

# To Suspend Finitude Itself: Hegel's Reaction to Kant's First Antinomy

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Abstract: Hegel famously criticizes Kant's resolution of the antinomies. According to Sedgwick, Hegel primarily chastises Kant's resolution for presupposing that concepts are 'one-sided', rather than identical to their opposites. If Kant had accepted the dialectical nature of concepts, then (according to Sedgwick) Kant would not have needed to resolve the antinomies. However, as Ameriks has noted, any such interpretation faces a serious challenge. Namely, Kant's first antinomy concerns the universe's physical dimensions. Even if we grant that the concept of the finite is necessarily related to that of the infinite, the physical universe cannot both have and lack a temporal beginning. I argue that Hegel neither adopts Sedgwick's view that Kant's antinomies require no resolution nor absurdly accepts that the physical universe both has and lacks a temporal beginning. Instead, Hegel proposes a sophisticated resolution of Kant's first antinomy (including its physical aspect) that depends on Hegel's theory of the Absolute.

## 1. Introduction

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant claims that the faculty of reason's demand for the unconditioned leads to the Idea of the world-whole but that attempting to cognize the world as a whole yields four paradoxical conflicts known as the cosmological

antinomies. According to Kant, we can resolve these antinomies only by appealing to transcendental idealism's distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves and acknowledging that the synthetic *a priori* cognition provided by the categories is merely of appearances, rather than of things-in-themselves.

Kant's discussion of the antinomies exerted a significant influence on the subsequent generation of philosophers. For example, in the *Science of Logic*, Hegel claims that Kant's antinomies 'more than anything else brought about the downfall of traditional metaphysics and can be regarded as a main transition into more recent philosophy' (WL, TW 5:216/Hegel 1960, 190).<sup>i</sup> Yet, few philosophers have held more contempt for Kant's own resolution of the antinomies than Hegel himself. In the *Encyclopedia Logic*, for instance, Hegel dismisses Kant's resolution of the antinomies as 'trivial' and accuses Kant of harboring too much 'tenderness for the things of this world' (EL, TW 8:126/Hegel 1991, 92). Recently, Sally Sedgwick has argued that Hegel's criticism amounts to the claim that Kant's discussion of the antinomies is 'question-begging' (Sedgwick 2012, 173). More specifically, Kant's discussion presupposes that concepts are 'one-sided', rather than identical to their opposites. As Sedgwick writes:

Hegel suggests that the question-begging nature of Kant's discussion is tied to his failure to entertain the possibility that the opposed concepts could be understood as something other than "finite categories." It is because Kant accepts the definitions according to which each of the concepts is "one-sided," that he identifies the arguments as contradictories. His treatment of the arguments reveals itself to be uncritical, in Hegel's view, in just this respect. (Sedgwick 2012, 173)

According to Sedgwick's Hegel, Kant should have accepted the dialectical nature of concepts and, thus, should have accepted the identity of the concept of the finite and the concept of the infinite. Indeed, if Kant had accepted the dialectical nature of concepts, then Kant would not have recognized any need to find a resolution of the antinomies. As Sedgwick writes, 'We would not need to direct our activities, then, to discovering a solution for the arguments' (Sedgwick 2012, 174).<sup>ii</sup>

However, as Karl Ameriks has noted, any such interpretation of Hegel's criticism faces a serious challenge. More specifically, Kant's first antinomy concerns a straightforward question about the physical dimensions of the universe – namely, whether the material universe is temporally and spatially finite or not. And even if we grant Hegel's claim that the concept of the finite is necessarily related to the concept of the infinite, it still makes no sense from a physical perspective to claim that the world both does and does not have a beginning in time. As Ameriks writes, 'the factual question of the world's physical dimensions ... remains even if there is the kind of necessary relation Hegel stresses between the *concepts* of the limited and the endless' (Ameriks 2000, 302).

Initially, it might seem easy to sympathize with Ameriks' worry. After all, in his mature system, Hegel primarily discusses Kant's antinomies in the *Science of Logic* and *Encyclopedia Logic*. These works focus on Hegel's theory of the Concept and do not discuss Hegel's views of the natural world. Based on these texts alone, one might easily wonder what Hegel's attitude towards the physical aspect of Kant's first antinomy could possibly be.<sup>iii</sup> Of course, Hegel develops his own views about space, time, and the physical world in his *Philosophy of Nature*. Hegel does not explicitly refer to Kant's first antinomy in the *Philosophy of Nature*. However, Hegel does take up the first antinomy's

question of the world's beginning in time. Unfortunately, Hegel's response to the question of the world's beginning in time might seem to confirm, rather than dispel, Ameriks' worries about the coherence of Hegel's position. Hegel states:

A plain answer is supposed to state that *either* the one *or* the other is true. But the plain answer is, rather, that the question, this 'either-or' is badly posed. If we are talking of the finite, then we have both a beginning and a non-beginning; these opposed determinations in their unresolved and unreconciled conflict with each other, belong to the finite: and so the finite, because it is this contradiction perishes. (N, TW 9:27/Hegel 1970, 16)

This quotation might appear to imply that Hegel accepts the physically absurd claim that the world both does and does not have a beginning in time. After all, Hegel says, 'If we are talking of the finite, then we have both a beginning and a non-beginning ...' (N, TW 9:27/Hegel 1970, 16). Consequently, we might worry that Hegel's position regarding the physical aspect of Kant's first antinomy falls prey to Ameriks' worries about gross incoherence.

In this essay, however, I will argue that Hegel neither adopts Sedgwick's view that Kant's antinomies do not require a resolution nor absurdly accepts that the physical world both does and does not have a beginning in time. Instead, Hegel proposes a sophisticated resolution of Kant's first antinomy (including the first antinomy's physical aspect) that depends on Hegel's own theory of the Absolute and on Hegel's own theory of time. As I will show, Hegel initially develops this response to Kant's first antinomy in the early Jena period writings *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of*

*Philosophy and Faith and Knowledge*, and he retains it in the mature *Philosophy of Nature*. The *Difference Essay* and *Faith and Knowledge* illustrate that Hegel's attitude towards Kant's first antinomy revolves around Hegel's contrast between the two styles of thinking that he calls Understanding and Reason.<sup>iv</sup> Although Hegel's use of the terms 'Understanding' and 'Reason' might recall Kant's distinction between the faculty of understanding and the faculty of reason, Hegel uses these terms in his own technical way.<sup>v</sup> More specifically, Understanding is a style of thinking that rejects the identity of opposites, while Reason is a style of thinking that accepts the identity of opposites. Unlike Kant, Hegel claims that Understanding *produces* the concept of a successive series of past events. More specifically, Hegel claims that Understanding refuses to accept the identity of opposites but also tacitly recognizes that the Absolute is an identity of subject and object and, thus, an identity of opposites. According to Hegel, Understanding attempts to reconcile the tension between its refusal to accept the identity of opposites and its tacit recognition of the Absolute as an identity of opposites by producing the concept of a successive series of past temporal states. This concept of a successive series of past temporal states takes the form of an *indefinite* regress, rather than the form of either a finite series or an actual infinite series.<sup>vi</sup> Moreover, according to Hegel, we can resolve the tension that produces this indefinite regress and, thus, avoid the indefinite regress itself by rejecting Understanding in favor of Reason. Reason, which accepts the identity of opposites, characterizes the Absolute in terms of eternity, rather than in terms of a successive series of past events.

