

“Where to Start?: Robert Pippin, Slavoj Žižek, and the True Beginning(s) of Hegel’s System”

Adrian Johnston

ABSTRACT:

Hegel scholarship of the past several decades, especially in the English-speaking world, has been dominated by non/anti-metaphysical interpretations of Hegel’s philosophy. Slavoj Žižek is far from alone in resisting these still-fashionable deflationary variants of Hegelianism. However, his ongoing work, particularly as elaborated in 2012’s *Less Than Nothing*, challenges in especially powerful ways attempts to downplay or jettison the ontological, materialist, naturalist, and realist dimensions of Hegelian thinking. Herein, I focus on Žižek’s disagreements with perhaps the most influential deflationist Hegelian, namely, Robert Pippin (with his thesis that the core of Hegel’s entire apparatus consists in a certain appropriation of Kant’s transcendental unity of apperception and, along with it, the subjectivist anti-realism of Kantian transcendental idealism). Although I am fully sympathetic to the broader cause of combatting deflationary Hegelianism, I opt in what follows, by contrast with Žižek, both: one, to contest directly Pippin’s construal of the importance of the *Critique of Pure Reason*’s “Transcendental Deduction” for Hegel; and, two, to problematize the very idea that the *Logic* alone forms the ground-zero foundation of the Hegelian System (an assumption arguably underpinning aspects of both Pippin’s and Žižek’s otherwise strikingly divergent approaches to Hegel).

Keywords:

Kant, Hegel, Pippin, Žižek, metaphysics, transcendentalism, subjectivity

So as to initiate a critical engagement with Slavoj Žižek’s *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*, I want to start, suitably enough, by addressing the nature of beginning(s) in G.W.F. Hegel’s thinking. In an earlier book, 1996’s *The Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters*, Žižek identifies “the problem of Beginning itself” as “the crucial problem of German Idealism.”¹ *Less Than Nothing* contains a reference to this problem specifically with respect to the opening of Hegel’s *Logic*:

...when he writes about the passage from Being to Nothingness, Hegel resorts to the past tense: Being does not pass into

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¹ Žižek 1996, p. 13.

Nothingness, it has always already passed into Nothingness, and so on. The first triad of the Logic is not a dialectical triad, but a retroactive evocation of a kind of shadowy virtual past, of something which never passes since it has always already passed: the actual beginning, the first entity which is ‘really here,’ is the contingent multiplicity of beings-there (existents). To put it another way, there is no tension between Being and Nothingness which would generate the incessant passage of one into the other: in themselves, prior to dialectics proper, Being and Nothingness are directly and immediately the same, they are indiscernible; their tension (the tension between form and content) appears only retroactively, if one looks at them from the standpoint of dialectics proper.²

Žižek then, in the immediately following paragraph, goes on to claim that the beginning of Hegelian Logic interpreted thusly already in and of itself furnishes readers with the groundless ground of a materialist ontology of radical, ultimate contingency.³ Prior to any evaluation of whether Žižek is entitled to this claim on the basis he provides in this instance, the above block quotation needs to be exegetically unpacked.

In the preceding quotation, Žižek clearly chooses to pinpoint “Determinate Being”/“Being-there” (das Dasein) as the true starting point of the metaphysical/ontological Logic of Hegel (i.e., “Book 1, Section 1, Chapter 2” of the Science of Logic and what is inaugurated with §89 in the Encyclopedia Logic). Of course, since the mid-twentieth century, the German word “Dasein” has come to be most closely associated with Martin Heidegger and his existential phenomenology. This is quite ironic in that Hegel’s logical dialectics of Being, Nothing, and Becoming (including implicitly on Žižek’s interpretation) can be understood as entailing a pointed critique *avant la lettre* of Heidegger’s pivotal conception of “ontological difference.” Hegel likely would accuse Heidegger of being logically inconsequent in his sharp distinguishing between Being and beings, thereby remaining unproductively confined to the initial moments of (onto)logical thinking in his fascination with a Being that is indistinguishable from Nothing (as

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² Žižek 2012, pp. 228-229.

³ Žižek 2012, p. 229.

on display in, for instance, Heidegger’s well-known 1929 essay “What Is Metaphysics?”⁴). Moreover, for Hegel, the opening moments of his Logic also capture what is essential to the chronological origins in ancient Greece of the history of Western philosophy,⁵ with Heidegger’s fetishization of these Greeks and their language, inherited from the German Romantics, thus further testifying to a dialectical-speculative inhibition/limitation marking Heideggerian phenomenological ontology. Hegel emphasizes repeatedly that pure Being on its own prior to any and every further determination (such as the Heideggerian ontological apart from the ontic) is the most meager and abstract of (onto-)logical moments⁶ (although some were and still are tempted to mistake the undeveloped poverty of its vacuous superficiality for the accumulated wealth of profound depths of mysterious, ineffable meanings).

Heidegger aside, Žižek’s above-quoted pinpointing of the “real beginning” of Hegelian Logic is an instance of a long-running, ongoing activity amongst scholars of Hegel and German idealism: debating about from where the Hegelian System actually starts. Some of the biggest (if not the biggest) questions concerning how to appreciate the relationship (or lack thereof) between the Phenomenology of Spirit and the various versions of the mature Logic hinge on the topic of when and how Hegelian philosophy proper gets well and truly underway. Disregarding those significant questions in the present context of considering what Žižek asserts about the beginning of the Logic alone (I will return to these questions later), one could say that, as regards the three major divisions of both the Science of Logic and the Encyclopedia Logic (i.e., the three books of the “doctrines” of “Being” [Sein], “Essence” [Wesen], and “Concept” [Begriff]), each division has been claimed by specific Hegel scholars as the genuine primordial nucleus of the Hegelian logical network. Recent examples arguably would include: Stephen Houlgate for “The Doctrine of Being” (with the thesis that Hegel begins precisely where he appears to begin, namely, without presuppositions and with indeterminate Being)⁷; Dieter Henrich for “The Doctrine of Essence” (with the thesis that “The Doctrine of Being”

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⁴ Heidegger 1993, pp. 89-110.

⁵ Hegel 1969a, pp. 31, 83-84, 88; Hegel 1991b, p. 10; Hegel 1991c, §13-14 (pp. 37-39), §86 (p. 138); Hegel 2008, §87 (pp. 88-89); Hegel 1955a, pp. 1-2, 4-5, 18, 29-30, 34-39, 45.

⁶ Hegel 1969a, pp. 73-75; Hegel 1991c, §51 (p. 99), §85-88 (pp. 136-145); Hegel 2008, §51 (p. 52), §87 (pp. 90-91).

⁷ Houlgate 2006, pp. 263, 266-267; Houlgate 2005, pp. 32, 40, 43-46.

tacitly presupposes from its very outset, in order to get the dialectical-speculative ball rolling even just from Being to Nothing, the conceptual and categorial distinctions introduced subsequently only with “The Doctrine of Essence”⁸; and Robert Pippin for “The Doctrine of the Concept” (with the thesis that Hegel’s praise in “The Doctrine of the Concept” for Immanuel Kant’s “transcendental unity of apperception” of the Critique of Pure Reason’s “Transcendental Deduction” signals that the Logic arises from and is anchored by Kantian-style cognizing subjectivity as per the “Subjective Logic” coming after the first two doctrines together constituting the “Objective Logic”).⁹ At least in *Less Than Nothing*, Žižek seems to be a partisan of “The Doctrine of Being” as the true launching platform for Hegelian Logic, albeit (by contrast with, for instance, the example of Houlgate) with the caveat that the launch gets delayed until determinate Being-there congeals out of Becoming.

As regards questions and controversies about beginning(s) in Hegel’s philosophy, I elect to zero in below on Pippin as a privileged foil for Žižek, and this for two reasons: First, in *Less Than Nothing*, Žižek himself does this; And, second, Pippin, by my estimation, has good reasons for challenging the kinds of exegetical positions regarding the true start of Hegelian Logic put forward by, among many others, Houlgate and Henrich. Apropos this second reason, Pippin’s position draws support from the facts that Hegel both characterizes Logic from start to finish as a “thinking about thinking”¹⁰ as well as treats it as a circle whose end (“The Doctrine of the Concept”) rejoins its beginning (“The Doctrine of Being”), with the former retroactively making explicit what the latter always-already was implicitly (in the manner of T.S. Eliot’s “to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time”).¹¹ Apropos the first reason here, one of Žižek’s main objections to Pippin has to do with the latter’s renowned “deflationary” (i.e., post/anti-metaphysical) rendition of Hegel.

Of course, Pippin is not the first or only advocate of a non-

8 Henrich 2010, pp. 104-105, 114-117, 121-128, 139-141, 143-150, 152-155; Henrich 2003, pp. 320-321.

9 Pippin 1989b, pp. 6, 9, 17, 33-35, 76, 79-80, 83-85, 91, 96-98, 104, 108, 111-112, 114-115, 120-121, 124-125, 132, 139-142, 152-154, 167-170, 176, 182-183, 224-225, 241-242, 284, 304; Pippin 1990, pp. 843-844.

10 Hegel 1986c, §2 (p. 65); Hegel 1986d, §1 (p. 74); Hegel 1969a, p. 43-44; Hegel 1991c, §17 (p. 41), §19 (pp. 45-46); Hegel 2008, §19 (p. 1).

11 Hegel 2002e, p. 249; Hegel 1986e, §86 (p. 122); Hegel 1969a, pp. 71-72, 838-842; Hegel 1971, §574 (p. 313); Hegel 2008, §235-236 (p. 227).

metaphysical version of Hegelianism. A far from exhaustive alphabetical list of the names of partisans of this (diverse) family of reconstructions would include: Robert Brandom, Klaus Hartmann, Jean-François Kervégan, Terry Pinkard, Paul Redding, and Allen Wood (with Karl Ameriks providing a helpful overview of some of the main representatives and orientations within this constellation of Hegel interpretations¹² as well as criticizing Pippin in particular¹³). Especially in the Anglophone world, this cluster of overlapping reconstructions of Hegelian thought has influenced profoundly the past four decades of Hegel scholarship, starting with Hartmann’s¹⁴ and Charles Taylor’s¹⁵ interventions in the 1970s. Although Taylor proposes a metaphysical reading of Hegel, he knowingly depicts this purportedly “cosmic” metaphysics to be too ridiculously puffed up to be a palatable, plausible option for philosophers of the present age, thus furnishing a sort of *reductio ad absurdum* (one accepted by Wood, among others) in favor of deflationary discardings of the metaphysical aspects of Hegel’s System. Žižek rightly rejects Taylor-style depictions of Hegelian metaphysics.¹⁶

However, even more recently, a number of scholars of German idealism have begun to push back against the still rather fashionable non/anti-metaphysical renditions of Hegel. Amongst the growing ranks of deflationism’s discontents are Frederick Beiser,¹⁷ Brady Bowman,¹⁸ Markus Gabriel,¹⁹ Rolf-Peter Horstmann,²⁰ Houlgate,²¹ James Kreines,²²

12 Ameriks 1992, pp. 177-202.

13 Ameriks 1991, pp. 386-402.

14 Hartmann 1972, pp. 101-124; Hartmann 1976, pp. 1-30.

15 Taylor 1975, pp. 27, 39-40, 44-45, 537-571.

16 Žižek 2012, pp. 285-286.

17 Beiser 1993, pp. 1-24; Beiser 1995, pp. 1-13; Beiser 2002, pp. 558-560; Beiser 2005, pp. 55-57; Beiser 2008, pp. 1-14.

