

Truth, the Good, and the Unity of Theory and Practice

Ever since Plato, philosophers have recognized the relationship of truth and the good to be of central importance. Nevertheless, what that relationship is has been a source of ongoing controversy. At one extreme, truth has been identified with the good, whereas at the other, truth and the good have been kept apart as irreconcilably separate. How the relationship between truth and the good is construed has decisive ramifications for what each is conceived to be and for how theory and practice are related.

Three figures play a seminal role in exploring the relation of truth and the good: Plato, Kant, and Hegel. Through considering their respective investigations, we will find that so long as truth and the good are held apart, not only will theory and practice be devoid of any unity, but theory will be just as unable to attain truth as practice will be unable to realize the good.

Plato and the Good

No treatment of the good is more enigmatic yet tantalizing than Plato's series of accounts in Book VI and VII of his *Republic*. Socrates introduces talk of the good in Book VI in connection with the very practical concerns of justice, suggesting that without knowledge of the good, no ruler can know what form should be imposed upon the body

politic to render it just.¹ The good would appear to be the proper object of political wisdom, without knowledge of which the good cannot be realized in the state. This requirement is what gives the body politic its special non-natural, spiritual character. The state cannot have an organic unity like the economic order of the “City of Pigs”, which embodies a form that is not willed nor need be known by any of its members. An organism reproduces itself through the complementary workings of its organs, whose “division of labor” functions without any organ having to know the form of the whole and acting to impose that order upon it. Mere organisms, like the market, lack a ruling element and only when the “natural” existence of family and economy are threatened by the non-natural pursuit of wealth, does a ruling agency become a necessity, ushering in a new form of association whose “form” cannot be realized without being known and willed. Accordingly, what that form should be becomes a normative concern that can only be resolved by knowing and willing what is good.

The good might then appear to be an ideal that can only be brought into being by the initiative of individuals who act to realize it in a world that does not yet embody it. Yet bringing the good into being through the founding of the just state is not the same thing as pursuing the activity of ruling that only operates from within an existing body politic. If political association must contain a ruling element that knows and wills its form and justice requires that that ruling element know and will the good, then the good can only be aimed at by an agency that is a part of the order that realizes the good. In other words, the political pursuit of the good is an activity that properly operates only within an existing political association that already embodies the good, which contains

¹ Plato, *Republic*, Book VI, 505a.

the knowing and willing by which it is actualized. The state may come into being through a founding act, but that founding is not part of the state's actuality and extinguishes itself with the advent of the founded body politic. Nonetheless, the actuality of the state is different from that of an artifact, for the good it should embody contains the knowing and willing that continually sustains its own order.

This distinguishing self-informing character of political association calls into question Socrates' recurrent identification of ruling with craft. That identification construes ruling as the activity of a governing political class upon a distinct subject class, on which the order of the whole is allegedly imposed like form upon matter in the making of an artifact. What Socrates ignores here, as well as in his parallel account of ruling and ruled parts of the soul, is that the ruling agency is part of that upon which ruling directs its informing activity. Unlike craft, ruling has a reflexive character that is only consistently realized when politics takes the form of self-government, where ruler and ruled are one.²

Socrates declares his inability to conceive how there can be self-rule or self-control, bewailing the impossibility of thinking how the same agency can be agent and patient at once.³ This theoretical inability is reflected in and underlies Socrates' paradoxical claim that the good, which must be known and willed for justice to be realized, is something of which he can provide no proper knowledge. In the *Meno* Socrates might appear to escape his conundrum by granting the statesmen correct belief if not genuine knowledge of the good. Nonetheless, the *Meno* itself suggests that right opinion about politics cannot be nailed down without the account that knowledge of the

² Michael B. Foster brings out these points in his examination of the *Republic* in *The Political Philosophies of Plato and Hegel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 1-71.

³ Plato, *Republic*, Book IV, 430e-431a.

good provides.⁴ So the *Republic* can still insist that without such knowledge the reality of the good can never be secured and certified.

