

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1971)

The Idea of Hegel's Logic

Surprisingly, in our century Hegel's philosophy has returned to favor after decades of playing the role of whipping boy and representing the quintessence of that "speculative" philosophy held in contempt by those oriented towards the empirical sciences. Even today such an opinion of his thought prevails in the Anglo-Saxon world. Interest in Hegel first gradually revived during the era of neo-Kantianism. At the turn of the century, there were impressive advocates of speculative idealism in Italy and Holland, England and France; to mention only a few, Croce, Bolland, and Bradley. At the same time the Hegelianism latently at work in neo-Kantianism emerged in the philosophic consciousness of the time in Germany, above all in William Windelband's Heidelberg circle (to which men like Julius Ebbinghaus, Richard Kroner, Paul Hensel, George Lukács, Ernst Bloch, and others belonged) and also in the continuing development of the Marburg school (Nicolai Hartmann, Ernst Cassirer). Still Hegel's philosophy had no real presence here since it sufficed for this so-called neo-Hegelianism to merely reiterate Hegel's criticism of Kant.

But that was changed in Germany by the impulse coming from Martin Heidegger and, after that, by the interest of French social scientists in Hegel which was awakened above all by the lectures of Alexander Kojève. Both of these initiatives aroused a rather one-sided philosophic interest in Hegel's first great work, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The *Logic*, in contrast, remained till today very much in the background. As a matter of fact, however, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is not the main systematic work of the Hegelian philosophy which prevailed through decades of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is a kind of anticipation of what was to come in which Hegel tried to summarize the whole of his philosophy from a certain point of view. As opposed to Kant, the author of the three "critiques," who found himself arguing about their function with those who followed him, there was no doubt for Hegel that this phenomenological introduction to his system was in no sense the system of philosophic

sciences itself. In contrast, the Science of Logic is not merely a first step in the direction of constructing the system of philosophic sciences, as the so-called Encyclopedia was later to present it, rather it is the first part of that system and its foundation. Moreover, the Encyclopedia of Philosophic Sciences is itself actually only a textbook for Hegel's lectures, these being the source of his great influence on the nineteenth century — for this influence stemmed not so much from the sibylline depth of his books as from his extraordinary ability to make his listeners perceive his meaning. Basically, Hegel's only books are the Phenomenology of Spirit and the Science of Logic, the sole part of his system which he actually completed. Even Hegel's most famous published book, to which the nineteenth century turned above all his others, his Philosophy of Right, is in truth nothing but a textbook for academic instruction and not the actual elaboration of a part of the system. All these facts indicate that it is time to place the Science of Logic closer to the center of Hegel research than it has been heretofore and my hope is that an understanding of Hegel's idea of the science of logic might show the way for coming to grips with it which our present philosophic interests demand.

To begin with, I shall treat the idea of Hegel's Logic generally. I shall proceed then to the method of this Logic. Thirdly, I will examine somewhat more precisely the starting point of the Logic, one of the most discussed problems of Hegel's philosophy. In conclusion, I shall discuss the relevance of Hegel's Logic, above all in reference to its bearing on the problem of language which plays such a central role in the philosophy of today.

With his Logic Hegel seeks to bring the transcendental philosophy initiated by Kant to its conclusion. According to Hegel, Fichte was the first to grasp the universal systematic implications of Kant's way of viewing things from the perspective of transcendental philosophy. At the same time, however, Hegel was of the opinion that Fichte's own "Doctrine of Science" did not really finish the task of developing the entirety of human knowledge out of self-consciousness. To be sure, Fichte's contention is that his "Doctrine of Science" had done precisely that. He saw, in the spontaneity of self-consciousness, the actual, underlying operation, "the active deed" (*Tathandlung*), as he calls it. This autonomous deed of self-consciousness, i.e., its determining itself in relation to itself, which Kant had formulated in the concept of autonomy as the essence of practical reason, was now to be the point of origin for every truth of human

knowledge. The “I” is this “immediate self-consciousness” (L I 61). Hegel’s objection is that here the ideal of a pure “I” as self-consciousness is insisted upon from the start, without the process of mediation which should lead up to it. Such a subjective supposition as this, he argues, does not in the least guarantee a sure understanding of what the self, i.e., the “I” in the transcendental sense, might be.

Now one must resist simply accepting Hegel’s version of this state of affairs, according to which Fichte taught a merely subjective idealism, Hegel himself being the first to join this subjective idealism with the objective idealism of Schelling’s philosophy of nature in the grand, authentic synthesis of absolute idealism. In point of fact, Fichte’s “Doctrine of Science” depends very much upon the idea of absolute idealism, i.e., on the development of the entire content of knowledge as the complete whole of self-consciousness. Nevertheless one must concede to Hegel that Fichte, instead of really completing the introduction into the standpoint of the “Doctrine of Science” — that is, the elevation and purification of the empirical “I” to the transcendental “I” — actually only insisted upon it. Precisely this elevation is what Hegel now claims to have accomplished through his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. One can also express the matter as follows: Hegel demonstrates that the pure “I” is spirit. That is the result which spirit reaches at the end of its course of appearances. It leaves behind its appearance as consciousness and as self-consciousness (including the “recognized” self-consciousness of the “we”) as well as all forms of reason and spirit which still contain the opposition of consciousness and its object. The truth of the “I” is pure knowing. Thus, at the end of the *Phenomenology*’s final chapter on “absolute knowing” stands the idea of a philosophical science whose moments are no longer determinate forms of consciousness, but rather determinate concepts. In its initial form such a science must be the science of logic. The beginning of science is therefore based upon the result of consciousness’s experience, which commences with “Sense Certainty” and is completed in the forms of spirit which Hegel calls “absolute knowing”: “art,” “religion” and “philosophy.” They are absolute because they are no longer opinions of consciousness which extend to an object beyond that which presents and fully affirms itself within these forms. Science first begins here, because here for the first time nothing but thoughts, that is nothing but the pure concept, is thought in its determinacy (Ph 562). Absolute knowing is thus the result of a purification in the sense that the truth of Fichte’s concept of the transcendental “I” emerges, not merely as being a subject, but

rather as reason and spirit and, accordingly, as all of reality. Thus Hegel lays his very own foundation, on which he rebuilds absolute knowing as the truth of metaphysics as Aristotle, for one, conceived of it in nous or Aquinas, for another, in intellectus agens. And thus a universal logic — which explicates the ideas of God before the creation — is made possible. Hegel's concept of spirit which transcends the subjective forms of self-consciousness thus goes back to the logosnous metaphysics of the Platonic and Aristotelian tradition, which predates the whole question of self-consciousness. In this fashion, Hegel achieves his objective of reinstating the Greek logos on the new foundation of modern, self-knowing spirit. The light in which all truth is seen is cast from consciousness's becoming clear about itself. No other, no further ontological or theological justification is given.

