

Fundamentality without Metaphysical Monism: Response to Critics of Reason in the World

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I am much indebted to Franz Knappik and Robert Stern for their generous attention to my work and their thoughtful arguments.¹ I have learned a great deal from this and many other exchanges with both of them, and I am happy to have this opportunity to acknowledge the debt. In my response, I don't want to let the generous spirit of what they write distract us from the considerable force of their worries—or from the considerable appeal of their counter-proposals. So I will here focus on these worries and proposals, trying to explain why I will—at least for now—mostly stick with the position I defend in *Reason in the World*.

Stern and the Fundamentality of the Metaphysics of Reason

I begin with Stern, as he focuses more towards the beginning of my extended argument, on what he calls “conceptual realism” (similar to what I call Hegel's “concept thesis”). Stern seems convinced that I have uncovered in Hegel a line of argument that he had not considered. Still, Stern argues as follows: Hegel does not so exclusively privilege the “metaphysics of reason” argument, in the manner I describe; Hegel also equally rests on, and needs, the argument Stern had in mind—an argument from Kant's epistemological problem about the explanation of the possibility of synthetic *a priori* knowledge. So Stern is proposing a kind of hybrid, which I would call the “double-barreled Hegel”. And why not? After all, how could two kinds of arguments fail to be better than one? I think the idea is compelling, and future consideration may well turn up more advantages than I anticipate; debate about Hegel would be the better for it. But I still prefer my view in the book.

I begin with a general point: Hegel is engaged in a systematic project, in which everything is meant to be unified. So I would initially distrust any proposed final explanation that Hegel's case rests equally on this X *and also* that discrete Y. Of

¹ I also want to thank Tobias Rosefeldt for hosting the book symposium at which these papers were presented, at the Lehrstuhl für Klassische Deutsche Philosophie of the Humboldt University.

course, many “and also” claims will be true of Hegel. But I think that the interpretive task includes explaining how the diversity of any “and also” is supposed to arise from some unifying focus.

I am not here saying that Hegel’s *Logic* cannot address both metaphysics and epistemology. The point of my introducing these metaphilosophical considerations is to bring into view Hegel’s way of taking one kind of issue as fundamental, but without this excluding everything else. Instead of excluding, Hegel *transforms* everything else in light of his unifying or organizing focus. On my account, Hegel’s one unifying focus does bring considerable philosophical strength to his project. So while it may be true that two kinds of arguments can be better than one, I also think that a smaller set of arguments more tightly organized into a system, by taking one kind of issue as fundamental, can complete.

One could cede that Hegel has such a unifying focus and then argue, contra my position, that this focus is on problems drawn from Kant’s positive project, as for example in the “Transcendental Analytic” of the first *Critique*, concerning the conditions of the possibility of experience, cognition, judgment, synthetic *a priori* knowledge, or something similar—concerning broadly epistemological issues, in this sense. I would then think that the strongest path would be to argue not that Hegel excludes metaphysics, ontology, etc., but that Hegel transforms all these in light of issues he takes as more basic, from Kant’s Analytic.² If Stern sees Hegel as resting so much independent weight on Kant’s problem about the possibility of synthetic *a priori* knowledge, then I think that his reading will be pulled in this direction.

But while that strategy has its strengths, I argue that we can preserve them and improve the reading further once we notice that, in Hegel’s *Logic*, a very different organizing focus provides the systematic unity. Hegel makes rather the metaphysics of reason fundamental, while everything else—such as the epistemological issues pursued in Kant’s Analytic—is so transformed thereby that all else can now only be understood by beginning with the metaphysics of reason, and not in any independent terms (such as terms from the letter to Herz, mentioned by Stern). Epistemology is not excluded, but it is radically transformed.

What happens if we begin instead with a proposal, like Stern’s, that Hegel rests the metaphysics of the concept partly on the sort of epistemological problem

² I think this is the groundbreaking strategy of Pippin’s *Hegel’s Idealism*, although the terms are used differently there. For example, Hegel transforms ontology rather than abandoning it, in radicalizing the sense in which conditions of the possibility of experience would be conditions of the possibility of objects themselves (Kant A158/B197; Pippin 1989, 33 and 2014, 148).

that Kant means to resolve in his positive project? I think we meet difficulties. I would formulate the Kantian argument of concern to Stern as beginning with a step like this:

(i) There is a pressing and inescapable problem for philosophy, hitherto unresolved, about the explanation of the possibility of synthetic *a priori* knowledge.