To grapple with the good, despite self-professed ignorance, Socrates introduces the three famous pictorial accounts of the good and it is here, in the analogy of the sun, the divided line, and the myth of the cave, that the relation of truth and the good takes center stage. The good now acquires a new character that seems to have little relation to its original practical significance. Whereas before the good enabled citizens to know what is just and then will in accord with justice, here the good makes it possible for all truth to be known and realized. As the analogy of the sun depicts, the good is the source for the being of what is and the knowledge of that being. This foundational role of the good operates both with respect to the true nature of things and to their phenomenal manifestation. On the one hand, the good is the source of the intelligible forms that both comprise the true reality of being and the concepts of true knowledge, enabling what is not only to be but also to manifest itself to thought as it is in itself. On the other hand, the good equally allows being to appear to experience, securing the “participation” of the forms in sensible phenomena and the perception of them by embodied selves.⁵ This foundational role reflects, on the one hand, how the intelligible forms do not provide for their own being or their own accessibility to thought, or for that matter, for the engendering of the phenomena and experience in which they participate. It also reflects, on the other hand, how our reason by itself cannot guarantee the correspondence of its concepts with the true nature of things. Instead, the good must provide for both being and thought and secure their conformity.

⁴ Plato, *Meno*, 98a.

⁵ Plato, *Republic*, Book VI, 508b-509b.

Moreover, in order for the good's own role to be known, the good must equally manifest itself to knowing as it is in itself by providing for the form of the good and for its valid thinking.⁶ Only then can we be sure of knowing the truth, for without true knowledge of the good and its foundational role, we cannot be certain that any of our other concepts are in accord with the true nature of what is.

The good performs all of these services, so necessary for truth, only by being that which is beyond all assumption, that which can only be apprehended immediately at the apex of knowing and being, as pictured in the Divided Line. Only by ascending the levels of cognition and of existence from what is most phenomenal to what is most true and rational can the neighborhood of the good be approached and only on its immediate encounter can an individual be sure of leaving the cave of appearances behind.⁷

What the good provides for is not truth as correctness, the mere fit of phenomena and experience. It rather concerns truth as the correspondence of reason with itself, as it is in the form of unchanging and independent true being with what it is in the form of true thought, equally eternal and resting upon itself. Although both sides are inalterable and intrinsically determined, Socrates realizes that they depend upon something else for their correspondence. The good is needed to secure the connection that furnishes truth precisely because both being and thought are regarded to have a fixed given character, such as can uphold the principle of non-contradiction. They each are just what they are and nothing else and they cannot become what they are not. For this reason, neither side can by itself secure its unity with what is different from itself, at least in form.

⁶ Plato, *Republic*, 508e.

⁷ Plato, *Republic*, 511b.

The good, however, suffers from the same fixed, given character. As the source of being and thought that secures their correspondence, the good cannot issue from any other factor nor does it have any further determination of its own. It can only be taken in immediately. There is no way of finding in it any account of just how it plays its foundational role or of how its privileged function is to be verified. Although the good must provide for the form of the good and the truth of thinking that form, the fulfillment of that imperative cannot be unequivocally confirmed. Since no other principle can be invoked to establish the boundaries of the good, it remains a mere assertion.

Is there any connection left between what the good comprises as first principle of the truth of all being and knowing and what it initially comprises as first principle of conduct? Or are theory and practice irrevocably separate owing to the distinct senses of the good in its seemingly separate capacities as foundation of truth and of valid conduct?

What might seem to unite both senses of the good and thereby unite theory and practice is Socrates' repeated claim that knowledge of the Good is tied to the doing of the Good. This appears to contradict the *Meno's* account of the statesman's right opinion, since that suggests that rulers can do good without genuinely knowing the good. There is a contradiction, however, only if doing good *always* involves knowledge of the good. It leaves open the possibility that good conduct can occur without knowledge of the good, even if knowledge of the good always involves doing good.

The latter identification of the knowing and doing of the good would seemingly preclude any criminal action, that is, any doing of wrong with knowledge that one's act is wrong. This would thereby make impossible due punishment as opposed to instruction about what is good. The identity of knowing and doing good would equally seem to

preclude any independence of will from reason, ignoring the challenge of competing inclinations that leads Aristotle to make habit the midwife of virtue.

These problems are somewhat mitigated by taking seriously the idea that the practical realization of the good is political association and that pursuit of the good is properly the work of members of the state. In that case, membership will involve the proper education in and lawful training in accord with the good, so that knowledge of the good will be obtained in conjunction with habituation to the ways of the good. Still, to be disposed to do good does not preclude acting out of character and doing wrong intentionally.

Moreover, the unification of the two senses of the Good is cast in doubt by the “Myth of the Cave” and the corresponding discussions where Socrates raises the problem of compelling the philosopher to descend into the shadows of phenomenal political life and take up the chains of rule.⁸ The philosophizing that seeks to know the good and then know the other ideas in their truth is acknowledged to not be equivalent to the activity of ruling. This admission raises the vexing question of who can and will want to compel philosophers to rule, putting the whole fabric of justice in jeopardy.

