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Modern Scepticism, Metaphysics, and Absolute Knowing in Hegel's *Science of Logic*

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Abstract

While there are good reasons to think that Hegel would not engage with modern scepticism in the *Science of Logic*, this article argues that he nevertheless does so in a way that informs the text's conception of logic as the latter pertains to metaphysics. Hegel engages with modern scepticism's general concerns that philosophy should begin without unexamined presuppositions and should come to attain not only knowledge of truth, but corresponding second-order knowledge: knowledge of knowing truth. These concerns inform two needs that Hegel formulates for first philosophy, which logic—by unifying with metaphysics, which is traditionally synonymous with first philosophy—is to satisfy. However, logic, for the *Logic*, is unified with metaphysics as a science of absolute knowing, the form of thinking involved in traditional metaphysics. As such, logic, for the *Logic*, is neither anti-metaphysical nor reducible to metaphysics, but is rather a science of metaphysical thinking, which, for Hegel, includes metaphysics. The article emphasizes how Hegel's construal of logic as a science of absolute knowing avoids running into the 'swimming problem' that Hegel raises against, broadly, epistemological forms of first philosophy.

Introduction

Hegel's engagement with scepticism is clearest in his early writings, up to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*'s 'self-completing [*sich vollbringende*] scepticism' (*PS*: §78/56).[1] In these early writings, Hegel looks to critically incorporate or even 'sublate' ancient scepticism, namely Pyrrhonism and the 'Platonic scepticism' of the *Parmenides*, into his own dialectical thinking (*RSP*: 323).[2] The early Hegel draws a sharp contrast between ancient and modern scepticism. Ancient scepticism embraces and destroys 'the whole domain of that knowledge [acquired] through the understanding' by setting finite determinations into antinomies, marking 'the

negative side of cognition of the Absolute' (*RSP*: 323). By contrast, modern scepticism exhibits a problematic 'certainty of the facts of consciousness' undergirding its challenges to and denials of knowledge, especially the 'fact' that thinking is finite and separate from being (*RSP*: 332).[3] Indeed, regarding problematic certainty, the early Hegel defines *dogmatism*, somewhat idiosyncratically, as philosophy that 'posits something finite, something burdened with an opposition (e.g. pure Subject, or pure Object, or in dualism the duality as opposed to the identity) as the Absolute', such that modern scepticism is 'dogmatic skepticism' (*RSP*: 335). On the usual story, then, Hegel favours ancient over modern scepticism, and his engagement with the latter is largely contingent upon the popularity it attained through texts like Shulze's *Aenesidemus*.[4]

There are at least four good reasons to think that Hegel would neither engage with scepticism in general nor with modern scepticism in particular in his work after the *Phenomenology*, especially in the *Science of Logic*. First, Hegel describes the *Phenomenology* as a 'self-completing' scepticism; that scepticism completes itself in the *Phenomenology* suggests that it would not appear afterward. Second, the *Phenomenology* concludes with a form of thinking that is unified with being—viz. absolute knowing—and if there is no room for sceptical challenges with no gap between thinking and being, there seems to be no room for scepticism after the *Phenomenology* in general.[5] Third, Hegel says that absolute knowing is the *Logic*'s 'standpoint', such that specifically in the *Logic*, there should generally be no room for scepticism (*SL*: 21.54–55; cf. *PS*: §798/427 and *SL*: 21.33–34). Finally, because absolute knowing overcomes the opposition of thinking to being, and because Hegel dismisses modern scepticism's emphasis on the opposition of thinking to being, there is reason to think the *Logic* would not engage with modern scepticism in particular.

Nevertheless, the *Logic* does engage with modern scepticism.[6] Modern scepticism, however, is multifaceted, including *challenges* to and *denials* of knowledge, sceptical *solutions* to the latter, and *methods* for orienting thinking pursuing truth. These may appear in the *Logic*, but I cannot examine them all here.[7] Instead, I will examine how the *Logic* engages with modern sceptical *concerns* over how philosophy (or 'science', or thinking pursuing truth) should begin and about second-order knowledge—knowledge of knowing *p*—corresponding to first-order knowledge—knowledge of *p*. Moreover, I argue that this engagement informs the *Logic*'s conception of logic vis-à-vis metaphysics, the latter of which I treat here as synonymous with ontology or the science of being *qua* being, such that logic, for the *Logic*, is a science of absolute knowing and is thus neither anti-metaphysical nor reducible to metaphysics, but a science of metaphysical thinking.

Well-known cases like Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Bacon's *New Organon*, and Kant's first *Critique* clarify that modern scepticism is concerned about how philosophy should begin, especially because, for modern scepticism,

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philosophy's beginning should 'enable' philosophy 'to arrive at a certain and evident knowledge of the truth' (Descartes 1984: 8). What I am calling modern scepticism's 'concern about second-order knowledge corresponding to first-order knowledge' is closely related to the concern about philosophy's beginning: as Descartes's remark indicates, the modern sceptical concern with philosophy's beginning is animated not simply by the aim of knowing or, what is here the same, thinking[8] truth, but *certain* and *evident* knowing of truth, i.e., known truth, the knowing of which is itself known. As such, for modern scepticism, knowing truth requires not only knowing truth itself, but knowing the knowing of truth.[9] Without corresponding second-order knowledge, first-order knowledge claims might be unchecked falsehoods. Even if true, as unchecked, they are indistinguishable from dogma and thus improper for philosophy or 'science'. Accordingly, modern scepticism scrutinizes philosophy's beginning so that philosophy knows its own knowing, which is necessary for truth to be certain and evidently known. This search for second-order knowledge, characteristically, is also meant to overcome dogmatism and avoid unchecked error, tasks marking the negative side of enabling philosophy to attain certain and evident knowing of truth.

Classically, the concern about second-order knowledge just articulated is taken to entail the need for a certain, indubitable 'foundation' from which to begin pursuing knowledge. While I argue that Hegel's *Logic* takes the second-order knowledge concern seriously, Hegel famously criticizes the oft-related need for beginning from a certain foundation in terms of the 'swimming rejoinder'. For Hegel, the modern sceptic's search for a certain foundation for knowledge prior to pursuing knowledge is like trying to learn how to swim without (or before) entering the water; just as one can only learn to swim in water, so too can 'the examination of knowing' proceed only '*by way of knowing*' (*EL*: §10). The reading offered here, where logic is a science of absolute *knowing* and is thus to some extent and in some respect epistemological, may thusly appear to render Hegel subject to his own swimming rejoinder (see Kreines 2015: 13–15, 142), but we will see (in section IV) that Hegel's construals of logic's beginning and relation to metaphysics undercut this worry.[10]

Despite the four reasons enumerated above and the worry flagged about the 'swimming rejoinder', we can generally understand why the *Logic* would engage with modern sceptical concerns in a way that bears on logic's relation to metaphysics. Absolute knowing, the *Logic*'s 'standpoint', is the form of thinking involved in traditional metaphysics, as the latter proceeds as if thinking and being are united (see *SL*: 21.49). By contrast, modern scepticism characteristically assumes thinking's disunity with being, requiring that philosophy examine thinking to determine whether it can be at all united with being, which would render knowledge of being *qua* being, or metaphysics, possible.[11] As Descartes expresses it, in examining thinking, modern scepticism examines 'the foundations of First Philosophy', the

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latter being traditionally synonymous with metaphysics (Descartes 1984: 8). However, on account of what are ultimately, for Hegel, mere 'prejudices about the facts of consciousness', modern scepticism characteristically concludes that thinking cannot be united with being and thusly denies metaphysics. If logic's standpoint is absolute knowing, one might think it is simply metaphysics. But if logic is also a science of absolute knowing, then absolute knowing is its standpoint *and* object, such that logic seeks to know not simply fundamental truth, like metaphysics, but the *knowing* of such truth. In other words, logic pursues second-order metaphysical knowledge, which is the sense in which I argue that logic in the *Logic* is neither anti-metaphysical nor reducible to metaphysics.

In Hegel's words, the 'older metaphysics had [. . .] a higher concept of thinking' in that thinking is unified with being, but 'modern philosophy' has a comparably 'loftier spirit', whereby thinking is recognized as itself needing to be known in thinking's pursuit of truth (*SL* 21.29–30). In taking on modern sceptical concerns, Hegel's *Logic* shares this 'loftier spirit', but retains the basic metaphysical view of thinking, and by 'elevating' the latter to the former, it looks to know absolute knowing, or metaphysical thinking. As Hegel puts it, the science of logic results in '*self-knowing truth*': the true form of thinking—i.e., absolute knowing—that knows itself as such, and thus knows the truth of its thinking, which includes metaphysics (*SL*: 12.236).

