Approaching a great system builder, and, at the same time, a systems-killer like Hegel is a problem, because, as the different aspects in the system are closely linked together, you can take up any one and go to the rest by showing the interconnections. But that doesn't simplify the matter because a given approach not only leads to the other aspects of his thought but also in a sense presupposes them. For example in the Hegelian sense the logic is not just a formal discipline but presupposes a metaphysics, or, if you like to begin with metaphysics you can't make sense of it unless the subtleties of dialectics or the nuances of internal and external negation are known.

Here, since the task in hand is primarily epistemological, I have thought it fit to begin with Hegel's criticism of Kant. This is useful in more than one ways. On the one extreme, it will bring out certain inconsistencies in the Kantian critique while at the same time appreciating the basic idea underlying it and some essential features in it. At the same time it will also uncover certain misconceptions Hegel had about the Kantian project. But, more importantly, Hegel's criticism can be seen as one directed not only against Kant in particular but against the idea of foundational epistemology or, in other words, the idea of the epistemology to which even Kant can be seen to have subscribed. A proper understanding of this analysis will be helpful in showing that, in spite of the talk of 'revolution', 'breach with the past', 'suspending all previous beliefs'
and so on there is a subtle continuity, and yet progressive refinement, in the western philosophical thought from Plato through Descartes to Kant and also that Hegel is no exception to it. Hence in spite of his criticism of Kant as ending in scepticism "It is Hegel who reduced all questions of being (ontology) to questions about the structure and forms of experience and he did so... by carrying modern philosophy - i.e. Kantian philosophy - to its logical and radical conclusions."^1

But as this continuity is progressive it will also pave the way for further developments in Hegel's thought through his criticism of previous epistemology by way of expectations which can be compared with the actual performance.

Hence, in the following section I propose to deal with Hegel's criticism of Kant as found in Phenomenology of Spirit, Logic (Lesser Logic), Science of Logic, Hegel's Lectures on History of Philosophy and Faith & Knowledge. As the last-mentioned book itself was not available in English I had to rely solely on references by & others. For the rest I have relied on the texts as well as criticisms and discussions by others.

I

HEGEL'S CRITICISM OF KANT

Hegel's criticism of Kant seems to stem from his very different conception of philosophy. Kant seems to be governed by the ideal of natural and formal sciences, both of which must be unique and based on methods which leave no scope for
contradictions. Hence in the introduction & prefaces of the first Critique as well as in the introduction to Prolegomena we find him lamenting over the deplorable plurality of philosophical systems and attributing it to the dialectic of reason as the logic of illusion. To Voltaire's announcement: 'There is only one Morality, as there is only one Geometry.' Kant would add 'and only one metaphysic.'

By contrast, Hegel's very use of the term 'dialectic' is not pejorative like Kant. In this respect he is closer to the classical tradition which recognizes a genuine place for dialectic in reality and thought, and therefore does not scoff at contradictions as totally undesirable. On the other hand it is to this dialectics that he attributes the multiplicity of philosophies and claims that 'this necessary multiplicity does not harm the possibility of philosophy.' Similarly, in Logic he remarks that the different systems of philosophy, apparently contradictory and exclusive are the products of the ongoing dialectical reflection of mind but in fact are nothing but the manifestations of a single universal: 'Philosophy.' Thus from the very beginning the pre-conceived goal of a unique system and the consequent demand for a unique method are nipped in the bud.

Naturally, the next target of attack on Kant is his idea of a prior critique of our cognitive faculties. Rather this single point forms the main argument of the Introduction to Hegel's 'Phenomenology of Spirit'. Basically, he does not seem to be against the basic idea of critique as reason's self-examination because he treats it as great and important step taken by Kant and regards pre-critical philosophy as not free thinking at all. Yet he is definitely against making critique a methodological preliminary to our acquisition of
knowledge. As he poignantly points out with the help of the Instrument and Medium models, the general strategy of examining the nature, powers and limits of instruments before or apart from their use is impossible in case of our own cognitive faculty. To examine them itself is an act of their employment. This is what leads Hegel to mock at the whole enterprise of critique as similar to one's determination not to enter water unless one knows how to swim.

On this point, there is a controversy as to whether Kant can be really said to have committed the fallacy of circularity; of claiming to know before one knows. Prima facie, Kant's approach of investigating the possibility of metaphysics through the actuality of natural science and mathematics can be taken to mean that he is not concerned with the possibility of knowledge as a whole but only about knowledge of a special, i.e., metaphysical type. So, if Kant is arguing on the basis of some actual knowledge and an awareness of its structure, he can't be said to be presupposing the very knowledge before its possibility. In this context, Hartnack's reference to Kant's awareness of this possibility of self-refutation in one of his letters is eloquent.

But this argument is based on a supposed distinction between knowledge of things as a first-order inquiry and critique as a second-order one. As against this Walsh holds that for Hegel such a distinction is not admissible—"there is no clear contrast between philosophical and non-philosophical thought: all thought is philosophical in some degree." However this won't help much as Hegel himself maintains clearly that philosophy as a mode of thinking is radically different from ordinary thinking.
One misconception on which Hegel's criticism of Kant's 'priority of critique' is based is his conviction that Kant follows a psychological method—"Kant ...sets to work in a psychological manner, i.e., historically. The story is unfolded and elaborated quite empirically and not developed from concepts." It is rather ironical that the very Kant who explicitly rejects Locke's empirical manner of investigation and even blames Aristotle for enumerating concepts in a haphazard way should himself be the target of those very charges. There is some basis for this misunderstanding in the Critique itself as the first edition emphasizes the subjective part of deduction and the second the objective one. Yet on the whole it is wrong to accuse Kant of psychological manner. But even though priority is taken not in temporal but logical sense, Kant cannot escape unhurt. For now the problem assumes the form of assumption of criteria. As Richard Norman has pointed out—"Any principle that specifies some criterion of what can and what cannot count as authentic knowledge must itself appeal to that very criterion (Circularity) or to some other criterion (regress)." Since this dilemma holds for any criterion, every criterion is bound to be problematic.

The outcome of the foregoing discussion is that though Hegel is not correct in criticizing Kant for temporal priority of the critique for all knowledge as such, Kant is definitely wrong on two counts: 1) Assuming a criterion as unproblematic and 2) Assuming that it is the only one or a unique criterion.

But if such a concept of critique is accepted two important limitations of the critical project follow immediately.

The first is peculiar to Kant's way of investigating the
structure of reason. We have seen how under the spell of 'completeness' and 'adherence to a principle' Kant adopted Aristotelian logic and derived his categories as exhaustive and unalterable. But since Hegel is questioning the very legitimacy of a pre-conceived procedure as such, he is naturally critical of this table of categories - both with respect to their number and their function. His main charges against the categories can be briefly presented as follows:

1) Categories transform the manifold.
2) They are subjective.
3) They are not empty; their content is not sensible but thinkable (like the content of a book.)
4) They are not fit to express the Absolute.  

It must be remembered here that Hegel is not against the very idea of categories. On the contrary he regards them as necessary for objectivity which is equated with universality and necessity - the attributes possessed by categories and not sensation. He is against accepting only a particular set as unproblematic, without criticism or; with criticism independent of their employment. So the question is why just these categories and not others, and why only twelve of them, neither less nor more?

But the thing about categories that irks Hegel most is that they are applicable only to phenomena. As we have seen, the noumenal element is an essential moment in the Kantian critical project aimed at the twofold achievements 1) Refutation of scepticism and 2) Curbing the flights of fancy of reason by limiting its field of operations and thus achieving its target of proving the
possibility of a priori knowledge by creating as it were the new sphere of phenomenal experience which is said to be the proper sphere of our reason. Therefore, as against Hume, Kant claims that the categories of understanding do have a legitimate sphere of application, while against the dogmatists, he would shun the idea of their application beyond as that leads to dialectical reasoning which is a rational illusion.

Hegel's arguments against both these operations - i.e., refutation of scepticism and limitation of dogmatism - show that both these have nothing but sceptical consequences. In the case of scepticism, the noumena are accepted as necessary for the possibility of mind-independent and intersubjective reality that 'appears' to us as the result of the synthesizing or constitutive function of categories having their roots in the transcendental 'I-think'. For Hegel, this very act of positing an 'unknowable but existing noumena' is absurd. Even Kant would agree that existence is not a predicate. But to say that 'there is an X' and then add 'nothing else can be said about it.' is incoherent, because as as Stephen Priest points out, 'For Hegel 'X exists' is equal to the proposition 'X is some sort of thing.' or in other words, 'some category can be applied to X.'

Here perhaps, Kant may try to escape by claiming that the noumena are an object in the sense that they are unknowable but still 'thinkable'. But with Hegel's rejection of the sense - understanding dichotomy even this route is closed.

It must be remembered here that Hegel is not repudiating the very idea of a reality-in-itself. Because of the very
limits of the concepts, none of them can be applied in principle to
the things in themselves. What Hegel is doing is to consistently
stretch this idea to its logical conclusion so that even the proposition
'there exists an X' in inconceivable. In Hegel's words: 'As pure being,
it is nothing (Nichts)'. Hartnack has brought out the full implications
of the foregoing analysis by claiming that Kant's claim of unknow-
ability of noumena really amounts to saying: 'Reality is unknowable
because there is nothing to know.'

