Critical Notice of Robert Pippin’s “Logik und Metaphysik. Hegels ‘Reich der Schatten’”

By Dennis Schulting

In Robert Pippin’s exciting new volume, entitled Die Aktualität des Deutschen Idealismus (henceforth DAdDI), which collects 15 of his German-language papers including four that were first published in English, there are two essays that haven’t been published before, in either language. These concern his recent talk ‘Hegel über die politische Bedeutung kollektiver Selbsttäuschung’ and the essay ‘Logik und Metaphysik: Hegels “Reich der Schatten”’, the latter of which it seems will be published in English translation in the forthcoming The Oxford Hegel Handbook, edited by Dean Moyar. I want to look at some aspects of that latter essay’s compelling arguments for seeing Hegel’s logic as a metaphysics, which takes objects, in some sense, to be a product and content of thought (WL, 5:30).

Pippin concentrates on Hegel’s statement, in §24 of the Encyclopaedia Logic, that “[d]ie Logik fällt daher mit der Metaphysik zusammen, der Wissenschaft der Dinge in Gedanken gefaßt, welche dafür galten, die Wesenheiten der Dinge auszudrucken” (Enz., 8:81). The central theme of the essay is that the science of logic is a metaphysics, albeit of a special kind.

Considering myself a fan of Pippin’s philosophical work ever since I started studying his Hegel’s Idealism and Idealism as Modernism in the mid-1990s, also here I’m in general agreement with much of what Pippin says, at least as far as Hegel is concerned. Pippin’s general approach to Hegel’s metaphysical logic is, it seems to me, the only viable one, interpretatively as well as philosophically. I beg to differ however with respect to some of the details in relation to Kant and the way that Hegel must be seen to build on Kant, which I shall be focusing on in this notice.

I shall argue that Kant’s and Hegel’s metaphysical logics are much closer even than Pippin deems possible, notwithstanding some ineliminable differences between Kant’s and Hegel’s perspectives.
Pippin is well-known for espousing a ‘Kantian’ reading of Hegel’s philosophy. He reads Hegel as taking Kant’s “Idee einer apriorischen Spezifikation von Inhalt allein durch das ‘Denken’” as a starting point, albeit without Kant’s “distinkte, abtrennbare Formen der Rezeptivität” (DAdDI, p. 188). However, as he points out in the introduction to DAdDI, readers and commentators have often mistaken this for holding the view that, like Kant’s idealism, Hegel’s idealism is a form of subjectivist idealism, or, in other words, that by linking Hegel intimately to Kant Pippin plays down the realist (‘ontological’) aspects of Hegel’s thought. This assumption is based on a mistaken idea about the subjectivity that is so central to both Hegel’s and Kant’s thought.

I agree with Pippin that Hegel’s notion of the ‘absolute’ has got nothing to do with it being a thing, or a substance (let alone the Christian God), and that it would be entirely wrong-headed to read Hegel as if he simply returned to or continued (or even built upon) a pre-Kantian rationalist metaphysics, which is interested in determining things and their properties intrinsically, apart from how they are necessarily determined in and by thought. As Pippin says, Hegel must “eindeutig in der post-kantischen Welt verortet werden” (DAdDI, p. 165). The subjective, reflexive element of Hegel’s metaphysics is incontrovertible and centrally important—compare the way that Hegel sometimes speaks of the \textit{Tätigkeit} of the \textit{Allgemeine}; Pippin also points to the employment of the adjective \textit{gewußter} in combination with “the concept” in a passage in the \textit{Science of Logic} where Hegel writes about truth as self-consciousness:

\begin{quote}
Als Wissenschaft ist die Wahrheit das reine sich entwickelnde Selbstdenken und hat die Gestalt des Selbstdenkes, daß das an und für sich Seiende \textit{gewußter} Begriff, der Begriff als solcher aber das an und für sich Seiende ist. (WL, 5:43; boldface added)
\end{quote}

Hegel’s logic of concepts is not a conceptual realism, but emphasises the active, subjective aspect of conceptuality, much as Kant’s analytic of concepts is focused on an analysis of the capacity of the understanding, rather than a mere analysis of given concepts (cf. A65/B90). Concepts themselves do not make assertions; it’s the thinking subject who makes assertions, in judging about objects and the world. In other words, as Pippin rightly says, concepts “behaupten nicht für sich selbst, was sie sind” (DAdDI, p. 169), and hence we need to be able to establish the extent to which \textit{self-consciousness} ‘drives’ the logic of concepts. But on the other hand, as Pippin wants to make it clear, his reading of Hegel does not make of him merely a category theorist as if Hegel’s logic were concerned with the \textit{mere} rules of intelligibility only or some kind of
conceptualist coherentism that risks spinning in a void (to use a McDowellian coinage), i.e. merely our rules of understanding something, and not with Wirklichkeit or Being itself.

There is, to be sure, one crucial aspect of Hegel, according to Pippin, that departs from Kant, and this is conveyed by the fact that, as Pippin argues, Hegel follows Aristotle in the principle “Zu sein heißt, auf bestimmte Weise verständlich zu sein” (DAdDI, p. 17), thus asserting the identity of Being and intelligibility; this means that metaphysics is the study of the categorial structure of what is, but at the same time what it means to say about something what it is (cf. Enz., §21).

The focus in Hegel’s metaphysics is squarely on the ‘in principle’ transparency of Being itself to reason, to our understanding (broadly conceived), a general assumption not shared by Kant’s philosophy. Being can be known because it is in principle articulable in thought (DAdDI, p. 189n.52). Pippin says: “Wer auf das Sein mit der Frage der Intelligibilität blickt, dem blickt es intelligibel entgegen” (DAdDI, p. 18).

But this does not mean that we can consider Being and thought apart as if Being were somehow that which is completely external to and distinct from thought. If we put it in the terms of that against which a type of philosophy that is currently en vogue argues, Hegel is a thoroughgoing “correlationalist” in that talk about reality that were supposedly antecedent or prior to reason, and hence external to it, is ipso facto nonsensical. In this, Hegel is a thoroughbred Kantian: even if there is a reality actually beyond any particular judgement or belief I entertain—and who would deny that there is an external reality, something de facto outside of our reasoning? (e.g. the words I’m now typing on my MacBook Air, and more radically, the far side of the moon, “what it is like to be a bat”, the physically real past that anteceded humanity and thus human reason in a historical sense, etc.)—in an a priori sense no possible reality is completely outside the scope of reason, just as for Kant what belongs to the domain of possible experience is determined by the functions of thought: nothing outside the scope of those functions can be experienced, and indeed can exist in the strict sense of determinate existence (namely, be said to exist or, indeed, have existed).

