CHAPTER I

Judgement and the German Idealists

1.1 Introduction

In this opening chapter, I want to explore why judgement was taken up as the model for thinking in the German idealist tradition. We will begin with the work of Immanuel Kant, as it is Kant who sets the agenda for the development of German idealism. As we shall see, Kant's revolution in philosophy involves moving from seeing thinking as a correspondence between subject and object to seeing thinking as legislating for experience. I will begin with the justification for this move before exploring what its implications might be for our conception of experience. I want to then look at why judgement plays a central role in Kant's conception of experience. For the remainder of the chapter, I will consider some of the responses to Kant's account of thinking and experience in the German idealist tradition, focusing on Hölderlin, early Schelling, and Hegel. My claim is that the general trend of German idealism was to see thinking in terms of judgement. Even where an alternative account was developed, as in the case of Hegel, this took the form of an augmentation of judgement, rather than a rejection of it.

1.2 Kant's Conception of Judgement

Kant is not the first philosopher to accord a central place to judgement in his account of our relationship to the world. For Leibniz, for instance, all propositions can be understood in terms of the attribution to a subject of a property. As he writes in his notes on logical reasoning, '[i]n every categorical proposition (for from them I can show elsewhere that other kinds of propositions can be dealt with by changing a few things in the calculus) there are two terms, the subject and the predicate' (Leibniz 1989: 11). The role of judgement in Kant's transcendental idealism is just as pervasive, given the legislative function of the understanding in constituting the experience of the

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009047920.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

subject. As we shall see, in attempting to determine the categories through which being is thought, Kant, as Hegel notes, 'turn[s] metaphysics into logic' (Hegel 1989: 51), and by doing so makes understanding the nature of judgement integral to his project.[1] He writes, for instance, that 'we can reduce all acts of the understanding to judgements, and the understanding may therefore be represented as a faculty of judgement' (Kant 1929: A69/B70). Béatrice Longuenesse notes that Kant in fact provides a number of different definitions of judgement, each of which develops a complementary aspect of his account of it.[2] In this section, I want to work through some of the characteristics of judgement. At the opening of the 'Analytic of Concepts', Kant gives a brief account of the nature of judgement:

> In every judgement there is a concept which holds of many representations, and among them of a given representation that is immediately related to an object. Thus in the judgement, 'all bodies are divisible', the concept of the divisible applies to various other concepts, but is here applied in particular to the concept of body, and this concept again to certain appearances that present themselves to us. These concepts, therefore, are mediately represented through the concept of divisibility. Accordingly, all judgements are functions of unity among our representations; instead of an immediate representation, a *higher* representation, which comprises the immediate representation and various others, is used in knowing the object, and thereby much possible knowledge is collected into one. (Kant 1929: A68–9/B93–4)

The first point to make about this definition is that it asserts that judgements involve the unification of diverse representations. In this case, the diverse representations of a body and divisibility are brought together in the judgement itself. As we shall see, this ability to give unity to a multiplicity will be an essential aspect of judgement's legislative role in the constitution of a field of objects for a subject. We can also note that it does so by being a 'function of unity', implying that judgement is not simply a passive collection of elements, but is itself a task or process by which the elements of diversity are brought together. Judgement is thus an activity.

There are many ways in which a multiplicity can be brought into the form of a unity, and so if we are going to understand Kant's conception of judgement, we need to explore further how the different representations

[1] For Hegel's interpretation of Kant's philosophy as a logic, see Longuenesse 2007: 15–18.

[2] Longuenesse 1998: 81. I will for the most part be following Longuenesse's excellent account of Kant's analysis of judgement in this section, with some changes of emphasis reflecting themes of particular importance to the twentieth-century French tradition.

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that make up a judgement are connected together. The first point to note is that a judgement contains two predicates – in this case, the predicate 'body' and the predicate 'divisibility' – and so Kant's conception of judgement appears to be more complex than that which we find in Leibniz. For Kant, we have a situation where judgement is a relation between representations: the second, 'body', related immediately to the object that judgement relates to, in effect picking out the object for the judgement, and the first, 'divisibility', related mediately through the concept of body. In fact, this idea that judgement contains a reference to objects is a fundamental feature of its structure. Later in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant explicitly distinguishes the kind of unity found in judgement from that which might be gained by, for instance, a Humean conception of association, by introducing the concept of the object:

> But if I investigate more precisely the relation of the given cognitions in any judgment and distinguish it, as belonging to the understanding, from the relation according to laws of reproductive imagination, which has only subjective validity, I find that a judgement is nothing but the manner in which given cognitions are brought to the objective unity of apperception. (Kant 1929: B141)

The notion of objective unity in this claim does not mean that Kant believes that all judgements, by virtue of their form, correlate with the world, and are hence true,[3] since such a claim would be absurd, given the possibility of contingent empirical judgements. Rather, the claim, as Henry Allison succinctly puts it, is that 'every judgement involves a synthesis or unification of representations in consciousness, whereby the representations are conceptualised so as to be referred or related to an object' (Allison 2004: 87). As such, the notion that judgements relate to objects is a constitutive feature of judgement itself.[4]

A further consequence of this is that the connection between representations in a judgement results in a structure that is truth functional – a judgement can either correctly or incorrectly characterise an object or objects that it relates to. In both of these dimensions, judgement differs from

[3] See Allison 2004: 88 and Longuenesse 1998: 82.

[4] This applies to both what Kant calls in the *Prolegomena* judgements of perception and judgements of experience (Kant 1997: §20). In the former, we have judgements which are fundamentally tied to our perception of the nature of the world (such as Kant's example of 'If the sun shines on the stone, it becomes warm'), and judgements of experience, which assert claims that the understanding considers to have necessary validity (such as the claim that 'the sun warms the stone'). What the two cases have in common is that both are made possible by relating representations through the concept of an object.

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the kind of unity that is developed by the imagination. The reference to an object within the structure of judgement ensures that what is aimed at by a judgement is something that transcends the particular situation and impressions of a given subject. For the imagination, operating without the concept of an object, we simply have a collection of representations not related together by objective functions, but by principles such as resemblance, contiguity, and association. A unity governed by association (such as Allison's example of the association of heat with the thought of the sun [2004: 88]) is not truth functional, and merely rests on the habitual interrelation of representations with one another. We can also note that in the case of an imaginative unity, the relationship between representations is flat – representations are simply coordinated with one another. As we saw in the case of the divisibility of bodies, however, there is a relationship of containment or subordination between the representations in the judgement. Divisibility is subordinated to the concept of body in such a manner that whatever is considered to be a body is necessarily also considered to be divisible. This relationship of subordination at the heart of judgement suggests important connections with syllogistic inference which Kant himself will draw out in the transcendental dialectic. For now we can note, however, that the ordered, object-centred, and active characteristics of judgement mean that it will play a central role in Kant's attempt to replace a philosophy of correspondence with one of legislation.

1.3 The Aims of Kant's Project

Kant's claim that 'the proper problem of pure reason is contained in the question: How are synthetic *a priori* judgements possible?' (Kant 1929: B19) reinforces the centrality of judgement. His question opens out onto a more substantial role for judgement than the mere formulation of claims about the world. Kant's claim here draws together two distinctions that are central to our understanding of judgements. The first is between analytic and synthetic judgements. For analytic judgements, 'the predicate B belongs to the subject A as something which is (covertly) contained in this concept A' (Kant 1929: A6/B10). For synthetic judgements, 'B lies outside the concept A, although it does indeed stand in connection with it' (Kant 1929: A6/B10). As Kant clarifies, analytic judgements provide knowledge in a manner that is explicative – they allow us to draw out connections implicit in a concept that we may have only understood in a confused manner. Synthetic judgements are ampliative, which means that they actively extend our knowledge by telling us something novel about the subject at hand. This distinction is combined

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with a distinction between a priori and a posteriori judgements. A priori knowledge is knowledge that is 'absolutely independent of all experience' (Kant 1929: B5), whereas a posteriori knowledge is knowledge gained through experience itself. This independence from experience for Kant implies that a priori truths are necessary truths, since 'experience teaches that a thing is so and so, but not that it cannot be otherwise' (Kant 1929: B3). Synthetic a priori knowledge is thus knowledge which is not derived from experience, and yet is ampliative, or that tells us something genuinely novel about the world. Kant's ostensive project is thus to understand how judgements such as that every event has a cause (a claim which goes beyond anything contained within the concept of an event) can be known with certainty. This claim in particular is one of the principal targets of Hume's scepticism.

The question of how synthetic a priori judgements are possible opens out onto the broader question of the nature of experience, and the relationship of the subject to the object. The *First Critique* seeks to address the failure of metaphysics to answer this question, and Kant begins with the broad claim that 'hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects. But all attempts to extend our knowledge of objects by establishing something in regard to them *a priori*, by means of concepts, have, on this assumption, ended in failure' (Kant 1929: Bxvi). Kant's claim, therefore, is that despite the apparent divergences between approaches to metaphysical questions, there is a shared set of assumptions underlying the different approaches. In the introduction to the *First Critique*, Kant's account of this common-sense view is quite brief, but he discusses it in greater detail in the paralogisms, where he defines the standard metaphysical position as transcendental realism:

> [Transcendental realism] regards time and space as something given in themselves, independently of our sensibility. The transcendental realist thus interprets outer appearances (their reality being taken as granted) as things-in-themselves, which exist independently of us and of our sensibility, and which are therefore outside us – the phrase 'outside us' being interpreted in conformity with pure concepts of understanding. It is, in fact, this transcendental realist who afterwards plays the part of the empirical idealist. After wrongly supposing that the objects of the senses, if they are to be external, must have an existence by themselves, and independently of the senses, he finds that, judged from this point of view, all our sensuous representations are inadequate to establish their reality. (Kant 1929: A369)

At the heart of this definition is the claim that for the transcendental realist, the reality of objects is defined independently of our manner of relating to

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them. Once we make this assumption, the question of how we can make judgements which are necessary but also contentful becomes dependent on our justification of the correspondence between our representations of the world and the world itself. This question arises for both the rationalist and the empiricist. For the rationalist, the question becomes how our innate ideas about the world can be justified as conforming to the nature of the world itself. Descartes' solution to this problem is to posit God as the guarantor of the natural light of reason, a solution also adopted by Leibniz in asserting that God guarantees the correspondence between the monads. While the empiricist rejects the belief in innate ideas, they still begin with a conception of the object that sees it as external to the subject. For the empiricist, the key question is the relationship between our sense impressions and their causes. For Locke, for instance, sense impressions are signs of things themselves, and bear a relationship of resemblance to them:

> [S]imple ideas are not fictions of our fancies, but the natural and regular productions of things without us, really operating upon us; and so carry with them all the conformity which is intended; or which our state requires: for they represent to us things under those appearances which they are fitted to produce in us . . .. Thus the idea of whiteness, or bitterness, as it is in the mind, exactly answering that power which is in any body to produce it there, has all the real conformity it can or ought to have, with things without us. (Locke 1975: 4.iv.4)

As we know, this correspondence between impressions and things is criticised, particularly by David Hume, but Kant's point is that even when the connection between our sense impressions and the object itself is thrown into doubt, the account of knowledge which our scepticism criticises is still understood on the basis of the criterion of correspondence between our categories of thinking and the things themselves.

