**Chapter 16**

**HEGEL’S *VORBEGRIFF* TO THE *ENCYCLOPEDIA LOGIC* AND ITS CONTEXT**

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While fundamentally a systematic thinker, for whom ‘the true is the whole’ (PS 9.15/¶20), Hegel is nonetheless well-know for certain individual ‘set pieces’ in his work, such as the master-slave dialectic in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the transition from the categories of being to nothing to becoming in the *Logic*, and the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* with is notorious claim that ‘What is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational’ (PR GW 14,1.14/Nisbet p. 20). These parts of Hegel’s texts, along with others of a similar distinctiveness and centrality, have been vigorously debated and discussed, and a large body of literature focusing on them has arisen as a result.

The ‘Vorbegriff’ or ‘preliminary conception’[[1]](#footnote-1) to Hegel’s *Encyclopedia Logic*[[2]](#footnote-2) is not generally considered a set piece of this sort, however. In the literature, explicit treatments of it are relatively rare,[[3]](#footnote-3) and it is not the direct focus of any very heated ongoing debate or controversy. Indeed, Hegel’s very placing and naming of this part of the text seems designed to down-play its significance, as a mere stepping stone to the more substantial matters that are to come.

Nonetheless, appearances can be misleading. For the Vorbegriff in fact contains some very important material that can be extremely helpful in helping us to understand Hegel’s views, and particularly in enabling us to locate his thought in relation to his predecessors, such as the ancient and rationalist tradition in metaphysics, as well as Kant’s critical philosophy. It also contains some highly important discussions of central philosophical issues and concepts, such as what Hegel means by ‘thought’, the distinction between what is subjective and objective, the nature of truth, and the differences Hegel sees between ‘understanding’ and ‘reason’. There are also systematic issues raised by this chapter, concerning what role such a Vorbegriff can play in relation to the main business of the *Logic* itself, and how it stands in connection to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*; for this was itself characterized as offering us a way into the *Logic* (cf. PS .9.19-21/¶26), where it is not clear what room there is for both texts as ‘ladders’ up to the system of philosophy, even assuming such a system can be given such a ladder at all.[[4]](#footnote-4) Thus, while the Vorbegriff may not have the high profile of some of Hegel’s other discussions, many fundamental issues in understanding his thought - which are substantive, methodological and historical - can be explored and better grasped by closely studying this part of his work.

The chapter itself is relatively straightforward in its structure. As usual in the *Encyclopedia*, it is divided into sections, each of which has a main part and then some remarks written by Hegel himself, followed by additions taken from students’ notes.[[5]](#footnote-5) The chapter runs from §19 to §83, where it is preceded by a series of Prefaces and an Introduction, and is followed by the main text of the *Logic* itself, beginning with Hegel’s account of ‘pure being’. The Vorbegriff falls into three main parts: §§19-25 are largely devoted to explaining what Hegel means by ‘thought’, where we have already been told in the Introduction that ‘to begin with, philosophy can be determined in general terms as the *thinking consideration* [*denkende Betrachtung*] of things’ (§2). Then, in §§26-78, Hegel moves through three main ways in which previous philosophers have conceived of how thought may be taken to relate to such things, exemplified first in the rationalism of traditional metaphysics; second in Kant’s critical philosophy as it developed out of the empiricist critique of this rationalism; and third in the anti-rationalism of F. H. Jacobi and others. Finally, in a brief but very important discussion which runs from §79 to §83, Hegel gives what he calls ‘a more precise conception and division of the *Logic*’, where he draws a distinction between the three ‘sides’ of thought that are ‘*moments of everything logically real*’ (E §80), which he calls the understanding, the negatively rational, and the positively rational, where it is largely out of this triadic structure that the Hegel legend of ‘thesis-antithesis-synthesis’ is born. In the very last section, Hegel also explains his three-fold division of the *Logic* into ‘The Doctrine of Being’, ‘The Doctrine of Essence’ and ‘The Doctrine of the Concept’, and how this relates to his account of the ‘sides’ of thought that have gone before. It should thus be clear from this brief outline that the Vorbegriff is a vital part of this first installment of Hegel’s philosophical system, and is rich in the kind material that is required for a proper understanding of his views.

In what follows, I will begin by situating the Vorbegriff in the *Logic* and relating it in more detail to the Introduction (1). I will then trace through the three main parts of the chapter as outlined above (2-4), before concluding with a consideration of what problems the text may seem to raise for Hegel and his overall project (5).

**1. The Role of Hegel’s Vorbegriff**

As a philosopher committed to a systematic approach, Hegel was famously ambivalent about prefaces and introductions to his work. On the one hand, he saw the need that a reader might have for some sort of preliminary orientation and motivation; on the other, he worried that by offering brief summaries or unsubstantiated conclusions, his reader might be tempted into adopting a simplistic picture of his position that was insufficiently worked-through. For, if philosophy really does require a properly systematic elaboration to be set out and defended, then it is only *with* the system that it can be grasped: all preliminaries are at best mere hints of what is still to come, and at worst can be positively misleading and even intellectually corrupting, as complex views get reduced to labels and simple-minded caricatures. Hegel’s ambivalence in this matter is reflected in several works, including the Prefaces to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Philosophy of Right*, as well as his discussion in the *Science of Logic* entitled ‘With What Must Science Begin?’. Hegel shows a similar unease about such matters in the Vorbegriff. So, for example, in §79R where he sets out the three sides of thought, he reminds us that ‘[l]ike the division itself, the remarks made here concerning the determinations of the logical are only anticipations and historical at this point’; and in §25 he touches on the fraught relation between the *Phenomenology* and the system, where he says that the Vorbegriff faces a similar difficulty in that it too brings in historical content and so in some ways is not properly systematic, while it is still needed as a way into the formal system itself. In reading the Vorbegriff, therefore, it is important to bear these warnings from Hegel in mind, as many of his claims will only receive their full elaboration and defense when the full system is worked out in the main body of the text.

What can help, clearly, is if one *already has* some sense of the system to which these preliminary sections are an introduction, for then one will have a grasp of where this is meant to be taking us, and so will be less likely to go astray. Thus one arrives at the familiar Hegelian idea that the process of philosophizing is essentially circular, as one returns to the beginning with a deeper sense of what that beginning amounts to, having previously come to the end to which it points us. Hegel thus doubtless expects his readers to have *already read* the *Logic* before they can fully grasp the Vorbegriff which is meant to precede it. What, then, is the text to which we are here being introduced?