This differentiation is important: it marks the difference between a realist (speculative or not) perspective on Being and a transcendental one. Hegel is definitely a transcendental philosopher, just like Kant. Hegel broadens the Kantian transcendental perspective, which focuses on possible experience of empirical objects determinable by mathematically-physical laws, to all possible objects of human experience without distinction, not just those that are governed by mathematically-physical laws. This means that within a Hegelian transcendental perspective, we can talk sensibly about whatever is relevant in the context of
whichever aspect of human experience (be it sensible objects, history, moral life, legal institutions, art, religion, etc.). No object, no aspect of Being, is in principle excluded from being articulable, or made intelligible, in the terms of (human) reason, that is, conceptually (everything can intelligibly be accounted for, even if only negatively, e.g. by describing why we can’t know what it is like to be a bat, or what it would have been like in ancestral times save for what we can infer from what we do know), and something is an und für sich only if it can indeed be made intelligible in thought; when something cannot be made intelligible in thought, it remains “ein bloßes, unbestimmtes und ununterscheidbares Sein” (DAdDI, p. 171), something that by implication is irrelevant to us. This is the way in which Being and reason must be seen as inextricably connected. The identity of Being and thought must be seen from this transcendental perspective, not in terms of metaphysical substances and their relations and properties in abstraction from reason. It would be a grandiose mistake to read Hegel’s metaphysics as if it were concerned with a straightforward pre-Kantian realism or ontology.

Does that mean that reality is reduced to a form of subjective idealism, to how things are merely for us? Of course not. There is nothing relativistic or reductionistic about Pippin’s approach: “Dies heißt nicht, zu behaupten, dass der Gegenstand nur als ein denkend aufgefasster Gegenstand existiert oder dass das Denken, von dem seine Bestimmtheit abhängt, als eine subjektiv-mentale Episode verstanden werden sollte” (DAdDI, p. 170). But this was already not the case for Kant, albeit that Kant restricted this intelligibility somewhat more narrowly than Hegel to possible empirical experience strictly speaking. It just shows that we can be confident about the intelligibility of whatever real presents itself to us.

I

Pippin rightly stresses the fact that Hegel’s logic concerns the making intelligible of things, not just of our understanding of things. He points to a distinction Adrian Moore (2012) has made, a distinction between (and I’m using Pippin’s German renditions) das Verständlichmachen des Verstehens and das Verständlichmachen von Dingen (DAdDI, p. 174), which Pippin argues are necessarily connected: the one can’t obtain without the other. In other words, the constitutive conditions for understanding understanding, or for how we think at all, are the same conditions that are constitutive of the understanding about objects, how we think about objects. This is a crucial, and centrally Kantian, point, which Pippin argues is taken up by Hegel, albeit in altered form. The Verständlichmachen of the understanding cannot be separated from the Verständlichmachen of things, in the way they are, and this is precisely what is meant by Hegel when he says that logic is a metaphysics, that “das an und für
sich Seiende sei der Begriff”. When making intelligible our ways of understanding things, we haven’t just made intelligible the way we, human beings, understand things, but rather how things are.

The difference with Kant, supposedly, is that Kant seems, in the eyes of the Hegelian, to claim that we know only what can be made understandable to us, within the spatiotemporal domain that is species-specific to human experience. Pippin (and Hegel) want the identity between the two sets of conditions (Verständlichmachen of understanding and Verständlichmachen of things) to go deeper, and to do away with Kant’s “angeblich übermäßig subjektivistischen Ansatzes” (DAdDI, p. 172): it rather concerns a real identity between thought and Being, from the incontrovertible perspective of thought, the concept (the gewusster Begriff), without the constraint of human experience. Notice that, of course, we can abstract from the relation to objects or the world and just consider the conditions of mere understandability, and purely concentrate on logical matters of Verständlichmachen. But the point is that this is an abstraction (and general logic is an abstraction) from the transcendental-logical vantage point from which objects and the world can be understood.

Pippin here appeals to Kant’s distinction between a general logic and a transcendental logic, the latter of which alone can consider the relation to an object of thought, as something outside of thought, and the former merely expounds on the laws or rules governing relations between concepts, inferences, and judgements. Hegel is interested in the relation between the “absolute allgemeine Formen der Verständlichkeit” and thinking “über jedes mögliche gegenstandsbezogene Denken” (DAdDI, p. 175). As with Kant, the logical form has an immediate influence on how we should understand the possibility of objective intentionality or object reference in thought. Kant’s novel idea that the very forms of judgement are the categories, insofar as they relate to objects, is one that Hegel fundamentally shares. But Pippin thinks that Kant did not go far enough in affirming the identity between the forms of thought and the categories of objective knowledge or experience (cf. DAdDI, p. 176). He maintains that the relation between general logic, which governs the rules of the forms of judgement or thought in general, and transcendental logic, which is about the forms of knowledge about objects, is far more intimate than Kant cares to admit (DAdDI, p. 177).

It appears that Pippin believes that the metaphysical deduction in and of itself already shows, or should, suitably amended, show, that intimacy between the forms of thought and things. The distinction that Kant makes between general logic and transcendental logic is not as sharp as one may think, says Pippin. It is certainly not the case that general logic should be understood as a form to which
content is being added (DAdDI, p. 177). If this is indeed meant as a criticism towards Kant, I think that it shows a few misunderstandings with respect to how Kant or Kantians regard the relation between the metaphysical and transcendental deductions, and secondly, I’d want to suggest that Kant's own understanding of that relation is much closer to Pippin’s own presumptively corrected view of Kant’s take on it or, at any rate, of the “standard” Kantian reading.