If one wishes to characterize the idea of Hegel's logic from this viewpoint, a comparison with Plato's dialectic is useful, for that is the model which Hegel always has in mind. In Greek philosophy Hegel saw the philosophy of logos, or put another way, the courage to consider pure thoughts per se. As a result, Greek thought succeeded in unfolding the universe of ideas. For this realm Hegel coins a new expression, typical of him, but which I have yet to find in anyone before him, namely, "the logical." What he is characterizing here is the entire cosmos of ideas as Plato's philosophy dialectically develops it. Now Plato was driven by the desire to provide justification for every thought and his doctrine of ideas was intended to satisfy the demand which Socrates makes in the dialogues that for every contention a reason or argument must always be given (logon didonai). For his part, Hegel will claim that his dialectic in the Logic meets the requirement of accounting for the rightness of each individual thought by explicating them all within a system. Of course, such an "account" as that could not be given in live, Socratic dialogue, where each successive stage of presumed knowledge is abandoned as the participants proceed through a sequence of questions and answers and then finally come to an understanding.' Nor could it be given by grounding this procedure, as Plato did, in the doctrine of ideas. Rather, the basis has to be the methodologically rigorous one of a "science" which ultimately is founded upon Descartes's idea of method and which, within the framework of transcendental philosophy, is developed from the principle of self-consciousness. The systematic derivation of pure concepts in the Science of Logic, in which spirit has attained "the pure element of its existence, i.e., the concept," subsequently determines the system of science as a whole. That derivation presents the

universe of possible thought as the necessity governing the continuing self-determination of the concept. The objective of this exposition is such that Plato's unending discussion of the soul with itself could only serve as a formal model.

A glance back at Greek philosophy is necessary, too, if one is to understand Hegel's conception of the method through which he sought to convert traditional logic into a genuine philosophical science — the method of dialectic. Dialectic develops from the magnificent boldness of the Eleatics, who, in opposition to what appears to be the case in sense experience, held strictly and relentlessly to what thought and thought alone demands. It is a well known observation of Hegel's that these Greek thinkers were the first to leave firm ground and to risk the high seas of thinking solely with the aid of thought itself. They were the first to demand and to carry out that pure thinking to which the title of as recent a work as Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* still implicitly refers. The expression, "pure thinking," obviously points to a Pythagorean-Platonic source. Implied is the purification or catharsis in which thought is freed from the cloudiness of sense perception.

Plato portrayed this art of pure thinking in his dramatization of Socrates' discussions in which the logical consequences of each thought are pursued unerringly. But Hegel comments with a measure of justification that Plato's dialectic is deficient in that it is only negative and does not reach any scientific insight.. As a matter of fact, Plato's dialectic is, properly speaking, not a method at all and least of all the transcendental method of Fichte or Hegel. It has no absolute beginning. Nor is it founded on an ideal of absolute knowledge which could be said to be free from all opposition between knowing and what is known and be held to embrace all knowledge in such a way that the entire content of knowledge would be exhausted in the continuing determination of the concept in relationship to itself. For Hegel something else was paradigmatic in Plato, namely, the concatenation of ideas. Plato's underlying conviction, which we find developed above all in the *Parmenides*, is that there is no truth of a single idea and, accordingly, that isolating an idea always means missing the truth. Ideas exist only linked, mixed, or interwoven as they are encountered in discussion or are "there" each time in the discourse of the soul with itself. Human thought is not constituted like an originary, infinite, on looking mind. Rather, it can only grasp what is, in discursive

development of its thoughts. Kant, for one, also brought this point into sharp relief by limiting legitimate concepts to those which refer to experience. But be that as it may, the truth visible behind Plato's Parmenides was that the logos is always a complex of ideas, i.e., the relationship of ideas to each other. And to this extent the first truth of Hegel's Logic is a Platonic one which is to be perceived even in the Meno, when it is said that all of nature is interrelated and that therefore the path of recollection of one thing is the path of recollection of all things. There are no single ideas, and it is the purpose of dialectic to dispel the untruth of their separateness.

That is most easily seen in regard to the determinations of "reflection." ² Everyone knows that identity would have no meaning by itself if self-sameness and differentness were not implied in it. Identity without difference would be absolutely nothing. Thus the determinations of reflection provide a most convincing argument for the internal linkage of ideas with each other. As a matter of fact, these determinations are the basis of the argument in the Sophist since they are prerequisite for any interweaving of ideas into a unified whole of discussion. Now to be sure, one must keep in mind that even in Plato's dialectic of ideas the pure concepts of reflection which properly belong to the logos are not distinguished from "world concepts" with complete clarity. Thus in the Sophist just as in the Timaeus cosmological concepts like motion and rest are fused in a curious way with the concepts of reflection, difference, and self-sameness. This fusion is the basis of Hegel's claim that dialectic makes the entirety of ideas thinkable. At the same time, the fundamental distinction in Plato between "categories corresponding to the polycombinable vowels of reality," as the Sophist puts it, and concepts with content, articulating a finite region of reality, remains unchallenged. In spite of this, Hegel's thesis rests on the assumption of unity here. For him objective concepts and concepts of reflection are only different stages of the same development. The concepts of "being" and the concepts of "essence" are completed in the doctrine of the "concept." Consequently what is realized there is a unity of thought and being which corresponds to Aristotle's conception of the category, on the one hand, just as much as it does to Kant's, on the other. The category is the basis of the idea of the new science of logic which Hegel expressly opposes to the traditional form of logic. As he puts it, after Kant had reached the standpoint of transcendental philosophy and taught us to think the logos of what is an object, i.e., its categorial constitution, logic could no longer remain

formal logic limiting itself to the formal relationship of concept, judgment, and syllogism.