Our receptivity can't explain *a priori* knowledge, and views like pre-established harmony are an unacceptable *deus ex machina*. So Kant sees transcendental idealism as supported: it is needed to solve an inescapable problem. Stern reads Hegel borrowing the engine of Kant's argument, (i), while adding that Kant's proposal fails to solve the problem; so it is really Hegel's conceptual realism that is supported:

...if we think of the world *itself* as conceptually structured, then we can explain how mind and world function together, but without appeal to this '*deus ex machina*'... (6)

But I don't see a solution here. What Kant asks, in the letter to Herz, is this: "What is the ground of the relation of that in us which we call "representation" to the object?" (Ak. 10:130) Stern seems to me to have a harmony that *just is*. This seems like taking just the pre-established harmony and subtracting the pre-establishment, or taking just the *deus ex machina*, and subtracting the *deus*. I don't see how just subtracting the ground leaves any answer to Kant's question about what the ground is, let alone a better answer.

Granted, Stern sees in Hegel a rejoinder to my complaint, in the wonderful passage in which Hegel says that some ways of defending the critical philosophy are akin to an argument that we should learn to swim before ever getting in the water. Stern says, of our cognitive capacities:

...if we have some reason to think those capacities are problematic (as Kant does in his letter to Herz), then we should question them; but Hegel's conceptual realism is meant to dispel such worries, and to make our knowledge here unmysterious. (6)

I think this passage in Hegel is important. But it seems to me to leave the epistemological argument Stern sees, for conceptual realism, without force. This *dispels* the engine of Stern's argument, (i). I don't think that we can dismiss contenders, whether Kantian or pre-established harmony, on grounds that they fail to solve an inescapable philosophical problem, but then when it comes time to solve that problem, instead claim that it can be escaped. Fans of orthodox Kantianism will claim to do equally well in dispelling the questions about further grounds that Stern

thinks *they* fail to answer. And the same with fans of pre-established harmony. Stern could instead complain that these competitors introduce more constructive philosophy than is needed, given the availability of the dispelling move. But then others will say the same of Stern: we don't need the controversial metaphysics of conceptual realism because (they will say) we can immediately dispel Kant's problem and appeal to supposedly unmysteriousness of our ordinary knowledge.

I don't think this is a special problem for Stern; I think quite generally that reading Hegel as resting weight on this kind of epistemological problem will meet similar results: such a Hegel will have to raise the stakes of epistemological problems so high, to eliminate competitors, that he cannot compellingly resolve those problems. This interpretive route ends with attributing to Hegel an unconvincing resolution to problems he is supposed to have selected as central. Or else with a portrayal of Hegel as converting to quietist pragmatism just in time to dismiss the theoretical problems that drove his arguments against others—*quietist pragmatism ex machina*.

My starting point is instead the idea that Hegel seeks a philosophical system in an ambitious sense, so that his success would require orientation around some kind of basic problem that will not later get dispelled, but can be followed through, systematically, to the very end. So I think that Hegel's swimming passage—in dispelling the problems central to Kant's positive project, the *Analytic*, and the letter to Herz—is making a more radical point: namely, that this kind of epistemological problem is not at all what should play the role of the engine driving a truly systematic philosophy—or anything on which the metaphysics of the concept could or should rest. This is not to say that Hegel's project is anything like the dispelling of problems in favor of returning to a surface of supposed quiet or unmysterious commonsense. Quite the opposite: the point is to move the dispelled problems out of the way, revealing a different kind of problem as more fundamental: the problem of the completeness of reason, or the problem of "the idea"—drawn not from Kant's positive project, as in the *Transcendental Analytic*, but from Kant's critique of the metaphysics of reason in the *Transcendental Dialectic*. And that is the problem to be carried through, systematically, to the end.

Now Stern also worries that the resulting argument, as I explain it, cannot support conclusions that are ambitious enough, with respect to necessity and contingency, to be accurate to Hegel. There isn't enough space to consider all versions of this worry, but here is one possible argument in the neighborhood,

employing some quotations from Stern (p. 14); this would be deadly, if successful, but I would reject both premises:

- (1) The method of Kreines' Hegel is supposed to be "inference to the best explanation", which Hegel also sees at work in natural scientific claims about "laws, kinds and other immanent universals".
- (2) Inference to the best explanation only supports conclusions that are "modest", in the sense that "it just seeks for explanations for how things are round here", in "our world".
- (3) Thus, Kreines' Hegel can only support conclusions about "our world", which are too modest to be Hegel's own conclusions.

Start with the second premise, and consider the example, important in the book, of the rotation of the planets. The idea is that the natural sciences can infer from observations of this to the best explanation, drawing conclusions about the forces inherent in the nature or immanent concept of matter. If so, then this tells us more than just how the matter in the solar system will always move in "round here", in "our world" (Stern, 14). The idea is that it would also tell us how material bodies would move differently in other possible worlds, such as those in which the Sun has 10% more mass. One could raise other issues concerning the precise further modal extent, but this will depend on details I have not tried to clear up in Hegel.