(1) The distinction between general logic and transcendental logic does not map onto the distinction between the metaphysical deduction and the transcendental deduction; Kant only retroactively labels the sections that are considered to be part of the metaphysical deduction a metaphysical deduction (in B159, at the start of §26). This suggests that the metaphysical deduction is just a part of the overall project of a deduction of the categories, not something that can be uncoupled from it and fully assessed on its own (of course, one can decide to limit one’s analysis to it, as e.g. the work of Wolff 1995 has shown is a worthwhile endeavour; but to be able to appreciate the full extent and role of the metaphysical deduction one should include an account of the transcendental deduction). As I have pointed out elsewhere (Schulting 2012), the account in the metaphysical deduction fully belongs within the purview of transcendental logic (to the extent even that the so-called table of judgement is as much a transcendental table, or a consideration of transcendental logic, as is the table of categories; see A97–8), specifically the account concerning the Leitfaden (which has Pippin's particular interest). Further, Kant indeed says at B159: “In der metaphysischen Deduktion wurde der Ursprung der Kategorien a priori überhaupt durch ihre völlige Zusammentreffung mit den allgemeinen logischen Funktionen des Denkens dargetan, […]”. If this is the central argument of the metaphysical deduction, and the categories are the forms of possible experience of objects, then the metaphysical deduction can't be concerned just with general logic.

(2) Relatedly, Pippin seems to confuse the distinction between general and transcendental logic with the distinction between the forms of thought and the categories. I return to this aspect further below.

(3) For Kant, content is not simply added. His argument in the deduction is concerned with the determination of content from within the subject’s perspective, entirely and wholly internally. After all, the central issue is to explain the synthetic a priori. In no sense is there an a posteriori addition of content to form. What is at issue is showing, from a transcendental perspective, how the
intrinsic link between forms of thought and things (objects) is formed, from the perspective of thought and thought only (given of course sensory content, but that would also not be denied by Hegel).

It is difficult to see how Kant’s connection between the functions of thought and the categories can be seen as more intimate (‘inniger’; DAdD1, p. 177) than it already is in Kant’s account. Kant claims indeed that the functions of thought are the categories, insofar as they concern the relation to an object, or their objective validity. Kant writes at B143: “The categories are nothing other than these very functions for judging, insofar as the manifold of a given intuition is determined with regard to them.” The “insofar” (so fern) here does not so much denote a limiting condition, which would still suggest some sort of discrepancy between the functions of thought strictly speaking and the categories, as that it indicates the outward perspective from thought itself. As Pippin himself says, considerations of mere general logic are, also for Kant, an abstraction from transcendental logic. Transcendental logic is not an addendum to general logic, which is inhaltlos, insofar as it has an unrestricted domain and is not bound to a specific type or set of objects; nor is it a distinct logic that merely concerns the examination of our understanding of objects. As Kant says, the “synthetic unity of apperception”, the quintessential marker of transcendental logic, “is the highest point to which one must affix all use of the understanding, even the whole of logic, and after it, transcendental philosophy” (KrV, B134n.; emphasis added). As Pippin points out (but he means this as a correction of a certain reading of Kant), transcendental logic reveals that thought itself is already intrinsically objectively valid; the transcendental deduction shows this, most clearly in the B-Deduction, where in the so-called ‘first step’ the very form of an object—an object in general, which is the concept of object that is instantiated in any object, spatiotemporal or not—is argued to be dependent on the synthetic unity of apperception, the principle that constitutes consciousness of the object (and the object of consciousness) as much as it constitutes self-consciousness.

Of course, Kant limits this objective validity, to the extent that our knowledge is about empirical, spatiotemporal objects only. But nothing gets added to the intimacy between form of thought and the categories in this case. In the ‘second step’ of the B-Deduction, the intimacy between the functions of thought (or of judging) and the categories is shown to apply, by means of the figurative synthesis, to objects of sensibility too. Often it is held by Kant commentators that the figurative synthesis is distinct from the intellectual synthesis, but I think this is a mistake. Though they are formally distinguishable, the figurative synthesis, or the productive imagination is nothing but the understanding’s effect on sensibility (B151–2), and since the understanding is the intellectual synthesis in abstraction from its effect on sensibility, the figurative synthesis is in fact the set of functions
of thought insofar as they apply, as categories, to an actual, empirical object; in other words, the intimacy at the intellectual level equally applies to the level of sensibility, insofar as the categories are said to apply to it.

The deep intimacy between understanding and imagination, or indeed their identity (in the non-trivial, transcendentally meaningful sense that Pippin rightly foregrounds), is made clear in e.g. B164: “Now that which connects the manifold of sensible intuition is imagination, which depends on understanding for the unity of [the manifold’s] intellectual synthesis and on sensibility for the manifoldness of apprehension.” I have interpolated “the manifold’s”, where in the English text it says “its”, which might give the impression that it refers back to the imagination. But reading it in that last way doesn’t make sense: it is not as if the intellectual synthesis of the imagination were at issue (what would that be?). Although the German “ihrer” can, grammatically speaking, refer to “Einbildungskraft”, it should be read as referring to “Anschauung”; this also makes sense, since the point of the passage is that the manifold in intuition is dependent on the understanding for its (i.e. the manifold’s) intellectual synthesis, which is carried out by the imagination with respect to the sensible intuition, and it is dependent on sensibility for its manifoldness of apprehension. (The Meiklejohn translation aptly, though somewhat freely, translates it as follows: “Now that which conjoins the manifold of sensuous intuition is imagination, a mental act to which the understanding contributes unity of intellectual synthesis, and sensibility, manifoldness of apprehension.”)