Hegel seeks to give logic a new scientific character by developing the universal system of the concepts of the understanding into a “whole” of science. His starting point is Kant’s traditional theory. But while Hegel’s system of categories is drawn from thought’s reflecting upon itself, the categories are nevertheless no mere determinations of reflection. Kant himself, as a matter of fact, went so far as to call the determinations of reflection “amphibolic” and he excluded — them from his table of categories because they have an equivocal function in the determination of objects. Categories are not simply formal determinations of statements or thinking. Rather, they claim to grasp the order of reality in the form of a statement. That is the case in Aristotle, and Kant, for his part, in his theory of synthetic judgments a priori also seeks to explain why pure concepts of the understanding can be legitimately applied to experience of the world given in space and time. Now Hegel’s conception of logic would unify this traditional doctrine of categories as the basic concepts of reality constituting the objects of the understanding with the pure determinations of reflection, which are the merely formal determinations of thought. Put another way, he attempts to restore the original objective function of the concept of “form,” which it had at first in Aristotle’s metaphysics. It is in this way that Hegel’s logic, which synthesizes the doctrine of Being and the doctrine of Essence in the doctrine of Concept, is to be understood. The doctrine of Being follows Kant’s table of categories insofar as it includes quality and quantity. The doctrine of Essence and the doctrine of the Concept, on the other hand, explicate the categories of relation and modality. All of these possible determinations are now to be systematically derived within the turbulence of continual self-cancelling negativity.

The ideal of a science of logic which is to be brought to perfection in this way does not imply that such perfection might ever be completely attained by any individual. Hegel himself fully acknowledges that his own logic is a first attempt which lacks ultimate perfection. What he means, obviously, is that by pursuing multiple paths of derivation, one could work out, as he himself did in his teaching, the fine distinctions of what had only been given in outline form in the Logic. Hence, the methodological necessity in the

interconnection of concepts as they unfold according to their specific dialectic, is not necessity in the absolute sense. Indeed, one can discern, not only in the second printing of the first volume of the *Logic* as contrasted with the first, but also within one and the same text, that Hegel corrects himself even in his publications. He can say, for instance, that he wishes to present the same subject matter from another point of view, that one can arrive at the same result in another way, etc. Thus Hegel's point is not only that in his *Logic* he did not complete the enormous task before him, but beyond that, in an absolute sense, that it cannot be completed.

It follows from this that a distinction must be made between the concepts as they operate in thought and the thematization of them. It is clear, for example, that one must always use the categories of Essence, e.g., the determinations of Reflection, if one wants to make any statement at all. One cannot utter a sentence without bringing the categories of identity and difference into play. Still, Hegel does not begin his *Logic* with these categories and it would have been of no help to him to do so. Even if he had decided to develop these categories right at the beginning, he would have had to presuppose both. Whoever makes statements uses different words and understands each word to mean this and not that. Both categories, identity and difference, are thereby already implied. The purpose Hegel has in mind for his system thus makes it necessary for him to resort to another construction. In the effort to derive the interrelationship of all categories from each other, a criterion is given in their determinacy per se. All categories are determinations of the content of knowledge, i.e., of the Concept. Since the content must be developed in its manifold determinations in order to arrive at the truth of the Concept, science must begin where there is the least determinacy. In that lies the criterion governing the construction of the *Logic*: there is to be steady advance from the most general (i.e., the least determinate) in which, in a manner of speaking, almost nothing is conceived of, to the full content of the Concept. The entire content of thinking is to be developed in this way.

In more precisely characterizing the idea of the *Logic*, it is necessary too that we be fully conscious of the difference between its method and that of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the introduction to the *Logic*, Hegel himself cites the dialectic of the *Phenomenology* as a first example of his dialectical method. Thus, there is certainly no

ultimate difference between the dialectic present in the Phenomenology and that in the Logic. The belief, based on the subsequent Encyclopedia, that phenomenological dialectic did not yet represent the pure method of dialectic, is thus untenable. For one thing, that is demonstrated by the fact that in the preface to the Phenomenology, Hegel, in characterizing its dialectical method as the scientific method, uses examples from the Logic. As a matter of fact, this preface was written as an introduction to a system which was to consist of two parts: a "Phenomenology of Spirit" and a "Logic and Metaphysics." Nevertheless, there are differences of which one must be aware if one is to grasp to what extent the Phenomenology of Spirit is also a science, i.e., to what extent development of its sequence of phenomena can be called a necessary one. In each case the method of dialectic must guarantee that the explication of the train of thought is not arbitrary, that there is no subjective intervention in its development, that there are no transitions from one point to the next which one "selects" on one's own from different perspectives and which, therefore, remain external to the subject matter. On the contrary, the advance from one thought to the next, from one form of knowing to the next, must derive from an immanent necessity. In the Phenomenology of Spirit that advance is played out in a most intricate fashion.

The chapters in the dialectic of the Phenomenology are so constructed that, as a rule, the dialectical contradictions are first developed out of the concept which is being thematized at that particular moment, e.g., out of the concept of Sense Certainty or Perception. Hence, the first development is of the concepts, as they are "for us" in our reflection about them. Only then is the dialectic described which the consciousness itself experiences and which forces it to change as it changes its opinion of its object. For example, in thinking the sense certainty which fills it, consciousness can no longer believe it self to be thinking anything other than a "universal 'this,' " and thus it must grant that what it meant is a "universal," and that it perceives it as a "thing." It is true that that which proved to be the truth of the old way of knowing is like a new form of knowledge, which believes in a new object. But it comes as something of a surprise to learn, for example, that the "universal this" is the concrete "thing" and the certainty, that of perception. The dialectic of the thing and its properties, in which consciousness is now about to get caught, looks like a new hypothesis which is richer in content and not a necessary consequence of what went before. Still, it appears to me that we are expecting too much here. The dialectic of the new form of knowing, e.g., of perception