The logical structure of Hegel's criticism of noumena is
worth considering. If there is X, it can't be said to be unknowable,
and if 'X is unknowable' it can't be said to exist.

We have noted the inconsistency in the Kantian position
of denying existence as a predicate and attributing only existence
to noumena. This can be taken to mean that at least in the case of
noumena, Kant treats 'existence' as a predicate. Though strange,
this has to be allowed, otherwise we will be caught up in the
dilemma of either regarding the proposition 'Noumena exist' as a
proposition without a predicate or regarding it as a meaningless
proposition or as not a proposition at all. None of these alternatives
will be acceptable to Kant.

If so, making exceptional use of 'existence' as a
predicate because Kant uses it in this way and using - Ex - x exists
and Kx - x is knowable - as notations, the aforementioned proposi-
tions can be presented as:

1) (x) [(Ex) \rightarrow Kx] \cdot (\neg Kx \rightarrow \neg Ex)]

By successively applying the rules of Double Negation,
Transposition, Tautology and Material Implication, this expression
will be transformed as follows:

2) \((x) [(\exists x. Kx) \cdot (\neg Kx \lor \neg \exists x)]\)
3) \((x) [(\exists x. Kx) \cdot (\exists x. Kx)]\)
4) \((x) (\exists x. Kx)\)
5) \((x) (\neg \exists x \lor Kx)\)

The step 4) is 'whatever exists is knowable' - the idealistic thesis quite consistent with Hegel's position. Step 5), though logically equivalent to step 4), brings out the relation between the predicates in a disjunctive way - either non-existent or knowable.

Now, the Kantian stand on the noumena viz- 'that they exist but are unknowable' can be seen as one exactly the opposite of the Hegelian stand. Let us see now:

1) The noumena are unknowable
2) There are noumena and they are unknowable.
3) There are some things and they are unknowable.
4) \((\exists x) (\neg \exists x \lor Kx)\)

By the use of the rules of Double Negation, De Morgan, Material Implication and Quantifier Negation, step 4) will be:

5) \((\exists x) (\neg \exists x \lor Kx)\)
6) \((\exists x) (\neg (\exists x \lor Kx)\)
7) \((\exists x) (\neg (\exists x \lor Kx)\)
8) \((x) (\neg (x) \lor Kx)\)

It is obvious that step 4) in the earlier presentation and step 8) above are the exact logical opposites (contradictories).

While this permanent exclusion of a realm of Being out of the bounds of knowledge upsets Hegel so much, it need not do so for
Kant because he has a finite and limited but assured solace in the realm of phenomena which he calls 'the land of truth' and likens it to an 'island...surrounded by a wide and stormy ocean, the native home of illusions.' The further development of this metaphor suggests that Kant is taking it very seriously as indicating the limited field of our exploration, because very soon he entertains the idea that 'there may be no other territory upon which we can settle.' About the sphere of phenomena he is sure that the required certain, necessary and complete knowledge can be had a priori.

Hegel destroys this satisfaction by pointing out to the genesis of Kantian experience as the result of the functioning of the categories through which, or with the help of which, we apprehend reality. The instrument or medium model of knowledge is self-refuting because it let us know reality not as it is in itself but as it is for us or, in other words, as it is not. But to 'know' something (even of necessity, as Kant claims) as it is not is not to know it.

Thus the climax of Hegelian criticism of Kant is that even Kant's attempt ends up in scepticism. We can't have knowledge of noumena because they are unknowable; of phenomena because phenomenal knowledge is not really knowledge at all.

II

HEGEL'S CRITICISM OF EPISTEMOLOGY

With the culmination of Hegel's criticism of Kant once again bringing us back to the sceptical impasse, we have reached one of the important landmarks in the history of philosophy where it is
necessary to pause, turn back and grasp the unprecedented significance of the situation. This is a turning point in the history of philosophy which is in a sense continuous with the past because it is similar in certain respects with several preceding turns and yet radically different from all of them. To understand this, it is necessary to take a bird's eye view, as it were, of the significant moments relevant in this context. As I have already dealt with these in the first chapter, I will but dwell on the essential points to avoid repetition.

Historically, the first significant moment is that of the emergence of man as a self-conscious being capable of knowing because there he parted company with the rest of the living beings. The next turn came where he extended the inquiry beyond the sphere of experience and started speculating. Till this point, in spite of instances of error, knowledge was regarded as factually possible if attempted at methodically. This self-complacency received a severe jolt when the quibbling sophists introduced a rift in the field of knowledge by polarizing it into knower - known or subject-object and then arguing against the possibility of knowledge as such. The dogmatists attempted unsuccessfully to refute scepticism. The next important turn came with Descartes who admitted the finitude of human beings and yet tried to overcome it by a new method. This trend was followed by others till Hume 'proved' conclusively that in the strict sense of the term we can't have a priori knowledge of the reality as it is. This is where Kant's Copernican Turn as questioning the very propriety of the traditional concept of knowledge as 'knowing-things-as-they-are' in the light of our radical finitude and proposing the possibility of human knowledge in a new sense -
knowledge as, by necessity, determined by our own cognitive make-up has to be appreciated as an step advancing towards a better understanding of ourselves. Here it must be remembered that, like his predecessors, Kant too was disturbed by the challenge of scepticism. But he diagnosed their failure as the result of wrong methods, and his essential contribution consists in proposing a new perspective in the methodology of epistemology. In spite of all the limits and demerits pointed out in the previous chapter, it must be conceded that Kant's attempt to justify the possibility knowledge was, by and large, the most systematic one; more realistic in its recognition of human finitude and in its plan of examining our ability before entering into futile adventures. When even this effort fails to overcome the challenge of scepticism, the picture is still more bleak. But, as Hegel himself has put it, when mind 'finds itself entangled in contradiction, due to frustration, reason may come to distrust itself. In these circumstances philosophy comes to rescue... thought raises itself above the natural state of mind and takes an aloof and negative point of view towards experience and is aware of the Idea.' This description of a frustrated self raising itself above its natural state and taking a critical look at itself clearly echoes the mental states of Descartes at the beginning of Meditations and of Kant at the beginning of the first Critique. So, in a sense, history is repeating itself; but if we remember the differences between Descartes and Kant, we should also expect a breach in the historical continuity. Here in case of Hegel the breach is all the more glaring. What I want to submit here is that whereas all the earlier turns, including Kant's Copernican Turn are turns within epistemol-
ogy as the hope of knowledge as a unique set of methodically obtained beliefs is not abandoned, the turn that we find in Hegelian philosophy (and therefore may be called the Hegelian Turn) can be characterized as reason going beyond and turning on epistemology. It is in this sense that Hegel's critique of Kant does not remain confined to Kant alone but inevitably cascades down into a critique of the whole of traditional epistemology as a whole. If seen as such Hegel is justified in not referring to Kant in the introduction to his Phenomenology of Spirit. Because even though Kant goes much beyond preceding epistemology he nonetheless shares certain deeper underlying assumptions of the latter. Hence like Kant perceiving certain common points of empiricism and rationalism and yet transcending them, Hegel can be seen as clubbing Kant with all his predecessors by virtue of the common assumptions (or misconceptions) on which their efforts to build up a theory of knowledge are based and then questioning the very propriety of the conception of a unique epistemology after which all of them are running. If Kant's critical turn is Copernican Turn, the Hegelian Turn can be regarded as a parallel of the Relativity Theory that shook the foundations of the Newtonian belief in the uniqueness of description of reality.

The purpose of this section, therefore, will be to look at Hegel's remarks in the Introduction to Phenomenology of Spirit and elsewhere in the broader perspective of a critique of the traditional concept of epistemology as such and then understand Hegel's diagnosis of the failure of this epistemology to overcome Scepticism in a convincing way. This will in turn pave the way into Hegel's own
I propose to divide Hegel’s criticism into two parts for sake of convenience. First of all, we will note his views on the deficiencies and problems within the fields of epistemology. But an awareness of these alone seems to be frustrating as they appear to be inescapable. It is then that the value of the second part will be appreciated. For here we will see Hegel’s acute insight in drawing our attention to the fact that, in spite of the best intentions and avowed determination to conduct a pre-suppositionless, free critical inquiry into the nature, scope and limits of knowledge and through it alone build up a picture of reality, in short to base ontology on epistemology, all the attempts - dogmatic and critical; empirical and rational; and even sceptical - are in fact themselves based on certain assumptions about the ontological structure of this world. Not only that, it is such an assumed ontology that is primarily responsible for the inevitability of sceptical doom that awaits these epistemological attempts.

