progressing through the development of the science of logic means diving deeper into *being* to determine and mediate it further and further – “the advance is a *retreat into the ground*” (*WL* 71; Suhrkamp 70).

Furthermore, Hegel writes that “[t]he essential requirement for the science of logic is not so much that the beginning be a pure immediacy, but rather that the whole of the science be within itself a circle in which the first is also the last and the last is also the first” and that “it is equally necessary to consider as *result* that into which the movement returns as into its *ground*” (*WL* 71; Suhrkamp 70). In what sense is the first also the last and the last also the first in the *WL*? The ground is also the result because the whole is the ground and the justification. Insofar as being, pure being *is* implicitly the whole logic in its undetermined and immediate form, we

already have the whole, in principle, at the beginning. But there is another sense in which the first is the last and the last is the first: *absolute idea* with which the science of logic is completed, Hegel claims, is *being*: “Idea alone is *being*, imperishable *life*, *self-knowing truth*, and is *all truth*” (WL 824).

Of course Idea and Being are *equal* to one another in a certain qualified sense. Hegel writes at the beginning of the *WL* that Being, “[i]n its indeterminate immediacy ... is equal only to itself” (WL 82; Suhrkamp 82). Fast forwarding to the end of the *WL*, he writes that logic,

in the absolute Idea, has withdrawn into that same simple unity which its beginning is; the pure immediacy of being in which at first every determination appears to be extinguished or removed by abstraction, is the Idea that has reached through mediation, that is, through the sublation of mediation, a likeness correspondent to itself. The method is the pure Notion that relates itself only to itself; it is therefore the *simple self-relation* that is *being*. (WL 842)

I argue that we should take Hegel at his word when he writes that the end returns to the beginning and that the circle is completed. The task remains to explain how exactly this is the case.

When Hegel writes that being is equal only to itself, this harkens back to Fichte’s first principle (which is that of identity) where $A=A^{210}$ which then the self posits itself as $I=I$ (as I explained in Chapter 2) but also foreshadows the initial movement of the Doctrine of Essence which begins with Identity as identical with itself. In both Fichte’s first principle and identity in the Doctrine of Essence there is difference implicit in identity that has yet to emerge. Fichte’s second principle, accordingly, is difference that emerges from within the first principle itself. And in the Doctrine of Essence, identity unfolds into difference through the very development

²¹⁰ Fichte and Hegel are both using the notion of ‘equality’ interchangeably with ‘identity’. Hegel is concerned with qualitative and not numerical identity (see fn212).

that identity is identical with itself, and thereby engendering an inner difference.²¹¹ In both cases the internal difference that emerges from within identity is difference that is based on identity.²¹²

The self-identity of Being generates (in our reflection²¹³ of it through engaging in the science of logic) Nothing by intuiting *itself*: “There is *nothing* to be intuited in it [Being]. ... Being, the indeterminate immediate, is in fact *nothing*, and neither more nor less than *nothing*” (*WL* 82; Suhrkamp 82-3). Through this identity with itself and intuiting itself, Being begins to unfold the science of logic. In fact, Nahum Brown argues in *Hegel on Possibility: Dialectics, Contradiction, and Modality* that although “Being is so simple that it does not even warrant a full sentence, as if the image associated with being were prior to the associations of the syntax of a full sentence”, nevertheless ““Without further determination” suggests that the positing of “being, pure being” is itself the first mark of determinateness. And yet being is otherwise truly indeterminate, as Hegel describes, so then it cannot at the same time be one-sidedly indeterminate, since if it were, it would have determinate being over against it, and this would make indeterminacy determinate” (Brown 39). Through this first mark of determinateness, the

²¹¹ Longuenesse writes of this identity and difference in *Essence* the following: “Behind Hegel’s score-settling with traditional logic, what is really at stake is thus not so much logic itself as the implicit or explicit metaphysics it conveys. ... Consider ... identity. A phrase such as “Everything is identical to itself” is grammatically constructed in such a way that it seems to express not a principle of thinking, but a quality of entities, of “everything.” Now the reason it is possible to assert identity in this way, in the form of a universal proposition, is precisely that it *is not* a determination of being. In fact, no traditional ontological determination has ever given rise to such a universal proposition. ... the reason a proposition like “everything is identical to itself” possesses meaning and can be articulated without disappearing into another called upon to complete it, is that it does not, in fact, express a determination of an entity, but a “determination of reflection,” that is, a requirement of thought: to characterize an object is to ascribe to it what makes it identical to itself, what is “stable” within it” (*Hegel’s Critique* 44).

²¹² It is useful to distinguish here between qualitative and numerical identity. Hegel means qualitative identity when he writes about identity here. Robert Pippin makes this case in *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfactions of Consciousness*: 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)” (Pippin 221).

²¹³ Longuenesse discusses this idea (*Hegel’s Critique* 45).

logic starts to unfold. The moment we say “being, pure being”, we are already in the logic and doing the science of logic by this very utterance.

The beginning of the logic holds the rest of the logic implicitly within it. Being has no determinations and no differentiation within it, nor is it different to anything outside itself. Nevertheless, being is everything. Brown explains the relation of ‘being’ and ‘everything’ as follows: “Hegel ... establishes being as comprehensive in the sense that everything and anything has being. If it were equal to itself *but not also equal to others*, something other than being would stand against being, as its opposite and determination. But since being has no further determination, there is nothing other than being. Since everything has being, being contains everything within it” (Brown 40).

It is no surprise then that Hegel declares at the end of the science of logic as he concludes his discussion of absolute idea that we have reached back to the beginning, to being. When the science of logic fully unfolds, since it is the totality of thought and thought includes all being in the form of logic (as discussed in detail in Chapter 3), the absolute Idea becomes a return to being in its undetermined and immediate totality, *being, pure being*. As quoted above, Hegel writes that the logic “in the absolute Idea, has withdrawn into that same simple unity which its beginning is” (*WL* 842). But let’s trace the steps of how absolute Idea gets to this point.

When absolute Idea first comes into view in the *WL*, Hegel writes that it is “the rational Notion that in its reality meets only with itself” and is “the return to *life*” (*WL* 824). Since it is being at its highest determination and mediation, it “contains within itself the highest degree of opposition” (*ibid.*). Furthermore,

The Notion is not merely *soul*, but free subjective Notion that is for itself and therefore possesses *personality* – the practical, objective Notion determined in and for itself which,

as person, is impenetrable atomic subjectivity – but which, none the less, is not exclusive individuality, but explicitly *universality* and *cognition*, and in its other has *its own* objectivity for its object. All else is error, confusion, opinion, endeavour, caprice and transitoriness; the absolute Idea alone is *being*, imperishable *life*, *self-knowing truth*, and is *all truth*. (ibid.)

Absolute Idea, then, is “self-knowing truth” and also “cognition”. These statements make clear that Hegel has epistemological intentions in the *WL*. The point at which being is the most determined and mediated is also the point at which being is self-*knowing* and *cognizing*. The absolute Idea as such is “the sole subject matter and content of philosophy” (ibid.). Furthermore, “it contains *all* determinateness within it, and its essential nature is to return to itself through its self-determination” (ibid.). This language of “self-knowing”, “self-determination”, and “return[ing] to itself” are all related to the closing of the epistemic circle with Idea returning to being.

When speaking of the absolute Idea as the “sole subject matter and content of philosophy” it would not be unusual for Hegel to consider the notion of method. As I discussed in Chapter 3 and will do so more below, for Hegel form and content or subject matter of philosophy ought to be integrated and cannot be separated from one another. Form is the form of specific content matter, and specific content matter has a specific form through which it unfolds. Method is the integration of form and content in this manner. As David Gray Carlson writes in *A Commentary on Hegel’s Science of Logic* “The point is that method *cannot stand apart from content*. Otherwise, method is dogma, and so are its products. What must occur is a complete merger of substance and procedure - of content and method” (Carlson 595).

The topic of method plays an important role in Hegel's exposition of absolute Idea.²¹⁴ He writes in the first sentence of the chapter on Absolute Idea that "[t]he absolute Idea has shown itself to be the identity of the theoretical and the practical Idea" and that "[e]ach of these by itself is still one-sided" (WL 824). For absolute Idea to reach its non-abstract and completed stage, that is, for it to move beyond this one-sided separation (the separation into theoretical and practical Idea), it needs to consider method: "what remains to be considered here is not a content as such, but the universal aspect of its form—that is, the *method*" (WL 825). We are considering Idea as Method here.

Method, Hegel claims, "may appear at first as the mere *manner* peculiar to the process of cognition, and as a matter of fact it has the nature of such" (WL 825). But it "is not merely a modality of *being determined in and for itself*" (ibid.). Rather, it is "posited as determined by the *Notion*", that is, it is determined through the dialectical movement and progression of the logic (ibid.). Furthermore, "what constitute the method are the determinations of the Notion itself and their relations" (WL 827). If one assumes that content is simply "given" to method, then method remains "a merely *external form*" (WL 825-6). In contrast, the method is guided by the Notion of the science of logic with "its entire course, in which all possible shapes of a given content and of objects came up for consideration" (WL 826).

Hegel emphasizes his stance against foundations and foundationalism here in this discussion that will culminate in his reaffirmation of the circular character of his work and

²¹⁴ Hegel writes: "the absolute Idea itself has for its content merely this, that the form determination is its own completed totality, the pure Notion. Now the determinateness of the Idea and the entire course followed by this determinateness has constituted the subject matter of the science of logic, from which course the absolute Idea itself has issued into *an existence of its own*; but the nature of this its existence has shown itself to be this, that determinateness does not have the shape of a *content*, but exists wholly as *form*, and that accordingly the Idea is the absolutely *universal Idea*. Therefore what remains to be considered here is not a content as such, but the universal aspect of its form—that is, the *method*" (WL 825).

epistemology. He writes that “not merely was it impossible for a given object to be the *foundation* to which the absolute form stood in a merely external and contingent relationship but that, on the contrary, the absolute form has proved itself to be *the absolute foundation and ultimate truth*” (WL 826, my emphases). By claiming the impossibility of any individual given object to be the foundation, he is standing against setting a certain point as a foundation. Instead, “absolute form” which is the absolute Idea in the shape of Method that is posited as determined by the Notion is the “absolute foundation and ultimate truth”. This claim amounts to nothing other than that the whole science of logic founds and grounds itself. As such, it is also the ultimate truth.

The Notion, as the thread that runs through the whole science of logic, amounts to an account of the whole. Hegel writes that “the *Notion is everything*, and its movement is the *universal absolute activity*, the self-determining and self-realizing movement” (WL 826). Hegel at this point also uses the terms “knowledge” and “cognition” rather prominently which again indicates the epistemological nature of the *WL*. Hegel clearly and explicitly connects the Notion and method with cognition and knowledge. He writes “[f]rom this course the method has emerged as the *self-knowing Notion that has itself*, as the absolute, both subjective and objective, *for its subject matter*, consequently as the pure correspondence of the Notion and its reality, as a concrete existence that is the Notion itself” (ibid.). Moreover, “according to the universality of the Idea, [method] is both the manner peculiar to cognition, to the *subjectively* self-knowing Notion, and also the *objective* manner, or rather the *substantiality* ... It is therefore ... sole *urge* to find and cognize *itself by means of itself in everything*.” (ibid.).²¹⁵

²¹⁵ Carlson goes further to connect the epistemological language here to Hegel’s notion of “absolute knowing” which Hegel uses in the *PhG*. He writes: “Yet Absolute Idea is not the final step of the Logic. Absolute Idea must develop its moments of immediacy and mediation. When this is accomplished, we reach Absolute Knowing—the

Hegel writes that “in true cognition”, referring to the absolute Idea, “the method is not merely an aggregate of certain determinations, but the Notion that is determined in and for itself” (*WL* 827). The Notion is determined, and thus has determinations. Each of these determinations are the determinations of Being (and Essence and Notion) which the science of logic has up until this moment developed and explored. We began with Being, and through its determinations arrived at Essence at which point we saw that Being is actually Essence. Thus we started to develop the determinations of Essence as the truth of Being. Then when we reached the Notion, we saw in turn that the truth of Essence is in fact the Notion, and hence the truth of Being as well. Accordingly, the development of Being from within itself has led to the Notion. Thereby, all of the determinations of Being throughout the *WL* are also determinations of the Notion. Hegel writes “what constitute the method are the determinations of the Notion itself and their relations” (*ibid.*).

The first of these determinations, “the *beginning*. ... is of an extremely simple nature. Because it is the beginning, its content is an immediate, but an immediate that has the significance and form of *abstract universality*” (*ibid.*). The pure immediacy of the beginning was indeterminate and immediate only through abstraction, and we see this in retrospect – not from the perspective we had at the beginning when we were at Being. As quoted earlier, Hegel writes that the beginning does not have to be a pure immediacy. We see here that though “being, pure being” was an immediacy, this was through an abstraction that comes to light only later.

phrase that terminates the *Phenomenology* and that initiates the introductory materials as the very last step (and presupposition) of the entire *SL*. Hegel does not use the phrase as such in his final chapter, but he does refer to the “*self-knowing Notion that has itself... for its subject matter*” (826). Self-knowing Notion is also generally referred to as Method” (Carlson 594).

The Idea, as the Notion that returns to the beginning to go through its own determinations throughout the science of logic is the method of the circular epistemology. Hegel calls this moment “true cognition” (as quoted above) (*WL* 827). Furthermore, at this point he is giving an account of the whole *WL*. This begins with his statement that “what constitute the method are the determinations of the Notion itself and their relations, which we have now to consider in their significance as determinations of the method. In doing so we must first begin with the *beginning*” (ibid.). The ascription of the epistemic language of “true cognition” to the whole account of the science of logic in the exposition of the Notion as Method shows us that Hegel is giving us an *account of knowledge*, i.e. an epistemology. Furthermore, at this point at the end of the *WL* he also explains the circularity of this whole account.

Hegel writes that method “expands itself into a *system*” (*WL* 838). Since we saw that the beginning point of Being was indeterminate and immediate only by abstraction, that is, “the beginning, since it is itself a determinate relatively to the determinateness of the result, shall be taken not as an immediate but as something mediated and deduced” (*WL* 839). Hegel claims that this “may appear as the demand for an infinite *retrogression* in proof and deduction” and also for an advance that “equally rolls *onwards* to infinity” (ibid.). This consideration of an infinite regress and the potential danger of falling into one in the setting up of the system harkens back to my discussion of the Münchhausen-trilemma in Chapter 1.

The Münchhausen-trilemma presents infinite regress, foundationalism, and vicious circularity as the only three cognitive strategies for truth and rejects all of them. Hegel also rejects foundationalism (as discussed earlier) and here he rejects infinite regress as a legitimate cognitive strategy. (It remains to be shown that Hegel’s circularity is not vicious, but more on this below). Hegel rejects an infinite regress as a legitimate cognitive strategy by referring to his

earlier discussion of infinity (*WL* 137-157), which I also discussed earlier in this chapter. He writes that “[i]t has been shown a number of times that the infinite progress as such belongs to reflection that is without the Notion; the absolute method, which has the Notion for its soul and content, cannot lead into that” (*WL* 839).

In contrast to an infinite regress (which regresses infinitely in search of a foundation) or an infinite progress (which starts from a purported foundation), Hegel’s system starts from a hypothetical beginning and progresses until it reaches back to the hypothetical beginning to affirm it with the totality of the progress of the system. This is akin to what Hegel calls “true or genuine infinite” (*WL* 137, 149). He writes “just as the absence of content in the above beginnings [that is, *being, essence, and universality*] does not make them absolute beginnings, so too it is not the content as such that could lead the method into the infinite progress forwards or backwards” (*WL* 840).

There are two pertinent aspects to how the beginnings that are absent of content become, through the movement of the method, determinate and seal the whole of the system by having the end return to them. One of these aspects is that “the *determinateness* which the method creates for itself in its result is the moment by means of which the method is self-mediation and converts *the immediate beginning into something mediated*”, that is, the result of the method is the moment in which the method mediates itself and thereby the immediate beginning also becomes mediated along with the whole (*WL* 840). The second aspect, in contrast to this first one is that “it is through the determinateness that this mediation of the method runs its course”, meaning, the determination in and of the movement brings the mediation of the method to its result (*ibid.*). According to this second aspect, Hegel explains, the mediation of the method “returns *through a content* as through an apparent *other* of itself to its beginning in such a

manner that not only does it restore that beginning-as a *determinate* beginning however-but the result is no less the sublated determinateness, and so too the restoration of the first immediacy in which it began” (ibid.). Crucially, “it accomplishes [this] as a *system of totality*” (ibid.).

The logic begins with a hypothetical immediate and undetermined beginning and advances to finally accomplish a system of totality. Hegel writes “this advance is determined as beginning from simple determinatenesses, the succeeding ones becoming ever *richer and more concrete*. For the result contains its beginning and its course has enriched it by a fresh determinateness” (WL 840). Furthermore, “[t]his *expansion* may be regarded as the moment of content, and in the whole as the first premiss,” supporting my above claim that the first moment contains in it the whole (ibid.). Consequently, as Hegel wrote earlier, the advance is a retreat into the ground – a retreat into the first point as well as the whole which constitutes the ground when the system is complete. He explains “[e]ach new stage of *forthgoing*, that is, of *further determination*, is also a withdrawal inwards, and the greater *extension* is equally a *higher intensity*” (WL 840-1) and

The highest, most concentrated point *embraces and holds everything within itself*, because it makes itself the supremely free-the simplicity which is the first immediacy and universality. ... It is in this manner that each step of the *advance* in the process of further determination, while getting further away from the indeterminate beginning is also *getting back nearer* to it, and that therefore, what at first sight may appear to be different, the retrogressive grounding of the beginning, and the *progressive further determining* of it, coincide and are the same. The method, which thus **winds itself into a circle**, cannot anticipate in a development in time that the beginning is, as such, already something derived; it is sufficient for the beginning in its immediacy that it is simple universality. In being that, it has its complete condition; and there is no need to deprecate the fact that it may only be accepted *provisionally* and *hypothetically*. Whatever objections to it might be raised—say, the limitations of human knowledge, the need to examine critically the instrument of cognition before starting to deal with the subject matter—are themselves *presuppositions*, which as *concrete determinations* involve the demand for their mediation and proof. Since therefore they possess no formal advantage over the *beginning* with the subject matter against which they protest, but on the contrary themselves require deduction on account of their more concrete content, their claim to

prior consideration must be treated as an empty presumption. (*WL* 841, bold emphasis mine)

As can be seen in this passage, Hegel argues that the system's development is a regression as well as a progression at the same time. The advance is also a retreat. The initial point becomes a ground through the same gesture of the whole constituting the ground and thereby the justification. As I argued in Chapter 1, Hegel redefines the term "ground" in the form of a criticism of foundationalist systems and tendencies, or approaches that see the initial point as the sole ground upon which a system is built in a linearly progressive manner (e.g. those of Reinhold and Schelling, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2).

Given that Hegel's redefinition of the term "ground" is a criticism of linear epistemologies, it is not a surprise that when he writes of the grounding of his own system he highlights the circular character of his system. I argued in Chapter 3 is chiefly epistemological, hence this circularity is epistemological as well. The "highest" point of the system "*embraces and holds everything within itself*" in the same way that Being, in its utmost simplicity, indeterminacy and immediacy also did (*WL* 841). In this manner of having explicated all the determinacies of Being to their utmost highest mediation such that the development reached so far back down into itself, the method at the end of the science of logic thus "winds itself into a circle" (*ibid.*).