Sections I and II examine the *Logic*'s opening portion, titled, 'With What Must the Beginning of Science Be Made?', to advance the claim that the text engages with each of the two concerns just discussed. Section III accounts for the two 'needs' for philosophy's beginning discussed in 'Beginning of Science'. Finally, section IV accounts for the *Logic*'s conception of logic, as it stands vis-à-vis metaphysics, as informed by the material from sections I through III. The conclusion briefly entertains some lines of objection to clarify the scope of the article's argument.

I. How should philosophy begin?

As the quotation from Descartes above suggests, the concern over how philosophy should begin pursuing truth is closely related to the issue of what 'first philosophy' is and how it can be pursued. Aristotle influentially treated first or 'primary' philosophy as synonymous with metaphysics or ontology, i.e., 'the science of being *qua* being'. Opening *Metaphysics* Epsilon, Aristotle says that the starting-point of metaphysics is 'being unconditionally or qua being' (Aristotle 2016: 98/1025b). For Aristotle, all sciences have 'starting-points', but that of metaphysics is unconditioned, such that 'no science [. . .] supervises it' (Aristotle 2016: 100/1026b). However, for Aristotle, and many others after him, to study metaphysics, one

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'should come with prior scientific knowledge of analytics', or, logic (Aristotle 2016: 52/1005a).[12] Accordingly, while logic has *ordinal*, even '*pedagogical*' *priority* over metaphysics in thinking's pursuit of truth, such that the latter in *some* sense begins with logic, truth itself, for Aristotle, ultimately rests on being *qua* being (Lu-Adler 2018: 45).[13] As such, metaphysics is *metaphilosophically primary* to all sciences, or the *most fundamental* science in thinking's pursuit of truth, though logic is ordinally prior to metaphysics in this pursuit.

Modern scepticism generally scrutinizes philosophy's beginning by beginning with an examination of thinking. Accordingly, for modern scepticism, some science of thinking ordinally precedes any metaphysics. If and in so far as logic is a science of *thinking* (cf. *SL*: 21.28), this accords with Aristotle and much of philosophical history. However, modern scepticism begins with an examination of thinking not to ensure that thinking abides by logical rules, but as Descartes says (see above), to arrive at *certain* and *evident* truth, or *truth for thinking*. Modern scepticism insists that the truth thinking pursues must be understood as truth for the thinking that pursues it, and to know what truth for thinking is, one must know not simply what constitutes truth *per se*, but, more importantly for modern scepticism, what thinking's knowing of truth consists in. Especially in light of the aims of overcoming dogmatism and avoiding unchecked error, any claim about what constitutes truth *per se* must accord with what can be thought or known, and to determine the latter, one must examine thinking. As such, *contra* Aristotle, modern scepticism holds that metaphysics should be 'supervised'—say, regulated, recast, forbidden, or deemed impossible—according to an examination of thinking. Because philosophy involves or paradigmatically *is* thinking pursuing truth, modern scepticism treats philosophy's beginning as a problem of and for philosophy, which Hegel remarks upon in terms of 'a new awareness of the difficulty of finding a *beginning* in philosophy, and the reason for this difficulty, and so also the possibility of resolving it' (*SL*: 21.53).

This sense of the problematic undergirding modern scepticism's concern about how philosophy begins helps us examine three distinctions concerning philosophy's beginning in the opening paragraphs of the *Logic*'s 'With What Must the Beginning of Science Be Made?' section. Although abbreviated, Hegel's discussion of these distinctions indicates engagement with the modern sceptical concerns noted here. Moreover, while some of these distinctions do not immediately exhibit connections to modern scepticism, they enable us to discern engagements with modern scepticism in the text. Given these interpretive challenges, some charitable reconstruction is needed.

On the first distinction, philosophy's beginning 'must be either *something mediated* or *something immediate*', however, 'it can be neither the one nor the other; so either way of beginning runs into contradiction' (*SL*: 21.53).[14] In charging each with contradiction, Hegel suggests that mediate and immediate beginnings

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both are and are not beginnings. To understand this, we might note two basic features of a beginning: a beginning must be (1) *first* and (2) the beginning *of something*. Mediate and immediate beginnings, at least when formulated one-sidedly, each fail to exhibit one of these features. A mediate beginning, as mediate, is determinate, meaning that it marks a point from which something can begin; on the other hand, as mediated, it presupposes something mediating it, such that it is not a 'beginning proper', i.e., not 'truly first' (*SL*: 21.54). An immediate beginning, as immediate, involves no presupposition and is thereby truly first, but it is also—as immediate—indeterminate, and so *nothing* from which something can begin (cf. *SL*: 21.69).

While neither are proper beginnings, mediated beginnings are particularly concerning for first philosophy. As the metaphilosophically primary science, first philosophy does not admit of examination by another science. Accordingly, if first philosophy's beginning is mediated, it relies upon some presupposition(s) that, according to the form of science, cannot be examined; as such, philosophy would not only begin with an 'improper' beginning—which is unproblematically true of all of thinking's pursuits of truth except first philosophy—but would also raise worries about dogmatism and unchecked falsehood, which animate modern scepticism's concern over how philosophy begins. But although these worries animate modern scepticism thusly, Hegel consistently criticizes modern scepticism for involving mediated beginnings reliant upon the presupposition that thinking is fixedly opposed to being (cf. *SL*: 21.29 and 21.121), which prompts his 1802 charge of dogmatism against modern scepticism.[15] Further, Hegel thinks that this presupposition marks an unchecked falsehood 'that has become the universal opinion of modern times', suggesting that modern scepticism is a diffuse rather than tightly circumscribed modern phenomenon, which supports reading his abovementioned reference to modern philosophy's 'loftier spirit' as related to modern scepticism (*SL*: 12.201).[16] As such, for Hegel, modern scepticism is guilty of precisely what it worries about. As we will see later in this section, the *Logic* raises this line of criticism against both sceptical and metaphysical forms of beginning philosophy, and because it reiterates Hegel's 1802 critique of modern scepticism and essentially repeats modern scepticism's concern about unexamined philosophical starting points, its appearance in the *Logic*'s discussion of how philosophy begins indicates that the text engages with modern scepticism's concern about this issue.

Hegel's second and third distinctions here are drawn between a 'first principle' and a 'beginning as such', and between 'objective' and 'subjective' first principles, respectively:

> The *principle* of a philosophy also expresses a beginning, of course, but not so much a subjective as an *objective* one, the beginning of *all things*. The principle is a somehow determinate

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> [*irgendwie bestimmter*] *content* —'water,' 'the one,' 'nous,' 'idea,' or 'substance,' 'monad,' etc.—or, if it designates [*bezieht*] the nature of cognition and is therefore meant simply as a criterion rather than an objective determination, as 'thinking,' 'intuition,' 'sensation,' 'I,' even 'subjectivity,' then here too the interest still lies in the content determination. The beginning as such, on the other hand, as something subjective in the sense that it is an accidental way of introducing the exposition, is left unconsidered, a matter of indifference, and consequently also the need to ask with what a beginning should be made remains of no importance in face of the need for the principle in which alone the interest of *the fact* seems to lie, the interest as to what is the *truth*, the *absolute ground* of everything. (*SL*: 21.53)

Hegel's terminology here is somewhat confusing, as first principles are distinguished both from 'the beginning as such' and from one another in terms of 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity'. According to the second distinction, a first principle is objective in that it essentially determines its corresponding exposition, while a beginning as such is subjective in the sense of not doing so, or of being 'accidental'. Especially in light of terminological overlap with the third distinction, a more helpful way to articulate the second distinction is as between 'essential' and 'non-essential' beginnings, where first principles correspond to the former and 'beginnings as such' to the latter.[17]

The third distinction differentiates between two different kinds of first principles, objective and subjective. Objective first principles are simply content determinations, and as objective, they are metaphysical claims and thusly candidates for first-order metaphysical knowledge. As first principles, they determine the nature of all things, and are immediate in this respect. On the other hand, objective first principles are 'somehow determinate [*irgendwie bestimmter*]' (*SL*: 21.27). With this qualification, Hegel indicates these principles' mediacy in a way that nods to modern scepticism's worry that without supervision from an examination of thinking, e.g., in traditional metaphysics, philosophy begins with unexamined presuppositions, here, first principles that are merely *somehow* rather than *in some particular way* determinate.