The imagination is truly the intermediary between sensibility and understanding — and Hegel had seen this clearly already early on, in Faith and Knowledge—but in order to be that intermediary it cannot be distinct from either understanding or sensibility; it must have both qualities, and somehow be identical to both understanding and sensibility in a certain respect, to be that true a priori intermediary. How can something be an intermediary of two entirely different things and still, in some sense, be identical to both of them? Such is accomplished by what Kant calls the productive imagination or the original-synthetic unity: an original unity that holds together what are opposites, understanding and sensibility. This is the deep identity between thought and object that Hegel, too, has in mind, and to which Pippin points—I think that Hegel is wrong though, or at least the early Hegel of Faith and Knowledge, to prise apart the imagination and the understanding, by seeing the understanding as just a derivative form of the original synthetic unity that is the imagination; rather, as is made clear by the passage at B164 and B151, the understanding itself is the imagination in terms of the former’s effect on sensibility; the imagination is how the understanding affects sensibility (see further Schulting 2017, ch. 8).
II

Clearly, then, it is not just Hegel, but Kant himself who sees a deep intimacy between understanding and imagination insofar as the affection of sensibility, and thus the knowledge of objects, is concerned. The intimacy is even deeper on the purely intellectual level (i.e. in the first step of the B-Deduction argument), where, just as Pippin argues, there is an identity between thought and object, more precisely, between the unity of apperception and the concept of an object. Some Kantians may protest at this reading of the Deduction, but they are just mistaken to see a gap between the argument for self-consciousness and the objective unity of consciousness that defines an object or that Kant's argument for the necessary application of the categories for our experience does not imply that the categories are in fact instantiated in the objects of our experience. These objections are based on (typically realist/naturalist) misunderstandings of the central point of the Deduction (for a critique of this position see Schulting 2017, ch. 4).

Pippin is of course right to reject what he calls the “Zwei-Stufen-Modell” of Kant's argument in the Deduction (DAdDI, p. 179), according to which we first receive sensible content, and only after which we apply concepts (he refers to an “Aufprägung der begrifflichen Form”; DAdDI, p. 15) to sensible content. But although some nonconceptualists may read it this way, I think no Kantian would read the central argument of the Deduction in this manner, as it would immediately raise the question as to how sensibility and the understanding are in effect a priori related if the understanding is only subsequently seen to apply concepts to a prior given content for any given cognitive judgement (Kant's use of terms like Anwendung at B149 might though be interpreted in this way). Such an interpretation just fails to explain how sensible content and concepts are in fact a priori connected, so that cognition of objects is made possible by means of it.

So the content that is a priori bound with conceptual form is not some a posteriori content added to form afterwards. When Kant says that general logic is without content or that it abstracts from all content, he means of course the transcendental content that relates concepts to objects outside them, i.e. real objects. Kant writes:
General logic abstracts from all content of cognition [allem Inhalt der Erkenntnis], and expects that representations will be given to it from elsewhere, wherever this may be, in order for it to transform them into concepts analytically. Transcendental logic, on the contrary, has a manifold of sensibility that lies before it a priori, which the transcendental aesthetic has offered to it, in order to provide the pure concepts of the understanding with a matter, without which they would be without any content, thus completely empty. (A76–7/B102)

Compare the passage at B78/A54:

As general logic it abstracts from all contents of the cognition of the understanding and of the difference of its objects, and has to do with nothing but the mere form of thinking.

Transcendental content, however, is not empirical logical content, namely such content of which judgements consist (the contingent logical content of any arbitrary judgement; cf. B142), and neither is it sensible content, namely the content of empirical intuitions (i.e. sensations). Rather, transcendental content is the combined set of the categories that make up the synthetic a priori unity of representations, defining an object, and also defining a judgement, for a judgement qua judgement is „nichts andres […], als die Art, gegebene Erkenntnisse zur objektiven Einheit der Apperzeption zu bringen“ (B142). It is this content that needs to be “added” to the general form of the way in which concepts are related (analytically), and from which general logic abstracts. Pippin would, I think, concur here. But of course there is not just this a priori intellectual element: it needs to be connected with sensible content somehow, and here Pippin appears to diverge. However, it is important to stress the fact that, for Kant, the way that sensible content is connected with the synthetic a priori intellectual aspect, the objective unity of apperception, is still wholly a priori. That content is what he calls pure intuition, so it is not as if the sensible matter is offered to concepts a posteriori, or that concepts are a posteriori applied to pre-given sensible matter, i.e. sensations as such. The connection between concepts and their transcendental content lies at the a priori level, namely, it occurs by means of the synthetic unity of apperception that determines sensibility inwardly (to use Pippin’s wording, [1989]), that is, by way of the figurative synthesis of the productive imagination. Transcendental content is not constituted by a literally external relation to something outside it, or by literally apprehending sensations one by one.
Content is therefore not in any way “added” externally to conceptual form. But does this mean that Kant’s distinctions are unwarranted or at least misleading?

Pippin says that falls diese Idee eines möglichen unabhängigen Beitrags seitens der Sinnlichkeit—ob als Kantinterpretation oder für sich genommen—zweifelhaft ist (wenn etwa die zwei Quellen des Wissens begrifflich distinkt, aber untrennbar sind), dann muss die Unterscheidung zwischen allgemeiner und transzendentaler Logik, die ja auf dieser Vorstellung eines Gegensatzes von ‘inhaltlos’ und ‘inhaltvoll’ beziehungsweise ‘von außen mit Inhalt bestückt’, beruht, ebenfalls überdacht werden. (DAdDI, p. 179)

I do not think this is right. First, as I have argued, the contribution by sensibility is not independent, also not for Kant, which is what Pippin implies. As Kant says, transcendental logic has the sensible manifold lying before it a priori, namely in the way that the transcendental aesthetic has offered it, hence in the form of a pure intuition: the connection with sensible content is with the necessary form of this content. The “Inhaltslosigkeit” of pure general logic concerns the abstraction from logic’s transcendental relation to objects: transcendental logic is precisely not inhaltslos because it relates to (sensible) objects, but not because it relates to them externally, as Pippin here suggests is how Kant is often read. I’d say that critiquing this Kant comes down to attacking a straw man.

The distinction between general and transcendental logic is meant to convey the idea that purely by means of an analysis of concepts and their interrelations, one doesn’t get a connection with an object; it is in that sense that concepts are without content. To obtain that relation with an object, one must make a distinction between general logic, which looks merely analytically at conceptual relations (or truth-functional relations between propositions, as Pippin refers them as at p. 181), and transcendental logic, which incorporates a connection to objects. But that has got nothing to do with the presumed idea that content is supplied from the outside (“von außen bestückt”). The only thing that comes from outside is the sensory material itself, qua sensory material; but Hegel would hardly deny that this indeed comes from outside thought (because it is not thought). The determination of this sensory content comes from “inside”, i.e., it is due to the spontaneity of the understanding, of thought itself (B151–2).