As Hegel puts it, all the traditional attempts at knowledge begin with a preconceived notion of a unique, standard knowledge as the goal to be reached; knowledge of things as they are or as Hegel calls it ‘knowledge in itself’21. By consequence, anything that does not conform to this standard is error. To assure that what we are possessing is knowledge and to distinguish it from error, the best solution is seen in the criterion or method which is specially selected or designed for this purpose. The trouble in epistemology begins here. Elsewhere, an inspection of an instrument is a necessary preliminary to ensure its efficacy in
bringing about the desired results. By analogy, philosophers insist on a similar inspection of our cognitive faculties before their employment. As Hegel points out, this is fallacious because this inspection itself involves the use of cognition. An attempt can be made to escape this charge by claiming that such a critique is not on par with the first-order knowledge. But then either this argument can fail due to Hegel's denial of such a distinction between first-order and second-order knowledge or if it escapes circularity it will now face the charge of infinite regress. For now, this 'second-order' knowledge, as knowledge, will require some other criterion to justify it and so on ad infinitum. But can a philosopher afford to avoid being critical in the face of this dilemma? Not in the least, because that would amount to being naïvely gullible to any assertion and an easy prey to scepticism. This is what David Lamb calls 'the problem of critique', 'the problem of starting in the absence of a standard which is itself incapable of falsity.' Till Kant the recurring theme is that of a hunt for 'the method' which, if and when found, is bound to yield genuine knowledge and silence the sceptic for ever. But when even Kant fails, Hegel rightly suspects that something is wrong not with this or that method but with the very idea of 'method'.

Another complication that is insoluble in the traditional model of epistemology arises out of the treatment of knowledge as an instrument or medium. As the ontological assumption behind this is to be discussed later, I will only present the epistemological problem here. Our aim is to know the truth. Knowing the truth is knowing a thing or fact as it is. But in the traditional conception of knowledge it is possible only via the instrument or medium which
necessarily must affect or condition it. But this defeats the very purpose of knowing. On the one hand, our 'knowledge' is not 'knowledge-of-things-as-they-are' and thus not knowledge at all. But still serious is the problem of ascertaining whether our 'awareness' corresponds with reality as the latter can be grasped only through the medium. As is well-known, assertion of correspondence is not possible if one of the terms of comparison is not available independently. So in the end, it is this problem of correspondence that makes knowing impossible.

But why do all these problems arise? And are they really insurmountable so that every attempt at epistemology must end in scepticism? From within the traditional concept of epistemology that we have seen in the preceding pages the answer to the second question would appear to be affirmative. The essential & basic novelty in Hegel's approach consists in questioning this very epistemological model and showing that it appears to be the only one possible because of some common underlying ontological assumptions about the universe in which this phenomenon of knowing takes place. As these assumptions are faulty it's no wonder that problems crop-up in the enterprise based on them. So ultimately Hegel's critique of epistemology crosses the boundaries of its object and examines its foundations in ontology.

Hegel's chief and most basic objection against the traditional epistemology is against its assumption of a dualistic or what may also be called fragmentational picture of the universe. Before seeing what precisely these assumptions are and to which problems they lead, it is necessary to keep in mind that by contrast
Hegel does not wish to propose a non-dualistic or monistic picture of reality in which the particulars have no place. On the contrary, his conception of Absolute is that of a system or organic whole in which the particulars are by their very nature interrelated with each other. As such his opposition to dualism must be understood as the opposition to treat the distinguishable objects of thought as totally separate from each other.

The most basic split that is assumed at the beginning is that between reason and reality. This split is very glaring in Kant who regards reason as the source of the very idea of order in the universe. Hegel protests against this by claiming that order is cosmic and not dependent on a contingent fact like human reason. It is not the case, in his eloquent words, that "the world in itself is falling to pieces and gets objective coherence... through the good offices of human self-consciousness and understanding." But once this distinction is accepted, the hard and fast distinctions between subject and object, knowledge and the knowable (Absolute) and even the knower and knowledge follow. It is that knowledge becomes an instrument or a medium interposed between us and the reality. Incidentally, thus treated, knowledge is thingified. But this is inconsistent with the fact of its examination which also is knowledge but an activity.

Another basic assumption that underlies the attempts at knowing the truth is that the reality is static in the sense of having a stable order. That is how we come to conceive the uniqueness of its knowledge. But this requires us to be constantly threatened by errors and this is where the idea of an unknowable noumena finds
a firm foothold.

The distinction between consciousness and objects itself presupposes the picture of mind as a container in which there are ideas and experiences and outside which there are the things-in-themselves. As Robert Solomon has pointed out, experience is not a self-enclosed entity not having to do anything with outside itself. It is the awareness-of-things. The trouble arises when we in the first place tear them asunder and then start wondering how they can be united again. Again in Solomon's words - 'When there is a boundary, crossing it becomes impossible.'

The knower-knowledge distinction mentioned above is responsible for the treatment of knowledge as an instrument or medium and also makes scope for the idea of critique as an externally imposed examination. Knowledge here is something that stands between us and reality and as existing independently can be treated as analogous to other instruments. The reason-reality duo coupled with the subject-object duo amounts to possession of reason by the subject/knower alone. Thus the method becomes 'external' and hence is intrinsically incapable of knowing.

The general lesson that philosophy has to learn from Hegel's critique is that the attempts to build up ontology on epistemology are futile because every epistemology is surreptitiously but inextricably embedded in some ontological commitments or, in other words can be said to make sense only within an ontological framework. As such the positive contribution by Hegel to the theory of knowledge should be not only in epistemology but also with respect to its foundations because so long as the foundations are
Hegel's approach must be distinguished from that of his opponents; the approach called ‘foundationalism’ by David Lamb, because foundationalism consists in founding an epistemological system on certain beliefs or principles accepted as indubitable or self-evident. In simple terms it is basing a large mass of belief on some chosen beliefs. With the realization that an ontological backdrop is inevitable, Hegel’s attempt is to go farther deeper, beyond the cognitive field and understand the ontological foundations.

On this background, I will first of all present Hegel’s concept of ontology which is supposed to replace the dualistic universe supporting the problematic epistemology and thus prepare the ground for Hegel’s own concept of knowledge.

III

HEGEL’S CONCEPT OF ONTOLOGY

It is true that in a sense it is wrong to treat Hegel in this conventional, stereotyped way by isolating the ontological, epistemological and similar other aspects of his philosophy while actually any one of them can’t be tackled without presupposing or at least knowing the other. But the way I have presented Hegel’s criticism epistemology prior to him as going to the ontological roots of that epistemology suggests that the proper way to understand Hegel’s own views is not by just juxtaposing his views on knowledge with those of the opponents but by understanding first the ontological
picture that he wants to substitute for that of his opponents. Because only then will his views on the nature of knowledge be fully understood. I feel that part of the reason why Hegel's talk of dialectics, knowledge of the Absolute Idea etc. appears absurd or mind-boggling to many of us is that we try to make sense of it within the dualistic, static ontological framework of pre-Hegelian philosophy - a framework which is also consistent with the natural attitude. Before Hegel exposed the ontological presuppositions of the pre-Hegelian epistemology, one could have protested against such a sweeping and fundamental assumption as going against the grain of the critical spirit. But Hegel's criticism amounts to claiming that the question is not of avoiding ontology but of choosing the right one. Hegel perhaps would add: 'And of openly recognizing that such a choice is made.'

Now on Hegel's own terms there can't be a question of proving the Absolute in order to accept its existence indubitably. Right in the beginning of his Phenomenology he has explicitly rejected 'the way of asserting a proposition, adduing reasons for it...' as the way by which we can reach the 'truth'. Not only that, he clearly states in the following Introduction that 'that the Absolute alone is true' is a fact. About the nature of the knowledge of the Absolute qua Absolute we will investigate at length later. At present it is sufficient to note that the Absolute is not something that appears at the terminal point of the quest. It is always there because as the necessary condition of all knowledge any attempt at knowing presupposes it. When we attempt to know we are going nearer to it.

The most important characteristic that Hegel attributes to the
universe is its intrinsic rationality or 'reasonableness. This is a master-stroke that aims at eliminating two evils of the critical philosophy - fear of error and externality or artificiality of the critique. We have already seen Hegel opposing the Kantian idea of reason imposing order on the universe. In claiming that the principles of thought are also the principles of the objects of thought, Kant too had brought thought and being together. But his delimitation of thought to phenomena leaves enomenal residuum to the attack of skepticism. Hegelian position, on the other hand, can be called pan-logic in the classical sense. Even though co-extensive with phenomena, reason (understanding) in Kant is basically different, heterogeneous from the former and hence the problem of relating the two emerges. But because of this assimilation of the "Logos" to the "Ontos" this problem vanishes.