18 Bowman 2013, pp. 5-7, 14-15, 18, 23-24, 36, 38, 97-98, 102-104, 109, 125, 133-135, 142-143, 145, 148-150, 153, 156, 181-182, 215-216, 219, 222-223, 227, 229-230, 238, 241, 247-248, 255-258.

19 Gabriel 2011, pp. viii-ix, xii, xix-xxii, 1, 3, 54, 60.

20 Horstmann 2004, pp. 133-134, 138-141.

21 Houlgate 2006, pp. 137-143; Houlgate 2013, pp. 193-194.

22 Kreines 2006, pp. 466-480; Kreines 2008, pp. 48-70.

Sally Sedgwick,²³ Robert Stern,²⁴ Kenneth Westphal,²⁵ myself,²⁶ and Žižek too. Despite differences amidst the multiple advocates of various flavors of deflated Hegelianism—there have been direct, detailed debates between some of them²⁷—they share in common, as Beiser lucidly explains in language borrowed from none other than Karl Marx, the conviction that the “rational kernel” of Hegel’s investments in Kantian transcendentalism and/or socio-historical angles of philosophical approach should be salvaged from the “mystical shell” of his more ambitious global ontology, especially as embodied by his *Realphilosophie of nature*²⁸ (i.e., those aspects of Hegel’s musings that appear to veer into [neo-]Platonic and/or Romantic visions of a metaphysically real God-like Notion as a kind of cosmic super-organism or Mega-Mind). Pippin, over the course of his own intellectual itinerary, has shifted his attention and focus between the two basic poles of the deflationist spectrum, from an early emphasis on Hegel’s fidelity to Kant’s transcendental idealism (as per his groundbreaking, now-classic 1989 study *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*) to a later highlighting of the social and historical dimensions of the Hegelian edifice (as per such texts as 2008’s *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life* and 2011’s *Hegel on Self-Consciousness: Desire and Death in the Phenomenology of Spirit*, texts in which Hegel seems to be presented as being a social rationality pragmatist of a Brandomian inferentialist kind *avant la lettre*—with this presentation being made possible by Pippin’s underlying [over] emphasis on the theme of apperception in Hegel).

Quite appropriately in a chapter (the fourth) of *Less Than Nothing* entitled “Is It Still Possible to Be a Hegelian Today?,” Žižek targets deflated Hegelianism à la Pippin (along with mention of the post-Sellarsian Pittsburgh neo-Hegelianism of Brandom and John McDowell).²⁹ His remarks in this vein are worth quoting:

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23 Sedgwick 2012, pp. 9-11, 62, 96, 125-126.

24 Stern 2009a, pp. 1-41; Stern 2009b, pp. 45-76.

25 Westphal 1993, pp. 263-272.

26 Johnston 2012, pp. 103-157; Johnston 2014a, pp. 13-64; Johnston 2014c.

27 Pinkard 1989, pp. 5-17; Pinkard 1990, pp. 831-838; Pippin 1989a, pp. 28-41; Pippin 1990, pp. 839-848; Pippin 1993, pp. 285-295; Sedgwick 1993, pp. 273-283.

28 Beiser 2002, pp. 508-511.

29 Žižek 2012, p. 237.

If... in ontological terms, spirit naturally evolves as a capacity of natural beings, why not simply endorse materialist evolutionism? That is to say, if—to quote Pippin—‘at a certain level of complexity and organization, natural organisms come to be occupied with themselves and eventually to understand themselves,’ does this not mean that, precisely in a certain sense nature itself does ‘develop into spirit?’ What one should render problematic is precisely Pippin’s fragile balance between ontological materialism and epistemological transcendental idealism: he rejects the

direct

idealist ontologization of the transcendental account of intelligibility,

but he also rejects the epistemological consequences of the ontological evolutionary materialism. (In other words, he does not accept that the self-reflection of knowledge should construct a kind of bridge to materialist ontology, accounting for how the normative attitude of ‘accounting for’ itself could have emerged out of nature.)³⁰

On the next page, Žižek proceeds to argue:

...the point is not that one should take sides and opt for one consistent stance, either evolutionary materialism or speculative idealism. The point is rather that one should fully and explicitly accept the gap which manifests itself in the incompatibility of the two stances: the transcendental standpoint is in a sense irreducible, for one cannot look ‘objectively’ at oneself and locate oneself in reality; and 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.³¹

This Hegel, “at his most radical,” is the Žižekian one in whose “parallax view” apparent gaps in knowledge (maintained as merely epistemological by Kantianism, including by Pippin’s Kantianized

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30 Žižek 2012, p. 238.

31 Žižek 2012, p. 239.

Hegel-as-transcendental-idealist) reappear as real gaps in being qua being an und für sich.³² This involves the transition from Kant to Hegel being portrayed as a matter of a shift from the positing of breaks exclusively at the level of epistemology (Kant) to the assertion of these very same breaks (also) at the level of ontology (Hegel).³³ For Žižek, the proper Hegelian gesture to be performed vis-à-vis Pippin's allegedly inconsistent position with respect to the split between the seemingly incommensurable ontological options of "either evolutionary materialism or speculative idealism" is not to force a decision one way or the other according to the taken-for-granted parameters of this binary opposition. Instead, the Žižekian Hegel both, one, eschews the Kantian inclination to shield the noumenal Real of Sein an sich from the rifts and ruptures phenomenally manifesting themselves within the cognizing subject's knowing as well as, two, treats the apparent choice between the first-person perspective of idealism and the third-person perspective of materialism as a false dilemma—with the consequence that the appearance of discrepancy between these perspectives is not just that, namely, a mere appearance as an epistemological epiphenomenon deprived of any ontological status and weight. Elsewhere in *Less Than Nothing*, Žižek makes this same set of moves with respect to the division within the Marxist tradition between its two fundamental approaches to theorizing human beings: The gap between the "social" à la historical materialism and the "natural" à la dialectical materialism is not to be closed in favor of one approach over the other but, rather, to be affirmed as directly reflecting a gap really perturbing from within the substance of humanity's very being itself.³⁴ Moreover, as a close reading of the early moments of *Less Than Nothing* readily makes evident, the topic of appearance, featuring centrally in Žižek's critical handling of Pippin, is one of the most important red threads tying together the entirety of his hulking 2012 philosophical masterpiece. Herein, I want to push the critique of Pippin's deflationary Hegelianism further and, in so doing, address both Pippin's and Žižek's conceptions of where, when, and how Hegel's Logic actually begins (an issue I raised a short while ago here).

Pippin hangs an enormous amount of interpretive weight on one

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32 Johnston 2008, pp. 155, 162-163, 179, 209, 236, 241, 245-246, 263-265, 275; Johnston 2014a, pp. 111-138.

33 Johnston 2014b.

34 Žižek 2012, pp. 393-394.

single passage in particular from "The Doctrine of the Concept" in the *Science of Logic*³⁵ (Brandom likewise highlights this same passage³⁶). Arguably, Pippin's overarching Kantianization of Hegel's philosophy as a whole, in addition to his reading of the Logic specifically, hinges on this particular stretch of text as its Archimedean point. Preliminarily addressing "the concept in general" at the start of the "Subjective Logic" formed by the third book of the *Science of Logic*, Hegel declares at great length:

It is one of the profoundest and truest insights to be found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the unity (Einheit) which constitutes the nature of the Notion (das Wesen des Begriffs) is recognized as the original synthetic unity of apperception (die ursprünglich-synthetische Einheit der Apperzeption), as unity of the I think, or of self-consciousness. This proposition constitutes the so-called transcendental deduction of the categories; but this has always been regarded as one of the most difficult parts of the Kantian philosophy, doubtless for no other reason than that it demands that we should go beyond the mere representation (die bloße Vorstellung) of the relation in which the I stands to the understanding, or notions (Begriffe) stand to a thing and its properties and accidents, and advance to the thought (Gedanken) of that relation. An object, says Kant, is that in the notion of which the manifold of a given intuition is unified. But all unifying of representations demands a unity of consciousness in the

synthesis

of them. Consequently it is this unity of consciousness which alone constitutes the connection of the representations with the object and therewith their objective validity and on which rests even the possibility of the understanding. Kant distinguishes this unity from the subjective unity of consciousness (die subjektive Einheit des Bewußtseins), the unity of representation whereby I am conscious of a manifold as either simultaneous or successive, this being dependent on empirical conditions. On the other hand, the principles of the objective determination of notions (objectiven Bestimmung der Vorstellungen) are, he says, to be derived solely from the principle of the transcendental unity of apperception (der

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35 Pippin 1989b, pp. 17-18, 35, 232; Pippin 1989a, pp. 30-31; Pippin 1990, p. 843; Pippin 1993, p. 288; Pippin 1997, p. 131; Pippin 2005, pp. 47-52; Pippin 2011, p. 10; Ameriks 1991, p. 400.

36 Brandom 2002, pp. 53-54, 216-217.

transzendentalen Einheit der Apperzeption). Through the categories which are these objective determinations, the manifold of given representations is so determined as to be brought into the unity of consciousness. According to this exposition, the unity of the notion is that whereby something is not a mere mode of feeling, an intuition, or even a mere representation (bloße Gefühlsbestimmung, Anschauung oder auch bloße Vorstellung), but is an object (Objekt), and this objective unity is the unity of the ego with itself (welche objektive Einheit die Einheit des Ich mit sich selbst ist). In point of fact, the comprehension of an object (Das Begreifen eines Gegenstandes) consists in nothing else than that the ego makes it its own, pervades (durchdringt) it and brings it into its own form (seine eigene Form), that is, into the universality that is immediately a determinateness, or a determinateness that is immediately universality. As intuited or even in ordinary conception, the object is still something external and alien (Äußerliches, Fremdes). When it is comprehended, the being-in-and-for-self (Anundfürsichsein) which it possesses in intuition and pictorial thought (Vorstellen) is transformed into a positedness (Gesetzsein); the I in thinking it pervades it. But it is only as it is in thought that the object is truly in and for itself; in intuition or ordinary conception it is only an Appearance. Thought sublates the immediacy with which the object at first confronts us and thus converts the object into a positedness; but this its positedness is its-being-in-and-for-self, or its objectivity (Objektivität). The object (Gegenstand) therefore has its objectivity in the Notion (Begriffe) and this is the unity of self-consciousness into which it has been received; consequently its objectivity, or the Notion, is itself none other than the nature of self-consciousness, has no other moments or determinations than the I itself.³⁷

The first sentence of the immediately following paragraph goes on to state, “Thus we are justified by a cardinal principle of the Kantian philosophy in referring to the nature of the I in order to learn

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37 Hegel 1969c, pp. 254-255; Hegel 1969a, pp. 584-585.

what the Notion is.”³⁸ Hegel explicitly refers in particular to B137 in the “Transcendental Deduction” (§17 therein, entitled “The principle of the synthetic unity of apperception is the supreme principle of all use of the understanding”) of the Critique of Pure Reason.³⁹ On Pippin’s construal, the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception likewise is “the supreme principle” of Hegel’s philosophy as itself ultimately grounded on and by the Logic—and this insofar as such a unity is taken to be the underlying agency of cognition responsible for driving the entire activity of logical, dialectical-speculative thinking (as a “thinking about thinking”) from its very inception with pure Being alone. Both the Science of Logic and the Encyclopedia Logic thereby look to be rectifications of what Hegel sees (along with many other of Kant’s contemporaries and immediate successors) as the unacceptable absence of a systematic, scientific (als Wissenschaft) derivation of the concepts and categories of the understanding from the transcendental unity of apperception in the “Transcendental Analytic” of the first Critique (with K.L. Reinhold and J.G. Fichte kicking off post-Kantian German idealism through their anti-Jacobian efforts to remedy this lack of sufficient systematicity/scientificity in the Kantian critical-transcendental apparatus).⁴⁰

In addition to Žižek’s criticisms of the deflationary depiction of Hegelianism à la Pippin, what else might be objectionable specifically as regards Pippin’s anchoring of his reconstruction of Hegel in the above-quoted passage from the Science of Logic praising Kant’s unity of apperception as per the B-version of the “Transcendental Deduction?” To thoroughly answer this question would be to destabilize Pippin’s deflationary Hegelianism at its very root, to undermine the fundamental load-bearing pillar of this exegetical edifice. Žižek does not go for this particular jugular in *Less Than Nothing*, although doing so would serve him well. Moreover, other dissenters from Pippin’s Kantianized Hegel such as H.S. Harris, Sedgwick, and Stern, despite their different sets of objections to Pippin, all concede that his construal of Hegel’s relationship to Kant’s “Transcendental Deduction” is one of the (if not the) great strengths of his approach, granting that this construal illuminates places in the Hegelian corpus such as the preceding block

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38 Hegel 1969a, p. 585.