Pippin is right to criticise a reading of Kant’s deduction that takes there to be a nonconceptual content that (1) is in and of itself objectively valid and (2) is built upon by means of subsequent acts of judgement (or understanding), such as for example Robert Hanna (2008) believes. Such readings don’t make sense in the Kantian context, where it is precisely the goal of the Deduction to demonstrate
how it is possible that we can determine, *a priori*, how thought content and sensory content hook up inwardly, which grounds our conceptual claims about empirical objects. If the contribution by sensible content, “transcendental content”, were really supplied “from the outside”, one would be none the wiser from any argument in the Deduction that supposedly showed how we are justified in making claims about objects, how pure concepts are justifiably (necessarily) employed in any judgement that says that some \(a\) is \(F\). If it were true that transcendental content is supplied from the outside, Kant could not have shown the fundamental intimacy between the pure concepts and empirical knowledge of objects, which it is precisely the goal of the Deduction to show. But the adjective “transcendental” in “transcendental content”, which is mentioned in the *Leitfaden* passage (B104–5/A79) already shows that this cannot be the case: it concerns content that *a priori* relates the pure concepts to objects outside concepts (whether empirical or imagined) (cf. the definition of ‘transcendental’ at A11–12/B25). The transcendental content of which Kant speaks is the synthetic *a priori* element that secures this relation. A series of passages from the *Critique* show that this relation and the content at issue is produced entirely *a priori*, and so “inwardly”:

[T]hat by means of which we cognize that and how certain representations (intuitions or concepts) are applied entirely *a priori*, or are possible (i.e., the possibility of cognition or its use *a priori*) [is called transcendental]. (B80–1/A56; boldface added)

Transcendental logic, since it is limited to a determinate content, namely that of pure *a priori* cognitions alone, cannot imitate general logic in this division. (A131/B170; boldface added)

But the peculiar thing about transcendental philosophy is this: that in addition to the rule (or rather the general condition for rules), which is given in the pure concept of the understanding, it can at the same time indicate *a priori* the case to which the rules ought to be applied. (B174/B135; boldface added)

[T]he synthesis alone is that which properly collects the elements for cognitions and unifies them into a certain content. (A77–8/B103; boldface added)

Sometimes Kant seems to say that *experience* gives us the matter to which pure concepts can be applied, e.g., at B87–8/A63: “[E]xperience […] itself alone can give us the matter (objects) to which those pure concepts of the understanding
can be applied.” But this should by no means be read as if the categories are literally “von außen mit Inhalt bestückt”. In this passage, Kant makes a more global argument about the fact that logic in and of itself can’t provide us with a connection to objects; for that we need to have recourse to experience. But how this is to proceed, will have to be explained in the body of the Analytic of Concepts, in the sections that follow this particular passage in the introductory section of the Analytic.

Pippin’s point that Kant’s general logic is not to be conflated with a contemporary notion of a formal logic that considers truth values is well taken, but in my view this does not warrant conflating general logic with transcendental logic (Pippin writes that no “strenge Trennung von allgemeiner und transzendentaler Logik statt[findet]” [DAdDI, p. 181]). Pippin argues that logic, for Kant (as for Hegel), concerns intelligibility (Verständlichkeit). But I believe, Kant’s remarks about general logic do seem to say that this intelligibility should be seen merely in terms of how concepts are analytically related (and, by implication, how judgements in inferences etc. are analytically related). Even though this is not formal in the contemporary sense, those relations which general logic, in Kant’s sense, considers are purely formal in the sense of abstracting from the content of cognition of objects, and so it considers questions of logical validity, governed merely by the rules of logic (primarily the principle of non-contradiction and the principle of excluded middle). Perhaps the point that Pippin wants to make is that general logic and transcendental logic are not two distinct logics in terms of separably “operable”. Transcendental logic is a specification of the possibility of logic as a theory of intelligibility (in Pippin’s sense), while general logic abstracts from this specification, but is governed by it nonetheless. This would be in agreement with Kant’s understanding of the relation between general and transcendental logic (see again the earlier quoted footnote to B133–4).

Pippin appears to confuse the distinction between general logic and transcendental logic with the distinction between the forms of thought and the categories. That the very distinction between the forms of thought and the categories is only formal and that in an actual judgement the forms of thoughts are in fact the categories (and thus show the identity of the form of thought and the categories), doesn’t warrant conflating general and transcendental logic. In fact, only making the distinction between general logic and transcendental logic enables one to appreciate this point about the intimate relation between the forms of thought and the categories. General logic (in Kant’s sense) does not make, and does not need to make, the distinction between it and transcendental logic, and so does not see that the forms of thought are intrinsically objectively valid (have extensional content, and refer to substances and their properties, as Pippin says on p. 184), and so have cognitive content that goes beyond the
logical content of conceptual relations (intensional content). Precisely the distinction between general and transcendental logic thus enables us to appreciate the fact that discursive logic, employed in judgements, in and of itself provides relation to an object, to cognitive content strictly speaking. Only transcendental logic makes this clear. Another way to make this point is to say that transcendental logic is a distinctive and distinct perspective on logic, which alone exhibits the objective validity of our thought forms. So in a way, as I suggested above, one may agree with Pippin in saying that there aren’t so much two distinct kinds of logic, which are operative independently of and/or even concurrently with each other; rather, there are two different, distinguishable perspectives, for which there are two distinguishable types of account—a general and a transcendental logic—of the one logic that is paradigmatic for human thinking, namely an Aristotelian-based discursive logic.

Pippin is of course right to say that the Transcendental Deduction needs to prove that concepts apply to intuitions of objects, in order to finally prove that categories are instantiated in the objects of our judgements (DAdDI, p. 184). It seems though that Pippin dismisses the need for such a transcendental deduction (elsewhere [Pippin 2014], he says that all we need is an updated metaphysical deduction). This is unsurprising, if we realise that Pippin’s Hegelian reading of Kant wants to do away with any reliance on a priori or pure intuition, as absolutely distinguishable from concepts (though he would still need the first part of the B-Deduction[7]). But Pippin’s claim (p. 184) that Kant himself points to a blurring of the distinction between intuition and concepts doesn’t seem warranted at all by the passages he quotes (most importantly, the Leitfaden passage). Moreover, the dismissal of pure intuition notwithstanding, Hegel’s point is much closer to Kant’s view than Pippin acknowledges. Pippin writes the following:

[W]enn Hegel zu erklären versucht, was er—im Gegensatz zu Kant—tut, indem er ‘Inhalt in die Logik einführt’, macht er deutlich, dass er weder von der Vielzahl empirischen Inhalts, der angeschauten Mannigfaltigkeit, spricht noch lediglich von gedanklichem Inhalt im Sinne des logischen Gehalts—etwa der Subjekt-Prädikat-Form. Stattdessen sagt er etwas, das zwar näherer Erläuterung bedarf, das aber die […] Idee […] aufruft, dass die Kategorien den ‘Rahmen’ der Bedeutung jeder möglichen Bezugsnahme auf Gegenstände bilden. / “Mit dieser Einführung des Inhalts in die logische Betrachtung sind es nicht die Dinge, sondern die Sache, der Begriff der Dinge, welcher Gegenstand wird.” (DAdDI, p. 185, quoting Hegel; boldface added)
But this is precisely, not in opposition to Kant, but in conformity with Kant's own claim, namely an object is defined as that in whose concept a manifold of representations has been unified (B137), and this is the transcendental content introduced into our concepts, which makes our pure concepts objectively valid, that is, binds purely logical form to empirical content (cf. A103–5). (Pippin himself quotes the formulation at B137 as Kant’s own “Hegelian” expression for the same view on p. 182n.39).

III

Of course, Pippin wants to argue, following Hegel, that a logic of the intelligibility of things does not stop at empirical spatiotemporal objects as such; unlike for Kant, there are no bounds of sense (cf. DAdDI, p. 189n.53). Instead, Hegel's analysis is aimed at “Formen des Denkens von Gegenständen, von Gegenständen, die als verstehbar aufgefasst werden”, in general. That means that the forms of thinking objects, of conceiving of them as intelligible in principle, “konstituieren alles das, was Gegenstände sein können”. They are the forms of objects, “und zwar ohne Kants Einschränkung ‘nur für uns’; denn er beruft sich in seiner Formulierung dieser Behauptung nicht auf nicht-begriffliche Formen der Sinnlichkeit” (DAdDI, p. 183; emphasis added). Quite clearly, then, Pippin argues, for Hegel, “Kants Berufung auf die Form des Außerbegrifflichen als eines weiteren, beitragenden Faktors [ist] irreführend und überflüssig” (DAdDI, p. 183).

Kant must indeed show that sensible objects in fact conform to the categories; there is no a priori guarantee that they do. This is the reason why a transcendental deduction of the categories is needed. Pippin rejects that this is necessary, that is, he rejects a reliance of the categories on nonconceptual intuitions for the objective validity of the categories; hence he rejects the need for a transcendental deduction. In a sense, the additional constraint that Kant adds, namely, the necessary schematisation of the pure concepts to sensible intuitions is arbitrary, and not required by the argument about the identity between apperception and the concept of an object in general. Pippin’s point can be taken to refer to Kant’s distinction between the thought of objects and the cognition (or knowledge) of objects (B146), a distinction that parallels the so-called first and second steps of the B-Deduction, and which concerns the distinction between objects qua conceived and objects of sensible experience (spatiotemporal objects). And here it seems that indeed, if one shears off the possible pure intuition of spatiotemporal objects, one can still have the conception of an object in general, which comports with the set of categories that first make up that a priori concept. It seems that Pippin has such a conception of object in mind for any judgement, an object as it is to be understood in general, and outside of whose perspective, there just is no intelligible object; their concept is all the
intelligibility objects could have. Kant would agree that outside the concept of an object in general there indeed is no intelligible object (see my account in Schulting 2017, ch. 1).

For Kant, however, categories only first have genuine objective validity in a judgement if and when they are applied to sensible objects, requiring their intuition, one way or the other. Of course, they still have meaning even apart from that application, but they do not refer to objects strictly speaking. They just have intensional meaning. It does not seem possible to employ categories other than in judgements about objects, which means to apply them to those spatiotemporal objects about which we judge. Pippin’s Hegel, who conceives of the categories as those concepts which “den ‘Rahmen’ der Bedeutung jeder möglichen Bezugnahme auf Gegenstände bilden” (DAdDI, p. 185), does not, it seems to me, go beyond Kant’s formal conception of an object (the categories forming the concept of an object in general, beyond which there is no possible conception of an object strictly speaking)—and perhaps Pippin concurs.

However, Hegel wants to talk about “die Vernunft dessen, was ist” (cited at DAdDI, p. 185), but it is difficult to see how Hegel can assume that reason as such can provide us the reference to real objects, to what is. Notwithstanding the fact that, as Hegel frequently claims, the Concept produces its own Wirklichkeit—by which Hegel intends to disabuse us of the idea that our knowledge claims were about external reality, or reality out there, apart from our conception of it—he needs to be able to differentiate between merely imagined objects (like ghosts or cherubim, say; cf. A96) or real ones, even if we do not define reality strictly in terms of empirical-physical reality (the latter a persistent complaint from Hegelians against Kant).

Pippin (cf. DAdDI, p. 185n.43) is of course right that intuition does not add anything to the conceptual content of an object, otherwise it wouldn’t be the same object to which I applied a concept and of which I had an intuition. But that doesn’t mean the intuition of the object isn’t needed for the concept to refer to some particular that is actually existent. The reference is not fixed by means of an external determination (whatever that might be), but still the relation between concept and an intuition needs to be specified in order for the reference to an actual object to be fixed. The concept cannot in and of itself fix this reference. Obviously, Hegel does not mean that the actuality of the object is reduced to or produced by the concept; just its objectivity, or intelligibility as an object is wholly dependent on the concept; it is the concept of a thing or object that is object or product of thought (as activity; see DAdDI, p. 186). This is actually quite similar to what Kant wants to say, albeit that any epistemic role for any form of sensible intuition, which is presupposed by the discursive logic that Kant espouses (B145), seems to have no equivalent in Hegel: even apart from the question of
application to spatiotemporal objects, Hegel's concepts do not require any manifold of representations in an intuition at all; all there is, it seems, is a coherent arrangement of relations among concepts only. But even apart from this peculiarity, there is a distinction, however, between saying that the categories together constitute what it means to refer to an object, namely by means of what Kant calls the transcendental object, outside which there is nothing to compare it with (A104), and the actual instantiation of that concept in a really existing object; and this marks the crucial difference with Kant's conception of possible knowledge of an object. Kant writes:

Hence the categories require, beyond the pure concept of the understanding, determinations of their application to sensibility in general (schema), and without these are not concepts through which an object can be cognized [erkannt] and distinguished from others, but only so many ways of thinking of an object for possible intuitions and of giving it its significance [Bedeutung] in accordance with some function of the understanding (under the requisite conditions), i.e., of defining it; they themselves cannot therefore be defined. […]. The pure categories, however, are nothing other than the representations of things in general insofar as the manifold of their intuition must be thought through one or another of these logical functions […].

