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FROM AN ONTOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW: HEGEL'S CRITIQUE OF THE COMMON LOGIC

ROBERT HANNA

HEGEL'S LOGIC, as developed both in the *Science of Logic*[1] and in the Encyclopedia *Logic*,[2] can be understood only as a criticism of what he calls the "common logic" (*EL*, 36/81) and also sometimes "formal logic" or "ordinary logic." Common logic is perhaps best exemplified by Kant's *Logic*[3]: it deals with the formal conditions of truth in judgments and includes the theory of the syllogism and identity.[4] Hegel's logic, as an ontological logic (*EL*, 36/81), mani-

[1] G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1969); *Wissenschaft der Logik I und II*, Theorie Werkausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969), Bänden 5 und 6. All subsequent references to the *Science of Logic* within the text of the essay are taken from these editions, signified by the abbreviation '*SL*' and two page numbers—the first referring to the English edition, the second referring to the German edition by respective volume—enclosed in parentheses.

[2] G. W. F. Hegel, *Logic: Being Part One of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. W. Wallace (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1975); *Enzyklopadie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse; Erster Teil: Die Wissenschaft der Logik*, Theorie Werkausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), Band 8. All subsequent references to the Encyclopedia *Logic* within the text of the essay are taken from these editions, signified by the abbreviation '*EL*' and two page-numbers—the first referring to the English edition, the second referring to the German edition—enclosed in parentheses.

[3] I. Kant, *Logic*, trans. R. S. Hartman and W. Schwarz (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1974); *Logik*, Theorie Werkausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1958), Band 6. All subsequent references within the text of the essay to Kant's *Logic* are taken from these editions, signified by the abbreviation '*KL*' and two page-numbers—the first referring to the English edition, the second referring to the German edition—enclosed in parentheses.

[4] Common logic in this Kantian sense is of course by no means identical with modern "elementary logic"—which presupposes the great technical and theoretical advances introduced by Frege, Whitehead, Russell, Tarski, and others. An excellent example of modern elementary logic is Benson Mates's *Elementary Logic*, second edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

Review of Metaphysics 40 (December 1986): 305-338.

festly goes far beyond the scope of the common logic; it is by no means either a bare denial or even a revision of common logic. Hegel's logic in fact preserves the entire edifice of common logic while still using the critique of the latter as a motivation for its own self-development towards a more comprehensive and radically new sense of logic. Many of the misunderstandings of Hegel's logic are based precisely on confusions concerning the equally critical and conservative character of Hegel's treatment of the common logic. An explication of Hegel's unique ontological point of view should therefore go some distance towards removing the misunderstandings, and by implication, begin to give a proper sense of what Hegel's logic really is.

I

Logic—as common logic—is an ontologically undeveloped and naive science for Hegel. He points out that it has lagged behind "the higher standpoint reached by spirit in its awareness of itself" (*SL*, 25/I:13). In particular, the common logic has not been subjected to the same kind of critique as that levelled at traditional metaphysics by Kant. But in view of the importance of the common logic for the Kantian transcendental metaphysics, such a critique is demanded. Hegel fully agrees with Kant that an ontological logic is possible, but disagrees about the status of the common logic with respect to the higher logic. Hegel makes a crucial distinction between the activity of "Understanding" insofar as it determines or merely fixes the characteristics of things, and the "Reason" insofar as it is dialectical, dynamic, and speculative (*SL*, 28/I:16–17; *EL*, 113–22/168–79). For Hegel, the Understanding and the Reason are not merely cognitive faculties, but determine ontological structures. The common logic clearly belongs to the activities of the Understanding (*EL*, 255/344–45), while Hegel's logic belongs to the activities of Reason. This means that the common logic and Hegel's logic *each* has an "ontological bias" towards Understanding and Reason, respectively, quite independently of its explicit recognition of this bias.

Hegel then articulates a basic contrast between Kant's transformation of the common logic of the Understanding (which Kant calls "analytic general logic")[5] into a "transcendental logic," and Hegel's own critique and sublation of the common logic in the service of his logic of Reason (*EL*, 65–94/113–47). The important difference between Kant and Hegel in this regard is that Kant did not see the common logic as ontologically naive and undeveloped, but rather as a well-grounded, necessary propaedeutic and foundation of his transcendental logic; by contrast, Hegel is quite clear that it is only by means of a *critique* of the common logic that the transition to the higher logic can occur. For the common logic has an unrecognized ontological bias towards the Understanding which must be removed before a logic of the Reason is possible. Therefore, insofar as Kant has not provided a critique of the common logic, his transcendental logic will be itself ontologically naive and undeveloped in direct proportion as it rests on the structures of the mere Understanding. This means that any kind of Kantian "metaphysical deduction of the categories" whereby the forms of common logic are translated into forms of "all possible experience," is decisively rejected by Hegel.[6]

Thus Hegel sees his logic as a "completely fresh start" (*SL*, 27/I:16) in philosophical logic, and therefore as a distinct movement beyond anything broached in the common logic. Philosophy does not so much borrow from common logic, as it consists in a free

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[5] I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. K. Smith (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1964), pp. 92–95, 97–99.

[6] There is a strong analogy between Kant's transformation of the common logic of his time into a transcendental logic, and the modern development of the common logic of *its* time (i.e., elementary logic) into a logic with at least implicit ontological import. Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Russell's early philosophy of "logical atomism," Carnap's *The Logical Structure of the World*, and Kripke's *Naming and Necessity* all reveal a strong tendency to transfer modern logical concepts onto a metaphysical or at least an ontological footing. Hegel's answer to this, based on his criticism of Kant, would be that such a transference is not sufficiently critical of the ontological biases and presuppositions of modern symbolic logic. I noted in note 4 that Kant's common logic and our elementary logic differed greatly in respect of technical and theoretical advances. But advances in technique or logical theory are not necessarily advances in ontological sophistication. Thus it seems that a suitably updated version of Hegel's critique of the common logic of his day could be turned *mutatis mutandis* upon the common logic of our time, and thereby have a great impact upon recent uses of logical concepts for ontological purposes.

development of the content provided for it by common logic. We might then say that Hegel holds the common logic to provide a wealth of material in which certain ontological structures lie dormant. These structures must be worked up from a different perspective than that which produced the wealth of material in the first place. In short, Hegel's philosophical use of common logic is a higher-order activity than the common-logical activity, and does not therefore by any means *compete* with the common logic at its own level. Hegel's higher-order comments about the common logic are *ontological* remarks or recommendations, not *common-logical* remarks or recommendations.

This helps to make it understandable how Hegel can at once say that common logic is to be viewed as an "extremely important source [for Hegel's own logic], indeed as a necessary condition and as a presupposition to be gratefully acknowledged" (*SL*, 31/I:19), and yet also say that "what it offers is only here and there a meagre shed or a disordered heap of bones" (*SL*, 31/I:19). Indeed, Hegel even goes beyond the metaphor of common logic as a heap of bones to say:

> the conceptions on which the [common] Notion of logic has rested hitherto have in part already been discarded, and for the rest, it is time that they disappeared entirely and that this science were grasped from a higher standpoint and received a completely changed shape. (*SL*, 44/I:36)

It is comments like these, I am sure, which have always misled interpreters of Hegel's logic. The apparent contradiction between common logic as a "necessary condition" and as a "disordered heap of bones," and again between common logic as a "presupposition to be gratefully acknowledged" and as something which should "disappear entirely" makes it seem that Hegel is either logically dense or seriously confused, or both. But this apparent contradiction can be dissolved simply by taking very seriously the "higher standpoint" of which Hegel speaks.