Obviously, this short summary of Hegel's position will require further spelling out below. But the main point to note is that Hegel does not absurdly claim that the world

is both finitely old and infinitely old. Instead, Hegel argues that Understanding's concept of a successive series of past states takes the form of an indefinite regress. Of course, Hegel (like Kant) concedes that the concept of an indefinite regress does not satisfy a demand for the unconditioned. But, according to Hegel, the unconditioned is properly known by Reason, rather than by Understanding. And from the standpoint of Reason, the unconditioned does not take the form of a successive series of past events at all; instead, the unconditioned (or, in Hegel's language, the Absolute) takes the form of eternity. Thus, from the standpoint of Reason, Kant's first antinomy does not even arise. Indeed, far from agreeing with Sedgwick's suggestion that the antinomies do not need to be resolved, Hegel actually argues that Kant should have resolved the first antinomy by rejecting the characterization of the unconditioned on which the first antinomy depends. And, as I will further demonstrate, Hegel's earlier quoted remark from the *Philosophy of Nature* needs to be interpreted against this same background.<sup>vii</sup> Of course, Hegel's theory, as I have briefly sketched it above, will strike many people as both obscure and highly metaphysical. Although I will attempt to render Hegel's position less obscure below, I will not attempt to render Hegel's position any less metaphysical. Instead, I will conclude by arguing, contrary to recent non-metaphysical interpretations of Hegel, that Hegel reacts to the first antinomy's critique of traditional metaphysics by developing a radically new metaphysics of the unconditioned and of time.<sup>viii</sup> And even those who do not find Hegel's radically new metaphysics persuasive should still heed Hegel's note of caution that Kant's allegedly all-destroying critique of metaphysics is, in fact, intimately tied to Kant's own metaphysical assumptions.

My discussion will proceed in two major steps. First, I will describe Kant's antinomy theory, including Kant's presentation of the first antinomy. Second, I will examine Hegel's response to Kant's first antinomy.

## 2. Kant's First Antinomy

Allow me to begin by briefly describing Kant's antinomy theory (and, in particular, the temporal aspect of Kant's first antinomy) before turning to Hegel's reaction.<sup>ix</sup> Kant's main topic in the 1<sup>st</sup> *Critique* is the possibility of synthetic *a priori* cognition. As we know, Kant's main explanation of the possibility of synthetic *a priori* cognition is found in the Transcendental Analytic, where Kant argues that the pure concepts of the understanding, known as the categories, are constitutive of experience and, thus, provide synthetic *a priori* cognition of objects of experience. Of course, Kant famously argues that the possibility of synthetic *a priori* cognition comes at a price. In particular, Kant takes the argument of the Transcendental Analytic to show that the synthetic *a priori* cognition provided by the categories is merely of appearances, rather than of things-in-themselves. And in the Transcendental Dialectic, Kant further argues that the categories cannot be used to cognize the traditional objects of special metaphysics – namely, the soul, the world-whole, and God.

According to Kant, the Ideas of the soul, the world-whole, and God all result from the faculty of reason's demand for the absolutely unconditioned. As Kant writes regarding the Idea of the world-whole:

Reason demands this in accordance with the principle: **If the conditioned is given, then the whole sum of conditions, and hence the absolutely**

**unconditioned is also given**, through which alone the conditioned was possible. (A409/B436)

But, according to Kant, this attempt to cognize the world as a whole leads to the four paradoxical conflicts known as the cosmological antinomies. As mentioned previously, I will focus on the time aspect of Kant's first antinomy; allow me, then, to explain how the first antinomy arises in regards to time.

If we consider the current state of the world, then the principle of reason requires that we infer the existence of all of the prior temporal states of the world that condition its current state. In other words, the principle of reason requires the existence of the world as a whole. Kant notes that this world-whole might take either of two different forms. First, the series of past temporal states might terminate in an initial temporal state, i.e., a beginning of the world in time. Second, the series might constitute an actual infinite series of past temporal states of the world. Kant believes that indirect arguments can be given in favor of both options, which yields the contradictory result that the world both has a beginning in time but also lacks a beginning in time.<sup>x</sup>

What, then, are the two indirect arguments that yield the first antinomy? The first indirect proof begins by assuming the existence of an actual infinite series of past temporal states. This assumption implies that an actual infinite series of temporal states has already elapsed prior to the present moment in time. But an elapsed infinite series is not possible, because the successive addition of elements cannot generate an actual infinite series. Kant writes, 'But now the infinity of a series consists precisely in the fact that it can never be completed through a synthesis' (A426/B454). Given the impossibility

of an elapsed series of prior temporal states, we can infer by *reductio* that the world must have a beginning in time.

The crux of this indirect argument is, obviously, the claim that an actual infinite series ‘can never be completed through a synthesis’ (A436/B454).<sup>xi</sup> It is worth emphasizing that Kant himself does not object to the notion of an infinite temporal magnitude *per se*. In fact, Kant believes that time (albeit not the world in time) is an infinite given magnitude. According to Kant, time itself is not given through the successive addition of elements. Instead, time is a whole, and moments of time are merely limitations of this whole. In Kant’s technical language, time is a *totum analyticum*. Because time is given as a whole, Kant happily concedes that time is an infinite magnitude. However, the indirect argument for the thesis denies that the parts of the world are merely limitations of a *totum analyticum*. Instead, the world itself is composed of its parts. Referring again to Kant’s technical language, the world-whole would be a *totum syntheticum*.<sup>xii</sup> The indirect argument for the thesis, then, is that the world-whole is given through its parts. But these parts (i.e., the temporal states of the world) are given only through the process of succession in time, and (according to the argument) an actual infinite series can never be completed through such a process.