39 Kant 1998, B137 (p. 249).

40 Hegel and Schelling 2002, p. 212; Hegel 1977c, pp. 142-145; Hegel 1969a, pp. 613-614; Hegel 1991c, §42 (p. 84), §60 (pp. 107-108); Hegel 1955b, p. 483; Hegel 2008, §42 (p. 35); Johnston 2014b.

quotation from the Science of Logic.⁴¹

Rather than seek to rebut Pippin through explicitly contesting his overriding stress on references to apperception by Hegel while implicitly conceding the accuracy of Pippin's interpretation of these same references (as some of his other critics have done), I will, in what follows, attempt to demonstrate why and how the very moment to which Pippin appeals actually does not bring Hegel back into the proximity of the specifically subjective idealism of Kantian transcendentalism. As is appropriate in a Hegelian discussion about Hegel, my critique of Pippin is immanent rather than external, working from the inside and developing itself out of Pippin's own chosen starting point. That said, a first manner of objecting to Pippin would be to note that Hegel's praise for Kant's transcendental unity of apperception is preceded by moments in both the Phenomenology of Spirit and the Science of Logic itself (as well as other articulations of the Logic) in which the alleged two-worlds metaphysics of the subjectivism of Kantian (and Fichtean) transcendental idealism is dialectically sublated.⁴² This means that, as one might describe it, Hegel pays Kant a backhanded compliment, with the principle of unity extolled already being, at this late stage in Hegelian Logic, so heavily qualified by Hegel's Kant critique as to no longer really be Kantian per se.

Directly related to this, Pippin appears not to appreciate in relation to the above-quoted lengthy passage from the Science of Logic just what a huge difference Hegel's own distinction between subjective and objective/absolute idealisms makes to the significance of his reference to Kant's transcendental unity of apperception (although such Hegelians as Westphal and Thomas Wartenberg do appreciate precisely this⁴³). This Hegelian distinction surfaces in both the Phenomenology and stages of the various versions of the Logic coming well before the "Subjective Logic" consisting of "The Doctrine of the Concept" inordinately privileged by Pippin.⁴⁴ For Kant, this principle of unity at the heart of the first Critique's "Transcendental Deduction" is the Ur-core of all genuine knowledge both actual and possible. But, this

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41 Harris 1989, p. 26; Sedgwick 1993, pp. 273, 275; Stern 2009b, p. 48.

42 Hegel 1977c, pp. 88-91, 100-101; Hegel 1969a, pp. 121, 134-135, 490, 507; Hegel 1991c, §44 (p. 87), §60 (p. 105); Hegel 2008, §44 (p. 37).

43 Westphal 1993, pp. 263-272; Wartenberg 1993, pp. 104-107, 109-110, 117, 120, 122, 125-126, 128.

44 Hegel 1977c, pp. 139-146; Hegel 1969a, pp. 45-47, 51, 61-64, 489; Hegel 1991c, §41-42 (pp. 81-84), §45 (pp. 88-89); Hegel 2008, §43-44 (pp. 36-37).

very nucleus of the theoretical part of critical philosophy is, of course, ensconced within the framework of the subjectivism of transcendental idealism. Consequently, for Hegel, Kantian subjective idealism results in the ridiculous thesis that, as he puts it in the introduction to the Science of Logic, cognizing subjects are limited to having true knowledge solely of false appearances (which makes a mockery of the very notions of truth and knowledge).⁴⁵ Hegel observes therein:

This is like attributing to someone a correct perception (richtige Einsicht), with the rider (Zusatz) that nevertheless he is incapable of perceiving (einzusehen) what is true (Wahres) but only what is false (Unwahres). Absurd as this would be, it would not be more so than a true knowledge (wahre Erkenntnis) which did not know the object (Gegenstand) as it is in itself (wie er an sich ist).⁴⁶

Hegel uses the word "Gegenstand" in both this quotation and the long, above-quoted passage from the Science of Logic relied upon by Pippin (in the latter, he alternates between "Gegenstand" and "Objekt" when referring to the "object" forming the correlate of the subject qua transcendental unity of apperception). By contrast with subjective idealism as Kantian transcendentalism (here specifically its anti-realism regarding objects treated as mere phenomenal appearances [i.e., as "false"] deprived of the actuality of ontological heft [i.e., as "true"]), Hegelian absolute idealism is robustly realist regarding the objectivities related to by subjectivities⁴⁷ (in the 1801 Differenzschrift, Hegel is willing, pace Kant, Fichte, and a certain Reinhold, to acknowledge that even a materialism such as that of Baron d'Holbach is not without its relevance to his and F.W.J. Schelling's absolute idealism⁴⁸). However, Hegel arrives at this absolute idealist position in a non-dogmatic and properly post-Kantian fashion by virtue of achieving a reaffirmed ontological realism precisely via an immanent critique passing through (and not simply bypassing altogether) Kant's critical problematizations of pre-Kantian realist ontologies.⁴⁹

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45 Hegel 1969a, pp. 45-47.

46 Hegel 1969b, p. 39; Hegel 1969a, p. 46.

47 Hegel 1969a, pp. 154-155; Johnston 2014a, pp. 13-64; Johnston 2014c.

48 Hegel 1977a, p. 177.

49 Hegel 1975, p. 57.

In light of Henry Allison's quite plausible interpretation of the "Transcendental Deduction," according to which Kant posits a "reciprocity thesis" holding that the transcendental unity of apperception entails a mutual, two-way interdependency of knowing subject and known object upon each other (with the claim that the subject can know itself as a unifying producer only in and through the produced unity reflected back to it by the objects it itself is responsible for unifying), Hegel's absolute idealist appropriation of Kant's subjective idealist transcendental unity of apperception cannot but involve a fundamental transformation of the sense and implications of the latter.⁵⁰ A famous one-liner from the Critique of Pure Reason, one directly related to what Allison has in view apropos the alleged reciprocity between apperceiving subjectivity and apperceived objectivity, has it that, "The a priori conditions of a possible experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience."⁵¹ With his absolute idealism as, in part, a sublation of subjective idealism in its anti-realist, deontologized one-sidedness, Hegel arguably radicalizes the reciprocity at the base of Kant's "Transcendental Deduction" such that the (epistemological) truthfulness of this just-quoted one-liner from the first Critique must be counterbalanced by also positing the equal (ontological) truthfulness of its precise inversion: "Conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience (i.e., the "in itself" [an sich] delineated in the "Objective Logic" prior to the "Subjective Logic" of "The Doctrine of the Concept") are at the same time the a priori conditions of a possible experience in general (i.e., the "in and for itself" [an und für sich] delineated in the "Subjective Logic" only after the "Objective Logic")."

Additional clarity and concreteness can be lent to this by another return to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: specifically, the opening of its third section on "Reason" (Vernunft) (Ameriks and Harris both correctly note that Pippin, although preserving a crucial role for the Phenomenology in the mature [post-1807] Hegelian System,⁵² ignores this section in his predominant focus on the preceding first two sections dealing with "Consciousness" [Bewußtsein] and "Self-Consciousness"

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50 Kant 1998, B136-139 (pp. 248-250); Allison 1983, pp. 144-145.

51 Kant 1998, A111 (p. 234).

52 Pippin 1988, p. 17; Pippin 1989b, pp. 38, 91-94, 178, 256; Pippin 1989a, p. 32; Pippin 1990, pp. 843-844, 847-848.

[Selbstbewußtsein]⁵³). In the wake of the dialectics running from Consciousness through Self-Consciousness, the Reason arising at the start of this third section is characterized by Hegel as being "certain"—however, at this juncture, it still has yet to prove the "truth" (Wahrheit) of this its certainty (Gewißheit) through the tests of its experiences—of the existence of fundamental structural isomorphisms between its minded subjectivity and worldly objectivity.⁵⁴ Reason balances out the lop-sided preponderances of object and subject posited by the earlier figures of Consciousness and Self-Consciousness respectively. It does so by adopting the view, into which it has been driven by the preceding dialectical moments sublating the shapes in the Phenomenology coming before it, that:

...self-consciousness (Selbstbewußtsein) and being (Sein) are the same essence (Wesen), the same, not through comparison, but in and for themselves (an und für sich). It is only the one-sided, spurious idealism (einseitige schlechte Idealismus) that lets this unity (Einheit) again come on the scene as consciousness (Bewußtsein), on one side, confronted by an in-itself (Ansich), on the other. But now this category or simple (einfache) unity of self-consciousness and being possesses difference in itself; for its essence is just this, to be immediately one and selfsame in otherness (Anderssein), or in absolute difference (absolute Unterschiede). The difference therefore is, but is perfectly transparent, and a difference that is at the same time none. It appears as a plurality of categories.⁵⁵

To begin with, the objection to Kantian transcendental idealism as subjectivism in this passage is so obvious as not to require deciphering and explanation. Moreover, Hegel's wording here in the Phenomenology is echoed in Pippin's preferred later moment of the Science of Logic, thus indicating that the latter text's kind words for the transcendental unity of apperception of the B-Deduction are significantly tempered by a rejection of the type of idealism to which Kant shackles this transcendently deduced unity. In the Science of Logic, Hegel recasts Kant's transcendental unity of apperception as (to

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53 Ameriks 1992, pp. 199-200; Harris 1989, p. 27.

54 Hegel 1970c, pp. 178-181; Hegel 1977c, pp. 139-142.

55 Hegel 1970c, pp. 181-182; Hegel 1977c, p. 142.

paraphrase the Phenomenology) the becoming-subject of substance, namely, a pre-existent objectivity in itself (“something external and alien”) being “comprehended,” “pervaded,” and thereby “idealized” so as to achieve the status of (also) being in and for itself via subjectivity (with subjectivity in this instance being nothing other than the self-reflectivity/reflexivity of substantial objectivity itself). As the above quotation manifestly shows (along with adjacent material in the same text⁵⁶), this recasting transpires already in the Phenomenology even before it occurs again in the Science of Logic.