Henry Allison describes this transcendental realist conception of metaphysics as a 'theocentric model of knowledge' (2004: 27), to the extent that it assumes that knowledge of the world is equated with the kind of direct access to the nature of the world that we might associate with God's knowledge of the world. This does not mean that knowledge is equivalent to God's knowledge, but rather, as was the case with Leibniz, as our knowledge of the world becomes more adequate, it approaches the kind of intellectual intuition of the world we associate with God. A further consequence of this is that transcendental realism does not develop a sharp distinction between our rational understanding of the world and the manner in which the thing is given to us. In this sense, spatial and temporal

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properties are seen as properties of things themselves, and as knowledge is understood as correspondence of our representations with objects themselves, the spatial and temporal aspects of our representations of things are collapsed into the conceptual relationships with things. For Leibniz, space and time are merely inadequate ways of understanding what are in reality conceptual determinations.[5] For the empiricists, our ideas ultimately differ from our sense impressions merely in degree, rather than in kind. As we shall see, the claim that there is a difference in kind between the organisation of intuition and concepts will be crucial both in the formulation of transcendental idealism and in the work of many of the French philosophers who come after Kant.

As Deleuze notes, we can see Kant's revolution as involving a move from seeing knowledge in terms of a correspondence of concepts with objects to seeing knowledge as involving a legislative function in regard to objects (Deleuze 1984: 58). In essence, Kant's claim is that rather than presupposing that the notion of an object is something that pre-exists our epistemic relationship to the world, leading either to dogmatism or scepticism, we should consider the possibility that our concept of an object may be a principle that we use to organise our experience ('We must therefore make trial whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge' [Kant 1929: Bxvi]). By seeing consciousness as conditioning experience, such that it conforms to our categories of understanding, we no longer make the unwarranted theocentric assumption of a pre-established harmony between our categories of thought and the objects of the world. As such, Kant no longer holds to a transcendentally real conception of objects, and in this sense he is an idealist. For the transcendental realist, a belief that knowledge was a form of correspondence between our representations and a transcendent realm of objects led to scepticism, and empirical idealism, to the extent that we were limited to understanding the world in terms of representations for which we couldn't prove objective reality. For Kant, on the contrary, once the concept of an object is recognised as something that is legislated by the subject, the fact that we ourselves constitute a world composed of objects means that we can guarantee that our conception of an object will be instantiated in experience. As such, Kant's project combines an idealism on a transcendental level with an empirical realism.

[5] 'As for my own opinion, I have said more than once that I hold space to be something purely relative, as time is – that I hold it to be an order of coexistences, as time is an order of successions. For space denotes, in terms of possibility, an order of things that exist at the same time, considered as existing together, without entering into their particular manners of existing' (Leibniz and Clarke 2000: 15).

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As we shall see in the next section, in order to develop this constitutive account of experience, Kant gives a prominent role to judgement in his system.

1.4 Functions and Categories

Even though objects conform to our knowledge of them for Kant, this does not mean that we simply have a radical idealism, such as that of Berkeley. While we may organise what is given to us, there is still a given. Our intuition of space and time is essentially receptive, while our cognitive faculties are active. This brings us to the central problem of the *First Critique*. As we saw earlier, transcendental realism posits a difference in degree between concepts and intuitions, which allows it to claim that our own perception of the world is analogous to the God's-eye view that it is supposed to correspond to. For Kant, there is a difference in kind between our receptive intuition of the world and the active faculty that organises experience. Deleuze puts the problem as follows:

> We have seen that [Kant] rejected the idea of a pre-established harmony between subject and object; substituting the principle of a necessary submission of the object to the subject itself. But does he not once again come up with the idea of harmony, simply transposed to the level of faculties of the subject which differ in nature? (Deleuze 1984: 19)

In other words, although the fact that we constitute objects and our representations of them allows us to solve Hume's problem of the external world, Kant has introduced a new, internal problem. How can two faculties which are different in kind relate to each other? Kant himself raises this difficulty. He begins by arguing that knowledge involves a form of synthesis. That is, making a statement involves bringing together different concepts into a unity. He then notes that 'appearances might very well be so constituted that the understanding should not find them to be in accordance with the conditions of its unity' (Kant 1929: A90/B123). There could, therefore, be nothing in intuition to which the understanding can apply itself. This problem of how the faculties relate to one another is the problem that required a reworking of his initial formulation of transcendental idealism in his inaugural dissertation, and was responsible for the delays in the publication of the *First Critique* itself.[6]

[6] Allison 2015: chapter 3 is a good source for Kant's development between the dissertation and the *First Critique*.

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Kant's solution to this difficulty involves arguing that conceptual thought plays a necessary organising role in experience. We can draw a distinction between perception, which simply involves us being presented with appearances, and experience. Kant argues that the difference between perception and experience is that whereas perception simply requires intuition, experience also involves the notion that we experience a world of objects.[7] When we look at our experience of the world, Kant argues that we can see that the notion of an object is not directly given in intuition. Instead, our experience of a world made up of things rather than, for instance, sensations *presupposes* a conception of an object, or objecthood. The question of the *First Critique* can therefore be reformulated as: what is it that allows us to experience a world of objects, rather than simply appearances? Kant addresses this claim in a section of the *First Critique* titled the 'Transcendental Deduction'. The claim that the transcendental deduction makes is that it is the understanding, which is the faculty of concepts (or, as we shall see, rules), that gives us the concept of an object. As such, the understanding plays a necessary role in experience, and the gap between the different faculties has been bridged:

> The question now arises whether *a priori* concepts do not also serve as antecedent conditions under which alone anything can be, if not intuited, yet thought as object in general. In that case all empirical knowledge of objects would necessarily conform to such concepts, because only as thus presupposing them is anything possible as *object of experience*. (Kant 1929: A93/B126)

Kant's attempt to justify this response has two moments to it. First, Kant argues that if there are categories of the understanding that unify experience under the form of the object, then these must be related to the functions of understanding that give unity to judgements. This first stage of Kant's argument is normally referred to as the metaphysical deduction. This stage is followed by the transcendental deduction, where Kant shows that the categories of the understanding do in fact unify experience. In the following sections, I want to work through these two sections of the *First Critique*, focusing on the transcendental deduction as developed in its first edition. These sections are both controversial; particularly in the case of the transcendental deduction, the structure of the argument, and even its aims, are still much debated.[8] My aim in working through them here will not be

[7] Cf. for instance Kant 1929: A93/B126: '[A]ll experience does indeed contain, in addition to the intuition of the sense through which something is given, a *concept* of an object as being thereby given, that is to say, as appearing.'

[8] See Guyer 1992 and Allison 2004: chapter 7 for summaries of some of the major issues governing the interpretation of the transcendental deduction.

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to present a rigorous reading of Kant's argument, but rather to show why Kant believes that there is a necessary connection between judgement, synthesis, objecthood, and experience.

1.5 The Metaphysical Deduction

So far in this chapter, we have focused on the programmatic aspects of Kant's project and his account of judgement. Kant's analysis of the nature of judgement forms a part of what he calls 'general logic', which is the analysis of 'the form of thought in general' (Kant 1929: A55/B79). For Kant, the subject has a constitutive role in producing the field of objects to which judgements relate. In this sense, as well as the general logic, there is also the possibility of a logic that governs the legislative rules by which the subject constitutes objects that are taken up into judgements. This second logic, which Kant calls transcendental logic, therefore deals with 'the origin of the modes in which we know objects, insofar as that origin cannot be attributed to the objects' (Kant 1929: A55/B80). The metaphysical deduction aims to determine what categories are responsible for determining the structure of experience. The metaphysical deduction is titled 'the clue to the discovery of all pure concepts of the understanding', and this clue derives from the synthetic nature of judgement itself. If transcendental logic is going to explain how the kinds of objects that are compatible with judgement can be constituted, it is a reasonable assumption that the categories themselves will be analogous to the functions of judgement. Kant argues, therefore, that our starting point should be the table of possible functions of judgement. This details all of the possible ways in which representations can be united together in a judgement (such as the difference between 'all bodies are divisible', 'some bodies are divisible', 'if something is a body, then it is divisible', etc.). The table of judgements lists four headings (quantity, quality, relation, modality), each containing three kinds of judgement that exhaust the respective characteristics of a judgement. For example, in terms of quantity, a judgement can relate to 'all x's', 'some x's', or 'this x'. What transcendental logic requires is a set of concepts that are both related to judgement and have some reference to intuition. This combination of an analogous structure to the functions of judgement on the one hand and a reference to intuition on the other defines the categories. As an anticipation of Kant's future argument, we can see here that if Kant is able to show that the categories do play a role in organising intuition, then he will have shown how judgement is able to relate to the objects of experience. The central claim is the following:

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> The same function which gives unity to the various representations *in a judgement* also gives unity to the mere synthesis of various representations *in an intuition*; and this unity, in its most general expression, we entitle the pure concept of the understanding. The same understanding, through the same operations by which in concepts, by means of analytical unity, it produced the logical form of judgement, also introduces a transcendental content into its representations, by means of the synthetic unity of the manifold in intuition in general. (Kant 1929: A79/B104–5)

By positing an isomorphism between the functions that constitute the object of experience and the functions of judgement, Kant guarantees that judgements will accord with the structure of the object, as the object is constituted from the outset to accord with judgement.