In any case, the first premise is more important. When I say that Hegel defends the possibility of the *natural sciences* having knowledge of immanent concepts in terms of something like inference to the best explanation, I do not mean to say thereby that Hegel sees this as much of a description of *his method in the Logic*. Hegel's topic, on my account, is indeed continuous with natural science. Hegel's view is systematically unified: *all* theoretical inquiry concerns the *why* of things, or reason in the world. But I see Hegel as showing that the natural sciences raise questions about this, while yet being unable to answer these further questions—such as the question of what laws of nature are. In general, Hegel pursues metaphysics in a sense that is...

...more precisely distinguished by the generality and directness with which its questions address the topic of reason in the world. (pp. 3-4)

As the generality increases, this forces a development in the appropriate methods. So the Hegelian arguments covered in the book are not cases of inferring from observations. For example: Consider the kind of mechanist philosophy that would reject Hegel's immanent concepts, on grounds that the explanatory role of such things would be rendered superfluous by the admissibility of mechanistic explanation

everywhere. But Hegel argues (on my account) that this absolute mechanism is incoherent, because even mechanism itself would *require* such immanent concepts to play an explanatory role. In a sense, the modal ambition is maximum: *in absolutely no possible world* could it be the case that mechanism could leave no explanatory role for any immanent concepts. And in such arguments there need be no inference from observations of the actual world; the workings of natural science make the philosophical problems determinate for us (EL §12Anm), but are not needed to resolve them. Note that saying this about independence from empirical observation is not to give up my denial that metaphysics can be distinguished by a final end definable in epistemological terms, as a pursuit of *a priori* knowledge. The *final end or point* is insight into the *why* of things; this turns out to require, as *means*, a method that is in some senses independent of experience.

But I think that Stern's focus is on the more difficult question of whether there must *necessarily* be complete explicability, or be some form of "the idea". On my view, this question should be considered in light of an overall sense of Hegel's method in the *Logic* (2015, Ch. 10). What drives this method is Hegel's borrowing Kant's claim that all theoretical inquiry seeks forms of complete reasons, or what Kant calls "the unconditioned". Hegel argues, as I discuss below, that Kant's case from here specifically for a limitation of reason does not work. So Hegel takes philosophical inquiry, when running up against contradictions generated by a lack of completeness on a given domain, to be justified in concluding that there *must necessarily* be something more complete, proceeding by a process of determinate negation to a better candidate account of complete reason in the world, and so on until completeness is reached. The resulting "must necessarily", I argue, is *epistemic*: what is demonstrated is that no possible form of theoretical inquiry could adequately support any competing conclusion. For example, no possible form of theoretical inquiry could demonstrate the non-existence of "the idea" or completeness of reason in the world, for it would in so doing already demonstrate the hopelessness of all theoretical inquiry.

Perhaps there is a sense in which the conclusion here would cover less than "all possible worlds" (Stern, 15): perhaps it would be better to say that the results in question apply to any possible *explicable* or *intelligible* world. But, first, a lack of absolute modal extent need not be a failure to carry *Hegel's* metaphysical project absolutely through; for—again—the final aim is insight into the *why* of things, not modal extent, and there is room for argument about what the appropriate modal

extent is relative to that distinct final aim. Second, I think Stern's proposal would in any case reach parallel results on this score. For example,

...why are there objects with properties (for example)? ... because otherwise there could not be anything at all, as this is the only stable form for being to take. (15)

This kind of argument seems to me like it would show that any possible *stable* world would be so structured (in whatever sense of "stable" makes the argument go). And, at the end of the day, Stern sees an argument from Kant's problem about the ground of agreement of representations and objects; but then the conclusions should be about any possible *knowable* or *representable* world, parallel to the conclusions I attribute to Hegel concerning any possibly *intelligible* or *explicable* world. With respect to modal ambition, I think this is a wash. I prefer my version because I think it does do better justice to the sense in which Hegel is arguing, in Kantian terms, for a priority of *reason* (issues about explicability and completeness) over *the understanding* (issues about the relation between representations and objects in general).

Finally, Stern worries that my Hegel might be limited to holding a "special metaphysics" without a "general metaphysics". But I agree with Stern that

the focus on explanation which Kreines emphasizes actually dovetails naturally with the ontological project of *metaphysica generalis* (15)

In this vein, I argued that Hegel is harnessing the issues about the metaphysics of reason in order to justify a reconception of the notion of substance itself, and even the conclusion that everything real is at least a distant approximation of reason in the world. What separates Stern and I here, in my view, is rather this: on my account Hegel rests his descendent of general metaphysics squarely on problems about the completeness of reason, and this prevents getting off the train and dispelling further problems, or modestly refraining from any special metaphysics.³ I think that the overall argument is so unified that every step is wired into Hegel's systematic project, for which success would require an account of the priority of *specifically* complete forms of reason, or "the idea", over incomplete forms—would require a descendent of special metaphysics. So I would think that Stern's worry would be that my Hegel is too metaphysically ambitious, rather than the reverse. But I think that these ambitions are Hegel's, and that their systematic unity gives them overlooked philosophical strengths.