Against the linear cognitive strategies, as it begins it does not assert the beginning point absolutely, but only hypothetically and provisionally. And surely enough, when we return to this beginning point at the end of the system we see that, as quoted above, "[t]he method, which thus winds itself into a circle, cannot anticipate in a development in time that the beginning is, as such, already something derived" (*WL* 841). The beginning is immediate and simple and

universal, which Hegel states is sufficient for the beginning. It must be hypothetical and provisional because any objection that may be raised to this hypotheticality and provisionality would include presuppositions about what the beginning point ought to be and would already give it “concrete determinations” (ibid.). We would then have to “mediate” and “prove” (i.e. justify) the need for these concrete determinations ahead of the beginning point, that is, ahead of the science itself. Before the science, and any objections that may be raised to the specific hypothetical beginning point “possess no formal advantage over the *beginning* with the subject matter against which they protest, but on the contrary themselves require deduction on account of their more concrete content, their claim to prior consideration must be treated as an empty presumption” (ibid.).

Hegel claims that it would be impatient to “[insist] *merely* on getting beyond the *determinate*” (WL 841) which would result in “ha[ving] before it as cognition nothing but the empty negative, the abstract infinite; in other words, a *presumed* absolute, that is presumed because it is not *posited*, not *grasped*” (WL 842). It can be “grasped” only “through the *mediation* of cognition” which takes place through the process of the science of logic, “in the extended course of the process and in the conclusion” (ibid.).

We reach the immediacy and indeterminateness we hypothesized at the beginning of the logic when we began with Being only at the end of the logic. Thereby the end returns to the beginning and completes the circle:

By virtue of the nature of the method just indicated, the science exhibits itself as a *circle* returning upon itself, the end being wound back into the beginning, the simple ground, by the mediation; this circle is moreover a *circle of circles*, for each individual member is ensouled by the method is reflected into itself, so that in returning into the beginning it is at the same time the beginning of a new member. ... [T]he pure immediacy of being in which at first every determination appears to be extinguished or removed by abstraction, is the Idea that has reached through mediation, that is, through the sublation of mediation,

a likeness correspondent to itself. The method is the pure Notion that relates itself only to itself; it is therefore the *simple self-relation* that is *being*. But now it is also *fulfilled being*, the *Notion that comprehends* itself, being as the *concrete* and also absolutely *intensive* totality. In conclusion, there remains only this to be said about this Idea, that in it, first, the *science of logic* has grasped its own Notion. (*WL* 842)

The last point affirms the first point by being a return to this first point. The whole process which started with a hypothetical beginning ends with a restatement of this hypothetical beginning.

However, when the beginning point is stated at the end, it is no longer hypothetical, because the process of reaching the end shows a development of justification. Therefore, the fact that the end point reaches back to the beginning point serves to justify the beginning point in the manner described.

The end or the last point, which is a return to the first, is necessary as much as the first point, which becomes necessary through the last point. Their necessity is interdependent within a circular justification. Though the last point is a return to the first, the last point does not inherit the hypotheticality of the first point but rather elucidates the nature of the first point (as extrapolated and shown above) better than we could at the beginning of the logic. Hegel writes “because it is the *result* which appears as the absolute ground, this progress is knowing is not something provisional, or problematical and hypothetical; it must be determined by the nature of the subject matter itself and its content” (*WL* 72). Thus, at the end of the logic, by returning to the beginning as the result, the logic affirms the beginning as no longer hypothetical, but rather “subsequently shown to have been properly made the beginning” (*ibid.*).

The last point has the moments of this investigation *aufgehoben* in it. Hegel writes that “it is equally necessary to consider as *result* that into which the movement returns as into its *ground*” (*WL* 71; Suhrkamp 70). The first point, through the necessity of the end point, therefore becomes the ground and at the same time the result. Hegel writes “the beginning of philosophy is

the foundation which is present and preserved throughout the entire subsequent development, remaining completely immanent in its further determinations” (ibid.). The end result, which is “the true”, validates the whole process and the beginning point.

However, the beginning point is “neither an arbitrary and merely provisional [*Provisorisches*] assumption, nor is it something which appears to be arbitrarily [*problematisches*] and tentatively [*hypothetisches*] presupposed” (*WL* 72). The beginning point has to be completely undetermined and immediate in order to be absolutely anywhere: this can only be *being, pure being* (I explain this in more detail below). The “ground, the reason” of why the beginning point is what it is is given in the body of the progression (ibid.).

The beginning, Hegel remarks, as a result of this circular process of affirming the beginning through the truth of the end, “loses the one-sidedness... it becomes something mediated, and hence the line of the scientific advance becomes a *circle*” (*WL* 71-72; Suhrkamp 71). In the *Philosophy of Nature* Hegel contends that a circle, which is made of a curved line, thereby is “in [itself] at once in two dimensions” (*Enzyklopaedie* §256). Therefore, insofar as the process of justifying knowledge is circular, each instance of justification would not be “one-sided” and “abstract”. Hegel regularly calls the beginning point of each stage in the *WL* and *PhG* “abstract” and “one-sided”. However, this state of being “one-sided” is remedied when we progress through the stage by acquiring and developing knowledge. He begins with something that is “abstract” and “one-sided” only to reveal that it has other dimensions that are not taken into consideration at the outset. However, through dialectical progression, we find that the one-sided notion was not a complete picture. We see that its *truth* is found through dialectic, through seeing the other “side” as well, which adds another dimension to the beginning point as a result of having returned to it in a circular fashion.

Hegel's dialectic is the way in which his works unfold. In a dialectical progression, one moment transitions into the next as a result of the internal contradictions of the current moment. The investigation begins with an "abstract" and "one-sided" notion. Upon reflection, the "abstract" and "one-sided" quality of this beginning is revealed because the reflection shows the other side to the consideration. As a result of this disclosure of internal contradiction, the investigation moves onto the next moment.

In *PhG*, we see that consciousness begins with a hypothetical immediacy. At the end of its journey (or investigation) consciousness finds the truth in its beginning point when it reaches "absolute knowing". Hegel makes a remark about this in his rereading of Reinhold in *WL* as mentioned earlier. He writes "consciousness on its onward path from the immediacy with which it began is led back to absolute knowledge as its innermost truth" (*WL* 71; Suhrkamp 70). This last point is also its beginning, which first "appeared as an immediacy" (*ibid.*). "Absolute knowing" is the point at which consciousness's Notion²¹⁶ matches its object. It is "absolute" because it is true knowledge. It is not in internal contradiction, for it is knowledge that matches its object (and also refers back to the absolute beginning of *PhG* where there is not yet a distinction between Notion and object in the immediacy). In *WL* however, there is no need for a pure immediacy in the beginning: "[t]he essential requirement for the science of logic is not so much that the beginning be a pure immediacy, but rather that the whole of the science be within itself *a circle* in which the first is also the last and the last is also the first" (*ibid.*, emphasis mine).

²¹⁶ A.V. Miller translates "*Begriff*" as "Notion". It would be better translated as "Concept". For the purposes of consistency I use "Notion" here for "*Begriff*".

Being, at the beginning of the *WL* is seen as immediate and undetermined (yet we see at the end of the logic that this was not the case, as I explained earlier) because we cannot begin with presuppositions. If we were to see being as mediated and determinate, then we would already be presupposing the specific mediation and determinacy we would see being as having. Nahum Brown writes the following about the presuppositionless nature of the beginning:

When Hegel writes “[being is] equal only to itself, and yet it is not unequal in contrast to others,” he complicates what we might normally think of as “indeterminate.” Being is at first indeterminate, but not yet even in the one-sided, exclusionary sense of not being determinate, as if what is determinate were something other than being. Being is, instead, an “indeterminate immediacy” that also has to include determinate being as well. Thus makes indeterminacy prior and completely inclusive, and makes being all comprehensive and presuppositionless. (Brown 39-40)

Being with which the science of logic begins, thus is not even determined enough to be one-sidedly indeterminate. It precedes even the notions of determining and being indeterminate, and is indeterminate in this way. Thus, it is “an indeterminate immediacy”, as Brown quotes, but one which in principle contains all determinacy immediately. And consequently, it “makes indeterminacy prior and completely inclusive, and makes being all comprehensive and presuppositionless” (Brown 40). Let’s explore the presuppositionlessness of being further.

Hegel argues that the science of logic *must* begin with being. He writes

Thus the *ground*, the *reason*, why the beginning is made with pure being in the pure science [of logic] is directly given in the science itself. This pure being is the unity into which pure knowing withdraws, or, if this itself is still to be distinguished as form from its unity, then being is also the content of pure knowing. It is when taken in this way that this *pure being*, this absolute immediacy has equally the character of something absolutely mediated. But it is equally essential that it be taken only in the one-sided character in which it is pure immediacy, *precisely because* here it is the beginning. If it were not this pure indeterminateness, if it were determinate, it would have been taken as something mediated, something already carried a stage further: what is determinate implies an other to a first. Therefore, it lies in the *very nature of a beginning* that it must be being and nothing else. To enter into philosophy, therefore, calls for no other preparations, no further reflections or points of connection. (*WL* 72, bold emphasis mine)

Anything other than pure being would already be determined and thus presupposing something. Being, pure being without any further determination, however, is a beginning that has no presuppositions about being as a whole, because there are no determinations to it. Being is a totality that is everything at once. Hence, the science of logic, if it is to begin without presupposing any prior moves, must begin with pure being.

He further writes that “[w]e cannot really extract any further determination or *positive* content for the beginning from the fact that it is the beginning of philosophy” (*WL* 72). As the beginning, there can be nothing more we can say about being before we begin *doing* the philosophy. The moment we say anything more about being, that is, determine being in any way, we have already begun philosophy and are beyond the beginning point.

Since the *WL* begins without presuppositions, it begins without an external foundation that is to legitimize the moves that happen once the science starts its course. Not only does the science of logic not have any external foundations, it is also against them in principle. The Introduction of Hegel’s *WL* displays Hegel’s views against foundations. Hegel holds an anti-foundationalist stance in two ways: (i) his work (*WL*) does not have or need a foundation and its Introduction is not meant as a foundation for what is done in the rest of the work, and (ii) logic (as “form”) is not separate from and a foundation of its “content” (or its “matter”). Not only does Hegel argue that foundations should be irrelevant to the science of logic and philosophy in general in their justification, but he is also vehemently against them when they stand outside the system they purport to found.

Hegel’s anti-foundationalist view points towards his epistemological stance that suggests a circular system and a circular epistemology with the interaction between form and content.

Consider Hegel's remarks about the place of the Introduction of *WL* for the rest of the work.

Hegel starts the Introduction by writing that “[i]n no science is the need to begin with the subject matter itself, without preliminary reflections, felt more strongly than in the science of logic” (*WL* 43).

The science of logic is a Science [*Wissenschaft*], yet it is distinguished from other sciences. Hegel writes that “in every other science the subject matter and the scientific method are distinguished from each other” (*WL* 43) but that in the science of logic, they are not. Hegel's critiques of Kant mandate that such a distinction is no longer possible. In the science of logic, the subject matter and the scientific method are one, that is, the science of logic is its own science. Furthermore, he writes that in other sciences “the content does not make an absolute beginning but is dependent on other concepts and is connected on all sides with other material” (*ibid.*), that is, these sciences depend on a foundation, such as preceding concepts and other founding materials that support the content of these sciences; they do not begin with their own content. Whereas in the science of logic, there is no such foundation; the science of logic begins with the content matter itself without reliance on anything that comes before.

The foundation for the other sciences mostly serves as a definition of them, laying out what is to be expected. However, Hegel claims, “[t]he definition with which any science makes an absolute beginning cannot contain anything other than the precise and correct expression of what is *imagined* to be the *accepted* and *familiar* subject matter and aim of the science” (*WL* 49). One cannot know what the science will turn out to be, thus one *imagines* it and claims it as what is to follow. Furthermore, this definition cannot extend beyond what is (imagined to be) *accepted* and *familiar*, and therefore does not reach towards new possibilities in knowledge. Such a system

of epistemology is thus self-limiting, for the science is limited by its foundation at the outset which cannot reach beyond what is imagined of the science to be already accepted and familiar.

Given that the *WL* does not rely on anything that comes before, nothing that comes before the *WL* serves as a definition for it. There is nothing that provides a definition of “the science of logic” other than the *WL* itself. If “the science of logic” had a definition or outline preceding it, then this would be a foundation for the *WL*. What precedes the *WL* is the *PhG*, which by no means gives a definition of “the science of logic”. The *PhG* reaches only at its end to a stance at which it is possible for consciousness to undertake the *WL*. Nevertheless, this end point cannot be a definition of “the science of logic”. In fact, he writes, “[p]ure knowing [that is, absolute knowing at the end of the *PhG*] yields only this negative determination, that the beginning is to be *abstract*. If pure being is taken as the *content* of pure knowing, then the latter must stand back from its content, allowing it to have free play and not determining it further” (*WL* 73). Thus, the point of absolute, pure knowledge that is reached at the end of the *PhG* is to have no role in the determination of the beginning of the *WL*. Consequently, the *PhG* does not provide presuppositions for the *WL*.

In contrast to an external determinate foundation upon which the system is built, the beginning point of the *WL*, “as the beginning of *thought*, is supposed to be quite abstract, quite general, wholly form without any content; thus we should have nothing at all beyond the general idea of a mere beginning as such. We have therefore only to see what is contained in such an idea” (*WL* 73). In fact, it is so empty that it is indistinguishable from nothing. Hegel writes that this “beginning is not pure nothing, but a nothing from which something is to proceed; therefore being, too, is already contained in the beginning. The beginning, therefore, contains both, being and nothing, is the unity of being and nothing; or is non-being which is at the same time being,

and being which is at the same time non-being” (ibid.). Nevertheless, “in the beginning, being and nothing are present as *distinguished* from each other; for the beginning points to something else-it is a non-being which carries a reference to being as to an other; that which begins, as yet is not, it is only on the way to being” (WL 73-4). Being is not pure nothing. As pure being, it is empty and is thus *as if* it is nothing, but it is empty being that is to become something. Therefore, it is being, pure being, indeterminately immediate and as “that which begins [it] already *is*, but equally, too, [it] is *not* as yet” (WL 74). Hence, this beginning presents “the notion of the unity of being and nothing” because “being and non-being are ... directly united in it, or, otherwise expressed, it is their *undifferentiated unity*” (ibid.).

The *WL*, having no preceding foundation, provides the definition of “the science of logic” as the totality of its text: “what logic is cannot be stated beforehand, rather does this knowledge of what it is first emerge as the final outcome and consummation of the whole exposition” (WL 43). Thus, the Introduction is not a definition of “the science of logic”, and neither does it suggest what could be expected from its content as a whole. Its goal is not “to justify its method scientifically in advance” (WL 43). Rather, it hopes to illustrate its difference from other kinds of inquiry.

For Hegel, use of foundations as justifications is a mistake in general: justifications based on foundations do not demonstrate necessity. This may be observed in the definitions of sciences that serve as a starting-point: “In this method of beginning a science with its definition, no mention is made of the need to demonstrate the *necessity* of its *subject matter* and therefore of the science itself” (WL 49). There is no demonstration of necessity in these foundations because there is nothing on the scene yet that may be proof to a necessity. The science does not precede its foundational definition.

Since the Introduction of the *WL* does not serve as a foundation in the traditional sense of the term, the science of logic will have its justification elsewhere. As a whole, it serves as its own justification and hence does not need to refer to something outside of it. It is fully self-referential and self-confined. It does not require the authority of any other system for its own legitimacy. The science of logic, therefore, contrary to the other sciences, is itself a demonstration of the necessity of its subject matter. Let's explore how.

Hegel writes that “[t]he Notion of pure science and its deduction” has already been deduced in the *PhG* (*WL* 49). The *PhG* is in fact “nothing other than the deduction” of pure science as science of logic. In the *PhG* consciousness goes through the stages of *Bildung* to reach the level of this science, that is, what it takes to do this science. Hegel argues that the *PhG* showed that “it is only in absolute knowing that the separation of the *object* from the *certainty of itself* is completely eliminated: truth is now equated with certainty and this certainty with truth” (ibid.). This is a “liberation from the opposition of consciousness”, the opposition between its certainty and the truth, and the pure science presupposes this liberation (ibid.). At this standpoint where consciousness is liberated, consciousness “contains *thought in so far as this is just as much the object in its own self, or the object in its own self in so far as it is equally pure thought*” (ibid.). Consequently, science is truth as “pure self-consciousness in its self-development and has the shape of the self”, and “the absolute truth of being is the known Notion and the Notion as such is the absolute truth of being” (ibid.). Consciousness (at the point where it removes all its oppositions) is truth and the absolute truth of being. It is also the known Notion which moves through the entire *WL* as the thread that draws the circle of the whole. Hegel writes consequently that “this objective thinking [i.e., consciousness at the standpoint of science], then, is the content of pure science” (ibid.).

As I discussed in Chapter 3 in detail, the content and form of the *WL* cannot be separated. The *WL* does not have a preceding definition in the form of a foundation. In contrast, its definition is secured through its development that intertwines its form and content. The presuppositionless beginning ensures that the form and content arise solely from this beginning and unfold with only what this beginning holds for thought. The *WL* is the development of thought in its totality, and thereby it explicates cognition through its own development. The method of the science can be seen only alongside its specific content and its specific development. This development is nothing other than the definition of this science.

The science returns to the beginning at its end – this circular move justifies the whole science. As discussed above, since the beginning is hypothetical insofar as we begin without any previous work on the science, insofar as we begin to philosophize the moment we actually begin and not before, returning to this beginning at the highest point of determination and mediation to affirm the beginning point in turn affirms the whole circle. The whole system becomes a totality in the form of a circle that grounds and justifies itself as a whole. In so doing, the whole also justifies itself and effectively demonstrates the necessity of its subject matter. Since we began with being, pure being and let thought determine and mediate being as a whole through its various formulations, the whole is nothing other than the necessity of the broadest understanding of being including all of its many determinations that thought appoints to it throughout the science of logic.

Not only does the science of logic not have a foundation (other than in the way that Hegel redefines and transforms the terms ‘foundation’ and ‘ground’ to mean the whole), it also is not a foundation to anything outside of itself. It is self-confined and only related to itself. This point is best explained with the use of Hegel’s view about form and content with regard to the logic:

logic is not the form that gives shape to some content, serving as the foundation for that content, but rather the logic is form and content together. The union of form and content is crucial for Hegel's circular epistemology in the *WL*.

Hegel remarks that logic is often thought of as the form of thought: “[w]hen logic is taken as the science of thinking in general, it is understood that this thinking constitutes the *mere form* of a cognition, that logic abstracts from *all content*” and that “its *matter*, must come from elsewhere” (*WL* 43). Furthermore, this form becomes the foundation to content which is then shaped by the form. To describe this point Hegel writes that “since this matter [i.e., content] is absolutely independent of logic, this latter can provide only the formal conditions of genuine cognition” (*WL* 44; Suhrkamp 36).

Hegel criticizes this view and claims that the Logic of the science of logic is not only form, but also its own content: “it is quite inept to say that logic abstracts from all content, that it teaches only the rules of thinking without any reference to *what* is thought or without being able to consider its nature” (*WL* 44; Suhrkamp 36). Logic is form that takes itself as its matter/content: “[f]or as thinking and the rules of thinking are supposed to be the subject matter of logic, these directly constitute its peculiar content” (*ibid.*). This is logic's “matter, about the nature of which it is concerned” (*ibid.*). Hegel's logic is thus no more form than it is content. It is wrong to think that it can solely be one or the other, or that one is the foundation to or is prior to the other.

The union of form and content in logic displays epistemological circularity. Like a serpent eating its tail, the logic works on the formation of itself as its content as it unfolds.²¹⁷ Thus, it does not concern itself with what lies outside it. Furthermore it develops its content through the means of the content, and the means of the content are created through the creation of the content itself. Hegel writes that “it is assumed that ... thinking on its own is empty and comes as an external form to the said material, fills itself with it and only thus acquires a content and becomes real knowing” (*WL* 44; Suhrkamp 36). However, such thinking that separates thinking and its contents “bar[s] the entrance to philosophy, [and] must be discarded at its portals” (*WL* 45). Discarding the idea of such a separation supports the circular epistemology of the *WL*.