By establishing his own logic as a development beyond the common logic, and as a higher-order activity which consists in the "system of pure reason, as the realm of pure thought" (*SL*, 50/I:44), Hegel is saying that the common logic can be viewed from two quite distinct perspectives. Viewed on its own terms and at its own level, common logic is simply a discipline among or "alongside" the other scientific disciplines (*SL*, 58/I:54). As such its procedures and notions have a certain integrity and efficacy which cannot be denied. As Hegel puts it:

> the purpose of the science [of common logic] is to become acquainted with the procedures of finite thought: and, if it is adapted to its presupposed object, the science is entitled to be styled correct. (*EL*, 22/75)

But viewed from a higher viewpoint, namely that of ontology, the common logic can be seen to rest on certain enabling presuppositions which are also at the same time crippling limitations from an ontological point of view. These limitations prevent the common logic from passing directly over into philosophical significance: "they bar the entrance to philosophy [and must] be discarded at its portals" (*SL*, 45/I:38). Only a transformation or "reconstruction" (*SL*, 52/I:46) of the conceptions of the common logic by means of a thorough critique of it, can provide the basis of the transition from common logic to Hegelian logic. Thus in order to become adequately ontological or properly philosophical the common logic must "disappear." Again, this does not mean that Hegel is denying the efficacy and efficiency of common logic *at its own level*. He is denying only the implicit and therefore uncriticized claim of common logic to ontological adequacy.

It will soon be necessary to look more closely at some details of Hegel's critique and transformation of the common logic. As regards the transformatory aspect, it is worth noticing from the start that Hegel's general procedure is to take a certain concept from the common logic, criticize it, and then to extend the meaning of the term over a much wider field which includes the initial meaning but is by no means reducible to it. It is precisely the misunderstanding of this procedure of Hegel's which has led to such claims as that Hegel "denies" the principle of non-contradiction, the law of identity, etc. The misunderstanding stems mainly from the idea that the given term—say, 'contradiction'—is being extended merely by taking the initial meaning as a model and then illegitimately widening the scope of its application. This is to get Hegel's approach quite backwards. To use rhetorical terminology, Hegel's treatment of the meaning of his logical terms is metonymic and not analogical. When Hegel uses a term like 'contradiction' in *his* sense, it is because he has already shown that the original meaning of the term in the discourse of common logic was an abstract, partial, and specifically limited use of a much wider notion which can be named by the same word. In short, the narrow or "partial" use of the word gets its significance only *because* it is a narrowing of or participation in a much broader and more concrete notion which has been, as it were, "forgotten" in the ordinary business of common logic.

It can be seen here that Hegel's critique and transformation of the common logic has something in common with Heidegger's account of logic.[7] In a manner similar to Heidegger, Hegel is well aware that the common logic is a "derivative" or "founded" phenomenon, in the Hegelian sense that its ontological status and the meaning of its terms *consist* in the narrowing and limitation of the implicit absolute structures of the Notion (*Begriff*) and the Idea. As Hegel puts it: "the logic of mere Understanding is involved in Speculative logic, and can at will be elicited from it, by the simple process of omitting the dialectical and 'reasonable' element" (*EL*, 120/177). Hence Hegel's own usages of the common-logical terms should not be regarded as extensions in the sense of merely analogically "widening" the use of a term, but as extensions which refer metonymically "back into" the more complete original sense of the term—a sense which is recoverable from the standpoint of Reason but not from the standpoint of Understanding. Thus Hegel cannot be accused of twisting conceptions of common logic to his own purposes; he is rather re-situating the notions in their proper sphere. From the ontological-philosophical (though not of course from the common-logical) perspective, it is precisely the common-logical uses of such terms as 'contradiction' which are "twisted" owing to their abstract partiality.

In order to get a fuller sense of Hegel's critique of common logic, I shall focus on his criticism and transformation (or re-situation) of the common-logical doctrines of (1) judgment, (2) syllogism, (3) contradiction. (As regards Hegel's architectonic in the two *Log-*

[7] Heidegger's ontological account of logic may be found mainly in *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 195–203; *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. A. Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), pp. 177–224; *Logik: die Frage nach der Wahrheit* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1976); and *Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. M. Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

ics, the treatment of judgment and syllogism both fall under the logic of the Notion or Concept, in the Subjective Logic; and the treatment of contradiction falls under the logic of essence, in the Objective Logic. So far as I can determine, the relative positions of these topics in Hegel's overall logical system have no special significance for my account.)

II

It seems necessary to begin with Hegel's critique of the common-logical doctrine of the judgment for two reasons. First, the common logic is manifestly a logic of judgments in the sense that all of its logical operations begin and end with judgments. Hence for Hegel to criticize the common-logical doctrine of judgment is to get at the basic "atomic parts" of the common logic. Secondly, the judgment is for the common logic the locus of truth, or as we would now say, the "truth-bearer." Both the common-logician and Hegel himself would agree that "truth" is the central concern of all logic, be it common logic or Hegelian logic. For example, Kant in his *Logic* writes that logic is "rightly called the logic of truth" (*KL*, 18/438). Hegel too asserts that "truth is the object of logic" (*EL*, 26/68). But where Hegel and the common logician will disagree is over just "where" the locus of truth lies; that is, over just what deserves to be called the ontologically genuine "truth-bearer." In order to motivate his new conception, therefore, Hegel will have to criticize the traditional conception, which is to say that he will criticize the common-logical doctrine of judgment.

Thus Hegel in fact begins his own "critique of judgment" by questioning the truth-bearing capacity of the common-logical judgment. In the context of a discussion of metaphysical judgments such as 'The Soul is simple', Hegel raises a more profound problem by pointing out that "nobody asked whether such predicates had any intrinsic and independent truth, or if *the propositional form could be a form of truth*" (*EL*, 48/94; emphasis added). In short, Hegel proposes to circumvent the question of whether a given judgment is "true" or not by raising the more primordial question of whether any judgment can be "true" in any proper sense of the term. This is not meant as a form of logical scepticism by Hegel, but rather as a question about the possibility of an ontological limitation which is "built into" judgment merely owing to its "propositional form."

Now by "propositional form" in this context Hegel also means the "form of the judgment," as he himself points out (*EL*, 51/98). Hegel distinguishes between "propositions" and "judgments" by saying that whereas the former have a merely grammatical existence with correct syntactical form, the latter respond to some actual question about the world and reach out into the world in their reference (*SL*, 626/II:305). It is worth making out this difference not only because it anticipates Austin's distinction between "sentences" and "statements,"[8] but so that it may be seen that Hegel is addressing his remarks primarily not to some imaginary construct or abstract entity but rather to a situated common-logical phenomenon.[9]

The common-logical judgment, as Hegel analyzes it, has both what can be called a "structural" and an "epistemic" component. These two components are nicely exemplified by Kant's doctrine of judgment. In his "Mistaken Subtility of the Four Syllogistic Figures," Kant writes:

> Judgment is the comparison of a thing with some mark [or attribute]. The thing itself is the Subject, the mark [or attribute] is the predicate. The comparison is expressed by the word 'is' which when used alone indicates that the predicate is a mark [or attribute] of the subject.[10]

This brings forward the "structural" element of the common-logical doctrine of judgment. The judgment is constituted by the linkage of a subject-thing to a predicate-thing by means of the 'is' or copula. The predicate-thing or "attribute" is supposed to "determine" the subject-thing by its application to it.

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[8] J. L. Austin, "Truth," in *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 119–21.

[9] Hegel's awareness that every judgment in logic belongs to an actual speech situation comports well with Husserl's analysis of logical acts in *Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N. Findlay (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970). This comparison brings forward the conspicuous absence of the human voice in modern symbolic logic. Of course we are all aware of the theoretical benefits of ridding logic of "psychologism." But what are the *ontological* consequences of this development? Does this render modern elementary logic *less* or *more* ontologically naive than Kant's common logic?

[10] I. Kant, "The Mistaken Subtility of the Four Syllogistic Figures," in *Kant's Introduction to Logic*, trans. T. K. Abbott (New York: Philosophical Library Inc., 1963), p. 79.

Hegel points out in this regard that the etymology of *'Urteil'* ('judgment') implies an "original partition" (*EL*, 231/316). Hegel takes this to mean that the entity denoted by the subject-term of the judgment is partitioned or ruptured in its living concreteness by the application of the predicate to it. The thing is "ruptured" because a certain feature or aspect of the thing is thereby take to characterize the *whole* thing. The thing is narrowed down in the judgment to a specific feature, as if it were being viewed out of the wrong end of a telescope. As Hegel notes:

> Attribution is no more than an external reflection about the object: the predicates by which the object is to be determined are supplied from the resources of picture thought and are applied in a mechanical way. (*EL*, 50/96)

What Hegel means by "external reflection" is the idea that a certain apparent feature of the object is elicited by the judgment, and is then hypostatized into a separate thing: the predicate. This hypostatized predicate is then *applied* to the thing as if it were simply another thing "over against" the original object. The "picture thought" which supplies the predicate is the activity of imagination governed by the Understanding. This imagination "creates" predicates by taking concrete, embedded aspects of the thing and representing them as distinct things on their own. Hence the aspectuality (or relationality) of the thing is, as predicate, transformed into an "attribute" or "mark." The application of this predicative thing back to the original thing is "mechanical" because the judgment is as it were *rebuilding* the object by means of the adhesive copula after having ruptured it in its primordial concreteness—or as Hegel would say, in its Notion.