Additionally, Hegel's recourse in this passage to the language of post-Kantian dialectical-speculative logic (in particular, non-bivalent ideas about the identity of identity and difference⁵⁷) marks a break with Kant (in particular, the classical logic of Kant's faculty of the non/pre-speculative understanding [Verstand]) that allows Hegel to be both an idealist and a realist simultaneously. As he maintains in the Science of Logic's first book right on the heels of stringently criticizing Kant and Fichte, “the opposition of idealistic and realistic philosophy has no significance.”⁵⁸ Already in his 1801 Differenzschrift, Hegel indicates that true idealism also involves realism (pace Kant's and Fichte's subjectivism qua anti-realism).⁵⁹ In 1802's article “How the Ordinary Human Understanding Takes Philosophy (as Displayed in the Works of Mr. Krug),” he gestures at a form of (post-)Kantian idealism overcoming the ostensibly false dilemma between realism and idealism—“transcendental idealism does not just concede... but asserts the reality of the external world, just as much as its ideality.”⁶⁰ His 1803/1804 Jena “First Philosophy of Spirit” is utterly scathing about the anti-realism of subjective idealism.⁶¹ And, he repeats these stipulations apropos idealism in the Encyclopedia.⁶² Considering the sustained maintenance of this stance on the realism-idealism distinction by Hegel in various texts from 1801 until his death, Pippin's dismissal of the Science of

.....
56 Hegel 1977c, p. 144.

57 Hegel 2002c, p. 154; Hegel 1977a, p. 156; Schelling 1984, pp. 136, 143.

58 Hegel 1969a, p. 155.

59 Hegel 1977a, pp. 115, 127, 165-167.

60 Hegel 2002d, p. 229.

61 Hegel 1979, pp. 223-226.

62 Hegel 1991c, §95-96 (pp. 152-153).

Logic's “Remark on Idealism” in “The Doctrine of Being” (from which I quoted a moment ago) as unrepresentative of Hegel's own convictions is quite dubious.⁶³

Immediately following the above block quotation in the Phenomenology, Hegel voices the complaint he often repeats, along with his fellow post-Kantian idealists, about Kant's alleged dogmatic, unsystematic cutting-and-pasting from antiquated traditional logic textbooks in the composition of his “Transcendental Analytic” of the concepts and categories of the understanding (i.e., the lack therein of a properly scientific deduction of these concepts and categories).⁶⁴ And, in the exact same context, he also directly addresses the matter of the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception in a manner undeniably foreshadowing his later comments upon it in the Science of Logic:

...only in the unity of apperception lies the truth of knowing (nur die Einheit der Apperzeption ist die Wahrheit des Wissens). The pure Reason (Die reine Vernunft) of this idealism, in order to reach this ‘other’ (Anderen) which is essential to it, and thus is the in-itself (Ansich), but which it does not have within it, is therefore thrown back by its own self on to that knowing which is not a knowing of what is true (Wahren); in this way, it condemns itself of its own knowledge and volition to being an untrue kind of knowing, and cannot get away from ‘meaning’ (Meinen) and ‘perceiving’ (Wahrnehmen), which for it have no truth (Wahrheit). It is involved in a direct contradiction (schlechthin Entgegengesetztes); it asserts essence (Wesen) to be a duality of opposed factors, the unity of apperception and equally a Thing (das Ding); whether the Thing is called an extraneous impulse (fremder Anstoß), or an empirical or sensuous entity (empirisches Wesen oder Sinnlichkeit), or the Thing-in-itself (das Ding an sich),

it still remains in principle the same, i.e. extraneous (Fremde) to that unity.⁶⁵

These assertions audibly resonate with Hegel's reduction, in a portion of the Science of Logic I referenced earlier, of the epistemology

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63 Pippin 1993, p. 289.

64 Hegel 1977c, pp. 142-145.

65 Hegel 1970c, pp. 184-185; Hegel 1977c, pp. 144-145.

of Kantian transcendental idealism to the absurdity of treating “true” knowledge as a knowing of admittedly false appearances (i.e., ideal phenomenal objects unrelated to and different-in-kind from real noumenal things—the latter including, on this reading, supposed pure intuitions [als Sinnlichkeit] as passively received hypothetically prior to their transubstantiation into actual objects of experience by the concepts and categories of the understanding⁶⁶). Kant’s anti-realist subjectivism, with its non/pre-speculative, Verstand-style oppositional dualism between subject (as the transcendental unity of apperception) and object (as das Ding an sich), backs him into this indefensible corner (with the phrase “fremder Anstoß” in the quotation immediately above, Hegel signals that Fichte, as likewise a subjectivist transcendental idealist, is in the crosshairs here too). But, what qualifies as an alternate version of the transcendental unity of apperception that manages to be both realist and yet, at the same time, also idealist in ways that reflect Kant’s valuable epistemological insights?

This question can be answered with a single proper name: Francis Bacon, the founding figure of British empiricism who, in his 1620 *New Organon*, erects the basic scaffolding of modern scientific method (at the same time that Galileo contributes another key component to the foundations of scientific modernity, namely, the identification of mathematics as the language of nature⁶⁷). Bacon not only provides the lone epigraph for the *Critique of Pure Reason*⁶⁸—Kant also, in the 1787 “Preface to the Second Edition” of the first *Critique*, explicitly compares the Copernican revolution of his critical-transcendental turn at the level of first philosophy (as metaphysics qua integrated epistemology and ontology) with “the suggestion of the ingenious Francis Bacon” at the level of natural science.⁶⁹ In particular, Kant credits Bacon with a spontaneous, proto-idealist realization to the effect that the order, pattern, and regularity of the apparently lawful world of nature must be produced through the practices of minded and like-minded subjects (in Bacon’s case, nature reveals its laws only in and through the process of scientific investigators actively submitting it to empirical, experimental interrogation and probing directed in advance by theoretical and

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66 Kant 1998, B145 (pp. 253-254).

67 Galileo 1957, pp. 274-278.

68 Kant 1998, Bii (p. 91).

69 Kant 1998, Bxii (p. 108).

methodological guidelines⁷⁰). In Kant’s prefatory narrative here, the first *Critique*’s transcendental idealism raises Baconian empiricism to the dignity of its notion (as Hegel might put it) by insisting that subjectivity makes possible every knowable and known objectivity, whether in the natural sciences or any other branch of whatever could count as genuine knowledge per se.⁷¹

In the opening pages of the section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* on “Reason,” particularly the start of this section’s first major division on “Observing Reason” (*Beobachtende Vernunft*), Hegel is referring implicitly to this Bacon in addition to (as seen in the quotations I discussed above from the *Phenomenology*) the Kant of the “*Transcendental Deduction*.” The figure of Observing Reason, which culminates in the self-subverting dead end of phrenology’s infinite judgment “*Spirit is a bone*,”⁷² represents the *Weltanschauung* of modern science circa the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially this worldview’s naturalism with its obsessive (and ultimately self-destructive qua auto-dialecticizing) pursuit of natural laws. The very first paragraph of the sub-section on “Observing Reason” can be understood solely through appreciating Bacon’s tacit presence in its background:

It is true that we now see this consciousness (*Bewußtsein*), for which Being [*Sein*] means what is its own [*Seinen*], revert to the standpoint of ‘meaning’ (*Meinen*) and ‘perceiving’ (*Wahrnehmen*); but not in the sense that it is certain of what is merely an ‘other’ (*Anderen*). Previously, its perception and experience (*erfahren*) of various aspects of the Thing (*Dinge*) were something that only happened to consciousness; but here, consciousness makes its own observations and experiments. ‘Meaning’ and ‘perceiving,’ which previously were superseded for us (*für uns früher sich aufgehoben*), are now superseded by and for consciousness itself. Reason sets to work to know the truth (*die Wahrheit zu wissen*), to find in the form of a Notion (*Begriff*) that which, for ‘meaning’ and ‘perceiving,’ is a Thing; i.e. it seeks to possess in thinghood (*Dingheit*) the consciousness only of itself. Reason now has, therefore, a universal interest in

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70 Bacon 2000, pp. 21, 24, 33-35.

71 Kant 1998, Bxii-xiv (pp. 108-109).

72 Hegel 1977c, pp. 208-210.

the world (allgemeines Interesse an der Welt), because it is certain of its presence in the world, or that the world present to it is rational.

It seeks its 'other,' knowing that therein it possesses nothing else but itself: it seeks only its own infinitude (Unendlichkeit).⁷³

Hegel's primary concern in this paragraph is to distinguish the Reason (Vernunft) of the third section of the Phenomenology from the Consciousness (Bewußtsein) of the first section. Despite potential misunderstandings to the contrary, the Reason whose initial incarnation is in the rational observation of nature (as per the empirical, experimental, mathematized sciences of modernity co-founded by Bacon and Galileo early in the seventeenth century) is not tantamount to a simple regressive return, in the aftermath of the dialectical self-sublation of the Self-Consciousness (Selbstbewußtsein) of the Phenomenology's intervening second section, to the phenomenologically previous standpoint specifically of the first two figures of Consciousness, namely, Sense-Certainty (sinnliche Gewißheit) and Perception (Wahrnehmung). For Hegel, the primary significant difference between Sense-Certainty and Perception, on the one hand, and Observing Reason, on the other hand, has to do with, as he emphasizes in the above block quotation, the contrast between passivity and activity—with Bacon's stress on the active role of the scientific investigator being pivotal both historically and (phenomeno) logically in this precise context.

Consciousness overall, including Sense-Certainty and Perception, sets as its own standard of the ultimately True a notion of objectivity as utterly independent of subjectivity and passively received/registered by the latter (the Self-Consciousness of the subsequent section reverses Consciousness's prioritization of objectivity over subjectivity). Reason, by contrast, sublates both Consciousness and Self-Consciousness such that its orienting standard of the Whole Truth is a rationally articulable ensemble of structures and dynamics common to both subjectivity and objectivity. These structures and dynamics are described by Hegel in language that risks being misconstrued as subjectively idealist in that he speaks of "concepts,"

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73 Hegel 1970c, pp. 185-186; Hegel 1977c, pp. 145-146.

"ideas," "logic," "syllogisms," and the like,⁷⁴ terms that have strong associations with images of mindedness in which subjective mind is set apart from objective world à la pre-Hegelian (i.e., non-dialectical/speculative) versions of the subject-object distinction (with Hegel warning of this risk and the need to avoid it⁷⁵—a caution underscored by, among others, Ludwig Siep⁷⁶ and Westphal⁷⁷). However, by this point in the Phenomenology with Reason, subjective idealism (including the Kantian transcendental variety) has been sublated (both in the final sub-section on "Consciousness" [the chapter entitled "Force and the Understanding"] as well as the section on "Self-Consciousness" in its entirety). That is to say, starting with Reason, the Phenomenology presents a non/post-subjective idealism (i.e., an objective and/or absolute idealism) in which apparently subjectivist language actually designates a rational reality composed of configurations that cut across the subject-object divide, being both objective (as substantially "in themselves" apart from any and all knowing subjects) and subjective (if and when they become also "for themselves" through human mindedness and like-mindedness) and reflected in isomorphisms between conceptual logics operative in subjects and objects alike.⁷⁸ After the advent of Reason in the Phenomenology, any endorsements by Hegel of idealism, including Kant's variety with its transcendental unity of apperception, both in the rest of this 1807 book as well as his post-Phenomenology System in its entirety must be appreciated as invariably qualified by his immanent critical sublation of subjectivism, especially that coloring Kantian and Fichtean transcendental idealisms on Hegel's readings of them.⁷⁹

Reason generally and Observing Reason particularly rise out of the ashes of the preceding section of the Phenomenology on Self-Consciousness (culminating in the "Unhappy Consciousness" of primarily medieval Christianity). Through his specific staging of the

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74 Hegel 1977c, pp. 88, 170-171, 177, 178-179.