(A245; boldface added)

IV

For Kant nor Hegel is there discontinuity between conceptuality and sensibility. Hegel reads this more absolutely than Kant though. For Kant, there is still the possibility that some subcognitive forms of sensibility (animal sensibility, the way infants experience, subcognitive coping or cognitive abnormalities in adult behaviour) do not comport with our standard conceptual forms of making intelligible. More importantly, Kant's perspective is more modest and analytically stringent than Hegel's: it seems that Hegel has more confidence in the 'in principle' intelligibility of Being per se, whereas for Kant Being is intelligible only insofar as the cognising subject takes it to be intelligible, with the additional constraint of our knowledge necessarily being conditioned on it having to be related to sensible objects, for our acquaintance with objects to count as knowledge. Pippin seems to say that for Hegel too there is an identity between the object being intelligible and my taking it to be so, effectively the same as what Kant asserts (minus the additional sensibility constraint).

But I venture to say that Hegel's claim is slightly different than Kant's. From a strictly Kantian perspective, the identity is one constituted by the subject taking the object to be in certain ways, which by the same token restricts that identity to
the subject’s perspective. Hegel seems to be saying that Being *lets* itself be known, rather than that its intelligibility is dependent on our *taking* it so. This is reflected by what I earlier quoted Pippin as saying: “Wer auf das Sein mit der Frage der Intellibilität blickt, dem blickt es intelligibel entgegen” (DAdDI, p. 18).

The identity between object and subject—which constitutes intelligibility in the way that this identity is ‘apperceivable’, so to speak—is one that is reflective of Being itself, not *just* of our perspective on it. This is why, in *Glauben und Wissen*, Hegel criticises Kant for first proposing this identity between subject and object, established by means of the original synthetic unity of apperception, and subsequently weakening this insight into what Hegel calls ‘absolute identity’ by assigning this original unity merely to the human understanding, which Hegel sees as rather derivative of that unity (see further Schulting 2017, ch. 8).

In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel further develops this insight into the absolute identity of subject and object, whereby ‘absolute’ should be read as lifting (*aufheben*) Kant’s restriction to what the *understanding* understands and as instead simply asserting Being’s own intelligibility, because the Kantian restriction shows to be an arbitrary one (at least, within the Hegelian conceptual scheme). More precisely, the absolute identity constitutes the synthetic a priori unity that is manifested in the reciprocally determining relations between contrasting pairs of pure concepts, starting with ‘Being’ and ‘Nothing’, that is, in the way each contrasting concept is shown to be a priori and reciprocally related to its putative opposite and hence to any successive concept that a priori combines, synthesises, the two supposedly contrasting concepts. The a priori synthesis between any two contrasting concepts shows both their identity and their contrast; this a priori synthesis is in turn united with a subsequent contrasting concept that is equally a priori synthetically united with the preceding synthesis. The ‘a priori’ aspect is just indicative of the fact that this can all be made clear purely by attending to the ‘logical’ implications of concepts. (This is a complex story, which I can’t tell here.) Since Hegel starts with the presumably most immediately intuitive and basic concepts, there is no reason, inherent to the dialectical logic of showing the synthetic a priori relation between pure concepts, to assume that there is anything left, at the end of the complete conceptual analysis, that remains absolutely *outside* that analysis, to which the combined set of pure concepts would have to be applied in order for these pure concepts to be instantiated in Being itself, so to speak.

By contrast, Kant’s own analysis of the synthetic a priori is constrained by the fundamental assumption that objectively valid knowledge can only be knowledge of empirical (that is, mathematical-physically determinable) objects. This is of course a legitimate assumption (and Kant’s premise is indeed the existence of such objects, as well as the science that studies these objects), but one may
argue that Hegel is right to say that this perspective is rather limited or that, in a sense, it is philosophically dissatisfying, since such an analysis presupposes too much (i.e., it assumes as unproblematic the existence of mathematical-physical knowledge or science as paradigmatic of possible knowledge). Why would religious knowledge or historical knowledge, say, be less knowledge than mathematical-physical knowledge? This has of course nothing to do with expanding the scope of what can be empirically known, that is, going beyond the bounds of sense, but everything with keeping the domain of possible human experience as wide and diverse as possible. What I believe Hegel is claiming is that no specific criterion, such as a priori forms of intuition, let alone empirical criteria, should be taken as an a priori constraint on what is philosophically and thus conceptually intelligible, is within the bounds of reason—and arguably, even Kant sought to examine the possibility of the intelligibility of phenomena that are not within the bounds of sensibility (cf. his accounts of morality, aesthetic judgement and religion). Needless to say that Hegel does not mean hereby to claim that we do not need empirical intuitions in those cases where perceptions of empirical (logico-mathematically determinable) objects are involved.

But the problem remains that Hegel assumes that there is no distinction between pure concepts (categories) and pure intuitions (space and time), that space and time are just types of concept, like ‘Being’, ‘Dasein’, ‘infinity’ etc. This would appear to mean that Hegel is not able to specify how the pure concepts are instantiated in given spatiotemporal particulars, just that space and time are pure concepts that are necessary for the intelligibility of any particular object, as much as other pure concepts are. In and of itself, this is not a problem; Hegel simply has a different conceptual methodology in approaching the problem of the intelligibility of Being than Kant’s more specific methodology, when it comes to the analysis of the intelligibility of percepts. Hegel’s perspective might, in this sense, be more global (less specific), but in another sense the Hegelian more systematically conceptual approach is philosophically more parsimonious in that it doesn’t have the burden of initially presuming, in the lead-up to the Deduction proper, that there is a “gap” between intuitions and concepts, which in the conclusion is then to be seen as bridged. As Pippin’s discussion shows, one might be tempted to say that there is no gap to be bridged in the first place (DAdDI, p. 302). Though I think it is a mistake, as an interpretation, to approach Kant’s Deduction in this way, it seems apt to see Hegel’s own approach to the issues for which Kant offers a solution in this “gap-denying” manner: for Hegel, there simply is no gap that needs bridging, given his denial of a sharp distinction between pure concepts and pure intuitions, and given the systematic and consistently immanent deduction of the pure concepts, which, once one has reached the end point in the absolute idea, does not require any application,
schematisation or demonstration of the instantiation of concepts in objects or intuitions of objects. Although for Kant too it is the case that there is no gap between the pure concepts and sensibility, via pure intuition, Hegel's insistence on the absolute identity of subject and object more overtly highlights the intrinsic intelligibility of things, indeed of Being itself.