The circularity here rests on Hegel’s criticism of logic as it has been conceived before him: “[h]itherto, the Notion of logic has rested on the separation, presupposed once and for all in the ordinary consciousness, of the *content* of cognition and its *form*, or of *truth* and *certainty*” (*WL* 44; Suhrkamp 36).²¹⁸ This understanding has taken the object, or content, as something that is complete and separate from thought on its own, and the thought or form as dependent on this object or content. However, Hegel contends that “truth is the agreement of thought with the object” (*ibid.*), echoing the state of consciousness at the end point of the *PhG*. This agreement takes a circular form in the development of the logic because the agreement is one of an evolving

²¹⁷ The content itself (with the form) unfolds because of the non-static character of thought, being, and cognition for Hegel. No concept is self-contained and compete on its own. Rather, each is one-sided and abstract, and therefore by its very nature relates and transitions to other concepts.

²¹⁸ That Hegel mentions “truth and certainty” here relates to self-consciousness in *PhG*. The chapter of *PhG* where consciousness reaches the stage of self-consciousness is called “The Truth of Self-certainty”. At this stage, consciousness recognizes its object as an object for itself as who this object is an object for (which in turn is an object). Thus, in a way, consciousness unifies the content of its cognition with its form.

identity relation between thought and object, form and content, which stems from being and returns to being with absolute idea.²¹⁹

Thinking is real knowing only if it is treated as its own content (*WL* 44; Suhrkamp 36-7). Hegel's notion of such a logic that takes itself as form which constitutes its own content is a development on Kant's notion of transcendental logic. Kant's transcendental logic is a view of logic, different from the traditional, as he calls it "general" logic, in that it concerns form and content together. Let's explore Kant's notion of logic and consider its effect on Hegel's approach to form and content in the *WL*.

Kant introduces his notion of a transcendental logic together with the notion of a general logic in the second part of the Transcendental Doctrine of Elements called The Transcendental Logic. The last section of this part of the Transcendental Doctrine of Elements, titled "On the division of transcendental logic into the transcendental analytic and dialectic" shows that the bulk of Kant's account of cognition falls under the heading of the transcendental logic. Clinton Tolley in his article "The Generality of Kant's Transcendental Logic" defines logic for Kant as follows

In §I of the Introduction, Kant claims that logic is "the science of the rules for our capacity for understanding in general" (B76). Our understanding is a capacity for thinking, which Kant defines as "cognition through concepts" (B94). Kant thinks that the paradigmatic case of thinking is the cognition through concepts in judgment. He famously claims that judgment is that which we can "trace back all acts of understanding" (B94). Logic itself, then, could equally be described as the science of thinking and judging "in general." (Tolley 425)

Logic, then, is the science of understanding and cognition. It analyzes the way in which thought operates in cognition in general.

²¹⁹ As I noted above, Hegel writes that thinking and its rules are the content of logic. Logic, which is deemed to be form, is thinking. Content is matter. Form and content develop interdependently with one another.

The notions of form and content turn out to play a significant role for logic, both for Kant and for Hegel. Hegel remarks as I quoted above, “[h]itherto, the Notion of logic has rested on the separation, presupposed once and for all in the ordinary consciousness, of the *content* of cognition and its *form*, or of *truth* and *certainty*” (*WL* 44; Suhrkamp 36). Kant has sought, however, before Hegel, to bring content into the conception of logic with his transcendental logic. However, it would not be a surprise for us if Hegel thought that Kant had not satisfactorily addressed this problem. After all, Kant’s immediate commentators almost all criticized Kant for his notion of “things-in-themselves” as an unknowable residue – which Hegel may see here as a part of content that does not have a matching form in the logic. In this sense, we can see Hegel’s logic as yet another way in which he is attempting to take the Kantian philosophy further by addressing its shortcomings.

At the beginning of the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant writes “I call that in the appearance which corresponds to sensation its [sensation’s] **matter**; but that which allows the manifold of appearance to be ordered in certain relations I call the **form** of appearance” (*CPR* A20/B34). In Kant’s portrayal of form and content, form is what orders matter, i.e. its content. Form is distinct from this matter and is empty without it. Matter, on the other hand, as the appearance which corresponds to sensation, forms the content for the form from which it is distinct. Form organizes matter from its manifold state to one that is unified. Kant writes that “[t]he understanding is not capable of intuiting anything, and the senses are not capable of thinking anything. Only from their unification can cognition arise” (*CPR* B75-76). Accordingly, understanding constitutes form and the senses constitute matter or content.

Examples of form can be given as “inner sense” and “outer sense”, time and space, respectively (*CPR* A37; B37). Kant writes that “time is ... a pure form of sensible intuition”

(*CPR* B47) and “space is ... a pure intuition” (*CPR* B39). Time and space together are the forms of sensibility: they form the contents of sensation which are distinct from time and space but are in cognition found in time and space.

However, the aesthetic is different from the logic. Kant writes that “we distinguish the science of the rules of sensibility in general, i.e., aesthetic, from the science of the rules of understanding in general, i.e., logic” (*CPR* B76). Thus our cognition can be separated into two parts: the part that deals with receptivity and sensation (the aesthetic) and the part that deals with the spontaneity and understanding (the logic) (*CPR* 193, A51/B75). These two parts, that is “[i]ntuition and concepts therefore constitute the elements of all our cognition” (*CPR* 193, A50/B74).

Following his discussion of time and space in the aesthetic, he begins the second part of the Transcendental Doctrine of Elements with an account of and a distinction between what he calls “general logic” and “transcendental logic”. This distinction is in line with Kant’s Copernican revolution insofar as he introduces a new kind of logic (the transcendental logic) to include in it content, which traditional logic had hitherto excluded (as Hegel remarks). Tolley writes that “in Kant’s view, the traditional logic has actually been treating thinking in complete abstraction from anything having to do with its content, and instead ‘treats only the *form* of thinking in general’ (B79). For this reason, Kant later describes the traditional logic itself as a ‘merely *formal* logic’ (B170; [Tolley’s] emphasis)” (Tolley 427).

Kant gives the name “general logic” to traditional logic. A general logic, for Kant, is strictly form, and is something that can be applied to matter. It does not concern itself with what it may be applied to, it is self-enclosed, and in Hegelian terms “one-sided”. For Kant, “[a]

general but pure logic has to do with strictly *a priori* principles, and is a canon of the understanding and reason, but only in regard to what is formal in their use, be the content what it may” (*CPR B77*).²²⁰ Let’s explore how this is the case.

Kant claims that we can “undertake logic with two different aims, either as the logic of the general or of the particular use of the understanding” (*CPR 194, A52/B76*). The logic of the general use of the understanding “contains the absolutely necessary rules for thinking, without which no use of the understanding takes place, and it therefore concerns these rules without regard to the difference of the objects to which it may be directed” (*ibid.*). “The logic of the particular use of the understanding”, on the other hand, “contains the rules for correctly thinking about a certain kind of objects”, such as those under the domain of a certain science (*ibid.*).

Of the general logic, we can make a further distinction: “general logic is either pure or applied logic” (*CPR 194, A52/B77*). An applied general logic is one which is “directed to the rules of the use of the understanding under the subjective empirical conditions that psychology teaches us” (*CPR 194, A53/B77*). It “has empirical principles, although it is to be sure general insofar as it concerns the use of the understanding without regard to the difference of objects” (*CPR 194-5, A53/B77*). It is “merely a cathartic of the common understanding” (*CPR 195, A53/B78*). A general pure logic, in contrast, “has to do with strictly *a priori* principles, and is a **canon of the understanding** and reason, but only in regard to what is formal in their use, be the content what it may (empirical or transcendental)” (*CPR 194, A53/B77*). Hence both the applied

²²⁰ Kant also defines a “general” but “applied” logic which would be “directed by the rules of the use of the understanding under the subjective empirical conditions that psychology teaches us” (*CPR B77*). However, he continues by stating that “[i]n general logic the part that is to constitute the pure doctrine of reason must ... be entirely separated from that which constitutes applied (though still general) logic. The former alone is properly science” (*ibid.*). Since we are concerned with science in Hegel’s discussion of logic, it serves the purposes of this paper better to discuss only the general pure logic.

and the pure general logic abstract from content. General pure logic is concerned with its *a priori* principles regardless of whatever empirical or transcendental content they may have, and general applied logic concerns the use of understanding regardless of whatever objects the understanding may have.

Kant claims that the pure doctrine of reason cannot be in the applied general logic but is rather to be found in the pure general logic (*CPR* 195, A53/B78). For “[a]s general logic it abstracts from all contents of the cognition of the understanding and of the difference of its objects, and has to do with nothing but the *mere form of thinking*” and “[a]s pure logic it *has no empirical principles ... everything in it must be completely a priori*” (*CPR* 195, A54/B78, my emphases). Hence, the traditional logic of philosophy, i.e. the general pure logic, abstracts from all empirical (or transcendental, as quoted above) content of cognition “i.e. from any relation of it to the object” (*CPR* 195, A55/B79) and focuses on the form of cognition as something distinct from its content.

Alongside general logic, Kant introduces what he calls transcendental logic. There are many disagreements in the Kant literature on what the transcendental logic is and its relation to the general logic. Tolley groups the interpretations of Kant’s transcendental logic in the literature into two main groups: those who take “transcendental logic to have in view a domain that is *excluded* from the traditional logic” and those who distinguish between traditional and transcendental logic by claiming “that while the traditional logic gives principles that govern all thinking and judging, and hence is universal in its scope, transcendental logic, by contrast, focuses only on *particular* species of thinking and judging, and so is more restrictive” (Tolley 417). Tolley calls the former the “domain-exclusive” interpretation and the latter the “domain-subordinate” interpretation, and together the “domain-sensitive” interpretations. In contrast, he

argues for a “domain-coincident” interpretation where “rather than standing in a relation of exclusion or subordination ... transcendental logic [is] every bit as unrestrictedly general or universal as the traditional logic” (Tolley 418). His reason, and I agree with him, is that “Kant’s conception of the nature of the content at issue in transcendental logic —what Kant calls the “transcendental content” of the pure (“unschematized”) concepts of understanding (B105)— shows it to be as universally present throughout our thinking and judging as are the traditional-logical forms” (ibid.).

Kant introduces the transcendental logic in the following way. He starts by claiming that “[g]eneral logic abstracts ... from all content of cognition, i.e. from any relation of it to the object, and considers only the logical form in the relation of cognitions to one another, i.e., the form of thinking in general” (*CPR* 195-6, A55/B79). The form is the content of general logic. But, Kant goes on to imply that there needs to be a new approach to logic, different from the traditional general logic to account for his findings as result of his Copernican revolution. He writes that “now since there are pure as well as empirical intuitions (as the transcendental aesthetic proved), a distinction between pure and empirical thinking of objects could also well be found” (*CPR* 196, A55/B79). And consequently “there would be a logic in which one did not abstract from all content of cognition; for that logic that contained merely the rules of the pure thinking of an object [that is, the general logic] would exclude all those cognitions that were of empirical content” (*CPR* 196, A55/B80).

As I discussed in Chapter 1, Kant redefines ‘empirical’ to mean the *a posteriori* contents of our cognitions, which as objects have their bases in our cognition and not out in the world (save for the uncognizable things-in-themselves). As I argued there, this redefinition of ‘empirical’ follows from his Copernican revolution. The two logics have the same domain

because they are both concerned with cognitions. General (traditional) logic is limited in its outlook because it does not consider the empirical content of cognitions as an integral part of the form of these cognitions. This is to be expected, because as traditional logic, it is pre-critical and before Kant's Copernican revolution – hence it excludes 'empirical' content as external to cognition. Transcendental logic has the same objects as general logic but looks beyond the mere form of cognitions and sees the empirical content as a part of the logic that ought to be involved in making sense of cognitions. In this sense, the empirical content becomes transcendental insofar as it is taken up in an *a priori* manner. Kant writes of this distinction that “[t]he difference between the transcendental and the empirical therefore belongs only to the critique of cognitions and does not concern their relation to the object” (*CPR* 196, A57/B81).

Kant thus introduces transcendental logic to account for the empirical content (though in an *a priori* manner) as well as the form of cognitions, and empirical content for Kant refers to the objects of cognition as they exist in cognition *a priori*. Consequently, transcendental logic

would therefore concern the origin of our cognitions of objects insofar as that cannot be ascribed to the objects; while general logic, on the contrary, has nothing to do with this origin of cognition, but rather considers representations, whether they are originally given *a priori* in ourselves or only empirically, merely in respect of the laws according to which the understanding brings them into relation to one another when it thinks and therefore it deals only with the form of the understanding, which can be given to the representations wherever they may have originated. (*CPR* 196, A55-6/B80)

Transcendental logic concerns the “origin of our cognitions” because it brings into view the content of these cognitions alongside the form. The content refers to the manifold that is made up of representations generated in intuition by being synthesized through space and time (not the sensory manifold that is prior to this synthesis). This manifold gets formed into thoughts and judgments in cognition through the categories and the transcendental unity of apperception.

Transcendental logic concerns itself with the categories and the transcendental unity of

apperception as form and the manifold which is given to this form as content. It is in this sense that the transcendental logic is concerned with the origin of our cognitions:

In the expectation, therefore, that there can perhaps be concepts that may be related to objects *a priori*, not as pure or sensible intuitions but rather merely as acts of pure thinking, that are thus concepts but of neither empirical nor aesthetic origin, we provisionally formulate the idea of a science of pure understanding and of the pure cognition of reason, by means of which we think objects completely *a priori*. Such a science, which would determine the origin, the domain, and the objective validity of such cognitions, would have to be called **transcendental logic**. (CPR 196, A57/B81)

Thus, the transcendental logic is the logic that takes up both the content and the form of cognitions in the spirit of the Copernican revolution, bringing the empirical content under the domain of the *a priori* structures of cognition.

In this introduction of transcendental logic as a new form of logic, Kant is seeking to transform how logic had traditionally been understood and to introduce a logic that follows his Copernican revolution by bringing the contents of cognitions under the purview of logic rather than to keep them as separate elements to which we have to externally apply the logic as mere form. Hegel follows suit in conceiving of logic in this critical manner and under the light of the Copernican revolution. He conceives of logic as including its content alongside its form. Form and content in Hegel's logic are interrelated and cannot be conceived as independent of one another. The development of the logic depends on the interdependence of the content and form. Hence, Hegel is taking the Kantian project further in two specific ways: (1) by developing his own logic that nevertheless has its roots in the Kantian model of transcendental logic, and (2) by going beyond the Kantian transcendental logic by placing the origin of the content of the logic within the logic itself and as integrated to the form of this logic inseparably.

The interrelation of content and form is important for Hegel's circular epistemology because it effectively ensures that *WL* is self-contained. *WL* finds its content from within itself as

opposed to applying itself to content that is external to it. Through its development of integrated content and form it returns to its beginning to justify this beginning and its whole, and thus forms a circle. As a development on the Kantian transcendental logic which is originally the introduction of a logic that is made to fit and accommodate the project of the Copernican revolution, Hegel's logic is also an account of cognition, and an account of cognition and thought which begins and ends in itself (with its own endogenous content and form) at that. Thus, Hegel's development on the Kantian transcendental logic is a significant aspect of the circularity of *WL*.

The fact that the *WL* generates its own content alongside its form is important for circular epistemology. As discussed in Chapter 1, Hegel's circular epistemology is an alternative to foundationalism, infinite regress, and vicious circularity. Foundationalism and infinite regress both look to establish a point for justification that is by definition outside the system that it would justify. Hegel's circularity, as well as vicious circularity (which I address will shortly), avoid this problem. Hegel's circular epistemology, by generating its own content and form as co-dependent and integrally related to one another. Thus, the form and content justify one another in regards to the way in which they relate to one another and how the form fits the content and vice versa.

Let's turn to the specifics of the development of the *WL* and how the science of logic unfolds. In foundationalist systems or systems of infinite regress, there is always a relation of dependence between the contents of the system to what came before them. In Hegel's *WL*, there is no such relation of dependence. Rather, the system unfolds without dependence and justifies itself only when it reaches completion, when the end returns to the beginning.

As I discussed earlier, the *WL* begins without presuppositions with a hypothetical beginning that is *being, pure being* (*WL* 82; Suhrkamp 82). Once we analyze *being, pure being*, it becomes clear that it is nothing other than *nothing, pure nothing* (*ibid.*). This revelation and development comes as a result of looking into what *being* is at this beginning point. In this sense, *nothing* explains what *being* really is or is like. However, the more we look into *nothing*, we find that it is actually *becoming*.

Each moment in the *WL* thus follows the other in such a way that one moment is in a sense better explained by the moment that follows from it. Even though, for instance, *nothing* seems to be a better explanation for *being*, when we move to *nothing* from *being*, we have already moved past *being* and are now talking about *nothing* which is a different point than the beginning point. Thus, the logic unfolds by delving into the details of each of its moments to analyze them in detail. As a result of this deep analysis of one moment, the logic moves onto the next moment. By showing the truth of a moment, the logic has already transgressed beyond that moment to the next moment. This next moment will in turn also have its truth be revealed through its determination and mediation which will carry the Notion of the logic yet further onto the next moment. Each instance of knowledge in the *WL* is more determinate and mediated than the ones that precede it. This pattern continues throughout the logic until the last moment, absolute Idea, which is a return to the beginning, as I explained in detail earlier.

At the end of the last chapter of the *WL*, “The Absolute Idea”, i.e. at the end of the *WL*, Hegel remarks that we have indeed returned to the beginning point, i.e. to “being”. He writes there (as quoted earlier) that “the science exhibits itself as a *circle* returning upon itself, the end being wound back into the beginning, the simple ground, by the mediation” (*WL* 842). The end point of the science, thus, is a return to the beginning after the mediation, which was the whole

logic, or our education by reading this logic as it developed. “Absolute Idea” is a return to “being” because it is a “withdraw[al] into that same simple unity which [logic’s] beginning is” (ibid.).

The development of the logic to its final stage, “Absolute Idea”, is a mediation of the beginning point “Being”. In *WL*, “Being” is mediated through the dialectical development every moment of which has the previous moments as *aufgehoben*. Namely, each moment preserves the moments preceding it while also recognizing the contradictions these preceding moments held that lead to their supersession – at once a negation and sustaining act. The final point of *WL* sublates [*aufheben*] all of the moments in which *Aufhebung* occurred, that is all of the moments of mediation. “Absolute Idea” thus sublates [*aufheben*] all of the mediation and returns to immediacy. “Absolute Idea” is thereby a return to the beginning point. Hegel expresses this when he writes that “the pure immediacy of being in which at first every determination appears to be extinguished or removed by abstraction, is the Idea that has reached through mediation, that is, through the sublation of mediation, a likeness correspondent to itself” (*WL* 842). “Absolute Idea” is the part of the dialectical progression where all of the moments that pure being has implicitly in itself are sublated after having been made explicit through mediation.

The last point of the system is, therefore, a return to the first point in *WL*. This shows a circular epistemology because the whole progression is a breaking down of ontology moment by moment for the reader: it shows how reality is put together logically. Thus, it is the *science* of logic. Hence, we, who are doing the science by following along with the dialectical development, are acquiring knowledge of how logic comes together. That the last point returns to the first in this scientific endeavor thus demonstrates the circular epistemology.

Not only is the *WL* a circle, but is a part of a “circle of circles”. Hegel writes in the *WL* that “this circle is moreover a *circle of circles*, for each individual member as ensouled by the method is reflected into itself, so that in returning into the beginning it is at the same time the beginning of a new member. Links of this chain are the individual sciences [of logic, nature and spirit]” (*WL* 842). I explain the circles of Nature and Spirit, as well as how Logic, along with these two form a circle of circles below in this chapter in the section on the *Enzyklopaedie*. But first, I will turn to the *PhG*.