By contrast, for Hegel an adequate characterization of the object "must characterize its own self and not derive its predicates from without" (*EL*, 50/96). This does not mean that a totality of predicates should be listed for the object through "all possible" judgments about it. The thing is not a maximally large class of predicates. Hegel says that "even supposing we follow the method of predicating, the mind cannot help feeling that predicates of this sort fail to exhaust the object" (*EL*, 50/96). This means that *in principle* the judgment—even an infinite number of them—will not be able to characterize the object adequately. And this is not because—as in Husserl—we simply cannot grasp the "inexhaustible" object in all its "profiles." Rather it is because there is an ontological difference between an adequate characterization of the object and any predicative partition of it. The essential nature of the object simply *cannot* be grasped by positing any single predicative feature or even an infinite number of them.

Thus the difficulty with common-logical judgment lies not in the completeness or incompleteness of a list of possible judgments about a given object, but in the ontological bias of the judgmental form itself. Hegel writes:

> The propositional form (and for proposition it would be more correct to substitute judgment) is not suited to express the concrete—and the true is always concrete—or the speculative. (*EL*, 51/98)

The judgment is not suited to express the concrete because the (propositional) form of judgment itself contains an internal opposition or "contradiction" in the Hegelian sense (see section IV below). The judgment sets out to characterize a subject by means of a predicate. Hence implicitly the subject is taken to be a source or ground of this predicate. As Hegel puts it:

> The predicate, as the phrase is, inheres in the subject. Further, as the subject is in general and immediately concrete, the specific connotation of the predicate is only one of the numerous characters of the subject. Thus the subject is ampler and wider than the predicate. (*EL*, 234/320)

The subject is a source or ground of the predicate in the sense that the predicate by the structural intention of the judgment, is taken to "inhere" in the subject along with many other predicates. Thus the predicate must refer back to the subject and "belong" to it as a part belongs to a whole.

Yet as soon as the predication is carried out, the concreteness of the subject-whole passes over into the abstractness of the predicate. The concreteness of the subject is as it were "absorbed" by the predicate. So, in the movement from 'The rose is . . .' to 'The rose is *red*', we can see the concreteness of the subject being subordinated to the universal predicate '. . . is red'. Thus

> the predicate as universal is self-subsistent, and indifferent whether this subject is or not. The predicate outflanks the subject, subsuming it under itself: and hence on its side is wider than the subject. (*EL*, 234/321)

In this way, the concrete whole of the subject becomes a particular as regards the abstract whole of the predicate. Hegel is clearly exploiting a crucial ambiguity here in the ontology of parts and wholes—an ambiguity which the common logic has not recognized—between concrete wholes or "individuals" and abstract wholes or "universals." The very subject/predicate form of the judgment embodies this ontological ambiguity insofar as it (1) denotes in the subject-term a concrete whole or individual in which it appears that the predicate must "inhere"; (2) denotes in the predicate-term an abstract whole or universal, under which it appears that the individual subject must be subsumed. In short, to use spatial metaphors, the "in which" of attributive inherence conflicts with the "under which" of predicative subsumption. Or to put it another way: the individuality of the subject conflicts with its bare particularity with respect to the predicate. As a form, therefore, the judgment really cannot give an adequate characterization of the thing in its concreteness or indeed of the predicate in its abstract universality.

Having diagnosed the structural flaw in common-logical judgment, Hegel is able then to give a broader, ontological characterization of the difficulty by noting that the judgment in itself expresses what he calls the "determinate being or otherness of the Notion which has not yet restored itself to the unity whereby it is as Notion" (*SL*, 627/II:306). This is an example of what I called Hegel's "re-situation" of common-logical notions. The Notion, for Hegel, is the concrete synthetic unity of universal and particular, whole and part, genus and individual. As John Smith puts it:

> What Hegel called the Concept [or Notion] is *not* the abstraction of a feature common to many particulars, but a principle of order, structure and organization which specifies itself by determining the elements of the system it organizes.[11]

With respect to judgment in particular, the Notion is the implicit, higher-order unity which makes it possible for the common-logical judgment to display itself as limited and internally oppositional in the first place. This aspect of Hegel's treatment of the judgment

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[11] John Smith, "The Logic of Hegel Revisited: A Review of Errol E. Harris, *An Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel*," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, forthcoming.

should not be taken to be a denial or discrediting of judgment, but only a diagnosis of its essential difficulties from an ontological point of view. To put it differently: the judgment of common logic is not *logically* flawed on its own terms; rather it is ontologically flawed insofar as it cannot adequately articulate the things of which it treats. The judgment is in fact the representative of the dirempted Notion, or the Notion as it shows itself in its onesidedness or otherness *prior* to the achievement of its own ultimate unity as Idea. Thus the judgment is seen by Hegel to be a kind of lower-order version of the Notion in its contradictory concreteness in much the same way that a two-dimensional photograph of a person is an inherently limited version of the three-dimensional living person who himself is incomplete in the sense that he has "many miles to go before he sleeps."

Owing to this ontologically limited, "contradictory" character of the judgment in its very form, it follows that for Hegel "every judgment is by its form one-sided and to that extent, false" (*EL*, 51/98). To the common-logician this statement would seem to be a perfect example of Hegelian confusion and obfuscation. "Is he saying that even *true* judgments are false? How absurd!" But such a response would be based on a misunderstanding of Hegel's ontological analysis. To disentangle this misunderstanding, we must talk about the "epistemic" component of judgment mentioned above. In his *Logic*, Kant writes:

> A judgment is a presentation [*Vorstellung*] of the unity of the consciousness of several presentations, or the presentation of their relation so far as they make up one concept. (*KL*, 106/531)

Thus Kant is saying that a judgment is a representation of the unity of several representations. In the context of Kant's theory of knowledge, this means that a judgment is the holding-together of an intuitive representation of a thing-in-itself and an empirical concept. The thing-in-itself is beyond all possible experience and is given only representationally in intuition as an object of sense-perception. The empirical concept is the synthetic act of the understanding in conjunction with the imagination. The upshot is that, as Hegel notes,

> one's first impression about the judgment is the independence of the two extremes, the subject and the predicate. The former we take to be a thing or term *per se*, and the predicate a general term outside the said subject and somewhere in our heads. (*EL*, 231/316)

In short, then, a certain epistemic view is implied by the common-logical judgment, a view in which the judgment seeks to apply a conceptual, "internal" predicate to a perceptual "external" subject.

This implicit epistemology of the judgment carries along with it a certain doctrine of truth. This is the doctrine of truth as "agreement" or "correspondence." Kant writes: "truth, one says, consists in the agreement of cognition with the object" (*KL*, 55/476). To put this formulation into the terminology of the present context, the truth of judgment consists in the successful application of the conceptual predicate to the perceptual subject. The "success" of the application is held to consist in some sort of mapping or matching of the conceptual predicate to the thing. It is absolutely crucial to note that Hegel's criticism of the truth of judgment does *not* amount to an attack upon the correspondence theory of truth. Instead, Hegel points out that such a view of judgmental truth relies upon a rather controversial doctrine of the relationship of thought and its object:

> The object is regarded as something complete and finished on its own account, something which can entirely dispense with thought for its actuality, while thought on the other hand is regarded as defective because it has to complete itself with a material and moreover, as a pliable indeterminate form, has to adapt itself to its material. Truth is [for the common logic] the agreement of thought with the object, and in order to bring about this agreement—for it does not exist on its own account—thinking is supposed to adapt and accommodate itself to the object. (*SL*, 44/I:37)

The doctrine is "controversial" for Hegel not because it implies the falsity of the correspondence theory of truth, but because ontologically it sets two things apart—thought and its object—which for Hegel are never ontologically dichotomous. Hegel writes that the

> logic of understanding . . . believes thought to be a mere subjective and formal activity, and the objective fact, which confronts thought, to have a separate and permanent being. But this dualism is a half-truth: and there is a want of intelligence in the procedure which at once accepts, without inquiring into their origin, the categories of subjectivity and objectivity. (*EL*, 255/345)

For Hegel, thought is thought *of* objects, and objects become "objective" only *for* thought. Hence to claim that truth lies in the "agreement" or "correspondence" of thought and its object is to presuppose that they are apart in the first place, and thereby to say something which is ontologically naive or "wanting intelligence"—

quite independently of any epistemic difficulties which a "correspondence-theory of truth" might have.