By contrast, a subjective first principle 'designates [*bezieht*] the nature of cognition' to the exposition it begins (*SL*: 21.53). '*Bezieht*' marks a striking asymmetry between subjective and objective first principles beyond differences between their respective, putative objects: thinking and being. According to this passage, unlike an objective first principle, which Hegel also calls an 'objective determination', a subjective first principle does not characteristically *determine* its object. In addition to 'designates' or 'relates', '*bezieht*' can also mean 'receives', and Hegel seems to

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mean the term in both general senses: a subjective first principle somehow *receives* an account of thinking and then *designates* or *relates* it to the principle's corresponding exposition via criteria that, presumably, are responsive to the received (or, given) account. In characterizing subjective first principles in terms of *beziehen* rather than *bestimmen*, Hegel indicates that they present the same problem of unexamined-ness as objective first principles, which, again, animates the modern sceptic's concern with how philosophy should begin. In this way, the *Logic* engages with if not adopts this concern.

Moreover, in so far as the *Logic*'s notion of subjective first principles denotes modern sceptical first philosophy, this criticism of subjective first principles reaffirms Hegel's 1802 criticism of modern scepticism. Indeed, if the *Logic*'s objective–subjective first principles distinction successfully distinguishes between two distinct forms of philosophy, to wit, it registers the opposition of modern scepticism to metaphysics. Hegel's examples of subjective first principles are readily identifiable of modern rationalism ('thinking') and empiricism ('sensation'), while those of objective first principles span ancient and modern philosophy from the Presocratics ('water') to modern rationalists like Leibniz ('monads') and Spinoza ('substance'). Accordingly, the distinction is between neither rationalism and empiricism nor ancient and modern philosophy *simpliciter*. The modern philosophers represented on the objective side are commonly understood as 'dogmatists' on account of engaging in metaphysics, and Presocratics like Thales are likewise metaphysicians. Subjective first principles denote philosophy that begins with thinking, and because the examples given seem to best represent instances of modern philosophy that contrast with ancient and modern metaphysics, we have reason to regard subjective first principles as denoting modern scepticism, which, as noted, regards the possibility of metaphysics as a problem requiring an investigation into thinking. As such, upon analysing Hegel's examples of objective and subjective first principles in the passage above, the objective–subjective first principles distinction is itself most legible as pertaining to the opposition of modern scepticism to metaphysics with respect to how philosophy begins.

Finally, the section's titular question, 'With what should the beginning of science be made?', articulates this modern sceptical concern in basic terms. To raise and entertain this question, the *Logic* cannot take for granted the classic Aristotelian views that metaphysics is first philosophy and that logic ordinally precedes and is thus really distinct from metaphysics. So regardless of Hegel's ultimate views on these issues, the *Logic* accepts the problematization of metaphysics as first philosophy and, *a fortiori*, of first philosophy as such. In so far as modern scepticism is responsible for these problematizations (cf. *SL*: 21.53), the *Logic* aligns with modern scepticism, and in as much as they reflect modern scepticism's concern with philosophy's beginning, the *Logic* takes this concern seriously.

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To recap, analysing three distinctions from the opening of 'Beginning of Science' has yielded at least three indications that the *Logic* engages with modern scepticism's concern about how philosophy should begin. First, from where we left off, if and in so far as modern scepticism is responsible for problematizing the traditional view in which metaphysics is first philosophy and logic ordinally precedes it, then because the *Logic* accepts such problematization, the *Logic* accepts modern scepticism's problematization on the basis of this concern. Second, the text's construal of objective and subjective first principles as merely somehow determinate registers the worry that philosophy should not begin with unexamined presuppositions, which animates modern scepticism's concern about how philosophy should begin. Third, relatedly, the *Logic*'s construal of each side of the objective–subjective first principles distinction as involving merely 'somehow determinate' beginnings reiterates the modern sceptical criticism of 'dogmatic' metaphysics and Hegel's 1802 critique of modern scepticism as 'dogmatic scepticism'.

II. Second-order knowledge

Appreciating the *Logic*'s engagement with the modern sceptical concern about second-order knowledge corresponding to first-order knowledge requires further consideration of subjective first principles. Given Hegel's distinction between first principles and 'the beginning as such', it is unclear why he counts subjective first principles as first principles. First principles determine their corresponding expositions, but subjective first principles are said to designate, *in contrast to determine*. Nevertheless, Hegel claims subjective first principles are first principles, and with them 'the interest still lies in the content determination' (*SL*: 21.53).

This confusion is dissipated by understanding subjective first principles as sceptical, which is explicitly supported in the 'Beginning of Science':

> But the modern perplexity about a beginning proceeds from a further need which escapes those who are either busy demonstrating their principle dogmatically or sceptically looking for a subjective criterion against dogmatic philosophizing, and is outright denied by those who begin, like a shot from a pistol, from their inner revelation, from faith, intellectual intuition, etc. and who would be exempt from *method* and *logic*. If earlier abstract thought is at first interested in the principle as *content*, but is driven as philosophical culture advances to the other side to pay attention to the conduct of the *cognitive process*, then the *subjective* activity has also been grasped as an essential moment of

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> objective truth, and with this there comes the need to unite the method with the content, the *form* with the *principle*. Thus the *principle* ought to be also the beginning, and that *which has priority* for thinking ought to be also the *first* in the process of thinking (*SL*: 21.53–54).

Hegel characterizes subjective first principles as criteria 'sceptically' set against 'dogmatic philosophizing', i.e., philosophy that makes metaphysical determinations. Accordingly, in so far as subjective first principles are criteria 'against' which such determinations are tested, they must at least exhibit *negative* interest in content determination, say, in regulating, deflating, or denying it. In this way, subjective first principles can pertain to content determinations without making or being them, and are thusly representative of modern scepticism's manner of 'supervising' any metaphysics.

There is a further way in which to discern Hegel's mentioning of the 'sceptical' use of subjective first principles as referencing modern scepticism in particular. Content determinations essentially take the form of first-order knowledge claims, while subjective first principles, as criteria, challenge these determinations *in a particular way*. As criteria rather than content determinations, subjective first principles do not challenge content determinations laterally, say, as alternative, incompossible but equally well-supported content determinations, à la ancient sceptical equipollence. As such, the 'sceptical' use of subjective first principles is not characteristically ancient. Rather, as criteria reliant upon accounts of thinking or 'the cognitive process', subjective first principles 'sceptically' challenge objective content determinations by subjecting them to criteria. If and in so far as this 'criterial' treatment of thinking is paradigmatic of modern scepticism—classic examples include Descartes's methodological use of 'indubitability' as a criterion for certain truth and Kant's treatment of the categories of the understanding in the 'Transcendental Analytic' (see Kant 1998: 217/B113–14)[18]—we have good reason to think the *Logic* construes these principles as used in a characteristically *modern* sceptical way.

In so far as Hegel's account of criteria here is of modern scepticism, the *Logic* registers that it matters for modern scepticism that content determinations be consistent with subjective criteria and thereby thinking. At minimum, this indicates that modern sceptical challenges to knowledge claims are made from another order than those claims themselves, namely, from thinking rather than objects of thought. That the *Logic*'s articulation of this modern sceptical challenge via subjective criteria marks an engagement with the concern about second-order *knowledge* becomes clear when considering the context of this discussion: the dispute registered through the distinctions we have examined is about how philosophy, 'science [*Wissenschaft*]', or simply *thinking pursuing truth* should begin. So the idea that

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objective content determinations must be tested against subjective criteria should be understood as an idea about how thinking should pursue truth, which of course implicates a concern about knowledge.

Accordingly, for modern scepticism, content determinations must be consistent with subjective criteria to be objects of knowledge. By themselves, then, content determinations do not exhibit sufficient conditions for being objects of knowledge; they must be consistent with subjective criteria, and knowing whether they are requires knowing about thinking and its criteria (more in section III). Specifically, because the criteria for knowing whether any content determination is an object of knowledge belong to thinking or knowing, knowing any content determination's (in)consistency with such criteria is knowing the knowing, or not, of that content determination: second-order knowledge of that content determination. Second-order knowledge, then, is required for first-order knowledge: knowing *p* is contingent upon criteria pertaining to thinking, such that knowing *p* requires knowing how thinking stands with respect to *p,* in addition to knowing *p*. If this is an apt reading of Hegel's discussion of subjective first principles 'sceptically' used as criteria against content determinations, then clearly this discussion engages with modern scepticism's concern about second-order knowledge corresponding to first-order knowledge.