The second indirect proof begins by assuming that the world has a beginning in time. This assumption implies the existence of an empty time that precedes the world’s existence. But the world could not have arisen from an empty time. Kant writes, ‘no part of such a time has, in itself, prior to another part, any distinguishing conditions of its [i.e., the world’s] existence rather than its non-existence’ (A472/B455). The point here seems to be that no part of the empty time that the argument takes to precede the world’s

beginning contains any ‘distinguishing conditions’ of the world’s existence (A472/B455). Rather, all of the temporal moments prior to the world’s beginning are just empty moments of time. Thus, none of these elements contains some unique ground that explains why the world began subsequent to it, rather than subsequent to any of the other qualitatively identical moments of empty time. Therefore, an empty time could not precede the world’s beginning in time. Consequently, we can conclude by *reductio* that the world has no beginning in time; instead, the series of past temporal states forms an actual infinite series.<sup>xiii</sup>

These two indirect proofs require that the successive series of past states be both finite and infinite; consequently, the two indirect proofs yield an antinomial conflict. Of course, Kant famously argues that we can resolve this antinomy by distinguishing between appearances and things-in-themselves. According to Kant, the Idea of the world-whole as a whole sum of appearances results from confusing appearances for things-in-themselves. Kant maintains that reason’s demand for the absolutely unconditioned is, in fact, legitimate for things-in-themselves.<sup>xiv</sup> As Kant writes:

If the conditioned as well as its conditions are things-in-themselves, then when the first is given not only is the regress to the second **given as a problem**, but the latter is thereby really already **given** along with it; and because this holds for all members of the series, then the complete series of conditions, and hence the unconditioned is thereby simultaneously given ... (A498/B526)

However, according to Kant’s theory of transcendental idealism, objects of experience are not things-in-themselves; instead, objects of experience belong to appearances. And

the principle of reason is not constitutive for appearances. An appearance, rather, is given only to the extent that we can represent it. Thus, the world-whole as a whole sum of appearances would be given only if we were able to represent the world-whole in intuition. As Kant observes:

it does not follow at all that if the conditioned (in appearance) is given, then the synthesis constituting its empirical condition is thereby also given and presupposed; on the contrary, this synthesis takes place for the first time in the regress, and never without it. (A499/B527)

In other words, the series of the world's past temporal states is given only to the extent that we regress back through the series. Because the principle of reason is constitutive only for things-in-themselves and not for appearances, we cannot apply the principle of reason to objects of experience as a constitutive principle. Consequently, we are not licensed to infer the existence of the world-whole from the existence of the current state of the world in time.

From these general considerations, Kant draws two further conclusions. First, Kant concludes that the first antinomy's thesis and antithesis are both false.<sup>xv</sup> As Kant notes, two opposed statements can both be false if they are based on a common, mistaken assumption (A503/B531). For example, the claim that the color red smells good is opposed to the claim that the color red smells bad. However, these claims are both false, because the color red lacks any smell at all. In the case of the first antinomy, Kant argues that the thesis and antithesis both mistakenly assume that the world has a definite age. Once we recognize that the series of past temporal states exists only to the extent that we regress back through the series of prior temporal states, we discover that the world lacks a

definite age. No matter how far we regress back through the series of past temporal states, we can always regard the regress as able to continue further. Yet, we will never be able to regress back through an actual infinite series of temporal states. Thus, the world's age is neither finite nor infinite but, rather, *indefinite* (A517ff./B546ff.). Second, Kant claims that we should not entirely reject reason's demand for the world-whole but, instead, should interpret reason's demand for the world-whole as a subjective, regulative maxim, rather than as an objective, constitutive principle. No matter how far we regress back through the series of past temporal states, we should assume that it is always possible to regress further and, indeed, should strive to do so.

Clearly, Kant's argumentation relies on several questionable assumptions. We might reasonably question Kant's three claims (1) that the successive addition of elements cannot generate an actual infinite series, (2) that the assumption of a beginning in time entails the existence of an empty time prior to the world's beginning, and (3) that the principle of reason's demand for the absolutely unconditioned is, in fact, legitimate for things-in-themselves. However, there can be no doubt that Kant finds his own argumentation extremely compelling. In fact, Kant claims in the B Preface to the 1<sup>st</sup> *Critique* that the antinomies *confirm* that the categories provide synthetic *a priori* cognition only of appearances, because the antinomies show that contradictions result if we attempt to construe this synthetic *a priori* cognition as cognition of things-in-themselves (Bxxin). In this way, the antinomies serve as a touchstone for the Copernican revolution as a whole.

Obviously, we could discuss many other aspects of Kant's antinomy theory in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, including the spatial aspect of Kant's first antinomy and the

technical differences between the two mathematical antinomies (to which the first antinomy belongs) and the two dynamical antinomies. But because our primary concern is with Hegel's reaction to the temporal aspect of Kant's first antinomy, let us turn to Hegel now.

### 3. Hegel's Reaction

As we have seen, Kant argues that attempting to cognize the world-whole by means of the categories results in contradictions. Moreover, Kant takes this point to confirm that the synthetic *a priori* cognition provided by the categories is limited to mere appearances. Interestingly, in *Faith and Knowledge*, Hegel applauds Kant's claim that cause, effect, and succession apply only to appearances. In fact, Hegel claims that this aspect of Kant's theory brought Kant close to founding a truly speculative philosophy. Hegel writes:

According to Kant, all these concepts of cause and effect, succession, etc. are strictly limited to appearances; the things in which these forms are objective as well as any cognition of them are simply nothing at all *in themselves*. The in-itself and Reason are wholly raised above these forms of finitude and kept clear of them. This is the very result which gives Kant the immortal merit of having really made the beginning of a philosophy.  
(GW, TW 2:338/Hegel 1977b, 101)

And Hegel continues:

And Kant's most important result will always remain this: these relations of the finite ... are nothing in themselves, and cognition in accordance

with them is only a cognition of appearances. (GW, TW 2:339/Hegel 1977b, 103)

These passages explicitly praise Kant for recognizing that cause, effect, and succession do not apply to the ‘in-itself’, because our traditional concepts of cause, effect, and succession are merely ‘forms of finitude’ (GW, TW 2:338/Hegel 1977b, 101). Hegel takes Kant’s antinomies to demonstrate that the traditional concepts of cause, effect, and succession yield contradictions when applied to the case of the unconditioned and, thus, prove inadequate for cognition of the Absolute. As Hegel would later write in the *Science of Logic*, ‘These Kantian antinomies ... helped to produce the conviction of the nullity of the categories of finitude in regard to their *content* ... which is a more correct method than the formal method of a subjective idealism’ (WL, TW 5:216/Hegel 1969, 190).

