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Hegel's Critique of Kant

From Dichotomy to Identity



SALLY SEDGWICK

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Earlier versions of some of my discussions in this book have appeared in various venues. Sections 2.1 and 2.2 of Chapter Two draw from material from my essay, "Hegel on Kant's Idea of Organic Unity: The Jenaer Schriften," in *Metaphysik und Kritik: Festschrift für Manfred Baum zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Sabine Doyé, Marion Henz, and Udo Rameil (Berlin/New York: Verlag Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 285–98. In Chapter Three, I have revised and expanded material from three papers: "Hegel's Treatment of Transcendental Apperception in Kant," *The Owl of Minerva* 23, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 151–63; "'Genuine' versus 'Subjective' Idealism in Hegel's Jenaer Schriften," in *Idealismus und Repräsentationalismus*, eds. R. Schumacher and O. Scholz (Mentis Verlag, 2001), 233–45; and "Hegel's Critique of Kant: An Overview," for *A Companion to Kant*, ed. Graham Bird (Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 473–85. My Chapter Four borrows heavily from section IV of my paper, "Productive Imagination as Original Identity: The Transcendental Deduction in Hegel's *Glauben und Wissen*," *Akten des IX. Internationalen Kant-Kongress*, Bd. 5 (Berlin: Verlag Walter de Gruyter, 2001): 343–52. In Chapter Five, I have revised and expanded material published in my essay, "Erkennen als ein Mittel: Hegels Kantkritik in der Einleitung zur *Phänomenologie*," in *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes—Ein kooperativer Kommentar zu einem Schlüsselwerk der Moderne*, ed. Klaus Vieweg and Wolfgang Welsch (Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008). I am grateful to the publishers of these works for permission to reproduce the above-mentioned material.

Abbreviations

In the body of this work and in footnotes, I provide page references, first to the English and then to the German editions of primary texts, and I separate pages of the two editions with an oblique (/). Below, I indicate the abbreviations I use for the works of Kant and Hegel. I list the English translations I most often consult (and occasionally modify).

Immanuel Kant

References to Kant's works are to the Akademie edition ["Ak"], *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1900–42). In the case of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, I provide the pagination of the "A" and "B" Akademie editions, respectively.

- CJ *Critique of Judgment*, transl. Werner Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987).
Kritik der Urteilkraft. In Ak volume V.
- CPR *Critique of Pure Reason*, transl. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
Kritik der reinen Vernunft. "A" edition in Ak volume III; "B" edition in Ak volume IV.
- CPrR *Critique of Practical Reason*, in *Practical Philosophy*, transl. and ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 133–271.
Kritik der praktischen Vernunft. In Ak volume V.
- G *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, in *Practical Philosophy*, transl. and ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 37–108.
Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten. In Ak volume IV.
- Proleg *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward As Science*, transl. Paul Carus, revised by James W. Ellington (Indiana/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1977).
Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können. In Ak volume IV.
- MFNS *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, in *The Philosophy of Material Nature*, transl. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1985), pp. 3–134. *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*. In Ak volume IV.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

References to Hegel's works in German are to the *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970).

- D *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, transl. H. S. Harris, ed. H. S. Harris and Walter Cerf (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977).
Differenz der fichte'schen und schelling'schen Systems der Philosophie. In *Werke* volume 2.
- EL *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, transl. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 1991). This is a translation of the third edition of Hegel's *Enzyklopädie* (the Philosophische Bibliothek edition of 1830), an expanded version of his first edition published in 1817.
Enzyklopädie des philosophischen Wissenschaften, erster Teil: Logik. In *Werke* volume 8.
- FK *Faith and Knowledge*, transl. Walter Cerf and H. S. Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977).
- GW *Glauben und Wissen*. In *Werke* volume 2.
- LHP III *Lectures on the History of Philosophy III*, transl. E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul / NY: The Humanities Press, 1968).
- VGP III *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III*. In *Werke* volume 20.
- NL *Natural Law*, transl. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975).
Über die wissenschaftlichen Behandlungen des Naturrechts, seine Stelle in der praktischen Philosophie und sein Verhältnis zu den positiven Rechtswissenschaften. In *Werke* volume 2.
- PH *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, transl. Leo Rauch (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1988).
Einleitung zur Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte. In *Werke* volume 12.
- PhG *Phenomenology of Spirit*, transl. Terry Pinkard. Online draft: http://web.mac.com/titpaul/Site/Phenomenology_of_Spirit_page.html *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. In *Werke* volume 3.
- PR *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen Wood, transl. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse*. In *Werke* volume 7.
- SL *Science of Logic*, transl. A. V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, Inc., 1991).
- WL I *Wissenschaft der Logik I*. In *Werke* volume 5.
- WL II *Wissenschaft der Logik II*. In *Werke* volume 6.