2. *Phenomenologie des Geistes*

The *PhG*, from beginning to end, forms a circle. Since Hegel’s epistemology is displayed through the body of his works (as argued in Chapter 3), I argue that the *PhG* displays a circular epistemology. I begin this section by examining the lack of foundations in the *PhG* and how consciousness does not have presuppositions when it first begins its journey. Moreover, at the end of its journey, consciousness finds that it returns to the beginning, though with absolute knowledge. This lack of a foundation and of presuppositions, when considered together with the contents of the last stage of consciousness’s journey, indicate that *PhG* is self-enclosed and self-justificatory. I then present the circular pattern of epistemology in *PhG*.

At the outset of the *PhG*, Hegel presents his stance against presuppositions and foundations. The first paragraph of the Introduction of the *PhG* – which can be said to be the first paragraph of the *PhG* as the Preface was written after the work itself was completed – begins with a criticism of the presupposed need to begin philosophy with first having an understanding of “its proper subject-matter, viz. the actual cognition of what truly is” (*PhG* 46, §73; Suhrkamp 68). There are two arguments Hegel levels against this presupposition. The first one is that there

are different kinds of cognition, and we may not know which one is appropriate for the task at hand before we know the task itself. Determining this cognition before we know the task, and doing so in order to get to know the task is problematic at best (ibid.). The second point is that “cognition is a faculty of a definite kind and scope” (ibid.) and without a definition of it we are bound to run into problems, especially when we are to use this cognition as a foundation for knowledge of philosophy. Thus, Hegel criticizes the effort to begin by giving an account of what cognition is as the foundation of knowledge, that is, of cognizing.

Hegel has in mind here the Kantian project, which seeks to begin its enquiry by first establishing an account of the very possibility of cognition (an account of philosophical knowledge). Kant’s “critical” project in fact begins with an account of cognition in the *Transcendental Doctrine of Elements*. Kant begins the Preface to the second edition of the *CPR* by remarking that there is a need to establish the “secure course of a science” for metaphysics (*CPR* Bvii). He continues in expressing his view that “the secure path of science” for metaphysics has “eluded us so far” (*CPR* Bxv) and we should take the advancements made in “mathematics and natural sciences” (*CPR* Bxvi) of his time as an example of what needs to be done similarly in metaphysics. We need a “change in the ways of thinking” which have thus far defined metaphysics (ibid.).

Kant proposes his Copernican revolution in metaphysics as an answer to the quest of securing a course of science for philosophy (*CPR* Bxvi). This so-called Copernican revolution consists of taking cognition as foundational. For, cognition forms the basis of all other parts of Kant’s philosophy and also any claims made within as well as outside philosophy. Kant’s philosophical inquiry bases itself on an account of cognition (though that account itself need not be foundational). As opposed to the previous ways of thinking which took cognition to conform

to the object, Kant proposes that we take the object to conform to the (sensory) intuition of the subject, that is, to cognition (*CPR* Bxvii). He remarks that this is the only way in which we may hope to “know anything of [objects] *a priori*” (ibid.). In other words, he is suggesting that accounting for cognition before anything else will yield a secure course for the science that is metaphysics.²²¹

Cognition, however, must have a limit. For, an epistemology for *a priori* knowledge should have at its foundation a conception of knowledge as something to which objects have to conform. Kant calls this limit “the unconditioned” (*CPR* Bxx). The unconditioned are things in themselves that are not accessible to cognition as such; for cognition, as *a priori*, reaches only appearances (ibid.). Kant’s proposal that we do not base metaphysics on conforming cognition to objects results in the fact that there must be such an unreachable point for cognition. For, an account of objects needs to conform to an account of cognition which is prior to the account of objects. The unconditioned is not “present in things insofar as we are acquainted with them . . . , but rather in things as we are not acquainted with them as things in themselves” (ibid.). All that we can know about things in themselves is that they are limits. The unconditioned, therefore, can be known only as things in themselves and cannot be known *a priori*. Only what is *a priori* is necessary and universal, independently of experience (*CPR* A2). Therefore, starting with an account of cognition is the only path which will lead us to a secure metaphysics.

Kant remarks that “on the assumption that our cognition from experience conforms to the objects as things in themselves, the unconditioned cannot be thought at all without contradiction”

²²¹ Kant writes: “after this alteration in our way of thinking we can very well explain the possibility of a cognition *a priori*, and what is still more, we can provide satisfactory proofs of the laws that are the *a priori* ground of nature, as the sum of total objects of experience – which were both impossible according to the earlier way of proceeding” (*CPR* Bxix).

(*CPR* Bxx). The only way to avoid this contradiction, for Kant, is to not base metaphysics on what we, through our cognition, have no access to. We should rather base metaphysics on cognition itself. Once we establish what cognition is, then we may be able to know something about the rest of what makes up a metaphysics according to the Kantian view. Most of the Transcendental Doctrine of Elements of *CPR* is devoted to establishing an account of cognition. Given that Hegel is in conversation with Kant (and some of Kant's immediate commentators) in most of his works, and given the importance the topic of beginnings had in the immediate reception of Kant, we can claim that Hegel's denunciation of beginning with an account of cognition is directed at the Kantian project and its proponents.

Hegel's opening paragraph of the *PhG*, thus, as a sharp attack on prematurely establishing an account of cognition as the foundation for dealing with "[philosophy's] proper subject-matter", is the beginning of a response in the *PhG* to the Kantian project (*PhG* 46, §73; Suhrkamp 68). Though others point out that Hegel is presenting a criticism of foundationalism directed at Kant and transcendental philosophy,²²² to the best of my knowledge, this specific paragraph has not been taken up in the manner I have just presented my argument.

Hegel characterizes the Kantian project of starting with an account of cognition as plagued with a "fear of falling into error" (*PhG* 47, §74; Suhrkamp 69). The fear of falling into error results from the idea that we should start with an account of knowledge. He writes that "if the fear of falling into error sets up a mistrust of Science, which in the absence of such scruples

²²² Richard Dien Winfield in his article titled "Route to Foundation-Free Systematic Philosophy" (1984), for instance, makes a similar argument. He writes that "the entire move to transcendental argument seems to be based upon certain assumptions concerning the character of knowing itself" and that "[a]ny transcendental inquiry takes for granted that the conditions of knowing can be examined prior to any particular knowing" (Winfield 16). This article explores Hegel's response to transcendental philosophy and his efforts in building a foundationless systematic philosophy. Significantly, Winfield also argues against readings of Hegel that present his philosophy as totalizing.

gets on with the work itself, and actually cognizes something, it is hard to see why we should not turn around and mistrust this very mistrust. Should we not be concerned as to whether this fear of error is not just the error itself?" (ibid.). He continues by claiming that "what calls itself fear of error reveals itself rather as fear of the truth" (ibid.).

In the Hegelian project, on the contrary, mistakes in reasoning (resulting from one-sided and abstract approaches to the objects and issues at hand) and contradictions are integral to the path towards "absolute knowing". Consciousness repeatedly finds that it is in error: at every stage, it recognizes that its position is untenable, until it reaches "absolute knowing". It reaches "absolute knowing" by virtue of having passed through the stages which proved to be erroneous. Hence, falling into (non-contingent) error is not something we should be afraid of.

Hegel contends that the haste to posit an account of cognition as a foundation for philosophy and the resulting fear of making an error "takes for granted certain ideas about cognition as an *instrument* and as a *medium*, and assumes that there is a *difference between ourselves and this cognition*" (*PhG* 47, §74; Suhrkamp 69). Thus, the fear of making an error turns into the error itself: taking cognition as the foundation, as Hegel explained in the first paragraph, is problematic. Furthermore, it assumes that this cognition, as something we can define and posit at the outset, is thereby distinct from us, since we are positing it before knowing about it. The cognition, thus, hypothetically becomes an instrument or medium on this account. There is no indication of legitimacy in taking cognition as an instrument that will guide us through the quest for knowledge, as distinct from us. More crucially, taking it as an instrument

will put us on the path that began with the fear of error, and eliminate any possibility of reaching true knowledge.²²³

Hegel's answer to the assumptions about cognition and the resulting fear of error is to introduce "the pathway of *doubt* [*Zweifel*], or more precisely ... the pathway of despair [*Verzweiflung*]" (*PhG* 49, §78; Suhrkamp 72). He warns us that the path he proposes (and then fleshes out in the main body of this work) is more difficult and demanding than the method he criticizes. The method he criticizes makes "excuses which creates the incapacity of Science" and adopts what it works on "in order to be exempt from the hard work of Science, while at the same time giving the impression of working seriously and zealously" (*PhG* 48, §76; Suhrkamp 70-1).

Hegel's attack on Kant's notion of beginning with an account of cognition (especially as significantly placed at the beginning of the Introduction of the *PhG*) indicate early on in *PhG* that Hegel's account of knowledge in *PhG* will not have presuppositions or seek to have a foundation. For, Hegel's rejection of the Kantian model shows that he is against an *a priori* epistemology. Hegel, as a response to the view he criticizes at the beginning of the *PhG*, presents a self-enclosed and self-justifying process of education, which does not depend on a foundation or presuppositions. That Hegel's system in the *PhG* is self-enclosed can be shown through Hegel's descriptions of consciousness's dialectical relation with its object.

The series of developing phenomenal objects are the phenomenal objects of consciousness and constitute the knowledge of consciousness at each respective stage of

²²³ Surely, Hegel is not trying to accuse Kant of being afraid of things in themselves or making a mistake about them. He is, however, at the very least accusing Kant (and some of Kant's immediate commentators who have foundationalist tendencies, such as Reinhold) of not being brave enough to set aside the founding position that is then used as an instrument (cognition for Kant). Accepting cognition as the instrument whereby Kant engages in his philosophical endeavor without first philosophically justifying doing so lets Kant rely his philosophy on an assumption that keeps him from fully immersing himself in uncertainty.

consciousness's journey. Hegel remarks that "[s]ince our object is phenomenal knowledge, its determinations too will at first be taken directly as they present themselves; and they do present themselves very much as we have already apprehended them" (*PhG* §82). The shape of consciousness is defined by the way in which consciousness apprehends its object. Hegel writes that "[c]onsciousness provides its own criterion from within itself, so that the investigation becomes a comparison of consciousness with itself; for the distinction made above falls within it" (*PhG* 53, §84; Suhrkamp 76). By characterizing the investigation as the comparison of consciousness with itself, Hegel means that at each stage of the *PhG* consciousness is critically examining its own criterion for the investigation. The investigation is thus not only that of the objects of consciousness at each stage, but also an investigation of the criteria of the investigation itself. Consciousness, insofar as it "provides its own criterion from within itself" (*ibid.*), also investigates itself through the investigation with the use of this criterion. Since the objects "present themselves very much as we have already apprehended them" (*PhG* §82), as quoted above, an investigation of these objects through consciousness's own criterion yields an investigation of consciousness's own apprehension, i.e. consciousness's very consciousness. The experience of consciousness within the bounds of its current stage which yields a redefined phenomenal object. Experience (which is categorial experience) here is strictly tied to and defined by the consciousness that is the experiential subject, because experience is the movement that the relevant stage of consciousness undergoes.

The first chapter of the *PhG* starts with "the knowledge or knowing ... [of] immediate knowledge" (*PhG* 58, §90). Although this immediate knowledge "immediately appears as the *richest* kind of knowledge", when we move past this immediacy we realize that it is "the most abstract and *poorest* truth" (*PhG* 58, §91). All along consciousness's journey, the knowledge

consciousness acquires turns out to be inadequate in one way or another until consciousness reaches Absolute Knowing. Throughout the journey, consciousness's object of investigation is the phenomenal object of each respective stage. Namely, in each stage consciousness finds itself facing a new situation and a new object of investigation that is a phenomenal object insofar as it *appears* only through the ways in which consciousness is experiencing it. The "knowledge" of this object thus changes through the experience consciousness has of it. Since the appearance of the phenomenal object is as much a reflection of consciousness as it is of the object itself, every stage of the *PhG* is also an investigation of consciousness itself.

However, this phenomenal object shifts when consciousness reaches Absolute Knowing – the journey of consciousness through the *PhG* itself becomes the object. Absolute Knowing is the stage at which consciousness finally fully grasps the whole, and thus finally dispels the otherness that comes with the abstract one-sided approaches it had to its objects throughout its journey. Nevertheless, dispelling this otherness does not mean that things *other* than consciousness cease to exist—rather, consciousness in Absolute Knowing is finally able to grasp its other in a truthful way. Namely, at Absolute Knowing consciousness knows the distinction of itself from its object (this object as an *other* from it), as well as the dependence of the *phenomenal* object to consciousness insofar as the phenomenal object exists in and for consciousness as such, insofar as consciousness *cognizes* this object.

Hegel writes the following to express the existence of the object *for* consciousness when it is *in* consciousness, but that it also has a separate existence *in itself*: “**In** consciousness one thing exists *for* another, i.e. consciousness regularly contains the determinateness of the moment of knowledge; at the same time, this other is to consciousness not merely *for it*, but **is** also outside of this relationship, or **exists in itself**: the moment of truth” (*PhG* 53, §84; Suhrkamp 77,

bold emphases mine). Consciousness fully appreciates this “moment of truth”, the existence *in itself* of the other (i.e. the other as in itself and not only *for* consciousness), when it arrives at Absolute Knowing. For, through the *Bildung* of the journey of *PhG* consciousness learns about the various aspects of its own cognition – consciousness learns the determinations of its cognition and its own differentiation and dependence with regard to its objects.²²⁴ Since its investigation through the *PhG* is an investigation of its own criterion for knowledge of its objects, it is in effect an investigation of its cognition. Consequently, consciousness learns its object as an other from itself, though at the same time as *for* consciousness and as *in itself*, and learns to make the various nuanced distinctions related to the object that we (as the scientists) observe consciousness make through the journey.

Since consciousness’s beginning point is “natural consciousness”, which is distant in its journey from real knowledge (the True), its object (what for it is the True) is distant from real knowledge. At each configuration what for it is the True and its knowledge of this truth come closer to the True, that is, to real (absolute) knowledge. Consciousness has to continually seek to match what for it is the True with its knowledge of the truth. If these two do not match one another, then “it would seem that consciousness must alter its knowledge to make it conform to the object” (*PhG* §85). In other words, consciousness would need to move through its configurations until its Notion matches its object. However, when the knowledge is altered, “the object itself alters for it too, for the knowledge that was present was essentially a knowledge of

²²⁴ It would be worthwhile in the future to work on a project that outlines exactly what consciousness learns about its own cognition in the *PhG* and its relation to Kant’s categories, examining and specifying the details of exactly what consciousness learns in its journey. Robert Brandom (in *Spirit of Trust: A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology*, 2019) and Kenneth Westphal (in *Hegel's Epistemology*, 2003) have written limited versions of this, but there is much more work to be done especially given the limitations of their works (an account of which works is beyond my scope here).

the object: as the knowledge changes, so too does the object, for it essentially belonged to this knowledge” (ibid.).

The new object that emerges from the testing of the Notion against the previous object does not come from outside the relation of subject and object but it “come[s] about through a reversal of consciousness itself” (*PhG* §87).²²⁵ The resulting object at each configuration “contains what was true in the preceding knowledge” (ibid.), i.e. according to Hegel later phases necessarily build upon earlier phases. However, this building does not happen as on a secure foundation. Later phases build upon earlier phases insofar as the earlier phases prove to be in internal contradiction. The later phases come as an attempt to accomplish what the previous phases failed to accomplish, which is to be free from internal contradiction. However, even though consciousness finds real knowledge only at the end of the progression, the whole progression is significant for it.²²⁶ For, Hegel writes, “the way to Science is itself already Science, and hence, in virtue of its content, is the Science of the *experience of consciousness*” (*PhG* 56, §88; Suhrkamp 80). The end point of the process is that toward which the entire process is driven. Yet only at the end are all the parts of the journey in the form of a circle such that the importance of each point emerges as a part of the whole.

Not only Hegel’s stance against foundations, as discussed earlier, but also the circularity of Hegel’s epistemology can be framed as a reaction to Kant.²²⁷ This reaction with regard to circularity is rooted in the terminology of Hegel’s description of what happens to consciousness

²²⁵ Related to this, Hegel writes earlier that “the criterion for testing is altered when that for which it was to have been the criterion fails to pass the test; and the testing is not only a testing of what we know, but also a testing of the criterion of what knowing is” (*PhG* §85).

²²⁶ Thomas E. Wartenberg, in his paper titled “Hegel’s idealism: The logic of conceptuality”, claims, related to this point, that *PhG* exemplifies “Hegel’s belief that the whole exists in a process of development” and that “the manner in which this holistic idea develops is to be thought of as its own self-actualization” (Wartenberg 107).

²²⁷ My argument for why the epistemology of the *PhG* is circular follows this discussion of Kant.

as it embarks on its journey. Hegel writes that the exposition presented in the *PhG* “has only phenomenal knowledge for its object” (*PhG* 49, §77; Suhrkamp 72). The exposition begins with phenomenal knowledge, which consciousness experiences, and finds to be internally contradictory. Consciousness then moves onto its next shape.²²⁸ This process takes place through its own means: there is no reliance or employment of anything external to the phenomenal object which is the sole object of experience and knowledge.

“Phenomenal” is the adjective form of the word “phenomenon” which has been used throughout the history of philosophy to mean roughly “appearance”. Plato, Aristotle, and Kant are among those that employed the word. Hegel’s use perhaps harkens back to all of these thinkers. However, it is especially useful to think of Hegel’s use of the term in relation to his contemporary Kant.

Kant uses the word “phenomena” to mean “appearances” (*CPR* B305). Phenomena are given in sensibility. Appearances are representations and “all our representations are in fact related to some object through the understanding” (*CPR* A250). The understanding “relates” appearances to “a something, as the object of sensible intuition” which is thus the “transcendental object” because we can know nothing about it (*CPR* A249). The transcendental object is only “a correlate of the unity of apperception for the unity of the manifold in sensible intuition” (*ibid.*). The categories, then, determine something in general (that is, the transcendental object) as appearance through the understanding (*CPR* A251). This is what Kant calls “noumena” (*ibid.*). For Kant, phenomena and noumena correspond to what is sensible and what is intelligible respectively. Phenomena, for Kant, are “appearances, to the extent that as

²²⁸ There is much that can be said about how and why these transitions happen. However, this is beyond my scope in this chapter.

objects they are thought in accordance with the unity of the categories” (ibid.). Thus, for Kant, phenomena are related to objects which are the noumena.

Kant indicates that appearances depend on us: “appearance can be nothing for itself and outside of our kind of representation” (*CPR* A251). But he also adds that there must be something that this appearance depends upon, especially if we are to avoid “a constant circle” (*CPR* A252). This circle is avoided since “the word ‘appearance’ must already indicate a relation to something the immediate representation of which is, to be sure, sensible, but which in itself, without this constitution of our sensibility (on which the form of our intuition is grounded), must be something, i.e., an object independent of sensibility” (ibid.). Therefore, the concept of a noumenon, for Kant, constitutes a “boundary concept”, a grounding object to which we can relate our phenomenon (*CPR* B311).²²⁹

Hegel’s use of the term “phenomenal” is not coupled with a corresponding “noumenal”. Rather, the phenomenal object for Hegel stands alone, not as a representation. The phenomenal object may present an internal contradiction in the experience of a shape of consciousness (as happens with each phenomenal object until the end of *PhG*). However, this contradiction is not with something external (or “transcendental”), such as not matching a transcendental object of which it is a representation. For knowledge does not seek to represent the phenomenal object or vice versa, but rather the two need to match one another, that is, there should not be internal conflict in the phenomenal object when taken as known. “Phenomenal object” for Hegel is how

²²⁹ “Noumenon” functions in several ways, as a thing that appears and as a limit concept.

the world appears to consciousness, but there is nothing more to the world than this appearance.²³⁰

Hegel's use of the term "phenomenal" is, thus, a clear break with Kant's use of the term.²³¹ Hegel's use not only does not align with Kant's because it lacks noumena as boundary, but it also commits what Kant denounces in his discussion of noumena: Hegel's use of "phenomenal" is inherently connected to his circular epistemology, the very circularity ("a constant circle" (*CPR* A252)) which Kant seeks to avoid. The criterion that consciousness works with throughout the *PhG* which finally leads consciousness to truth, i.e. to Absolute Knowing, is consciousness's own criterion. It does not come from outside consciousness. In Absolute Knowing, consciousness completes the circular path of its journey by returning to the initial criterion, but this time grasping it for what it is, in its truth. Hegel's circular epistemology depends on the internal investigation, that is, internal to cognition, of the phenomenal object.