As we can see from these quotations, Hegel closely ties Kant’s antinomies to Kant’s acceptance of finitude; indeed, Hegel claims that the antinomial conflicts originate ‘only through and within finitude’ (GW, TW 2:319/Hegel 1977b, 84). Moreover, Hegel claims that Kant failed to resolve the antinomial conflicts, because Kant ‘did not suspend finitude itself’ (GW, TW 2:319/Hegel 1977b, 84). Hegel’s basic reaction to Kant’s first antinomy is, thus, relatively clear. Namely, Hegel believes that Kant’s antinomies result from finitude and that Kant’s failure to reject finitude prevented Kant from fully resolving the antinomies. At the same time, Hegel’s talk of finitude might seem rather cryptic. As such, we might find ourselves asking the following questions. What exactly does Hegel *mean* by finitude? *Why* does Hegel think that the antinomies result from finitude? Why does Hegel think that Kant *failed* to resolve the antinomies? And *how*

would rejecting finitude provide a preferable resolution of the antinomies? Allow me to handle these questions in sequence below.

To begin, what exactly does Hegel mean by finitude? Hegel's explicit discussion of the antinomies in *Faith and Knowledge* is brief, but we can begin to answer this question more fully by attending to the opening sections of Hegel's *Difference Essay*. Here Hegel associates finitude with the failure to recognize a speculative identity of subject and object and also provides a detailed explanation of the relationship between finitude and antinomies.<sup>xvi</sup> Hegel's discussion in the *Difference Essay* revolves around the aforementioned distinction between Understanding and Reason. As noted above in the introduction, Hegel uses these terms in a technical manner that is not identical to Kant's distinction between the faculty of understanding and the faculty of reason.<sup>xvii</sup> According to Hegel, Understanding is a style of thinking that rejects the identity of opposites. Thus, Understanding can successfully represent identity only by abstracting away from all opposition. Reason, however, readily acknowledges the identity of opposites and, thus, expresses identity without abstracting away from opposition.

Hegel explains these points further by examining how Understanding and Reason relate to knowledge of the Absolute. In the *Difference Essay*, Hegel depicts the Absolute as an original identity of subject and object.<sup>xviii</sup> More specifically, Hegel thinks that the Absolute can be characterized in its entirety as subject and can also be characterized in its entirety as object. Thus, the subject is *identical* to the object. But subject and object are also *differentiated* from one another, as different *aspects* of the Absolute. So, although the Absolute is an identity, it is an identity of opposites.

As mentioned previously, Understanding can successfully represent identity only by abstracting away from all difference. Consequently, Understanding initially attempts to know the Absolute by abstracting away from all difference between subject and object. As a result, Understanding initially attempts to represent the Absolute as the identity  $A=A$ . As Hegel writes:

in  $A=A$ , as principle of identity, it is connectedness that is reflected on, and in this connecting, this being one, the equality is contained in this pure identity; reflection abstracts from all inequality ... This is the meaning of pure unity as conceived by the Understanding, or in other words a unity in abstraction from opposition. (D, TW 2:37-8/Hegel 1977a, 106)

In the expression  $A=A$ , one term of the identity refers to the subject, and the other term of the identity refers to the object. But subject and object are both referred to as simply  $A$ , because Understanding has abstracted away from all difference between them.

Yet, subject and object are not merely identical in the Absolute. Rather, as also mentioned above, they are differentiated from one another, as different aspects of the Absolute. Understanding expresses this difference as  $A \neq A$ , because the first term of the identity (subject) is different from and, thus, not identical to the second term (object). As Hegel writes, ‘One  $A$  is subject, the other object; and the expression of their difference is  $A \neq A$ , or  $A=B$ ’ (D, TW 2:38/Hegel 1977a, 106). But because the Absolute contains both the identity of subject and object and the difference between subject and object, Understanding can fully represent the Absolute only by uniting its expression of the identity of subject and object ( $A=A$ ) with its expression of the difference between subject and object ( $A \neq A$ ). However, Hegel takes  $A=A$  and  $A \neq A$  to contradict one another,

because the first expression says that A is A, while the second expression denies that such is the case. Thus, Understanding can fully represent the Absolute only as a contradiction or, as Hegel himself says, as an ‘antinomy’ (D, TW 2:39/Hegel 1977a, 107).

Because the law of non-contradiction governs Understanding, Understanding cannot tolerate this antinomy. Accordingly, Hegel claims that Understanding destroys itself in its attempt to know the Absolute. Hegel writes, ‘If the Understanding fixes these opposites, the finite and the infinite, so that both are supposed to subsist together as opposed to each other, then it destroys itself’ (D, TW 2:27/Hegel 1977a, 95). On Hegel’s view, Understanding’s self-destruction requires us to reject Understanding in favor of Reason. Reason accepts the identity of opposites and, thus, can know the Absolute without destroying itself. Indeed, because Reason adequately knows the Absolute but Understanding can represent the Absolute only as an antinomy, Hegel claims that antinomies are ‘the highest possible expression’ of Reason by the Understanding (D, TW 2:39/Hegel 1977a, 107). Of course, one might wonder why we should accept the existence of Hegel’s Absolute and reject Understanding, rather than retain Understanding and reject Hegel’s characterization of the Absolute. But Hegel attempts to overcome this worry (at this early stage in his career) by contending that we can have a special ‘transcendental intuition’ that reveals the speculative identity of subject and object (D, TW 2:41/Hegel 1977a, 110).<sup>xix</sup>

Given this sketch of Hegel’s position in the *Difference Essay*, we can begin to appreciate Hegel’s characterization of Kant’s first antinomy in *Faith and Knowledge*. When Hegel claims that Kant is committed to finitude, Hegel means that Kant is committed to Understanding. In other words, Kant is committed to a style of thinking that

does not recognize an identity of opposites and, thus, does not recognize the identity of subject and object. Moreover, Hegel's claim that Kant's antinomies, including the first antinomy, result from finitude entails that the antinomies result from Understanding. Indeed, the *Difference Essay* shows that Understanding finds itself tangled up in an antinomy whenever it attempts to know the Absolute. Yet, Hegel's discussion of antinomies in the *Difference Essay* might seem far removed from Kant's own presentation of the first antinomy. After all, Kant's characterization of the unconditioned in terms of a temporal succession of the world's states seems distinct from Hegel's characterization of the Absolute as an original identity of subject and object. Consequently, we might worry that Kant and Hegel are simply talking about entirely different things. As a result, we might doubt Hegel's claim that the first antinomy results from Kant's commitment to Understanding.