75 Hegel 1969a, pp. 664, 669, 826-827; Hegel 1991c, §24 (pp. 56-57).

76 Siep 1991, pp. 71, 75-76.

77 Westphal 1993, p. 268.

78 Hegel 1977c, p. 151; Hegel 1986b, §40-42 (pp. 63-64); Hegel 1955b, pp.181-182; Hegel 2008, §24-25 (pp. 15-18), §95 (p. 110); DeVries 1988, pp. 110, 114-115, 175, 177-178, 196-197, 200; Harris 1997, p. 490; Quante 2011, pp. 93, 133.

79 Johnston 2012, pp. 115-118; Johnston 2014c.

transition between Self-Consciousness and Reason, Hegel intends to convey the claim that the Christianity of the Unhappy Consciousness historically and (phenomeno)logically paves the way and serves as a possibility condition for the modern secular sciences of nature born early in the seventeenth century—and this despite the fact that the rational scientific *Weltanschauung* that takes shape thanks to the contemporaries Bacon, Galileo, and René Descartes promptly comes to generate a tension between itself and the religion of its historical background. This is definitely an instance of, as the *Phenomenology's* introduction puts it, a transition between figures of phenomenal consciousness (as Self-Consciousness and Reason, in this case) transpiring “behind the back of consciousness.”⁸⁰ Simply stated, science fails to recognize or remember its indebtedness to the religion out of which it emerges and with which it quickly enters into lasting conflict after this its emergence.⁸¹ Moreover, Hegel indicates that Reason, first and foremost as Observing Reason, is especially prone to ahistorical amnesia (the proof of this being that working scientists need not and often do not pay much attention to the history of their disciplines).⁸²

To be more precise, Hegel has in mind in the context presently under consideration the role that God fulfills in Descartes's philosophy as expressed in the latter's 1640/1641 *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Therein, the singular Supreme Being is reduced to serving as not much more than an ultimate guarantor of the veracity of both perceptually-based empirical (*aposteriori*) knowledge as well as conceptually-based non-empirical (*apriori*) knowledge. As with, approximately three centuries later, Albert Einstein's God who does not play games with dice, Descartes's divinity is not an unreliable deceiver, trickster, or the like. In addition to Bacon's contribution of an epistemologically formalized/generalized methodology and Galileo's of the identification of mathematics as the language of nature, Descartes, at least tacitly, contributes to the foundations of modern science its supporting assumption that being is a rule-bound, stable field of existence knowable by thinking, with the signifier “God”

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80 Hegel 1977c, p. 56.

81 Hegel 1977c, pp. 137-139.

82 Hegel 1977c, pp. 141-142.

naming this presupposition.⁸³ Without such an assumption, scientific investigators never could launch into their inquiries in the first place with the requisite inaugural confidence and conviction that, at least in principle, reality is law-like and, hence, comprehensible in the form of posited laws with predictive power. This non-empirical article of faith provides an indispensable philosophical/metaphysical ground for the empirical disciplines themselves, including modernity's experimental, mathematized sciences of nature. The God of the Unhappy Consciousness (i.e., what Hegel designates in this sub-section of the *Phenomenology* “the Unchangeable,”⁸⁴ thus already foreshadowing this depiction of Descartes's) in which Self-Consciousness culminates continues to live on in and through the apparently secular (or even atheistic) rationality subsuming (as both preserving and negating) Him.⁸⁵ Likewise, the “Holy Spirit” of the universal fellowship of believers united by faith and recognition in God morphs into the community of scientists, a community whose presence is entailed already in Baconian scientific method itself and whose powers of recognition are responsible for determining what does and does not count as genuine, true knowledge. Additionally, an earlier moment of Self-Consciousness also persists into and contributes to the new scientific rationality: The technological apparatuses, devices, implements, instruments, tools, etc. as well as the technical skills to employ them, as jointly constituting a *savoir-faire* crucial to Bacon's *Novum Organum Scientiarum* essentially involving experimentation (and, hence, crucial to scientific *savoir tout court*),⁸⁶ are inherited by Reason from the history of labor beginning with the slavery famously figuring in the sub-section of Self-Consciousness on “Lordship and Bondage” (with serfs, artisans, craftsmen, and so on conserving and enriching this historically accumulated know-how extending across anonymous generations of unsung laborers).⁸⁷

The opening paragraph of the section on Reason in the *Phenomenology* portrays this new shape of consciousness/Spirit as taking over and translating into its own terms (as per the positive, preservative side of the *Aufhebung*) a number of elements initially

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83 Pinkard 1996, p. 81.

84 Hegel 1977c, pp. 131-132, 134-138.

85 Johnston 2012, pp. 114-115; Johnston 2014c.

86 Bacon 2000, pp. 18, 33.

87 Hegel 1977c, pp. 115-116, 117-118.

characteristic of the Unhappy Consciousness of Self-Consciousness. Utilizing his non-subjectivist logical language, Hegel here employs the structure of the syllogism so as to establish the parallels and continuities between Self-Consciousness and Reason: Vernunft, first incarnated as the rational scientific observer of nature, becomes aware of itself as a syllogistic middle term (i.e., the mediator assuming the position previously occupied for Unhappy Consciousness by the priest as clerical conduit mediating relations with the divine) between, on the one hand, a universal term (i.e., God qua the Unchangeable become the God's-eye "view from nowhere" of modern science's methodologically secured objective viewpoint on the world) and, on the other hand, a particular term (i.e., the individual persons qua members of the congregation/flock become the specific empirical entities and events of concern to the scientist).⁸⁸ This syllogistic formulation helps further sharpen the distinction between Consciousness (particularly as Sense-Certainty and Perception) and Reason: Not only, as I already noted, is Consciousness passive and Reason active (with this emphasis on activity reflecting Reason's successor position as an inheritor of the intervening legacies of Self-Consciousness)—while the objects of Consciousness are conceived by it nominalistically as sensory-perceptual individualities qua utterly unique thises, thats, and others, the "same" objects are, for Vernunft in its modern scientific shape, particular embodiments or manifestations of universal patterns and rules (i.e., laws amenable to formalized generalizations, such as causal laws of nature). That is to say, Reason's primary concern is with what is intelligibly universal in sensuous particulars, whereas Consciousness is fixated on and in thrall to the latter alone⁸⁹ (a point Hegel later underscores in his Berlin-era history-of-philosophy lecture on Bacon⁹⁰).

Now, having clarified the historical and (phenomeno)logical backdrop to Reason as the preliminary appearance of what proceeds to become Hegelian absolute idealism proper (or, one could say, of Vernunft as the an sich of absolute idealism an und für sich), I still have to respond directly to two questions raised by prior stretches of my preceding remarks: First, how does Hegel's implicit reference to Bacon in 1807 inform his appropriation of Kant's transcendental unity of

.....
88 Hegel 1977c, p. 139.

89 Hegel 1977c, pp. 139, 147-149, 154; Johnston 2012, pp. 119-120.

90 Hegel 1955b, pp. 175-177.

apperception (both in the Phenomenology itself as well as the passage of the Science of Logic repeatedly brandished by Pippin)? Second, how does the answer to the previous question affect Pippin's interpretation of apperception in Hegel's idealism? Apropos the first of these queries, Hegel reverses Kant's above-cited narrative, in the preface to the B-version of the first Critique, about the relationship between Bacon and critical transcendental idealism. Kant sees the Copernican revolution of his idealism as the consequent advancement and coming to fruition of the germinal seed of Bacon's insight into the necessary contribution of the inquirer's subjective activities to what is revealed as the objective content of true knowledge in and through these same inquiries. By contrast, for Hegel, Kant's (subjective) idealism is retrograde in comparison with Bacon's proto-idealism, lagging behind what it claims to be merely one of its historical precursors. Not (yet) burdened by the baggage of an anti-realist subjectivism freighted with fatal, (self-) dialecticizing inconsistencies, Bacon, with his combination of an empiricist, naturalist realism and proto-idealist appreciation of active subjectivity as a co-constituter of known reality, is philosophically closer to Hegel's absolute idealist metaphysics than is Kant's transcendental idealist epistemology chronologically (and geographically/culturally) closer to Hegel. Even in the Phenomenology, the logical arguably has priority over the chronological, one consequence of this being that speculative solutions to dialectical problems sometimes occur historically out of sequence, with answers to questions surfacing in linear historical time before the questions themselves have been (explicitly) posed.⁹¹ By Hegel's lights, the Bacon-Kant relationship is an illustration of precisely this: Baconian Vernunft already overcomes the self-subverting one-sidedness of the subjectivism of Kantian critical-transcendental idealism in a manner foreshadowing Hegel's own absolute idealist sublation of Kantianism. In line with the Vernunft of Hegelian absolute idealism, Bacon already sketches the rudimentary contours of an immanent unity of apperception—more precisely, such a unity as a subjectivity sharing a dialectical-speculative identity-in-difference with objectivity within an overarching one-world metaphysics (as opposed to Kant's two-worlds metaphysics).⁹²

Apropos the question of how the immediately preceding impacts

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91 Johnston 2014c.

92 Johnston 2012, pp. 118-121.

Pippin's reconstruction of the Kant-Hegel relationship, my highlighting of Hegel's interweaving of simultaneous references to both Bacon and Kant in the "Reason" section of the Phenomenology (an interweaving with respect to which Pippin remains silent) hopefully drives home the point that the Pippinian brand of deflationary Hegelianism is a highly selective revision of Hegel's actual philosophy, one replacing absolute with subjective idealism wholesale (here, my verdict on Pippin agrees with that pronounced by Houlgate,⁹³ although Houlgate and I each reach this shared judgment by different exegetical and argumentative routes). Taking the "absolute" out of absolute idealism and ignoring the absolute idealist dialectical-speculative sublation of subjectivist one-sidedness (i.e., sidelining and neglecting both Hegel's critique of Kantian transcendentalism as subjective idealism as well as his 1807 elevation of Bacon over Kant apropos the metaphysics of active subjective agency) certainly allows for a creative reconstruction of Hegel as, for the most part, a good Kantian. But, simply put, this is not Hegel. Especially considering the weight of the evidence I already have provided for this critical contention vis-à-vis Pippin—this evidence is drawn mainly from textual moments prior to Pippin's favorite passage on the transcendental unity of apperception from "The Doctrine of the Concept" in the Science of Logic—additional testimony drawn from textual moments subsequent to Pippin's key piece of evidence for his Kantianizing interpretation further substantiates my counter-claims against this interpretation. As the immediately ensuing will show, Hegel himself would reject the post-Kantian anti-realism Pippin tries to attribute to him. Hegel's somewhat pro-Bacon, anti-Kant account of Reason breaks with Kant's subjectivism, resting as this subjectivism does on speculatively-dialectically untenable dualisms of a sub-rational (als Vernunft) Verstand-type supporting anti-materialist, anti-naturalist perspectives alien to both Bacon's and Hegel's idealisms.