Hegel's epistemology in the *PhG* is circular because each of the stages follow one another to reach the last stage which harkens back to the first stage to start the process over again. Though Hegel has been criticized repeatedly for creating a system that supposedly does not allow for any new knowledge or, in other words, is a totalizing. As other commentators have remarked,²³² such a reading of Hegel's system shows blatant disregard for the specific statements Hegel makes.²³³ As I discussed in Chapter 4, Hegel's system is a circle in the form of his notion

²³⁰ This use of "phenomena" that excludes noumena of which the phenomena are appearances resembles Hegel's move in determining "Essence" as "illusory" in the "Doctrine of Essence" in *WL*.

²³¹ Solomon remarks that "Hegel does not attack Kant's phenomenon-noumenon distinction; he undermines it, finally reducing it to an absurd joke at the end of the chapter on "Understanding"" of *PhG* (Solomon 282). A discussion of the chapter on "Understanding" is beyond the scope of this paper.

²³² Winfield writes, for instance, that "Hegel's systematic claims regarding absolute knowing have all but been ignored by subsequent critics, starting with Marx and Kierkegaard and extending into our own time" (Winfield 26). Winfield later extends this interpretation the *WL*.

²³³ At the end of Hegel's works, we return to the beginning. But this beginning is taken up differently than the first time, i.e. in the first beginning. Though this may seem to suggest that Hegel is presenting a system of spirals or

of true infinity found in the *WL*. This means that it opens up the potential for true freedom and contingency in knowledge and our philosophical endeavors.

Each stage of the *Phenomenology* moves on to the next because of the failure of the current stage until we reach “absolute knowing”. Because the internal contradiction of a stage prompts the transition into the next stage at every stage, stages of consciousness do not depend on the stages that come before them for justification in the usual sense of the term. The extent of the dependence is nothing other than the subsequent stage following the preceding stage as a result of the failure and internal contradiction of the preceding stage. The subsequent stage appears following the destruction and dissolution of the preceding stage. In this sense, the subsequent stage is ‘justified’ in appearing following the dissolution of the preceding stage. However, the preceding stage and its contents do not justify the knowledge gained in the subsequent stage in an epistemic sense – in other words, the knowledge gained in the preceding stage(s) does not function as premises in the arguments of the subsequent stage(s). Consciousness holds on to the knowledge of the preceding stages as sublated [*aufgehoben*], but this knowledge does not play an active role in the configuration of the subsequent stage(s).²³⁴

The internal contradictions of each stage show that at that point consciousness has not yet made sufficient progress in its *Bildung*. Each stage that shows this insufficient progress in consciousness’s *Bildung* does so by turning out to be in internal contradiction and therefore transitions onto the next stage, all the way until Absolute Knowing. Each subsequent stage of consciousness reveals more of consciousness’s lack of and inconsistency in knowledge. Through

“loops” (Koch, 2021), as I argue in the Introduction, such an interpretation is not accurate. Further arguments can be given to explain this difference, specifically, through exploring the (1) non-flat character of Hegel’s epistemology, and (2) focusing on the center of the circle as the specific problem (different for each work) the work is intended to address. Exploring these two avenues is for a future project.

²³⁴ See fn241. *Aufhebung* means ‘lifting up’ by negating yet preserving.

this revelation, consciousness is getting further self-educated. “We”, the observers of consciousness’s self-education, can see this.

Each stage of consciousness breaks down, only to be succeeded by another stage which succumbs to the same fate. Thus, for founding and grounding its knowledge no given stage depends on the stage that precedes it. For, the breaking down of each stage through its own respective means indicates that it cannot serve the function of a foundation; it has shown itself to be an inadequate configuration for knowledge. Consequently, consciousness moves from one stage to the next as each stage presents its own inadequacy resulting in its dissolution. At the end of each stage of consciousness Hegel mentions the topic of what the next stage is,²³⁵ as following the current stage. For example, at the end of “Sense-certainty”, Hegel mentions “perception” as the following shape of consciousness, presenting it as “the truth of” of consciousness’s object (as consciousness sees the object in that moment), rather than taking that object as “immediate” (as consciousness has done in “Sense-certainty”) which has led consciousness into despair (*PhG* §110). Similarly, in the last paragraph of “Perception” Hegel mentions “Understanding” (*PhG* §131). The same pattern occurs at each stage. Each new shape is an attempt to be free of internal contradiction like the previous shapes.²³⁶

Furthermore, at the end of “Absolute Knowing”, that is, at the end of the *PhG*, Hegel claims that once consciousness reaches the end of its *Bildung*, it may need to do it over again.²³⁷

²³⁵ Although we, the observers of consciousness’s education, see what his next shape will be at the end of the current shape, consciousness is unaware of it. Consciousness finds itself in a new stage without recollection of previous stages at each stage of the journey until the last stage, “absolute knowing”, at which point consciousness becomes aware of the shapes it took in its journey. We, the observers who have an *account* of the education of consciousness, know the stage that will follow at the end of each stage and how this following stage relates to the previous stage, but consciousness itself remains unaware until the end.

²³⁶ Again, each new shape is an attempt to be free of contradiction even though consciousness itself is not aware of it at the time.

²³⁷ Similarly, Scott F. Aikin remarks, in his paper titled “The Problem of the Criterion and Hegel’s Model for Epistemic Informatism”, that because Hegel’s “system is made explicit by philosophy, both the system and the

However, what Hegel means here is not that this specific consciousness will go through the journey of the *PhG* again (except through recollection, which I discuss below), but rather that we will enter another circle, namely the circle of the *Science of Logic*. Thus, the end point of the *PhG* seeks to find its justification at the *PhG*'s beginning point which takes the investigation through yet another circle (though in the *WL* there is no explicit consciousness; consciousness dissolves at the end of the *PhG*). Hegel writes of the final point of consciousness's progression that "[i]n the *immediacy* of this new existence the Spirit has to start afresh to bring itself to maturity as if, for it, all that preceded were lost and it had learned nothing from the experience of the earlier Spirits" (*PhG* 492, §808; Suhrkamp 590-1, emphasis mine).²³⁸ Thus, consciousness (or Spirit, as it is at the final stage) through its return to the beginning, starts afresh in a new circle, in its new existence.

What is more, the mention of "the *immediacy* of this new existence" (*PhG* 492, §808; Suhrkamp 590, emphasis mine) bears striking resemblance to how the knowledge of consciousness in the first paragraph of the first chapter, "Sense-certainty", is characterized as "immediate": "The knowledge or knowing which is at the start or is *immediately* our object cannot be anything else but *immediate* knowledge itself, a knowledge of the *immediate* or of what simply *is*. Our approach to the object must also be *immediate*" (*PhG* §90, first three emphases mine). This use of the same term to characterize knowledge and existence of consciousness at both the first and the last paragraph of the journey of consciousness's education

articulation must be circular and ongoing", it therefore presents "a unique form of epistemic infinitism" (Aikin 379). According to Aikin, the epistemic system is circular and follows its pattern of inferences to infinity in circular motion (Aikin 379-80).

²³⁸ Hegel proceeds to claim that, however, "recollection, the *inwardizing*, of that experience, has preserved it and is the inner being, and in fact the higher form of the substance. So although this Spirit starts afresh and apparently from its own resources to bring itself to maturity, it is none the less on a higher level than it starts" (*PhG* 492, §808; Suhrkamp 591).

strongly suggests a connection between these two paragraphs.²³⁹ I discuss this connection and §808 further below.

Knowledge is true only when it is free of internal contradiction, when the categorial identity (perfect correspondence) of *An-sich* and *Für-uns* is achieved. Consciousness reaches this truth only at “absolute knowing”, when consciousness is at “the standpoint of Science” (*PhG* §78; Suhrkamp 73). Hegel writes that “[the] path [of consciousness] is the conscious insight into the untruth of phenomenal knowledge” as such (*ibid.*). At each stage of consciousness in the journey, consciousness finds its phenomenal knowledge to be untrue. In this path, each time the process takes place over again, the phenomenal object gets further differentiated and determined, and thus changes (while nevertheless remaining as a *phenomenal* object). The aim of this movement is to come to a point at which there is no discrepancy between the Notion “for us” [*für uns*] and the object “in itself” [*an sich*]. Hegel expresses this when he writes that “the goal is as necessarily fixed for knowledge as the serial progression [of the configurations]; it is the point where knowledge no longer needs to go beyond itself, where knowledge finds itself, where Notion corresponds to object and object to Notion” (*PhG* §80). This point is the standpoint of Science in which natural consciousness, having reached true knowledge, has lost itself

²³⁹ Hegel writes that each time the whole process takes place again, it starts at a “higher level” than before, but nevertheless finds a greater “depth”. This process of repeating the circle over and over again is “the raising-up of its depth” (*PhG* §808). Again, though this “rising up” may indicate that we are dealing with a spiral and not a circle to some, upon closer reading we find that since this rising up is equally a descent into the depths, Hegel’s epistemology here is one that is not flat – which does not mean that it is thereby spiral, for the circle nevertheless closes and the circle is repeated. However, the repetition creates a different Spirit each time: “The realm of Spirits is formed in this way in the outer world constitutes a succession in Time in which one Spirit relieved another of its charge and each took over the empire of the world from its predecessor” (*PhG* 492, §808). This image, as a spiral, would be a spurious infinite, one that creates an infinite progression, which for Hegel is not a real infinity. Absolute Knowing is nothing but the demonstration of the limit of Spirit. For more discussion on this, see Introduction.

completely and is no longer merely consciousness. It is the point at which consciousness no longer needs to progress further and breaks down.²⁴⁰

Accordingly, there is no “consciousness” *per se* that undergoes a journey in the *WL* which begins where the *PhG* ends. At the point of Absolute Knowing, Spirit knows its own limits, i.e. the limitations of its knowledge as a finite historical being. The knowledge throughout the *PhG* has been phenomenal knowledge. At the end of Absolute Knowing, Spirit knows that its exploration of phenomenal experience in relation to its various objects has its limits: the whole journey has been an account of these various limitations and contradictions.

For consciousness which embarks upon the journey to reach its truth, reaching true knowledge would mean that (i) “the Notion corresponds to the object” and (ii) that “the object corresponds to its Notion” (*PhG* 53-4, §84; Suhrkamp 77.). In the first case, knowledge is designated as the Notion and “the essence²⁴¹ or the *True* as what exists, or the *object*” (ibid.). In the second case essence is called the Notion and the object is understood as “the Notion itself as *object*, viz. as it exists *for an other*” (ibid.). The two cases (“procedures”), Hegel says, “are the same” (ibid.). For in both procedures, the goal is to seek the matching of Notion and object. In other words, as Winfield puts it, “purged of all distinguishable dimensions of *for itselfness* and *in itselfness*, absolute knowing is left with neither knowledge for which truth can be claimed nor any object to which to refer” (Winfield 30). Accordingly, Winfield claims that “[c]onsequently, absolute knowing is not only no determinate cognition, but no knowing at all. Its pure unity has

²⁴⁰ Hegel writes of consciousness that “it is something that goes beyond limits, and since these limits are its own, it is something that goes beyond itself” (*PhG* §80).

²⁴¹ “Essence” here is a translation of “*Wesen*” which resembles the past tense (Perfekt and Plusquamperfekt) form “*gewesen*” of the verb “to be” (“*sein*”) in German (cf. English “was” and “were”). This may have connotations for the process of *aufheben* that occurs in Hegelian dialectic where the past moments are preserved in the present moment. Most commentators think Hegel is an essentialist and that this term means “essence”. That implies there is something fixed by which to identify the object, whereas for Hegel the object, hence possible knowledge of it, changes.

eliminated all relation to other and thus mediation as well” (Winfield 31). Moreover, “indeterminate absolute knowing not only overcomes the opposition of consciousness but also eliminates the very standpoint of phenomenology itself” (Winfield 30).

Thus only when the Notion and the phenomenal object are matching can the claim to true knowledge be made: this is knowledge of one’s own limits in phenomenal cognition. Hegel claims that the investigation in the *PhG* should be viewed as “*relating Science to phenomenal knowledge*” (*PhG* 52, §81; Suhrkamp 75). However, it does not (despite seeming to) require a “presupposition which can serve as its underlying criterion” (*ibid.*). An examination which has a presupposition must presuppose what cognition is supposed to be like in order to examine it: it must presuppose cognition. And based on this criterion, the examination and its results will be limited to whether the results fit the criterion or not. On such a model, the examination cannot be fruitful. Not to mention, such an examination would be dogmatic; *we* would have to supply the criteria.

On the Hegelian circular model, however, the examination yields results because there is no presupposed criterion. We just look to see what consciousness chooses as its first, immediate criterion. The starting point is not foundational because it is necessarily revisable and does not form the ultimate authority and criteria for what comes later. In the *PhG* “the Soul ... journeys through the series of its own configurations as though they were the stations appointed for it by its own nature, ... and achieve[s] finally, through a completed experience of itself, the awareness of what it really is in itself” (*PhG* 49, §77; Suhrkamp 72). Consciousness does not begin with what it ends up affirming, which is the final result of an ongoing process. This process is one in which every result falls short, and is continually revised until the result agrees with its Notion.

This final point in the *PhG* is crucial for an account of *PhG*'s circular epistemology. To explain why, I shall explain what happens in the Absolute Knowing chapter and the two senses in which Absolute Knowing is in effect a return to the beginning. Through this discussion it shall become apparent that *PhG* gives an account of knowledge that is circular because following the dissolution and transition of each stage the final stage is a return to the beginning. At the end of the *PhG* consciousness returns to the beginning to complete its journey as a full circle.

In Absolute Knowing, consciousness sees its whole journey in retrospect in its totality as a gallery of images (*PhG* 492, §808; Suhrkamp 590). In this sense, Absolute Knowing is itself a perusing of the gallery of images of the journey. It is a return to the beginning to complete the circle in two senses. First, the complete view of the whole journey requires that consciousness return to the beginning in its recollection as it recollects starting from Sense-Certainty. Second, this return is a return to complete immediate knowledge. For, Absolute Knowing is the standpoint of Science and as such it is the beginning of the *WL*. To express these two senses in which Absolute Knowing is a return to the beginning, Hegel writes “the self-knowing Spirit, just because it grasps its Notion, is the immediate identity with itself which, in its difference, is the *certainty of immediacy*, or *sense-consciousness*—the beginning from which we started” (*PhG* 491, §806; Suhrkamp 589-90). Spirit, at the stage in which it knows itself and knows *knowledge*, is an *immediate* identity with its beginning point of “*certainty of immediacy*”.²⁴²

²⁴² In a similar vein, Hegel also writes the following: “Spirit [...] has shown itself to us to be neither merely the withdrawal of self-consciousness into its pure inwardness, nor the mere submergence of self-consciousness into substance, and the non-being of its [moment of] difference; but Spirit is *this movement* of the Self which empties itself of itself and sinks itself into its substance, and also, as Subject, has gone out of that substance into itself, making the substance into an object and a content at the same time as it cancels this difference between objectivity and content” (*PhG* 490, §804; Suhrkamp 587-8).

The circle that is formed with the completion of the journey at Absolute Knowing resembles the circle of the true infinite (which I discussed in Chapter 4). Hegel defines “knowledge” in a strikingly similar manner to the true infinite. Spirit comes to grasp knowledge fully and accurately only at Absolute Knowing, at this moment of return to the beginning, and the definition of knowledge itself also mirrors this return to the beginning. Hegel’s definition of knowledge is the following: “knowing is this seeming inactivity which merely contemplates how what is differentiated spontaneously moves in its own self and returns into its unity” (*PhG* 490, §804; Suhrkamp 588). This definition is one way of saying that at the point of absolute knowing, all of the moments of consciousness’s journey are retained and present (though as *aufgehoben*). But this definition also uncovers a new way in which consciousness (now Spirit) can regard its journey: the journey itself is encapsulated in every piece of true knowledge.

In other words, the journey of the *PhG* is a philosophical analysis of knowledge into its categories as lived experience (as phenomenal knowledge in the *PhG*). Consequently, when one grasps what knowledge truly is, then one is able to see the parts of the journey of the *PhG* as the categories that make up knowledge. The whole of the journey and the *Bildung* it offers is found as a whole in all knowledge, with the various stages of the journey functioning as the categories in knowledge and cognition. At Absolute Knowing then, Spirit finds its journey and itself (insofar as the journey is various stages of *consciousness*) in *knowledge*. Hegel writes that “[i]n this knowing, then, Spirit has concluded the movement in which it has shaped itself, in so far as this shaping was burdened with the difference of consciousness [i.e. of the latter from its object], a difference now overcome” (*PhG* 490, §805; Suhrkamp 588). The difference of consciousness from its object and the Notion is overcome through the journey in this last moment as it finally grasps *true* knowledge, which is the whole.

Grasping true knowledge in this way means that Spirit “*externalizes*” itself (*PhG* 490, §804). Spirit externalizes itself because it is in immediate identity with itself, having overcome its difference (from consciousness) and thereby returned to the beginning (*PhG* 491, §806). Because it is the immediate identity with itself, and because it has overcome its difference from consciousness, “[t]his [is the] release of itself from the form of its Self”, namely Spirit’s externalization (*ibid.*).

This externalization is at the same time the moment in which the *für-es* and *an-sich* of Spirit’s object are one and the same (*PhG* 490, §804), just as there was no differentiation between the *für-es* and *an-sich* of consciousness’s object at the very beginning of Sense-certainty before consciousness realized the contradiction in that stage. Spirit externalizing itself means that it is no longer encumbered by the oscillation between the subjective and the objective, the Notion and the object, and the *für-es* and the *an-sich* in its cognition, but has absolute knowledge, which is (as quoted above) “this seeming inactivity which merely contemplates how what is differentiated spontaneously moves in its own self and returns into its unity” (*PhG* 490, §804; Suhrkamp 588). Its unity, which Hegel refers to in this quote, is the whole journey. Though “the Notions of Science” are expressed in the shapes of consciousness, in Absolute Knowing “the Notion [...] breaks asunder the moments of this mediation” such that the Science takes shape in its totality in unity (*PhG* 491, §805; Suhrkamp 588-9).

Spirit externalized, no longer a Self, is beyond the oppositions of the subjective and the objective, the Notion and the object, and the *für-es* and the *an-sich* with which it grappled throughout its journey. As externalized, Spirit can grasp matters of knowledge without being one-sided or abstract. For, it has been *in* the position of one-sidedness and abstractness (caused in one way or another by the form of the Self), but has learned from these positions in its various

shapes and is now beyond them. Accordingly, being beyond the shapes of consciousness means that Spirit can (and does) have these shapes in view in totality. In order to have a view of the whole, Spirit has to first, before going further, externalize itself and shed its form of the Self.²⁴³

Hegel is quick to mention, however, that “this externalization is still incomplete” (*PhG* 491, §807; Suhrkamp 590). It is incomplete because “it expresses the connection of its self-certainty with the object which, because it is thus connected, has not yet won its complete freedom” (*PhG* 492, §807; Suhrkamp 590). This means that the externalization is dependent on the connection of the self-certainty with the object. In order to complete the externalization, Spirit has to “sacrifice itself” (*ibid.*). This self-sacrifice is a requisite part of Absolute Knowing as true knowledge because “[t]he self-knowing Spirit knows not only itself but also the negative of itself, or its limit: to know one’s limit is to know how to sacrifice oneself. This sacrifice is the externalization in which Spirit displays the process of its becoming Spirit in the form of *free contingent happening*, intuiting its pure Self as Time outside of it, and equally its Being as Space” (*ibid.*). Through this “*free contingent happening*” Spirit becomes Nature (*ibid.*). Spirit comes to know itself as a part of Nature and also as Nature as such. Spirit’s externalization as Nature indicates Spirit’s “living immediate Becoming” as the “eternal externalization of [Spirit’s] *continuing existence* and the movement which reinstates the *Subject*” (*ibid.*). Spirit lives as individual subjects – individual subjects are the externalization of Spirit as free contingent happening in space and time. Only now does consciousness or Spirit know how to *know* as a subject.