But Hegel is aware that Kant's characterization of the unconditioned differs from his own characterization of the Absolute. In fact, Hegel thinks that Kant's characterization of the unconditioned in terms of a successive series of past events *results* from Understanding, and he refers to any characterization of the unconditioned in terms of a successive series as a 'whole of the Understanding's own kind' (D, TW 2:26/Hegel 1977a, 95). More specifically, Hegel thinks that the concept of a successive series of past events results when Understanding chooses to distort the Absolute rather than accept its own self-destruction. Now, Hegel's suggestion that Kant's characterization of the unconditioned in terms of a successive series results from Understanding's distortion of the Absolute might seem surprising. After all, Kant himself characterizes the unconditioned in terms of a successive series of past events simply because temporal

succession is an obvious feature of our experience and naturally prompts the question of how long the world has existed. But here we need to be careful. Hegel's criticisms of Kant in *Faith and Knowledge* are not immanent.<sup>xx</sup> Instead, Hegel criticizes Kant from the standpoint of his own speculative philosophy. From the standpoint of Hegel's speculative philosophy, time (along with everything else) needs to be explained in terms of the Absolute. Thus, Hegel is content neither with Kant's suggestion that time is simply an obvious feature of our experience nor with Kant's refusal to ask why time is one of our forms of intuition. Consequently, Hegel develops his own theory of time.

Hegel discusses the topic of time at great length in *Faith and Knowledge*'s section on Jacobi. In this section, Hegel defends Spinoza against Jacobi by reinterpreting Spinoza as a speculative philosopher who recognizes the identity of subject and object. While Jacobi simply accepts temporal succession as a manifest feature of experience, Hegel claims that the concept of a successive temporal series results from Understanding's distortion of the Absolute. In an approving reference to Spinoza, Hegel writes:

We obtain the abstraction of time if we do not conceive thinking as attribute of absolute substance ... but isolate it from the attributes and abstract it away from the substance, i.e., if we fixate thinking as empty thinking, as subjective infinity, and place this abstraction in relative connection with the particularity of being. Through this abstraction, eternity will then truly be the basis of the cognition of time and, if you like, of the explanation of time. (GW, TW 2:348/Hegel 1977b, 110)

Here Hegel provides a speculative reinterpretation of Spinoza's view that temporal succession belongs to the imagination. More specifically, Hegel notes that Understanding

fixes thought and being (or, in the terms of the *Difference Essay*, subject and object) in opposition to one another as ‘empty thinking’ and ‘the particularity of being’ (GW, TW 2:348/Hegel 1977b, 110). If Understanding attempts to know the unconditioned, then it begins by positing the particularity of being (e.g., a determinate point) as unconditioned. But Hegel maintains that an item is conditioned by its opposite. Thus, because the particularity of being is opposed to empty thinking, Hegel infers that empty thinking conditions the particularity of being. Consequently, Understanding recognizes that the particularity of being is not unconditioned. As a result, Understanding suspends the particularity of being (i.e., the determinate point) in favor of empty thinking. But empty thinking does not provide us with the unconditioned either, because empty thinking is opposed to and, thus, (according to Hegel) conditioned by the particularity of being. Therefore, Understanding must suspend empty thinking by positing a new instance of the particularity of being (i.e., a new determinate point). But this new determinate point, as an instance of the particularity of being, is opposed to and, thus, (according to Hegel) conditioned by empty thinking. Consequently, Understanding suspends it in favor of empty thinking. And so on. According to Hegel, Understanding can end this successive series of determinate points only by conceding the identity of opposites and accepting the identity of thought and being. But, as we know from the *Difference Essay*, Understanding destroys itself when it attempts to know the identity of thought and being. Rather than choosing to destroy itself, Understanding vainly tries to satisfy itself with this indefinite regress that results from the unending oscillation between positing empty thinking and the particularity of being.

Although Hegel develops these points in *Faith and Knowledge* most clearly in the section on Jacobi, Hegel makes the same points in his discussion of Kant's first antinomy. According to Hegel, Kant's request for 'an intuition for the Idea of Reason in which the Idea would be experienced as purely finite and sensuous and simultaneously and contiguously experienced as a supersensible Beyond of experience' is 'the very ground of the mathematical antinomies' (GW, TW 2:323/Hegel 1977b, 87). Hegel's point here is the same as in his discussion of Spinoza and Jacobi. In this passage, the Idea of Reason corresponds to the unconditioned, the sensuous corresponds to the particularity of being, and the supersensuous beyond corresponds to empty thinking. Hegel's claim is that the mathematical antinomies, including the first antinomy, result from Understanding's opposition of the sensuous and the supersensuous or, in other words, from Understanding's opposition of the particularity of being and empty thinking. Thus, as we might expect from our previous discussion, Hegel claims that the distinction between the sensuous and the supersensuous generates the successive series under discussion in the first antinomy. Hegel writes:

A is posited and at the same time it is not to be posited. A is posited in that it remains what it was. It is suspended in that there is a transition to something else. This empty requirement of another, and the absolute being of that for which another is required, together give rise to this empirical infinitude. (GW, TW 2:319/Hegel 1977b, 83)

As previously acknowledged, Hegel's reconstruction does not match Kant's own presentation of the first antinomy. Unlike Hegel, Kant thinks that we are just confronted with the world as a successive series in time and, thus, naturally ask how far this series

extends into the past. Hegel, however, contends that Understanding produces the concept of a successive series of past states. Thus, the concept of a successive series of past states arises only from the perspective of Understanding. And because the first antinomy revolves around the concept of a successive series of past states, the first antinomy also arises only from the perspective of Understanding. Thus, Hegel claims that the first antinomy originates ‘only through and within finitude’ (GW, TW 2:319/Hegel 1977b, 84).