V

To make this last point without insisting too much on the differences between Kant's and Hegel's approaches, we should be focusing on the central premise of both Kant's and Hegel's metaphysics. Their vision of metaphysics is principally concerned with showing that the categories are, by their nature, categories of the objects, as we encounter them in actuality (in Being, in more Hegelian speak), and that since—and this is the revolutionary Kantian claim, which Hegel fully endorses—the categories are nothing but functions of thought, insofar as these are directed at objects, objects and our judgements about them reduce to each other. This should be taken in as radical a sense as it sounds: there is no fundamental discrepancy, or “gap”, between the object and my judgement that would, in principle, prevent me from knowing the object as it is (qua determinate object). There is no good reason to believe such could be the case, and every reason to be confident that reason has the capacity, in principle at least, to know reality. Of course, I could be wrong about some empirical property of an object a, but I could never be wrong about the necessary categorial forms of the object a about which I judge, correctly or incorrectly, that it is F, say.

Any putative opposition between subject and object, between a concept of an object and an intuited empirical (spatiotemporal) object, only obtains in the formal analysis of the presupposed constitutive elements of objectively valid judgement, i.e., in the Deduction itself (this formal opposition is reflected in the so-called “two step” procedure of the B-Deduction); this is the business of transcendental philosophy, an analysis of what is originally synthetically combined. In an actual judgement or experience, I judge about the object such as it presents itself, as concrete object, to me empirically, from its own objectivity, which strictly correlates with the objective unity of my apperception that defines judgement. There is no gap here: my apperception is a ‘reflection’ of the very objectivity of the object that I thereby perceive. Kant's analysis in the Deduction is an abstraction of constitutive elements of what actually takes place integrally, and these constitutive parts should not be taken factually (as if they were separably localisable). With Hegel the abstract analysis of the dialectical logic turns out somewhat more favourable, that is, the way that the constitutive parts manifest themselves gradually, in the course of the logic, as "logically" implicative admits less of misapprehending this as requiring a further instantiation in the real world. For with the thoroughgoing deduction of the concepts all relevant
determinations of the object will have already been given with my concept of the object. To persist in asking the question of the application of concepts to a real object is pure abstract gesticulation; it is to misconceive of what logic, in Hegel’s sense, actually means.

In some sense, then, one might say that the aforementioned Hegelian-Aristotelian idea, which Pippin quotes, namely that “Zu sein heißt, auf bestimmte Weise verständlich zu sein” is also signalled by Kant’s definition of an object as a unity of my representations, as Pippin also suggests (see above, end of Section II), albeit that, given Kant’s interest in an analysis of the how of the possible instantiation of particulars in Euclidean space, but more importantly his different systematic methodology, Kant has certain qualms about extending this, his own, fundamental insight about objectivity to the realm of Being simpliciter.

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Notes:

[*] This essay is an early draft for a chapter, under the title ‘On the Kinship of Kant’s and Hegel’s Metaphysical Logics’, in a book that I’m currently writing, entitled Reflexivity and Representation: Essays on Kant and German Idealism.↩

[1] The title of Pippin’s essay refers to a passage in Hegel’s Greater Logic, where Hegel compares the science of logic to “the realm of shadows”:


[2] For Hegel’s work, I refer to the well-known Suhrkamp (1970/1986) edition, which is also used by Pippin. Most likely, Pippin was obliged to use this edition by Suhrkamp, rather than the Meiner edition—nevertheless, I think it is about time that Anglophone Hegel scholars start referring to the historisch-kritische edition, which, for
the most part, is also available in cheaper Studienausgaben or in the 6 volume Hauptwerke. Of the important most recent English language books on Hegel I’m currently reading (Kreines, Bowman, Pinkard), it seems only Brady Bowman (2013) refers to the historisch-kritische edition.  

[3] Bar a very illuminating essay on Terrence Malick’s majestic The Thin Red Line from 1998, one of the best films ever made, I’m not familiar with Pippin’s extensive work on film and literature.  

[4] This is the second essay, in which I engage Pippin’s account of Hegel’s relation to Kant. For the other essay, see Schulting (2016). See also ch. 3 of Schulting (2017); in ch. 1 of the latter book I explain that the title of my book is in fact indebted to Pippin’s essay ‘Leaving Nature Behind or Two Cheers to Subjectivism’ (see Pippin 2005); in the body of the book I extensively discuss and defend elements of Kant’s subjectivism, in relation to Pippin, in particular with respect to the themes of apperception, objectivity, spontaneity and judgement. Of the essays compiled in DAdDI, I discuss the English versions of Chapters 1 (“Die Form der Vernunft”) and 11 (“McDowells Idealisten”) and the latter also in Schulting (2016).  


[6] Pippin quotes a passage from the Science of Logic, where Hegel compares the Logic to Kant’s transcendental logic: “Die klarste Beschreibung der Weise, wie Hegel zwei Drittel seiner Logik, die objektive Logik, verstanden wissen will, lautet so: ‘Das, was hier objektive Logik genannt worden, würde zum Teil dem entsprechen, was bei [Kant] die transzendentale Logik ist [5:61]” (DAdDI, pp. 165–6).  

[7] Thanks to Christian Onof for noting this. Pippin actually appears to latterly have shifted his view on this point from at first arguing (1989:38) that we only need the first half of the B-Deduction to arguing (2014:148) that all we need is an updated metaphysical deduction (cum apperception theory). See further Schulting (2017), ch. 3.  

References:


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