²⁴³ Externalization of Spirit here paves the way for the *WL* begin following the *PhG*. There is no “self” as phenomenally experiencing consciousness in the *WL* as I discussed in Chapter 3. Furthermore, as I mentioned earlier, the Self that is shed here is that which seeks to know phenomenally and not through engaging with the Idea.

There is, however, another side to the Becoming of Spirit here. This other side is *History* which is “a *conscious, self-mediating* process—Spirit emptied out into Time” (*PhG* 492, §808; Suhrkamp 590). Hegel writes that this History, or Becoming “presents a slow-moving succession of Spirits, a gallery of images, each of which [is] endowed with all the riches of Spirit” (*ibid.*). During this slow-moving succession, the Self is fulfilled by “perfectly *knowing* what *it is*”, or “knowing its substance” and “this knowing is its *withdrawal into itself* in which it abandons its outer existence and gives its existential shape over to recollection” (*ibid.*). In this withdrawal the Self is “absorbed in itself, it is sunk in the night of its self-consciousness” where “its vanished outer existence is preserved” (*ibid.*). This outer existence is “vanished” for the self while the self recollects, but it is “preserved” as external. The self thus has a “transformed existence” which is “the former one, but now reborn of the Spirit’s knowledge” (*ibid.*). There is much that can be said about what this transformation means, and such an exploration is beyond my scope here. However, what is significant for my purposes is that this transformation, this rebirth of the self from Spirit’s knowledge is “the new existence, a new world and a new shape of Spirit” (*ibid.*).

By returning to the beginning in Absolute Knowing, as discussed earlier, the *PhG* closes itself as a circle (“the self-knowing Spirit, just because it grasps its Notion, is the immediate identity with itself which, in its difference, is the *certainty of immediacy, or sense-consciousness*—the beginning from which we started” (*PhG* 491, §806; Suhrkamp 589-90)). However, the final step is this new existence of the Self. Accordingly, “in the *immediacy* of this new existence the Spirit has to bring itself to maturity as if, for it, all that preceded were lost and it had learned nothing from the experience of the earlier Spirits” (*PhG* 492, §808; Suhrkamp 590, my emphasis). This is the beginning of the *WL*. This is indicated in Hegel’s statement in the same passage that “although this Spirit starts afresh and apparently from its own resources to

bring itself to maturity, it is none the less on a higher level than it starts” (*PhG* 492, §808; Suhrkamp 591). Regardless, the immediacy found at this end point which coincides with the return to the beginning and constitutes the beginning of a new circle completes the circle of the *PhG*.

3. *Enzyklopaedie des philosophischen Wissenschaften*

The *Enzyklopaedie* is Hegel’s mature articulation of his complete system. Therefore, his views expressed here are of special importance for understanding Hegel. §15 of the *EL* is a key passage when considering circularity for Hegel:

Each of the parts of philosophy is a philosophical whole, a *circle* that closes upon itself; but in each of them the philosophical Idea is in a particular determinacy or element. Every single circle also breaks through the restriction of its element as well, precisely because it is inwardly [the] totality, and it grounds a further sphere. The whole presents itself therefore as a *circle of circles*, each of which is a necessary moment, so that the system of its peculiar element constitutes the whole idea—which equally appears in each single one of them. (*Enzyklopaedie* §15; Suhrkamp 60, emphases are mine)

In this section of this chapter, I will explain this quote and then I will go through each of the three parts of the *Enzyklopaedie* and outline their circular structure and their structure together as a circle of circles.

When Hegel presents the outline of his entire system in the form of three volumes under the title of “Encyclopaedia”, he is indicating that this is work of complete philosophical knowledge, that it is a complete system of philosophy. Furthermore, the term “encyclopaedia” is in part derived from the Ancient Greek word “ἐγκύκλιος” meaning “circular”. There is, therefore, an inherent connection between Hegel’s statement about the “circle of circles” and the name of the work.

The use of the encyclopaedic form for this work is also surely a nod to Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert's ground-breaking *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (1751-77). Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopaedia* is a novel format of scholarship of its time which aims to provide a comprehensive account of human knowledge while challenging the regular structures and orders of this knowledge as had thus far come to be the norm.²⁴⁴ In doing so the main goal of their encyclopedia is to change people's common ways of thinking. On this matter, Diderot states that "only a philosophical century could attempt an *encyclopedia*; and I said this because this work everywhere requires more boldness of mind than is normally possessed in centuries of cowardly taste. One must examine and stir up everything, without exception and without cautiousness" (Diderot, *Encyclopaedia*, *Encyclopaedia*).²⁴⁵

Hegel's choice to adopt this format for his systematic rendering of the three main parts of his philosophy signals his similar intention of changing common ways of thinking. This signal becomes especially salient we consider the implications of the format of an encyclopaedia together with the emphasis Hegel places on the circular structure of his *Enzyklopaedie* as a response and an alternative to other cognitive strategies (as discussed in chapters 3, 4, and 5).

²⁴⁴ D'Alembert states the two aims of the *Encyclopaedia* as follows: "As an *Encyclopedia*, it is to set forth as well as possible the order and connection of the parts of human knowledge. As a *Reasoned Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts, and Trades*, it is to contain the general principles that form the basis of each science and each art, liberal or mechanical, and the most essential facts that make up the body and substance of each" (d'Alembert, Jean-Baptiste le Rond. "Preliminary Discourse").

²⁴⁵ When we consider Hegel's discussion of the fear of making an error I discussed above, his own approach to philosophy without fear (starting at least in *PhG*) seems to be in the same spirit as Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopaedia*.

3.1. The Circular Structure of the Three Parts of the *Enzyklopaedie*

When we consider the structure of the *Enzyklopaedie* in relation to its contents, we can observe the circular pattern of which Hegel speaks.²⁴⁶ Hegel makes three distinct points in §15: 1) each part of the philosophy is a philosophical whole, which is a “circle that closes upon itself”, 2) each of these circles “breaks through the restriction of its element”, and 3) “the whole presents itself therefore as a circle of circles” (*Enzyklopaedie* §15; Suhrkamp 60). Let’s go through the *Enzyklopaedie* to see he Hegel means. I will restrict my scope to the Introductions, beginnings and ends of the three volumes. Incidentally, this decision is supported by Hegel’s claim that “As an *Encyclopaedia*, science is not presented in the detailed development of its particularization; instead, it has to be restricted to the beginnings and the fundamental concepts of the particular sciences” (*Enzyklopaedie* §16; Suhrkamp 60).

3.2. Part 1: Logic

After the Preliminary Conception that enumerates the three positions of thought with respect to objectivity, Hegel begins the Logic with The Doctrine of Being. When we look at the Logic, we will see that it is in the form of a circle, a complete whole, and that it also goes beyond itself: matching the three points Hegel made in §15 about circles.

Hegel starts The Doctrine of Being by saying that “*Pure being* makes the beginning, because it is pure thought as well as the undetermined, simple immediate, [and because] the first

²⁴⁶ But, we need to be mindful of not separating contents from structure or form, as Hegel reminds us throughout his corpus, as I discussed with regard to the *WL* in detail above. He also writes, for instance, at the end of the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, that “the method is not an external form, but the soul and the Concept of the content” (*Enzyklopaedie* §243). What I refer to here as structure is merely the circular form, and not the form of the details of the work, at which Hegel’s claim is aimed. By contents, I mean the form and specific content together of the details of the work.

beginning cannot be anything mediated and further determined” (*Enzyklopaedie* §86). The beginning point is pure, undifferentiated, immediate, and undetermined being in its entirety. “Pure being” here is “pure thought” because it is “being” in the domain of the logic. In the first part of the *Enzyklopaedie*, we explore logic and the realm of thought. When we begin with *pure being*, we are beginning here (as in the *WL*, which I discussed earlier) with a presuppositionless beginning. Hence, the pure being here is pure thought as the first immediate beginning into the exploration of logic, insofar as logic is the science of thought.

Starting at this point, this concept of Being develops within itself to create further determinations of itself and to differentiate and mediate itself by unfolding and going deeper into itself.²⁴⁷ As a result of the particular form of progression and development of the three sections of the Logic, we arrive at the last point, which is the Absolute Idea. Here, after looking through the specific form of development in each of the three main parts of the Logic, Hegel remarks that essentially we have returned to the beginning by coming to the end: “It is the Idea for which, being what is absolutely first (in the method), this end is at the same time only the *vanishing* of the *semblance* that the beginning is something-immediate, and the Idea is a result” (*Enzyklopaedie* §242).

This return to the beginning through a circular movement, Hegel claims, “is the cognition that the Idea is the One Totality” (*Enzyklopaedie* §242), that is, a whole.²⁴⁸ At the end of the

²⁴⁷ Hence, Hegel writes, it is “an unfolding, of the Concept that is *in-itself*, and at the same time the *going-into-itself* of being, its own deepening into itself” (*Enzyklopaedie* §84). In all three parts of the Logic, i.e. in Being, Essence, and Concept, there is a different mode of progression: respectively, these modes are an “abstract form of the progression is an *other* and *passing-over* into an other”, a “*shining within what is opposed*”, and “the distinctness of the *singular* from the *universality* which *continues* itself as such into what is distinct from it and is [present] *as identity* with the latter” (*Enzyklopaedie* §240).

²⁴⁸ This is to be expected already since Hegel wrote at the beginning of the Logic that “Being itself, as well as the following determinations (the logical determinations in general, not just those of Being), may be looked upon as definitions of the Absolute” (*Enzyklopaedie* §85). When we think of the term Absolute, especially in the sense in

Logic, we have not only completed a whole and come to the beginning but we also transcend the Logic by moving beyond it. The Logic is a complete whole, and a circle, but through this completion arises another circle. In the final paragraph of the Logic, Hegel explains how this happens: “*Considered according to this unity that it has with itself, the Idea that is for itself is intuiting and the intuiting Idea is Nature. ... The absolute freedom of the Idea ... in the absolute truth of itself, resolves to release out of itself into freedom the moment of its particularity or of the initial determining and otherness, the immediate Idea as its reflexion, or itself as Nature*” (*Enzyklopaedie* §244). It is beyond my scope here to explore this transition in detail, but I shall say a few things about how it happens.

When explaining the Idea, several sections preceding the Absolute Idea, Hegel writes the following:

The Idea can be grasped as *reason* (this is the proper philosophical meaning of “reason”); and further as the *Subject-Object*, as the *unity of the ideal and the real, of the finite and the infinite, of the soul and the body*, as the *possibility that has its actuality in itself*, as that whose *nature* can be *comprehended only as existing*, and so forth. [It can be grasped in all these ways] because all the relationships of the understanding are contained in the Idea, but in their ***infinite self-return and self-identity***. (*Enzyklopaedie* §214, bold emphasis mine)

Idea is the unity of these seemingly opposing sides of thought exhibited through the Logic. Like the true infinite (as discussed in Chapter 4) the Idea is an “infinite self-return and self-identity”. In this self-identity in Absolute Idea, the whole Logic returns to itself and reflects (as quoted in the paragraph above). This reflection is that of nature, as externalizing form the self-identity of the Absolute Idea as the totality of the Logic. Nature is at once identical to and yet different from the Logic in this reflection. Nature is thus another circle, as the Idea released by its own freedom.

which Hegel uses it in many of his works, we think of totality, unity, and a whole. I argue that when we think of the Absolute, we must also think of a circular pattern.

3.3. Part 2: Nature

Through this we transition into the second circle, the circle of Nature. Hegel writes that “Nature is, in itself, a living Whole” (*Enzyklopaedie* §251). It is not only a totality, just like Hegel claimed of all three parts of the *Enzyklopaedie* in the passage quoted at the beginning, it is also a circle, and it also moves beyond itself to create another circle, which is Spirit. In the *Zusatz* at the beginning of the Introduction to the Philosophy of Nature, Hegel again reminds us that “The science of philosophy is a circle in which each member has an antecedent and a successor” which are each circles of totality (*Enzyklopaedie* 2).²⁴⁹

Just as in the Logic, the end of Nature returns to its beginning. Hegel describes the movement of Nature through its stages as follows: “the Idea *posits* itself as that which it is *in itself*; or what is the same thing, that it returns *into itself* out of its immediacy and externality which is *death*, in order to be, first a *living creature*, but further, to sublimate this determinateness also in which it is only Life, and to give itself an existence as Spirit, which is the truth and the final goal of Nature and the genuine actuality of the Idea” (*Enzyklopaedie* §251). Thus, we see that Nature arises from Idea (as I discussed earlier), but we then return to the Idea when the individual dies, because the individual sublimes its existence. Though the individual dies and its body loses its integrity required to stay alive, the individual remains as an idea (I explain remaining as an idea more, immediately below). This closes the circle. From the complexity of determination and mediation required in nature for a living individual to exist, with the death of this individual, we are thrust back to the immediacy of space and time, namely, the beginning.

²⁴⁹ Hegel writes, “the precession of nature from the eternal Idea, its creation, the proof that there necessarily is a Nature, lies in the preceding exposition (§ 244); here we have to presuppose it as known” (*Enzyklopaedie* §375). Thus, it is confirmed by Hegel once again that the circle of nature comes from the circle of logic.

What Hegel means by the claim that the individual remains an idea is worthy of further exploration – a task beyond my scope here. We can explain this ideal character of the individual in nature in reference to ideality and infinity I explored in Chapter 4. There I explained that the real is included in ideality and that ideality is the most real. Moreover, ideality has the form of the circle insofar as ideality is the true infinite. At the end of Nature, we have a reference to this ideality and infinity. Accordingly, though the particular individual dies,²⁵⁰ life continues, and the idea of the individual lives on in the other individuals that follow. Slavoj Žižek expresses this circularity as follows:

Hegel does not imply that nature is always the same, that forms of vegetal and animal life are forever fixed, so that there is no evolution in nature—what he claims is that there is no history proper in nature: “The living conserves itself, it is the beginning and the end; the product in itself is also the principle, it is always as such active” (*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Suhrkamp, 525-6). Life eternally repeats its cycle and returns to itself: substance is again and again reasserted, children become parents, and so on. (Žižek 233)

Somewhat paradoxically, then, in the death of the individual we find the “*immortal being*” (*Enzyklopaedie* §376). Žižek’s claim above clarifies that Hegel means by the statement that “[t]hought, as this universal which exists for itself, is *immortal being*; mortal being is that in which the Idea, the universal, exists in an inadequate form” (ibid.). Death of the individual gives rise to Spirit: we are beyond considering the specific aspects of the nature of the living individual, but move on to the exploration of how individuals are in the world and in society together. This is Hegel’s anthropology, i.e. the next circle in the encyclopaedic system. Let’s look at this in some more detail.

Since Nature arose from the Idea externalizing itself at the end of the Logic, we begin Nature with pure externality, which is space. Space is at first abstract and universal. Hegel writes

²⁵⁰ The death of the individual reflects the death of consciousness as Spirit at the end of the *PhG*.

of space that “The first or immediate determination of Nature is *Space*: the abstract *universality of Nature’s self-externality*, self-externality’s mediationless indifference” (*Enzyklopaedie* §254). The end of the Philosophy of Nature seems to be very different though. We have an individual dying through its own disease. How have we then returned to the beginning to have the circle completed?

In the second last paragraph, Hegel writes that “The disparity between [the individual’s] finitude and universality is its *original disease* and the inborn *germ of death*, and the removal of this disparity is itself the accomplishment of this destiny” (*Enzyklopaedie* §375). There is a clue in this sentence: death is the removal of the disparity between finitude and universality. The individual is the finite singular that exists in the universal, which poses the disparity. When the individual dies, however, this disparity is sublated and we are at an indifferent and unmediated point. Similarly, space, at the beginning, does not distinguish between finitude and universality. Once we start to develop it more into its dimensions and parts, we then stumble across the disparity between finitude and universality: things in space are each finite, yet space is universal. This means that the relation of the universality of space and the finite things in space is akin to the relation of the universality of the Idea and the individual that lives and dies as a part of it.

Of the end point, Hegel writes in the last paragraph that “this achieved identity with the universal is the sublation of the *formal opposition* between the *immediate* singularity of the individuality and its *universality*; and this is only one side, and that the abstract side, namely, the *death of the natural being*” (*Enzyklopaedie* §376). This is the way in which the circle is closed and we have returned to the beginning. However, this is only one side; there is something else also happening, which is the arrival at a concrete universality that will take us to the next

circle:²⁵¹ “With this, Nature has passed over into its truth, into the subjectivity of the Notion whose *objectivity* is itself the sublated immediacy of singularity, is *concrete universality*; so that the Notion is posited as having for its *determinate being* the reality which corresponds to it, namely, the Notion—and this is *spirit*” (ibid.). The “sublated immediacy of singularity” here refers to the death of the individual as the singular, and the concrete universality is the continual life and death cycle which is not just some abstract notion (as a single individual would be) but concrete in having reached Spirit, society/social being.

3.4. Part 3: Geist

Thus, we have transitioned into Spirit. Hegel writes at the beginning of the third volume of the *Enzyklopaedie* that “[Geist] has become as the truth of Nature” (*Enzyklopaedie* §388). This Geist, he continues, “in its concretion and totality is one and simple. At such a stage it is not yet [*Geist*], but soul [*Seele*]” (ibid.).²⁵² After progressing through the Subjective and Objective Geist, we have returned full circle not only to the beginning of the *Geistesphilosophie* but also all the way back to the beginning of the first circle.

At the end of *Geistesphilosophie*, we have the section on Philosophy. The work that started with Spirit as Soul has progressed to the point where Spirit is Philosophy, and as a circle, we find in Philosophy the Soul itself, the beginning point.²⁵³ At this moment, Philosophy “finds

²⁵¹ Hegel writes that “in the Idea of life, subjectivity is the Notion, and it is thus *in itself* the absolute *being-within-itself* of actuality and concrete universality” (*Enzyklopaedie* §376).

²⁵² The soul is no separate immaterial entity. Wherever there is Nature, the soul is its universal immaterialism, its simple 'ideal' life. Soul is the substance or 'absolute' basis of all the particularizing and individualizing of mind: it is in the soul that mind finds the material on which its character is wrought, and the soul remains the pervading, identical ideality of it all. But as it is still conceived thus abstractly, the soul is only the sleep of mind – the passive of Aristotle, which is potentially all things. (*Enzyklopaedie* §389)

²⁵³ We arrive at Philosophy following Art and the Revealed Religion, and Hegel characterizes it as the cognition which is “the liberation from the one-sidedness of the forms, elevation of them into the absolute form, which

itself already accomplished, when at the close it seizes its own notion – i.e. only looks back on its knowledge”, meaning it goes back in a circular motion. Since it sees itself as already accomplished, this seeing is going back to the beginning through all of the knowledge in the *Geistesphilosophie* as well as through the whole *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*.