Indeed, Hegel's treatment of the ontological naiveté of judgmental truth, far from denying the correspondence-theory, in fact *preserves* it. Hegel does this by distinguishing between "truth" (*Wahrheit*) and "correctness" (*Richtigkeit*). Hegel writes:

> In common life the terms truth and correctness are often treated as synonymous: we speak of the truth of a content, when we are only thinking of its correctness. Correctness, generally speaking, concerns only the formal coincidence between our conception and its content, whatever the constitution of this content may be. Truth, on the contrary, lies in the coincidence of the object with itself, that is, with its notion. (*EL*, 237/323)

Several things must be said about this. First, it is clear that the distinction between truth and correctness enables Hegel to say that *all* judgments are "false" despite the fact that many of them may be "correct." They are "false" because they rely upon a view of thought and its object which is one-sided and ontologically inadequate. Secondly, however, the correctness or incorrectness of judgments is preserved by Hegel as features of judgments considered wholly at their own level and not ontologically. Judgmental correctness, however its epistemic form be construed, is experientially adequate—which is to say that it comports well with our various ordinary practices, especially those of the natural and pure sciences (*EL*, 32/75–76)—while it nevertheless remains ontologically inadequate. Finally, the concept of "truth" which is opposed here to mere "correctness" returns us to the idea that what judgment is always overlooking is the relationship between ordinary things and their Notions—that is, between things in their abstract immediacy and in their concrete articulated totality. The Notion of a thing is not something extra over against the thing but is the thing itself considered in its structural fullness and total relatedness to other things and to itself. This higher-order aspect of things is precisely what is overlooked by the common-logical doctrine of judgment and is therefore precisely where its ontological inadequacy lies.

Now that we have at length unpacked Hegel's criticism of common-logical judgment, it is worthwhile to look briefly at Hegel's own positive doctrine which is correlative to the critique and is indeed negatively anticipated by it. For Hegel, the primary locus of truth is what he calls the "category" (*Gedankenbestimmung*). Hegel writes:

> To ask if a category is true or not, must sound strange to the ordinary mind: for a category apparently becomes true only when it is applied to a given object, and apart from its application it would seem meaningless to inquire into its truth. But this is the very question on which everything turns. (*EL*, 40–41/85)

It seems to be faithful to Hegel's doctrines to say that the category is the judgment as taken up into the Notion, that is, the judgment as having overcome its ontological limitations. Indeed as Hegel was no doubt aware, the etymologies of 'category' and 'judgment' are intimately related,[12] except that the former has always been taken to be an ontologically basic version of the latter. For Aristotle, the categories are ultimate classes of attributes of "substance." For Kant, the categories are the a priori concepts of the Understanding. Hegel would agree with Aristotle and Kant on the idea that a doctrine of categories is somehow ontologically basic, but would notice that for both Aristotle and Kant, their categories are modelled too closely on the common-logical doctrine of judgment. Using the terminology developed in this paper, we might say that Aristotle's categories are too "objective" and manifest the structural flaws of judgment; while Kant's categories are too "subjective" and manifest the epistemic flaws of judgment. Be this as it may, what *is* absolutely clear from a Hegelian point of view is that both Aristotle's and Kant's doctrines of categories participate in the ontological naiveté of the common-logical doctrine of judgment.

By contrast Hegel's idea is that

> the principles of logic are to be sought in a system of thought-types or fundamental categories in which the opposition between subjective and objective, in its usual sense, vanishes. (*EL*, 37/81)

Hegel's "thought-types" (*Denkbestimmungen*) or categories are like Aristotle's categories in that they describe "generic traits of existence"—to use Dewey's phrase—and also like Kant's categories in that they are "forms of thought" (*SL*, 33/I:22). But the "generic traits" are dynamic rather than static for Hegel, and the "forms of thought" are by no means limited to individual human subjects.

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[12] This can be seen in the traditional notion of a "categorical" judgment, that is, an ordinary subject-predicate judgment. The Greek root of 'category', 'kategorein', seems to have had the basic meaning of making a definite assertion or affirmative predication: most concretely, of making a legal claim against someone in public. See H. G. Lidell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 927.

The categories are simply the "moments of the Notion" (*SL*, 28/I:38), which is to say that they express the actualized natures or essences of things insofar as thought has manifested itself in these things (*EL*, 237/323–24). Categories are "true" precisely because they have captured these natures or essences. Thus categories play the same role relatively to Hegel's logic that judgments play in the common logic. Hegelian categories are, as it were, "ontologized judgments"—where it is of course understood that the inherent ontological limitations of judgment have been overcome in the "ontologization."

III

It was noted above that all of the operations of the common logic begin and end with judgments. This of course implies a process or procedure of operation which takes one in a systematic way from judgment to judgment. This process of the systematic "movement" of the judgment is the syllogism. In his *Logic* Kant writes:

> A syllogism is the cognition of the necessity of a proposition by subsumption of its condition under a given general rule. (*KL*, 125–551)

That is, by means of a syllogism, a logically necessary relation is established between a single judgment and other judgments. The single judgment results from the logical interaction of other judgments, and in the canonical Aristotelian case, two other judgments. This interaction is conceived by the common logic as the specification of a judgment (minor premise) under a general rule (major premise). By actually running through this specification, the common logician is able to obtain a single judgment as a conclusion. Kant says:

> By concluding is to be understood that function of thought in which one judgment is deduced from another. A conclusion in general is thus the deduction of one judgment from another. (*KL*, 120/545)

Now Kant is speaking here of an "immediate" syllogism in which the conclusion is drawn directly from a single premise. But this single premise is typically the conjunction of the two premises of the standard syllogism, so the normal structure of the syllogism is implied. A judgment is thus "deduced" as a conclusion from two other judgments which are its premises. As is well known, the deduction is successfully carried out or "valid" so long as it cannot be the case that when the premises are true, the conclusion is false. Now while not all deductions are syllogisms, every syllogism properly carried out is a deduction; the syllogism with its threefold form traditionally stands forth as a paradigm of deduction.

As in the case of judgment, Hegel is by no means interested in criticizing the syllogism in its ordinary functioning; he grants the syllogism its common-logical integrity as a particular relationship between judgments. Rather Hegel is interested in criticizing the syllogism insofar as it betrays a certain ontological bias or naiveté. As we saw, the judgment contains an ontological limitation in its very structure and also in the epistemic views with which it is closely associated. A similar state of affairs holds for the syllogism. But whereas for judgment the limitation had both a structural and an epistemic aspect, the limitation in the syllogism is purely structural.

The structural limitation of the syllogism from an ontological point of view displays itself in two ways. The first way has to do with the relationship between the three judgments of the syllogism, while the second way has to do with the dimension of truth in the syllogism.

As for the relationship between the three judgments in the common-logical syllogism, Hegel wants to say that the very externality of these parts of the syllogistic whole is misleading for any adequate characterization of the relationships between phenomena:

> If we stop short at this form of the syllogism, then the rationality in it, although undoubtedly present and posited, is not apparent. The essential feature of the syllogism is the *unity* of extremes, the *middle term* which unites them, and the ground which supports them. Abstraction in holding rigidly to the *self-subsistence* of the extremes, opposes this *unity* to them as a determinateness which likewise is fixed and *self-subsistent*, and in this way apprehends it rather as a *non-unity* than as a unity. (*SL*, 665/II:353)

What is crucial for Hegel here is that the common-logical syllogism is used by the common logic and indeed by philosophical logicians as a model for the movement of thought and thereby as a model for the relationships between things (since even for Kant there is a strong connection between thought and things). But the very triplex form of the syllogism implies that such relationships can be determined as merely external relationships between two "self-subsistent" extreme terms (i.e., the major premise and the conclusion) and a self-subsistent middle term (the minor premise). Insofar as each of these is presented as self-subsistent, the actual internally-related movement of thought and things is ruptured. If the major premise is a universal judgment and the minor premise and conclusion are particular judgments, this seems to indicate that the universal and particular are somehow related only externally.