of the thing, in which the implicit contradictions are exposed, has the appearance of being an arbitrary hypothesis. However, the scientific rigor of the Phenomenology is not to be judged by that appearance. On the contrary, this dialectic which we spin out in our reflection is only an ancillary mediation performed on the natural presuppositions of consciousness, one which Hegel works in throughout the text. In contrast to it, the “experience” which the consciousness itself has and which we observe and comprehend, is the proper object of the phenomenological science. Only here does the immanent negativity of the concept develop, which drives the latter to self-sublimation and further determinations of itself. In this there is the necessity of “science,” and it is the same in the Phenomenology as it is in the Logic. In the Phenomenology this scientific advance occurs as a movement back and forth between that which our consciousness believes and that which is actually implied in what it says. Thus, we always find a contradiction between what we want to say and what we actually have said. We are continuously compelled to abandon what proved insufficient and to again set about saying what we mean. Herein consists the method of the Phenomenology by which it progresses to its goal, namely to the insight that knowledge properly exists only where that which we believe and that which is are no longer different in any way.

In the Logic, on the other hand, there is no place at all allowed for belief. Here knowing is no longer different from its content. Indeed, the conclusion reached in the Phenomenology was precisely that the highest form of knowing is that in which there is no longer a difference between belief and what is believed. The first convincing demonstration that “I” and “thing” are the same is provided by the work of art. The work of art is no longer a “thing” which needs to be put into relationship with something beyond itself in order to be comprehended; rather, it makes a “statement,” as we say, i.e., it itself dictates how it is to be comprehended. The science of philosophy presupposes the same standpoint of “absolute” knowledge. Accordingly, in the foundation provided for it in its first part, i.e., in the “logic” as the science of possible modes of being, we are concerned with the pure content of thoughts, with thoughts freed from any subjective opinionation of the one who thinks them. Nothing mystical is intended here. Rather, the knowing in art, religion, and philosophy is common to all who think, so that in regard to it, it no longer makes any sense to differentiate one individual consciousness from another. The forms of the subject’s certainty given in the statements of art, religion, and philosophy, where the reservations of private belief no

longer obtain, are therefore the highest shape spirit assumes. For the universality of reason consists precisely in its being free of any subjective one-sidedness.

If then private subjectivity is no longer to have a place in the Logic, the question might arise in attempting to understand the dialectic of the latter, how a movement of concepts can develop there where no more movement of thought is experienced. Why is the system of concepts something in motion and moving itself and not something which thought merely runs through?

In the Phenomenology the course and goal of the movement of thought is clear. The movement there is the experience of human consciousness as it presents itself to the thinking observer. It cannot maintain its first assumptions, e.g., that sense certainty is the truth, and is driven from one shape to the next, from consciousness to the highest objective forms of spirit and ultimately to the forms of absolute spirit in which “you and I are the same soul.” But where should motion begin and where should a path be traversed in the Logic, where the sole concern is with the content of thought and not at all with its movement? That, precisely, is the problem of the Logic and, in fact, the most discussed point in Hegel’s entire systematic project. Even during his lifetime his opponents — the first and foremost of which was Schelling — raised the question of how in the Logic a movement of ideas could begin and then continue. I would like to show that this apparent difficulty arises only when one does not adhere strictly enough to the perspective of reflection in terms of which Hegel conceives of his transcendental logic.

In this regard, a reference to Plato’s Parmenides is useful. There too we are drawn into a movement of thought, though, to be sure, it seems rather more like the agitation of enthusiasm or of “logical” intoxication than a systematic movement towards a goal. There too it happens to thought, so to speak, that each concept calls for another. None stays by itself, but rather each ties itself in with another, and ultimately a contradiction emerges. In this fashion the Parmenides achieves its goal, namely the demonstration that thinking an idea in isolation is impossible. Something definite can only be thought of within a context of ideas, which implies, to be sure, that its opposite can also be

thought with equal legitimacy. Certainly there is nothing here of Hegel's method. What we do have is more a kind of permanent turbulence since no idea can be valid by itself and since the contradictory result at which thought inevitably arrives calls forth new hypotheses. Still, there is something "systematic" implied here too since the One, which reality is, is developed in the Many which the thought of it contains. It is "systematic" too in that the whole of it unrolls as though it were a dialectical interplay unfolding the extremes of the universal interconnectedness of the ideas, on the one hand, and, on the other, of their separation. Finally, it is "systematic" in the sense that a field of possible determinate knowledge is marked off.

What Hegel claims for his logic, however, is methodologically much more rigorous. Here there is no series of hypotheses which having been merely proposed, are, one after the other, reduced to inconsistency within the complex of ideas. In the Logic a starting point is firmly established and then a methodological procedure entered upon in which the knowing subject no longer intrudes. But how do things such as movement and progress commence in this construction of logical thought? That will have to be demonstrated using the beginning of the Logic.

To be sure, in taking this route, we must keep in mind that that which can properly be called Hegel's text is the same sort of thing referred to in the philosophy of the Middle Ages as a corpus. Hegel insisted repeatedly that introductions, comments, critical excursuses, etc., do not have the same legitimacy as the text, i.e., the course itself of the developing thought. Thus he treats his own introductions — and in the case of the Logic, which we are accustomed to read in the second edition, there are no less than four of these at the beginning — as things which do not yet have to do with the subject matter itself. They are concerned solely with the needs of external reflection, that is with relating the material to the conceptions which the reader, whom Hegel's comments are meant to serve, already brings with him. The actual beginning of the Logic consists of only a few lines, which, nevertheless, pose the essential problems of Hegelian logic: the beginning with the idea of Being, the identity of it with Nothing, and the synthesis of the two opposed ideas of Being and Nothing, called Becoming. According to Hegel, that constitutes the content of that with which science must begin.