Hegel characterizes the whole encyclopaedic process, then, as a bringing together and an account of knowledge when he, at this very last point, reveals Philosophy as the knowledge that we have gathered through the three circles forming a circle of circles. He writes that “This notion of philosophy is the self-thinking Idea, the truth aware of itself” (*PM* §574).²⁵⁴ Through the concretization of the knowledge, that is, the “content as in its actuality”, Hegel writes that “the science has gone back to its beginning” (*ibid.*). Thus, this completes the circle of circles, and the *Enzyklopaedie* is a whole totality of philosophical knowledge and an epistemology in Hegel’s “speculative” sense.²⁵⁵

That the *Enzyklopaedie* forms an epistemology is further made clear by Hegel when he discusses its syllogistic form in its three parts at the end of the *Geistesphilosophie*. This discussion takes place in the Philosophy section of the *Enzyklopaedie*, and in this sense portrays philosophy, and the *Enzyklopaedie of the Philosophical Sciences* as a logical enterprise of circular accounts of knowledge, i.e. circular epistemologies. According to the syllogism that Hegel presents, Logic, Nature, and Geist each form one part of the syllogism.²⁵⁶ But they also

determines itself to content, remains identical with it, and is in that the cognition of that essential and actual necessity” (*Enzyklopaedie* §573).

²⁵⁴ He then refers to the end of the *EL* (§236) where he had discussed the Idea.

²⁵⁵ As discussed before in this dissertation, Hegel’s sense of epistemology is a “speculative” account of knowledge that is integral to his idealism and the structure and contents of his works. This is the sense in which the whole of *philosophical* knowledge can at the same time be (and it very much is) epistemology. For more detail on this topic, see chapters 1, 3, and 5.

²⁵⁶ “The first appearance is formed by the syllogism, which is based on the Logical system as starting-point, with Nature for the middle term which couples the Mind with it. The Logical principle turns to Nature and Nature to Mind” (*Enzyklopaedie* §575).

each form a syllogism in themselves. For the purposes of my discussion, we don't need to go into the details of these, but we can importantly point out the epistemological nature of Hegel's description in hindsight of the whole project.

To conclude let's focus on this final point. The moment of Philosophy accomplishes three points: 1) It brings the three circles together by closing the circle of circles, 2) It reveals all that has transpired in the *Enzyklopaedie* as knowledge, and 3) It reveals itself as already having been found at the beginning of the Logic with Being. When we put these pieces together, we see that Hegel is making quite a peculiar claim: Being as knowledge is Philosophy, and we come to this insight through the cognition of the *Enzyklopaedie*. This, I argue, is Hegel's circular epistemology, and it reveals to us his idealism as ontologically tying together being and knowledge and philosophy in a scientific framework.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the ways in which Hegel's *WL*, *PhG*, and *Enzyklopaedie* exhibit circular epistemologies. My accounts of the circular epistemology in these works focused on their specific development, the importance of their beginning and end points, and how the end points returned to the beginning to form the circular structure. At the same time, I explored the various ways in which Hegel is conversing with Kant and Fichte, and providing improvements and critiques to their ideas through certain aspects of the circular epistemology in these works.

I began the section on the *WL* with an argument that Hegel has been preoccupied with a circular epistemology through his whole philosophical career. This argument is based on the fact that Hegel takes up in the *WL* the issue of circularity which he explored in his early philosophical

publication, the *Differenzschrift*, in relation to Reinhold. I argued that Hegel changes his stance on Reinhold's philosophy but not on circularity. While exploring the relation of the beginning point and the end point of the *WL*, I claimed that Hegel is responding to Fichte's three principles (which I explained in Chapter 2). I argued that Hegel's aim in his critiques of his predecessors and of foundationalism is to present a solution to the skeptical worry (which I explained in the form of the Münchhausen-trilemma in Chapter 1). He presents the advance as a retreat into the ground in order to not only critique foundationalism as privileging the beginning point from the outset and reject an infinite regress (as also exhibited in his account of true infinity, which I explored in Chapter 4), but to establish his circular epistemology as the correct alternative to the cognitive strategies that fail to reach truth. Accordingly, I presented Hegel's circular epistemology in the *WL* through a detailed analysis of the presuppositionless beginning and a return to this beginning's immediacy at the end of the work. Following an account of Kant's "transcendental logic", I also argued that Hegel's logic is a development on Kant's idea. This argument is important for understanding Hegel's circular epistemology in the *WL* because Hegel's notion of a science of logic as a circular epistemology can be grasped in its full historical significance when we consider its relation to Kant's transcendental logic.

In the section on the circular epistemology of the *PhG*, I began with a discussion of the immediacy of the beginning point and its presuppositionless character. Through an account of the science of the journey of the *PhG*, I argued that this beginning is anti-foundationalist. In this sense, the *PhG* as a whole constitutes a response to Kant's account of cognition. I argued that this is the case insofar as the *PhG* exhibits an account of cognition that gets developed through the phenomenal experience and dialectical investigation (through the movement of the Notion) of the cognition of consciousness itself, and Hegel criticizes Kant for giving an account of

cognition that is prior to this cognition.²⁵⁷ I then gave an account of the general idea behind the progression of the *PhG* from one stage to the next until the return to the beginning at Absolute Knowing. This account included an analysis of Hegel's use of the term 'phenomenology' in dialogue with Kant's dichotomy between phenomena and noumena. I claimed here that the circular structure of Hegel's notion of phenomena as governing the notion of cognition is a criticism of and a break from the Kantian distinction. I argued that the return to the beginning and the closing of the circle happens in Absolute Knowing in the form of a gallery of images of the whole journey as well as the introduction of a new immediacy (namely, the beginning of the *WL*). This return to itself and to the immediacy of its beginning of the journey is akin to Hegel's account of the true infinite. Furthermore, the crucial relation of true knowledge (found in Absolute Knowing) and the completion of the circle indicates once again the epistemological character of Hegel's notion of circularity.

Following the section on the *PhG*, I gave a brief overview of the "circle of circles" of the *Enzyklopaedie*. I began with a discussion of the importance of the format of encyclopaedia – what it means for circularity and for Hegel's project in general. Then I divided my discussion into three subsections, one for each volume of the *Enzyklopaedie*: Logic, Nature, and Geist. In these subsections, I analyzed the beginning and end points of each volume, focusing on how the end returns to the beginning to form a circle in each one. Moreover I presented Hegel's accounts of how each transitions to the next and the third volume returns to the first volume to form a circle of circles.

²⁵⁷ This refers to my discussion in Chapter 3 of Hegel's criticism of the "founding and grounding tendency" and trying to learn to swim before jumping into the water.

These accounts of the circular structure in these three major works put into context the various aspects of Hegel's circular epistemology. The discussion and arguments surrounding the special character of the beginning points, end points, the return to the beginning at the end, and the non-foundational progression of these works not only substantiate my arguments in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 regarding Hegel's circular epistemology, but also demonstrate some of the details of how this circular epistemology is intended as a response to the cognitive strategies of Kant and his immediate commentators on the one hand (as I explored in Chapters 1 and 2) and as a strong alternative to the dominant cognitive strategies in the Western philosophical canon which all fall into the problem outlined in the Münchhausen-trilemma (as I introduced in Chapter 1).

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I argued that an accurate account of Hegel's circular epistemology, evoked through the image of a "circle of circles", allows us to rethink Hegel's idealism and philosophy overall. To conclude, I would like to provide an overview of what I accomplished in this dissertation and identify philosophical projects that may be undertaken in the future as a development of various arguments I made and issues I identified.

The main claim of this dissertation is that Hegel's notion of circles, (taking the shape of "circle", "circle of circles", and "circularity", scattered throughout his corpus), is not merely an odd image he alludes to in passing, but that it has wide implications for Hegel's philosophy overall that spans his philosophical career. Many of the arguments I made weave a range of topics and philosophical issues across the chapters in this dissertation. Thus, it is important to take stock of the wide breadth of conclusions and implications we can glean from my endeavor in this dissertation to begin to develop a firm grasp of Hegel's notion of circularity.

Circularity in Hegel's philosophy has not received the focused attention it needs. In this dissertation I gave a detailed account of circularity in Hegel's philosophy, and argued that Hegel's circles refer to his cognitive strategy and shape some of his most important works: *PhG*, *WL*, and the *Enzyklopaedie*. I analyzed the circular epistemology of these works. I argued that a circular epistemology, as a cognitive strategy, is an approach to doing philosophy where one sets the standards for knowledge as one develops the system, not beforehand. As such, a philosophical endeavor begins without presuppositions and develops dialectically, that is, it develops through detailed consideration of the object at hand to the point where a contradiction

of some kind or another object emerges and moves the science forward. This development continues until we find ourselves at the beginning point – where the end meets the beginning and thereby justifies it, having come full circle.

The truth, Hegel claims is the whole. I argued that Hegel’s circular epistemology is such that the circle as a whole grounds, i.e. justifies, itself. It does not rely upon a foundation that rests outside of it. The science is complete and successful in answering its main concern, which I argued is the center of the circle, only when the circle is complete. For, the center of the circle is established also only when the circle is complete. Thus, we have a full grasp of the subject and object of the science only when we complete it. The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of dusk.

Starting from the beginning of the dissertation, one of my main goals has been to situate Hegel’s notion of circularity within German idealism as well as within the philosophical tradition more broadly. I argued that Hegel’s notion of circularity answers the skeptical worry about the difficulty in finding knowledge and truth which has been expressed throughout the history of philosophy in various forms. Moreover, when considering the relation of Hegel’s notion of circularity and idealism (more on this shortly), I argued that Hegel’s notion of ideality conceived in the form of a circle (as the “true infinite”) – though an infinite circle, nonetheless a concrete finite unit that grounds itself – intervenes in the discussions in metaphysics that dominate the history of philosophy regarding ideality and reality, matter and form.

Hegel’s intervention into the debate on ideality and reality through his circular epistemology, I argued, is to be understood within a specific discussion over what he calls “the founding and grounding tendency” in the immediate reception of Kant’s Copernican revolution. I

traced this specific discussion through the works of some German idealist philosophers who are crucial in the development of Hegel's thought. I began my tracing with Kant, whose work was read through a foundationalist critique by Reinhold, who then influenced Schulze's reading of Kant that gave rise to Schulze's skeptical but at the same time foundationalist critique. Fichte's reading of Kant and his own system he was developing at the time were influenced by Schulze's criticisms of Kant, and in turn, Fichte influenced Schelling who, for the most part, conceived of himself to be working within the framework of Fichtean philosophy. Through my analysis of this specific formational thread running through the works of these important post-Kantian commentators and thinkers, I argued that there is a gradual evolution of the approach to "the founding and grounding tendency" that Hegel identifies as finding its highest point in Reinhold's philosophy (though, I showed, Hegel later changes his mind on this judgment of Reinhold). Hegel's circular epistemology, as a defining feature of his works, is a reaction and alternative to the various iterations of this tendency.

Hegel takes on foundationalism and skepticism through his circular epistemology and provides an alternative cognitive strategy in the wake of the crisis about knowledge created by Kant's Copernican revolution. Rather timelessly, Hegel's circular epistemology is able to answer the issues in foundationalist theories of the twentieth-century epistemology by providing an alternative. This much is not a surprise since foundationalism has more or less the same structure in its various iterations and is thus susceptible to the same critiques. What is interesting and exciting is, however, the insights Hegel's circular epistemology can provide to coherentist views, such as those developed by Sellars, Davidson, and Quine. As I indicate in Chapter 5 through my engagement with McDowell and Sellars's discussions around coherentism, Hegel's notion of

circularity, as a successful alternative cognitive strategy, can be directly relevant in answering potential criticisms against coherentist theories.

Most foundationalist theories are some form of representationalism. Insofar as Hegel's circular epistemology is a response to foundationalist tendencies, it is a rejection of representationalism. Accordingly, I argued that Hegel's circular epistemology characterizes his idealism. Throughout the dissertation, I provided various arguments to explain Hegel's idealism from various angles, including his interaction with and responses to Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. Most strikingly, however, is Hegel's discussion of the ideal in the *WL*. There, by characterizing the ideal as the true infinite, which is a circle, I claim that Hegel directly relates idealism to his circular epistemology through his position on the correct way to grasp infinity, namely as ongoing and complete at the same time.

My novel account of Hegel's idealism here is based on circularity. What we can know is only the totality of what we develop progressively as knowledge, and at the limits of what we can/may know within that account, the circle closes and we return to the beginning to begin a new circle. Accordingly, "absolute" for Hegel indicates limits. As opposed to the infinite regress of the spurious/bad infinite, Hegel's true infinite found at the closing point of the circle, namely at the absolute, indicates that knowledge is infinitely limited – and *that* is the truth. Truth is limited to what we can/may know in a given context and development. Recognizing the limits of our current framework by seeing it absolutely, i.e. in its entirety, provides the perspective to progress further. In Hegel's case, progressing further means another circle. Thus, our scientific endeavor is to repeat the circle progressively to a point where we may return yet again to the very beginning, forming a circle of circles.

My account of Hegel's notion of circular epistemology and the absolute dispels the problematic yet dominant approaches to Hegel's notion of the "absolute". These approaches view Hegel to mean that his philosophy is an all-encompassing system that leaves no further work to be done in philosophy – a totalizing universal system that rejects the possibility of unknowns and asserts itself as dogma. As my arguments for Hegel's circular epistemology show, Hegel's work is not totalizing but humble in its claims for what we (and our finite ways of cognizing and knowing) can achieve in a given philosophical enterprise. Thus, his circular epistemology is his cognitive strategy to claim what we may know, and claim it with its limits, such that we may then go forward, but without falling into an infinite progression similar to an infinite regress. With Hegel's circular epistemology, we may have complete knowledge – complete for our task at hand and our limitations. Moreover, this knowledge is complete only when we know its limitations and ours. The greatest achievement is self-sacrifice and the recognition of the limits of what can be done with the specific progression that began in the way that it did with its own beginning point. So, we return to the beginning as an affirmation of the beginning, the end, the whole progression, and the limits of the whole, thereby making it a *concrete* circle of knowledge.

Despite the large breadth of material I cover in this dissertation, there is more work to be done. As I indicated at the beginning, in the Introduction, since circularity is a defining characteristic of Hegel's work and approach, we need to pay much more attention to it in order to make sense of Hegel's work. There is much to explore in the relations of Hegel's circular epistemology to Kant, other German idealists I discussed (especially Fichte and Schelling), and other figures in the history of philosophy who had an influence on Hegel. It is crucial to explore further why it is that Hegel changes his mind about and seems to favor Reinhold's view (as it

relates to foundationalism and the beginning point) in his mature work when he had criticized him sharply earlier, and what this change means for a development in Hegel's philosophy in accordance.

Aside from the historical considerations, there are many elements of the conception of Hegel's circular epistemology to further analyze. The concepts of truth, reality, ideality, infinity, finitude, concreteness, abstractness, and the meaning of wholeness all figure prominently in how I've explored and given an account of Hegel's circular epistemology. However, these can each be explored and analyzed further. Though I indicated the role of the center of the circle in my account of Hegel's circular epistemology, I was not able to explore the specific centers of Hegel's circles I've analyzed. It would be fruitful for our efforts to grasp these works and circular epistemology to identify clearly what constitutes the center in each circle and this center's import for the way we make sense of the circle as a whole.

Finally, I think it is of utmost importance to bring Hegel's circular epistemology prominently into discussions in contemporary epistemology and metaphysics where its input may resolve various problems, just as Hegel intended it to be a solution to the skeptical worries of his time and of those before him.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aikin, Scott F. "The Problem of the Criterion and Hegel's Model for Epistemic Informatism". *History of Philosophy Quarterly*. Vol. 27, No. 4, 2010, pp. 379-388.
- Albert, Hans. *Traktat über kritische Vernunft*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1968.
- Allison, Henry. *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Alston, William P. "Concepts of Epistemic Justification." *The Monist*. Vol. 68, Issue 1, 1985, pp. 57-89.
- . "The Deontological Conception of Epistemic Justification." *Philosophical Perspectives*. Vol. 2, 1988, pp. 257-299.
- Ameriks, Karl. *Interpreting Kant's Critiques*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- . "Introduction: interpreting German Idealism". *Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*. Ed. Karl Ameriks. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000. pp.1-17.
- . "Recent Work on Hegel: The Rehabilitation of an Epistemologist?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. Vol. 52, No. 1, 1992, pp. 177-202.
- Aquinas, Thomas. *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* in three two-part volumes. In *Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. edita, t. 22*. Rome: Ad Sanctae Sabinae/Editori di San Tommaso, 1975-1970-1972-1973-1976.
- Aristotle. *De Anima*. In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. New York: Random House, 1941.
- . *Metaphysics*. In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. New York: Random House, 1941.
- . *Posterior Analytics*. In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. New York: Random House, 1941.

- Ayer, A.J. *The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge*. Macmillan, 1940.
- Bataille, Georges. *Inner Experience*. Trans. Leslie A. Boldt. Albany: SUNY Press, 1988.
- Bates, Jennifer Ann. *Hegel's Theory of Imagination*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2004.
- Baumgarten, Alexander. (1739) *Metaphysics*. Trans. and Ed. Courtney D. Fugate and John Hymers. Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Bernstein, Richard. *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science Hermeneutics, and Praxis*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983.
- BonJour, Laurence. *In Defense of Pure Reason*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- . *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985.
- BonJour, Laurence and Ernest Sosa. *Epistemic Justification: Internalism vs. Externalism, Foundations vs. Virtues*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.
- Büttgen, Philippe, Marc Crépon, and Sandra Laugier. "Begriff". *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*. Ed. Barbara Cassin, Emily Apter, Jacques Lezra, and Michael Wood. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014.
- Brandom, Robert. *A Spirit of Trust: A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019.
- . *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, & Discursive Commitment*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994.
- Breitenbach, A. "Mechanical explanation of nature and its limits in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*". *Studies in the History of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*. Vol. 37(4), Dec. 2006, pp. 694-711.
- Brown, Nahum. *Hegel on Possibility: Dialectics, Contradiction, and Modality*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020.

- Brown, Stuart. *Introduction*. In *British Philosophy and the Age of Enlightenment*. Ed. Stuart Brown. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Brunschwig, Jacques and David Sedley. "Hellenistic Philosophy". *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Philosophy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003. pp. 151-183.
- Bubner, Rüdiger. "Hegel and the End of History". *Hegel Bulletin*. Vol. 12, Issue 1-2, Number 23/24, 1991, pp. 15-23.
- Buck-Morss, Susan. *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009.
- Burbidge, John. *The Logic of Hegel's 'Logic'*. Canada: Broadview Press, 2006.
- Carlson, David Gray. *A Commentary to Hegel's Science of Logic*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Chisholm, Roderick. "A Version of Foundationalism". *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*. Vol. 5, No.1, 1980, pp. 543–564.
- . *The Foundations of Knowing*. Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 1982.
- Chomsky, Noam. *Language and Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Comay, Rebecca. *Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.
- Comay, Rebecca and Frank Ruda. *The Dash—the Other Side of Absolute Knowing*. MIT Press, 2018.
- Correia, Fabrice. "Ontological Dependence". *Philosophy Compass*. Vol. 3, No.5, 2008. pp. 1013-1032.
- Dahlstrom, Daniel. *Essence and Subjectivity in Hegel's Science of Logic*. St. Louis, Missouri: Saint Louis University Press, 1978.

- . *Philosophical Legacies: Essays on the Thought of Kant, Hegel, and Their Contemporaries*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008.
- Dale, E.M. *Hegel, the End of History, and the Future*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- d'Alembert, Jean-Baptiste le Rond. "Preliminary Discourse." *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*. Trans. Richard N. Schwab and Walter E. Rex. Ann Arbor: Michigan Publishing, University of Michigan Library, 2009. Web. 14 Nov. 2020. <<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0001.083>>. Trans. of "Discours Préliminaire," *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, Vol. 1. Paris, 1751.
- Davidson, Donald. "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge". *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson*. Ed. Ernest LePore. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1986, pp. 307-319.
- . "Radical Interpretation". *Dialectica*. Vol. 27, No. 1, 1973, pp. 314-328.
- de Boer, Karin. "Hegel's Account of the Present". *Proceedings of the Hegel Society of America*. Vol. 19, 2009, pp. 51-67.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Deligiorgi, K. "Religion, Love, and Law: Hegel's Early Metaphysics of Morals". In *A Companion to Hegel*. Ed. Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur. UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2011, pp. 23-44.
- DeRose, K. "Direct Warrant Realism". In *God and the Ethics of Belief: New Essays in Philosophy of Religion*. Ed. A. Dole and A. Chignell. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Descartes, Rene. *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999.