Another consequence of this pan-logical position is that "Logic" for Hegel is not just a purely formal discipline. On the contrary, it is inextricably related with ontology and, therefore, deals with the most general forms of being. Of course, on this count one should not expect a repeat performance of the metaphysical deduction: "as many concepts as the number of judgements". In Hegel's eyes this is a forcibly imposed petrification on our thought by an external and independently designed formal logic. He criticized traditional logic for justifying the common sense in a philosophical manner and for stabilizing and perpetuating a false reality with its categories.33

To have a proper perspective of the Hegelian world therefore, it is necessary to grasp what his logic is. As Stanley
Rosen has remarked, "One is not studying Hegel unless one enters into the complexities of his logic.... Hegel accepts the Greek conception of philosophy as an attempt to give a 'Logos' or discursive account of the Whole".34

The dynamic nature of Hegel's logic as representative of the nature of being is due to the dynamic nature of that being itself. Earlier it was noted that Hegel's Absolute Idealism is not monism as it has a place for the particulars. But the particulars are not independent existents. In Hegel's system the nature of a thing consists of its relations with other things as well, its similarities and differences included. As these are infinite, the articulation of the nature of thing through definition can't be adequate. In this sense no particular thing is "true" or "real". Hence they are necessarily negative - "they are not what they are".35 Thus, negativity is at the very heart of being. It is however, not purely destructive but preservative of what is good. This is "determinate negation" as Hegel calls it, providing or leading to a better alternative. As Herbert Marcuse puts it, "....such form of (negative) existence is bad. When this is realized and beings become "subjects" and modify their outward state to suit their potentials that true existence begins."36 Outside the realm of epistemology this is the nature of the dialectical process that is part and parcel of the very existence of the universe - realization of the limits of any given form of existence and overcoming these limits by a better state of affairs.

It is within such an ontological setting - potentially and intrinsically rational, dynamic and evermoving towards progressive "realization" of its essence - that the cognitive enterprise begins.
Hegel's Concept of Critique

One small but important point must be made at the outset. Hegel himself does not use the word critique, primarily perhaps because of his basic opposition to the very idea of an external artificial preconceived examination of reason. At the same time it should be remembered that he is not opposed to the very idea of reasons' self-examination, for he praises Kant for making knowledge its own object. Furthermore, his own description of 'reflection' (his own term for critique) e.g. philosophy as reflective thinking about the modes of thought, mind finding its fulfillment when it turns upon itself, thought raising itself above the natural state of mind and taking an aloof and negative point of view towards experience (emphasis added) makes 'reflection' basically identical with critique. We have already seen that Hegel is vehemently opposed to the idea of critique as examination of reason prior to its application as it leads to reification of knowledge on the one hand and involves circularity or infinite regress on the other. Moreover, the whole project of such a critique is artificial in the sense that on its own, reason seems to be incapable of self-criticism so that it is necessary to suspend its rovings and subject it to the prying eyes of a judge. But, if reason is not critical, what or who else can be? What Hegel does is to naturalize this process of criticism by the aforementioned assimilation of reason with reality. In the words of Herbert Marcuse 'reflection' is primarily the process of being that is replicated in consciousness. Note the passivity of the process. It is wrong to say...
We reflect on our own consciousness. Reason is self-critical and reflection is an ongoing activity. "We are also spared the trouble of really testing; all that is left for us is simply to look on." It will be perhaps more accurate to say that a person as a particular individual has to follow and grasp "the formative stages of the universal Spirit, as shapes which Spirit has already left behind." Another count on which Hegel accuses Kant and others is of assuming a subject-object dichotomy. Though this assumption is in consonance with common sense and experience, it poses the big problem of explaining how a relation between the two is possible. But, if the realistic position can't solve the problem, the idealistic position doesn't do justice to our experience by absorbing objects in consciousness or by reducing them to ideas. Here the problem is that of overcoming the separation between subject and object without dissolving their intrinsic characteristics. Hegel's solution of this problem lies in holding that the 'outer', independent existence of an object or rather the very objectivity is the manifestation of the subject (in the universalized sense of Spirit) itself. 'Consciousness simultaneously distinguishes itself from something and relates itself to it.' In such a situation of identity in difference, the problem of an independent and unknowable noumenon vanishes. This is how Hegelian reflection moves within the sphere of phenomena and yet can claim knowledge. There are simply no noumena, and therefore, the problem is not whether we have knowledge but whether we have it adequately. Now, as the object of consciousness is not something radically different from it, the problem of correspondence - of comparing the impressions of an object which
are in our mind with the object which is outside and not knowable except through the impressions - simply does not arise. As Hegel puts it - 'Since both are for the same consciousness.... it is for the same consciousness to know whether its knowledge of the object corresponds to the object or not.' It is obvious that what Hegel means by 'correspondence' here is consistency or coherence. It is thus that Hegelian phenomenology as a description of phenomena begins.

Here, it is necessary to attempt to locate the precise position of Hegelian phenomenology. On the one extreme, we have the classical Greek contempt for everything that is phenomenal as it is transcendent, subjective, and therefore incapable of yielding knowledge at all. This pejorative sense is present even in Kant, although he boldly asserts that whatever knowledge we can have belongs only to the phenomenal sphere. Yet, the knowable element of noumena constantly casts its shadow and sustains an unending uneasiness. With Hegel's demonstration of the absurdity of accepting the existence of an unknowable, the noumenal ghost is dismissed. Now there are only phenomena and our consciousness grasping them - to some extent or other. But, for Hegel phenomenology is not a method or a propaedeutic, prior to and apart from philosophy proper - like Husserl who stands at the other extreme. To Hegel, phenomenology is philosophy - a constant ongoing concern with phenomena apart from which there is nothing to know but which themselves always seem to elude the perfect grasp and hence demand reconsideration by our consciousness. The most crucial advantage of Hegel's phenomenology lies primarily in its disposal
of the noumenal element and in 'phenomenalization' (if I may be allowed to use the term) of all the elements involved in the epistemic situation - knowledge, object of knowledge and even the knowing self. Besides, it also nips in the bud the problems that arise out of adoption of a pre-conceived external standard, because even the fields of logic or mathematics are now within the fold of phenomena.

Thus, Hegelian philosophy is phenomenology in the sense that it accepts phenomenality as the only nature of all that is and operates within this field.

Before turning to the most important topic of the nature of reflection itself, I want to draw attention to a distinction that is of fundamental importance for the present discussion. This is the distinction that Hegel makes between 'knowledge' and 'truth'. He uses these two terms in a sense different from their ordinary usage, hence the difference must be brought to notice. Earlier, I have referred to Hegel's explanation of the apparent duality between subject and object as a result of an act of the Spirit presenting itself as the object as well. Hegel defines knowledge as a way in which the subject relates itself to the other. In this characterization of knowledge there is not the slightest inkling of uniqueness of knowledge. Thus 'knowledge' becomes relative to our standpoint. In its ordinary usage 'Truth' is regarded as a property of propositions. Hegel uses this term in the sense of a property of reality itself. Something is true only when it is real in the sense of having actualized all its potentialities. In this sense particulars are not real. Only the Absolute is. Thus at the very outset, Hegel plants the seeds
of destruction or relativization of epistemology in its conventional sense.\footnote{178}

The Nature of Reflection

In a sense, the position about the beginning of reflection is perplexing. On the one hand, it is rather incorrect to say that it has a beginning, because the very universe is 'reasonable' and has the element of criticality at its heart and as such, in the widest sense of the term, reflection is co-extensive with reality. But from the point of view of the individual (though it is true that reflection is the process of recovering the shapes of consciousness by the Spirit) reflection as being aware of this process does have a beginning. Hegel's own characterization of the beginnings of reflection - reason turning upon itself, getting entangled into contradictions, raising itself above the natural state and taking a negative and detached look - is prima facie reminiscent of the situation in which the Kantian critique begins. Yet, the resemblance is only superficial as, for Kant, the multiplicity of philosophical systems points to a serious malady in our very thinking process. To him there can be only one philosophy, the others must be necessarily wrong. For Hegel, on the other hand, the very nature of reality is such that it can't be adequately grasped in a single philosophy and hence contradictory philosophies are a necessity.\footnote{49} Thus, the fear of error is eliminated to such an extent that not only particular errors but even particular viewpoints which may be branded as erroneous by those conforming to a preconceived, single standards are not erroneous from the Hegelian point of view.
Now, at which point does the reflection begin? Since, as Herbert Marcuse has pointed out, reflection is a process that mirrors the process of being, there should be some sort of correspondence between the level of being and the level at which reflection starts its operation. This is where the actual process of phenomenological reflection begins. The lowest level of being is that of particular existents, and therefore, corresponding to it is the level of sense experience. But even here reflection is not merely descriptive like the Husserlian phenomenology (at least as per the original intentions). Description is no doubt there, but it is not an end in itself. We have to describe to see whether this description corresponds to the object. Though Hegel himself does not use the word description in the Introduction (to Phenomenology of Spirit) his talk of correspondence in the sense of comparison can make sense only if the comparison is regarded as one between the object in the sense of our consciousness of something and our description or articulation of it in language. It is only then that the talk of degrees of adequacy is possible.

Hegel and Method

This is the place which requires a serious consideration of Hegel's views on method. The reason why he is represented as an anti-metaphysician or anti-epistemologist is his vehement criticism against the very artificiality of the process of critique of all the predecessors. The most conspicuous feature of such a critique is its predilection for a particular model of knowledge as the
paradigm and the consequent blind adoption of its method. Normally, there should be nothing against such an adaptation if the methods really worked. But actual experience is otherwise. In the historical survey undertaken in chapter 1, we found that despite of their genuine preoccupation with encountering scepticism by using the right method as the remedy, all the thinkers - from Descartes to Kant - were no less prone to the sceptical attack than their dogmatic brethren.