Moreover, the form of the common-logical syllogism requires that the middle term become a virtual barrier between the major premise and the conclusion. Hegel writes:

> The expression *middle term* (*media terminus*) is taken from spatial representation and contributes its share to the stopping short at the *mutual externality* of the terms. Now if the syllogism consists in the *unity of extremes* being *posited* in it, and if, all the same, this unity is simply taken on the one hand as a particular on its own, and on the other hand as a merely external relation, and non-unity is made the essential relationship of the syllogism, then the reason which constitutes the syllogism contributes nothing to rationality. (*SL*, 665/II:353)

The syllogism "contributes nothing to rationality" in this regard essentially because the extremes are not united in some encompassing third thing, but rather are externally related over against one another *through* the middle term. In a word, it conceives relationships as the Understanding does, not as the Reason does. It presents an obviously naive picture of mediation as requiring a third *distinct* thing (*tertium quid*) in order to relate the two extreme terms. But if the middle term is a distinct thing, then clearly it can be put over against each of the extreme terms, thus requiring a new "third thing" or middle term to relate the original middle term to each of the extreme terms. A viciously infinite "third man" regress of relations is thereby engendered.

In general, the common logic suffers ontologically from having misunderstood the interest which Reason takes in the syllogism. What Reason is interested in is the movement of things in their general Notional relationships; but the common logic portrays this movement and relationship as a rigid formalism. Hegel writes:

> To regard the syllogism merely as consisting of *three judgments*, is a formal view that ignores the relationship of the terms on which hinges the sole interest of the syllogism. It is altogether a merely subjective relation of the terms into separate premisses and a conclusion distinct from them. . . . This syllogistic process that advances by means of separate propositions is nothing but a subjective form; the nature of the fact is that [in] the differentiated Notion determinations of the fact are united in the essential unity. (*SL*, 669/II:358)

Thus Hegel here exposes in the very idea of the common-logical syllogism a crucial ambiguity in the way rational relationships are conceived. It is not at all clear how the common logic can reconcile its idea of Reason as syllogistic deduction with the traditional concept of Reason as the progress towards completed totalities (as Kant would express it). For Hegel, the unnecessary limitation in the syllogism consists in the overly great emphasis upon the bare externality of the syllogistic form as a model for Reason. Indeed Hegel sees the syllogism of the common logic as being really a disguised syllogism of the Understanding:

> What the Formal Logic usually examines in its theory of syllogism, is really nothing but the mere syllogism of understanding, which has no claim to the honour of being made a form of rationality, still less to be held as the embodiment of all reason. (*EL*, 245/334)

This transposition of the Understanding for the Reason, and the consequent ontological restriction of Reason, is typical of the common logic. In the Kantian case of the development of the common logic into a propaedeutic of all philosophy, the consequence is that even though Kant has recognized the ability of Reason to comprehend a totality, this ability is essentially truncated and is viewed merely as a constant approach to the infinite totality which never actually obtains the totality.[13] Thus for Kant it is as if Reason were a common-logical syllogism with a maximally broad major premise and an infinite number of middle terms. The very possibility of what Hegel would call the "spurious infinity" (*SL*, 137/I:149) seems to lie in the structure of the common logical syllogism owing to the externality of its terms.

By contrast, Hegel would like to see the syllogism properly interpreted as anticipating the Notional fusion of universality and particularity which issues into individuality. This would involve seeing the "middle term" as an encompassing dynamic unity which links the two extreme terms in a totality. Hegel even writes:

> Everything is a syllogism, a universal that through particularity is united with individuality. (*SL*, 669/II:359)

Clearly, Hegel is carrying out here what I have called a "re-situation" of the common-logical terms, an insertion of the common-logical notion back into the basic ontological structure from which it arose

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[13] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 308–22.

as an abstract form. Another way of saying this is to say that the abstract Understanding presupposes concrete structures of Reason of which it is not aware. In the case of the syllogism, Hegel is thus able to "repatriate" the syllogism from the Understanding to the Reason by showing that the threefold structure of the common-logical syllogism implies the threefold structure of the Notion in general. The triad "major premise/minor premise/conclusion" can be "mapped" back onto the Notional triad "universal/individual/particular." Again, it should be remembered that Hegel's re-situation of the term 'syllogism' is not meant to imply that henceforth the common-logical syllogism should be regarded as somehow more profound and powerful in a common-logical sense; he is only providing an ontological commentary on the concept of a syllogism.

As regards the ontological limitation implicit in the dimension of truth in the common-logical syllogism, Hegel notices that what is a banality for the common-logician—namely, the syllogism's "truth preserving" character—is of great ontological significance. A syllogism is "valid" just in case it cannot happen that when the premises are all true, the conclusion is false. This of course means that when the premises are true, the conclusion *must* be true if the syllogism is to remain valid. But this by no means guarantees the truth of the conclusion just in case one of the premises is false, nor does it guarantee the truth of the premises and conclusion. As Hegel notices, this "truth-preserving" but not "truth-guaranteeing" character of the syllogism means that false conclusions can be validly drawn from a true major premise merely by using a false minor premise:

> It is justly held that there is nothing so inadequate as a formal syllogism of this kind, since it is a matter of chance or caprice which middle term is employed. No matter how elegantly a deduction of this kind has run its course through syllogisms, however fully its correctness may be conceded it still leads to nothing of the slightest consequence, for the fact always remains that there are still other middle terms from which the exact opposite can be deduced with equal correctness. (*SL*, 671/II:361)

Now, as usual, the common-logician would yawn at such an observation on Hegel's part. But it must be reemphasized that Hegel is not attempting to disclose anything "new" to the common-logician in point of logical fact or technique. What he is indicating is the ontological weakness of the syllogism as regards truth—and truth is the stated objective of all logic.

The truth of the conclusion of a syllogism is guaranteed, as we have seen, only if the premises are also true. This casts the "burden of truth," as it were, back upon the separate judgments of the premises. But this means that, so far as syllogistic form is concerned, each of the premises will have to be itself derived from a further syllogism in which both premises are true. It can easily be seen from this that an infinite regress of justificatory pro-syllogisms will be required to guarantee the truth of any given conclusion (*SL*, 672–73/II:362–63). This regress in justification illustrates how the primary question of truth in the common logic is forever delayed by the very form of the syllogism. Now of course, this is a "delay" only in an ontological sense, since as we have seen, the common logic appeals to its own "correspondence" theory of truth for judgments. But Hegel wants to say that it is essential to the very conceptual structure of the common-logical syllogism that it never deals directly with the notion of truth.

The "ontological delay" of truth in the syllogism is closely bound up with the syllogism's character as a tool for the manipulation of judgments. By means of the syllogistic apparatus and its various modes and "figures," arguments may be formally "tested" for their validity by monitoring the "distribution" of the middle term. Such testing relies heavily on the syntactical character of the propositions which represent judgments in the syllogisms. This partial reliance upon syntax and the regularity of the syllogistic figures gives the syllogism a mechanical, calculative dimension. Hegel writes:

> In judgments and syllogisms the operations are in the main reduced to and founded upon the quantitative aspect of the determinations; consequently everything rests on an external difference, on mere comparison and becomes a completely analytical procedure and mechanical [*begriffloses*] calculation. (*SL*, 52/I:47)

Here it is clear that while Hegel of course has no conception of a purely truth-functional logic, nevertheless he has anticipated the modern development of logic as the construction of formalized languages and propositional calculi. Hegel's criticism of this idea has nothing to do with a Luddite objection to the mere fact of logical mechanization, as if there were something inherently wrong with formalization and mathematization. Rather Hegel is concerned *only* with the illegitimate extension of such structures into ontological realms where they do not belong, namely the realms of organic relationships, dynamic process, and concrete truth.