With these points in mind, we can now examine Hegel’s complaint that Kant fails to fully resolve the first antinomy. As Hegel recognizes, Kant’s appeal to transcendental idealism in the resolution of the antinomies transforms the faculty of reason’s demand for the absolutely unconditioned into a subjective, regulative maxim. According to Hegel, however, Kant’s distinction between a subjective, regulative maxim and an objective, constitutive principle is not especially helpful, because the distinction merely relocates, rather than cancels, the tension that gives rise to the regress of past states. In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel writes:

If such determinations belong to the world, to God, to free agents, there would be an objective contradiction; but this contradiction is not found as absolute; it pertains only to us. Or, in other words, this transcendental idealism lets the contradiction remain only it is not being in itself that is thus contradictory, for the contradiction has its source in our thoughts alone. Thus the same antinomy remains in our mind. (VGP, TW 20:358-9/Hegel 1896, 451)

Hegel's worry that Kant 'lets the contradiction remain' concerns Kant's claim that we should regulatively regard the series of past events as constantly extendable further back in time. Hegel charges that this kind of indefinite regress, which Kant embraces as part of his resolution of the first antinomy, merely manifests the tension between empty thinking and the particularity of being that, in Hegel's view, gave rise to the antinomy in the first place. After all, the indefinite regress results from initially considering a determinate moment as a first beginning, then noting that this determinate moment does not satisfy the faculty of reason's demand for the unconditioned, then moving to a new determinate moment, then recognizing that this new determinate moment does not satisfy the faculty of reason's demand for the unconditioned either, and so on. Hegel complains that this view of the world is unsatisfying, because it merely manifests, rather than resolves, the tension between thought and being. Thus, according to Hegel, Kant's view of the human 'mind is in itself all derangement and disorder' (VGP, TW 20:359/Hegel 1896, 451).

Of course, we might wonder how seriously Kant should take these criticisms. After all, Hegel admits that Kant avoids the straightforward, objective contradiction that the world both is and is not infinitely old, and, presumably, Kant thinks that he has managed to replace the vicious contradiction that the world both does and does not have a first beginning in time with a relatively benign tension in our regulative view of the world.<sup>xxi</sup> Finally, even if we concede that Kant leaves us with a tension in our regulative view of the world, Kant might respond to Hegel by arguing that the harmonious worldview Hegel desires is just not possible.

But Hegel's criticism might seem more serious if Hegel could offer an alternative to Kant's resolution of the antinomies. And Hegel believes that he can. As previously

mentioned, Hegel thinks that Kant's appeal to transcendental idealism ignores the first antinomy's real source – namely, finitude. According to Hegel, Kant should have resolved the first antinomy by suspending finitude. Now, Hegel's call to suspend finitude does not amount to the claim that we should somehow accept that the world both is and is not infinitely old. Hegel's call to suspend finitude amounts, instead, to the claim that Kant's tendency to construe the unconditioned in terms of a successive series is itself a mistake. Because Understanding *generates* the concept of a successive series of past events, we can avoid this regress by abandoning Understanding in favor of Reason. If we accept Reason's knowledge of the identity of subject and object, then, according to Hegel, we do not have temporal succession at all. Instead, we have eternity. Hegel writes, 'The eternal is to be posited as the absolute identity of both; and in the eternal, the infinite on the one side, the finite on the other, are once more nullified as to the antithesis between them' (GW, TW 2:346/Hegel 1977b, 108). Hegel's suggestion is that Kant should have resolved the first antinomy by abandoning Understanding's distorted characterization of the unconditioned in terms of a successive series. Instead, Kant should have embraced Reason's alternative characterization of the unconditioned (or, in Hegel's language, the Absolute) in terms of eternity.

Hegel characterizes eternity as a suspension of time and as a timeless present. He writes, 'The true suspension of time is a timeless present, and in it striving falls away and absolute opposition loses its standing' (D, TW 2:71/Hegel 1977a, 134). It is not immediately clear how best to interpret such remarks, but Hegel develops his theory of eternity more fully in *Faith and Knowledge* through a sympathetic engagement with Spinoza's own theory of eternity.<sup>xxiii</sup> As Hegel notes, Jacobi recoils at Spinoza's theory of

eternity, because Spinoza's theory of eternity entails that time is not actual. Hegel concedes that a proper theory of eternity entails that time is not actual. But, in contrast to Jacobi, Hegel opts for eternity over the actuality of time. Thus, Hegel responds to Jacobi's horror that "finitude and time and succession perish in the highest idea" by welcoming this exact conclusion, when he sarcastically writes, 'as if such misfortune was not what was intended in the first place' (GW, TW 2:343/Hegel 1977b, 105).

Although Hegel makes this remark in reference to Spinoza, it is important to note that Hegel is not merely expressing his interpretation of the historical Spinoza's view. Rather, throughout *Faith and Knowledge*, Hegel reinterprets Spinoza as a speculative philosopher who embraces the identity of thought and being. Hegel's reply to Jacobi is not merely Hegel's statement of how the historical Spinoza might try to respond to Jacob but, instead, represents Hegel's own response to Jacobi.<sup>xxiii</sup> Indeed, regardless of the historical Spinoza's own views, Hegel in *Faith and Knowledge* fully welcomes the conclusion that time is 'nothing in itself' and is 'lost in eternity' (GW, TW 2:348/Hegel 1977b, 109).<sup>xxiv</sup>

Of course, even if we accept this interpretation of Hegel's position in *Faith and Knowledge*, one might worry that Hegel's attitude towards Kant's first antinomy changed by the time of his mature works, including the *Philosophy of Nature*. Thus, it remains to be shown that Hegel's position in the *Philosophy of Nature* largely repeats his early position from the Jena period. In the *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel, once again, stresses that the Absolute (or, as he says here, the True, the idea, Spirit) is eternal. He writes:

Time, therefore, has no power over the Notion, nor is the Notion in time or temporal; on the contrary, *it* is the power over time, which is this

negativity only *qua* externality. Only the natural, therefore, is subject to time in so far as it is finite; the True, on the other hand, the idea, Spirit, is *eternal*. (N, TW 9:49-50/Hegel 1970, 35)

Because the Absolute is eternal, Reason does not actually compel us to ask whether the world has a beginning in time. Rather, as in the Jena writings, Hegel suggests that the question of whether the world has a beginning in time arises when we confuse the temporal world with the true unconditioned, i.e., the Absolute. Thus, Hegel writes:

In the question whether the world or Nature, in its finitude, has a beginning in time or not, one thinks of the world or Nature as such, i.e., as the universal; and the true Universal is the Idea, which we have already said is eternal. The finite, however, is temporal, it has a before and an after; and when the finite is our object we are in time. (N, 9:26/Hegel 1970, 15-6)

In the *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel explicitly denies that the world has an absolute beginning in time (N, 9:26/Hegel 1970, 16). Nature has a beginning only in the sense that the eternal Absolute is the ground and, thus, ‘beginning’ of nature. Rather than having a beginning in time, Hegel (once again) claims that the temporal world takes the form of an indefinite regress. He says:

Where to make the beginning is therefore undetermined; a beginning is to be made, but it is only a relative one. We pass beyond it, but not to infinity, but only to another beginning which, of course, is also a conditioned one; in short, it is only the nature of the relative which is

expressed, because we are in the sphere of finitude. (N, TW 2:26/Hegel 1970, 16)

As we might expect, given our previous discussion, Hegel thinks that the characterization of the world in terms of an indefinite regress is unavoidable from the perspective of Understanding. It is, he says, ‘a necessary idea so long as one is confined to a consideration of the finite as finite’ (N, 9:26/Hegel 1970, 16). And, as we might also expect, given our previous discussion, Hegel believes that the question of the world’s beginning in time is, thus, a false one. From the proper perspective of Reason, ‘the question of a beginning at once disappears’ (N, 9:27/Hegel 1970, 16). After all, from the perspective of reason, the Absolute is eternal.