Hegel’s *Logic* is the first part of his system of philosophy, of which the subsequent two parts are the Philosophy of Nature and the Philosophy of Spirit. As such, it is a formal treatment of the fundamental categories of thought and thus (for Hegel) of metaphysics, such as ‘being’, ‘quantity’, ‘cause’, ‘substance’ and so on. Rather than merely consisting in a list of such categories in a random order, Hegel traces a development through them, in the course of which their various limitations and interrelations are brought out, in ways which Hegel hopes will overcome the deficiencies we may find in using them. The highest categories are those of the Concept (*Begriff*), which comprise universality, particularity and individuality. Hegel argues for a particular way in which they should be best understood, which he thinks will then enable us to properly conceive of the natural world in his *Philosophy of Nature*, and the world of mind or spirit in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, which comprises our own minds both individually and collectively, as well as our cultural productions, religious thought and philosophy itself.

Thus, from this brief outline of Hegel’s system as a whole, we can already anticipate some of the central themes of the Vorbegriff, particularly: the nature of thought, as the vehicle for our categories; how that thought relates to the world and thus its metaphysical implications; how thinking develops and is structured; and how Hegel’s view of all this relates to and differs from the views of his predecessors.

As well as setting the Vorbegriff in the context of what comes afterwards, it is also useful to briefly set it in the context of what comes before, particularly the Introduction.[[6]](#footnote-6) One important common theme is again the issue of *thought*; why this is so central to philosophy; how this relates to other capacities such as perception, imagination, emotion, and so on; and how because philosophy has thought as its object, it must proceed in a presuppositionless and systematic way, without taking anything for granted. As is often the case in Hegel’s prefaces and introductions, Hegel here takes himself to be arguing against critics of philosophy who claim that it is overly abstract, abstruse and remote from our real concerns, precisely because it seems to focus on pure thought over experience, feelings and concrete representations. The result, Hegel fears, is a kind of anti-philosophy or misology, which rejects the discipline in favour of some apparently more tractable and useable alternative, such as empirical science, direct religious faith, or unreflective common sense. However, as he hopes to show in what follows, to go in these directions while leaving philosophy behind is a false step that is fraught with peril: for this approach exaggerates the difference between thought on the one hand and these other faculties on the other, while the categories which philosophy reflects upon play a role at all these levels, where without such reflection we can easily be led astray. Moreover, the Introduction also signals how the history of philosophy can help shed light on these issues, insofar as it too can be understood in a systematic way, in tracing thought’s conception of itself through time, and how this has developed. Having alerted the reader to these themes, and warned her about the difficulties we have mentioned, concerning how philosophy is to begin (E §17), we then move to the Vorbegriff itself, which again starts by focusing on the nature of thought.

**2. ‘Logic is the science of *thinking*’**

Hegel assumes that he can count on the fact that ‘we are all agreed’ that ‘*thinking* is the subject matter of logic’ (E §19A2), where such thought has its own constitutive categories and laws ‘which thinking does not already *have* and find given within itself, but which it gives to itself’ (E §19R). This makes logic difficult because it is highly abstract, just as thought appears abstract; but it may also seem to make logic easy, because it only concerns our own thinking and its fundamental categories, and so can be conducted by just turning inward, as it were. However, Hegel warns us not to be complacent on this score, as a major part of his inquiry will be to challenge the way in which we standardly think about such categories, where such a sense of familiarity will then get in the way of this investigation by encouraging us to believe that no such examination is needed, thereby mistakenly leading us to dismiss the *Logic* as redundant and a waste of effort (E §19R).[[7]](#footnote-7)

Moreover, Hegel warns, opinions differ regarding the capacities of thought, and how well or badly it can get us to the truth. For some, the truth may be seen as unattainable, while for others it may be attainable but in a way that does not require thought at all, as it can be reached in some other fashion, for example through direct experience or feeling. On the other hand, people may hold that it is only through thought that we can come to understand the highest things, such as God. At the same time, some may therefore take logic to have little value, and to make no real practical difference to how we see the world, while others may believe that it is only via logic that thought attains its true potential and is at last ‘free, at home with itself’ (E §19A2). Thus, ‘[p]eople can have a high or a law opinion of the science of thought, just as they can of thought itself’ (E §19A2). Finally, Hegel notes, people have become suspicious of thought for the way in which abstract philosophizing has led to radical challenges to religious and political life, from Anaxagoras to Socrates onwards, through to the French Revolution: ‘For this reason, a justification of thinking with regard to its results was demanded; and the inquiry into the nature and competence of thinking is just what has very largely constituted the concern of modern philosophy’ (E §19A3). The opening of the Vorbegriff therefore echoes the concerns voiced in the Introduction, that an exercise such as Hegel’s *Logic*, with its close investigation of thought and its consequent commitment to the latter’s value is not necessarily in tune with the spirit of the times, where doubts about the limits, usefulness and importance of thought have been raised.

Hegel now proceeds to consider thought in relation to what he calls ‘subjectivity’ and ‘objectivity’, where he moves in the next sections from the former to the latter (E §§20-25). Unfortunately, he does not make clear at the outset exactly what he has in mind in drawing this distinction, but it becomes more evident as the discussion proceeds. Beginning in §20, he starts by considering thought in ‘its ordinary subjective significance, as one spiritual activity or faculty *side by side* with others such as sensation, intuition, imagination, etc. desire, volition, etc.’ Thus, this is subjective in the sense that it considers thought simply as one of the subject’s capacities alongside others, where it is also said to be subjective because thought here is seen as producing abstract ideas, which belong merely to the mental life of the subject and subsist ‘in their heads’; rather than being parts of the concrete world, they are the subject’s representations *of* that world to itself. As a result, thought comes to be set over against sensible experience, which appears to grasp things in their individuality, and thus as they are apart from thought.

However, for Hegel this view of thought is inadequate precisely because it distances thought from the world and has the kind of mistaken conception of immediate experience that he had earlier criticized in the *Phenomenology* under the guise of ‘sense-certainty’, where he briefly reprises the argument made there that in fact ‘apprehension’ is impossible without ‘comprehension’.[[8]](#footnote-8) Hegel thus thinks he can show that far from cutting us off from reality, it is in fact *by* thinking that we better come to understand reality through the process of ‘thinking things over’ (*Nachdenken*), so that rather than leading us away from the world into the realms of abstraction and purely subjective representations, the universals employed by thought help us to grasp that world more fully and adequately. Hegel argues that this more positive view of thought is reflected in many aspects of our lives, such as when we tell children about grammatical rules, or act for general purposes, or look for general moral principles, or see natural phenomena as falling into general kinds or as governed by universal laws (see E §21A), where in all these cases we treat thought as guiding us to ‘the value of the *matter*, what is *essential, inner, true*’ (E §21), so that ‘we must first *think it over* in order to arrive at the genuine constitution of the object, and that by thinking it over this [goal] is indeed achieved’ (E §21R). The truth we are getting at here is not mere ‘correctness’ or representational adequacy, but rather the fundamental nature of things, to which those things ought to conform (E §24A2; cf. also E §213A). Once this is allowed, we have taken an important first step away from a merely ‘subjective’ to a more ‘objective’ conception of thought.