III. Two needs for beginning philosophy

Examining the two needs of beginning philosophy that Hegel mentions in the paragraphs quoted above clarifies how the engagements with modern sceptical concerns just reviewed inform the *Logic*'s conception of logic vis-à-vis metaphysics.[19] As we will see in section IV, the *Logic* construes logic such that it can properly satisfy these needs. Accordingly, at least in so far as these needs or their proper satisfactions issue from or are shaped by the engagements with modern sceptical concerns discussed above, the *Logic*'s conception of logic is informed by the latter.

The first need is 'for the principle in which alone the interest of *the fact* seems to lie, the interest as to what is the *truth*, the *absolute ground* of everything', or in other words, for philosophy to begin with a principle pertaining to fundamental truth (*SL*: 21.53). Hegel mentions this need when distinguishing between first principles and the beginning as such; the former recognizes this need, the latter does not.

Drawing on Hegel's distinction between mediated and immediate beginnings, given that this need implicates fundamental truth, satisfying it requires an immediate first principle. Metaphysical first philosophy, then, in beginning with a determination of all things, satisfies this need. However, it only does so to some extent, given Hegel's nod that objective first principles are somehow determinate and thus mediate. As noted, Hegel raises this concern for both objective and

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subjective first principles; neither properly pertains to fundamental truth. Accordingly, what it means to begin with an immediate first principle in a way that properly satisfies this first need is unclear, and will require some ingenuity. In section IV, we will get a sense of Hegel's ingenuity in this respect.

Bracketing the immediacy issue, we should consider whether and if so to what extent modern scepticism recognizes this need, even if it tends not to satisfy it. At minimum, because failures or refusals to satisfy needs are not thereby failures at recognizing them, modern scepticism *can* recognize this need. And indeed, multiple 'varieties' of modern scepticism recognize but do not satisfy this need. In attempting to establish an indubitable foundation from which to infer from thinking to being, Cartesian scepticism registers this need; however, as Conant puts it (2012: 30), the Cartesian sceptic concludes that this is 'something we cannot do', such that she fails to satisfy a need she recognizes and attempts to satisfy. Further, Kantian scepticism (surely the more important 'variety' for Hegel) presents an instance of recognizing but refusing to satisfy this need in, among other places, Kant's remark in the first *Critique* that while knowledge of fundamental truth is unattainable, thinking nevertheless 'necessarily and with every right demands' it (Kant 1998: 112/Bxx). For the Kantian sceptic, then, this need is *necessarily* and *rightly* recognized, but is nevertheless unsatisfiable, such that the Kantian sceptic refuses to attempt at its satisfaction. In Conant's words, here there is 'nothing to do' except determine and accept the limits of thinking (Conant 2012: 30).

It seems, then, that traditional metaphysics recognizes this need but fails to satisfy it in so far as the principle of traditional metaphysics is not immediate, but somehow determinate. And even when modern scepticism knowingly fails or refuses to satisfy this need on account of its prejudices about the facts of consciousness, it nevertheless recognizes the need.

Hegel also notes 'a further need': 'to unite the method with the content, the *form* with the *principle*' (*SL*: 21.54). In other words, the further need is for thinking's way of proceeding to knowledge to be unified with what it seeks to know. Hegel is quite explicit about this need's uptake. It is unrecognized by metaphysicians, at least in virtue of their dogmatic invocation of first principles, and by modern sceptics, at least in virtue of their use of subjective first principles as criteria. It is also denied by philosophy that, following Hegel's examples of inner revelation, faith, and intellectual intuition, straightaway begins in virtue of the idea that *some* form of thinking—in a fideistic or generally rationally inscrutable way—is united with being; if thinking and its object are already united, there is no *need* to unite them, hence the *denial* of this need. There is not room here to consider this latter philosophical beginning at length, but, there is a corresponding, noteworthy puzzle in anticipation of section IV: If logic, for Hegel, begins with absolute knowing, it seems that it also simply assumes the unity of thinking and its object, such that *it too* would deny this need, which, from this passage, appears problematic for Hegel, at least in so far

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as the assumed unity is rationally inscrutable or fideistic rather than 'scientific', as his examples indicate. In section IV we will see that understanding logic as a science of absolute knowing helps address this issue.

Discussing how this 'further need' comes to be recognized, Hegel mentions that 'early abstract thought' was simply interested in first principles as content, i.e., as metaphysical determinations. Here, too, the unity of thinking and being appears implicit or assumed, as metaphysical determinations are advanced without interest in thinking. Hegel, effectively, is underscoring that traditional metaphysics recognizes and (imperfectly) satisfies the first need to the exclusion of recognizing this further need. The latter, Hegel says, only begins to become recognized once 'philosophical culture' shifts from beginning with determinations of being to attending 'to the conduct of the *cognitive process*' (*SL*: 21.54).[20] This certainly sounds characteristic of modern scepticism. However, in its character of applying subjective criteria to content determinations, modern scepticism fails to recognize this need, as the two relate merely externally. Because Hegel at once credits characteristically modern sceptical developments with enabling the recognition of the further need while also construing modern scepticism as in some sense failing to recognize the need, we should ask: is there a particular variety of modern scepticism that (1) does not *merely* treat thinking as the basis for developing criteria for testing content determinations independent of thinking, (2) regards thinking as essential to its object, and (3) appears in Hegel's *Logic*?

The answer, to all appearances, is Kantian scepticism.[21] In a discussion clearly anticipating the passage we have been examining, Hegel notes 'something deeper lying at the foundation of this turn which knowledge takes, and appears as a loss and a retrograde step, [but which is] something on which the elevation of reason to the loftier spirit of modern philosophy in fact rests': Kant's 'insight into the *necessary conflict* of the determinations of the understanding with themselves' (*SL*: 21.30). For Kant, the categories of the understanding are in some sense 'criteria for thinking', but philosophy often mistakes these criteria for 'properties of things in themselves' or of being (Kant 1998: 217/B114). The ground on which this is mistaken, for Kant, is the necessary conflict itself; because the categories of thinking result in contradiction, they cannot, for Kant, be true of—and hence cannot be unified with—being, which Hegel likes to remark upon in terms of Kant's 'excessive tenderness toward the world to keep contradiction away from it' (*SL*: 21.232; cf. *SL*: 11.272). Excessive tenderness notwithstanding, Kant is importantly recognizing, among other things, that the further need for first philosophy is not satisfied by subjective first principles as criteria, which helps clarify why criterial treatments of first philosophy tend to conclude sceptically.[22] Accordingly, for Kant, because fundamental truth is separate from criteria, there can be no 'general and certain criterion of the truth of any cognition' (Kant 1998: 197/A58/B82–83; cf. *SL*: 12.26–27).[23]

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However, there is a further, complicating moment in the Kantian sceptical account. The disunity of criteria and being and the subsequent inability of criteria to serve as 'general and certain' indications of truth imply that modern scepticism's characteristic, criterial approach to first philosophy cannot enable metaphysics, let alone certain and evident metaphysics. As such, 'there is nothing to do' for the Kantian sceptic. On the other hand, the Kantian sceptic's subjective first principle *is* united with its content; specifically, the original unity of apperception, in Kantian idealism, structures all of thinking's possible objects (cf. Kant 1998: 305/B234). So although metaphysics, as a science of being *qua* being, is, strictly speaking, unavailable to the Kantian sceptic, she introduces a sceptical solution: in so far as thinking determines its objects, a science of thinking can effectively replace metaphysics. More specifically, for Kant, transcendental logic takes the place of metaphysics. So while a science of being *qua* being is impossible because of thinking's disunity with the in-itself, metaphysics, now as transcendental logic, is possible as a science of the general form of all possible objects (of thought) (cf. Kant 1998: 358–59/A247/B303).[24] In this respect, Kant recognizes and satisfies the further need by appeal to the original unity of apperception and transcendental logic.[25]

For Hegel, this 'satisfaction' is unsatisfactorily one-sided. On the Kantian account, determinations of thinking are not true of being *qua* being, but of being *qua* the form of all possible objects of thought. For Hegel, this 'is like attributing right insight to someone, with the stipulation, however, that he is not fit to see what is true but only what is false', which counts against both Kant's sceptical solution as a satisfaction of the further need and the truth of his account of thinking (*SL*: 21.30).[26] Indeed, this dissatisfaction is corroborated by Kant's own expression, whereby the science of being *qua* being gives way to the 'modest', 'mere analytic of the pure understanding' (Kant 1998: 359/A247/B303). Thus, while Kant's insight prompts recognition that thinking and its object must be unified in some sense, which also leads Kant to recognize how a science of thinking can serve as first philosophy neither in the dogmatic manner of subjective idealism nor in the sceptical manner of using criteria separate from thinking's object, Kant does not, for Hegel, properly satisfy the further need (cf. *SL*: 12.23–25).