Thus, Hegel’s stance in the *Philosophy of Nature* seems to be consonant with his earlier position in the *Difference Essay* and *Faith and Knowledge*. Hegel’s position, beginning in the early Jena period and continuing through the *Philosophy of Nature*, is that the concept of an indefinite regress of past events stems from Understanding. From the perspective of Understanding, the world takes the form of an indefinite regress of past events. But Understanding should be replaced by Reason. And Understanding’s distorted characterization of the Absolute in terms of a successive series should be replaced by Reason’s proper characterization of the Absolute in terms of eternity.

With these points in mind, let us return to the initially confusing remark from the *Philosophy of Nature* that I cited in the introduction. To repeat, Hegel writes:

If we are talking of the finite, then we have both a beginning and a non-beginning; these opposed determinations in their unresolved and

unreconciled conflict with each other, belong to the finite: and so the finite, because it is this contradiction perishes. (N, 9:27/Hegel 1970, 16)

Previously, we worried that Hegel intends to claim in this passage that the world is both finitely old and infinitely old. But we can now see that such an interpretation is misplaced. Hegel's claim that the finite presents us with both a beginning and a non-beginning refers to Hegel's previously analyzed view that Understanding opposes the particularity of being to empty thinking and, thus, presents us with both a beginning in the instance of the particularity of being but also the denial of any such beginning in the instance of empty thinking. According to Hegel, Understanding fails to reconcile the tension between the particularity of being and empty thinking. Thus, this tension remains 'unresolved and unreconciled' (N, 9:27/Hegel 1970, 16). Rather than perpetuate this tension in the form of an indefinite regress, Understanding should fully accept the identity of thought and being and, thus, accept its own self-destruction. As Hegel says, the finite 'because it is this contradiction perishes' (N, 9:27/Hegel 1970, 16). Of course, the self-destruction of Understanding should prompt the embrace of Reason. And from the perspective of Reason, the tension between the particularity of being and empty thinking, which belongs merely to the finitude of Understanding, is suspended.

#### 4. Conclusion

As I have argued, Hegel does not treat Kant's first antinomy merely in terms of the identity of concepts. Rather, Hegel also attends to the physical aspect of Kant's first antinomy. Contrary to Ameriks' worry, Hegel does not claim that the world is both finitely old and infinitely old. Rather, from the perspective of Understanding, the world

takes the form of an indefinite regress of past events, while from the proper perspective of Reason, the Absolute takes the form of eternity. Moreover, contrary to Sedgwick's suggestion, Hegel *does* think that we need to find a resolution of the first antinomy. In particular, Hegel contends that we should resolve the first antinomy by suspending Understanding, because Understanding generates the concept of a successive series of past states that gives rise to the antinomy in the first place. Hegel's reaction to the physical aspect of Kant's first antinomy is, thus, sophisticated and nuanced.

Of course, Hegel's reaction to Kant's first antinomy relies on both Hegel's theory of the Absolute and Hegel's theory of time, and these theories might strike many modern readers as implausible and fanciful. Then again, the same criticisms are often leveled against Kant's own resolution of the first antinomy by means of transcendental idealism. Yet, whatever we might think of Hegel's theory of the Absolute and theory of time, our analysis of Hegel's reaction to Kant's first antinomy allows us to draw an important general lesson regarding the history of classical German philosophy. It is, of course, tempting to assume that Hegel and his contemporaries would have been foolish to practice metaphysics in the wake of Kant's all-destroying critiques. And even Hegel seems to think that Kant's antinomies effectively sounded the death knell for earlier metaphysical theories. But these earlier metaphysical theories were products of Understanding, rather than Reason. As I have tried to show, Hegel responds to Kant's criticisms of traditional metaphysics by developing radically new metaphysical theories of the Absolute and of time that express the standpoint of Reason, rather than by simply eschewing metaphysics. And, regardless of what we today might think of Hegel's own view of the Absolute or Hegel's own view of time, we should certainly heed Hegel's

notice that Kant's criticisms of special metaphysics will only ever be as good as Kant's characterizations of the unconditioned on which they rest.<sup>xxv, xxvi</sup>

#### Abbreviations:

Hegel

D = *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*

EL = *Encyclopedia Logic*

GW = *Faith and Knowledge*

N = *Philosophy of Nature*

TW = *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*

VGP = *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*

WL = *Science of Logic*

Kant

A/B = *Critique of Pure Reason*, where A refers to the 1781 edition and B to the 1787 edition

AA = *Gesammelte Schriften*

Prol = *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*

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<sup>i</sup> Hegel's praise for Kant's antinomies is tempered by Hegel's claim that Kant's indirect arguments for the antinomies are superfluous (WL, TW 5:219/Hegel 1960, 193). My focus in this essay will be on Hegel's early treatment of antinomies in the *Difference Essay* and *Faith and Knowledge* and on Hegel's treatment of the world's beginning in the mature *Philosophy of Nature*. Because Hegel does not raise the superfluity objection in these writings, I will refrain from evaluating the precise nature of this objection.

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<sup>ii</sup> Sedgwick (1991) argues for a related claim that Hegel takes Kant's attempt to provide a resolution of the antinomies to presuppose a distinction between thought and being.

However, as I will contend in Part 3 below, rather than assuming merely that Kant's *resolution* of the antinomies presupposes a distinction between thought and being, Hegel maintains that Kant's antinomial paradoxes originally *result* from Understanding's opposition of thought and being.

<sup>iii</sup> Sedgwick (2012) does not address Ameriks' worry.

<sup>iv</sup> Horstmann (1995) stresses that Hegel had developed his basic attitude towards Kant's philosophy by the time of the 1802 *Faith and Knowledge*. I will argue that the mature *Philosophy of Nature* preserves the main contours of Hegel's early reaction to Kant's antinomy theory.