The question of how movement gets into the Logic must be answered in reference to this beginning. Now it is clear, and Hegel makes use of the fact in his commentary, that it lies in the nature of any beginning to be dialectical. Nothing may be presupposed in it and it clearly reveals itself as primary and immediate. But it still is a beginning only if it begins a development, and thus it is determined as a beginning in reference to that development, which is to say that it is “mediated” by the latter. Now let us assume that Being is to be the indeterminate, immediate beginning of the Logic. Though it might be evident right away that a Being so abstract “is nothing,” how is it to be made evident that from this Being and Nothing a movement to to Becoming develops? How, in the first place, does the movement of the dialectic get started from Being? Though it is convincing that one cannot think Becoming without thinking Being and Nothing simultaneously, the converse, that when one thinks Being and Nothing one must think Becoming is not at all convincing. A transition is made, Hegel claims, but it plainly lacks the evidentness that would allow one to recognize it as dialectically necessary. In contrast, it is very easy to see, for example, that one must progress from the thought of Becoming to the thought of Existence. All becoming is a becoming of something which exists as a result of having become. That is an ancient truth, one already formulated by Plato in the *Philebus* as the *gegennemene oust a* or *genesi s et s oust an*, respectively. It lies in the very meaning of Becoming itself that it reaches determinacy in that which finally has become. Becoming thus leads to Existence. The transition from Being and Nothing to Becoming is, however, entirely different. Is there a dialectical transition here in the same sense? Hegel himself seems to single out this case as a special one when he comments that Being and Nothing “are only different in belief.” That would mean that if both were purely thought by themselves neither would be distinguishable from the other. Thus the pure thought of Being and the pure thought of Nothing would be so little different that their synthesis could not be a new, richer truth of thought. One way Hegel puts this is to say that Nothing “bursts forth immediately” from Being (L I 85). Clearly, the expression, “bursts forth,” is one carefully chosen to exclude any idea of mediation and transition. In accord with this it is said on page 79 that talk of such a transition implies the false appearance of separateness. And only in the case of the transition from Being and Nothing to Becoming does Hegel say that “that passing from one to the other does not yet constitute a relationship” (p. 90). Thus that Nothing “bursts forth” from Being is intended to mean that although in our belief Being and

Nothing appear as the most extreme opposites, thought cannot succeed in maintaining a distinction here.

Now it is striking that Hegel speaks here of belief (Meinen), for distinguishing between belief and what is actually implied in what is said by the holder of that belief, does not properly belong to the themes of the logic of “pure thought” or, as stated on page 78, “is not in the sequence of this exposition. . . .” The Logic is concerned with what is present within thought as “content” and develops the determinations of thought as it thinks this presence. Here nothing of the Phenomenology’s juxtaposition of belief and what is believed remains. As a matter of fact, the pure thinking of the Logic presupposes the result of the dialectic in the Phenomenology and thus the subject matter of the Logic obviously cannot include belief. Of course, that does not mean that thinking could ever exist without beliefs. It is only meant to imply that between what is believed and what is actually thought and stated no difference at all exists any more. It is now a matter of indifference whether I believe or state something or someone else does. In thinking, that which is held in common is thought, that which excludes all private belief. “‘I’ is purified of itself” (p. 60).

Thus if there is recourse to belief at the beginning of the Logic that is only because we are still at the level of incipient thought, or, put another way, because as long as we stay at the level of Being and Nothing as what is indeterminate, determination, i.e., thought, has not yet begun. For that reason the difference between Being and Nothing is limited to belief.

Implied in this, however, is that the progression to Becoming cannot be taken as a development in dialectical determination. If, as thought now determines, the difference of Being and Nothing is at the same time their complete lack of difference, then the question how Becoming emerges out of Being and Nothing no longer makes any sense at all. For such a question would certainly imply that there was a thinking which, in a manner of speaking, had not begun to think. Taken as thoughts for thinking, Being and Nothing are not at all determinations of thought. Accordingly, Hegel states explicitly that Being is empty intuition or empty thought per se and that the same holds for Nothing.

“Empty” does not mean that something is not, but rather that something is which does not contain what actually ought to be there, something deprived of what it could be. Thus, according to Hegel, light and darkness are two emptinesses to the extent that the complete content of the world consists of things which stand in the light and which eclipse each other. Empty thinking is thus thinking which is not yet that which thinking is at all. And, as a matter of fact, in this way the merging together of Being and Nothing in Becoming can easily be seen to be the proper truth for thought. Thus, saying that “Being passes into Nothing and Nothing passes into Being,” is actually a quite untenable way of putting the matter, because a Being already present and distinct from Nothing would thereby be presupposed. If one reads Hegel precisely, one will see that in fact he never speaks of such a transition at all. Instead he says that “what the truth is, is neither Being nor Nothing, but on the contrary, that Being does not now pass over into Nothing nor Nothing into Being, but rather has already passed over” — a transition, accordingly, which has always taken place already. Being and Nothing exist solely as passing over or transition itself, as Becoming. It seems to me most significant that Hegel is able to describe Being and Nothing starting with either intuition or thought (insofar as intuition or thought can be spoken of here). The difference between intuition or thought is itself an empty one as long as nothing determinate is given as content.

Thus Being and Nothing are more to be treated as analytic moments in the concept of Becoming — but “analytic” here neither in the sense of an external reflection, which breaks down the unity of thought by pointing up multiple respects in it, nor in the sense which would imply that out of every synthesis the immanent contradiction can be recovered through analysis of the moments synthesized therein. Such an opposition presupposes things that are different. However, by virtue of their undifferentiatedness, Being and Nothing are only different in the pure and full content of the concept of Becoming.