For Hegel, to properly satisfy this need, what is metaphilosophically primary and what is ordinally prior in thinking's pursuit of truth must coincide:

> the *principle* ought to be also the beginning, and that *which has priority* for thinking ought to be also the *first* in the process of thinking [*So soll das* Prinzip *auch Anfang und das, was das* Prius *für das Denken ist, auch das* Erste *im* Gange des Denkens sein]. (*SL*: 21.54)

This remark is highly suggestive along lines segueing into the issue of logic's relation to metaphysics. As noted, metaphysics—the science of being *qua* being—has historically been synonymous with first philosophy, and yet logic, traditionally, is

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ordinally prior to it. Modern sceptics, whatever—if anything—they ultimately regard as first philosophy, likewise regard logic as ordinally prior to and thus distinct from first philosophy, including those otherwise critical of Aristotle.[27] In light of this, Hegel is clearly proposing something like a unification of logic and metaphysics to satisfy the further need without resorting to a Kantian sceptical solution. Kantian transcendental logic marks something like a unification of logic and metaphysics (though it is more like a deflation of metaphysics into logic) and thereby marks a clear precedent for Hegel's proposal, but Hegel's conception of logic as unified with metaphysics is to overcome the deficiencies Hegel sees in Kant's attempt to satisfy these needs with transcendental logic as first philosophy. Accordingly, in so far as the two needs discussed here owe to modern sceptical concerns, and in as much as the *Logic*'s conception of logic is developed to satisfy these needs in contradistinction to modern scepticism, the *Logic*'s conception of logic is informed by modern scepticism in being responsive to the latter's concerns.

IV. The *Logic* on logic in relation to metaphysics

As the appeal to transcendental logic indicates, Hegel is not the first to offer a conception of logic as in some sense unified with metaphysics. One could thus productively read both Kantian transcendental logic and Hegelian logic in light of 'the age-old question about the relation between logic and metaphysics' (Lu-Adler 2018: 67). However, such a study cannot be undertaken here. Accordingly, rather than offer a general picture of the *Logic*'s conception of logic, here I sketch out the *Logic*'s conception of logic in relation to metaphysics according to this conception's pertinence to and emergence from the engagements with modern scepticism identified above, emphasizing this conception's satisfaction of the two needs discussed in section III. The first need is for philosophy to begin with a principle pertaining to fundamental truth, which entails that philosophy must in some respect begin with an immediate first principle, i.e., with something 'truly first'. The second is for thinking to be united with its object, which, in this context, Hegel thinks is properly satisfied by some unification of logic and metaphysics.

As noted, given Hegel's indications that both objective and subjective first principles fail to be adequately immediate, what it means for philosophy to begin with a principle that really pertains to fundamental truth requires ingenuity. Hegel attempts at this by beginning logic with what he calls a 'mediated immediacy'.[28] Following his discussion of first principles and his proposal to unify metaphilosophically primary science (metaphysics) with ordinally first science (logic), Hegel introduces the idea of a '*logical* beginning' as distinct from objective and subjective first principles (*SL*: 21.54). He says that logic's beginning can be made 'either by way of mediation as result [viz. of the *Phenomenology*], or immediately as

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beginning proper' (*SL*: 21.54). The latter, immediate beginning, in Hegel's words, is simply 'the resolve [. . .] of considering *thinking as such*', or the resolve to maximally abstract from all contents of thought (*SL*: 21.56). This, of course, makes it unclear how the *Logic* actually begins or takes logic to begin, but on the other hand, that logic can begin immediately from mental abstraction or mediately from the result of the phenomenology of consciousness—i.e., absolute knowing, which Hegel also calls 'pure knowledge'—raises logic above the opposition of immediate and mediate beginnings and thereby above what scholars have called 'the problem of beginning' in the *Logic* (*SL*: 21.54).[29] A consequence of this claim is that each beginning of logic, in so far as the other is equally possible, can be taken as a mere 'beginning as such', which raises the question of whether there is a more essential mediated immediacy at the beginning of logic, for the *Logic*.

After voicing this indifference regarding logic's beginning, Hegel provides a deeper sense in which logic begins with mediated immediacy that clarifies logic's satisfaction of the first need. After characterizing the *Phenomenology*'s result as 'pure knowledge', Hegel writes: '*Logic* is the *pure science*, that is, pure knowledge in the full compass of its development' (*SL*: 21.55). In this sense, logic's beginning, for the *Logic,* is mediated, as logic develops the *Phenomenology*'s result of absolute knowing. However, Hegel says that we must 'ensure that the beginning [of logic] will remain immanent to the science of *this* knowledge', i.e., to logic—the science of absolute knowing or 'pure knowledge'—rather than to the science of consciousness (*SL*: 21.55).[30] So while Hegel thinks that logic begins with 'this determination of pure knowledge' from the *Phenomenology*, i.e., absolute knowing, he thinks that logic must also begin purely from or in absolute knowing, because—as we will further appreciate below—doing so is also beginning with '*simple immediacy*', which can satisfy the first need without introducing unexamined determinateness (*SL* 21.55).

Regarding the further need, there is another important sense in which logic's beginning, for the *Logic*, is a mediated immediacy. In a sense, we have seen, logic begins with absolute knowing, but it also begins with '*pure being*' (*SL*: 21.56). '*Being, pure being*—without further determination' is 'indeterminate immediacy' and thusly 'truly first' (*SL*: 21.68). This may seem to be an objective first principle, which would support a more metaphysical reading of the *Logic* than what is offered here, where, say, logic just is metaphysics. However, pure being here is a thought-determination, such that, as indeterminate immediacy, 'it is equally only this empty thinking', and thus the thought of pure being lapses into that of nothing (*SL*: 21.69). As such, the manner in which logic begins with both absolute knowing and pure being is that it neither simply begins with pure being (which helps distinguish it from traditional metaphysics) nor with an explicit determination of thinking itself (which helps distinguish it from modern scepticism), but with pure being *in thought*, specifically, in absolute knowing; as Hegel says, a logical beginning is 'made in the element of a free, self-contained thought, *in pure knowledge*' (*SL*:

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21.54).[31] In this way, mediated immediacy describes both the form and content of logic's beginning, in that pure, immediate being in thought is likewise pure, immediate thinking of being. This aspect of logic's beginning in the *Logic* as a mediated immediacy thereby marks some kind of satisfaction of the further need to unite the form and principle of first philosophy.

At this point it should not be too controversial to say that, for the *Logic*, logic is the science of absolute knowing; we have encountered remarks that indicate this, and the claim is corroborated by Hegel's characterizations of logic as a science throughout the *Logic*, in which logic is variously called 'pure science' (*SL*: 21.33), 'the system of pure reason' (*SL*: 21.34), 'the science that has *pure knowledge* for its principle' (*SL*: 21.45), and 'the science of the *absolute form* which is implicit totality and contains the *pure idea of truth itself*' (*SL*: 12.25–26). Likewise, Hegel writes that 'the science of logic finds the highest concept of itself, the pure concept conceptually comprehending itself' (*SL*: 12.253). Moreover, we have seen that logic's 'standpoint' is absolute knowing, such that at minimum, logic is a science of absolute knowing in the sense that absolute knowing is the thinking to which the science of logic belongs. However, traditional metaphysics shares this status, such that we still need to determine how the *Logic*'s understanding of the science of logic differentiates logic from traditional metaphysics.