Another flaw that is found uniformly in the attempts of all these 'methodists' is that none of them remains strictly within the confines of their own method. For example, Descartes accepts God; Hume bases his argument against causality on causal account of knowledge, Locke and Kant accept an unknowable substance. It seems that, by themselves, the axioms and basic principles of any method are not capable of giving the desired results. But such an illicit supplementation of a method by an extraneous element surely distorts the very nature of a method as an enclosed, well-knit and self-sufficient entity. Hence the idea of using a method, useful elsewhere and therefore assumed to be useful in another field is not helpful because such a method neither gives the desired results nor is sufficient by itself.

Here I want to suggest that the very idea of using a tested method in another field is a fallacious one. First of all, it is necessary to note that the very idea of a method as a specific way to reach a certain goal (as its etymology-meta- after; hodos-a way-suggests) in basically proper only to closed formal systems in which the basic truths, relations, principles of inference are all in consciousness in
the sense of being fully known. To use a geographical metaphor, the field is entirely charted. As such 'method' as a sure and effective way of reaching the goal which also is known is a perfectly sensible idea. Understood in this way, it is also not hard to see that a method must be by its very nature field-specific. The fallacy lies in assuming that reason itself is a closed field and then uncritically transferring a method fruitful elsewhere, to it. To continue the geographical metaphor, the sure way to a location can't be chalked out prior to a full acquaintance with the whole of the concerned region.

On this background, it will now be clearer as to why Hegel is 'against' method. Indeed, the fact that he is against the deductive, formal methods is clear from his own remarks: 'the way of asserting a proposition, adducing reasons for it, and in the same way refuting its opposite by reason, is not the form in which truth can appear.' But this need not be taken as Hegel's opposition to method as such, because that will imply absence of a criterion and hence an indiscriminate acceptance of all beliefs. But the proper method should neither be borrowed, preconceived nor be external. That amounts to a forcible imposition and hence distortion of the subject-matter. Moreover, the insistence on the uniqueness of a method leads to its staticity and even though the subject matter requires a change in method, the method dominates and forces its own rigidity on the matter. That is what Hegel's similes of pigeon-holing process or grocer's labelled boxes suggest. Thus there is a dilemma before Hegel. Conformity to a method (in the rigid sense) petrifies knowledge, but discarding the very idea of a method leaves the field open for truths and falsehoods alike.
Hegel's description as an anti-epistemologist is also often construed as meaning that he denies the very possibility of knowledge. But this is exactly against Hegel's intentions. (To help bring philosophy closer to the form of science, to the goal where it can lay aside the title 'love of knowing' and be actual knowing - that is what I have set myself to do'). If the distinction between 'knowledge' and 'truth' in Hegel's sense as clarified earlier is taken together with his rejection of an arbitrary and unique criterion, plurality or diversity of 'knowledges' will seem to be the necessary consequence. And within each knowledge-system there will have to be standards according to which we may justify our acceptance of our belief. Because a belief can claim the status of knowledge only within a system. 'Knowledge is only real and can only be set forth fully in the form of a science, in the form of a system.' This systemic character of knowledge is in consonance with the Hegelian idea of universe as an organically inter-related whole. The advantage of such a form of knowledge is that, as David Lamb has put it, 'attention is paid to organization of beliefs... rather than to the foundations of knowledge. The limits to what can be said are drawn in accordance with the contents of other beliefs and activities.'

Thus, on the one hand, Hegel admits the possibility of knowledge as a part of a system, and as such will have to provide for a standard or criterion, and on the other hand, stands his criticism of method. The apparent contradiction between the two can be resolved only if Hegel's criticism of a method is taken as applying to a method accepted uncritically and applied to a field as the only guarantee of knowledge which is supposed to be unique. But as
knowledge can't be regarded as a closed field, any method or principle should not only be obvious and consistent as in the case of formal systems but also true. This is something that can't be proved within any system. Hence, whether requiring circularity or regress, any such standard will be problematic and hence no epistemology can claim finality or uniqueness. Hence, to quote Lamb again, "The standards that he (Hegel) repudiates are not standards within a system but standards about a system." If so Hegel must have a method in the Phenomenology of Spirit, too—though in a different sense—not one that sanctifies one set of beliefs as the knowledge but accounts for alternative or parallel ways of 'consciousness relating itself with the object'. As such it will not itself be one of the many views but a view about views, a meta-view. This is the way in which Hegel's dialectic should be seen.

Dialectics As The Method.

As stated earlier, phenomenology for Hegel is not a method but the field in which the ongoing process of the contact between the spirit and the object is to be understood. We as first persons deprived of our individuality and subjectivity are not initiators of the process. It is rather more proper to say that the process in already under way as a result of the in-built desire of our consciousness to come to terms with the object which ultimately is nothing but itself. Hence, there is a constantly nagging question that keeps the consciousness on the toes—'Does the consciousness grasp the object adequately?'
The difference between the earlier attempts - including Kant's - and the present one is worth noticing. As the fear of error is thrown to the winds, the ability of our consciousness to steer clear of obstacles is fully trusted. Therefore, instead of asking questions about the indubitable truths and means to acquire them, Hegel straightaway makes a headway into the field. And, as there are no initial truths or principles, there also are no proofs in the formal sense. Still phenomenology can be looked upon as a journey because, as Soloman has put it, there is deduction in the literal sense of 'leading from' not according to logical principles but according to the end one wants to reach. The question is - what is this end that the consciousness wants to reach? And how is it driven towards it? The strange thing with Hegel is that the goal of consciousness is itself, but in its fully actualized or real form of pure subjectivity. But presently, we should be concerned more with the impetys that moves it in that direction. This is the force of negation. This negation of course should be distinguished from its ordinary as well as formal logical counterparts. Unlike the popular sense of negation, Hegelian negation is not a simple denial of everything that a thing or idea may have; and unlike its formal counterpart it is not only formal and meeting its opposite by way of a head-on collision in which both are annulled. Kant has rightly pointed out to such a situation as the most favourable for a sceptical proof that consists in the denial of both the conjuncts, p and ¬p because even the dogmatist concedes that such a contradictory situation is impossible. But Hegel's conception of Logic differs from both, the dogmatists and the sceptics, in regarding logic as representing the most general forms
of being (and not of thought) from 'Being' to subjectivity as the
essence of reality, and like Hegel's concept of reality, his logic too is
dynamic and not a static one imposing monochrome formalism and
stabilizing a false reality as traditional logic does. It won't be an exaggeration to say that negation in Hegel's
sense is at the heart of his logic and consequently of dialectics in the
new sense. Perhaps that is why, Hegel consciously distinguishes
his negation from a simple negation by calling his own negation
'Determinate'. It would be more appropriate to characterize it as
the attitude with which consciousness continuously looks at the
objects as well as at itself and finds that it is not adequately
comprehending the object. It seems that, when Hegel says,
'Consciousness provides its own criterion from within itself', it is the
negativity that he has in mind not as the criterion but as the source
of criteria. Because taking a negative looks makes us aware of the
gap between our actual grasp of the object and its notion and these
brings out the limits of the former. For Hegel these limits are not
forever; they can be transcended, rather their awareness is
necessary and sufficient for such a transcendence. Again, though
there is the talk of correspondence between the notion and the
object, the real test is not whether both of them are consistent with
each other in the logical sense but whether the comparison is
satisfactory to the self. So long as there is a felt tension between the
two comparata, it will continue to act as a stimulant to a reformulation
and still better reformulation of our knowledge (by which Hegel
seems to mean articulate linguistic expression of our experience.)

At this place it is necessary to pause and note certain
important points on which Hegel differs with Kant and also has a clear advantage over the latter. In following Copernicus Kant had no doubt taken a decisive step in holding that 'objects must conform to knowledge'. But when it came to answering the next question -

'To what should knowledge conform?' he slipped and imposed the rigid and fixed model of formal logic on a field which also has a necessary material side. From his of exact received it is very clear that he is against such formalized (and therefore fragmentary) treatment of a subject-matter as it deals with only one of its superficial characters and thus sacrifices full comprehension for exactness and rigour. That is what Kantian epistemology suffers due to formal logic influenced by mathematics. By contrast, Hegel's attempt to build up a picture of knowledge by beginning from inside the experience is at least honest to the ontological presupposition of his endeavour. There is no pre-conceived standard or even a ready logic, because ideals or standards as pertaining to reality are supposed to emerge from the particulars. What there is from the beginning is reason itself with its inherent tendency to take an aloof, negative critical look at its objects. But this is something that is inside, not borrowed imposed from outside.