<sup>v</sup> My description of Hegel's contrast between Understanding and Reason follows that of Horstmann (2003). Throughout this essay, I have typographically marked the distinction between Kant and Hegel's different uses of the terms '*Verstand*' and '*Vernunft*' by capitalizing the terms when used in Hegel's technical senses. The Harris and Cerf translations of the *Difference Essay* and *Faith and Knowledge* translate '*Verstand*' as 'intellect'. I have systematically replaced 'intellect' with 'Understanding' in the quoted translations.

<sup>vi</sup> Bowman (2013) also seems to suggest that Hegel regards the world in time in terms of an indefinite regress. Bowman writes, 'But if we join Hegel in dropping the frame of transcendental idealism while radicalizing the idea of dialectic, the resolution of the cosmological antinomy applies to the objects themselves' (Bowman 2013, 156).

Unfortunately, Bowman does not elaborate any further. Thus, Bowman does not explain

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why Hegel thinks that the first antinomy results from finitude, why Hegel thinks that Kant's theory of an indefinite regress actually fails to resolve the first antinomy, or why Hegel thinks that he can provide a better resolution of the first antinomy by appealing to the distinction between Understanding and Reason and claiming that the world takes the form of an indefinite regress only from the perspective of Understanding. Finally, Bowman does not discuss the quotation from the *Philosophy of Nature* that might seem to confirm Ameriks' objection.

<sup>vii</sup> We will see below that Hegel develops his theory of eternity in the section of *Faith and Knowledge* defending Spinoza against Jacobi. Franks (2005, 93ff.) and Boehm (2011) have both recently suggested that Spinozism might present various avenues of response to Kant's antinomy theory. Franks argues that Jacobi developed a Spinozistic, monistic response to Kant's third antinomy, while Boehm identifies the antithesis of Kant's first antinomy with Spinoza and, then, argues that Kant's argumentation in the *Critique of Pure Reason* fails to refute Spinoza's position. However, neither Franks nor Boehm refers in this context to Hegel, much less links Hegel's reaction to Kant's antinomy theory to Hegel's quasi-Spinozistic theory of eternity.

<sup>viii</sup> Kreines (2006) provides a helpful overview of the debate between metaphysical and non-metaphysical interpretations of Hegel.

<sup>ix</sup> No interpretation of Kant's antinomy theory in the 1<sup>st</sup> *Critique* can claim to be entirely uncontroversial. Because this essay focuses primarily on Hegel's reaction to Kant's first antinomy, rather than on Kant himself, I will not aim to defend the following interpretation of Kant's antinomy theory in full detail. See (Al-Azm 1972), (Allison

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2004, 357ff.), (Grier 2001, 172ff.), and (Guyer 1987, 385ff.) for representative overviews of the cosmological antinomies.

<sup>x</sup> Kant ultimately argues that these indirect arguments are flawed, because they rely on the mistaken assumption that appearances are things-in-themselves. But Kant also thinks that the indirect arguments would be successful if appearances were things-in-themselves. Thus, Kant writes in the *Prolegomena*, ‘I will vouch for the correctness of all these proofs’ (Prol, AA 4:340). Kant’s view that the antinomy of pure reason confirms transcendental idealism (because we can resolve the antinomy of pure reason only by appealing to transcendental idealism) makes sense only if Kant is prepared to endorse the indirect arguments from the perspective of transcendental realism.

<sup>xi</sup> Longuenesse (2000, 267) notes that Hegel grants this assumption, but it is worth noting that Maimon challenged the assumption during Kant’s own lifetime (Maimon 1794, 213). See (Allison 2004, 367ff.), (Bennett 1974, 121ff.), and (Guyer 1987, 307ff.) for standard contemporary criticisms of Kant’s assumption.

<sup>xii</sup> Boehm (2011, 685) has recently suggested that Kant lacks sufficient grounds to claim that the world is a *totum syntheticum* and, thus, leaves himself open to the Spinozistic challenge that the world is a *totum analyticum*.

<sup>xiii</sup> This indirect proof was contested during Kant’s own lifetime by Maaß, who argued that time is itself dependent on the substances that comprise the world and, thus, cannot exist prior to the world’s beginning (Maaß 1789). Presumably, Kant would reply by appealing to the (controversial) assumption that the concept of a beginning analytically entails the concept of a prior empty time; Allison (2004, 375) stresses the argument’s reliance on this assumption.

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<sup>xiv</sup> Guyer (1987, 387) emphasizes this assumption but questions Kant's right to it.

<sup>xv</sup> This conclusion is specific to the mathematical antinomies. In the case of the dynamical antinomies, Kant concludes that the thesis and antithesis can both be true (A532/B560).

<sup>xvi</sup> My interpretation of Hegel's *Difference Essay* is particularly informed by Horstmann (2003). See (Düsing 2010), (Förster 2011), and (Heidemann 2010) for other recent discussions of the *Difference Essay*.

<sup>xvii</sup> Again, my interpretation follows that of Horstmann (2003).

<sup>xviii</sup> (Horstmann 1990, 2003). The *Difference Essay* adopts this description of the Absolute from Fichte and Schelling.

<sup>xix</sup> In the *Difference Essay*, Hegel depicts Understanding's self-destruction through antinomies as distinct from the transcendental intuition that raises us to the standpoint of the Absolute. This differs from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where the contradictions in the shapes of consciousness raise us to the standpoint of absolute knowing without a distinct exercise of transcendental intuition.

<sup>xx</sup> (Longuenesse 2000)

<sup>xxi</sup> (Hegel 1896, 451)

<sup>xxii</sup> Obviously, this does not entail that Hegel agrees with Spinoza in all points. For example, in later works, Hegel famously accuses Spinoza of acosmism. Of course, Hegel's later charge of acosmism against Spinoza might make one wonder whether Hegel maintains the attitude towards time presented in *Faith and Knowledge*. But, as I will illustrate below, Hegel puts forward the same theory of time in the mature *Philosophy of Nature*.

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<sup>xxiii</sup> Because Hegel reinterprets Spinoza as a speculative philosopher, we should be careful of immediately identifying Hegel's theory of eternity with that of the historical Spinoza.

<sup>xxiv</sup> The suggestion that Hegel denies the actuality of time is not new. For example, McTaggart writes, 'In the philosophy of the present day the two most important movements (excluding those which are as yet merely critical) are those which look to Hegel and to Mr. Bradley. And both of these schools deny the reality of time' (McTaggart 1908, 457). Forster (1998, 291) has more recently expressed doubts about the actuality of time in Hegel's philosophy.

<sup>xxv</sup> Beiser (2005) emphasizes a different version of this point, arguing that Hegel regards the Absolute as immanent and thus avoids Kant's critique of transcendent metaphysics.

<sup>xxvi</sup> [Acknowledgments removed]