Hegel’s meaning here becomes completely clear when we see how he examines the aspects of Becoming, i.e., “coming-into-being” and “passing-away.” It is plain that in this examination the concept of Becoming will be more specifically determined insofar as Becoming now is a coming-to-be or a becoming-nothing. That is to say, Becoming is now determined as transition to something. It is semantically misleading, however, to think

of this first determination of Becoming while presupposing the difference of Being and Nothing. In effect that would be to start with the determinate being which Hegel calls Existence and to think of coming-into-being as coming-into-existence or passing-away as passing-out-of-existence. But precisely that being from which the movement of Becoming is said to come or towards which it is said to go is only as the result of this process of determination. Since Being and Nothing acquire reality only in Becoming, in Becoming, as the mere transition “from-to,” neither one is determined in opposition to the other. What we have is thought’s first truth: Becoming is not determined as coming-into-being and passing-away on the basis of a pre-given difference of Being and Nothing, rather, this difference emerges from Becoming in thinking the determination of Becoming as transition. Being and Nothing, respectively, “become” in it. Coming-into-being and passing-away are thus the self-determining truth of Becoming. They balance each other out, as it were, insofar as there is in them no other determination than the directionality implied in “from-to,” which in turn is determined only by the difference in direction. The equilibrium between coming-into-being and passing-away of which Hegel speaks is only another way of expressing the utter lack of difference constitutive of Being and Nothing. Indeed, it is correct to say that it is open to us to see in Becoming something either coming into being or something passing away. Coming-into-being is, if viewed in reference to Existence, just as much passing-away and vice versa — as Hölderlin in his well-known treatise on “Becoming in Passing-Away” quite properly assumes.

If, then, we wish to be clear about the development from Becoming to Existence, the deeper sense of Hegel’s dialectical deduction, i.e., that beyond what is immediately and generally illuminating in it, must be stated as follows: since the distinction between Being and Nothing is without content, there is also no determinateness present in the “from” and “to” constituting Becoming. All that is implied is that there is in every case a “from-to” and that every “from-to” can be thought of as a “from-where” or a “to-where.” Thus we have here the pure structure of transition itself. The special characteristic of Becoming is that its content, a being which is not nothing, issues from this structure. Thought has now gone so far as to determine itself henceforth as being which is not nothing. As Hegel expresses it, the still unity of Existence results replacing the shifting equilibrium of coming-into-being and passing-away.

Our retracing of Hegel's dialectical deduction here should now have enabled us to see why the question of how movement gets into the concept of Being cannot arise in the first place. For in fact, no movement does get into Being. Being, as well as Nothing, may not be taken as existences already "there" outside of thought, but rather as pure thoughts along with which nothing is to be imagined except themselves. They do not occur at all save in the movement of thought. Whoever asks how movement starts in Being should admit that in raising that question he has abstracted from the movement of thought within which he finds himself raising it. But instead, he leaves this reflection aside thinking it "external reflection." Certainly in Being just as in Nothing, nothing determinate is thought. What is present is empty intuiting or thinking, but that means no real intuiting or thinking. But even if nothing other than empty intuiting or thinking is present, the movement of self-determination, that is, of Becoming, is there. "One has acquired great insight when one realizes that being and not-being are abstractions without truth and that the first truth is Becoming alone" (XIII 306).

Our investigation of the beginning of the Logic has led us to the point where we can see that Hegel's claim of immanent necessity for the dialectical development of his thought is not touched by the usual objections to the fact that the Logic begins with Being and Nothing. If one keeps the purpose which Hegel assigned to the Logic in mind, his claim that its dialectic is scientific proves to be thoroughly consistent. It is another question, however, whether that purpose, which he proposes for his Logic as transcendental logic, is justified convincingly when even he himself relies on the natural logic which he finds in the "logical instinct" of language. The expression, "instinct," which Hegel uses here, apparently means the unconscious, but unerring tendency towards a goal, a tendency such as that which seems to make animal behavior virtually compulsive. For that is the nature of instinct: unconsciously and, precisely for that reason, unerringly, it does everything which, if one were aware of it, one would like to have done in order to reach a goal. When Hegel speaks of the logical instinct of language he is thus pointing out the direction and object of thought — its tendency towards "the logical." In the first place, it should be noted that that term has quite a comprehensive meaning. And to be sure, there is reflected in language — not only in its grammatical, syntactical forms, but also in its nouns — that tendency of reason to objectify which was the essential

characteristic of the Greek logos. What is thought and what is said is so constituted that one can point to it, as it were, even if one takes no position with regard to the truth of what is said and so that, on the contrary, even where the question of its truth is left unasked, the tendency of reason to objectify is actualized and precisely that gives thinking and speaking its special character of being universally objectifying. Thus Aristotle singled out the logos apophantikos from all other modes of speech because his sole concern was with making things plain (deloun). In so doing he established propositional logic, the logic which prevailed completely until only very recently when it was shown to have its limits by Hans Lipps's Hermeneutic Logic and Austin's How to Do Things with Words, 3 to take two examples. Hegel, however, radicalizes the Aristotelian tradition not only by utilizing dialectic, but also, and indeed above all, by giving conceptual form in his Logic to the structure of dialectic itself. To be sure, the actual "logical" determinations constitutive of the relationships of things thought to each other, e.g., identity, difference, relation, proportion, etc., or those determinations which Plato compared to the vowels (Sophist 253), are always operative only when wrapped in language as it were. Thus in grammar there is a reflection of these logical structures. But Hegel's talk of the "logical instinct" of language obviously implies more than that. It means that language leads us to logic because in logic the categories naturally at work in language are focused on as such. For Hegel, language thus reaches its perfection in the idea of logic since in the latter thinking goes through all of the determinations of thought occurring within itself and operating in the natural logic of language, and relates these to each other in thinking the Concept as such.

But the question arises whether language is in fact only an instinctive logic waiting to be penetrated by thought and conceptualized. Hegel notes the correspondence between logic and grammar and compares — without heed to the differences between languages and their grammatical bases — the life which a "dead" grammar assumes in the actual use of a language to the life which logic assumes when one gives content to its dead form through use of it in positive sciences. But as much as logic and grammar might correspond to each other in that both are what they are in concrete use, the natural logic lying in the grammar of every language is by no means exhausted in the function of being a prefiguration of philosophic logic. Of course, logic in its traditional form is a purely formal science, and thus in any specific use made of it in the sciences or elsewhere, it is one and the same; the life which it assumes for the knower in such use is

its proper life. On the other hand, the idea of logic which Hegel develops within the tradition of Kant's transcendental analytic, is not formal in this sense. That, however, seems to me to have a consequence which Hegel would not desire. Specifically, its use in the sciences is by no means the only concretion of this logic. (Indeed the one-sidedness of neo-Kantianism lay in the fact that it turned the given fact of science into a monopoly.) On the contrary, in the "variety of human language structures" 4 there lies a range of very different anticipations of what is logical, which are articulated in the most diverse schemata of linguistic access to the world. And the "logical instinct," which most assuredly does lie in language as such, can for that reason never be comprehensive enough to include all of what is prefigured in this vast number of languages. Thus it could never really be elevated to its "concept" by being transformed into logic.