Hegel then turns to consider in a little more detail how exactly this ‘thinking things over’ in fact does manage to get at the fundamental features of the world, where he accepts that it does so by going beyond what is immediately given to is in sensation or intuition or representations. He acknowledges, of course, that this may then give rise to a skeptical worry, one which he thinks lies at the heart of Kant’s critical philosophy which is discussed in more detail later (E §§40-60): namely, that by transcending what is immediately given, or even altering it in various ways, we are cut off from things as they really are. However, he thinks at this stage he can appeal to common sense, which is happy to accept that thought takes us to the truth by proceeding in this manner, as ‘it has been the conviction of every age that what is substantial is only reached through the reworking of the immediate in our thinking about it’, where to think otherwise is only the result of the ‘sickness of our time’ (E §22A), which Hegel hopes his *Logic* will be able to cure.

Thus, while more will be said about this issue in his later discussion of Kant in the Vorbegriff, and where Hegel signals it is primarily Kant he has in mind here,[[9]](#footnote-9) Hegel thinks that at this stage he can now ask a further question: namely, if skepticism can be rejected, what does that tell us about the nature of the world around us and in which we live? Hegel claims that it shows that this world is not *alien* to thought and thus to us as thinkers, so that in ‘thinking over the genuine nature [of the object]’, the subject is also ‘*at home with itself*’ and therefore free, where through its own activity of thinking the mind is able to rise above its own particularity as an individual thinker and come to know what holds universally, for all thinkers, so that ‘the worthiness that consciousness ascribes to itself consists precisely in the giving up of our *particular* opinions and beliefs and in allowing the *matter* itself [*die Sache selbst*] to hold sway over us’ (E §23R).[[10]](#footnote-10) In the light of this, Hegel holds, we are entitled to take thoughts to be not just subjective but also *objective*, in the sense of reflecting the fundamental nature of things themselves, so that logic tells us not just about the structure of *our* thinking but also about the structure of the world, whereby it is also a form of metaphysics. Hegel thus famously writes at this point: ‘Thus *logic* coincides with *metaphysics*, with the science of *things* grasped in *thoughts* that in return have been taken to express the *essentialities* of *things*’ (E §24).

Here, then, we arrive at the picture of objective thought that Hegel wants to defend, which he here puts in a variety of ways that all amount to the same claim: namely, that thoughts are not just subjective ideas in our heads, but also structure reality itself at a fundamental level, in so far as what is universal is also inherent in which is individual and particular.[[11]](#footnote-11) Thus, Hegel thinks he is in entitled to say (in a preliminary way, which will be further defended when he comes to consider further the relation between universal, particular and individual later on in the *Logic*), that ‘thinking constitutes the substance of eternal things’, while at the same time, as thinking beings *ourselves*, ‘it is also the universal substance of what is minded [*des Geistigen*]’ (E §24A1). Far from there being a skeptical *gap* between mind and world, therefore, the two are fundamentally in alignment, where as thinking beings ourselves, we are uniquely able to bring this conceptual structure of nature to consciousness, by knowing in a way that objects in nature do not that both we and they *are* indeed conceptually structured in this way. Thus, ‘Nature does not bring the *nous* to consciousness for itself; only man reduplicates himself in such a way that he is the universal that is [present] *for* the universal’ (E §24A1). As a result, our investigations into nature and the workings of the mind itself (undertaken in the *Philosophy of Nature* and the *Philosophy of Spirit* respectively) may be thought of as cases of ‘applied logic’ (E §24A2), whereby we look for the conceptual structures we consider in their pure form in the *Logic* itself to see how they play out in the context of the natural world and our own ‘mindedness’ in which they are embodied.

This means, however, that there is a fundamental *normative* nature to the way in which these inquiries are conducted, for if things are taken to be exemplifications of universals, we can ask how *well* or *badly* they exemplify them, and thus whether they are ‘true’ or ‘false’ as individuals this sense – where again Hegel takes himself to have common sense on his side, which is happy to ask of someone whether they are a ‘true friend’, for example, meaning whether they properly instantiate the nature of friendship (E §24A2). However, where common sense may find things more challenging, is that we can ask how adequately the categories of thought manage to capture the nature of things in a fundamental way without leading us into incoherence, where this deeper reflection may take us beyond our usual view of these categories and what we ordinarily mean by ‘existence’, ‘cause’, ‘freedom’ and so on. It is this investigation of the possible limitations of such ‘finite’ categories as leading to something more satisfactory that forms the focus of themain body of the *Logic* (E §24A3).

Hegel has thus given a sketch of the position he hopes to defend further in the *Logic* itself, as a form of *objective* idealism, in the sense that it is a realism about thought and thus concepts, which do not reside merely within subjects who are thereby cut off from the world by this capacity to conceptualize, but are rather brought closer to it.[[12]](#footnote-12) However, Hegel recognizes that this is not the only view that may be taken of such matters, and that other options concerning the relation between mind and world are and have been upheld. At this point, therefore, he turns to offer a brief and systematic overview of the history of positions [*Stellungen*] that have been taken on the issue of objective thought, in order to bring out where his view differs from these alternatives, and how it constitutes a worth successor to them.

**3. Thought’s View of Itself: a History**

The next part of the Vorbegriff is the only place in which the history of philosophy is given any extended treatment within Hegel’s systematic writings, and the only published account of that history that Hegel presented in his mature works. While well known for his views on the history of philosophy, these are expressed elsewhere, either in his posthumously published lectures, or in his early works such as the so-called *Differenzschrift*; and while various predecessors are alluded to in the *Phenomenology*, they are not given any explicit discussion, in accordance with the approach adopted in that text. These sections of the Vorbegriff are thus a very useful source for understanding Hegel’s views on the historical development of the philosophical tradition.

Prior to beginning his account, Hegel makes plain why such historical discussions are not given more of a role within his mature published writings, which is that they cannot be conducted in a properly systematic manner. But as with the *Phenomenology*, there is said to be some value in this treatment nonetheless, as it shows the role that the categories can play in our view of fundamental matters such as knowledge and faith, where it is such categories or ‘thought determinations [*Denkbestimmungen*]’ which (as we have seen) will be properly analyzed in the main part of the *Logic* itself. Thus, how we conceive of the categories is a fundamental focus of the historical discussion that Hegel offers here, as this will determine how we view thought itself and the positions that are taken up concerning its relation to the world.