³ Cf. Stern 2009, 32.

Knappik and Many Monisms

Given the above, it should be clear that Hegel (on my view) is committed to following absolutely through the problem of the completeness of reasons. But he also argues that such completeness looks *very* different than we expect. It will, Hegel argues, not look like any metaphysical foundationalism, according to which there is something on which everything depends, providing a complete reason for everything. So it cannot be, more specifically, any *monist* form of metaphysical foundationalism (everything is in the One substance, which provides a complete reason for everything). Nor any scientific foundationalism, and so on. This is part of the meaning, I argue, of Hegel's slogan—repeated in many forms and sometimes deployed against Spinoza—that “the absolute cannot be a first, an immediate. Essentially the absolute is rather its result.”⁴ I will here work in four steps toward Knappik's central worry about my denial that Hegel is a metaphysical monist, and a compelling proposal he makes in response. I will maintain my position: the *Logic* defends conclusions that are ambitiously metaphysical, and also involve a form of monism—but the ambitious metaphysics is non-monist, and the monism is epistemological.

First, the metaphysics of the understanding (MU): The completion of Hegel's *Logic* argument is rooted, I argue, in his case that philosophers have confused two incompatible demands: the demand of the understanding (requiring something to correspond absolutely with the subject of a subject-predicate judgment) and the demand of reason (for completeness specifically of explainers or reasons in the world). The former encourages us to think not of reasons but of various substrata—paradigmatically but not exclusively the famous *bare* substratum. But substrata would then be of no explanatory relevance to whatever led us to posit them, and so no form of reason in the world. For example, in the paradigm case, the entirely bare substratum would be too bare to explain anything at all. The posit of substrata rests, in the end, not on any real need to explain, but only on the assumption that reality corresponds to the form of subject-predicate judgment. Hegel rejects this assumption, arguing that we must reject it in order to succeed in following through absolutely on completeness specifically of *reasons*.

Knappik agrees that MU has something to do with substrata, but argues—looking the introductory material in the *Encyclopedia*—that Hegel rather treats

⁴ WL 6:196/473

quite *another* assumption as the central error of MU: namely, the assumption that thought-determinations such as reality and negation are 'absolute opposites'... its *atomism*. (12)

I separate my claims about this into two: (i) Anti-atomism cannot be central *in the sense that it is the ultimate support for the argument*. For Hegel sees this anti-atomism as part of what is *at issue* and not accepted by his opponents. I think it is more traditional to focus on anti-atomism, but that leaving the matter resting there would mean that Hegel, on his own account, would be merely assuming what is at stake, depriving any following argument of philosophical force, or obviously begging the question. (Perhaps some contemporary readers do not worry here, because they like arguments from linguistic-turn philosophy for holism about meaning; but the issue that arises in Hegel concerns metaphysical holism—and he is, again, precisely *not* transforming metaphysical issues by taking issues about meaning as more fundamental, but transforming everything else in light of his metaphysical focus.) Further, (ii), I give an account of the needed supporting argument: it rests on the metaphysics of reason, and more specifically the tension between the demand of reason for explainers and the demand of the understanding for substrata. By resting here, Hegel draws on Kant's own commitments—about the faculty of reason—in arguing against Kant. With respect to anti-atomism specifically, I focus on the example of lawful interaction in the "Chemism" section of the *Logic* (2015, Ch. 7). In effect, Hegel shows that even positing *properties* as atomistically independent would be a way of positing a *substratum*. We might posit such properties for the lawfully interacting, but they could be no reason for lawful interactions, and so are just as objectionable as other cases of substrata, above. The point is, then, that the attack on substrata supports everything else, including the anti-atomism, and thus anything that follows from the latter. So I don't see how my account could be blocked from grounding anything that an approach via anti-atomism grounds; my account supplies the prior argument needed if any of it is to be grounded at all.⁵

Much is supposed to follow. For example, it is supposed to follow that *reason* is the key concept of metaphysics, and (in a line Knappik cites) "we should not understand reason in terms of dependence" (2015, 230). Think of this in terms of the idea of a metaphysical side of the notion of explanation. We cannot, then,

⁵ Knappik's footnote here seems to agree with (i), that anti-atomism needs support from "processes" in the body of the *Logic*. Since it makes no suggestions about how we should or should not explain the philosophical issues driving these "processes", he seems to here accept my (i) and offer no challenge to my (ii).

account for explanation itself in terms that are entirely contextual and/or entirely epistemic (e.g. as prediction, or as a form of argument). Even those granting that there is a such metaphysical side of explanation might have wanted to understand it as *dependence*, meaning that appeal to X in explaining Y would be possible only if there is some worldly sense in which Y *depends* on X (cf. Kim 1994, 67). But dependence is too permissive, insofar as it would include dependence on a substrate, which would turn out indifferent, or not of explanatory relevance. We need first of all, then, a positive conception, from the perspective (as it were) of the explanans rather than explanandum. The key concept, then, is rather *reason in the world*. One way to put it is this: appeal to X in explaining Y is possible only if (along with any other constraints, which may be epistemological, contextual, etc.) X is reason in the world for Y.