If one keeps in mind the relationship which, as noted above, obtains between the operative use of concepts on the one hand and their express thematization on the other, and if one realizes that there is no possibility of getting around that relationship, one cannot remain indifferent to the problem which is implied here. What holds for the construction of the Logic — namely that it must already presuppose and use the categories of reflection which it then claims to deduce dialectically — holds for every relationship between word and concept. With words too, there is no beginning *ex nihilo*. Nor is it the case that a concept could be determined as a concept without the usage of the word with all of its many meanings playing a role. Thus it does not appear coincidental to me that Hegel's acute analysis and dialectical deduction of categories is always most convincing where he appends a historic derivation of the word. Concepts are only what they are in their functioning and this functioning always rests on the natural logic of language. Strictly speaking, it is not a matter of our making use of words when we speak. Though we "use" words, it is not in the sense that we put a given tool to use as we please. Words themselves prescribe the only ways in which we can put them to use. One refers to that as proper "usage" — something which does not depend on us, but rather we on it, since we are not allowed to violate it.

Now Hegel, assuredly, is conscious of this when he speaks of the "natural logic." The concept too is not a tool of our thinking, rather our thinking obeys it and finds the prefiguration of it in the natural logic of language. Precisely for this reason the task of

the Logic — to thematize what “one thinks,” in respect to itself, in “pure thinking” — confronts us with an insoluble problem. Hegel discovers this problem and takes it to be that of the inherent disquietude of the dialectical process. Nevertheless, that process is supposed to be superseded in absolute knowing as thinking of the totality. The question arises, however, whether this “supposed to be” does not suffer from the “immorality” of a “supposed to be” which is never able to overcome its untruth.

Truly, our human nature is so much determined by finitude that the phenomenon of language and the thinking wherein we seek to get hold of it must always be viewed as governed by the law of human finitude. Seen in this way, language is not a transitional form of thinking reason which is perfected when thought becomes completely transparent to itself. It is not a self-effacing and temporary medium of thought or merely its “casing.” And its function is not at all limited to merely making plain what is being thought of beforehand. On the contrary, a thought first attains determinate existence in being formulated in words. Thus, it turns out that the movement of language goes in two directions: it aims towards the objectivity of the thought, but it also returns from it in the reabsorption of all objectification into the sustaining power and shelter of the word. When Hegel undertook to uncover “the logical” as that “innermost” in language and to present it in its entire dialectical self-differentiation, he was correct in seeing this undertaking as the attempt to reconstruct in thought the thoughts of God before the creation — a reality prior to reality. But even that reality or “Being” standing at the beginning of this contemplative repetition in our thought, the content of which is ultimately to be fully objectified in the concept, always presupposes language in which thinking has its own abode. The Phenomenology of Spirit, where Hegel methodically leads up to the beginning of pure thought, does not furnish us with this presupposition, but rather it, too, constantly presupposes the functioning of language which sustains and accompanies it. Thus it itself remains tied to the idea of total objectification of self and fulfills itself in absolute knowing. Its insurmountable limitation becomes manifest in our experience of language. What makes it possible for language to speak is not “Being” as the abstract immediacy of the self-determining concept. Rather, it is much better described in terms of the being which Heidegger refers to as a “clearing.” A clearing, however, implies both something disclosed and something still enclosed.

A kind of thinking, able to conceive of the functioning of language as revealing and objectifying but at the same time as holding back or concealing as well, can find in Hegel's attempt at logic only one side of the truth — that of the perfected determination of the concept. Still to have established only this one-sidedness is not sufficient. Were it taken to be, then an essential concern common to both Heidegger and Hegel would have been overlooked. Specifically, Hegel's logic indirectly points beyond itself, since Hegel's turn of speech, "the logical," of which he is so fond, indicates that the essential impossibility of completing the concept is acknowledged by him. "The logical" is not the quintessence or totality of all determinations of thought but the dimension which underlies all posited determinations of thought, just as a geometric continuum underlies all posited points. Hegel calls it the "speculative" dimension and speaks of the "speculative statement" which, as opposed to all statement sentences referring a predicate to a subject, demands a retreat of thought into itself. The speculative statement maintains the mean between the extremes of tautology on the one hand and self-cancellation in the infinite determination of its meaning on the other. Here lies Hegel's great relevance for today: the speculative statement is not so much a statement as it is language. It calls for more than objectification in dialectical explication. While it does call for such explication, at the same time the speculative statement brings dialectical movement to a standstill. Through it thought is made to see itself in relationship to itself. In the language form (not of a judgment as a statement, but in the judgment as it is spoken in a verdict, for example, or in the curse) the event of its being said is felt, and not merely what is said.

Mutatis mutandis, in the speculative statement the event of thinking is present. The speculative statement which challenges and stirs thought in this way thus unmistakably "consists in itself" as do, more generally, words of poetry and the being of the artwork. In the "consisting in itself" of poetry and artworks there is an assertion which "stands" self-contained. And just as the speculative statement demands dialectical "exposition," the work of art demands interpretation, even though its content may never be exhausted in any particular interpretation. My point is that the speculative statement is not a judgment restricted in the content of what it asserts any more than a single word without a context or a communicative utterance torn from its context is a self-contained

unit of meaning. The words which someone utters are tied to the continuum in which people come to understand each other, the continuum which determines the word to such an extent that it can even be “taken back.” Similarly, the speculative statement points to an entirety of truth, without being this entirety or stating it. Hegel conceives of this entirety which is not in actual existence as the reflection in itself through which the entirety proves to be the truth of the concept. Having been compelled by the speculative statement to follow the path of conceptual comprehension, thought unfolds “the logical” as the immanent movement of its content.