1.6 The Transcendental Deduction

The aim of the transcendental deduction is to demonstrate that the categories do in fact play a role in the constitution of experience. Kant's claim is that experience rests on a threefold synthesis, which in turn requires us to posit a subject and an object, leading us to introduce the categories as rules which relate to the constitution of objects. In this section, I want to go through these various syntheses quickly in order to give a sense of the role of judgement in Kant's account of the world. I will focus on the version of the transcendental deduction given in the first edition of the *First Critique* (known as the 'A' deduction), principally because of the greater emphasis it places on the different moments of synthesis, over the more formal 'B' deduction.[9]

The first condition for the possibility of experience is what Kant calls a 'synthesis of apprehension', performed by intuition, the faculty responsible for giving us the spatial and temporal manifolds within which experience takes place. Although everything we experience in the external world occurs in space, Kant here concentrates on time, as he claims that even non-spatial phenomena, such as mental states, occupy a position in time. Thus, if he can ultimately show that the categories are responsible for temporal experience, he will have shown that the categories are responsible for all experience. This condition relates to our understanding of experience as essentially temporal and involving a manifold or diversity of different moments. In order for us to be able to experience the world, we

[9] Given the focus of this book on French thought, my aim here will not be to justify Kant's argument, but rather to show how the various syntheses he presents provide an account of the constitution of experience.

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have to somehow be able to order these experiences. That means that we have to apprehend the different temporal moments of experience as forming a sequence. We need a unifying synthesis of time, since otherwise we would simply encounter a series of moments without relation to one another, rendering experience impossible. This first synthesis therefore gives us a unified temporal framework by '[running] through and [holding] together' (Kant 1929: A99) the various moments of time. We can note here that even if what is given to us is a well-ordered temporal sequence, we still need some kind of synthesis on the part of the subject to take up this temporal sequence and recognise it as well ordered.

The synthesis of apprehension on its own clearly does not give us our conception of experience of objects. In order for the synthesis of apprehension to be possible, we need a further synthesis. The synthesis of apprehension allows us to recognise different moments as belonging to the same temporal sequence. Kant notes that when we contract habits, for instance, we make use of the imagination's associative principles, and if we hear a melody, or see a pattern often enough, we come to expect the next note or sign on the basis of what we have already heard or seen. This ability to expect the future is an empirical synthesis on the part of our imagination, to the extent that our particular habits themselves are not conditions for the possibility of experience. The possibility of contracting a habit *does* imply a transcendental synthesis on the part of the subject, however, as habits rely on the existence of regularities within the world:

> If cinnabar were sometimes red, sometimes black, sometimes light, sometimes heavy, if a man changed sometimes into this, sometimes into that animal form, if the country on the longest day were sometimes covered with fruit, sometimes with ice and snow, my empirical imagination would never find opportunity when representing red colour to bring to mind heavy cinnabar. (Kant 1929: A100–1)

The empirical synthesis whereby we recognise regularities in the world therefore relies on a transcendental synthesis that makes this recognition possible. This synthesis is the synthesis of production in the imagination. Kant introduces the example of drawing a line to explain this transcendental synthesis. Kant claims that in order for us to associate various representations with one another, they must have an 'affinity' (Kant 1929: A122) with one another: they must be associable. That is, as well as being brought together, as the first synthesis shows, they must be related to one another in such a way that they have some coherence to each other. If I draw a line in thought, to use Kant's example, it must be the case that I can reproduce the

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previous moments as being contiguous with the present one in order for the thought to be complete.

This synthesis implies a further synthesis, since we do not simply need different moments of experience to have an affinity with each other, but these different moments also need to be related together as a unity for consciousness itself. In the 'B' deduction, Kant puts this point as follows:

> It must be possible for the 'I think' to accompany all our representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me that couldn't be thought at all, and that is equivalent to saying that the representation would be impossible, or at least would be nothing to me. (Kant 1929: B131–2)

Now, when we think of a process such as listening to a melody, all of the different notes of the melody need to be related to the same consciousness, and recognised as belonging to the same consciousness. Otherwise, we would have a sequence of moments that were unconnected with one another, rather than the unity of a melody. Likewise, the process of counting requires us to recognise that each individual number relates to a unified notion of the total. When we analyse the process of counting, or listening to a melody, then we can note that neither the total nor the melody itself is given as an appearance. If we introspect, then all we have is a series of notes in the latter case, or a procession of numbers in the former.

We can make a similar claim about the relationship between the different moments of our experience of external objects. If we walk around a building, for Kant, this building is presented to us through a series of different perspectives of it. A condition of seeing these different perspectives as being perspectives of the same building, however, is that I am able to relate them together as being *my* perceptions of the building. Without this, we would simply have a series of fragmentary appearances. Without the unity of consciousness, these perspectives would not even be perspectives of different buildings. Rather, they would be appearances without any relation to anything, since they would be without any kind of unity whatsoever.

So material objects unite appearance in an analogous way to how melody unites the individual notes that relate to it. In a similar way, the notion of a material object is not itself discovered in experience. Rather, it is that which allows a series of appearances to be conceived as forming a unity. In order for experience to be possible, we need to be able to see the series of appearances as relating to the same subject. This, in turn, means that the appearances themselves need to exhibit unity. It is the concept of the object that gives all of these moments of appearance a unity, as it is by seeing all moments of appearance as referring to an underlying object that

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we are able to unify them. What makes the unity of consciousness possible is therefore the unity of appearances granted by the concept of an object.

If the subject is going to be able to unify experience, then we need to ask what Kant thinks this self is. Kant takes it as a fundamental assumption that 'I think' must be able to accompany all of our representations. This does not imply that our conscious experience must always be accompanied by a reference to ourselves ('I see a building', 'I am counting', etc.), and we are often directly engaged with the world without explicitly thematising our relationship with it ('there is a building', 'the total is x'). The 'I think' cannot therefore be the foundation of experience, since it is not always present. Rather, it is a mark that the kind of synthesis which gives unity to our representations has taken place. Similarly, if we introspect, we do not find a self, but rather simply a series of related impressions – 'no fixed and abiding self can present itself in this flux of inner appearances' (Kant 1929: A107). The situation here is rather like the case of the imagination. The fact that we were able to discover affinities between appearances presupposed a deeper synthesis whereby the imagination produced these affinities. Here it is the case that the 'I think' is made possible by a prior, transcendental synthesis.

This condition which makes possible the 'I think' has what appears to be a faintly paradoxical nature in Kant's account. It is transcendental because it is a condition of the possibility of experience. As such, it doesn't occur within experience itself. This means that it is not something that we can have knowledge of, but something we must presuppose as a foundation for experience. If we return to the distinction Kant made between perception and experience, we can see that our relationship with the transcendental unity of apperception is even more limited. Experience relates to objects that we can make judgements about, whereas perception just gives us a manifold of appearances. If the transcendental unity of apperception, as Kant calls it, is prior to experience, then it is also not the kind of thing we can make judgements about. While we can say, following Descartes, that 'I think, therefore I am', we cannot say what this 'I am' consists in. Substance is a category, and as the transcendental unity of apperception is supposed to be the ground for our use of the categories, we cannot even judge the self to be a substance. Nevertheless, Kant's deduction shows that we need to posit some such subjective unity if experience is going to be possible.

We can say something similar about the object. It cannot be given in experience, and rather is a condition for the possibility of experience. It is really simply a way of allowing the various appearances that are given to us to be united in a rule-governed manner. Essentially, it allows appearances

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to refer to something beyond themselves, and thus, like musical notes that refer beyond themselves to a melody, to form the kind of unity that we need in order to apply the 'I think' to our representations. As Kant puts it, '[i]t is easily seen that object must be thought only as something in general = *x*, since outside our knowledge we have nothing which we could set over against this knowledge as corresponding to it' (Kant 1929: A104). The conclusion of this, therefore, is that both a transcendental subject and a transcendental object are necessary for Kant in order for us to move from perception to experience. If these are necessary, then one further question we need to ask is, what makes possible the subject and object?

For Kant, each of these makes the other possible. The subject makes the object possible, since it is the transcendental unity of apperception that allows the 'I think' to accompany all of our representations. In unifying representations, the subject grounds the transcendental object, which simply is the formal unity of representations. The object in turn grounds the subject, as since the subject cannot be given in intuition, it discovers itself through the synthesis of the manifold. In being able to draw a distinction between a representation and an object itself, the subject can know its representations *as* representations. Without this distinction, representations would simply 'crowd in upon the soul' (Kant 1929: A111). The concept of an object allows the subject to recognise representations as representations of the object, and thus to distinguish itself from them. In recognising itself through this synthesis of unification of representations into an object, consciousness recognises itself as a spontaneous consciousness.

1.7 The Resolution of Kant's Dilemma

To return to our earlier question, how are the different faculties able to relate to each other? For experience to be possible, the subject needs to synthesise appearances into objective unities. As we saw, what was integral to the structure of judgement was that it was an active process, and that it involved the relation of properties to the concept of an object. The categories share the structure of judgement, but also contain a reference to intuition. They thus give us the essential characteristics of what it is for something to be an object (to be a substance, to have properties, etc.), and so Kant argues that the categories of the understanding provide the rules for this synthesis. Thus we have a situation whereby appearances are synthesised into experience by relating them to the notion of an object, and in order to relate appearances to the notion of an object, we need rules governing objects in general, and these are the categories.