From this perspective, Hegel takes us through three such positions on the objectivity of thought. The first standpoint is that of rationalist metaphysics,[[13]](#footnote-13) which starts out with a naïve confidence in the ability of thinking to take us to the heart of things (E §26). As is often the case with Hegel’s discussion of positions of this sort, he will in fact want to re-capture something of the spirit of this outlook, but do so in a more sophisticated and knowing way. For, as it stands, he recognizes that such metaphysics is vulnerable to the complaints raised against it by Kant’s critical philosophy, which casts doubt on this confidence. Hegel therefore makes plain that he hopes this positive attitude can be restored, but in a less simplistic manner.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Where Hegel concedes that rationalistic metaphysics is vulnerable, and where he sees Kant as doing great service in revealing this vulnerability, is in its view of the categories which it tried to apply in this unquestioning way, without distinguishing between thought concerning ordinary finite objects and thought about the special objects it claims to grasp, such as God, the soul or the world as the whole (which are the three transcendental ideas identified by Kant himself as central to the metaphysical tradition he criticizes).[[15]](#footnote-15) Hegel thus claims that this metaphysics took both the ordinary categories and the ordinary forms of propositional thinking, and attempted thereby to theorize about such objects, without realizing that it is not possible to move from one level to the other: for example, God cannot be thought of as ‘existing’ in the same way as a table can, and nor can we just apply predicates to him in the way we can to other things. As a result, Hegel admits, rationalistic metaphysics inevitability got itself into conceptual difficulties in a way that Kant was the first to recognize fully, as using these terms it was not possible to settle various questions and aporia that then seemed to arise. So, for instance, Hegel suggests that rational psychology made the category mistake of conceiving of the soul as a ‘thing’, which then led to all sorts of unresolvable puzzles (E §34A); equally, when thinking about freedom, the concept of necessity that is contrasted with this is taken from mechanics, and thus the two are rendered incompatible with one another (E §35A). The early promise of rationalist metaphysics is thus one that it finds impossible to fulfill, because it has not yet reflected hard enough on the forms of thought with which it proposes to engage with its inquiries, but has taken them up naively and in what turns out to be a limited manner.

As a result of this failure, philosophy undergoes a counter-reaction, and moves from rationalism to empiricism, where this takes us on to the second position that thought takes in relation to objectivity, of which empiricism is its first phase and Kantian philosophy its second. Empiricism turns away from the apparently empty theorizing of rationalism, while also questioning the capacity of thought to tell us about reality, as concrete sensible experience is now given epistemic priority over the abstract speculations of metaphysics (E §37). Hegel is happy to accept that this correction to rationalistic metaphysics was needed, and has some value in bringing us back into contact with the world around us.[[16]](#footnote-16) Nonetheless, Hegel argues, empiricism is also naïve in its own way, in holding that it has somehow escaped from having any metaphysical commitments of its own, where as a result (like rationalistic metaphysics before it) it fails to reflect at all upon these commitments and subject them to philosophical examination. But no matter how much it simply tries to stick to experience, some thought and theorizing is inevitably involved in its inquiries, so that far from escaping metaphysics, empiricism simply engages in it unthinkingly, and in a way that is therefore just as problematic as the rationalist’s approach turned out to be.[[17]](#footnote-17)

The great insight of Kant’s critical philosophy, for Hegel, is that it sees more clearly than anyone who came before him that there is no possibility of experience without thought (thus taking us beyond the naivety of empiricism), while also recognizing that the categories of thought cannot be just taken for granted as putting is in touch with the world (thus taking us beyond the naivety of rationalism), so that its role in ‘[s]ubjecting the determinations of the older metaphysics to investigation was without doubt a very important step’ and ‘certainly involves the correct insight that the forms of thinking themselves must be made the object of cognition…’ (E §41A). Hegel thus accepts that Kant’s critical philosophy represents a crucial turning point in the history of philosophy; yet at the same time, he sees it as fundamentally flawed. For, he thinks that in conducting this investigation into our categories, Kant was led to treat them as *merely* belonging to our thought in a subjectivist manner, thereby cutting thought off from the world as it is in itself and confining us to the world of appearances. According to Hegel, this is because Kant made a crucial mistake: while he rightly saw that the categories of rationalist metaphysics were flawed and limited in their capacity to capture the nature of things, he did not see that we could develop our categories of thought beyond them, so that he took thought to be stuck at this level of inadequacy. But for Hegel, this was itself an uncritical assumption, where Kant’s inquiry falls fatally short; for what remains to be seen, and what the *Logic* itself will attempt to discover, is whether our concepts can be further refined in such a way as to overcome the puzzles that Kant thinks are insuperable for thought. In this way, then, something of the old confidence of rationalist metaphysics can be restored, but on a new and radically different basis, whereby the categories are then fundamentally reconceived and not just taken for granted. Once this has been achieved, we can accept the Kantian insistence that our experience is conceptually structured, but without succumbing to Kantian fears that this sets the mind apart from the world; rather, we can take it that these conceptual structures map onto reality and so can treat thought as objective, just as Hegel had urged earlier in the Vorbegriff, and as he thinks both rationalism and common sense are happy to allow.[[18]](#footnote-18)

However, this is to get ahead of ourselves; for, before this Hegelian approach seems worth trying, another response to the Kantian viewpoint must be considered, which constitutes the third and final historical position that Hegel discusses. On this position, Kant’s apparent skepticism is rejected, but not in the Hegelian manner, but rather by turning away from thought in favour of a kind of non-conceptual knowledge that is taken to be the highest form of cognition. On this account, which Hegel mainly associates with F. H. Jacobi, conceptual thought is said to be limited to comprehending things by seeking their conditions;[[19]](#footnote-19) but this means that when it comes to making sense of an infinite and hence *un*conditioned being such as God, it is useless, so that ‘God, or what is infinite and true, lies outside the mechanism of a connection of this kind to which cognition is supposed to be restricted’ (E §62R). As a result, it is argued, such mediated knowledge must be given up, and we must instead adopt a form of immediate knowing, or what Jacobi also calls ‘faith’ [*Glaube*], because it is not based on any argument or reasoning, or search for grounds.