So I do not accept either option offered by Knappik on this topic (16): The point is not to deny that reasons may involve any form of dependence. Reasons might, *looked at backwards*, involve some sorts of dependence. For example, with respect to the rotation of the planets, the immanent concept or kind—the *Begriff* of matter—is the reason for the rotation of the planets; the rotation depends, in this sense, on the concept. But the notion of reason must be primary in order to exclude bad generalizations to other, ill-fitting forms of dependence, like dependence on a substrate.

Similarly, the point is also not that complete reasons involve no form of dependence (16); whatever is explained by a complete reason would be dependent (in an explanatory sense) on that complete reason. But this completeness cannot be understood until we carefully block bad generalizations to other, ill-fitting forms of dependence—else we run into contradictions involved in combining a notion of a complete *substrate* with that of an explainer. So reasons can be complete, even if they are also in some senses dependent, as long as they are only dependent in senses irrelevant to explanatory import. Hegel argues that life is an example: life depends on there being some or other form of lawful reality, as a kind of substratum indifferent to what life does; but this form of dependence is no form of reason, and so does not detract from the greater explanatory completeness of life as compared to the lawful. Similarly, the absolutely complete reason can be a *result*—something in some senses dependent on something else (as an end is dependent on a beginning).

I express this point also in terms of Kant's notion of "the unconditioned":

we could take the term ... either to (i) essentially refer to the completeness of reasons, or to (ii) essentially encompass both completeness of reasons and finality of substrata. (2015, 204)

Where Hegel sees the latter sense in Kant, he rejects the very notion of the unconditioned as confused and misleading (e.g. EL §45). But, crucially, in the former sense, Hegel is *defending* an account of the reality of the unconditioned as “the idea” (WL 4: 463/671). The same applies to my metaphor of a *turtle-with-a-jetpack*, as an alternative to *last-turtle* or *only-infinite-turtles*: if understood as referring essentially to rationalist conceptions that confuse reason and dependence, Hegel rejects the very notion; but if referring properly to the idea of something that is a complete reason for itself and all that follows from itself, then Hegel is defending a turtle-with-a-jetpack. There is such a turtle with a jetpack, even if it is (as it were) also dependent, in a non-explanatory sense, on many turtles that compose it.

I would say something similar about Knappik’s worry that my Hegel would be forced to simply choose the Antithesis side in Kant’s antinomies. On my account, Hegel does indeed reject Thesis-style arguments: they all confuse substrata with reasons. But, on my account, Hegel also rejects Antithesis-style arguments: he does so because they preclude completeness of reason. For example, with regard to an Antithesis style argument that would make absolute the lawful interaction of “Chemism”: this would deny any complete “form of reason”, which is why the *Logic* “*must* turn instead to teleology” (2015, 192). Hegel’s central problem, on my account, is how to conceive and find the completeness blocked by such Antithesis reasoning, without falling back on the Thesis way of appealing to substrata.⁶

Second, Hegel’s argument against metaphysical foundationalism. Knappik agrees with me that Hegel rejects the principle of sufficient reason (PSR); Hegel allows that some things lack complete explanations (Knappik, 18). Given my definition of foundationalism as involving one foundational complete explanation for everything, this means agreeing that Hegel is no foundationalist. Still, Knappik worries that I haven’t found in Hegel a sufficient *argument*, from consideration of explanations or reasons to anti-foundationalism.

As I see it, part of the story here is how prominent foundationalist proposals fail. Crucial for Hegel is his argument that Spinoza’s monism fails: substance

⁶ Granted, in the case of some domains, an anti-thesis would be right *if limited to that domain*. This is so wherever reality lacks complete reasons, such as the domain of lawful interaction. But this will be the case on any reading, including Knappik’s, according to which Hegel allows some limited domain on which things lack complete reasons.

becomes an indifferent substratum, forcing elimination of difference and finitude rather than its explanation or grounding—a conclusion Hegel finds unacceptable.⁷ Knappik protests that Spinoza has and needs no indifferent substratum:

substance explains the modes that inhere in it precisely in virtue of its *determinate characteristics*, namely, in virtue of its essence. (6)