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Kant's approach here is important because it shows the interrelations between a number of concepts, such as judgement, the object, synthesis, and consciousness. Conscious synthesis takes the form of a judgement. When I count, or bring together the moments of a judgement ('the table is red'), it is I who actively relates these representations to one another. In a sense, the spontaneity of my ego is what holds together the passive determinations, 'table' and 'redness'. In taking this kind of synthesis as the model for synthesis more generally, Kant develops a conception of experience that implies the relationship of a subject to an object – one that characterises the world in terms of properties. As we shall see in the following chapters, much of French philosophy will accept Kant's discovery of the rich web of interrelations between these concepts. A result of this is that an attempt to diverge from any of Kant's core concepts will necessitate a broader set of revisions to all of these concepts. This will involve a rejection of judgement as the paradigmatic model of thinking. For the remainder of the chapter, however, I want to sketch some of the key lines of response to Kant in the German tradition. Here, I will claim, the response to Kant takes the form of an attempt to rework the notion of judgement to allow a broader metaphysical project to develop.

1.8 Absolute Idealism

As we have just seen, Kant designated his idealism transcendental idealism, in that it saw the subject as responsible for legislating certain aspects of experience, notably the fact that we encounter a spatio-temporal world of objects. In that the subject plays a conditioning role in experience, Kant also designated his idealism formal idealism (Kant 1929: B519). The idea that the subject plays a synthetic role within the constitution of experience is one also taken up by Kant's successor, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, although Fichte also attempts to systematise and correct some deficits in Kant's account. After Fichte, however, transcendental idealism was superseded by the absolute idealisms of Hölderlin, Schelling, and Hegel. For the remainder of this chapter, I want to discuss this series of philosophers who emerged after Kant and developed a series of differing approaches to Kant's thought. These approaches share a diagnosis of some of the central problems of Kant's thought, but differ dramatically in the way they seek to address these problems. The label 'absolute idealism' emerges in that they take issue with the subjective character of Kant's method. We can get a sense of the programmatic intentions of absolute idealism by looking at Hegel's criticism of Kant:

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> The critical philosophy had, it is true, already turned metaphysics into logic but it, like the later idealism, as previously remarked, was overawed by the object, and so the logical determinations were given an essentially subjective significance with the result that these philosophies remained burdened with the object they had avoided and were left with the residue of a thing-in-itself, an infinite obstacle, as a beyond. (Hegel 1989: 51)

Absolute idealism seeks to rectify what it sees as a too subjective approach to the categories. At the heart of the absolute idealists' projects was a recognition that while Kant had inaugurated a new era in philosophy, his own account suffered from a number of arbitrary claims and ungrounded distinctions. The first of these was the distinction between intuition and concepts, which, as we saw, led to the central problem of the *First Critique*: the relation of the faculties. In the introduction to the *First Critique*, Kant speculated about a single origin of the faculties, suggesting that 'there are two stems of human knowledge, namely *sensibility* and *understanding*, which perhaps spring from a common, but to us unknown, root' (Kant 1929: A19/B29). As we saw, Kant shows in the transcendental deduction that the categories have a necessary role to play in the organisation of experience, and hence that we are justified in applying conceptual determinations to the objects of experience. If we return to the initial aim of the *First Critique*, it was precisely this: to determine how a given type of judgement about the world, synthetic a priori judgement (and, in fact, judgement more generally), was possible. In relation to this, we can note that the term deduction used by Kant in his transcendental deduction does not refer to deduction as logical inference. Rather, it has its origin in German legal language, and signifies a kind of genealogy that could be drawn up to show the validity of a legal claim of a ruler of one of the relatively independent territories of the Holy Roman Empire (Henrich 1989). In taking up this conception of deduction, it becomes clear that Kant does not need to trace the origins of the faculties beyond the point where he has established the validity of his initial claim, just as we do not need to trace back the history of ownership of a property beyond what is needed to resolve a particular dispute. Thus, the origin of the faculties does not need to be discovered to justify our ability to apply synthetic a priori judgements to the world. Nonetheless, both Fichte and the absolute idealists who came after him sought to develop an account of the origin of this distinction. Similarly, the distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal became problematised. In presenting the constitution of experience purely in terms of the subject, Kant appeared to rule out any possibility

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of making claims about the thing-in-itself. Nonetheless, Kant's transcendental idealism appeared to rely on the notion that the subject is affected by something that provides the content of intuition in order to get off the ground. Kant's contemporary, Jacobi, summed up Kant's dilemma succinctly by noting that without the concept of the thing-in-itself, he could not get into Kant's system, and with the concept of the thing-in-itself, he could not stay within it.[10] For Hegel at least, these two distinctions mutually implied each other to the extent that it was the mediating role of intuition that prevented us from seeing the categories as relating to real objects.[11]

Finally, Kant's derivation of the categories in the metaphysical deduction was taken to be problematic. Here, Kant attempts to provide a derivation of the categories that make experience of a world of objects possible. Nonetheless, the derivation of the categories from the functions of understanding, as well as the claim that the list of twelve categories was complete, were both considered to be weak claims by Kant's successors. Kant's himself denied the possibility of further explanation:

> This peculiarity of our understanding, that it can produce *a priori* unity of apperception solely by means of the categories, and only by such and so many, is as little capable of further explanation as why we have just these and no other functions of judgement, or why space and time are the only forms of our possible intuition. (Kant 1929: B145–6)

The absolute idealists sought to develop a more sophisticated derivation of the categories than Kant had thought possible.

Horstmann (2000: 117) sums up these different aspects of absolute idealism by arguing that there were three claims that the absolute idealists held to: (1) they were all convinced that Kant had succeeded in establishing the most resourceful philosophical system to be found in modern times, a system that was deeply committed to the idea of the unity of reason and that permitted a coherent picture of the world in all its different aspects. It was this claim that made them followers of Kant, or Kantians; (2) at the same time, however, they were also convinced that Kant had not succeeded in developing adequately his systematic approach because he was hopelessly entangled in a dualistic mode of thinking which was fundamentally at odds with his proclaimed goal of unity. This conviction made them opponents of Kant; (3) they all shared the opinion that, in order to avoid Kant's dualism, one has to supplement his philosophy with a monistic basis

[10] See Henrich 2003: 78. [11] See Guyer 2000: 46–9.

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and accept that monism is the only viable alternative to dualism. It is this belief that made them German idealists.

In exploring the relationship between absolute idealism and judgement, I want to look at three key figures. The first of these is Friedrich Hölderlin, whose short note on judgement and being sets out many of the central tenets of absolute idealism. The second is F. W. J. Schelling, where we will focus on his attempts to move beyond Fichte in developing his philosophy of identity. The third is G. W. F. Hegel, where we will focus on his account of the method of dialectic, and the speculative proposition. The aim will not be to provide an exhaustive account of absolute idealism, but rather to provide support for the claim that judgement remains the paradigmatic model for what it is to think for the post-Kantian German idealists.

1.9 Hölderlin: Judgement and Constitution

Friedrich Hölderlin plays an important role in the development of absolute idealism. Hölderlin was a friend to both Schelling and Hegel, and his brief note, *Judgement and Being*, sets out with remarkable economy a path for idealism beyond the limitations of Kant and Fichte's transcendental idealism. To understand the development of Hölderlin's absolute idealism, we need to begin with Fichte's attempt to develop a coherent foundation for Kant's transcendental idealism (Horstmann 2000: 123). In order to develop a response to the sceptical attacks on Kant's system (and the systematisation of it by Kant's disciple, Reinhold), Fichte attempted to prove that transcendental idealism could be developed systematically from a single principle. In line with Kant's account, Fichte took the first principle of his account to be subjective. Beginning with judgements of which were empirically certain, such as the judgement, 'A is A', Fichte claimed that we can develop a deduction that shows the necessity of self-consciousness as a first principle. In essence, Fichte begins by claiming that the proposition 'A is A' can be reformulated as the claim that 'if A exists, then A exists'. Fichte's argument is that such a proposition requires a self-consciousness in order to posit the existential claims that make up the proposition. This empirical principle has a transcendental basis. If the I is able to posit the existence of A in forming the judgement, 'A is A', then we need to ask what the basis of the 'I' itself is. Fichte's response is that the self-consciousness that forms the basis for transcendental idealism is able to posit itself. In other words, the I grounds itself since, through its own activity, it posits its own existence. The 'I' for Fichte is therefore both an activity and the result of that activity. As he puts it, the I 'is at once the

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agent and the product of action; the active, and what the activity brings about; action and deed are one and the same' (Fichte 1982: 97). By making the fundamental principle of transcendental idealism the self-positing movement of consciousness, Fichte solves the problem of demonstrating the necessity of this first principle. Such a principle is a unity that is presupposed in all of our acts of empirical consciousness, but is not simply a fact that could in turn require further justification. It is also the action which generates that fact reflexively. Fichte claims that just as the principle 'A is A' can be traced back to the I, we can provide similar justifications for the other categories of thought. He therefore appears to overcome the limitations of Kant's account.

In a letter to Hegel written in January 1795, Hölderlin describes Fichte as '[standing] very much at the crossroads' (Hölderlin 1988b: 125). Hölderlin notes in this letter that Fichte's attempt to ground transcendental idealism in a fact of consciousness is illegitimate. His criticism of Fichte appears in compressed form as follows:

> [H]is absolute 'I' (=Spinoza's Substance) contains all reality; it is everything, and outside of it there is nothing; hence there is no object for this 'I', for otherwise not all reality would be within it; however, a consciousness without object cannot be thought, and if I myself am this object, then I am myself necessarily restricted, even if it were only within time, hence not absolute; therefore, within the absolute 'I', no consciousness is conceivable; as absolute 'I' I have no consciousness, and insofar as I have no consciousness I am (for myself) nothing, hence is the absolute 'I' (for me) nothing. (Hölderlin 1988b: 125)

Hölderlin's claim here is that Fichte's account relies on a notion of subjectivity that it cannot justify. Fichte's account of consciousness relies on the fact that to be conscious is to be conscious *of* something. The claim is that in order to be conscious of something in a determinate manner, I must be able to oppose it to something that it is not.[12] This principle is central to Fichte's account, and even applies to consciousness' reflection on itself. It is this principle that also allows Fichte to derive the world as non-ego from the ego. Consciousness therefore requires a relation to an object that it is not, in order to become determinate. If the absolute 'I' is a genuine first principle, however, then there can be no other object for it to relate to. As such, the absolute 'I' cannot be understood as conscious, and hence it is illegitimate to describe the first principle of philosophy as a subjective principle.