Discussing the relation between metaphysics and 'objective logic' in particular, Hegel differentiates logic from metaphysics by writing that while 'objective logic comprises within itself also the rest of metaphysics', in logic, 'the *determinations of thought*'—not the 'substrata' (e.g., 'the soul, the world, and God') that metaphysics uses such determinations to comprehend—are the '*essential factor*'; logic considers these metaphysical thought-determinations as 'forms free of those substrata' (*SL*: 21.49). Hegel continues in a way that credits the modern sceptical concern with first philosophy, or metaphysics, discussed in sections I and II, further distinguishing logic from metaphysics:

> That metaphysics neglected to do this [viz. critique its own thought-determinations], and it therefore incurred the just reproach that it employed the pure forms of thought *uncritically*, without previously investigating whether and how they could be the determinations of the thing-in-itself, to use Kant's expression—or more precisely, of the rational.—The objective logic is therefore the true critique of such determinations—a critique that considers them, not according to the abstract form of the *a priori* as contrasted with the *a posteriori*, but in themselves according to their particular content. (*SL*: 21.49)

Here, logic is the 'true critique' of thought-determinations through which metaphysics makes claims about being *qua* being. This makes logic sound like modern scepticism and particularly Kantianism, in so far as the latter critique metaphysics

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(cf. *EL*: §41). *Prima facie*, this favours reading the *Logic* as advancing an anti-metaphysical conception of logic, where logic is a science of thinking that challenges metaphysics and is to that extent sceptical. On the other hand, Hegel says that at least with objective logic, metaphysics is 'comprised', which counts against the idea that logic, for the *Logic*, is anti-metaphysical, and *prima facie* in favour of logic as metaphysics.

This apparent issue is overcome by examining Hegel's contrast between his conception of logic and the more commonplace, merely formal conception. As a science of absolute knowing, logic is a science of a particular kind of thinking, one that is neither finite nor estranged from being. 'Whenever logic is taken as the science of thinking in general', by contrast,

> it is thereby understood that this "thinking" constitutes *the mere form* of a cognition; that logic abstracts from all *content*, and the so-called second *constitutive piece* that belongs to the cognition, namely the *matter*, must be given from elsewhere; hence that logic, since this matter does not in the least depend on it, can give only the formal conditions of genuine knowledge, but does not itself contain real truth; or again, that logic is only the *pathway* to real knowledge, for the essential component of truth, the content, lies outside it. (*SL*: 21.28)

Merely formal logic, for Hegel, shares with modern scepticism a presupposed gap between thinking and being, meaning it is also dogmatic in Hegel's sense. Even if logic is necessary for achieving 'genuine knowledge' by providing the latter's formal conditions, it is estranged from knowledge and thus not a science, but instead, say, a canon for correct thinking (Kant). Accordingly, while formal logic might play an indispensable role in thinking pursuing truth, attaining truth is not its task *per se* (cf. *SL*: 21.10). However, for the *Logic*, 'the attainment of truth [. . .] is the object and purpose of logic' (*SL*: 21.16). If the attainment of truth is logic's object and purpose, then logic must not only attain truth, which would mark its purpose, but also come to know the attainment of truth, which marks logic's object. If metaphysics is generally tasked with knowing fundamental truth, then in some respect, logic, according to the *Logic*, shares a purpose with metaphysics. Moreover, in as much as it is reasonable to say that truth is the object of metaphysics, we can draw a further contrast between logic and metaphysics while appreciating their unity for Hegel. According to the *Logic,* logic's object is *the attainment of truth*, meaning that logic is not simply tasked with attaining truth, as is metaphysics, but with attaining the attainment of truth. And if metaphysics is what attains truth, then in being tasked with attaining the attainment of truth, logic is tasked with knowing metaphysical thinking, or absolute knowing. Absolute knowing is thus 'elevated'

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to modern philosophy's 'loftier spirit' in that it is *itself* to be known by logic, in addition to being the form of thinking in which being is known.

For Hegel, metaphysics, the science of being *qua* being, is not traditionally tasked with attaining knowledge of its own thinking, or of itself as a science (cf. *SL*: 21.49, quoted above). This, together with Hegel's manner of differentiating logic from metaphysics while linking the former with the latter, clarifies how logic for the *Logic* is informed by the modern sceptical concern about second-order knowledge. The second-order standing of logic vis-à-vis metaphysics is legible in both logic's object and logic itself: logic's object is the attainment of truth rather than simply truth, and logic itself is the critique of metaphysical categories rather than the attempt to think substrata through those categories. Further, the second-order standing of logic's object indicates that logic is not an anti-metaphysics or sceptical solution—that logic does not outright deny the attainability of truth. Positively stated, it indicates that logic shares a purpose with metaphysics but differs from metaphysics in striving after this purpose on a second-order, namely by examining the attainment of truth, or metaphysical thinking.

However, for logic to attain the attainment of truth, it must also attain truth, and in this respect it must also comprise metaphysics. Accordingly, it is important that Hegel insists that logic is not separate from truth but rather, with absolute knowing as its standpoint, already has truth in its grasp and is thus already in possession of first-order metaphysical thinking. This is a crucial sense in which logic begins with pure being in thought, or the thought of pure being. The latter is metaphysical thinking, such that logic, for the *Logic*, includes metaphysics, but by examining pure being *in thought* or *the thinking of pure being* rather than simply *being*, logic is irreducible to metaphysics as a science of being *qua* being. And of course, in including metaphysics, logic is not anti-metaphysical.

Finally, we should address an issue regarding logic's standing as a science of absolute knowing, anticipated in section III. If absolute knowing, as Hegel says, is 'the *truth* of all the modes of consciousness', the form of thinking in which truth is properly attained, then because logic begins with absolute knowing, it seems that logic attains truth at the outset if not prior (*SL*: 21.33). How, then, can logic satisfy the further need? How can the attainment of truth be something to *achieve* as logic's purpose? Here it is worth considering the second of two moments that Hegel identifies in logic:

> But in the Introduction, the concept of logic was itself presented as the result of a science that transcends it [i.e., the science of consciousness], and hence as equally a *presupposition* here. Accordingly, logic was defined as the science of pure thought —the science that has *pure knowledge* for its principle and is a unity which is not abstract but living and concrete, so that the

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> opposition of consciousness between *a being subjectively existing for itself*, and another but objectively *existing such being*, has been overcome in it, and being is known to be in itself a pure concept and the pure concept to be true being […] But they are now known to exist *inseparably*, not as in consciousness, where each *exists for itself*; it is for this reason and this reason alone, because they are at the same time known to be *distinct* (yet not to exist for themselves), that their unity is not abstract, dead and inert, but concrete. (*SL*: 21.45)

Hegel moves from the *concept* of logic, which is here essentially equated with that of absolute knowing, to the *science* of logic, the science of pure thought. In calling the unity of thought and being in the science of logic 'living and concrete' rather than abstract, Hegel seems to mean, following Ng, that 'thinking and its self-generated system of thought-determinations' are 'in constant development, driven by inner division and contradiction' (Ng 2020: 120). That thinking and its thought-determinations are constantly developing through divisions and contradictions means that thinking is not *settled* in total unity with being in the *Logic*, but is in a *dynamic* unity with being. Accordingly, while absolute knowing is surely at the beginning of logic for Hegel in some respect, it need not be *complete* at the beginning, and indeed *cannot* be so if and in so far as logic is a *science* of absolute knowing in which knowledge of absolute knowing is to be *pursued*. Hegel is surely mindful of this because, for him, philosophy must begin with logic as a science of absolute knowing to satisfy the further need discussed in section III, and because a science of absolute knowing must proceed—in light of Hegel's 'swimming rejoinder'—by way of knowing, philosophy cannot begin with a certain truth or indubitable foundation, but 'can begin only with something which is *hypothetically* and *problematically* true' in the sense that it is neither fully known nor fully intelligible (*SL*: 21.57). At the conclusion of the *Phenomenology*, we may come to know that absolute knowing is the truth of all modes of consciousness, such that logic's beginning is in some sense true. However, we have yet to know the truth of absolute knowing itself, and of course, a science of absolute knowing—logic—is to arrive at proper, scientific knowledge of absolute knowing. As such, while the reading of logic as a science of absolute knowing offered here might appear to render Hegel subject to his own swimming rejoinder in as much as the latter applies to broadly, epistemological forms of first philosophy, this is not actually the case, because logic begins with a problematic rather than full version of what it seeks to ultimately attain (as the swimmer, on the analogy, cannot begin with the full-blown capacity to swim, but, to wit, must begin with *some* incomplete, hypothetical, or problematic capacity to swim—say, with the capacity to co-ordinately move her limbs).[32] Moreover, the demand for a certain foundation undergirding the swimming rejoinder proceeds

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from the modern sceptical prejudice about thinking's disunity with being, and because logic for the *Logic* does not share this prejudice, logic is not positioned to make such a demand in the first place. And so, regarding logic's satisfaction of the further need, in as much as absolute knowing—the thinking unified with being that has itself, metaphysical thinking, as its object in the science of logic—is not itself known, neither is its object, such that logic, for the *Logic*, can recognize and satisfy the further need even if it in some sense begins with the unity of thinking and its object, which appears to suggest that the *Logic* would deny the further need.