But I don't see any help here against the argument from Hegel I emphasize: Spinoza tries to make sense of real difference within one substance, in part, by holding that different attributes, like thought and extension, are such that there can be no explanatory relation between them. Further, Knappik is appealing to essence, which Spinoza connects to the attributes, defined as "what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence" (EID4). Knappik's proposal will thus threaten to leave Spinoza with *different* attributes as *distinct* and independent basic explanatory grounds of things, with no sense of the unity of a monism. Hegel's thought, as I understand it, is that Spinoza retains the unity only by employing the model of substance as a substrate of the attributes. But then substance must be indifferent to anything specific to the attribute of thought, for example, so that the lack of explanatory connections between distinct attributes would not prevent substance from *also* equally grounding the attribute of extension. And then substance seems too indifferent to the difference in attributes to ground them, and through them either infinite or finite modes; as Hegel puts it:

...the determinations are not developed from substance, it does not resolve itself into these attributes. (VGP 20:173/3:264)

If everything real needs a complete reason in substance, and difference and finitude could have none, then Spinoza should be forced to eliminate it.

I know, of course, that it is traditional to think that Hegel claims to retain all of this monist foundationalism but to solve the problem by altering the conception of the foundation. So it is crucial that I see in the *Logic* a *general* argument against *any* foundationalism. Knappik is right that this argument runs via a claim we can call *realizer-required*:

...the various forms of Hegel's *idea* – and thus, the privileged forms of reasons in the world – are kind-dependent processes which essentially take place *in something else*, in a realizer which is not itself an instance of the kind that governs the process. I entirely agree that Hegel holds this view. (16)

⁷ "Spinozism is a deficient philosophy" (WL 6:195/472) for this reason.

Having agreed with the interpretation on this point, Knappik asks why this should rule out foundationalism. The most direct answer would bring back into view Hegel's argument for this claim, at the crucial transition in the *Logic* to "The Idea": The "Chemism" chapter shows that non-teleological or lawfully related objects necessarily lack explanatory completeness; so completeness, or "the idea", requires teleology. The "Teleology" chapter shows that explanatorily complete teleology requires inner purposiveness; but it also requires realization in or "mediation" by something non-teleological/lawful, because if something teleological interacted directly by nature or immediately with the lawful then it would and lack explanatory completeness:

In an *immediate connection*... purpose would itself enter into the sphere of mechanism and chemism and would therefore be subject to accidentality and to the loss of its determining vocation. (WL 6: 452/663)

It is easy to see why this argument would rule out foundationalism: completeness of explanation requires realization in something else, *specifically because it requires realization in something not explanatorily complete*; this rules out the possibility that everything has a complete reason, and so rules out foundationalism (in the sense above).

Three, there are of course texts in Hegel that seem at first to suggest foundationalism, specifically in a metaphysically monist form. But I also point out that other texts equally appear, at least at first, to cut against foundationalism in general. Some examples are isolated by these lines in the book:

(a) Passages difficult for Spinozist interpretations include those concerning the weakness and contingency as limits of the explicability of nature, for example...

(b) Passages difficult for my non-Spinozist approach will include Hegel's claims that the idea is all substance, truth, actuality. (2015, 261-2)

The passages Knappik cites as apparently expressing metaphysical monism seem to me also to belong under heading (a). So, given the tension here, I think that interpreters on all sides need explanations—myself included. The strongest metaphysical monist readings known to me do provide an explanation: they argue that passages like those in (a) are not rejections of foundationalist monism but are just specifications of how some things look when judged from a merely *partial*

perspective; while the passages in (b) say that, from a complete perspective, foundationalist monism is true.⁸

But I think that foundationalist metaphysical monism—although certainly philosophically interesting in itself—does not fit Hegel's commitments. First, there is the anti-foundationalist argument above: a real complete form of reason would require realization in an incomplete form of reason; the argument is metaphysical, and requires more than just something *taken* to be incomplete when judged from a *partial perspective*. Other tensions stem from the fact that no one, to my knowledge—including Hegel—has provided an absolutely complete explanation for everything about anything like this or that bit of matter. To be sure, some foundationalists might have promising responses. They might respond by saying that only a divine, immediate grasp of reality would reveal the complete explanation for such things. But *Hegel*, starting long before the *Logic*, begins to bitterly criticize those of his contemporaries who he portrays as defending metaphysical monism by appeal to a dualism of mediate and immediate intellect (e.g. WL 5:65/46–47 and PhG §27/16); right or wrong about others, this precludes Hegel from making the rejected move himself.⁹ Finally, some foundationalists might respond instead by ceding that bits of matter have no complete explanation, and so (given foundationalism) cannot exist. But this is a form of the eliminativist move to which Hegel says that Spinoza is, unacceptably, forced. Overall, foundationalist metaphysical monism does not fit Hegel's philosophical commitments well.

And there is a better way; I say this instead: there is ambitious metaphysics in passages under heading (b), but it is not monist; and there is monism there, but it is not metaphysical.