In this regard, Hegel refers to Leibniz's idea of a *"characteristica universalis"* or what would now be more commonly called an "ideal language":

> The extreme example of this irrational treatment of the Notion determinations of the syllogism is surely Leibniz's subjection of the syllogism to the calculus of combinations and permutations . . . Connected with this was a pet idea of Leibniz, embraced by him in his youth, and in spite of its immaturity and shallowness not relinquished by him even in later life, the idea of a *characteristica universalis* of Notions—a language of symbols in which each Notion would be represented as a relation proceeding from others or in relation to others—as though in rational combinations, which is essentially dialectical, a content still retained the same determinations *that it possesses when fixed in isolation.* (*SL*, 684/II:378-379)

It is the last sentence of this quotation which is crucial for Hegel's critique of the ontological bias of the syllogism conceived as a *characteristica universalis.* The error of an "ideal language" which is conceived as a calculus is the ontological error of imposing a model which functions in a mechanical sense onto a content which functions not in a mechanical sense but in an organic and teleological sense. The Notion for Hegel is among other things the self-development of a phenomenon from potentiality to actuality. Notional truth lies in the completeness or perfection of this self-development (*EL*, 237/323-24). The Notion is also the principle of organic totality whereby a whole and its parts are internally related. The mechanical and quantitative structural aspects of the syllogism conceived as a *characteristica universalis* cannot capture the organic and irreducibly qualitative aspects of the Notion. The proposed "ideal language" therefore fails as "ideal" because it cannot adequately describe large ontological domains.

In light of the critique of the syllogism, Hegel can again anticipate an aspect of his speculative logic. We saw above that in the critique of the common-logical judgment ontological limitations were exposed which called out for an ontologically adequate correlative of judgment—this was the "category" in the Hegelian sense. Similarly in the case of the syllogism, the critique has revealed an ontological lack in the syllogism, namely its externalism, formalism, "delay" of truth, and "calculative" character. This lack of course tends to call out what is *lacking,* which as we saw was an idea of Reason developing its Notion in an internalistic, material, truthful, and organic way. For Hegel, the ontological correlative of the common-logical syllogism is the idea of a "system" in which the phenomena display their rationality by means of internal, articulated, organic connection. The system, for Hegel, is the ultimately adequate locus of truth (as opposed to correctness):

> Truth, then, is only possible as a universe or totality of thought; and the freedom of the whole, as well as the necessity of the several subdivisions, which it implies, are only possible when these are discriminated and defined.
>
> Unless it is a system, a philosophy is not a scientific production. (*EL*, 20/59–60)

Such a speculative-logical system is constructed of categories in a way partially analogous to that in which the syllogism is built out of judgments. But a system in Hegel's sense does not merely "preserve" the truth of categories; rather it *guarantees* their truth. This is because, unlike the syllogism, the categorial "parts" anticipate the systematic whole (the Notion or Idea) and the systematic whole is manifested in every one of the categorial parts. In short, for Hegel the speculative-logical system reproduces in essence the structure of organic totalities and therefore overcomes the ontological inadequacy of any "ideal language."

IV

By having first developed Hegel's critique of the common logic with respect to judgment and the syllogism, I hope to have prepared a climate of receptivity for that *bête-noire* of Hegel's doctrine, his critique of common-logical contradiction. Russell's cheeky remarks in "On Denoting" implying the absurdity of Hegel's "denial" of the principle of non-contradiction[14] have long stood in the way of a fruitful understanding of Hegel's logic. But as we have seen, Hegel's account provides a critique of the common logic from an ontological point of view alone, and is by no means a "denial" of *any* principle of the common logic. This goes as much for contradiction as it does for judgment and the syllogism. Thus Hegel escapes the charge of absurdity by having a wholly different critical project in mind than the one Russell implicitly attributes to him.

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[14] B. Russell, "On Denoting," in *Essays in Analysis* (New York: George Braziller, 1973), p. 110.

In order to understand Hegel's critique of the common-logical concept of contradiction, however, a few preliminary historical remarks are absolutely necessary. For there is a troublesome distortion regarding Hegel's critique of contradiction which stems merely from the development of the science of common logic between Kant's day and the modern period. For the modern common logic, (1) negation is an operation applied only to propositions (or more accurately, to sentences of the formal language—formulas not containing free variables—where 'sentence' means in addition to simple sentences, also conjunctions, disjunctions, negates, and conditionalizations of sentences) and results in the reversal of the truth-value of that proposition; (2) contradiction is a conjunction of a proposition and its negate; (3) the theory of identity is regarded as being separate from the central subject-matter of common logic.[15]

But for the common logic of Kant's day, the concepts of identity and of contradiction are closely connected. In his *Logic*, Kant includes as the first of the "three principles of universal, merely formal or logical criteria of truth":

> 1) the principle of contradiction and identity (*principium contradictionis* and *identitatis*), by which the inner possibility of a cognition is determined for *problematic* judgments. (*KL*, 58/479)

Hegel also accepts this basic unity of the concepts of contradiction and identity:

> The other expression of the law of identity: A cannot at the same time be A and not-A, has a negative form; it is called the *law of contradiction*. (*SL*, 416/II:45)

Now what is important about this assimilation of identity and contradiction for my purposes is the idea that contradiction may apply equally to *things* and to *propositions*. For identity is explicitly a relationship between things (or between a thing and itself), and on this view if a thing is non-self-identical, it is contradictory. Thus it follows that for Kant's and Hegel's common logic, negation can be construed as an operation either upon propositions (or judgments)

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[15] See William Kneale and Martha Kneale, *The Development of Logic* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 742.

or as an operation upon things insofar as they are non-identical with other things.

Quite independently, then, of the logical correctness of this assimilation of contradiction and identity, it must be understood that Hegel (just as does Kant) *assumes* this to be the case, and his entire critique of the common-logical concept of contradiction presupposes it. It is therefore wrong-headed or at least in interpretive bad faith to criticize Hegel for "muddling" the principle of non-contradiction by applying it indifferently to things and propositions (or judgments), when it is explicitly part of Hegel's critical method to assume that the common logic must be analyzed *as it stands* and not be intrinsically disturbed by his analysis.

Having said this, we can now turn back to Hegel's account of common-logical contradiction. It should be clear by now that Hegel's critique of common-logical contradiction cannot be wholly split off from his treatments of identity and negation, since the common logic posits an intimate relationship between these three notions. In particular, it can be said that in the common logic, contradiction is construed as the negation of self-identity, where "identity" can be taken to encompass both things and propositions (or we might simply say that propositions are a special sub-class of things). Thus in order to criticize the common-logical notion of contradiction, we must first turn to Hegel's critique of the common-logical notions of identity and negation.

Hegel formulates the common-logical law of identity in the following way:

> Thus the essential category of identity is enunciated in the proposition: everything is identical with itself, A = A. (*SL*, 409/II:36)

Now Hegel's criticism of common-logical identity really has two parts, one of which is concerned with the "material" aspect of the general law 'A = A' and the other of which is concerned with its purely "formal" aspect. The material aspect of the law of identity is that it asserts an absolute identity between a thing and itself (which I shall call "simple identity"), or between two things (which I shall call "complex identity") in such a way that no difference whatsoever between the things is possible. This abstraction from all possible difference is what Hegel calls the "abstract Identity of Understanding" (*EL*, 166/237). It is "abstract" precisely because of the abstraction from all difference. As J. N. Findlay puts it:

> On the degenerate interpretation [i.e., the interpretation held by the common logic] the Law of Identity merely bids us identify objects referred to by means of one term or concept with objects referred to by the *same* term or concept.[16]

Thus identification occurs merely through the criterion of sameness alone. And yet the very fact of the repeatability of the second term in simple identity ('A = A') and the bringing-forward of the distinct second term in complex identity ('A = B') seems to presuppose the dimension of difference. For in simple identity, repetition is still *different* from the mere presence of an object, and the relation a thing bears to itself is still *different* from its mere existence; and in complex identity the mere presence of a second thing (or on the Fregean interpretation, a second name with a distinct sense but the same denotation) is sufficient to indicate at least a *prima facie* difference (even if only a difference in the Fregean sense) from the first thing, despite their identity. Hegel objects therefore not to the bare idea that a thing is identical to itself, or that two things can be identical to one another (or put in a Fregean way, that there is but one thing, referred to by two different names), but rather to the covert ontological assumption that identity can be "pure" in the sense of excluding all difference.