Hegel’s response to this outlook is to claim that it sets up a false opposition between immediate knowledge and philosophical inquiry, such that ‘immediate knowing adopts an *exclusionary* posture or, in other words, it sets itself against the doing of philosophy’ (E §64R). But, Hegel argues, as Descartes’ *Cogito* shows, philosophy can happily allow that there are forms of foundational and non-syllogistic knowledge, not based on any prior rational grounds (E §64R). When the proponent of immediate knowledge tries to be more radical than this, Hegel claims, they are then led astray by adopting an overly simplistic characterization of the relation between the notions of mediation and immediacy. So, for example, he argues that while the well-trained inquirer (such as an expert mathematician) may seem to grasp truths immediately, this is in fact based on reasoning that is now simply habitual and largely unconscious, just as our unreflective actions as adults is nonetheless mediated by earlier training (E §66). Likewise, Christian faith itself is not fully immediate, but comes about through education and enculturation (E §67), while thought and being are themselves mediated by one another (E §70). Ultimately, Hegel argues, the proponent of immediate knowledge must therefore fail to draw a clear distinction between what is immediate and what is mediated, as both imply the other, where (in a claim that will become clearer after the next part of the Vorbegriff) ‘[i]t is only the ordinary abstract understanding that takes the determinations of immediacy and mediation to be absolute, each on its own account, and thinks that it as an example of a *firm* distinction in them’ (E §70).

Moreover, Hegel suggests, adopting this position can also have broader consequences that are to be avoided if possible. Thus, in epistemology, this appeal to immediacy can lead to a kind of subjective dogmatism, where what strikes an individual as self-evidently the case is taken to be valid for all (E §71). As a result, virtually any belief can be claimed to be true using this criterion, as well as any conception of good or evil, as no reason need then be given in support, as long as the view is strongly believed or sincerely held in an ‘immediate’ manner (E §72). Finally, when it comes to religious faith, because the knowledge of God is non-conceptualized, it must remain largely indeterminate and abstract, as any more concrete knowledge would require mediation through concepts; but then the result is just a conviction *that* God exists, but no grasp of *what* he is, in a way that is impoverished and empty (E §73). Jacobi might reply with what is his essential claim: namely, that God himself cannot be mediated, as that is to make him depended on an other and hence finite. But Hegel’s response is that what mediates God is not an *other* in a way that reduces him to finitude, but that rather he undergoes a form of *self*-mediation, and so contains mediation *within* his immediacy, in a way that also makes him determinate and concrete while also allowing him to be unconditioned and infinite. This is the only way, Hegel holds, that immediate knowing can avoid the very abstractness of which it had accused theoretical philosophy (E §74). Thus, Hegel claims to have refuted immediate knowledge in an immanent manner, for where this form of knowing places great store on what is evidently the case or an indisputable fact, Hegel argues that it is precisely evident in this way that there is no purely immediate knowing, and that thinking involves both aspects, as the *Logic* itself will further demonstrate in its own procedure (E §75).

Finally, Hegel considers the relation between this position of immediate knowledge and the rationalist metaphysics with which we began (and for which, it will be remembered, Hegel expressed considerable sympathy). Viewed superficially, he allows, the two positions may appear rather close: for, as we have seen, Descartes’ *Cogito* may be taken as a form of immediate knowing, while the rationalist may think there is a direct connection between the idea of God and his existence, and may also hold that sensible experience gives us access to things in their immediacy as bare particulars (E §76). But, Hegel insists, on closer inspection this similarity is less striking than the differences between the two standpoints. For, Descartes may have begun with the *Cogito*, but he did not *stop* there, going on instead to reason from this basis up to a belief in God. The proponent of immediate knowledge, however, refuses to go any further, where their dissatisfaction leads them to give up reasoning altogether.

As Hegel himself allowed in his own critique of rationalist metaphysics, this dissatisfaction may to some extent be justified; but nonetheless he holds that it is a false step to move from this to abandoning reasoning as such, as the result can only be that this position ‘surrenders itself to the untamed arbitrariness of imaginations and assurances, to moral conceit and haughtiness of feeling, or to opinions and arguments without norm or rule’ (E §77). By contrast, Hegel argues, philosophy in general and his *Logic* in particular will avoid any such dogmatic starting points, by beginning in a presuppositionless manner, where the idea that there is an antithesis between immediacy and mediation is one of many such assumptions that needs to be given up. This is not the same as beginning with *skepticism*, however, as skepticism itself makes its own assumptions regarding the nature of our categories and how we must think using them; though as we shall see in the final part of the Vorbegriff, skepticism is give some role in our inquiries in Hegel’s account. But what we really want is a more positive form of presuppositionless investigation, which can be ‘fulfilled by the freedom that abstracts from everything, and grasps its own pure abstraction, the simplicity of thinking – in the resolve of *the will to think purely*’ (E §78R). In other words, what we want is what Hegel has already promised he will give us in the *Logic*, namely thought thinking itself, unconstrained by prior assumptions – where as we have seen, it is such fundamental assumptions which he thinks have vitiated the various positions he has worked through in this part of the Vorbegriff. So, for example, metaphysical rationalism took our ordinary categories for granted and did not inquire further into their limitations; Kant went on to highlight those limitations, but in turn assumed that we could not develop our categories any further; while Jacobi simply accepted an irresolvable opposition between the categories of immediacy and mediation, and took all concepts to fall into the latter camp.

The implicit lesson of this historical part of the Vorbegriff, therefore, is that it is assumptions of this sort that will be problematic to philosophy, where it is only if they are overcome that we can return to the optimism concerning objective thought with which metaphysics began. This lesson is then made more explicit in the final part of the Vorbegriff, in which Hegel offers his last preliminary discussion, focused on giving us a ‘More Precise Conception and Division of the *Logic*’.

**4. The Science (and Art) of Speculative Thinking**

In this short by very significant conclusion to the Vorbegriff, Hegel offers a key to the approach that he will take in what follows – though with his customary warning against any such preliminary statements and their potential to mislead.[[20]](#footnote-20) The discussion rests on a distinction that he draws at the outset, between the ‘sides’ of thought as ‘moments’ of the ‘logically real’ [*Momente jedes Logisch-Reellen*], by which he means ‘every concept or everything true in general’ (E §79R). These are ‘(α) *the side of abstraction* or *of the understanding*, (β) *the dialectical* or *negatively rational side*, [and] (γ) *the speculative* or *positively rational* one’ (E §79).

The first stage, of the understanding, is characterized as a form of thinking that operates in terms of fixed antitheses and distinctions, while it also operates by abstracting its concepts from concrete particulars, and so is treated as opposed to experience and immediate intuition. It thus forms the basis for certain kinds of theorizing in empirical science, which draws important distinctions between natural phenomena using concepts like ‘matters, forces, kinds, etc.’, while in practical matters it focuses on some things to the exclusion of others, and will insist that the practical world must involve important divisions, such as that between the executive and judiciary within the state. Likewise, in art, religion and philosophy itself, the understanding will insist on drawing clear differences within and between things, so that confusion and indeterminacy are avoided (E §80A). Throughout this discussion, Hegel makes evident that this approach taken by the understanding is highly beneficial up to a point; but what concerns him, however, is that ‘the understanding must not go too far’ (E §80A), and lead us to think that its view of the world is the full story.