It is also the peculiarity of negation in the Hegelian sense that avoids his thinking from getting stuck up in contradiction. As seen earlier, negation in the formal sense allows for a head-on collision between contradictory assertions and results in a stalemate. But negation in the Hegelian system of a mobile, goal-directed reality acts not merely in a negative but also in a positive way. It seems that, as a way in which consciousness acts, negation is not a blind force
that acts on each and every aspect of anything in the same way. It is critical, evaluative and selective and therefore eliminates that which is bad and preserves the good. 'To contrast it with the simple, formal negation, we may say that the negation in Hegel's sense acts obliquely and though it doesn't totally bring the process to a standstill, it gives it a new slant a sudden deflection. Hence, whether the process concerned is of reality or of conscious-

ness, its progress has to be represented not by a straight line on a plane but by a zigzag line crossing newer and newer levels indicating not just quantitative but also qualitative progress.

It is because of this peculiar way of operation of negation that Dialectics becomes a method in Hegel. In a way the idea of dialectic is not totally new. Hegel himself praises Plato as the great discoverer of dialectics, but also calls the Platonic dialectic 'external and negative, content just a exhibit contradictions. Thus Platonic dialectics has got only a negative function of bringing to light the contradictory nature of experienced particulars and hence their 'unreality'. The contradiction is not used to 'go beyond'. Perhaps this is not Plato's fault as his conception of reality isn't dynamic.

In Kant, too, we find the term 'dialectic' used in a pejorative sense. Kant calls it a 'logic of illusion'. This again is consistent with Kant's allegiance to formal logic in which contradiction implies absurdity, impossibility and hence unreality.

By contrast, Hegelian dialectic has a goal, a positive or constructive function. The very journey of consciousness begins with the aim of its own realization and negation, while it points to the limits, also propels the consciousness to overcome these limits.
Hence, the very meaning of contradiction changes. Far from being a frustrating situation, it becomes rather a necessary precondition of further progress. That is how, Hegel can look at the multiplicity of philosophical positions as strewn in a single ongoing process of our understanding to comprehend the world. Though none of them is the correct one neither of them is wholly wrong too.

It can be questioned as to whether such a procedure that has a place for every type of instance in a field can be called a method at all. Thus, for example, Gadamer is tempted to call it a non-method. But, as I have already pointed out, the very concept of method originates in and in its strictest sense belongs to formal, closed and static fields. Naturally, the very idea of using a method in this sense requires (or dictates) that the field of its application should be taken as or modelled on formal fields. That explains how the ideas of a unique reality, a unique truth and a unique method that leads us there find a firm root. But now as Hegel's insistence is on beginning from the picture of the field and then on fashioning a method to suit it, the analogy of formal disciplines is no longer valid. Moreover, Hegel's preliminary notion of reality is neither formal nor static, though there is some basis to say that he regards it as a closed or finite one. Most importantly, the field is unknown and hence we can't expect a well charted, sure way which is to be followed. Hegel's approach is that of an adventurous pioneer who sets out to explore a virgin territory to reach a goal of which he has a sure but hazy idea. Naturally, as a trail-blazer he is not following a way but making one going ahead, taking bearings, relying on his instincts and making modifications from time to time, not only
in the directions but also in his own ideas about the goal. As such a turn is to be seen not only negatively as 'turning away from' but also as 'turning towards'. It is obvious that in this process there is a considerable risk of getting lost; but you get lost 'somewhere' and then, as there is no fixed schedule, you can always hope for learning from the deviation and coming back to the track. Personally, I believe that Hegel's procedure seems to be much more sensible and practical than one with outright misconceptions about the field and method and goal. So, to the question 'Is this a method at all?', we should confidently reply 'So far as the intention behind the method is concerned, Hegel's dialectic is no less a method that that of Euclid or Descartes. In its operation, however, the emphasis is on gearing the method to the field and not vice versa, and therefore, it appears to be flexible or fluid.' And, if even now there is any hesitation over calling the dialectic a method, one can do nothing more than point out that Hegel himself calls this the 'absolute method of knowledge.' Now what remains is how and to what extent Hegel actually follows the method.

The Process

The dialectical reflection on the journey of consciousness begins at the stage of ense-certainty. Though Being as such is a prior stage, it can't be an object of knowledge in any sense because it just exists and as such is 'nothing'. To be a thing, an object is to be 'something as distinct from the rest. Our awareness fulfills this condition. But, though it appears to be the richest kind of
knowledge due to its immediacy, on closer scrutiny it proves to be not so because it only gives us the being of the thing. But knowing, even in the most elementary form consists in making a judgment about it, in acknowledging its presence as a distinct entity. And the moment we do this, Hegel points out, we cease to deal with a bare particular, because there is no term in our language that can be strictly particular. Thus, even though we mean to talk about particulars, we end up talking about universals. Thus, Hegel's conception of philosophy as necessarily beginning with sense experience and rising to the level of supersensible by its negation finds its expression right at the first stage in the process. Now phenomenological emphasis shifts to the subject whose experience is regarded as the thing. But again like the particularity of things the particularity of the experient 'me'-too, makes way for the universal 'me' - the knower as such. We are, as it were, propelled to the level of perception by the sheer inadequacy of the world of particulars.

In a way this earlier world of sense-certainty has to be a transient phase of experience because in practice we are hardly aware of and can be content with a mere 'This-here-now'. But as ordinarily believed, the world of perception is not of pure particulars having particular properties supposed to be anchored to a base or medium which is the thing that lasts and perseveres in all outward modifications.

But tensions recur in understanding this nature of a thing too. How can one reconcile the supposed unitary nature of a thing with the plurality of mutually distinct properties? Whether we regard a thing as merely a set of properties or their substratum or universal
properties and the particular, none of the alternatives seems to be satisfactory. Equation of the thing with properties leaves its unitary aspect unexplained. But the alternative of ignoring the properties and delving to the thing itself is no good either, because it is only on the basis of the properties that the plurality and mutually exclusive character of things stands. If properties are left out we have no reason to think of many and distinct things. Least satisfactory of all alternatives is the one of accepting the co-existence of both - a unitary thing underlying the diversity of properties. Though that is the only one we are forced to accept, reconciliation of the two heterogeneous aspects is problematic. In the apt words of J.N.Findlay, the particular reveals itself as 'universality infected with conflicts'. The attempts to overcome these conflicts transport the consciousness to a supposed supersensible world behind the world of appearance. As an explanatory device this world and all the entities in it are totally the products of our consciousness itself, yet they are regarded as something alien to it.

In the following passages, the dialectics is seen as trying to comprehend the given in terms of more and more adequate categories as a result of the felt inadequacy of earlier ones. The difference between the Kantian categories and Hegelian categories becomes clear at this point. Both are subjective, but while for Kant their number and nature is fixed and are just found to be there, Hegel's account of the categories of consciousness is in the form of a historical dialogue in which the categories 'emerge' out of the necessity of our understanding's attempt to comprehend its objects in more and more satisfactory way. That is why his Logic
treats the categories in a developmental manner-categories of immediate experience & categories of relation.

But, according to Hegel, the very nature of categories is such that they can't express the Absolute. This is because they are not purely empty but contribute to our knowledge and thus condition our knowledge. To escape this trouble we can't take resort to a categorial mode of experience because it is due to categories that our knowledge has the characteristics of necessity, universality which are 'equated with objectivity'.

Now, if the above two positions with regard to categories viz. -their inadequacy to grasp the Absolute and their indispensability for knowledge-, are considered together, we have to accept that from this point onwards consciousness must go from pillar to post trying various alternative concepts or conceptual systems, finding them useful in some respect but also inadequate or unsatisfactory so far as the ideal of Absolute knowledge is concerned. In Hegel's own words this is an ongoing process of 'reflection, negation and rising to a higher level.' This also explains the synoptic view that Hegel takes towards the journey of philosophical in which (as usual, without referring to the thinkers by their names) the views of philosophers like Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant and Schelling are 'necessary' and yet dispensable stages.

In the third section part A (Consciousness) of Phenomenology, however, this progress of mind is depicted as beginning with the concept of Forces, proceeding to posit a tranquil kingdom of laws and in the end realizing that it is experiencing nothing but itself and thus the apparent duality
between the understanding and its own creations merge. It is this realization that knowledge is something of its own making that Hegel calls self-consciousness.

It is upto this point that epistemological implications of the phenomenology are unfolded. The point towards which we are driven is that the object of knowledge is of necessity conceptualized and in that sense a product of consciousness. Hence, in knowing how we know, we are really knowing ourselves. But, as Hegel doesn't think this to be the only way in which we can 'know', the journey continues through the exploits of consciousness in the fields of work, social, political and moral spheres and religion. As these are not important for the present study in their content, we will skip them and come straight towards the last section—Absolute knowledge. However, it will have to be noted that the stages in between indicate Hegel’s insistence on stringing all these facets of human life in the single thread of a restless and exploring consciousness.