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Introduction

This is a study of Hegel's critique of Kant's theoretical philosophy. Its main purpose is to defend the thesis that Hegel offers us a compelling critique of and alternative to the conception of cognition Kant argues for in his "Critical" period (from 1781 to 1790). It examines key features of what Kant identifies as the "discursive" character of our mode of cognition, and considers Hegel's reasons for arguing that these features condemn Kant's theoretical philosophy to skepticism as well as dualism. This study presents in a sympathetic light Hegel's claim to derive from certain Kantian doctrines clues to a superior form of idealism, a form of idealism that better captures the nature of our cognitive powers and their relation to objects.

In this Introduction, I indicate the overall shape of this work and of the arguments of its individual chapters. I begin, however, with some remarks on the original motivation for this project. This project came to be many years ago as part of an effort to understand Hegel's critique of Kant's *practical* philosophy, in particular, his charge that Kant's supreme practical law or categorical imperative is an empty formalism. Hegel's critique of the categorical imperative is perhaps his most well-known criticism of Kant, but it is very poorly understood. One reason it is poorly understood, I now believe, is that it is an expression or particular application of Hegel's larger critique of Kant. In ways that are by no means obvious, Hegel's criticism of the categorical imperative is connected to his objections, for example, to Kant's restriction of our knowledge to appearances, to the "subjectivity" of Kant's idealism, and to the "emptiness" of the faculty Kant calls "transcendental apperception."

Although I focus in this study on Hegel's treatment of Kant's theoretical philosophy, I am going to begin—in a somewhat roundabout way—with a brief discussion of some of his main objections to Kant's practical philosophy. I have a number of reasons for wanting to begin in this way. For one thing, this will enable me to clarify the motivation for this project and therefore also foreground some of the problems we will be setting out to solve. Of course, the particular way in which I frame those problems matters. It influences the choices I make about the questions we will need to answer. It thereby also sets in place the general course our investigation will follow. By beginning with Hegel's critique of Kant's practical philosophy, I can furthermore convey some of this project's broader implications. In particular, I can suggest how Hegel's critique of Kant's theoretical philosophy bears on his critique of Kant's practical philosophy.

My discussion in the first part of this Introduction will proceed as follows: After providing a brief sketch of Hegel's criticism of the categorical imperative, I will consider typical Kantian lines of defense. I will suggest that these efforts to defend Kant misrepresent the true target of Hegel's objections. They do so because they fail to appreciate that Hegel's critique of the formalism of the categorical imperative is an expression of his opposition to some of Kant's most basic philosophical commitments—regarding the nature and limits of human cognition, the objects we seek to know, and the activity we are engaged in when we undertake a critique of our cognitive powers. Kant lays the ground for these commitments in the context of his theoretical philosophy.

Hegel charges that the formalism of Kant's practical philosophy is responsible for its deficiency in three principal respects. First, the formalism of the supreme practical law renders it ineffective as a guide to the derivation of specific duties. Kant argues that the supreme practical law or categorical imperative is the rule by means of which we determine how we ought to act in particular circumstances. But in requiring nothing more than that our intentions and actions conform to the form of universalizability, the law is too "empty," in Hegel's view, to adequately perform this function. The categorical imperative can only guide the derivation of specific duties, he claims, with the help of additional assumptions or "content."¹

Second, Hegel has doubts about the supreme practical law's efficacy in motivating us to act. For Kant, we earn moral credit (and thus can be said to possess a will that is good) only to the extent that we are motivated by the categorical imperative. When we act from the categorical imperative, in his view, we necessarily act from respect for universal ends or interests, that is, from ends or interests we share with all rational natures. Strictly speaking, then, our will has no moral content if what ultimately determines it to act are the ends that reflect our particular empirical natures, our unique histories and capacities, our individual conceptions of happiness. But precisely because the ends that reflect our particularity are not allowed to figure in what counts as moral agency on this system, Hegel doubts that the Kantian approach has the resources to explain why any agent would ever be moved to act morally at all.²