For, Hegel argues, if we just stick to the understanding, we will inevitably enter the second or dialectical stage of thought, whereby the distinctions that it insists on making will draw us into seemingly unresolvable conceptual difficulties. So, for example, in separating the concept of freedom from the concept of cause, we will be led to think of freedom as mere arbitrariness lacking in any ground whatsoever, in a way that itself seems to undermine freedom by rendering it empty. Or, by separating God from his creation on the grounds that he is infinite and it is finite, we will limit God in a way that then makes him finite, as he is now bounded by the world he created. Or, by separating universals from the individuals in which they are instantiated, we treat the latter as propertyless and thus indistinguishable from each other after all, thereby undermining their status *as* individuals as they are no longer different from one another. In all these ways, and many others, the understanding can push us into seemingly irresolvable puzzles, akin to those that Kant identified in the antinomies and elsewhere in the dialectical section of the first *Critique*. But where Kant took the problem to lie in the attempt to use categories beyond the bounds of experience, for Hegel the problem lies instead in the way in which those categories are treated by the understanding, which grasps them in a way that is insufficiently sophisticated and complex.

Hegel holds that it is here that skepticism finds its natural place, for when the understanding is forced to see that its conceptual divisions lead thought into incomprehension and puzzlement, it may come to doubt that we can ever arrive at a satisfactory picture of how things are, and so cause us to give up our inquiries in despair. However, he insists that the results of the dialectical stage are not merely ‘negative’ in this way: rather, they lead to the third and final stage of *reason*, which ‘apprehends the unity of the determinations in their opposition, the *affirmative* that is contained in their dissolution and their transition into something else’ (E §82).

Thus, after thought is forced to reconceive its concepts in such as way as to break down the ‘abstract *either-or*’ of the understanding (E §80A), it can arrive at a new way of conceiving of things, from which it can see how these divisions are simplistic and misleading, in a way that will overcome the skeptical aporia of the dialectical stage. So, for example, it will see how freedom is not opposed to causality, but that the latter can be incorporated into the former; that God can remain infinite while at the same time being embodied in his finite creation; and that universals can be instantiated in individuals in a way that enables the latter both to be distinguished from one another and not reducible to merely general properties. All this, Hegel accepts, will remain hard for the understanding to make fully intelligible to itself, so it will be drawn back to the earlier distinctions that caused the problems for thought in the first place; but he thinks that the speculative capacity of *reason* is capable of thinking in the way that is required, so that it is reason that in the end which is required to make sense of the world for us, not the understanding – thus reversing Kant’s priority of the latter over the former. Thus, as Hegel had put it earlier in the Vorbegriff, ‘[t]he struggle of reason consists precisely in overcoming what the understanding has made rigid’; and it is precisely in moving from the understanding to reason that we can advance over the mistakes of traditional metaphysics, into a metaphysics of a more successful and speculative form: ‘[t]he dogmatism of the metaphysics of the understanding consists in its adherence to one-sided thought-determinations in their isolation, whereas the idealism of speculative philosophy involves the principle of totality and shows itself able to overgrasp the one-sidedness of the abstract determinations of the understanding’ (E §32A). In this way, we can see even more clearly how Hegel took pre-critical metaphysics to be naïve: it adopted a limited conception of the categories, which then lead it into philosophical puzzles that cast doubt on its intellectual self-confidence. On the other hand, Kant was wrong in the diagnosis he offered of this puzzlement, precisely because he took it to be insuperable and thus as evidence of the limitedness of human thought, rather than seeing how it can lead us to adopt a new way of thinking that can be achieved by speculative reason. This will then restore to us the self-confidence of thought, but this time on a secure basis, which will also be invulnerable to Jacobi’s critique, for that too was directed against the limited outlook of the understanding rather than reason itself.

Now, obviously, actually showing that speculative reason can indeed be triumphant in this way is an enormously ambitious undertaking, which aims at nothing less than the resolution of all the traditional problems of philosophy. It is this project, nonetheless, that Hegel sets out to realize in the *Logic*, as well as the *Encyclopedia* as a whole. Thus, in the main body of the text, Hegel seeks to demonstrate how the various categories of thought are interrelated in a dialectical manner, such that the conceptual oppositions responsible for our perplexities can be overcome and resolved. In fact, however, he thinks that this will prove easier in relation to some categories rather than others, so that in the final section of the Vorbegriff, he anticipates the structure of what is to come by distinguishing between the categories of Being, Essence and the Concept. At the first level of Being, the relation between categories is one of ‘passing over’ or ‘transition into the other [*Übergehen in Anderes*]’; at the level of Essence, it is a closer relation of ‘reflection and mediation’ or ‘appearance in the other [*Scheinen in Anderes*]’; and at the highest level of the Concept, it is one of ‘development [*Entwicklung*]’ (E §83; cf. also §161 and §161A). So, for example, while the categories of Being can be connected with one another, this connection may be simply one of negation (as when we conceive of nothing as that which is not, for example); but the categories of Essence are more internally related (as when we see that something can only be a cause if it has an effect and vice versa, for example), and those of the Concept are yet further interrelated again (such that each of the categories of universal, particular and individual can only be made sense of in terms of the others). The point here, therefore, is that it is only really at the end of the *Logic*, with the categories of the Concept, that true speculative thinking can really be achieved; for it is once these categories are properly grasped that the possibilities of ‘objective thinking’ promised in the Vorbegriff can be vindicated, as we then move on in the rest of the *Encyclopedia* to make full sense of both the world around us and ourselves.

**5. How is Hegel’s *Logic* Possible?**

In conclusion, it seems appropriate to provide some critical assessment of what Hegel has achieved in the Vorbegriff. But of course, in many ways this is impossible: for as we have seen, the Vorbegriff is no more than an ante-room to the *Logic* itself, where Hegel makes clear than anything he claims in the former must stand or fall with the latter – and this is hardly the place to assess the *whole* of the *Logic*, much less the full *Encyclopedia* system of which it is part.

Perhaps, however, something more modest is achievable here, namely to consider how far it even makes sense for Hegel to *promise* what he does in the Vorbegriff concerning the *Logic*, even if we cannot here assess how far that promise may be fulfilled. For, might we not already know, even before Hegel starts down this path, that he must surely fail? Are there not clear reasons to reject the project proposed in the Vorbegriff, even before it begins? Certainly a number of misgivings might legitimately be raised, of which I will here briefly consider four.