Absolute Knowledge

There seems to be a considerable amount of confusion in the minds of writers on Hegel when it comes to Absolute knowledge. Partly, no doubt, Hegel himself is responsible for this - by using ambiguous language and by talking in a language that misleadingly suggests a terminal point to the process of Phenomenological survey of the self-formation of the Spirit, e.g. 'In this knowing (absolute knowledge), then, spirit has concluded the
movement in which it has shaped itself.\textsuperscript{179} The question is 'Is this knowledge to be understood in the sense of 'knowledge of Absolute' or 'knowledge which itself is Absolute'? The first alternative is really not bothersome as Hegel himself precluded the possibility of categories adequately comprehending the Absolute as Absolute. In another sense, there is really no problem of knowing the Absolute, according to Hegel. For him the Absolute is always there and any attempt to know, howsoever crude, knows it as it is the very necessary condition of knowing.\textsuperscript{80} Thus, to the question "Can we know the Absolute?" Hegel may well pose a counter-question, "Well, what else is it that we know?" The other alternative seems very attractive, especially on the background of Kantian critique, but at the same time appears to be impossible on Hegel's own terms. Because the very method of phenomenology is that of taking a look at the past to grasp how the universal Spirit has left behind different shapes of consciousness and to understand by empathy no one of them is related with its successor. The necessity of this transition is not logical but teleological and thus can't be used to predict future. As such what Hegel is entitled to say is how the Spirit has travelled up till now.' Robert Solomon holds that Hegel forgot this and went on to think that 'the culmination of the journey is just round the corner'\textsuperscript{81} Solomon also points to a certain struggle between Hegel the historian and Hegel the philosopher and remarks that, '(Hegel) almost came to the realization that there could be no realization of the Absolute, that philosophy has no end...that philosophy and human nature are nothing but history...without an essence. But he didn't and his later philosophy proves that what he discovered, he
I think, objections of this sort are based on a misconception that the Absolute knowledge is some sort of special knowledge or an aggregate of all the levels of consciousness which are left behind. But this also presupposes that this process has an end or a terminal point. Again, Hegel himself is responsible for this his talk of the Concept which is adequate to the Absolute or of the notion corresponding to the object and vice versa. This seems to suggest some sort of end of history or human achievements.

But if seen as a knowledge or awareness of the nature of our knowledge, this frightening interpretation can be easily set aside. This indeed also appears to be Hegel’s intention behind positing a terminal stage to knowledge where what terminates is not particular additions to our epistemic repertoire but our misled pursuit of the knowledge has a result of the realization that all this knowledge is of our own making, the product of different conceptual schemes that our consciousness devises to grasp its objects more and more adequately. Solomon defines Absolute knowing as ‘knowing that one knows, not only without doubt but beyond doubt.’ If this definition is to be adopted, what is it that we can claim to know ‘beyond doubt’? Only that ‘this is how we know’, or ‘knowledge is essentially of our own making.

Retrospect

We began with Hegel’s criticism of the instrument-model of epistemology to which most of his predecessors subscribed and
through Hegel's diagnosis of the malady that epistemology as resulting from a subtle assumption of a dualistic ontology examined his own attempt to replace that ontology by a different one and then to propose a model of a historical progress of consciousness through various stages as a result of an inbuilt urge to see a more and more satisfactory grasp of the reality. It is time we take a look back and evaluate the progress.

There seems to be a peculiar phenomenon recurring in the history of western philosophy. Whenever a person or a school proposes a radical reform or alteration in the prevalent model of knowledge, the result is inevitably accusations of heresy, attempts to destroy moral or social order and scepticism. The earliest case is that of the Sophists. Descartes faced the same fate and had to flee to Holland. The case of Hume needs no elaboration, but even Kant, intent on defending, knowledge, was branded 'Prussian Hume' and for his honest views on religion incurred royal displeasure. Now, after criticizing Kant for providing us only with beliefs and not knowledge, what has Hegel to offer? Because of his radical criticism of the traditional, foundationalist epistemology as rather ensuring the victory of scepticism, Hegel is often represented as severing all links with his past. But is such a view tenable? It is true that his criticism of the instrumentalistic view of knowledge or of accepting blindly a model of knowledge and its criterion are valid. But in many other respects there is also a continuity with the past - e.g., the self-centred view - point of knowledge, concept of knowledge as a system and even the need of some criteria as such. This continuity is particularly more evident in the case of Kantian
philosophy. As Solomon remarks, Kant with his unknowable x is more caught up in the metaphysics of the traditional type - Hegel purged the philosophy of the thing-in-itself and carried the Kantian philosophy to its logical and radical conclusions. But if so, the result is exactly the opposite of the intentions - to help philosophy... be actual knowing - and makes him an anti-epistemologist. The only difference is that Kant ended up presenting a static, rigid and unique model of self-knowledge, where as Hegel avoids the straitjacketing imposed by a single criterion and opens up a panorama of a plurality of such knowledges which are nonetheless about the knower in the ultimate sense. So if Kant presents a system of 'beliefs', Hegel comes up with a plurality of them. Perhaps these may be arranged in a hierarchic order, but since none of them is perfect, Hegel's success (or failure) can't be regarded as different in kind from Kant but only different in degrees. Here, I am not justifying Kantian weekness with 'tu quoque'. To me it appears as a serious matter that in spite of his rejection of noumema and development of an 'immanent' critique, Hegel achieves nothing substantially different from Kant for who also knowledge is self-knowledge. Only now, we can have options to choose from. This tendency of the attempts to institute critique to gravitate towards self-knowledge is a feature that must be noted with concern.

Similarly one of Hegel's anxieties, perhaps the most important one, is to avoid the imputation of 'unknowable' in any sense. It is for this that he 'phenomenolizes' the whole field and believes that by this trick he has made everything accessible to consciousness. But on the other hand, the categorial nature of our
understanding, in principle prevents the grasp of its object - the Absolute. What is the nature of this Absolute? It can't be defined as all definitions are problematic. Nor can it be grasped in a categorial system because it is relative. Earlier we have seen how Hegel accepts it as the metaphysical foundation of a system as a necessary condition of any knowledge at all. As any way of predication would result in 'conditioning' it, it can be characterized only negatively - not divided, not dependant on senses. If we carefully examine and compare Kant's 'noumena' and Hegel's 'Absolute', it is difficult to see how the Absolute as partially or inadequately 'knowable' through understanding, yet always eluding complete grasp and constantly luring us to restructure our cognitive mode in the hope of grasping it is essentially different from the noumena. Perhaps one distinction may be made. In the static picture of understanding in Kant, the noumena are behind a fixed boundary or wall, as it were. In the dynamised picture of Hegel they are progressively more and more knowable but are also ever - receding like a horizon.

This is an important difference because it does make a difference in the battle against scepticism. Because of the assimilation of the noumena into the field of consciousness, that which was in principle unknowable earlier is now in principle knowable. But when it comes to actual knowing, this success is slightly tarnished due to the fact that it is knowable only in some way, to some or other extent. Though mitigated, such a success deserves welcome.

Yet, the overall feeling that one acquires towards the end of the highway of despair is that of being lost on an endless stretch of
ocean. Earlier, I had used a geographical analogy and pointed out that, being a pioneer, Hegel is right in discarding the notion of a charted path. But, here, after a long journey is over, what Hegel tells us is: 'This is how we have travelled up to our present position.' The sense in which Hegel uses the term 'necessity' is such that for any given position in a journey, the previous one is necessary. But this is true even in case of a wayward traveller. The reason why we leave the cozy and comfortable security of ordinary experience is that the attractive goal of Absolute Knowledge beckoned us. Now, at this stage, Hegel's assurance that, though inadequate, any knowledge is knowledge of Absolute seems like a consolation offered to disgusted mariners who are apt to wonder whether they were wrong in embarking on a journey towards a hypothetical destination on an uncharted ocean without any navigational instruments. Perhaps, the goal that beckoned us was a mirage, but this explanation is hardly satisfying as it does not do justice to an inner conviction that all of us have for a genuine goal, a deep-lying longing for going 'beyond'.
CHAPTER III