As in the Science of Logic, Hegel, in the prefatory treatment of Kantian critical philosophy in the Encyclopedia Logic, also pronounces a few approving words with respect to the transcendental unity of apperception.⁹⁴ But, once again, as soon as he voices this sympathy he significantly qualifies it, immediately adding with respect to Kant's pure apperceiving "I":

.....
93 Houlgate 2006, pp. 139-143.

94 Hegel 1991c, §42 (pp. 84-85).

Now this certainly expresses correctly the nature of all consciousness (die Natur alles Bewußtseins). What human beings strive (Streben) for in general is cognition of the world; we strive to appropriate it and to conquer it (sie sich anzueignen und zu unterwerfen). To this end the reality of the world (die Realität der Welt) must be crushed (zerquetscht) as it were; i.e., it must be made ideal (idealisiert). At the same time, however, it must be remarked that it is not the subjective activity of self-consciousness that introduces absolute unity into the multiplicity in question; rather, this identity is the Absolute, genuineness itself (Zugleich ist dann aber zu bemerken, daß es nicht die subjektive Tätigkeit des Selbstbewußtseins ist, welche die absolute Einheit in die Mannigfaltigkeit hineinbringt. Dieses Identität ist vielmehr das Absolute, das Wahrfafte selbst). Thus it is the goodness of the Absolute (die Güte des Absoluten), so to speak, that lets singular [beings] (Einzelheiten) enjoy their own selves (Selbstgenuß), and it is just this that drives them back into absolute unity (treibt sie in die absolute Einheit zurück).⁹⁵

To begin with, both here and in his other invocations of the transcendental unity of apperception (ones quoted by me earlier), Hegel, contra Pippin's subjectivist anti-realism, implies that the absolute idealist (as also realist) sublated version of this Kantian principle involves positing that "the reality of the world," as already unified and formed in itself ("it is not the subjective activity of self-consciousness that introduces absolute unity into the multiplicity in question"), objectively pre-exists the synthesizing/unifying activities of subjectivity. That is to say, if this real world is "appropriated," "conquered," "crushed," and "idealized," it must already be there, as a pre/non-subjective presence, to be submitted to these "strivings" of the apperceiving, (self-)conscious subject.⁹⁶ When Pippin himself quotes the above passage from the Encyclopedia in support of his Kantian anti-realist version of Hegel, he ignores this directly implied preexistence of an asubjective real as unified/formed in and of itself.⁹⁷

Furthermore, in the preceding block quotation from the

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95 Hegel 1970b, §42 (p. 118); Hegel 1991c, §42 (p. 85).

96 Hegel 2002b, pp. 116, 118-120; Lukács 1978, p. 9.

97 Pippin 1993, pp. 290-291.

Encyclopedia Logic, the “drunk on God” (à la Novalis) talk of “the Absolute” so anathema to all permutations of deflationary Hegelianism (Pippin’s included) promptly follows and directly qualifies the ambivalent characterization of Kant’s transcendental unity of apperception. This serves as a reminder of a fundamental feature of post-Fichteian German idealism beginning with Friedrich Hölderlin’s “Über Urtheil und Seyn” of 1795 and “The Earliest System-Program of German Idealism” of 1796,⁹⁸ a feature coming to form a red thread running across the entire length of Hegel’s intellectual itinerary: The infinite Absolute as substance also becomes self-reflective/reflexive in and through finite minded subjectivity, with the latter and its cognizing (self-)conscious activities remaining fully immanent to the substantial, absolute infinity out of which it arose as its ontological ground (if finite subjective reflection were to fall outside of this infinity, the infinite would be rendered finite, the Absolute less than absolute).⁹⁹ As the deservedly celebrated preface to the Phenomenology already maintains, the Absolute, in its proper absoluteness, includes within itself reflection on the Absolute (something maintained right on the heels of the famous “Substance... equally as Subject” line).¹⁰⁰ Hegel warns there that, “Reason is... misunderstood when reflection is excluded from the True, and is not grasped as a positive moment of the Absolute” (Es ist... ein Verkennen der Vernunft, wenn die Reflexion aus dem Wahren ausgeschlossen und nicht als positives Moment des Absoluten erfaßt wird)¹⁰¹—with “the True” here being “the Whole” (Das Wahre ist das Ganze),¹⁰² namely, the dialectically self-sundering absolute substance dividing into itself and its (self-)reflection in and through subjectivity. Hence, pace Pippin’s repeated maneuver of drawing Hegel close to Kant’s epistemological finitism via the former’s mentions of the latter’s transcendental unity of apperception, Hegelian absolute idealism, by marked contrast with Kantian transcendental idealism, recasts this unity as a transcendent-while-immanent transcendental function (re-)unified

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98 Hölderlin 1972, pp. 515-516; Hegel 2002a, p. 110; Vaysse 1994, p. 138; Pinkard 2002, pp. 141-142; Förster 2012, p. 279; Johnston 2014a, pp. 13-22; Johnston 2014b.

99 Johnston 2014a, pp. 13-22.

100 Hegel 1977c, pp. 10-12.

101 Hegel 1970c, p. 25; Hegel 1977c, pp. 11-12.

102 Hegel 1970c, p. 24; Hegel 1977c, p. 11.

with an infinite ontological base.¹⁰³ Pippin’s deflationary finitization qua epistemological deontologization and deabsolutization of Hegel de-Hegelianizes Hegel himself.

Additional moments in Hegel’s corpus bearing witness against Pippin’s Kantianization of him via the topic of apperception are to be found in “The Doctrine of the Concept” as the “Subjective Logic” of the Science of Logic (i.e., in the very same place from where Pippin extracts Hegel’s admiring remarks about the first Critique’s “Transcendental Deduction”). In fact, just a couple of pages later, the fourth paragraph subsequent to the paragraph extolling the importance of Kant’s transcendental unity of apperception (albeit, as seen, with significant caveats and reservations) states the following:

...the Notion (der Begriff) is to be regarded not as the act of the self-conscious understanding (selbstbewußten Verstandes), not as the subjective understanding (subjektive Verstand), but as the Notion in its own absolute character (der Begriff an und für sich) which constitutes a stage of nature (Stufe der Natur) as well as of spirit (Geistes). Life, or organic nature, is the stage of nature at which the Notion emerges, but as blind, as unaware of itself and unthinking (nicht denkender Begriff); the Notion that is self-conscious and thinks pertains solely to spirit. But the logical form of the Notion is independent of its non-spiritual (ungeistigen), as also of its spiritual (geistigen), shapes (Gestalten des Begriffs).¹⁰⁴

Later in the Science of Logic, Hegel devotes the entirety of the introduction to the third and final section of “The Doctrine of the Concept” on “the Idea” (die Idee) to dismissing subjective idealist understandings of the ideational. He emphasizes, by pointed contrast, that his Idea is an absolute idealist one essentially involving the identity-in-difference of the subjective and the objective.¹⁰⁵ All of this qualifies Hegel’s appropriations of Kantian critical philosophy both in the Science of Logic itself and elsewhere.

With its proximity to the invocation of Kant’s “Transcendental Deduction,” the preceding block quotation is crucial to appreciate at this juncture. The transcendental unity of apperception is situated at (and

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103 Quante 2011, p. 121.

104 Hegel 1969c, p. 257; Hegel 1969a, p. 586.

105 Hegel 1969a, pp. 755-760; Hegel 1990, §162 (p. 128).

as) the very heart of the first Critique's analysis of Verstand. Hence, it is firmly circumscribed within the field of phenomenal experience and its limits as co-constituted by the two faculties of intuition and the understanding. Therefore, Hegel's above disqualification of "subjective understanding" qua "the act of the self-conscious understanding" strikes at nothing other than the apperceiving activity of synthesizing self-consciousness as per the "Transcendental Deduction" ambivalently referenced four paragraphs earlier in the Science of Logic. Unlike in transcendental idealism, with its subjectivism (and corresponding aversions to realism, naturalism, and materialism), "der Begriff an und für sich" is as much "non-spiritual" (i.e., asubjectively objective qua natural, substantial, etc.) as it is "spiritual" (i.e., subjective, whether as individual [self-]consciousness or the socio-historical collectivities of "objective spirit"). Moreover, the Notion/Concept (der Begriff) as self-aware thinking subjectivity (i.e., the side of this closer to Pippin's Kant) is explicitly rendered by Hegel here, already anticipating the philosophical anthropology and psychology of the third volume of the Encyclopedia on Philosophy of Mind, as emergent vis-à-vis nature generally and organic, living beings specifically.¹⁰⁶ This posit or anything like it would be inadmissible within the epistemological confines of the Kantian critical-transcendental idealism leaned upon by Pippin.

As seen, Žižek, both implicitly and explicitly throughout *Less Than Nothing*, challenges in various ways Pippin's tendency to situate Hegelian subjectivity within the anti-materialist, anti-naturalist, and anti-realist framework of the subjectivism of Kantian transcendental idealism as grounded in the apperceptive unity of (self-)consciousness. The second paragraph of the preface to Hegel's 1801 *Differenzschrift* provides yet more ample support for opposition (whether Žižekian or not) to Pippin's deflationary rapprochement between the Kant of the "Transcendental Deduction" and Hegel (and, with Pippin himself citing this very same paragraph in support of his Kantianizing interpretation,¹⁰⁷ I am opting once again, as with the passage in the Science of Logic's "Doctrine of the Concept" on the "Transcendental Deduction," for an immanent-critical line of contestation):

The Kantian philosophy needed to have its sprit (Geist)

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¹⁰⁶ Hegel 1986a, p. 185; Hegel 1970d, §376 (pp. 443-445); Hegel 1971, §381 (pp. 8, 13-14), §388-389 (pp. 29-31), §391 (pp. 35-36), §412 (pp. 151-152).

¹⁰⁷ Pippin 1989b, pp. 6, 17, 35; Pippin 1989a, pp. 28-29.

distinguished from its letter (Buchstaben), and to have its purely speculative principle lifted out of the remainder that belonged to, or could be used for, the arguments of reflection (der rasonierenden Reflexion). In the principle of the deduction of the categories Kant's philosophy is authentic idealism (echter Idealismus); and it is this principle that Fichte extracted in a purer, stricter form and called the spirit of Kantian philosophy. The things

in themselves—which are nothing but an objective expression of the empty form of opposition—had been hypostasized anew by Kant, and posited as absolute objectivity like the things of the dogmatic philosophers. On the one hand, he made the categories into static, dead pigeonholes of the intellect (Intelligenz); and on the other hand he made them into the supreme principles capable of nullifying the language that expresses the Absolute itself—e.g., 'substance' in Spinoza. Thus he allowed argumentation (negative Rasonieren) to go on replacing philosophy, as before, only more pretentiously than ever under the name of critical philosophy. But all this springs at best from the form of the Kantian deduction of the categories, not from its principle or spirit (Prinzip oder Geist). Indeed, if we had no part of Kant's philosophy but the deduction, the transformation (Verwandlung) of his philosophy [from speculation into reflection] would be almost incomprehensible. The principle of speculation is the identity of subject and object (die Identität des Subjekts und Objekts), and this principle is most definitely articulated in the deduction of the forms of the intellect (Verstand). It was Reason (Vernunft) itself that baptized this theory of the intellect.¹⁰⁸

Hegel here unambiguously distinguishes between the non-speculative qua subjective idealist "letter" and the speculative qua absolute idealist "spirit" of Kant's "Transcendental Deduction." Already in 1801, he heavily qualifies his praise of the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception in the exact same manners he does later in such texts as the Science of Logic (with me having cited and unpacked these subsequent instances in the course of substantiating my criticisms of Pippin earlier). Moreover, he signals that his post-Kantianism is a sublation als *Aufhebung*, being at least as much "post-" in the sense

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¹⁰⁸ Hegel 1970a, pp. 9-10; Hegel 1977a, pp. 79-80.

of surpassing as “post-” in the different sense of preserving; apropos both the transcendental unity of apperception as well as transcendental idealism überhaupt, Hegelian “speculation” (i.e., absolute idealism) is a “transformation (Verwandlung),” instead of a continuation, of Kantian “reflection” (i.e., subjective idealism).