Hegel then goes on to give an account of how it is that the common logic thinks itself able to propose a "pure" law of identity. He writes:

> This Identity becomes an Identity, in form only, or of the understanding, if it be held hard and fast, quite aloof from difference. Or, rather, abstraction is the imposition of this Identity of form, the transformation of something inherently concrete into this form of elementary simplicity. And this may be done in two ways. Either we may neglect a part of the multiple features which are found in the concrete thing (by what is called analysis) and select only one of them; or, neglecting their variety, we may concentrate the multiple characters into one. (*EL*, 166/237)

In short, the crucial thing about common-logical identity is that it utilizes a principle of abstraction without explicitly admitting to it. In this abstraction it either neglects the variety of features of things in favor of one particular feature which it then fixates upon and

[16] J. N. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-examination* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1958), pp. 189–90.

calls "identical" across implicitly suppressed differences; or it overlooks the *prima facie* differences between the features of a thing and collapses them into a single homogeneous feature which is then held to be "identical" with another similarly reduced class of features.

The "formal" aspect of the common-logical notion of the law of identity is that it presents itself as formally or logically necessary, or as Hegel puts it:

> This proposition in its positive expression A = A is in the first instance, nothing more than the expression of an empty tautology. (*SL*, 413/II:41)

That is, the common logic wants to put the principle of identity forward as necessary purely in virtue of its logical form alone, or as the contemporary terminology would have it, as necessary owing to its "analyticity." But Hegel is suspicious about the analyticity or tautologousness of the law of identity, because he holds that the very form of the proposition in which an identity is expressed is sufficient to imply the non-analyticity or "syntheticity" of the proposition. He writes:

> In the *form of the proposition*, therefore, in which identity is expressed, there lies *more* than simple, abstract identity; in it, there lies this pure movement of reflection in which the other appears only as illusory being, as an immediate vanishing; *A is*, is a beginning that hints at something different to which an advance is to be made; but this different something does not materialize; *A is—A;* the difference is only a vanishing; the movement returns into itself. The propositional form can be regarded as the hidden necessity of adding to abstract identity the more of that movement. (*SL*, 415–16/II:44)

Thus the common logic has not realized that there is something "built into" the very form of the proposition which prevents the law of identity from being a mere tautology or analytic proposition. This "built-in" component is the bipartite subject/predicate structure of the proposition which requires that something *distinct* from the subject-term be applied to the subject in the predicate-term. Hence the ontological structure of difference is implicit in the very syntax of the proposition. Hegel of course recognizes that there are differences between the existential, veridical, predicative, and identifying uses of 'is'; but he is well aware that these uses are not ontologically so split off from one another as the common-logician supposes. In this way Hegel is able to say that the syntactical structure of predication is implicit in every identifying use of 'is' (or its symbolic correlative '='). This makes every superficially "analytic" statement of identity into a "synthetic" statement at a deeper level. Hegel writes:

> From this it is evident that the law of identity itself, and still more the law of contradiction, is not merely of *analytic* but of *synthetic* nature. For the latter contains in its expression not merely empty, simple equality-with-self, and not merely the other of this *in general*, but, what is more, absolute *inequality, contradiction per se*. But as has been shown, the law of identity itself contains the movement of reflection, identity as a vanishing of otherness. (*SL*, 416/II:45)

For 'contradiction' in the above quotation, read 'internal self-opposition'; I will deal with Hegel's own notion of contradiction below. At present, it is necessary only to see that Hegel has detected within the very form of the principle of identity a structural characteristic which opposes the apparent "pure" analyticity of identity.[17]

Hegel's critique of the common-logical negation has to some extent been anticipated by the account I have just given of identity. For Hegel, the contrary of sameness is difference, and an obvious parallelism arises from his critique of identity: just as there can be no "pure" identity such that one can have sameness quite apart from difference, so there is no "pure" negation such that one can have difference quite apart from sameness. Another way of saying this is that for Hegel negation is never mere difference without some implicit determinate content or sameness.[18]

The common logic, however, puts its doctrine of negation forward in such a way as to suggest that negation is something quite apart from any "ontic commitment" or sameness. The common logic views negation as an "indifferent difference" which can be applied to things or propositions. In order to capture the important distinction between the negation which implies determinate things and the negation of the common logic which is an "indifferent dif-

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[17] It is obvious that Hegel's critique of the analyticity of identity has important parallels with Quine's famous attack on the analytic/synthetic distinction in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" in *From a Logical Point of View* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 20–46. But Hegel's critique goes far deeper than Quine's in that it demonstrates the syntheticity of even *logical* analyticity. This raises ontological problems about logic *itself*, a line of questioning which Quine never pursues.

[18] See G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 36, 51.

ference," Hegel proposes a distinction between "difference" (*Unterschied*) and "diversity" (*Verschiedenheit*). Here we can see that Hegel's critique of common-logical negation consists in the re-situation of the abstract common-logical doctrine into a more concrete ontological doctrine of negation as "difference." Of difference Hegel writes:

> That which is different from difference is identity. [For 'identity' is this quotation, read 'sameness' in order to correspond to the terminology of this essay; unfortunately, Hegel uses the same term 'identity' to refer to abstract common-logical identity and concrete ontological sameness.] Difference is therefore itself and identity. Both together constitute difference; it is the whole, and its moment. It can equally be said that difference, as simple, is no difference; it is there only when it is in relation with identity; but the truth is rather that, as difference, it contains equally identity and this relation itself. (*SL*, 417/II:47)

And of diversity, Hegel writes that

> in diversity, as the indifference of difference, reflection has become, in general, external to itself. (*SL*, 419/II:48)

Whereas difference determinately refers to things in their concreteness, diversity at best indeterminately refers to them. Whereas difference has an internal relatedness to things it operates upon, diversity has only an external relatedness.

'Diversity' is for Hegel an ontological term which refers to the negation which is utilized by the common logic. Where common-logical negation is to be criticized is not in the fact that it is used in assertions of non-identity or in negates of propositions, but rather in the fact that it does not recognize itself to be only "diversity" and not "difference." Put differently, negation in the common-logical sense puts itself forward as ontologically basic, but is in fact an abstract, static concept which in its indifference to the things it negates, ontologically distorts the actual concrete relations of difference which things have to one another. Thus for Hegel diversity is not "wrong" but is rather ontologically limited. To take diversity as exhaustive of the whole idea of the negative is simply to cover over an entire region of reality named by 'difference'. Of this ontological region Hegel writes:

> All that is necessary to achieve scientific progress—and it is essential to strive to gain this quite *simple* insight—is the recognition of the [speculative] logical principle that the negative is just as much positive, or that what is self-contradictory does not resolve itself into a nullity, into abstract nothingness, but essentially only into the negation of

> its *particular* content, in other words, that such a negation is not all and every negation but the negation of a specific subject matter which resolves itself, and consequently is a specific negation, and therefore the result essentially contains that from which it results. (*SL*, 54/I:49)

The essential aspect of difference for Hegel is that it consists in an active rejection of a determinate content; thus the "negative is just as much positive." What this means is that things are to be construed for Hegel in their sameness with themselves only because they positively exclude other things, and define themselves as against those other things.

This concrete dimension of the negative is also inherently active because when a thing changes or moves it does so obviously by not-being what it was, or by striving to be what it currently is-not. Thus Hegel can speak of difference as the "inner negativity of the determinations [of the Understanding] as their self-moving soul, the principle of all natural and spiritual life" (*SL*, 56/I:52). We are verging here upon an essential aspect of Hegel's own speculative logic, the aspect of dialectical negativity. In an adequate account of this, much would need to be said about negativity or difference as the motor of the dialectic, and about the inherent tendency of the Understanding to give rise to this dialectical dynamism. For the present purposes, however, all we need notice is that common-logical negation implicitly avoids the concreteness and dynamism of difference by its ontological bias towards "indifferent difference." The awareness of this avoidance is sufficient for Hegel's critique of common-logical negation as ontologically limited.