With respect to metaphysics, then, consider the proposal that all “actuality” is “the idea”: that certainly seems to be metaphysical monism. But Hegel's use of the term “actuality” clearly means to *deny* that everything there is “truly merits the name 'actuality'”.¹⁰ So any connection between actuality and the idea should cut against metaphysical monism (on which everything there is would be “the idea”). Similarly, all “substance” may be “the idea”, but I show that Hegel's metaphysics

⁸ A strong example: Franks' explanation of German Idealism more generally in terms of “a partial perspective located within the whole” as opposed to “the perspective from which alone the whole can be seen as a totality, with an absolute first principle” (2005, 334).

⁹ I take no stand here or in the book on whether matters might be different on this score in Hegel's very earliest writings.

¹⁰ EL §6Anm; Kreines 2015, 238.

recognizes that some of what there is—for example, the lawful—is real but insubstantial. There might then be only “one substantial being”, as Knappik quotes Hegel, but that is itself no expression of metaphysical monism.

Further, I recognize a *monism* in some of these passages, but an *epistemological* sort. In short, Hegel’s way of taking metaphysics as fundamental raises transformed epistemological problems—no longer at base problems about knowledge or intentionality, but problems about the epistemological side of the notion of explanation, or about our grasp of or understanding of reason in the world. And Hegel argues for a monism *here*: anything being such that we can find it intelligible depends on its relation to the absolute idea, in one all-encompassing epistemological system. Note how this relates to Hegel’s claims, in passages noted above and by Knappik, that “the idea” (and in some sense at least a one rather than a many) is the “truth” of everything. But Hegel clearly uses the term “truth” in an unusual manner: it is not “correctness” (*Richtigkeit*), or an agreement of representation with object; it is an agreement between an object and a standard set by its own immanent purpose. Since not everything is a form of “the idea”, there are some things that have no inner purpose, and aren’t even candidates for truth *in themselves*. Hegel’s method aims to show that any theoretical consideration of these things, if pursued completely, should lead to antinomy contradictions, *resolved by something else* – in this epistemological sense the latter is “the truth of” the former. Ultimately, the process leads to “the idea”, which is accordingly “the truth of” everything else—in this epistemological sense; it is the result of philosophy.

This reading resolves the problems with foundationalist readings: Passages like (a) seem to be anti-foundationalist metaphysical assertions that some things lack a complete reason, *because that is precisely Hegel’s view*. There is no problem about a failure to completely explain things like bits of matter; Hegel’s view is that such things do lack complete reasons—so much the worse, when it comes to metaphysical status, for bits of matter! And yet this account recognizes, in passages like (b), a sense in which Hegel pursues an ambitious *metaphysics of complete reasons*, and also a connected kind of *monism* (an epistemological kind).

Note that my reasoning here has nothing to do with a desire to find in Hegel conclusions that are more commonsensical than monism, or that seem true by the standards of contemporary philosophical orthodoxy. I don’t think that Hegel’s actual conclusions are either of these. And this is all to the good, on my view, because I am more interested in how Hegel—and Kant, and other historical figures—provide strong

arguments *against* common sense and contemporary philosophical orthodoxy. So what moves me away from a metaphysical foundationalist reading is that I don't think it can do as well at understanding Hegel's conclusions in light of the arguments he gives for them, and the commitments from which he actually argues, and how the whole fits together into a philosophical system.

Four, Knappik's other monism: I have focused on arguing against readings attributing to Hegel *foundationalist* metaphysical monism. And this is the way I have dealt with the sort of passages Knappik emphasizes. Why have I focused in this way? Well, take all the existing interpretations claiming to find in Hegel *arguments* for metaphysical monism; they find arguments that seem to me to hope to support, if anything, *foundationalist* monism. That is, the arguments aim to exclude non-monist forms of metaphysics on grounds that only a metaphysical monism could provide a complete reason for everything real. Some may portray Hegel as running into a problem about the consistency with the premise of that form of argument with his other claims, like those in (a) concerning contingency.¹¹ And some may see Hegel as ambivalent. For example, Inwood—one of Knappik's examples—portrays Hegel as “believing, or at least half-believing, that everything had to be just as it is and that it could be shown why it is so” (1983, 64). But if such beliefs drive the arguments, then this seems to me a picture of Hegel's philosophy as ambivalently advocating foundationalist metaphysical monism—not a picture of it as advocating something else. Knappik, by contrast, seems to me to propose something *very* different: Hegel is out to defend a coherent form of metaphysical monism that includes the claim that some things lack complete reasons—to defend non-foundationalist metaphysical monism (in my terms). Everything real would be in the One; and the One would completely explain some things, but not everything, leaving some facts brute.