Third, Hegel is troubled by the implications of Kant's formalism for the prospects for realizing duty. Kant holds that the categorical imperative and the particular practical

¹ Hegel makes this charge, for instance, in § 135 of his 1821 *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. See also his discussion in his *Natural Law* essay of 1802–3 (*Über die wissenschaftlichen Behandlungen des Naturrechts, seine Stelle in der praktischen Philosophie und sein Verhältnis zu den positiven Rechtswissenschaften*), NL 77f./461f.). Of course, Kant provides further formulations of the supreme practical law, and some of the further formulations seem less formal than the one Hegel singles out for attack. But Kant also tells us in the *Groundwork* that the various formulations are formulations of the "same law" (G 436). Our applications of the formula requiring universalizability, then, should yield exactly the same results as our applications of any of the other formulae.

² This complaint is implied in Hegel's remark, in his addition to § 134 of the *Philosophy of Right*, that the "universal aspect of good, or good in the abstract, cannot be fulfilled as an abstraction; it must first acquire the further determination of particularity."

norms that derive from it must have their basis in our rational natures. We cannot derive practical norms or duties from our empirical natures, because the ends and interests of our empirical natures, on his definition, are not universally and necessarily valid. Expressed differently, the human will, as Kant says, is not a “perfect” or “holy” will.³ While it is possible for us to bring the ends and interests that drive us as creatures belonging to the realm of nature into conformity with duty, those natural or empirical ends and interests are incapable of perfectly harmonizing with duty. For this reason, they are ill-suited to ground either moral motivation or right action. The categorical imperative commands us to submit our empirical natures to the governance of our practically rational natures, but our empirical natures can never provide the basis for duty. Because of the kinds of beings we are, the Kantian “ought” can in this respect never become for us an “is.”⁴

Kantians commonly respond to these criticisms by charging Hegel with misinterpretation. In response to his worry about the adequacy of the supreme law in guiding the derivation of particular duties, they suggest either that he was not interested in providing an accurate reading of Kant, or (more charitably) that his preoccupation with the formal features of Kant’s theory blinded him to other features, including the role Kant awards empirical content. They point out that Kant acknowledges that the adequate application of the categorical imperative requires that we attend to the contingent circumstances of individual cases. Kant, in other words, grants that we need to be sensitive to empirical particulars if we are to properly formulate our maxims or intentions (in the realm of morality) and properly describe our actions (in the realm of right). Kantians note, moreover, that facts about our empirical natures place limits on the kinds of commands that issue from the supreme practical law. The categorical imperative would not ground the specific command that we look after the welfare of ourselves and others were we not in need of looking after—were we not in fact finite, vulnerable creatures. Nor would the supreme practical law need to appear in the form of a *command* were we not responsive to our empirically derived passions and desires. We must be commanded in morality, according to Kant, because unlike “perfect” or “holy” wills, we are governed by passion as well as by reason.

As for the motivation issue: Kantians point out that although it is true that the will of the agent must be motivated by duty if it is to have moral worth, we should not conclude from this that, in acting from duty, the Kantian moral agent is a cold and unfeeling calculator. Kant argues that in acting from duty, we are motivated by “respect” for the supreme practical law; and respect, he explicitly tells us, is a feeling.⁵

³ “Holiness,” Kant writes in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, is “a perfection of which no rational being of the sensible world is capable at any moment of his existence” (CPrR 238).

⁴ According to the Kantian system, Hegel writes in the *Philosophy of Right*, the “subjective will” stands “in a relationship to the good, a relationship whereby . . . it ought to make the good its end and fulfill it” (§ 131). Hegel’s point here is that because the “subjective” human will is structurally incapable of perfect conformity with the good, the good must for it always be determined as an “ought,” as duty (§ 133).

⁵ See, e.g. *Groundwork* (401n) and *Critique of Practical Reason* (75f.).

Respect is indeed a feeling of a special kind; it is awakened, on his account, only in response to ends that are universal or rational. But respect is a feeling nonetheless.

Finally, in response to the worry about the impossibility of realizing of duty, Kantians argue that Kant's claim that we cannot expect to attain moral perfection in this life is evidence, not of a deficiency in his theory, but of his sober realism. It is a virtue of his approach, they tell us, that it never loses sight of the fact that we are not just rational creatures but also creatures of nature, creatures governed by unsocial as well as social forces, capable of selfishness and destruction as well as of goodness. It is to Kant's credit, they insist, that rather than a starry-eyed utopian, he is sensitive to the reality of human finitude.