As the above passage from the *Differenzschrift* indicates, Hegel’s interpretation of the “Transcendental Deduction” is very much along the lines of (albeit avant la lettre) the Allisonian “reciprocity thesis” reading—and this insofar as an equivalence can be maintained between Hegel’s “identity of subject and object (die Identität des Subjekts und Objekts)” and Allison’s “reciprocity” between apperceiving subjectivity and apperceived objectivity. This reciprocity thesis, as subject-object identity, is the *Critique of Pure Reason*’s “purely speculative principle,” namely, that by virtue of which “Kant’s philosophy is authentic idealism (echter Idealismus)” (i.e., absolute, rather than subjective, idealism). In the preceding block quotation, Hegel treats everything other than this moment of identity in the first *Critique* as “the remainder that belonged to, or could be used for, the arguments of reflection (der rasonierenden Reflexion)” (i.e., a subjective idealist worldview with a *Verstand*-style opposition between subjectivity qua ideal thinking and objectivity qua real being, with the former as entirely external to the latter). Hegel suggests an exegetical thought experiment in which one faces the “Transcendental Deduction” on its own, freed from its position as sandwiched between, in particular, “the remainder” formed by the “Transcendental Aesthetic” (as insisting upon the strict ideality of space and time¹⁰⁹) and the “Transcendental Dialectic” (as buttressing this anti-realist insistence of the Aesthetic through supposedly demonstrating the contradictory, illogical consequences of any robustly realist option¹¹⁰). He justifiably sees the Kantian Aesthetic and Dialectic, by which the Deduction is surrounded in the first *Critique*, as working together to cement in place the two-worlds metaphysics of the reflective intellect/understanding, a *Weltanschauung* in which the subject-object reciprocity of the Deduction is confined to one world (i.e., the subjective/ideal one of phenomenal experience with its objects-as-appearances) separate from another world (i.e., the objective/real one of noumenal things-in-themselves). Worded in Hegelian fashion, the

109 Kant 1998, A26/B42-A49/B66 (pp. 159-171), B66-73 (pp. 188-192).

110 Kant 1998, A493-494/B521-522 (p. 512), A506-507/B534-535 (p. 519).

Kantian unity of subject and object is a unity internal to the subject itself (i.e., a one-sided unity).

Additionally, even though Fichte, for the Hegel of the *Differenzschrift*, makes progress beyond Kant by jettisoning *das Ding an sich*, Fichtean transcendental idealism is as or more subjectivist than the Kantian variety—with, as Hegel insists in 1801, Fichte’s subject-object identity remaining a lop-sided, wrongly absolutized identity confined exclusively to the subject alone.¹¹¹ Tellingly, Pippin stresses the importance of Fichte for Hegel and relatedly depicts the Hegelian identity of subject and object in the shadow of the dissolution of Kant’s thing-in-itself as a Fichtean subjective idealist one qua internal solely to subjectivity itself.¹¹² Not only does this downplay Hegel’s sustained critique of Fichte in the *Differenzschrift*—it correlatively neglects Schelling’s importance here, with Schelling’s philosophies of nature and identity representing a Hölderlin-heralded, post-Fichtean objective/absolute idealism to which Hegel remains steadfastly committed throughout his mature intellectual itinerary (even long after his break with Schelling). Of course, as is well known, Hegel’s first philosophical publication of 1801 largely sides with Schelling’s identity-philosophical counter-balancing of the subjective subject-object of Fichtean transcendental idealism with the objective subject-object of the Schellingian philosophy of nature¹¹³ (Pippin symptomatically selects the young Schelling’s 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism*, the more Fichtean side of his early endeavors prior to his rupture with Fichte publicly announced through the publication of 1801’s “Presentation of My System of Philosophy,” for mention as an influence on Hegel’s development¹¹⁴).

At various points throughout his oeuvre, Hegel sublates the dualist metaphysics of Kantian transcendental idealism as a self-subverting (attempted) absolutization of the subject-object dichotomy upheld by the external, formal understanding in the guise of an inflexible, brittle dualism between mental thinking and worldly being. In particular, his 1801 vision of the Deduction minus both the Aesthetic and the Dialectic is one in which the “object” of subject-object identity is

111 Hegel 1977a, pp. 81-83, 117, 133, 135, 155, 157-158, 162.

112 Pippin 1989b, pp. 42-44, 83, 98, 168.

113 Hegel 1977a, pp. 82-83, 157, 159-162, 165-169, 172-174.

114 Pippin 1989b, p. 64.

no longer merely the phenomenal object-as-appearance but, instead, a genuinely objective (as extra/non-subjective) object an sich (i.e., not the “formless lump” of das Ding an sich,¹¹⁵ but, instead, an asubjective yet formed/unified objectivity). That is to say, Hegel’s immanent critiques of the two-worlds metaphysics of transcendental idealism, with its anti-realist subjectivism as embodied in the related theses apropos the strict ideality of space and time as well as the existence of things-in-themselves, allow for interpretively appropriating the transcendental unity of apperception of the “Transcendental Deduction” such that this unity is no longer enclosed within the limits of the merely conscious, mental, and subjective as deontologized, epistemological, and exclusively ideal. This immanent-critical possibility for sublating Kant’s Deduction testifies to the fact that, although Kant himself debatably restricts his subject-object identity (or, as per Allison, reciprocity) to the one side of the subject only, this identity is open to an absolute idealist speculative re-reading once the anti-realist arguments of the first Critique’s Aesthetic and Dialectic are justifiably left by the wayside (with this openness helping to explain what Hegel means when he says in 1801 that, “It was Reason (Vernunft) itself that baptized this theory of the intellect”). Thus, the Differenzschrift adds yet more weight to my prior claims that Pippin misconstrues Hegel’s references to Kant’s transcendental unity of apperception as drawing the former closer to the subjective idealism of the latter.

Given that I began this intervention with the question of beginnings in Hegel’s philosophy and Žižek’s perspectives on German idealism, how is my problematization of Pippin’s use of the transcendental unity of apperception to establish a certain continuity between Kant and Hegel linked to this point of departure? As earlier remarks by me already indicate, the link is simple and direct: Insofar as Pippin identifies his Kantianized version of “The Doctrine of the Concept” as the genuine logical start of the Hegelian system (by contrast with those, such as Houlgate, Henrich, and Žižek, who advocate for “The Doctrine of Being” or “The Doctrine of Essence” as the locus of proper beginning in Hegel’s Logic), my critique of Pippin’s portrayal of Hegel’s relationship to the “Transcendental Deduction” of the first Critique inhibits the gesture of elevating Kant’s transcendental unity of apperception to the status of grounding primordial moment of Hegel’s philosophical edifice as a whole. In fact, I wish to move towards a

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 115 Hegel 1977b, pp. 76-77.

conclusion with the proposal that the entire debate amongst readers of Hegel about where the Hegelian system well and truly gets underway in the Logic rests on two questionable assumptions shared by participants in this debate (and this despite their otherwise fierce disagreements amongst themselves): First, there is a stable beginning, a fixed starting point, to be found somewhere within the Logic; And, second, the Logic itself (or, at least, some moment[s] within it) is the foundational, one-and-only proper beginning of Hegel’s systematic philosophical apparatus in its entirety.

Contra these two assumptions, I assert that: First, the Logic in its full sweep is composed of a series of (spectacular) failed attempts to begin with thinking alone (with thinking, at the end of this series, driving itself out of and beyond itself into the Real of the Realphilosophie, first as objectively real spatio-temporal nature in its externality¹¹⁶); And, second, there is no single Ur-beginning in Hegel’s philosophy, but, instead, at least three different beginnings incommensurable yet equiprimordial with respect to each other (these two proposals are more specific versions of suggestions also gestured at by Sedgwick¹¹⁷). Starting with my first assertion here, a snippet from the recently published collection of Žižek’s Jokes is fitting to quote at this juncture:

There is the ultimate good news/bad news doctor joke that reaches the dark limit of a joke; it starts with the good news, which, however, is so ominous that no further bad news is needed: ‘Doctor: First the good news: we definitely established that you are not a hypochondriac.’ No need for a counterpoint here. (Another version: ‘Doctor: I have some good news and some bad news. Patient: What’s the good news? Doctor: The good news is that your name will be soon a household name all around the world—they are naming a disease after you!’) Is this a nondialectical short circuit? Or is it rather the proper dialectical beginning that immediately negates itself? Something like this joke happens at the beginning of Hegel’s logic, not a passage to the opposite, but the beginning’s immediate self-sabotage.¹¹⁸

The back cover of the collection containing this passage

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 116 Hegel 1969a, pp. 843-844; Hegel 1991c, §244 (p. 307); Hegel 2008, §244 (pp. 232-233); Hegel 1970d, §253-254 (pp. 28-29), §257-258 (pp. 34-35).

117 Sedgwick 2012, p. 156.

118 Žižek 2014, p. 54.

cites Ludwig Wittgenstein's statement that, "A serious and good philosophical work could be written consisting entirely of jokes." My suggestion for how to read Hegel's Logic could be construed as involving a reversal of this Wittgensteinian assertion: The Science of Logic (or other versions of the Logic, such as the first volume of the Encyclopedia) amounts to a long sequence of jokes delivered in the form of a serious and good philosophical work (further support for this can be found in Ernst Bloch's reflections on "Hegel and Humor"¹¹⁹). In both *Less Than Nothing* and Žižek's *Jokes*, Žižek denies that the very beginning of the Logic (i.e., the initial triad of Being, Nothing, and Becoming) really is a beginning. However, as I highlighted during the opening of this essay, the Žižek specifically of *Less Than Nothing* claims that "Determinate Being"/"Being-there" (das Dasein), the immediate successor-moment to Becoming in "The Doctrine of Being," indeed is to be understood as the actual start of Hegelian Logic after the false starts of its opening trinity. That is to say, Žižek limits "the beginning's immediate self-sabotage" in Hegel's *Science of Logic* and *Encyclopedia of Logic* to these texts' literal beginnings with the Being-Nothing-Becoming triad. Not only does this leave him exposed to the objections that the likes of a Henrich or Pippin would raise to treating any moment whatsoever of "The Doctrine of Being" as the proper starting point of the Logic—it is less than optimally consistent with and buttressing of the specifically dialectical materialist version of Hegelian philosophy aimed at by *Less Than Nothing*.

This leads directly to my second above-expressed assertion regarding the three distinct varieties of beginnings in Hegel's framework, with each one enjoying its own mode of precedence/priority vis-à-vis the other two. As with Jacques Lacan's Borromean knot, the Hegelian System is a configuration whose existence and integrity depends upon all three of its dimensions as equally indispensable constituents, this arguably being part of what is at stake in some of Hegel's (often opaque) remarks about syllogistic structures.¹²⁰ Of course, the *Encyclopedia*, as articulating the core of Hegelian *Wissenschaft*, is structured by two basic organizing divisions, a two-part and a three-part division: first, a two-part division between *Logik* and *Realphilosophie*; and, second, a three-part division between, on

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119 Bloch 1970, pp. 136-140.