In this section, I have looked to show that Hegel offers a conception of logic as first philosophy that is supposed to be somehow unified with metaphysics. Like Kantian transcendental logic, Hegelian logic involves a critique of metaphysical thought-determinations, and the concern prompting it as such a critique is modern scepticism's concern that philosophy begin in a way that does not involve unexamined presuppositions. I then noted that logic, for the *Logic*, comprises metaphysics. This appears as an impasse: is logic an anti-metaphysical critique of metaphysics, or does it comprise metaphysics? Hegel does not want to follow Kant in offering a sceptical solution, where, strictly, there can be no science of being *qua* being, because being is merely in-itself and hence unthinkable and unknowable. Instead, Hegel's conception of logic is unified with metaphysics in that it shares a purpose with metaphysics—attaining truth—but differs in its object. Logic examines metaphysical categories themselves, over and above the substrata to which these categories are supposed to apply; or, as Hegel also says, logic has the attainment of truth as its object, such that logic, according to the *Logic*, studies something more like the purpose than the object of metaphysics, metaphysical thinking rather than the substrata metaphysics thinks. But for logic to have the attainment of truth as its object, it is tasked with attaining the attainment of truth, and to do this, it must also have (attained) truth. Accordingly, in 'comprising' metaphysics, logic includes but is irreducible to metaphysics. As a science of absolute knowing, logic is the science of metaphysical thinking, and true metaphysical thinking, which logic must in some sense have at hand, includes first-order metaphysics, indeed, is the thinking of first-order metaphysics.

Conclusion

There are good reasons to think that the *Logic* would not engage with scepticism—especially modern scepticism—which are readily apparent when one appreciates that the text occupies the standpoint of absolute knowing. However, despite reasons to the contrary, the *Logic* does engage with at least two of modern scepticism's characteristic concerns: how philosophy should begin and second-order

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knowledge. We saw how these concerns are themselves articulated with respect to the possibility of metaphysics, or knowledge of being *qua* being. Philosophy's beginning, as Descartes says, is supposed to *enable* such knowledge, in no small part by examining thinking and determining the possibility of its unity with or simply knowing of being. The two needs examined in section III set out more general stakes for first philosophy. The first need, though generally unsatisfied by modern scepticism, is often recognized and taken seriously via modern scepticism's use of subjective first principles as criteria. The second need emerged from Kant's understanding of the limitations of subjective criteria and his subsequent treatment of thinking *qua* transcendental logic as constitutive, though only partly, of its object. Finally, in section IV we turned to the *Logic*'s conception of logic vis-à-vis metaphysics and the issues encountered in the previous three sections, understanding the *Logic*'s conception of logic as responding to the two needs articulated in section III in a way that is informed by the text's engagement with modern sceptical concerns discussed in sections I and II. By working through this material, the article has sought to support that (1) the *Logic* engages with modern sceptical concerns, and (2) this engagement informs the *Logic*'s own conception of logic vis-à-vis metaphysics such that (3) logic, for the *Logic*, is neither anti-metaphysical nor reducible to metaphysics: (4) it is rather the science of metaphysical thinking, including and sharing a purpose with metaphysics, and having this purpose—the attainment of truth—likewise as its object.

Of course, there is the outstanding issue of whether the *Logic* is a logic in its own sense of the term. This cannot be examined here. I have indicated the possibility that the *Logic*'s engagement with modern sceptical concerns is important to the text as such by homing in on how this engagement pertains to the text's conception of logic, which may well be the text's self-conception (cf. *SL*: 12.236), but establishing whether this truly holds requires a systematic reading of the whole text. Nevertheless, I hope to have clarified a meaningful component of the *Logic*, namely, its conception of logic and the latter's relations to metaphysics via the *Logic*'s engagement with modern sceptical concerns.

I have already entertained an objection along lines whereby on my reading Hegel is subject to his own 'swimming rejoinder'. We have seen that by beginning with absolute knowing rather than finite, estranged thinking, and doing so in a problematic rather than certain, unshakeable manner, Hegelian logic, on the reading offered here, doubly avoids this issue. But there are two other kinds of objections worth noting to clarify the scope of the article's argument.

First, a more strongly metaphysical reader of Hegel's *Logic* might point to remarks where Hegel suggests that logic is metaphysics in some sense, for example, to the remark noted above where logic 'comprises metaphysics'. This reading does not deny metaphysics to the *Logic,* but rather claims that if the *Logic* is a logic in its own sense of the term (and perhaps it is not), it is a science of absolute knowing,

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and as such is not *reducible* to metaphysics—is not *simply* metaphysics—*even if* it includes or, for that matter, *fully* comprises metaphysics.

Second, one might claim that the elements of the text I have read as engagements with modern scepticism also appear to represent moments in the history of logic, and given that the *Logic,* ostensibly, is some kind of logic, it should be read in terms of logic rather than modern sceptical concerns. I would welcome such a reading of the *Logic*. But a logic-oriented reading of the *Logic* is not likely incompatible with the modern philosophic and specifically modern sceptical reading offered here. Perhaps some themes and general philosophical moves are common between modern scepticism and moments in the history of logic. Nevertheless, given the clear reasons for the *Logic* to not engage with modern scepticism, it is noteworthy that the *Logic* nevertheless does engage with it, regardless of the *Logic*'s standing in the history of logic. Relatedly, this article offers a textual case that the *Logic* engages with modern sceptical concerns, so even if the history of logic is ultimately more important to account for in understanding Hegel's *Logic* than is modern scepticism, if and in so far as the case is apt, we should not dismiss the relevance of modern sceptical concerns to the *Logic*. Indeed, if modern scepticism, its concerns, or the problematic undergirding the latter bear some resemblance to, if not overlap with, important moments in the history of logic, then the reading offered here should only aid our understanding of the *Logic* as a text within the history of logic.[33]

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Notes

[1] Translation modified. Abbreviations used:

EL = Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline, Part I: Science of Logic*, trans. K. Brinkmann and D. O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

PS = Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. T. Pinkard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018)/Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, in *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1968–).

RSP = Hegel, 'On the Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy, Exposition of its Different Modifications and Comparison of the Latest Form with the Ancient One', trans. H. S. Harris, in G. di Giovanni and H. S. Harris (eds.), *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*. Revised Edition. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000).

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SL = Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. G. di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)/Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik,* in *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1968–).

[2] For a sympathetic treatment of Hegel's 'sublation' of Pyrrhonism, see Hentrup 2018. For a more critical treatment, see Heidemann 2010, 2011.

[3] Hegel even goes so far as to say that modern scepticism should for remedial purposes be 'referred' to 'common sense', because despite its own shortcomings according to Hegel, common sense recognizes the transience and uncertainty of the finite, *including* the facts of consciousness themselves.

[4] For general background, see Beiser 1987: 266–68.

[5] See Ng 2009: 147.

[6] Modern scepticism appears explicitly in the *Logic* at *SL*: 21.53–54, 11.246–47, 12.194, 12.243–44. Ancient scepticism, on the other hand, is only explicitly mentioned once, at *SL*: 21.180–81. That said, I make no claim here comparing the importance of ancient and modern scepticism for Hegel's *Logic*, but simply that modern scepticism is more important to Hegel's *Logic* than one has good reason to think. This is perfectly compatible with the view that ancient scepticism is important to Hegel's thought in general and to the *Logic* in particular, as well as with the view that ancient scepticism is more important to Hegel's thought in general or to the *Logic* in particular than is modern scepticism.

[7] Because Hegel appears in some respect interested in external world scepticism in his discussions of *Schein* and *Erscheinung* in the *Wesenlehre* and his discussions of subjectivity and the idea of cognition in the *Begriffslehre*, and because external world scepticism is arguably a specifically modern variety of scepticism (see Schmid 2019), one could argue that Hegel incorporates modern sceptical challenges into the *Logic*. Some scholars (see Trisokkas 2017), however, have read the discussions of *Schein* and *Erscheinung* in the *Wesenlehre* as responsive to ancient scepticism. Moreover, as noted above, scholars have effectively argued that Hegelian dialectic is informed by ancient scepticism, so if the *Logic*'s method is dialectical, it may be in some respect methodologically sceptical. This sounds plausible. One might, however, wonder whether the *Logic* is (also) methodologically sceptical in the way of modern philosophers, by working through sceptical challenges to properly orient thinking. Because I am not addressing whether Hegel's *Logic* takes on sceptical challenges, I cannot possibly do justice to this further question here.