Though within this tendency towards “the logical” it is the concept which is thought of as the completed determination of the indeterminate, and though in that concept only the one aspect of language (its tendency towards “the logical”) is completely developed, reflection’s being or consisting in itself nevertheless continues to have a disconcerting similarity to the “consisting in itself” of the word and of the artwork which bear truth contained (geborgen) within themselves. Indeed, there is a hint here of that conception of “truth” which Heidegger seeks to formulate in his thought as the “event of being” and which opens up the space for the movement of reflection, as well as for all knowledge, in the first place.

Again and again Heidegger himself bears witness to this wider inference of “the speculative” and the temptation it presents. This is revealed not only in the fascination Hegel’s dialectic has for him, in the critical analyses which it prompts and in his effort to differentiate his own philosophy from it. Beyond all of this there are occasional direct references to Hegel, rich in illuminating advertences, which we ought now to include in our discussion. Most important of these is the sketch of an idea found in his Nietzsche, 8 vol. 2, p. 464:

Reflection, grasped within the history of being in its being-thereness. The light shining back to aletheia without the latter itself being experienced as such and being grounded and coming into its proper presence (“Wesen”). The homelessness of the shining back of what shows itself ... man’s settlement in one of his proper places of presence. Reflection — certainty, certainty — self-consciousness.

Here Heidegger refers to reflection as a “shining back into aletheia without the latter itself . . . coming into its proper presence.” Thus he himself relates reflection to that which he conceives of as aletheia and which he calls here the being of aletheia as it presents itself. To be sure, establishing this relationship amounts to making a distinction at the same time: the dimension of “the logical” is not the sphere of aletheia which is illumined by language. For language is an “element” within which we live in a very different sense than reflection is. 9 Language completely surrounds us like the voice of home which prior to our every thought of it breathes a familiarity from time out of mind. Heidegger refers to language as the “house of being,” in which we dwell with such case. To be sure, there occurs in it, indeed precisely in it, the disconcealment of what is present to the point of the objectification of the latter in a statement. But being itself, which has its abode there, is not disconcealed as such, but keeps itself concealed in the midst of all disconcealment occurring in speaking; concealed as in speaking, language itself remains essentially concealed. Thus Heidegger is not saying in any way that reflection takes the measure of this original “clearing.” Rather, he speaks of reflection as the shining back of what is showing itself; while never ceasing to be underway within the “clearing,” reflection seeks to get this shining back in view before itself. In this respect reflection, the movement of logic, is homeless: it can stay nowhere. That which shows itself, i.e., that which is encountered as the object of thought and of the process of determination, has the “object’s” essential mode of being encountered. That accounts for its insurmountable “transcendence” for thought, which in turn prevents us from being at home in it. The process of comprehension which aims nevertheless at eliminating this transcendence and which Hegel unfolds as the basic movement of self-recognition in the other, is for that reason continually thrown back on itself. As a result it has the character of the self-assuring process of self-consciousness. This too is a manner of appropriation and as such, it provides the “housing” which has given Western civilization its essential form-making what is another one’s own means the conquest and subjugation of nature through work. Heidegger is not striking up the song of cultural criticism here. Rather, in the comment which we are explicating he speaks of what has occurred as “man’s settlement in one of his proper places of presence.” Because this “settlement” constitutes all that exists as “object,” it is in an essential sense, he maintains, the “expropriation event (Ent-eignung) of what exists.” What exists does not belong to itself because it is entirely there in reference to us. Viewed in this way, Hegel appears as the logical consummation of a path of thought going back a long way — an

end in which the subsequent philosophical phenomena of Marx and logical positivism are foreshadowed.

Nevertheless, that which escapes this perspective of thought comes to light here — that which Schelling sensed first and which Heidegger developed into the question about the being which is not the being of existents. The shining back of what shows itself — incidentally, a literal translation of “reflection “ — is certainly different from the original “clearing” in which what is comes to show itself in the first place. There is indeed another familiarity, one more basic than that acquired and cultivated in appropriation, which prevails where word and language are at work.

Still, it is nothing less than the complete fathoming of an essential course of human thought when Hegel in “reflection in itself — thinks the light “shining back” which all objectification casts. In Hegel’s reflection-in-itself, which unfolds as the movement of the Logic, there is preserved a truth which is not that of consciousness and its opposite, that is, a truth, precisely, which in no way claims to be the “appropriation” of what shows itself, but rather distinguishes such “external” reflection as that, from the reflection of thought into itself. That is what emerges in Hegel’s Logic. If one traces the experience of consciousness in the way Hegel does in the Phenomenology, namely, in such a way that one learns to recognize everything alien as one’s own, one sees that the lesson actually taught to consciousness is none other than the experience which thinking has with its “pure” thoughts. Still it is not only the Phenomenology which points beyond itself, i.e., in its case, to the Logic. For its part, does not the logic of the self-unfolding concept necessarily point beyond itself too, that is, point back to the “natural logic” of language? The self of the concept (in which pure thinking conceives of itself) is, in the last analysis, nothing of the sort which displays itself, but rather, like language, something at work in everything which is. The determinations of the Logic are not without the “casing” of language in which thought is sheathed. The medium of reflection in which the progression of the Logic moves is for its part, however, not sheathed in language like the conceptual determination at any given point, but rather, as an entirety, as the “logical,” is in shining back, grounded in illumination of language. Indirectly, that is made evident in Heidegger’s note.

Were Hegel's idea of logic to include full acknowledgment of its relationship to the natural logic, which he treats on the level of reflective consciousness, he would have to draw close again to the classical origin of his idea in Plato's dialectic and Aristotle's conquest of sophism through logic. As it stands, his logic remains a grand realization of the goal of thinking "the logical" as the foundation of all objectification. Thus, Hegel brought to its completion the development of traditional logic into a transcendental "logic of objectivity" — a development which began with Fichte's "Doctrine of Science." But the language-ness of all thought continues to demand that thought, moving in the opposite direction, convert the concept back into the valid word. The more radically objectifying thought reflects upon itself and unfolds the experience of dialectic, the more clearly it points to what it is not. Dialectic must retrieve itself in hermeneutics.