[12] Cf. Beiser 2002: 387–8 for a more detailed analysis of this argument.

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In fact, the claim that for something to be determinate it must be opposed to another object means that the first principle cannot be determined as an objective principle either. Given the unitary structure of the first principle, no determinations of it are possible at all. In *Judgement and Being*, Hölderlin outlines the implications of his critique of Fichte. In this note, Hölderlin takes up one of Kant's key claims in the transcendental deduction: that we cannot make sense of a subject without an object, and vice versa. He argues, however, that if we are to properly understand the grounds of judgement, they cannot be discovered through a simple repetition of the functions of the understanding at a higher level. Thus, if we are to understand the grounds of judgement, we need to move to a position where the subject and object are *not* separated from one another. Given the significance of his account, it is worth quoting Hölderlin's description of judgement at length:

> Judgement [*Urteil*], in the highest and strictest sense, is the original separation of object and subject which are most deeply united in intellectual intuition, that separation which alone make subject and object possible, the original-separation [*Urteilung*]. In the concept of separation, there lies already the concept of reciprocity of object and subject, and the necessary presupposition of a whole of which object and subject form the parts. (Hölderlin 1988a: 37, translation modified)

Hölderlin's point here is that one of the conditions for judgement is that we are able to understand the subject as separated from the object. As we saw in Kant's transcendental deduction, judgement is a structure of experience that relates a subject to an object, and as such it requires a separation of the two terms. For Hölderlin, the German term for judgement, *Urteilung*, implies etymologically this notion of an original (*Ur*) separation (*Teilung*). As Kant showed, it is this separation that makes possible the determinate nature of the world. As such, in separating out the world, it is judgement that makes possible determination in general. It is in this sense that the Fichtean 'I am I' cannot be the foundation of idealism. In recognising myself as myself, I do indeed in a sense recognise myself as self-identical, but this self-identity cannot be understood through the notion of the 'I' alone. The 'I am I' is a moment of self-identity only on the basis of the fact that the structure of judgement (the original separation) is already in place.[13] It is only on condition of this separation that the 'I' can take itself as an object. In effect, the first principle of Fichte's system therefore turns out not to be self-consciousness,

[13] Fichte 1982 makes the juridical nature of 'I am I' clear on pp. 97–8.

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but rather judgement, understood as the separation of the self and object that makes possible self-consciousness. If judgement requires this notion of separation, we are going to have to seek its ground in something which is unseparated. Otherwise, we will just repeat the structure of judgement at a higher level, meaning that we will not have really explained how objects are possible. Hölderlin describes this higher level in the second part of this fragment, which deals with Being:

> Being expresses the connection between subject and object. Where subject and object are united altogether and not only in part, that is, united in such a manner that no separation can be performed without violating the essence of what is to be separated, there and nowhere else can be spoken of *Being proper*. (Hölderlin 1988a: 37)

Hölderlin's first 'principle' is therefore prior to the kind of unity we find in consciousness, and in judgement, and for this reason we have the transition to absolute being. Without the opposition of subject and object, there is no way to make sense of being as subjective, or indeed as objective. In fact, as Being contains no oppositions at all (it contains no separations), it can contain no determinations whatsoever. As Larmore (2000: 148) notes, this first term of philosophy, which Hölderlin calls Being, is better described as a ground than a principle, as without determinations it cannot be thought. In this sense, from the position of judgement, Being is entirely unknowable.

While showing that the foundations of judgement cannot be understood in terms of judgement itself, Hölderlin in fact perpetuates the priority of judgement we find in Kant. As Beiser notes,[14] Hölderlin attempted to develop an account of a relation to being that did not operate through judgement, but instead had its grounds in aesthetic experience, but his development of such a model was only tentative. At root, for Hölderlin, all determination operates in terms of judgement, and that which is outside of judgement must be seen as indeterminate. As Deleuze puts it when talking of the philosophical tradition more generally, 'what is common to metaphysics and transcendental philosophy is, above all, this alternative they impose on us: *either* an undifferentiated ground, a groundlessness, formless nonbeing, or an abyss without differences and

[14] Cf. Beiser 2002: 391–7. As Beiser notes, Hölderlin's conception of aesthetic sense is troubled by the paradox that either it remains a purely indeterminate intimation of the absolute, or it collapses back into the determinacy of rational discourse, and hence becomes subject to the modes of determination that make thinking the absolute impossible. Hölderlin's eventual solution is to argue that the absolute is expressible in mythical language, which combines the immediacy of our intuitions with the determinacy of language.

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without properties, *or* a supremely individuated Being and an intensely personalised Form' (Deleuze 1990: 105–6). Once the assumption has been made that all determination has to be understood in terms of judgement, we seem forced to make a sharp distinction such as Hölderlin's between the indeterminate grounds of judgement and the determinate world of judgement itself. The immediate problem with such an approach is that it fails to provide any account of why an undifferentiated being originarily divides itself into the opposition of subject and object. Without any distinctions in Being at all, any attempt at a deduction such as Fichte's now seems impossible. As we shall see, one of the central concerns of the French tradition will be to develop an account of determination that does not understand it purely in terms of the separation of the world into subjects and objects presupposed by judgement. As such, it will restore the possibility of understanding how a world of subjects and objects becomes constituted in the first place. For the remainder of this chapter, I want to explore two responses to the dilemma instituted by Hölderlin that emerged within absolute idealism itself: those of Schelling and Hegel.

1.10 Schelling and the Question of the Absolute

Exploring the role of judgement in Schelling's thought is complicated by the apparent lack of systematic development of his views. While some commentators are correct to note thematic connections running through his work as a whole,[15] there is still a great deal of truth to Hegel's assertion that 'Schelling worked out his philosophy in view of the public. The series of his philosophic writings also represents the history of his philosophic development and the gradual process by which he raised himself above the Fichtian principle and the Kantian content with which he began. It does not thus contain a sequence of separately worked-out divisions of Philosophy, but only successive stages in his own development' (Hegel 1995: 513). Schelling's earliest work is easily interpreted as operating within the framework of Fichte's philosophy,[16] though beginning with his philosophy of nature, and then more openly with his identity philosophy, Schelling breaks with Fichte. The identity philosophy meets Horstmann's three criteria for absolute idealism that I outlined earlier in this chapter,

[15] Cf., for instance, Heidegger's comment that 'The truth is that there was seldom a thinker who fought so passionately ever since his earliest periods for his one and unique standpoint' (Heidegger 1985: 7).

[16] See Snow 1996: 45–55 for a reading that complicates this view by focusing on the importance of Spinoza for Schelling's development.

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and so we will focus on exploring the way in which judgement is conceived of in this system.

Schelling's earliest works appeared from 1794, when Schelling was nineteen years old. These works, which made his name, led in 1798 to a professorship at Jena, where he worked closely with Fichte. Schelling was close friends with Hölderlin, and as Beiser notes (2002: 478), Hölderlin would have made Schelling aware of his criticisms of Fichte as early as July 1795. In spite of this, it was not until around 1800 that the relationship between Fichte and Schelling broke down into one of mutual suspicion. We can see the origins of this final breakdown of relations in Schelling's development of *Naturphilosophie*. Schelling's aim in this work is to develop a systematic account of nature that goes beyond mechanism. Central to this effort is Schelling's incorporation of the categories of organicism into our account of the world.[17] Rather than seeing the world in terms of the mechanical interactions of atoms, Schelling takes up the notion that Kant develops in the *Critique of Judgement* that we can understand nature in terms of unities with purposes and ends. Kant held that the kinds of teleological categories we use to understand organic life had only a heuristic function. That is, while they were of use in explaining the world, we were not justified in claiming that purposive principles were actually at work in nature itself. As Kant puts it,

> It is a mere consequence of the particular constitution of our understanding that we represent products of nature as possible only in accordance with another kind of causality than that of the natural laws of matter, namely only in accordance with that of ends and final causes, and that this principle does not pertain to the possibility of such things themselves (even considered as phenomena) in accordance with this sort of generation, but pertains only to the judging of them that is possible for our understanding. (Kant 1987: 5:408)

Schelling in his *Naturphilosophie* claims that the categories of the organic have a constitutive role in the structure of nature. As such, Schelling considers nature as a whole as a self-organising entity. The grounds for this move come from Schelling's consideration of the role of the subject in organising experience. As Horstmann notes, while Schelling's argument on this point is somewhat confusing, it ultimately rests on the fact that knowledge seems to require that our understanding has a structural counterpart to it in the world itself (Horstmann 2000: 122–3). On the surface, this kind of claim fits well with Fichte's transcendental idealism. If we

[17] For more on Schelling's organicism, see Horstmann 2000: 127–35 and Snow 1996: 67–92.

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derive our philosophy from one single principle, it seems clear that all of the content of our theory will come from that principle. For Fichte, the external world is derived from the nature of consciousness. If properties only become determinate in relation to their opposites, then the ego needs a moment of non-ego to know itself. This moment of non-ego is the world. As such, the world is a product of consciousness itself. Initially, Schelling takes this claim to mean that the study of nature is itself a project that takes place inside Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. As such, the study of nature is another way of understanding the nature of the self:

> [W]hat the soul intuits is always its own self-developing nature . . .. Thus through its own products the soul reveals the pathway, imperceptible for common eyes but clearly and distinctly visible to the philosopher, along which it gradually travels towards self-consciousness. The external world lies open before us in order that we may rediscover the history of our own spirit.[18]

The purposiveness that we encounter in nature is therefore initially understood as a result of the purposiveness of the subject, who is also expressed in nature.