[8] For precedent on treating thinking as knowing in discussion of Hegel's *Logic*, see Pippin 2019: 9–10.

[9] Contemporary philosophers tend to discuss this idea in terms of the 'KK' ('knowing that one knows') principle. For a defence of the KK principle, see Hintikka 1970. For a criticism, see Williamson 2000.

[10] Kreines reads Hegel's discussion of the swimming problem as not only suggesting or implying that broadly epistemological approaches to first philosophy (what Kreines calls 'epistemology-first metaphilosophy'), including less psychological, more semantic versions thereof, involve incoherent reasoning (though I think he is right to read Hegel as advancing the latter view),

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but also that modern sceptical concerns (or as Kreines says, 'epistemology-first worries') 'provide no reason to conclude that metaphysical topics must be contingent on the results of epistemic reflection' (Kreines 2015: 142). Much hangs on what one counts as 'epistemic reflection', and here I suspect that Kreines invokes an overly restrictive conception of the latter, especially given Hegel's conception of absolute knowing and its place in his logic. In this respect I agree with Gabriel's (see his 2016: 204) response to Kreines, which conceives of Hegelian idealism as involving a radical rethinking of epistemology. Gabriel calls the latter 'meta-metaphysics', which he says inquires into 'the right kind of methodological setting within which first-order metaphysics is feasible', such that Hegelian idealism is understood as itself a meta-metaphysics (Gabriel 2016: 185). While I am not discussing Hegelian idealism in general but the conception of logic in Hegel's *Logic*, I am tempted to say that what Gabriel calls 'meta-metaphysics' in Hegel simply is logic according to Hegel, which agrees with Pippin's claim that logic, understood according to Hegel's *Logic*, is the 'core' of Hegelian idealism (Pippin 2019: 3). (This temptation, however, is tempered by the possibility that determining the right methodological setting for first-order metaphysical inquiry requires extra-logical inquiry.) To be sure, while I am neither specifically discussing Hegelian idealism nor looking to vindicate the more post-Kantian readings of Hegelian idealism offered by Pippin, Gabriel, and others *per se*, the view of logic I am arguing the *Logic* to hold in light of its engagement with modern sceptical concerns certainly lends itself to these more post-Kantian readings and especially to Gabriel's reading of Hegelian idealism as 'meta-metaphysics'. Indeed, it will be clear from section III that I read Hegel's engagement with modern sceptical concerns as especially responsive to Kant.

[11] Bacon (2000: 19) evocatively expresses this modern sceptical task as one of 'furnishing' 'the bedchamber for the marriage of the mind and the universe'.

[12] For a helpful overview of the history of logic that clarifies the extent to which Aristotle's view about logic's relation to first philosophy was commonly held, see Lu-Adler 2018: Ch. 2.

[13] Emphasis added.

[14] The scholarship has recently exhibited heightened interest in this moment of the *Logic* in terms of the 'problem of beginning' (see Dunphy 2020a, 2020b, and Xiong 2022). While I am not dealing precisely with this issue here, what I say in section IV regarding the beginning of logic for the *Logic* and how this beginning avoids the swimming problem may have implications for this debate over the standing of the *Logic*'s beginning. I suspect that the need for presuppositionlessness at the opening of the *Logic* is often read in a way that overlooks the insights of Hegel's treatment of the 'swimming problem'. However, a more detailed analysis of the *Logic*'s opening in relation to the 'swimming problem' must be deferred until another occasion.

[15] The latter passage features a critical discussion of 'prejudices' undergirding 'the restrictions of thought, of reason, and so forth' (*SL*: 21.121).

[16] In the *Wesenlehre* Hegel clarifies that, in his view, it is not that modern scepticism made or rightly responded to some *discovery* that thinking truly is disunified with being, but rather that modern scepticism (including Kantianism and 'the more recent idealism') simply does not 'permit itself to say "It *is*"', and does not 'permit itself to regard cognitions as a knowledge of the thing-in-itself' (*SL*: 11.247). This lack of permission, Hegel suggests earlier in the introduction, simply owes to

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'presuppositions and prejudices' about thinking's disunity and hence lack of access to being, and because Hegel thinks that thinking can attain true knowledge of being 'solely by pressing onward', beyond modern scepticism's 'permission', such presuppositions and prejudices are simply false (*SL*: 21.19). As is well-known, the truth Hegel identifies in this otherwise mistaken presupposition is that the finite conception of thinking that modern scepticism adopts, which Hegel refers to as 'understanding [*Verstand*]', is itself 'untrue both in its relation to actuality and to the concept' (*SL*: 21.122).

[17] Thanks to the anonymous reviewer from the *Hegel Bulletin* for spotlighting and pushing me to address the confusion posed by Hegel's terminology here.

[18] As we will see in section III, and as Hegel clearly recognizes (cf. *SL*: 12.26–27), Kant's position on the importance of subjective criteria admits of ambiguity that will prove crucial for grasping the centrality of Kantianism in the *Logic*'s engagement with modern scepticism.

[19] Here I will not argue for or against the appropriateness of these needs in general. My aim is to give a charitable and illuminating reading of Hegel's *Logic*, not to justify or undermine the text's claims in a more general philosophical manner. I take it that the latter can only be undertaken on the basis of a charitable, illuminating reading, so if anything, this article is preparatory for a more general assessment of the *Logic*.

[20] Hegel corroborates elsewhere by invoking the modern 'turn which knowledge takes', which merely 'appears as a loss and a retrograde step' (*SL*: 21.30). This remark immediately precedes Hegel's mention of the 'loftier spirit of modern philosophy'.

[21] I am not using 'Kantian scepticism' in precisely Conant's (2012) manner, but my usage here is certainly informed by his.

[22] Here I take Kant to prefigure Cavell's probing discussion of the ways in which, especially when the needs discussed in this section are taken up, 'criteria are disappointing' (Cavell 1979: 79).

[23] Notice that the predicates Kant attaches to criteria here, namely, 'general' and 'certain', betray recognition of modern scepticism's motivation for adopting the concerns discussed in sections I and II.

[24] See also Lu-Adler (2018: 133).

[25] Thanks to Zach Hall for discussing this dimension of Kantian idealism with me on numerous occasions.

[26] As Hegel says shortly after, '[t]his conclusion [on Kant's part] can only mean that they [i.e., the forms of the understanding] are in themselves something untrue' (*SL*: 21.30).

[27] Cf. (Bacon 2000:14). In as much as logic concerns thinking, the separation between logic and first philosophy by metaphysicians and sceptics alike marks at least a failure to satisfy the further need.

[28] There is lively scholarly debate about whether and if so how the *Logic*'s beginning succeeds according to Hegel's own standards (see Houlgate 2006, Dunphy 2020a and 2020b, and Xiong 2022). While I mean to offer a charitable reading of the *Logic*, here I do not address the text's cogency or success. Moreover, the purpose behind my discussing how the *Logic* begins is simply to offer an understanding of how, according to the *Logic*, a science of logic should begin. As such, I am open to the possibility that the *Logic* ultimately fails to meet the requirements it sets

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out for a science of logic, as well as to the possibility that the requirements it sets out for a science of logic cannot ultimately be met. But of course, gaining insight on the latter possibilities requires an understanding of the *Logic*'s conception of logic, so the project undertaken here can be regarded as preparatory for such investigations.

[29] On the latter, see Dunphy (2020a).

[30] Emphasis added.

[31] Emphasis added.

[32] While much of the literature on the *Logic*'s beginning advances that logic, for the *Logic*, requires *total presuppositionlessness*, which then leads some of its readers to conclude that it fails in light of proceeding from the result of the *Phenomenology* (see Dunphy 2020a and 2020b), the reading here suggests that this conclusion is too hasty, advancing an impossible standard that is undercut upon appreciating the implications of Hegel's treatment of the swimming problem. It is certainly true that for Hegel, logic cannot begin with absolute knowing in full, just as a swimmer cannot begin learning to swim with complete knowledge of how to swim. However, just like Descartes says, the beginning must *enable* the corresponding knowledge, and all this requires, contra modern foundationalism, is a germ, say, the concept of absolute knowing, or the ability to co-ordinately move one's limbs. In light of the reading of the failure of mediate and immediate beginnings offered in section I, total presuppositionlessness fails to qualify as a beginning because it cannot be the beginning of something. While Dunphy and others may be right to diagnose problems with the *Logic*'s beginning, the emphasis upon total presuppositionlessness runs the risk of overlooking how the *Logic*'s beginning is deeply consistent with Hegel's treatment of the 'swimming problem'.

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