First, it might be said that insofar as this project promises to return us to a rationalist faith in the power of the human mind to attain a full grasp of reality, we can question any such faith at the outset, as we can be confident that our minds are limited in a variety of ways, where intellectual humility of this sort is no more than what is appropriate to the finite creatures that we clearly are. Second, it could be argued that in so far as Hegel pushes for a more optimistic picture, he does so on blatantly circular and thus illegitimate grounds; for, he takes what idealism tells us about the metaphysics of the world, namely that it is conceptually structured, and uses this to ground his confidence in our ability to comprehend it, while at the same time his idealist claims are themselves based on his faith in the power of thought – where ultimately this alignment that he claims between the mind and world can be taken as no more than a happy accident, if we reject the idealistic metaphysics that supposedly explains and underlies it. Third, it could be said the claims that Hegel makes in the Vorbegriff regarding the method he will pursue in the *Logic* are clearly unsupportable, particularly regarding its supposed presuppositionlessness. And finally, the worry might be raised that we have good reason to doubt that Hegel’s attempt to follow the path of speculative reason can lead us anywhere, as such a dialectical dance can only take us into a world of sophistry and illusion, by violating the very rules and laws of thought that make such thinking intelligible, such as the law of non-contradiction.

Now, while all these worries are certainly legitimate, I believe that they can be addressed by the Hegelian, though I perhaps do not have the space to do so fully here – and where again, some of the replies will depend on how one views the main part of the *Logic* itself, not just what is said in the Vorbegriff. Nonetheless, I will here attempt a brief respond to each of the concerns.

As regards the first worry, this can perhaps be addressed by drawing out some affinities which I think exist between Hegel’s approach, and those adopted later by pragmatists such as C. S. Peirce. Thus, while Peirce was a fallibilist, who was perfectly prepared to accept that there may well turn out to be limitations to the human mind and that our knowledge claims may always need revising, he was nonetheless hostile to the claim that our cognitive limitations could be known *in advance* of inquiry, and that this could be enough to cause us to give them up on certain matters. This, he argued, would violate a fundamental principle that ‘deserves to be inscribed upon every wall of the city of philosophy’: ‘*Do not block the road of inquiry*’.[[21]](#footnote-21) Of course, this does not assume or guarantee that our inquiries *will* be successful: at some points, we may be compelled to give up, or at least suspend further investigation pending new developments. But until we meet what appears to be an *actual* blockage, we should just inquire as best we can and not think *in advance* that we are debarred from doing so because of our cognitive limitations. Likewise, then, I believe that Hegel would hold that at the stage of the Vorbegriff, at least, nothing should prevent us in undertaking the kind of inquiry he promises in the *Logic*, though of course this does not guarantee the latter’s success, or show in advance that it will not fail somewhere – but until we have actually *reached* that point of breakdown, nothing rules out it being legitimate to make a start, so at least the Vorbegriff itself can be vindicated at the outset. Of course, as we have seen, a Kantian might respond by saying that she *has* shown that an actual breakdown can and will occur, so that she is *not* just raising this as an abstract possibility. However, as again Hegel hopes the *Logic* itself will show, he believes that Kant was wrong in his diagnosis of what appears to go wrong with our inquiries, so again we are entitled to at least *start* the *Logic* to see how this goes, and thus to see whether Hegel’s speculative approach can indeed improve on Kant’s transcendental one.

Turning now to the second worry, the concern is here that Hegel’s approach can only really be circular, as he bases his confidence in our reason on an idealist metaphysics, which itself assumes the efficacy of this reason. However, I think this worry can be addressed along the same lines as the response given above. That is, I think one can argue that again Hegel is not guaranteeing at the outset that his inquiry will be successful, which would then require some suitably strong metaphysics to underpin it; rather, he is proposing we begin his inquiry with some *hope* that this may be so, where *if it is* successful this in turn will vindicate the idealist metaphysics that would explain it, particularly if it turns out to result in a picture of the world that is itself idealistic in Hegel’s sense – which is how Hegel claims things do indeed turn out at the end of the *Logic*. Both rationalist metaphysics and common sense, Hegel thinks, share this hope that our thought can fathom reality, as they again see no prior reason for doubt, while they also see that thought has at least had some success on this score; but this, Hegel would hold, is enough to justify the stance taken in the Vorbegriff, and to make starting the *Logic* at least a reasonable undertaking, without begging any questions from the beginning.

But this may bring us to the third worry, namely that by claiming not to start with any presuppositions in this way, Hegel is being absurdly naïve, as *all* inquiry must begin from somewhere and so make some assumptions, including his own. Now, again, when we look at the *Logic* itself, Hegel may or may not turn out to have violated his own rules at various stages, and so taken for granted things he should not have done. The question as regards the Vorbegriff, however, is whether it is absurd to even think that *in principle* any such approach is possible. It is probably impossible to fully address this concern here, as it will in part depend on getting clear exactly what is meant by ‘presuppositionless’, and thus precisely what this rules in or out.[[22]](#footnote-22) But again, I think Hegel’s main point would be that we cannot know *in advance* that such an approach is impossible or unworkable: all we can do is move from the Vorbegriff to the rest of the *Logic* itself, to see whether Hegel actually achieves it, so to that extent again the limited role of the Vorbegriff is adequately realized.

Finally, one may feel that the Vorbegriff sinks Hegel’s project from the outset, for precisely in §§79-82 it offers us a conception of ‘speculative thinking’ that can only prove absurd, and lead us into nonsense. For, it can be argued that the distinctions that Hegel identifies with the understanding are in fact good ones, without which thought loses all determinacy and content, and in transcending which Hegel is forced to violate certain fundamental rules of thought, such as the principle of non-contradiction. From what the Vorbegriff tells us about his ‘speculative science’, we can thus know in advance that it is absurd and bound to fail.

Once again, this raises large issues that cannot be fully addressed here. First of all, while Hegel clearly expects his way of thinking to be difficult for us and fundamentally challenging, I think that some take his rather provocative comments on this too far, where I do not hold that he is hereby actually rejecting the principle of non-contradiction or related principles: in fact, it seems that without a basic allegiance to such principles, the dialectic could not be driven forward, as contradictions within a position could just be accommodated, thereby undermining the process of immanent critique that is made central to Hegel’s approach. Of course, this does not mean that everything he says in the *Logic* is fully intelligible and easy to grasp, and that there are certainly positions that will appear contradictory *to the understanding*; but this is not because reason is licensed to assert contradictions as such, but because it can conceive of the categories in ways that shows they are *not* in fact in contradiction to one another, despite how this appears to the understanding. Now, perhaps there are also points where Hegel’s attempt to transcend dichotomies or to encompass different sides is unworkable, and the results lack cogency. But again, that is a matter that can only be decided by looking at the various positions laid out in the *Logic* itself, and *not* something that can be decided at the outset, from just the description that Hegel gives us in the Vorbegriff of speculative reasoning and its differences from the understanding.