We now have the materials for an adequate discussion of Hegel's critique of the common-logical notion of contradiction. Insofar as the common logic defines contradiction in terms of common-logical identity and negation, it will presuppose whatever the latter presuppose. We have seen that common-logical identity is ontologically biased in its claim to be "pure" and to be analytic. We have also seen that common-logical negation is abstract and avoids the concrete dimension of difference. Consequently, common-logical contradiction will be ontologically biased in its "purity" and analyticity, and will also avoid the concrete ontological region of difference. Here we can see that the law of non-contradiction will continue to work undisturbed in the logical practices of the common logic. Hegel's critique does not make logical contradictions such as 'Socrates is mortal and it is not the case that Socrates is mortal' into noncontradictions. All Hegel is doing is to point out that common-logical contradiction is as it were only the very most abstract tip of an ontological iceberg and therefore must not be taken to stand in for the whole iceberg.

Hegel's critique of common-logical contradiction centers on the fact that in the common logic contradiction is presented in an overly abstract way. For the common logic, a contradiction is a necessary falsehood, whether by non-self-identity or by the conjunction of a proposition and its negate. But this leaves the terms of the contradiction in a merely external relationship to one another. As Hegel puts it, in the common logic contradiction

> remains an external reflection which passes from likeness to unlikeness, or from the negative relation to the reflection-into-itself, of the distinct sides. It holds these two determinations over against one another and has in mind *only them,* but not their *transition,* which is the essential point and which contains the contradiction. (*SL,* 441/II:77–78)

In short, the two terms of the common-logical contradiction face one another as merely exclusive. There is no sense of the "transition" between the two terms which would show *why* the two terms are in fact mutually incompatible. This of course has no impact upon the common-logical contradiction in its propositional form, but it does seem to imply that the things *referred to* by the common-logical judgment will be as externally related as the terms in the proposition. Here again we see the implicit translation of syntactical form into ontological structure. To make the law of non-contradiction ontologically basic (as in Aristotle) is to impose an ontologically biased structure upon the world. As Hegel will show, when two aspects of a phenomenon mutually exclude one another within the same phenomenon, they do so because of some internal characteristic of one aspect which cannot "tolerate" some internal characteristic of the other aspect. Common logical contradiction is a formal, externalized *expression* of this ontological reflexive intolerance or internal self-resistance, not the *reason* for it. Thus common-logical contradiction replicates at best the mere form of a more concrete relationship arising within a single phenomenon, and cannot be said to be basic to that phenomenon.

By contrast, then, in his usual move of ontological re-situation, Hegel can state his own ontologically more adequate account of contradiction:

> The self-subsistent determination of reflection that contains the opposite determination, and is self-subsistent in virtue of this inclusion, at the same time also excludes it; in its self-subsistence, therefore, it excludes from itself its own self-subsistence. For this consists in containing within itself its opposite determination—through which alone it is not a relation to something external—but no less immediately in the fact that it is itself, and also excludes from itself the determination that is negative to it. It is thus *contradiction.* (*SL*, 431/II:65)

Since the re-situated idea of contradiction is central to Hegel's speculative logic, it is worth paraphrasing what he is saying here. In a nutshell, Hegel is saying that when a phenomenon excludes itself by virtue of what it includes, and includes itself by virtue of what it excludes, it is "contradictory" in Hegel's sense. That is: a phenomenon is contradictory when the very conditions of its own existence necessitate its own non-existence, but the conditions of its non-existence are sufficient to provide its existence.

Thus it can be seen that for Hegel a contradiction—or as G. R. G. Mure calls it, a "dialectical contradiction" in contradistinction from common-logical contradiction[19]—is not merely a necessary falsity, but rather involves the internally destructive character of a thing whereby it continually posits and negates itself. As Hegel puts it in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

> We have to think . . . antithesis within the antithesis itself, or *contradiction.* For in the difference which is an inner difference, the opposite is not merely *one of two*—if it were, it would simply *be*, without being an opposite—but it is the opposite of an opposite, or the other is itself immediately present in it.[20]

This is what I referred to above as "ontological intolerance" or "self-resistance." Hegel's dialectical contradiction, as J. N. Findlay has noticed,[21] is very close in certain ways to what modern logicians call a "paradox" or an "antinomy." What is important about such paradoxes and antinomies is not that they generate a particularly vicious form of truth-functional inconsistency (indeed, only some of the antinomies are truth-functional) but that they undo themselves by means of the very same functions and conditions by which they establish themselves. As Quine has pointed out, such paradoxes and antinomies are at the limits of logical comprehension, and yet

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[19] G. R. G. Mure, *A Study of Hegel's Logic*, p. 302.

[20] Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 99.

[21] J. N. Findlay, "The Contemporary Relevance of Hegel," in *Language, Mind and Value* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1963), pp. 221–22.

are somehow basic to logic.[22] In a very similar way, the Hegelian contradiction is a notion which confounds the logic of the Understanding and yet from the standpoint of Reason is ontologically basic. For as Hegel points out, "everything is inherently contradictory" (*SL*, 439/II:74). This is far from being the ridiculous claim that it seems to be, for it is only saying that everything is a complementary blend of sameness and difference, and both posits and negates itself in its every activity.

A final difference between dialectical contradiction and common-logical contradiction brings forward the "dialectical" dimension of Hegel's speculative logic. Whereas common-logical contradiction is static and "linear" (in Bosanquet's sense[23]), dialectical contradiction is dynamic and developmental. It is dynamic and developmental because for Hegel all motion and process, interpreted ontologically, contain within themselves an essential aspect of internal negativity or difference. In this light, dialectical contradiction is seen as the most acute form of difference—a kind of boiling-point of difference, as it were. This "boiling-point" erupts into activity when the negativity is sufficiently involuted. Hegel writes:

> Contradiction is the root of all movement and vitality; it is only insofar as something has a contradiction within it that it moves, has an urge and activity. (*SL*, 439/II:75)

What Hegel means is that contradiction is not only the reflexive intolerance of things, but is also intolerable *for* things, and that a new level or state of development will be forced into existence through the pressure of dialectical contradiction. Such development is for Hegel a "dialectical" development.

This aspect of contradiction may seem intolerably metaphorical; and indeed from a restricted common-logical point of view it *is* vague and unsatisfactory. But ontologically speaking, Hegel's doctrine of contradiction points to that aspect of things which we all recognize in our struggles with conceptual knots and which we also recognize in the irreducible phenomena of conflict and crisis in the process of development of organic nature. Therefore insofar as Hegelian contradiction at least gives us a way of talking about these things, the

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[22] W. V. O. Quine, "The Ways of Paradox," in *The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 1–18.

[23] See B. Bosanquet, *Implication and Linear Inference* (New York: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1920).

ontological adequacy of Hegel's account is not impaired by criticism based on the ontological "clarity" of any ontology based on the common logic. Such ontologies cannot even begin to *speak* of such things: "what we cannot speak about, we must pass over in silence."[24]

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From the perspective of Hegel's critique of the common logic, we can now see Hegel's own logic as the attempt to establish an ontological logic over and above the common logic. This involves the resuscitation of ontological structures which have been narrowed or even positively distorted by the common logic. This supposes that the common logic is not "ontologically neutral" but is rather in fact ontologically biased insofar as it implicitly treats of things from the standpoint of the Understanding as opposed to that of Reason. In the process of his critique, Hegel has re-situated the concepts of judgment, syllogism, and contradiction back into his own speculative logic, and has thereby prepared places for his ontological doctrines of categories, system, and dialectic, respectively.

What is perhaps more important, however, than Hegel's re-situation of common-logical concepts or his anticipation of his own ontological doctrines, is his critical conservatism with respect to the common logic. This allows him to expose the ontological bias of the common logic and hence remove its suitability for translation into ontology, without thereby disturbing the common logic in itself. Thus the Hegelian logic is not a competitor of the common logic—not some grandiose "alternative logic"—but is rather the result of a more adequate *ontological* reflection upon the common logic.[25]

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[24] L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 151. For an account of what Hegelian logic *can* say about just those things which "logical atomism" must pass over in silence, see E. Harris, *An Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), especially pp. 8, 39, 62, 126, 311–19.

[25] I would like to thank John E. Smith for his helpful comments on an earlier version of this essay.