This seems to me a wonderful idea, and I certainly encourage the increased attention it will likely receive. Still, I will for now stick with my position, and for this main reason: I still don't see how one could read Hegel as hoping to *argue* for this non-foundationalist metaphysical monism; as soon as one locates the sort of arguments needed, one seems destined to portray Hegel as a foundationalist (if perhaps also ambivalent). Knappik sees Hegel's hopes as resting with an ontological argument for the existence of God. And Knappik is right that it was not enough for

¹¹ See e.g. Beiser's (2005, 76ff.) powerful demonstration that traditional appeals to a necessity of contingency do not solve the problem of consistency of contingency with foundationalist metaphysical monism. Beiser sees this as a problem for Hegel; I see it as a problem for traditional interpretations.

me to say that ontological argument would have to support something so powerful that it would explain everything; Knappik is right that my own book suggests a very different possibility:

Hegel can be plausibly read as holding the view that the realization of the absolute idea necessarily has to involve contingent and therefore brute facts (precisely because it requires an indifferent realizer, as Kreines had argued). (18)

This is a wonderful idea, and I cannot help but be attracted to it; what I said about this was indeed not enough. Still, this doesn't really dislodge my same main reason for pessimism, from above: I still see no hope here for supporting *metaphysical monism* in particular. To be sure, *if* some rationalist thinks that an ontological argument establishes the existence of something that completely explains *everything*, then I see that she might hope to then argue that nothing could play this role unless metaphysical monism is true. But Knappik and I agree that Hegel rejects the idea that everything has a complete explanation. *Maybe*—I now cede—a modified ontological argument might support the existence of a complete explainer that complete explains itself but not everything. But could Hegel hope to argue that nothing could conceivably play *that* role unless metaphysical monism is true? No. Consider, for example, one of several reasons, stemming from the principle to which Knappik agrees: *realizer-required*, which holds that forms of "the idea" are

kind-dependent processes which essentially take place *in something else*, in a realizer which is not itself an instance of the kind that governs the process. (16)

So the kind or concept involved in a form of "the idea"—presumably a complete explainer—is not the kind or concept of the realizer; for all that has been said, this leaves at least *two*, not *the One*. Knappik thinks that I've overlooked some possibilities here: First, there might be a purpose that produces the conditions of its own realization; second, higher-level kinds or concepts might partially determine a lower-level. But, what results if we could add all this to *realizer-required*? (I am worried that a strong enough form to give monism would conflict with the teleology argument above; but set that aside.) If they could be combined, this would result in a metaphysics that is, for all said so far, non-monist: one ultimate ground *produces something distinct from itself*, something *not* an instance of the same one kind or concept. And I don't need any *requirement* here: if a complete reason in a non-

monist metaphysics is even *conceivable*, then there still seems no hope for any route from a modified ontological argument to metaphysical monism in particular.¹²

I should note that I reach these conclusions on the basis, in part, of my interpretive emphasis on Hegel's *arguments* and their organization into a *system*. I focus in this way, on argument and system, because I think this is part of our only hope for the study of philosophers like Hegel to avoid anachronism, and instead to bring our own contemporary prejudices to light, and to place them in question—including our prejudices about what philosophy itself is. Still, some might think that giving different weights to different interpretive principles might help Knappik's proposal about non-foundationalist metaphysical monism. But consider what Knappik says about this: we should take seemingly monist passages at "face value" (p. 3) unless given sufficient reasons against; he thinks that I have attractive but not sufficient reasons against. But then what *is* the "face value" of these passages? To judge by Knappik's own examples of monist interpretations (and my own sense) the "face value" is again *foundationalist* metaphysical monism, on which everything has a complete explanation. So giving more weight to face value than I do—downplaying philosophical concerns about argument and system—seems to me no panacea for Knappik's proposal. Similarly, some may think that we should read Hegel in light of views most popular with other philosophers of his time and place. I avoid this, because I think that similar claims on the surface can mislead us about very different systematic projects and arguments—because I think this method unjustly privileges identity over difference. But, in any case, I think that interpretations which more heavily stress this kind of continuity end up seeing in Hegel, again, *foundationalist* metaphysical monism.¹³ So, again, I don't see this emphasis as resolving the difficulty for Knappik's proposal.

In sum—while I save room for future debate about the extremely compelling counter-proposals in both Knappik and Stern—I am content to rest the final matter, for now, in this way: Knappik and I agree that there are reasons in favor of reading Hegel as denying that everything is completely explicable, or as rejecting the PSR. We agree that these reasons are sufficient to that end. I simply add that the same reasons (as I see it) should still be judged equally sufficient when they point us also

¹² Granted, if you draw a line, is it were, around the realizer, you might also have a line encompassing the realized, and you could say that the One is simply the whole of everything within the line; but almost any metaphysics would allow such a line, so this is not enough for metaphysical monism in any non-trivial sense.

¹³ See for example Beiser (2005) and Franks (2005).

toward the conclusion that the doctrine of Hegel's *Logic* is both monist and ambitiously metaphysical, but no form of metaphysical monism at all.ⁱ

end

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