- Desmond, William. "Hegel, Art, and History". *History and System: Hegel's Philosophy of History*. Ed. Robert L. Perkins. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1984.
- di Giovanni, George. (Ed.). *Essays on Hegel's Logic*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990.
- . (Ed.) *Karl Leonhard Reinhold and the Enlightenment*. Berlin: Springer, 2010.
- Euclid. *Elements*. Ed. Dana Denmore. Trans. Sir Thomas Little Heath. Green Lion Press, 2002.
- Ferrarin, Alfredo. *Hegel and Aristotle*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Fichte, J.G. *Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, Germany: Friedrich Frommann Verlag, 1962.
- . *Brief Nr. 168*. Gesamtausgabe, Hrsg. Lauth/Jacob, Bd. III 2, 1970, p. 18.
- . *Brief Nr. 171*. Gesamtausgabe, Hrsg. Lauth/Jacob, Bd. III 2, 1970, p. 28.
- . "Review of Aenesidemus". *Between Kant and Hegel*. Trans. George di Giovanni and H.S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000. pp. 136-157.
- . *The Science of Knowledge*. Ed. and trans. Peter Heath and John Lachs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- . *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1972.
- Förster, Eckart. *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy: A Systematic Reconstruction*. Trans. Brady Bowman. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Forster, Michael N. *Hegel and Skepticism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- . *Hegel and the Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Franks, Paul. *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism*. Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2005.

- Fulda, Hans Friedrich. *Das Problem einer Einleitung in Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik*. Frankfurt am Main, 1975.
- . *Hegels Dialektik als Begriffsbewegung und Darstellungsweise*. 1978, < http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/17109/1/Fulda_Hegels_Dialektik_als_Begriffsbewegung.pdf>
- . *Materialien zu Hegels „Phänomenologie des Geistes“*. Ed. with Dieter Heinrich. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1992.
- . *Zur Logik der Phänomenologie von 1807*. 1966, < http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/16189/1/Fulda_Zur%20Logik%20der%20Phaenomenologie%20von%201807.pdf>
- . “Unzugängliche Bemerkungen zur Dialektik”. *Hegel-Bilanz: Zur Aktualität und Inaktualität der Philosophie Hegels*. Ed. Reinhard Heede and Joachim Ritter. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1973. pp. 231-282.
- . “Ontologie nach Kant und Hegel”. *Metaphysik nach Kant?*. Ed. Dieter Heinrich. Stuttgart, 1988. pp. 44-82.
- . “Über den spekulativen Anfang”. *Subjektivität und Metaphysik*. Ed. Dieter Heinrich. Frankfurt am Main, 1966. pp. 109-127.
- . *Systemphilosophie als Selbsterkenntnis Hegel und der Neukantianismus*. Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2006.
- Gabriel, Markus. *Transcendental Ontology: Essays in German Idealism*. London: Continuum, 2011.
- Goldman, A.I. “Internalism Exposed”. In *Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. 96 (6), pp. 271-293, 1999.
- Greco, John. “Justification is Not Internal”. *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*, second edition. Ed. Matthias Steup, John Turri, and Ernest Sosa. Wiley-Blackwell, 2014.

- Guyer, Paul. "Absolute idealism and the rejection of Kantian dualism". *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*. Ed. Karl Ameriks. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000. pp. 37-56.
- . "Thought and being: Hegel's critique of Kant's theoretical philosophy". *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*. Ed. Frederick C. Beiser. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993. pp. 171-210.
- Haack, Susan. (1998) "Evidence and Enquiry". *Philosophical Quarterly*. Vol. 48 (192), pp. 409-412.
- . *Evidence and Inquiry: Towards Reconstruction in Epistemology*. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995.
- Haring, G.H. and C.L. Michelet. *Historisch-kritische Darstellung der dialektischen Methode Hegels*. Leipzig, Germany: Duncker & Humbolt, 1888.
- Harris, H.S. *Hegel: Phenomenology and System*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing, Inc., 1995.
- . "Hegel's Correspondence Theory of Truth". *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Reappraisal*. Ed. Garry, K. Browning. Springer, 1997. pp. 11-22.
- . *Hegel's Ladder: Pilgrimage of Reason, Volume 1*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing, Inc., 1997.
- . *Hegel's Ladder: The Odyssey of Spirit, Volume 2*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing, Inc., 1997.
- . *Introduction to The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*. By G.W.F. Hegel. Trans. T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, and H.S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991.

- . *Lecture Notes on Hegel's Encyclopedia Logic [1830] prepared by H.S. Harris for a course during the academic year 1993 – 1994 at Glendon College, York University, Toronto.* <
<http://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10315/943/HS00017.pdf>>
- . "The End of History in Hegel". *Hegel Bulletin*. Vol. 12, Issue 1-2, Number 23/24, 1991, pp. 1-14.
- Hegel, G.W.F. *Ästhetik I*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2013.
- . *Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie*. In *Jenaer Schriften 1801-1807*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2016. English translation: *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*. Trans. H.S. Harris and Walter Cerf. Albany: SUNY Press, 1977.
- . *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften, I*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2014. English translation: *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*. Trans. T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, and H.S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991.
- . *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften, II*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2014. English translation: *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*. Trans. A.V. Miller with Foreword by J.N. Findlay. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- . *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften, III*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2016. English translation: *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*. Trans. William Wallace, together with the *Zusätze* in Boumann's Text (1845) trans. A.V. Miller, with Foreword by J.N. Findlay. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- . *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2013.
- . *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2014. English translation: *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- . *Wissenschaft der Logik, I*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2014. English translation: *Science of Logic*. Trans. A.V. Miller. Ed. H.D. Lewis. New York: Humanity Books, 1998.

- . *Wissenschaft der Logik*, II. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2014. English translation: *Science of Logic*. Trans. A.V. Miller. Ed. H.D. Lewis. New York: Humanity Books, 1998.
- . *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2015. English translation: *Philosophy of History*. Trans. J. Sibree. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1991.
- . *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, I. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986.
- . *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, II. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986.
- . *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol 3. Trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1986.
- Henrich, Dieter. *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*. Ed. David S. Pacini. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- . *Hegel im Kontext*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971.
- . "Kant's Notion of a Deduction and the Methodological Background of the First *Critique*". *Kant's Transcendental Deductions: The Three 'Critiques' and the 'Opus postumum'*. Ed. Eckart Förster. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989. pp 29-46.
- . "The Proof Structure of Kant's Transcendental Deduction". *The Review of Metaphysics*. Vol. 22, No. 4, 1969, pp. 640-659.
- Hoepfner, Till. "Kants Begriff der Funktion und die Vollständigkeit der Urteils- und Kategorientafel". *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*. Vol. 65, No. 2, 2011, pp. 193-217.
- Houlgate, Stephen. *The Opening of Hegel's Logic: From Being to Infinity*. Purdue University Press, 2005.
- Huemer, Michael. *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.

- Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding: And Other Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Hyppolite, Jean. *Logic and Existence*. Trans. Leonard Lawlor and Amit Sen. Albany: SUNY Press, 1997.
- Inwood, Michael J. *Hegel*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Jacobi, F.H. (1785) *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*. Hamburg: Meiner, 2005.
- . (1789) *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn, vermehrte*. Hamburg: Meiner, 2005.
- Kainz, Howard P. *Paradox, Dialectic, and System: A Contemporary Reconstruction of the Hegelian Problematic*. Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*. In *Practical Philosophy*. Trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- . *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- . *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Ed. Paul Guyer. Trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- . "The Dohna-Wundlacken Logic" (1790s). *Lectures on Logic*. Ed. J. Michael Young. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. pp. 425-516.
- . *Letter from Kant to Herz, February 21, 1772*. In *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: Background Source Materials*. Ed. and trans. Eric Watkins. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- . "Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God" (1763). *Theoretical philosophy, 1755-1770*. Trans. and Ed. David Walford. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. pp. 111-115.

- Kepler, Johannes. *Harmonices Mundi*. Linz: Johann Planck, 1619.
- Kim, Jaegwon. "What is 'naturalized epistemology'?" *Philosophical Perspectives*. Vol. 2, 1988, pp. 381-405.
- Koch, Anton Friedrich. *Der Begriff als die Wahrheit: zum Anspruch der Hegelschen "subjektiven Logik"*. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2003
- . *Die Evolution des logischen Raumes: Aufsätze zu Hegels Nichtstandard-Metaphysik*. Mohr Siebeck, 2014.
- . "Robert Pippin on the speculative identity of thinking and being". *European Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. 26, No. 4, 2019. pp. 1048-1054.
- . "Kants transzendente Deduktion aus der Perspektive der Wissenschaft der Logik". *Hegel-Jahrbuch*, Nr. 1 Berlin: 2016, pp. 45-53.
- . "Die Selbstbeziehung der Negation in Hegels Logik". *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*. Vol. 53 no.1, 1999, pp. 1-29.
- . "Die Problematik des Übergangs von der Schlusslehre zur Objektivität". *Hegels Lehre vom Begriff, Urteil und Schluss*. Ed. Andreas Arndt, Christian Iber, and Günter Kruck. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006. pp. 205-215.
- . "Die schlechte Metaphysik der Dinge: Metaphysik als immanente Metaphysikkritik bei Hegel". *Internationales Jahrbuch des deutschen Idealismus*. Vol. 5, 2007, pp. 189-210.
- . "Hegelsche Subjekte In Raum Und Zeit". *Hegel-Jahrbuch*. Vol. 12, 2010, pp. 63-71.
- . "Second Lecture. From the Phenomenology of Spirit to the Science of Logic". *Five Lectures About Hegel*. Heidelberg. Accessed Feb 14, 2021. <https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/md/philssem/personal/koch_five_lectures_about_hegel.pdf>
- . "Kant, Fichte, Hegel und die Logik. Kleine Anmerkungen zu einem großen Thema". *Internationales Jahrbuch des deutschen Idealismus*. Vol. 12 (2014), Berlin, 2017, pp. 291-316.

- Köhnke, Klaus Christian. "Über den Ursprung des Wortes Erkenntnistheorie – und Desen Vermeintliche Synonyme". *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*. Vol. 25, no. 2, 1981, pp. 185-210.
- Kojeve, Alexandre. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980.
- Krüger, Lorenz. „Wollte Kant die Vollständigkeit seiner Urteilstafel beweisen?“. *Kant-Studien*. Vol. 59, 1968, pp. 333-356.
- Lenin, Vladimir. (1915) "On the Question of Dialectics". *Philosophical Notebooks, Collected Works*, Volume 38, 4th Edition, Moscow: 1976, pp. 357-361.
- Limnatis, Nectarios G. *German Idealism and the Problem of Knowledge: Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel*. Netherlands: Springer, 2008.
- Linnaeus, Carl (1758). *Systema naturae per regna tria naturae: secundum classes, ordines, genera, species, cum characteribus, differentiis, synonymis, locis*. 10th ed. Stockholm: Laurentius Salvius.
- Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996.
- Long, A.A. "Roman Philosophy". *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Philosophy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003. pp. 184-210.
- Longuenesse, Béatrice. *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*. Trans. Nicole J. Simek. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- . *Kant and the Capacity to Judge: Sensibility and Discursivity in the Transcendental Analytic of the Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Charles T. Wolfe. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- . *Kant on the Human Standpoint*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Magee, Glenn Alexander. *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001.

- Makin, Stephen and Nicholas Denyer. "Aristotle on Modality." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes*. Vol. 74, 2000, pp. 143–178.
- Malabou, Catherine. *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality, and Dialectic*. Trans. Lisabeth During. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- McDowell, John. "Avoiding the Myth of the Given". *John McDowell: Experience, Norm, and Nature*. Ed. Jakob Lindgaard. Blackwell, 2008.
- . *Having the World in View: Essays on Kant, Hegel, and Sellars*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.
- . *Mind and World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996.
- McCumber, John. *Understanding Hegel's Mature Critique of Kant*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014.
- Messier, Charles (1781). "Catalogue des Nébuleuses et des amas d'Étoiles, Observées à Paris, par M. Messier, à l'Observatoire de la Marine, hôtel de Clugni, rue des Mathurins". *Connaissance des Temps, ou Connaissance des mouvemens célestes*. Paris: L'Imprimerie Royale, 1784.
- Moore, G.E. "The Refutation of Idealism". *Mind*. Vol. 12, no. 48, 1903, pp. 433–453.
- Nuzzo, Angelica. *Memory, History, Justice in Hegel*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- . (Ed.) *Hegel and the Analytic Tradition*. London: Continuum, 2010.
- . "Vagueness and Meaning Variance in Hegel's Logic". *Hegel and the Analytic Tradition*. Ed. Angelica Nuzzo. London, UK: Continuum, 2010. pp. 61-82.
- . "Translation, (Self-) Transformation, and the Power of the Middle." *Philosophia*. Vol.3, No. 1, 2013, pp.19-35.
- O'Regan, Cyril. *The Heterodox Hegel*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1994.

- Pinkard, T. *German Philosophy 1760-1860: The Legacy of Idealism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- . *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- . "Spirit as the 'Unconditioned'". In *A Companion to Hegel*. Ed. Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur. UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2011, pp. 91-108.
- Pippin, Robert. *Hegel on Self-consciousness: Desire and Death in the Phenomenology of Spirit*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011.
- . *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Consciousness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- . *Hegel's Realm of Shadows: Logic as Metaphysics in "The Science of Logic"*. University of Chicago Press, 2019.
- Plato. *Cratylus*. In *Collected Works of Plato*. Ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1961.
- . *Republic*. Trans. Allan Bloom. New York: Basic Books, 1968.
- Quine, W.V.O. "Two Dogmas of Empiricism". *The Philosophical Review*. 60, 1951, 20–43.
- Ramberg, Bjørn. "Richard Rorty". *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. 2007. Accessed: January 19, 2021. <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rorty/>>
- Redding, Paul. "The Analytic Neo-Hegelianism of John McDowell and Robert Brandom". In *A Companion to Hegel*. Ed. Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur. UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2011, pp. 576-593.
- Reich, Klaus. *The Completeness of Kant's Table of Judgments*. Stanford University Press, 1992.
- Reinhold, Ernst. *Handbuch der allgemeinen Geschichte der Philosophie für alle wissenschaftlich Gebildete*. Hennings, 1929.

- Reinhold, Karl Leonhard. *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*. Trans. Karl Ameriks. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- . "The Foundation of Philosophical Knowledge" (excerpt). *Between Kant and Hegel*. Trans. George di Giovanni and H.S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000. pp. 51-104.
- . *Über das Fundament des philosophischen Wissens*. Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1978.
- Rockmore, Tom. "Analytic Philosophy and the Hegelian Turn". *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 55, No. 2, Dec. 2001, pp. 339-370.
- . *Cognition: An Introduction to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- . *German Idealism as Constructivism*. University of Chicago Press, 2016.
- . *Hegel's Circular Epistemology*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986.
- . "Hegel's Circular Epistemology as Antifoundationalism". *History of Philosophy Quarterly*. Vol. 6, No.1, 1989, pp.101-113.
- . "Hegel, German Idealism, and Antifoundationalism". *Antifoundationalism: Old and New*. Ed. Tom Rockmore and Beth J. Singer. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992. pp. 105-126.
- . "Introduction". *Antifoundationalism: Old and New*. Ed. Tom Rockmore and Beth J. Singer. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992. pp. 1-12.
- . *On Constructivist Epistemology*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005.
- . *On Foundationalism: A Strategy for Metaphysical Realism*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004.

- . *On Hegel's Epistemology and Contemporary Philosophy*. New Jersey: Prometheus Books, 1996.
- Rorty, Richard. *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- . "Solidarity or Objectivity?" *Post-Analytic Philosophy*. Eds. John Rajhman and Cornel West. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. pp. 3-19.
- Rosen, Stanley. *G.W.F. Hegel: An Introduction to the Science of Wisdom*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.
- Schellenberg, S. "Experience and Evidence". *Mind*. Vol. 122, No. 487, July 2013, pp. 699-747.
- Schelling, F.W.J. "Of the I as Principle of Philosophy". *Unconditional in Human Knowledge: Four Early Essays (1794-1796)*. Trans. Fritz Marti. Associated University Press, 1980.
- . *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Trans. Peter Heath. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978.
- Schulze, G.E. "Aenesidemus" (excerpt). *Between Kant and Hegel*. Trans. George di Giovanni and H.S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000. pp. 104-135.
- Seeberg, Ulrich. *Ursprung, Umfang Und Grenzen der Erkenntnis: Eine Untersuchung Zu Kants Transzendentaler Deduktion der Kategorien*. Berlin: Philo, 2006.
- Seebohm, T.M. "Fichte's Discovery of Dialectical Method". *Fichte, Historical Concepts/Contemporary Controversies*. Eds. Daniel Breazeale and Tom Rockmore. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1994. pp. 17-42.
- Sellars, Wilfrid. *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- . "Some Reflections on Language Games". *Philosophy of Science*. Vol. 21, No. 3, 1959, pp. 204-228.

- Sextus Empiricus. *Outlines of Pyrronism*. Trans. R.G. Bury. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933.
- Siegel, S. *The Rationality of Perception*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Solomon, Robert C. (1974) "Hegel's Epistemology". *American Philosophical Quarterly*. Vol. 11.4, pp. 277-289.
- Spinoza, Baruch. *Ethics*. In *The Essential Spinoza*. Ed. Michael L. Morgan and trans. Samuel Shirley, 1-161. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006.
- Stern, Robert. *Hegelian Metaphysics*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Swinburne, Richard. *Epistemic Justification*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Swindal, James. *Action and Existence: A Case for Agent Causation*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Taylor, Charles. *Hegel*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- . "Rorty and philosophy". *Richard Rorty: contemporary philosophy in focus*. Eds. C. Guignon & D.R. Hiely. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. pp. 158–180.
- Thöle, Bernhard. „Michael Wolff und die Vollständigkeit der kantischen Urteilstafel“. *Kant und die Berliner Aufklärung*. Akten des p. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses , Berlin, Bd. 2, 2001, pp. 447-488.
- Thomas-Fogiel, Isabelle. "Reflection, Metaphilosophy, and Logic of Action in the Science of Knowledge". *The Palgrave Fichte Handbook*. Ed. Steven Hoeltzel. Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.
- Tolley, Clinton. "The Generality of Kant's Transcendental Logic." *Journal of the History of Philosophy*. Vol. 50, no. 3, 2012, p. 417-446.
- Wartenberg, Thomas E. "Hegel's idealism: The logic of conceptuality." *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*. Ed. Frederick C. Beiser. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. pp. 102-129.

- Watkins, Eric. "Kant and the Myth of the Given". *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. 51 no. 5, 2008, pp. 512–531.
- Westphal, Kenneth R. "Harris, Hegel, and the Truth about the Truth". *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Reappraisal*. Ed. Garry K. Browning. Springer, 1997. pp. 23-9.
- . *Hegel's Epistemology: A Philosophical Introduction to the Phenomenology of Spirit*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2003.
- . "Self-Consciousness, Anti-Cartesianism, and Cognitive Semantics in Hegel's 1807 *Phenomenology*". In *A Companion to Hegel*. Ed. Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur. UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2011. pp. 68-90.
- Winfield, Richard Dien. *Overcoming Foundations: Studies in Systematic Philosophy*. Columbia University Press, 1989.
- . "The Route to Foundation-Free Systematic Philosophy". *Philosophical Forum*. Vol. 15, no.3, 1984, p. 323.
- von Wolff, Christian. (1751) *Vernünfftige Gedancken von der Menschen Thun und Lassen, zu Beförderung ihrer Glückseeligkeit*. Hildesheim: Olms, 1976.
- Žižek, Slavoj. *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*. Brooklyn, NY: Verso Books, 2012.
- Zöllner, Günter. *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy: The Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.