As I noted a moment ago, these responses share the conviction that Hegel was either unaware of, or uninterested in, some of the finer nuances of Kantian theory. They assume that he overlooked the role empirical features of human nature play in Kant's practical philosophy. They assume, in addition, that he failed to appreciate the virtues of Kant's attention to the reality of human frailty and finitude. This latter charge is particularly understandable in light of Hegel's grandiose-sounding claims about our potential for achieving "absolute" knowledge, and about the "identity" for us of the "rational" and the "actual." Claims such as these give the impression that he was not much moved by the fact of human finitude.⁶

But we should also note that the Hegelian objections outlined above admit of a more sympathetic reading. On this more sympathetic interpretation of the criticisms, it is no consolation to be reminded of the various ways in which Kant's practical philosophy allows a role for empirical content. It is of no use to be told, for example, that Kant recognizes that in properly applying the law, we need to bear in mind empirical facts about human nature and about the unique contingencies of individual circumstances. Nor is the worry about the practical law's motivational efficacy put to rest once we acknowledge that Kant classifies respect for the law as a feeling. These observations highlight some of the finer subtleties of Kant's theory, but they leave the basic architecture of the theory intact. They leave unchallenged Kant's assumption that a sharp line may be drawn between our empirical natures, on the one hand, and our purely rational or "intelligible" natures, on the other. They preserve Kant's view that as empirical characters we are governed by one set of laws (deterministic laws of nature), and as intelligible characters we are authors and legislators of another set (laws of freedom). They leave in place Kant's claim that we can be moved by two distinct kinds of feelings, those deriving from our empirical natures and that special feeling of respect that is produced by pure practical reason.⁷

⁶ In the words of one prominent Kantian, a "Hegelian conception of rationalized nature" "implausibly overlooks the finitude of human reason." See Onora O'Neill, "Kant After Virtue," published in her collection, *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant's Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 40n.

⁷ Respect is awakened by the "activity" of the pure will (G 400f.). It is "produced solely by reason [*lediglich durch Vernunft bewirkt*]," as Kant says (CPrR 76).

To express these points in more general terms, the defenses of Kant we have just reviewed preserve his core philosophical commitments. Practical norms in his view must derive from pure practical reason; they cannot be grounded in the needs and passions that drive us as creatures belonging to the realm of nature. Practical norms must derive from pure practical reason, because only pure practical reason can supply rules that are universally and necessarily valid and that thus have the status of law. Practical norms must furthermore have their basis in pure practical reason, according to Kant, because only pure practical reason can generate laws of freedom. Either human nature is a mere “appearance” and we are governed in all that we think and do by deterministic forces of nature, or we in addition possess the capacity to rise above laws of nature and act from laws of freedom, laws that we give ourselves as practically rational natures. Although we cannot know that we are free, Kant argues, we nonetheless have legitimate grounds for thinking of ourselves as free. In thinking of ourselves as free, we in effect attribute to ourselves the faculty of pure practical reason. This faculty (which he also refers to as the “pure will”) is a special, non-natural causal power. It is capable of initiating a causal series “spontaneously,” that is, “without needing to be preceded by any other cause” (CPR A 533/B 561). Its free or spontaneous acts originate from a standpoint outside time.⁸

On a more sympathetic reading of the above-outlined criticisms, these core commitments are precisely what Hegel calls into question when he charges that the categorical imperative is an empty formalism. Hegel charges the categorical imperative with emptiness, not because he ignores the role Kant awards empirical content, but because he rejects the Kantian assumption that there *could* be a wholly formal law deriving from a wholly “pure” faculty of practical reason—a law that has sufficient content or specificity to guide action. Hegel aims to expose the fact that Kant’s own interpretation and applications of the supreme practical law in fact rely on more than the formal requirement of universalizability. In his view, Kant presupposes additional assumptions or content—assumptions, most notably, about rational nature and its ends. Since Hegel is convinced that these additional assumptions are contingent rather than universally and necessarily valid, he concludes that the categorical imperative is not the formalism Kant claims it to be. As I shall be arguing in this work, Hegel indeed challenges Kant’s assumption that human reflection—even of the most *critical* variety—is capable of yielding insight into the absolutely fixed and immutable conditions of our various domains of inquiry. Hegel challenges this assumption, because he believes it attributes to us powers of abstraction we do not possess.