In 1799, Schelling takes a step beyond this initial consideration of nature as a subordinate moment within Fichte's philosophy of consciousness. In his *Introduction to the Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, Schelling instead argues that the *Naturphilosophie* and Fichte's transcendental idealism comprise two parallel disciplines, neither of which has any priority over the other:

> Now if it is the task of transcendental philosophy to subordinate the real to the ideal, it is, on the other hand, the task of the philosophy of nature to explain the ideal by the real. The two sciences are therefore but one science, differentiated only in the opposite orientation of their tasks. Moreover, as the two directions are not only equally possible, but equally necessary, the same necessity attaches to both in the system of knowledge. (Schelling 2004: II, 272–3)

As Schelling notes, transcendental philosophy and the philosophy of nature approach the world from different perspectives, with Schelling calling the philosophy of nature 'the Spinozism of physics' (Schelling 2004: II, 273).[19] In this sense, the philosophy of nature becomes a system whereby we see the development of consciousness itself out of the

[18] Schelling, *Samtliche Werke I*: 123, quoted in Sturma 2000: 218.
[19] As Beiser notes (2002: 530), this Spinozism gives a real place to final causes within the world, a claim Spinoza himself would reject.

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structures of the natural world. From this perspective, therefore, nature is not a reflection of the ego, but rather the ego is a moment of nature:

> [T]here is no place in this science for idealistic methods of explanation, such as transcendental philosophy is fitted to supply, since for it Nature is nothing more than the organ of self-consciousness, and everything in Nature is necessary merely because it is only through the medium of such a Nature that self-consciousness can take place. (Schelling 2004: II, 273)

With this move, the *Naturphilosophie* is no longer seen as operating within the framework of Fichte's transcendental idealism, as it requires us to posit an actual dynamic principle within matter itself. Given the disparity between the two methods of Schelling's philosophy, it should be clear that this parallelism between the philosophy of nature and his transcendental idealism was unsustainable. It is in order to reconcile these disparate approaches to understanding consciousness and the world that Schelling moves to his philosophy of identity, a form of absolute idealism.

1.11 Schelling's Absolute Idealism

In Schelling's *Presentation of My System of Philosophy*, he claims that from the beginning he has attempted to present 'one philosophy that I know to be true from two wholly different sides' (Schelling 2012b: 141). As has been noted,[20] Schelling's claims to have been formulating a consistent position throughout his work must be taken with a degree of scepticism. Nonetheless, the *Presentation* shows a development of themes from Schelling's earlier work. How does Schelling distinguish his absolute idealism from his earlier commitments to Fichte? Schelling's account of this difference is rather cryptic. He claims that 'if idealism in the subjective sense said that the I is everything, Idealism in the objective sense would be forced to say the reverse: everything is = I' (Schelling 2012b: 142). Such a move implies a change of emphasis in the nature of the absolute. Whereas for subjective idealism, the world emerges from the subject, here the world is given priority. Thus, for Schelling, it would appear to be the case that here he gives his Spinozistic tendencies primacy in his interpretation of the world. In his *Further Presentation from the System of Philosophy* (1802), Schelling expresses the same point from another angle, arguing that knowledge of the absolute and the absolute itself cannot be distinguished from one another once knowledge is properly conceived: 'it is but a small step to the insight that

[20] Cf. Beiser 2002: 552.

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this cognition is immediately a cognition of the absolute itself, and is accompanied by the abolition of all differences that contrast the absolute as cognised to the subject who cognises it' (Schelling 2012a: 209). At the heart of this claim is the Hölderlinian insight that in order to be absolute, the absolute must be free from any distinction between subjective and objective. As Schelling puts it, 'Absolute identity *is* only under the form of quantitative indifference of the subjective and objective' (Schelling 2012b: 154). In this sense, Schelling's general approach is well captured by a claim made by Hegel about his own form of absolute idealism:

> Objectivity of thought, in Kant's sense, is again to a certain sense subjective. Thoughts, according to Kant, although universal and necessary categories, are *only our* thoughts – separated by an impassable gulf from the thing, as it exists apart from our knowledge. But the true objectivity of thinking means that the thoughts, far from being merely ours, must at the same time be the real essence of things, and of whatever is an object to us. (Hegel 1991: §41)

Schelling's absolute is not simply free from any distinction between the subjective and the objective. Just as Hölderlin's being was a ground for judgement by being prior to the originary division that made judgement possible, so for Schelling the absolute has to also be prior to all divisions. As he argues, were reason not to be simply self-identical, 'the being of reason would require some additional ground other than reason itself' (Schelling 2012b: 147). For this reason, Schelling takes the proposition A = A to be emblematic of the nature of the absolute. Now, taking the absolute to be a moment of identity without differentiation naturally leads us back to the same problem we found in Hölderlin's original formulation of absolute idealism. If the absolute is undifferentiated, how do we explain the genesis of the differentiated world of judgements, subjects, and objects that emerges from it?

In fact, for Schelling, the nature of the absolute precludes our giving an account of the genesis of the world we find around us on the basis of the absolute. Schelling elucidates this point by claiming that the absolute can also be understood as the 'simple infinite', since if it was not infinite, it would require a ground outside of itself, and hence would not be absolute. We can draw from this claim two different arguments for the impossibility of the deduction of a finite world from the infinite. First, if the infinite were to give rise to the finite, then the infinite would be limited by its creation. As such, the creation of something external to the absolute would destroy the absolute's nature. Second, if the infinite were to give rise to something outside of itself, 'it would have to be related to this outside something as

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objective item to objective item' (Schelling 2012b: 148). What Schelling means by this claim is that the only conceivable way of understanding the relationship between the infinite and the finite is by understanding them as opposed, which is to understand them according to the categories we use to relate different objects to one another. As we have seen from both Kant and Hölderlin's accounts of the nature of objectivity, the logic of objects is captured by the categories of judgement. For Schelling, therefore, to understand the connection between judgement and being as one of the generation of a field of finite beings from being (or the absolute) itself is to rely on the categories of judgement, and hence to once again apply the categories of judgement to being itself. This is once again to illegitimately apply the categories of judgement prior to their proper domain. Hence, if we are not to treat the absolute as an object, we must give up the kind of account that would see it effectively as one thing causing another. Ironically, therefore, the infinite could only be the ground for the finite by already being understood according to the categories of finitude. The absolute cannot be a ground for the finite, therefore, and since Schelling is certain that the absolute exists, the finite cannot exist. Thus, for the Schelling of the *Presentation*, 'nothing, considered intrinsically, is finite' (Schelling 2012b: 149).

As such, Schelling's position in the philosophy of identity is effectively a form of Parmenideanism, where the world is understood as a simple One. As Beiser notes, Schelling does provide several descriptions over the course of his *Presentation* and the later *Further Presentation of My System* that attempt to account for the existence of the finite world, but none of these are particularly satisfactory (Beiser 2002: 567–73). In the *Presentation*, Schelling makes the claim that while the absolute cannot be qualitatively differentiated, it can be quantitatively differentiated, and this quantitative differentiation allows us to explain differences we find in the world without having to import real oppositional differences into the absolute. This solution itself fails as it is not at all clear why quantitative differences should be included in the absolute either. In the end, Schelling himself is forced to admit this point, claiming that 'quantitative difference is possible only *outside of* absolute identity' (Schelling 2012b: 152). In the *Further Presentations*, Schelling attempts to resolve this difficulty by arguing that under one aspect at least, finite things are contained within the infinite. In this text, he argues that insofar as objects in the world share a moment of unity with one another, they can be seen as contained within the absolute. Once again, however, Schelling is forced to place the individuating differences of finite things into the sphere of appearances, however:

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> It is also evident, on the other hand, how every particular *as such* is immediately and necessarily an *individual*. For by its essence, each thing is like every other and in this capacity expresses the whole; so when its form becomes *particular* form, it becomes inadequate to essence and is in contradiction with it, and the contradiction of form and essence makes the thing be individual and finite. (Schelling 2012a: 215)

Clearly, placing those aspects of a thing that make it a finite particular object outside of the absolute does not allow us to say in anything more than a formal sense that the finite is contained within the absolute.

We can see in Schelling's work of the periods leading up to his philosophy of identity that he maintains an implicit belief in the Kantian claim that all determination requires judgement. For Hölderlin, this implied that the grounds for judgement, on pain of infinite regress, would have to lack all determination. Schelling's position radicalises this Hölderlinian insight. If all determination relies on judgement, then we cannot even understand the distinction between infinite and finite, ground and grounded, without falling into the categories of judgement. As such, thinking the absolute involves making the original separation of judgement itself illusory. The world becomes one undifferentiated whole. This result is the origin of Hegel's claim that the absolute of identity philosophy is 'the night in which, as the saying goes, all cows are black' (Hegel 1977: §16).[21] For Hegel, identity philosophy lacks the ability to explain the existence of the finite world. As we shall see in the next section, Hegel's approach to overcoming these limitations is to place the finite firmly within the absolute by making mediation a key part of it. Hegel's strategy for achieving this aim is to begin with the finite, and to show how it immanently develops into the absolute. As such, he inverts the direction of Schelling's approach in the *Presentation* and *Further Presentation*. Placing the finite within the infinite involves developing a more complex conception of how one thinks in a philosophical manner in order to overcome the objections developed by Schelling. In particular, it will involve thinking opposing determinations within a unity, which, on a traditional understanding of

[21] Hegel himself often claims that his target is not Schelling himself, but those philosophers who have taken up Schelling's work without fully understanding it. Thus, in the *History of Philosophy*, he writes that it is 'of the greatest importance to distinguish Schelling's philosophy, on the one hand, from that imitation of it which throws itself into an unspiritual farrago of words regarding the Absolute; and on the other, from the philosophy of those imitators, who, owing to a failure to understand intellectual intuition, give up comprehension, and with it the leading moment of knowledge, and speak from so called intuition' (III, 543). Such a reading is difficult to sustain in the light of his direct criticisms of Schelling's formulations of claims about the Absolute that he makes in, for instance, Hegel 1991: §12.

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logic, would mean thinking a contradiction. Nonetheless, this new conception of philosophical thought is an augmentation of the model of thinking as judgement, rather than a replacement of it.

1.12 Hegel and Infinite Thought

Hegel develops two main criticisms of Schelling. The first of these is that Schelling does not provide a proper derivation of his concept of the absolute. Rather, he begins with the assumption that those with a natural ability to philosophise will be able to relate directly to it. Second, Hegel claims that Schelling's conception of the absolute is abstract. As we shall see, these two claims are in fact directly related to one another, since it is through showing the dialectical development of the absolute that Hegel argues that it becomes concrete. Having examined Hegel's account of the limitations of Schelling's identity philosophy, I want to look at the problems Hegel finds with the classical account of judgement, before turning to Hegel's own positive solution. Hegel's systematic philosophy is vast, and so here I will focus on the dialectic of the finite and infinite, drawing on Hegel's early *Jena Logic* to show the connections between these concepts and several others that we have encountered already in this chapter. I want to conclude by looking at Hegel's account of the speculative proposition, and its relation to the structure of judgement.