It seems, then, that from what we learn about Hegel’s project in the Vorbegriff, we are not entitled to abandon that project *in advance*. But of course, from what Hegel himself says about any such preliminary discussion, the Vorbegriff on its own cannot vindicate that project either. To do that, we must embark on the project itself – which is exactly what Hegel hopes his readers will do, once they have been properly orientated by the text we have been discussing.

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1. The English translation does not fully capture the significance of this title, where as we shall see, for Hegel the Concept or ‘Begriff’ is his highest and most significant category, which is discussed fully in the third and final part of the *Logic*. The ‘Vorbegriff’ is thus not merely a first conception, but also something that comes before the *Begriff* or Concept itself, as this is articulated later in the text, and towards which we here start to make our way. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The *Vorbegriff* appears only in the *Encyclopedia Logic* (1st edn 1817, 2nd edn 1827, 3rd edn 1830), though some of the introductory material to the *Science of Logic* (published in parts between 1812 and 1816) has a similar role, particularly the section entitled ‘With What Must Science Begin?’ (SL 21.53-66/45-55). The 1817 edition of the *Encyclopedia Logic* had a much shorter *Vorbegriff* (§§12-36) which nonetheless covers similar ground. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A recent collection of articles on it is Denker, Sell and Zaborowski (eds), *Der Vorbegriff*. Earlier contributions include Fulda, *Das Problem einer Einleitung*; Flach, ‘Zum “Vorbegriff” der Kleinen Logik Hegels’; Flach, ‘Die dreifache Stellung des Denkens zur Objectivität’; Fulda, ‘Vorbegriff und Begriff von Philosophie bei Hegel’; Westphal, ‘Hegel’s Attitude Towards Jacobi’; Lucas, ‘Der “Vorbegriff” der enzyklopädischen “Logik”’. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For further discussion of this issue in relation to the *Phenomenology*, see Stern, *Routledge Guidebook to Hegel’s ‘Phenomenology’*, 22-30. For a classic more detailed discussion, see Fulda, *Das Problem einer Einleitung*. For a recent consideration of how these issues also relate to the Vorbegriff, with further references, see Nuzzo, ‘Das Problem eines “Vorbegriff”’. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In giving translations, I will largely follow the text of Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, translated by Geraets, Suchting and Harris, though this will be amended where necessary. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The Vorbegriff is also preceded by two Prefaces and a Foreword, each relating to different editions of the *Encyclopedia*. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. On my account, this issue is also one explanation for the need for the *Phenomenology*, whose role in part is to get consciousness to see why such an examination of the categories is needed, and thus to undertake the ‘strenuous effort’ of the *Logic*. See Stern, *The Routledge Guidebook to Hegel’s ‘Phenomenology’*, 22-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. E §20R; cf. PS 9.69-78/¶¶90-110. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Cf. E §22A, where he refers to ‘the standpoint that has been maintained by the Critical Philosophy’. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. On the issue of freedom, see also E §24A2. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Cf. ‘To say that there is understanding, or reason, in the world is exactly what is contained in the expression “objective thought”’ (E §24R); ‘nature [is] a system of thought without consciousness, or an intelligence which, as Schelling says, is petrified’ (E §24A1); ‘This meaning of thinking is more precisely expressed by the Ancients when they say that *nous* governs the world, or by our own saying that there is reason in the world, by which we mean that reason is the soul of the world, inhabits it, and is immanent in it, as its own, innermost nature, its universal’ (E §24A1). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. For further discussion, see Stern, ‘Hegel’s Idealism’. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Although this discussion is more historically concrete than anything we find in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel still leaves it somewhat vague who exactly he has in mind here. In particular, while it is clear he is focusing on pre-Kantian metaphysics, and thus presumably the seventeenth and eighteenth century rationalists who were criticized by Kant himself such as Leibniz and Wolff, it is not so clear if he also intends to include classical Greek metaphysics in the mix. Some of the views he attributes to the metaphysical position, and particularly its confidence in reason, is (as we have already seen) something he often also attributes to the ancients; but there is a post-Christian focus to the metaphysical position he theorizes here, while in one addition, he seems to include within it the Scholastics but not Plato and Aristotle (E §36A), where in general, Hegel’s very positive view of the latter two would suggest they are not really to be brought under this position and its inadequacies. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. ‘This science [of metaphysics] regarded the thought-determinations as the *fundamental determinations of things*; and, in virtue of this presupposition, that the cognition of things as they are *in-themselves* results from *thinking* of what *is*, it stood at a higher level than later critical philosophising’ (E §28); ‘The presupposition of the older metaphysics was that of naïve belief generally, namely, that thinking grasps what things are *in-themselves*, that things only are what they genuinely are when they are [captured] in thought… The standpoint of the older metaphysics referred to here is the opposite of the one that resulted from the Critical Philosophy. We can fairly say that this latter standpoint sends man to feed upon husks and chaff’ (E §28A). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Cf. *CPR* A334-5/B391-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. ‘From Empiricism the call went out: “Stop chasing about among empty abstractions, look at what is there for the taking, grasp *the here and now*, human and natural, as it is *here* before us, and enjoy it!” And there is no denying that this contains an essentially justified moment. The world, the *here and now*, the present, was to be substituted for the empty Beyond, for the spiderwebs and cloudy shapes of the abstract understanding. That is precisely how the firm footing, i.e., the infinite determination, that was missing in the older metaphysics was gained’ (E §38A). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. ‘The fundamental illusion in scientific empiricism is always that it uses the metaphysical categories of matter, force, as well as those of one, many, universality, and the infinite, etc., and it goes on to draw *conclusions,* guided by categories of this sort, presupposing and applying the forms of syllogising in the process. It does all this without knowing that it thereby itself contains a metaphysics and is engaged in it, and that it is using those categories and their connections in a totally uncritical and unconscious manner’ (E §38R). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. ‘Now, although the categories (e.g., unity, cause and effect, etc.) pertain to thinking as such, it does not at all follow from this that they must therefore be merely something of ours, and not also determinations of objects themselves. But, according to Kant’s view, this is what is supposed to be the case, and his philosophy is *subjective idealism*, inasmuch as the Ego (the knowing subject) furnishes both the *form* and also the *material* of knowing – the former as *thinking* and the latter as *sensing* subject’ (E §42A3). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Cf. Jacobi, *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza*, 373: ‘We comprehend a thing whenever we can derive it from its proximate causes, or whenever we have insight into the order of its immediate conditions. What we see or derive in this way presents us with a mechanistic context’. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. ‘Like the division itself, the remarks made here concerning the determinations of the logical are only anticipations and historical at this point’ (E §79R). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Peirce, ‘The First Rule of Logic’, 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Cf. Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel’s ‘Logic’,* 29-71 for further discussion of this issue. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)