120 Hegel 1991c, §187 (p. 263); Hegel 2008, §188-189 (pp. 197-198).

the one hand, *Logik* and, on the other hand, *Realphilosophie* as divided into *Naturphilosophie* and *Geistesphilosophie* (i.e., the three divisions familiar in the form of the three volumes of the *Encyclopedia*, namely, *Logic*, *Philosophy of Nature*, and *Philosophy of Mind*). Stated roughly and quickly, my idea is that Hegel's three beginnings correspond approximately to the divisions of the Hegelian system as follows: metaphysical (*Logic*), material (*Philosophy of Nature*), and historical (*Philosophy of Mind*, including *Phenomenology*—both ontogenetic and phylogenetic histories are involved in mindedness and like-mindedness).

The *Phenomenology of Spirit*—this first systematic work of the mature Hegel defensibly can be read as a massive dialectical process-of-elimination argument in which all non-Hegelian presuppositions (embodied in the *Phenomenology*'s myriad figures/shapes of consciousness) dialectically eliminate (qua sublate) themselves—provides the pre-history leading up to the presuppositionless initiation of the *Logic*. Given both that Hegel is no metaphysical realist and that he distinguishes between the logical and the real (as per the division between *Logik* and *Realphilosophie*), the *Logic* then can be construed as spelling out the dialectical-speculative network of concepts and categories making possible all *Realphilosophie* precisely as knowledge of the Real (any and every knowing of Nature or Mind [als Geist] necessarily relies directly upon at least some of the constellations delineated in the *Logic*). However, this making possible is done not in the epistemological manner of Kant's subjectively idealist transcendental, but, instead, in the ontological fashion of Hegel's absolute idealist *Idea* (*Idee*) qua the identity-in-difference between the objectively real as well as subjectively ideal dimensions of concepts and categories (with, as I have shown already at some length, concepts and categories indeed being both objectively real as well as subjectively ideal for Hegel). Hence, the intelligibility of all things real, be they natural or mental (again, als geistige), is made possible by them always-already being formed in and of themselves along lines traced by the *Logic*.

Nonetheless, the structures and dynamics of the *Logic* do not magically float in the rarified air of a mysterious, eternal time-before-time (despite a famous Hegelian passage misleadingly suggesting this¹²¹). They exist only in and through the natural and spiritual realities

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121 Hegel 1969a, pp. 49-50.

that are themselves immanent realizations of logical concepts and categories. For Hegel, and pace metaphysical realism, the metaphysical by itself is not the real. Therefore, the Logic is a beginning strictly in the circumscribed sense of laying down the skeletal metaphysical abstractions serving as necessary conditions/ingredients for an ontology of intelligible being(s)—with this “-logy” formulated at a determinate point of spiritual history from the contextually situated standpoint of philosophy’s backwards glance (à la the Owl of Minerva) as itself invariably embodied in individual human creatures of nature (as well as culture). These qualifications I just now attached to the logical beginning of Hegel’s absolute idealism already hint at the different priorities belonging to the two fundamental dimensions of Realphilosophie, those of Natur und Geist.

One of the accomplishments of the Phenomenology of Spirit, Science of Logic, and Encyclopedia Logic taken together is that they permit Hegel to posit real beginnings both material/natural (as in Realphilosophie als Naturphilosophie) as well as historical/mental (as in Realphilosophie als Geistesphilosophie) in thoroughly non-dogmatic, post-critical ways. In particular, not only does Hegelian Logic make possible knowledge of the Real à la the Realphilosophie (as real knowledge¹²²)—it also argumentatively supports Hegel’s realism generally (by immanently critiquing such anti-realist options as Kantian transcendental idealism) and his beginning, at the start of the Philosophy of Nature, with space and time as objectively real specifically. The course of Hegel’s mature Logic begins with Being and ends with the transition to Nature (with the latter as external to thinking, including the thinking of/about thinking that is the Logic itself). This is significant, especially considering that Hegel, as I noted a while ago, proclaims the structure of his Logic to be circular, with the end reconnecting (somehow or other) with the beginning. Of course, the Logic initially gets underway with the attempt to start with Being from within pure thinking. Hence, its conclusion, as a neither temporal nor causal move from the Logical to the Real of Nature as an externality in excess of pure thinking, entails that the “onto-” in ontology really is to be found over and above a “-logy” alone, namely, in Natur an sich.

If I am right in reading the entire Logic as a series of false starts, then it becomes a failed ontology. However, surprisingly, its failure is epistemologically productive. Inaugurated without presuppositions

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122 Hegel 1977c, p. 3.

and set in motion with the self-induced dialectics of the attempt to begin with mere, sheer Being per se, the Logic keeps failing properly to begin. The sequence of failures to begin inexorably drives thought up to the point of thinking Nature’s externality, ready to do so equipped with the conceptual and categorial resources generated precisely by the sublimely, stunningly productive failures, as “determinate negations,”¹²³ constituting the full sweep of the Logic. With the Logic’s circularity, this means that Being, its false start, is truly recovered first as spatio-temporal objective reality (i.e., the start of Realphilosophie with Natur), an intelligible reality whose intelligibility is made possible by the Logic itself (as a metaphysical, but not yet real, beginning). Therefore, the Philosophy of Nature can be construed as furnishing a second beginning for Hegel’s System, that is, its material preconditions/presuppositions.

Finally, and as the deservedly renowned preface to Hegel’s 1821 Elements of the Philosophy of Right powerfully proposes, philosophy generally and Hegelian systematic, scientific philosophy specifically is invariably and inevitably a “child of its time,” namely, constructed from the perspective of the backwards glance of the Owl of Minerva.¹²⁴ In this sense, what I am here identifying as the third, historical beginning of Hegelian Wissenschaft, in addition to the other two beginnings metaphysical (with Logik) and material (with Naturphilosophie), enjoys the priority of embodying the spiritual-contextual starting points conditioning Hegel’s philosophy überhaupt. As the introductory “First Part” of a “System of Science,” the Phenomenology of Spirit, particularly with its glaringly prominent socio-historical components, already hints, well before 1821, that both Logik and Realphilosophie (i.e., the entirety of the encyclopedic nucleus of the System) are actual and possible only insofar as the history of human mindedness and like-mindedness has eventuated in Hegel-the-philosopher’s particular early-nineteenth-century European time and place.¹²⁵ However, although Hegel posits such conjunctural/situational presuppositions as (pre) conditions of his philosophy as well as philosophy tout court, he nonetheless avoids crudely and unreservedly reducing the philosophical to the historical. For instance, his own Logic, Philosophy of Nature, and

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123 Hegel 1977c, p. 36; Hegel 1969a, pp. 54-56, 106-107; Hegel 1991c, §82 (pp. 131-132).

124 Hegel 1991a, pp. 20-23.

125 Hegel 1977c, pp. 6-7; Hegel 1956, pp. 446-447; Hegel 1955b, pp. 546-548, 551-552.

large portions of the Phenomenology and Philosophy of Mind are put forward as possessing at least a relative autonomy vis-à-vis their socio-historical catalysts and influences, with these portions' validity not simply rising and falling with the waxing and waning of given contextual circumstances.

Two fundamental questions are at stake in Žižek's recent disagreements with Pippin (and similar deflationists) over the non/anti-metaphysical Hegel: First, what is the true nature of beginning(s) for Hegel's philosophical framework? Second, how and why, in the current aftermath of deflationary variants of Hegelianism (especially Pippin's Kantianizing one), is anybody entitled to put forward a historical/ dialectical materialist Hegel? As seen, I answer the first question differently than Žižek does. Whereas he locates a single Ur-beginning in the Logic's "Doctrine of Being" (more precisely, in "Determinate Being"/"Being-There" as preceded by the triad of Being-Nothing-Becoming) and Pippin does so within "The Doctrine of the Concept," I treat the Logic in toto as only one of three different yet equiprimordial beginnings, that is, as a metaphysical beginning distinct from equally indispensable material (as per Naturphilosophie) and historical (as per Geistesphilosophie) ones too. Furthermore, this move of mine, particularly by virtue of it restoring to Hegel's Realphilosophie equal standing with respect to Logik within his System as a whole, answers the second question by inverting it: How and why, in taking seriously Hegel's thoughts and texts, is anybody entitled to put forward an anti-materialist, anti-naturalist, and/or anti-realist (in a word, deflated) Hegel? In *Less Than Nothing* as well as throughout his still-unfolding oeuvre, Žižek indeed reads Hegel in this same spirit, clearly considering the material/natural and historical/mental Philosophy of the Real to be as essential to Hegel's philosophy as the Logic. However, not only does this exegetical approach require the sort of additional argumentative and textual support I have tried to provide in this intervention—some of Žižek's interpretive maneuvers with respect to Hegel (such as the beginning he claims to find in "The Doctrine of Being") are at odds with a globally consistent overall reading Hegel's System as a historical/ dialectical materialism *avant la lettre*. As seen at the start of this essay, Žižek, immediately after claiming in *Less Than Nothing* that Hegel's System initially gets underway quite early in the Logic with the Being-there of Determinate Being, claims that there is a properly Hegelian materialist ontology. One thing I think I have managed to show here is that these two claims are in tension with each other and that Žižek would

be well advised to drop the former claim if he wants to hold onto the latter.

Deflationists might respond to all of the preceding by appealing to a distinction between historically accurate readings versus philosophically interesting reconstructions, identifying themselves as pursuing projects of the latter type. With this line of response, it is either assumed or asserted that much of the actual, factual Hegel of yore (for instance, the grand system-builder, the ambitious metaphysician, and the philosopher of nature) long ago ceased to be alive, relevant, or valid for later generations of readers and thinkers. Such deflationists take it for granted that the various and sundry post-metaphysical turns in the Continental and/or Analytic philosophical traditions are (or, at least, should be) assumed to be historical points of no return marking a trajectory of presumed intellectual development (or even progress); in this, they are neither sufficiently (self-)critical nor philosophically interesting. For them, the key questions are: Where does Hegel stand with respect to the present? What remains interesting or palatable in Hegel's philosophy judged by today's philosophical criteria and tastes? But, for anyone risking the encounter of a true engagement with a giant of the philosophical past such as Hegel (as a past which, echoing William Faulkner, is never even past) with as few (usually anachronistic) presuppositions as possible, the key questions always (also) are: Where does the present stand with respect to Hegel (or whichever member of the pantheon of the "mighty dead")? How would Hegel (or any other philosopher of the never-even-past past) judge today's philosophical criteria and tastes? That is to say, recognizing Hegel (or anyone else) as truly worthy of sustained attention in the present, as an interlocutor irreplaceable by other recent or current thinkers, ought to entail those conferring this recognition being willing and able to have their very present itself called into question and challenged by the object of this recognition. This amounts to a reversal of Žižek's question "Is it still possible to be a Hegelian today?": Is it still possible to be contemporary (i.e., to presume as well-founded today's established standards for judging Hegel's enduring value or lack thereof) in the face of an honest, thorough reckoning with Hegel himself in all his glorious philosophical untimeliness? Anything short of this reckoning signals a disrespectful underestimation throwing the doors wide open to the surreptitious replacement of Hegel with the ersatz of a dummy made for exploitation by post-Hegelian ventriloquists.

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