As for Hegel’s worry about the motivational efficacy of the supreme practical principle, it is not that he overlooks Kant’s classification of respect as a special kind of

⁸ When I think of myself as free, I presuppose that I have, in addition to an “empirical” character as an “appearance” governed by laws of nature, an “intelligible” character. As Kant writes, “this acting subject, in its intelligible character, would not stand under any conditions of time, for time is only the condition of appearances but not of things in themselves” (CPR A 539/B 567).

feeling. Rather, he calls into question Kant's classificatory scheme itself. For Kant, the feeling of respect is awakened in us in response to the supreme moral law, a law of pure practical reason. Respect thus owes its origin to a law that on Kant's account is generated by a faculty belonging to our non-empirical or "intelligible" character, a faculty that possesses extra-natural causal powers. Kant's characterization of the special feeling of respect therefore rests on the assumption that we can make a clean separation—even just in thought—between who we are as creatures wholly determined by nature, and as pure wills capable of initiating action from a standpoint outside nature. Since Hegel doubts that we can make this kind of separation even in thought, he challenges the classificatory scheme Kant takes to follow from it.

Finally, Hegel's criticism of the Kantian claim that moral perfection is unavailable to us is not evidence of his insensitivity to the reality of human finitude. Hegel does not hold that our powers are unlimited and that our wills are perfectly good. Like Kant, he calls attention to the weaknesses and darker side of human nature (he describes human history, for instance, as a "slaughter bench [*Schlachtbank*]").⁹ Hegel resists Kant's claim that perfection is beyond our reach only because his estimation of the extent of human weakness does not produce in him the level of pessimism he discovers in Kant. He does not share Kant's conviction that finite or merely empirical human nature is incapable of furnishing the ground for practical obligation, and he has no patience with the implication of Kant's system that moral perfection is an ideal we can realize only in a life beyond this life.¹⁰

At the most basic level, Hegel's objections to specific features and implications of Kant's categorical imperative reveal his resistance to Kant's various dualisms. Hegel rejects Kant's division of human nature into an empirical form of subjectivity wholly governed by deterministic laws of nature and an "intelligible" subjectivity belonging to the realm of freedom. He rejects the associated separation of our ends or interests into those that derive from our empirical natures and those that have their basis in pure reason. He is skeptical of the Kantian assumption that we can think of ourselves as governed by two separate kinds of causality, a causality of nature and a causality of freedom. He has doubts as well about Kant's claim that, in addition to the merely contingent and empirical rules or norms that govern our behavior, we are responsive to rules or norms that are universally and necessarily valid, thanks to their origin in pure reason.

Of course, I have simply suggested, but not argued for, the thesis that this more charitable reading is truer to the intention of Hegel's criticisms. As I have already indicated, the argument in defense of this thesis must in the end come from a consideration of his treatment of Kant's theoretical philosophy. The reason for this is

⁹ See Hegel's Introduction to his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (PH 24/35).

¹⁰ Hegel is quite explicit in charging Kant with pessimism, for example in *Faith and Knowledge*. He writes there of the "litanies" of Kant and Fichte on the "evils of the world." Both philosophers gave "pessimism a philosophical form, and proved it systematically" (FK 178/GW 420).

that Hegel's remarks on the categorical imperative are extremely sketchy and vague. Especially when considered in abstraction from his larger critique of Kant, they are not clear or informative enough to support reliable interpretation. Fortunately, the situation is different in the case of his discussions of Kant's theoretical philosophy. In a number of texts, Hegel offers us detailed and focused commentary on central Kantian doctrines. The basis of his objections is obvious and accessible in a way that it is not in the context of his discussions of Kant's practical philosophy.

If we examine Hegel's remarks on Kant's theoretical philosophy, we discover parallels to the objections he directs at Kant's practical philosophy. As in the case of Kant's practical philosophy, Hegel charges that Kant's theoretical philosophy suffers from empty formalism. He discovers empty formalism in the concepts and principles Kant takes to ultimately govern our experience of nature, concepts and principles that are supposed to originate *a priori*, that is, in pure reason. Hegel discovers empty formalism as well in the "transcendental" form of subjectivity Kant identifies as performing the acts of synthesis at the basis of all human cognition. And just as he complains about an unbridgeable gap between the "ought" of Kant's practical law and the "is" of finite empirical human nature, he is likewise troubled by a gap implied by Kant's theoretical system. He resists Kant's thesis that we have no warrant for assuming that the *a priori* norms or laws we bring to experience conform to the reality of things themselves.