References

1. Solomon Robert C., In the Spirit of Hegel, p.8
3. Hegel, Werke XVII 46,47, quoted by Martin G., General Metaphysics p.286
4. Hegel, Logic, p.21-22
5. Hegel, History of Philosophy vol III p.429
6. Hartnack J, ref. to Kant’s Letter to Marcus Herz (dt.11-5-1781)
7. Walsh W.H., The Idea of A Critique of Pure Reason:
   Kant & Hegel, in Hegel’s Critique of Kant, p.126
10. Ibid, p.114
12. Hegel, Logic, para 71,72
13. Hegel, Logic, para 41
14. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, p.504
15. Priest Stephen, Hegel’s Critique of Kant, p.20
16. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, p.27.
17. Hegel, Logic, p.127
19. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, p.257
22. Lamb David, Hegel - From Foundation to System, p.15
24. Hegel, Phenomenology, p.47
25. Ibid.
27. Ibid, p.296
28. Hegel, Phenomenology, p.28
29. Lamb David, Hegel-from Foundations to System, p.xii
30. Hegel, Phenomenology, p.28
31. Ibid, p.47
32. Lamb David, Hegel-from Foundation to System, p.40
34. Rosen Stanley, G.W.F. Hegel-Introduction to Science of Wisdom, p.xiii
35. Marcuse Herbert, Reason & Revolution, p.66
36. Ibid.
37. Hegel, Lectures on The History of Philosophy vol.III, p.429
38. Hegel, Logic, p.5
39. Ibid, p.17
40. Ibid, p.19
41. Ibid, p.21
42. Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, p.54
43. Ibid, p.16
45. Hegel, Phenomenology, p.52
47. Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, p. 52
48. Lamb David, Hegel-From Foundation To System, p. 39
50. Marcuse Herbert, Reason and Revolution, p. 142
51. Solomon Robert C., In the Spirit of Hegel, p. 7
52. Hegel, Phemenology of Spirit, p. 28
53. Ibid, p. 3
54. Ibid, p. 85
55. Lamb David, Hegel-From Foundations to System, p. 30
56. Ibid, p. 35
57. Solomon Robert C., In the Spirit of Hegel, p. 8
58. Ibid, p. 305
59. Ibid, p. 205
60. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, p. 357
61. See Marcuse Herbert, Reason and Revolution, p. 123
62. Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, p. 53
64. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, p. 22
65. Hegel, Logic, tr. Wallace, P. 187
67. Hegel, Werke IV 112 - quoted by Martin G. in General Metaphysics, p. 314
68. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, p. 99
69. Gadmer Hans-Georg, Hegel’s Dialectic, p.3
70. Hegel, Science of Logic, p.28
71. Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, p.58
72. Hegel, Logic, p.21-22
73. Findlay J.N. in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit; Analysis of Text, p.512
74. Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, p.86-87
75. Hegel, Logic, p.91
76. Ibid, p.83
77. Ibid., p.22-23
78. Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, p.488-9
79. Ibid, p.490
80. See Lamb David, Hegel-From Foundation to System, p.40
81. Solomon R.C., in the Spirit of Hegel, p.207
82. Ibid, p.161
83. Ibid, p. 303
84. See History of Western Philosophy, Bertrand Russell, p.582
85. Solomon Robert C., in the Spirit of Hegel, p.7-8
INTERLUDE

The chapter on Hegel was opened up with Hegel's criticism of Kant. In various places in his writing, Hegel has criticized Kant systematically and profusely and this criticism in its turn also paves the way for anticipating the method and contents of Hegel's own philosophy. Thus the problematic of Kant serves as the principle of movement of his own philosophy and, therefore, even beyond the confines of explicit criticism, Kant is present as the unperceived but ever-present 'other' of Hegel's own philosophical self. The relation between the two is, as it were, internal and continuous.

In the present context such an internal move to Husserl via his criticism is not possible. It is true that he makes a passing reference to Hegel in Ideas-I and a few more comments in 'Philosophy as the Rigorous Science', but they are post-facto and don't reveal any inner connection. The purpose of this interlude is to attempt to delineate such a connection in retrospect by bringing out their inner similarities and differences.

Prima Facie, this situation of Husserl substantially ignoring Hegel and criticizing him cursorily is puzzling. A beginner may expect Husserl to begin with a careful and detailed examination of Hegelian philosophy, particularly his views on method and, after certain criticism, proceed to present his own thoughts. Because Hegel named his philosophy 'phenomenology'. Instead, Husserl sees the roots of his own thoughts primarily in Descartes and Hume. In many a place, not just the terms but also the manner of his presentation is reminiscent of Kant. One starts wondering whether
Hegel and Husserl share nothing but the term ‘phenomenology’.

However, if we as spectator-critics of both these thinkers review the configuration of their thoughts, certain similarities and differences are traceable. Of these, the differences are obvious, the similarities hidden. As such, it is useful to begin with the points of affinity between the two, so that the undeniable differences may be placed in the proper perspective.

The fundamental similarity between Hegel and later Husserl is in their conception of the teleology of philosophical development. Hegel in his ‘Lectures on the History of Philosophy’ maintains that his own absolute idealism is the terminus of philosophical thought from its earliest beginnings. Husserl on his part claims in Ideas-I that phenomenology is the secret longing of all modern philosophy. But while Hegel thinks that philosophy is on its march in the history, for Husserl there is in the past really no philosophy but ‘impulse to philosophy’. Both are, therefore, historical philosophers. Their sense of history of course differs from certain thinkers, e.g., Marx. Marx would see the structure and movement of ideas as a reflection and response to contradictions in the conditions of material existence. But for Hegel, it is the history of ideas that is the explicandum and the history of finite existence the explicans. Similarly, Husserl also sees philosophy as the clue to the structures of historical existence. On a more concrete level, for Hegel also, the grand theme of development of thought is from Being to the consciousness of Spirit. (‘It is the movement and struggle between the in-itself and the for-itself.’) In Husserl’s terms it is a struggle between naturalism and transcendentalism. Husserl, of course, is
closer to Kant in his conception of transcendental. But, of the many overtones that 'transcendental' has in Husserl, one is the transcendental as the domain of pure consciousness. In this lies the greatest bond between Hegel and Husserl - both of them are philosophers of consciousness.

Besides, there are also some other points on which Hegel and Husserl converge, as for example, their opposition to Kant's empty formalism and Hume's sceptical phenomenalism, their rejection of limits of reason and -lying at the root of these - their rejection of dualism between sense and intellect.

It is on the backdrop of this affinity that we can now proceed to make a few important differentiations. Since the intention of the present note is to present an anticipation of Husserl, we shall look at the differences as Husserl's critique of Hegel.

The most important contrast between the two lies in the emphasis of Hegelian phenomenology on thinking as opposed to that of Husserl on seeing. Thinking, in Hegel, has a different connotation from its ordinary sense of cognitive awareness. Hegel calls it 'reflection' still it is closely akin to Kant in the sense that it is an activity of mind which constitutes experience as a meaningful phenomenon. In this sense, etymologically, Hegel's phenomenology is a 'logos', a discursive account of phenomena, for it is in its retrospective glance that the stages in the journey of consciousness become meaningful. Even stylistically, this retrospective distansion is revealed in Phenomenology, for the account is given from the point of view of the philosophizing subject and not the subject involved in action. In fact, Hegel asserts it repeatedly that this type
of grasp is impossible for the latter. Hence, Hegel’s phenomenology can be rightfully called third-person phenomenology.

On the contrary, the emphasis in Husserl falls on the meaning that I grasp. Connected with this is the other element in Husserlian phenomenology. As a result of this first-person point of view, Husserl’s phenomenology thematizes the given more than Hegel for whom the ‘given’ is appearance and, therefore, must be left behind. Going beyond the level of sense-certainty is but an example of this tendency. Husserl, too, was a critique of naive empiricism, but unlike Hegel who left the level of sense-certainty for ever, he feels it necessary to return to experience constantly. This difference between their views about experience is found reflected in their views on Hume. For Hegel, Hume’s position is infra-philosophical while Husserl elevates Hume even beyond Kant in ‘Crisis’.

The second difference is that, for Husserl, although there are higher order objectivities, all of them are founded in perceptual subjectivity. There are layers of constitution but perception is the founding layer. Essences can be grasped only in intuition. This need for perceptual foundation is absent in Hegel. Towards the close of the system, the Notion can never have its adequate perceptual embodiment. Therefore, Hegel’s phenomenology is an attempt by thought to escape from the bounds of perception. But for Husserl, thought deceives itself in this attempt and hence his phenomenology is a recovery of genuine perception. It is in this perspective that we should place the operations of reduction. Superficially, reductions may appear to be parallel to Hegel’s alienation from the given, but the exercise is not a speculative
passage beyond the given but a discipline that consciousness imposes upon itself to recover the genuinely given. Reduction is a return.

Similarly, there is also an important methodological difference. According to Husserl, the goal of phenomenological thinking is to transform itself into 'seeing', hence, the only maxim is 'to the things themselves'. In Hegel since the thought has to construct reality from the given, it depends on the synthetic energy of reflection in its triadic movement of the dialectic. Husserl has no place for such a dialectic as it amounts to 'interpretation' of the given.

Substantively also, the emphasis on the given opens the great theme of 'life-world'. This idea was prefigured in Ideas-I as the natural standpoint. The intention was to clarify what is involved in it. But in 'Crisis' this becomes the project of explication of 'life-world'. In Hegel, for all its vivid descriptions, this sense of 'life-world' is missing. Hegel would perhaps call the idea an expression of naivete. But since 'life-world' is the 'horizon' of Husserl's phenomenology, he is faithful to its contours, e.g., it is a world I share with other equally genuine egos. This assertion of intersubjectivity is expressed as 'transcendental intersubjectivity'. This pluralism in Husserl and his feeling for the 'other' as irreducible is absent in Hegel for whom the 'other' is only consciousness in its other being, e.g., Nature is the other of Spirit in the sense that its truth is revealed in Spirit.

The final difference is linked with a shared feeling that has to do with the prospects of metaphysics or ontology. Hegel claims that it is because of the breakdown of the epistemology of critical
philosophy that we have to move beyond. While Husserl would agree over the breakdown, his response would not be a different turn of speculative reason but a shift to intuitive seeing.

With these few stage-setting remarks, we may now turn to the Husserlian paradigm.