In Schelling's *Further Presentation from the System of Philosophy*, he begins by briefly exploring the methodological presuppositions for thinking the absolute. Schelling's claim, essentially, is that our ability to think (or not) the absolute is something simply given that cannot bear further explanation:

> The absolute mode of cognition, like the truth that subsists within it, has no opposite outside itself, and it cannot be demonstrated [to one who lacks it] just as light cannot be demonstrated to those born blind, or space to someone who lacked spatial intuition (were it possible that an intelligent being lacked it), on the other hand, it cannot be contradicted by anything. It is the dawning light that is itself the day and knows no darkness. (Schelling 2012a: 209)

The first difficulty with this approach is immediately apparent. As Hegel puts it, on Schelling's reading, 'Science lacks universal intelligibility, and gives the impression of being the esoteric possession of a few individuals' (Hegel 1977: §13). If philosophy is seen simply as the innate possession of a select few individuals, then it becomes impossible to justify the view of

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the world presented by philosophy. Schelling's approach is therefore open to scepticism about the possibility of philosophical thinking on the part of ordinary consciousness. Hegel's solution to this difficulty is his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In terms of the problems of justification at the heart of Schelling's approach, Hegel suggests that '[t]he individual has the right to demand that Science should at least provide him with a ladder to this standpoint [of Science itself], should show him this standpoint within himself' (Hegel 1977: §26). What the *Phenomenology of Spirit* provides, therefore, is an account of how natural consciousness itself develops into a form adequate to knowing the absolute.

Hegel's other major criticism of Schelling bears upon the manner in which this development is conceived. As he writes, 'it can happen, even in a developed philosophy, that only abstract principles or determinations are apprehended (for instance, "That in the Absolute all is one," "The identity of the subjective and the objective"), and that with regard to what is particular these same principles are simply repeated' (Hegel 1991: §12). To understand why Schelling's approach is abstract for Hegel, we need to turn to the mode of development of consciousness to absolute knowing. We could understand this development as proceeding according to the application of a formal method to the beliefs of consciousness. This approach, with its distinction between method and content, is, according to Hegel, the standard approach of enquiry, and he labels this method of thinking about the world 'finite thinking' (Hegel 1991: §28 Add. 1). Such a procedure would be much like the deduction of theorems in geometry, and can be understood as the classical logic of judgement. There are a number of limitations of such an approach that are relevant to Hegel's project. First, such a deduction is essentially non-ampliative. The results of our analysis are already contained implicitly within the axioms presupposed by our geometry. While this is not a problem for geometry itself, it is a limitation for an account that aims to trace the actual development of consciousness. The second and third consequences stem from the fact that the formal procedures that we find in mathematics are external to the subject matter that we are investigating. First, each one of the steps in a mathematical proof is to a certain extent arbitrary. That is, while it follows according to the formal application of a rule to the content of the proof, there is no reason why *this* rule has to be applied in developing the proof rather than another rule. '[T]he instruction to draw precisely these lines when infinitely many others could be drawn must be blindly obeyed without our knowing anything beyond except that we believe that this will be to the purpose in carrying out the proof' (Hegel 1977: §44).

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More important for our present purposes is the fact that the formal procedures remain external to the result that we want to obtain. If we take Pythagoras' Theorem, for instance, it is apparent that we can make clear the meaning of the theorem without knowing its proof. We can make sense of the notion that the square of the hypotenuse of a triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides without understanding how this theorem can be derived from the axioms of geometry. The difficulty with this approach is that it does not allow for the possibility that the meaning of our terms may change as we work through a problem. 'Subject and object, God, Nature, Understanding, sensibility and so on, are uncritically taken for granted as familiar, established as valid, and made into fixed points for starting and stopping' (Hegel 1977: §31).

If he rejects the notion that we understand the development of consciousness through the application of a formal calculus to our basic concepts, how does Hegel understand the notion of method? Hegel's claim is that rather than operating externally to the material under consideration, we must simply allow the implications of our initial categories to develop themselves. This is what Hegel calls 'infinite thought' (Hegel 1991: §28 Add. 1). In the case of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, this involves showing that consciousness' conception of its object shows itself to be inadequate under scrutiny, and hence develops into a more adequate form of categories. Thus, the *Phenomenology* begins with the categories of sense-certainty, the pure recognition that consciousness is confronted with something that is without any further qualifications. Hegel's dialectic aims to show that this mode of consciousness' categories for understanding the object overturn themselves. Thus, what appear to be the most particular categories, 'this', 'here', and 'now', are shown to in fact be the most universal. 'When I say: "a single thing", I am really saying what it is from a wholly universal point of view, for everything is a single thing; and likewise "this thing" is anything you like' (Hegel 1977: §110).[22] Similarly, once we have reached the position where we have shown that thought is adequate to thinking the absolute, our consideration of the absolute itself proceeds by simply allowing the content of the absolute to explicate itself. There is no distinction, therefore, between the content of the dialectic, and its method:

> [N]ot only the account of scientific method, but even the Notion itself of the science as such belongs to its content, and in fact constitutes its final

[22] For a more detailed analysis of the dialectic of sense-certainty, see Houlgate 2013: 31–44; Stern 2002: 43–50.

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> result; what logic is cannot be stated beforehand, rather does this knowledge of what it is first emerge as the final outcome and consummation of the whole exposition. (Hegel 1989: 43)[23]

Insofar as Hegel's approach attempts to track the development of the object itself, it is clear that any transformations in the subject matter that it uncovers are not for him arbitrary choices of the application of rules of a calculus, but necessarily track the development of the object itself. Similarly, in that the transformations of the object or categories under consideration are real changes, such a logic is ampliative – it is not simply a re-examination of content, but a transformation of it. Most important for our purposes here, though, is the result that the object cannot be distinguished from its method, and hence from its development. This means that in contrast to the proofs of geometry, we cannot understand the result of a dialectical proof prior to working through the process of the proof itself. As such, the meaning of our terms is constituted during the dialectical process itself. Finally, the fact that the meaning of our categories is inseparable from the process by which they develop, combined with the fact that new categories emerge through showing the contradictions in prior categories, means that the categories of thought contain within themselves opposing or opposed determinations:

> It is the process which begets and traverses its own moments, and this whole movement constitutes what is positive [in it] and its truth. This truth therefore includes the negative also, what would be called the false, if it could be regarded as something from which one might abstract. (Hegel 1977: §47)

Having set out the principal differences in approach between formal, finite thought and infinite thought, we are now in a position to ask why Schelling's approach is characterised by Hegel as involving a purely formal approach. As we saw, Schelling conceives of the world as a Parmenidean One. The reason for this was that the infinite could not be conceived as being in relation to the finite, as such a relation would involve a limitation of the infinite itself. Hegel's interpretation of such a claim is that Schelling's method of understanding the infinite still operates in terms of finite thinking. In discussing the question of the magnitude of the world, Hegel presents an argument parallel to Schelling's as a paradigm case of formal thinking:

[23] I am here following the reading of Hegel as a philosopher without presuppositions expressed in the work of Stephen Houlgate (particularly 2006) and William Maker (1994). Rosen 1982 provides an extended analysis of the interrelation of method and content in Hegel's work.

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> Or again, the question of the finitude or infinity of the world was raised. Here infinity is sharply contrasted with finitude, yet it is easy to see that if the two are set against one another, then infinity, which is nevertheless supposed to be the whole, appears as *one* side only, and is limited by the finite. But a limited infinity is itself only something finite. (Hegel 1991: §28)

Thus, Schelling presupposes the meaning of the categories of finite and infinite in his account, and as a consequence discovers that these purely finite determinations cannot be used to determine the infinite. His response to this is to leave the absolute indeterminate. Hence, for Hegel, Schelling's formalism leads him to develop an entirely formless absolute. Schelling's philosophy thus 'denounces and despises' this formalism, 'only to see it reappear in its midst' (Hegel 1977: §16).

Hegel's account of the absolute develops from his alternative conception of infinite thought. As we have just seen, for Hegel, the meaning of our categories develops through the process of their explication. The process of the development of these categories proceeds immanently through uncovering their own internal inadequacies, and tracing how they develop in response to these inadequacies. Given this process is internal to the categories themselves, what we find is that the categories are not inadequate in response to a presupposed conception of the world, but rather show themselves to be internally contradictory, much as sense-certainty aimed to be the most concrete form of knowledge, but, when allowed to develop itself, showed itself to in fact be the most abstract. Thus, the categories develop through an immanent process of making explicit their own inadequacies. As the meaning of a category is determined by its development, such categories therefore contain opposed determinations within themselves. The result of this is that we cannot suppose that 'infinity is different from finitude, that content is other than form, that the inner is other than the outer, also that mediation is not immediacy' (Hegel 1989: 41); rather, we discover that each of these categories contains the other. In developing his own conception of the infinite, Hegel calls the infinite that we find in Schelling (and in classical metaphysics), the 'spurious infinite' (Hegel 1989: 139). Such a conception of the infinite is defined essentially as what the finite is not. The infinite is a beyond of the finite, but, as we have seen, such a beyond relies on a limit that defines the infinite just as much as the finite. Determining the beyond according to the finite thus limits it, and in turn makes it finite. When we extrapolate from this process, we find that we have an infinite progression of alternations between finite and infinite terms.