There is a parallel, too, in the *strategy* Hegel deploys in challenging the formalism of Kant's theoretical philosophy. As in the case of his attack on Kant's practical philosophy, Hegel sets out to convince us of the various ways in which the purportedly formal arguments of Kant's theoretical philosophy, revealing purportedly universal and necessary conditions of cognition, presuppose content. Hegel directs this charge at a number of key Kantian arguments—including, for example, Kant's derivation of the categories from the forms of judgment, his account of the nature of substance, and his treatment of the arguments of the antinomies. In drawing attention to the content Kant presupposes, Hegel's purpose is to persuade us that the line between the purportedly formal or *a priori* conditions of the perceiving and knowing subject and the objects it seeks to know cannot be neatly drawn. His aim, then, is to expose the fragility of Kant's various dualisms. Hegel hopes that in doing so, he can free us from supposing that we have to contend with their implications. He can relieve us of the burden, for instance, of striving for forms of perfection we can never achieve, in the realm of knowledge as well as action.

We learn from a careful study of Hegel's critique of Kant's theoretical philosophy, then, that his attack on the formalism of Kant's categorical imperative is a specific instance of his general rejection of core commitments of Kant's Critical system, and that there can be no understanding the former without understanding the latter. In all domains of Kant's Critical philosophy, the culprit as far as Hegel is concerned is dualism—a dualism that divides the human mind as a power of generating *a priori* concepts and laws from the separate contribution of objects wholly outside the mind. If

we are to demystify any of Hegel's particular objections to Kantian arguments, as well as his proposal for an alternative form of idealism, we first have to grasp the basis of his opposition to Kant's dualism. We have to consider his treatment of Kant's most fundamental assumptions about human cognition and its relation to nature.

This, then, is where our story begins. In Chapter One, we examine the features of Kant's theory of cognition that lay the foundation for the various dualisms of his system. We consider implications that follow from his thesis that our mode of knowing is "discursive." Kant holds that, as discursive, it is not possible for us to generate the objects or content of our empirical knowledge simply by exercising our cognitive powers. Unlike a mode of cognition that is "intuitive," we have to rely in our cognitions of nature on a sense content that is independently given. Although we must, as a further condition of cognition, unify that sense content by means of concepts, we cannot know that our concepts capture the nature of that content. Precisely because we do not generate the content or matter of our cognition, we have no grounds for assuming that a perfect harmony or fit obtains between our concepts and that given content.

In our consideration of Hegel's reflections on these doctrines in his early Jena writings, we will learn that he was fascinated by Kant's idea of an intuitive mode of cognition. In that idea, he discovered clues to our own cognitive capacities. Hegel argues that Kant was mistaken in insisting upon an "absolute opposition" or "heterogeneity" between our concepts and the given sensible content. We indeed *can* know that the given sense content is in agreement with (and in this respect "identical" to) our concepts. We can know this, according to Hegel, not because we literally possess the power of the intuitive intellect to generate sensible content or intuitions, but because our concepts are related to that content in a way that Kant did not appreciate.

Of course, the task of specifying precisely what Hegel thinks Kant failed to grasp about the "identity" of concepts and sensible intuitions is no simple matter. Two lines of interpretation I will be arguing *against* in this work charge that Hegel's prescription for replacing dichotomy with identity requires us to turn back the philosophical clock and revive one or the other of the following "pre-Critical" positions: According to some interpreters, Hegel tells a quasi-Leibnizian story about the relation of our concepts or ideas to intuitions or sensations. This story exaggerates the cognitive powers of our faculty of thought. Although we of course experience sensations in our encounters with objects of nature, sensation on this account is no more than a confused or imperfect species of conception. Sensation is "identical" to conception, then, because it makes no genuinely independent contribution in the production of knowledge. We know an object when we know its concept.¹¹

¹¹ In the first *Critique*, Kant describes the Leibnizian view as follows: Leibniz "compared all things merely with reference to their concepts and found...no other differences than those by means of which the understanding distinguishes its pure concepts from one another. He did not recognize the conditions of