We can note that these two categories are inherently related to one another. They are united with one another, but can also be distinguished

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by placing a different emphasis on each of them. The infinite is determined, in part, by its differentiation from the finite. As such, however, it is tied to the notion of a limit, and thus finitude. It is a finitised infinite. But the finite also is defined by its reference to a beyond as limit. As such, it is an infinitised finite. Each of these terms is no longer defined simply on its own, but we need to recognise that *as part of its structure*, finitude has a reference to infinity, and the infinite contains a reference to the finite. The infinite alternation of terms shows that whichever term we begin with, we are led to the other. Instead of seeing them as an infinite series (the spurious infinite), we can now view this as a circle that relates the two determinations to each other:

> The image of the progress to infinity is the *straight line*, at the two limits of which alone the infinite is, and always only is where the line – which is determinate being – is not, and which goes *out beyond* to this negation of its determinate being, that is, to the indeterminate; the image of true infinity, bent back into itself, becomes the *circle*, the line which has reached itself, which is closed and wholly present, without *beginning* and *end*. (Hegel 1989: 149)

The true infinite emerges when we realise that the circular movement between the finite and the infinite itself is the infinite. The consequence of this for our reading of Schelling's absolute is that for Hegel, the fact that the absolute is infinite does not imply that it excludes the finite. Rather, finite determinations are seen as a necessary moment within the infinite itself. Rather than an undifferentiated One, therefore, the absolute is a mediated substance containing internal differences. In the next section, I want to explore this conception of Hegel's 'good infinite' further, by looking at some of the connections Hegel makes between infinity and the problems of the one and the many, and the nature of contradiction, in an early work known as the *Jena Logic*. While this logic precedes Hegel's distinction between phenomenology and logic, it makes explicit a number of parallels between different categories in Hegel's system. It will also allow us to draw out the continued reliance of infinite thought on the model of judgement, even while infinite thought puts the structure of judgement in motion.

1.13 The *Jena Logic*

We have already encountered the question of how we are to relate the one to the many several times, and it is intimately connected to the question of

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judgement. Kant sees judgement as a way of forming a unity from a diverse set of representations. Similarly, Hölderlin took an account of the genesis of judgement to involve showing how a unity could be divided into a diverse field of objects. In positing a sharp distinction between the nature of the one and the many, Hölderlin develops an implication of Kant's assumption that the basis of the unity of judgements and objects is something transcendental (whether a transcendental subject or a transcendental object). We can see Schelling as drawing the implication from this that if the one and the many must exist on different ontological planes, and if the one is absolute, then there can be no many. In the *Jena Logic*, Hegel interprets the relation of the one and the many in terms of the logic of the infinite. Specifically, the *Jena Logic* takes this assumption that the one and the many must operate on different levels to be related to the structure of the bad infinite. He writes that 'the subsistence of the many qualities as of the many quanta has simply the "beyond" of a unity that has not yet been taken up into them and would sublate the subsistence if it were so taken up' (Hegel 1986: 33). Here, Hegel's claim is that a field of diversity is not united by an external unity, whether this unity is the ground of being or the synthetic unity of a consciousness. Rather, the diverse unifies itself immanently when viewed in terms of its dialectical development, just as the infinite developed out of the finite: 'In order to subsist, the aggregate is not allowed to take up this beyond into itself, but just as little can it free itself from it and cease to go beyond itself' (Hegel 1986: 33). The kind of interpretation of the one and the many taken up by Kant, Hölderlin, and Schelling, therefore, is one that results from artificially suspending the development of the diverse, such that its immanent moment of unity is not allowed to develop. The implication of this reading is that unity is a necessary, inherent, and non-arbitrary result of a field of diversity. 'Only the infinitely simple, or that unity-and-multiplicity, is one' (Hegel 1986: 33). A subject, as a centre of unification, is thus a necessary moment of a philosophical enquiry.

How does this relate to the question of judgement in Hegel's thought? The issue with judgement mirrors that which we found with geometrical proofs. A judgement is a process whereby we subsume an individual under a universal. As Rosen (1982: 102) notes, however, the relation between the universal and the diverse individuals that fall under it is abstract on our standard reading of judgement, as the relationship between the two is arbitrary: 'abstract universality is deficient because, although the particular may be subsumed under the universal, there is no intrinsic relation between the two'. Furthermore, judgement relies on the structure of opposition to

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function. As we saw in relation to Hölderlin and Schelling, judgement operates by sorting objects according to opposed predicates. Objects are subsumed under predicates such as the one or the many, or the finite or the infinite. What the dialectic of the finite and the infinite shows us, however, is that when viewed from the perspective of infinite thought, such determinations are in fact contained within one another, rather than opposed to one another. Judgement is therefore one-sided to the extent that it operates according to a logic of exclusion. In the *Jena Logic*, when Hegel sets out the logic of the good infinite, he relates it directly to a different logical structure – that of contradiction: 'Genuine infinity . . . is not a series that always has its completion in some other yet always has this other outside itself. Rather, the other is in the determinate itself; it is a contradiction' (Hegel 1986: 35). In contradiction, as in the structure of the good infinite, opposed determinations are unified with one another. This process is what Hegel calls 'the absolute contradiction of the infinite' (Hegel 1986: 38). For finite thought, it is impossible to think a contradiction, just as it is impossible for it to think the unity of the finite and the infinite:

> The contradiction that bad infinity expresses, both that of infinite aggregate and that of infinite expansion, stays within the acknowledgement of itself; there is indeed a contradiction, but not *the* contradiction, that is, infinity itself. Both get as far as the requirement that the two alternating members [positing and surpassing the limit] be sublated, but the requirement is as far as they go. (Hegel 1986: 33)

Just as there are two forms of contradiction, there are also two forms of relation between subject and predicate, which Hegel outlines in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. For Hegel, the way that we normally understand a judgement relies on an 'objective, fixed self' (Hegel 1977: 37) to which we attach predicates. Such a model of judgement sees the subject of judgement as essentially a 'passive subject inertly supporting accidents' (Hegel 1977: 37), which therefore has no necessary relation to its predicates. Hegel's speculative proposition does not relate subjects to predicates, but instead relates categories of thought to other categories. Whereas in a non-speculative proposition we have a structure such as 'the rose is red', Hegel gives us as an example of the speculative proposition 'God is being' (Hegel 1977: 38). The fact that we have two subjects to the proposition prevents finite thought from understanding it. As Rosen (1982: 140) notes, the structure of the speculative proposition relies on two meanings of the copula 'is'. In that it has two subjects, it appears as if the copula is being interpreted as asserting an identity between the two terms. In that these two terms differ from one

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another, however, it appears that the copula is being used to assert the second term as a predicate of the first. The second term cannot straightforwardly be attached to the first, and instead appears to determine its essential nature. 'The passive subject itself perishes' (Hegel 1977: 37) through this movement whereby we are 'thrown back' (Hegel 1977: 39) onto the original term as a subject, but as one which has been altered in the movement back and forth between the two terms. The speculative proposition allows terms to be identified which remain different from one another. 'In the philosophical proposition the identification of subject and predicate is not meant to destroy the difference between them, which the form of the proposition expresses; their unity, rather, is meant to emerge as a harmony' (Hegel 1977: 38). In this sense, the speculative proposition mirrors the structure of the infinite, which asserted an identity of opposed categories. What unified the infinite was the recognition that the infinite was itself the motion of the finite and the infinite, and similarly, what Hegel attempts to achieve with his notion of the speculative proposition is to model a thought that is inherently in motion. Hence, the speculative proposition 'is merely dialectical movement, this course that generates itself, going forth from, and returning to, itself' (Hegel 1977: 40).

In embodying the structure of the infinite, the speculative proposition is thus a contradiction, and cannot be grasped by finite thinking, which 'is checked in its progress, since that which has the form of a predicate in a proposition is a substance itself' (Hegel 1977: 37). In elaborating the limitations of finite thought, Hegel notes that this limitation is not that it operates according to finite categories, but that it fails to push these categories to the point at which they become speculative. Thus, Hegel writes that 'it is usually said also that the understanding should not go too far. This contains the valid point that the understanding cannot have the last word. On the contrary, it is finite, and, more precisely, it is such that when it is pushed to an extreme it overturns into its opposite' (Hegel 1991: §80). Hegel's ultimate complaint against the structure of judgement, therefore, is not against understanding the world in terms of subjects and predicates, but that such an understanding normally involves positing fixed forms, and arbitrary connections. What is needed is to understand the structure of judgement as composed of terms whose meanings are composed organically through their interactions. This structure, which is the identity of identity and difference, can be understood as the structure of judgement put into motion, just as the categories of finite thought are simply frozen moments of the dialectic of infinite thought. In describing

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the relationship between the absolute and its particular forms, Hegel explicitly brings in the notion of judgement:

> The Absolute is the universal and One Idea, which particularizes itself in the act of *judging* into the *system* of determinate ideas – whose whole being consists, nonetheless, in their returning into the One Idea, i.e., into their truth. It is because of this judgement that the Idea is *at first* just the One and universal *substance*, but its developed, authentic actuality is to be as subject and so as spirit. (Hegel 1991: §213)

1.14 Conclusion

Both transcendental and absolute idealism, therefore, take judgement to be the central structure of thinking. In all of the figures that we have looked at, determination operates through the attribution of predicates to subjects. Where the structure of judgement is not in play, we discover a lack of any determination, whether this is Kant's thing-in-itself, Hölderlin's being, or Schelling's absolute. While Hegel's account of the speculative proposition represents a break with the kind of logic of judgement found in the work of prior idealists, his approach operates as a development, rather than a rejection, of the logic of judgement. What is at issue in Hegel's approach is that traditional accounts of judgement are too static. Hegel's solution, therefore, is to put judgement into motion. Such an approach involves the development of a model of thinking that takes contradiction as its primary category. Nonetheless, such a logic still operates in terms of the general structures of subject and predicate, universal and particular, and represents a revaluation of traditional logical categories such as opposition and contradiction. As we shall see, modern French philosophy addresses many of the same questions of determination and the relation of the one to the many that we encountered in the traditions of German idealism. The thesis of this book will be that modern French philosophy operates by attempting to develop accounts of thinking that avoid seeing it primarily as judgement. Whereas Hegel combines the singular and the universal, the alternative approach will be to seek out something that is outside of these categories. In the next chapter, we will see the beginnings of this approach in the work of Henri Bergson. As we shall see, rather than developing a philosophy of synthesis, what will be central to Bergson's account of thinking is a process of dissociation, whereby a dynamic world of processes is configured as a world of objects by the intellect.

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