Plato may have raised the prospect of uniting the good and truth and with it, theory and practice, but the problems he uncovers cast in doubt whether this can be done.

Kant is content to leave Plato’s quest unfulfilled and accept the radical difference between truth and the good and between theory and practice. Can this option be valid?

⁸ Plato, *Republic*, Book VII, 519c-520d.

Kant and the Disunity of Theory and Practice

Kant recognizes truth to consist in the correspondence of putative knowledge with its object. Although that object could be a mathematical construct or something ideal, the *objective* reality of knowledge depends upon knowledge claims corresponding to something that is given independently of knowing. To the extent that what is independent of knowing can only be accessed by how it appears to cognition, objective truth seems to be equivalent to correctness, the mere conformity of representations to appearance. Nonetheless, Kant acknowledges a conceptual element to truth. This is because representations can be about objects rather than subjective illusion only if representations are connected in ways determined by categories.

Knowing has no way of assuring that the content of any representation corresponds to some thing in itself, insofar as knowing is assumed to confront the given and only have access to it as it appears to knowing. This assumption is basic to the transcendental turn resulting from Kant's suspicion of immediately reading off the character of what is and doing ontology as first philosophy. One can only investigate knowing without making claims about objects if knowing and objects of knowing are given independently of one another. If then knowing relates to an object different from itself and can never verify that the content of its representations conforms to things in themselves, knowing can only look for what is non-subjective in the relationship between its representations. Knowing can secure the reference of its representations to objects by distinguishing between connections of representations that are arbitrary and those that are necessary. Necessary connections provide a non-subjective element that can be

considered objective as well as intersubjectively valid if they hold true of cognition or, as Kant puts it, consciousness in general. Insofar as representations must fit within the unity of self-consciousness to be represented at all, they must have that much necessary connection. Accordingly, objective knowledge will involve the conformity of representations to appearance with the further qualification that those representations and appearances exhibit necessary connections among themselves. Insofar as necessary connections of representations are judgments and judgments have different forms distinguished by relations determined by different categories, the necessary relations of representations will be determined by categories. Such categorial determination cannot exhaust the entire content of objects, since it applies only to the relation of representations and not to their contents. Accordingly, objective knowledge can never just be about what knowing “puts” into its object. Rather, appearances have an independently given character, reflected in the receptivity of sensibility.

Accordingly, even though one may have *a priori* knowledge of the form of appearances, including their basic dynamic relationships, objective knowledge still involves an activity whereby the knowing subject confronts an independently given object in conformity with which it seeks to mold its representations. Objective truth is obtained through this subjective alteration whereby one makes one’s mental content fit what one finds given in experience.

The good, by contrast, is for Kant exclusively a matter for conduct. The good represents that end in accord with duty that the agent aims to bring into being by acting with lawful intentions. The good accordingly unites happiness with duty in that the realization of the good is equivalent to achieving what is lawfully intended, which will

automatically bring satisfaction to the agent who exercises a good will. The good is aimed at as something that is not yet at hand and which can only be achieved through the independent initiative of the agent who pursues it. Consequently, the good consists in an end whose achievement takes the form of an activity by an agent who makes given objectivity conform to its lawful intention. The given objectivity in question involves both the nature of the subject and the nature of the world, for the agent cannot realize the good without making its own inclinations conform to duty and take action in the world that alters the given state of affairs accordingly.

One might wonder how Kant could possibly sustain this view of the good in light of politics. Even in his own account of civil government, which is instituted through social contract to uphold person and property, the legislative activity of citizens operates under a constitutional framework that already realizes right, understood as the legal condition in which individuals are treated as subject to law they impose upon themselves. Consequently, it might seem that the good that citizens will is something already at hand that contains that activity of its own realization, just as does the good of Plato's republic. Kant, however, like all his social contract predecessors and successors, treats the body politic as instrumental to the realization of a good consisting in exercising a privileged form of willing, that of person and property, as determined prior to and apart from political association. If the state were for its own sake, its existence would automatically fulfill its end. When political association is instrumental, as it is in social contract theory, the existence of the state can never guarantee that the good is at hand, for political association may or may not uphold that distinct end for which it is merely an instrument.

Not only do the internal conditions of the state leave the realization of the good always an ought, but the external relations of states to one another leave domestic right in jeopardy. As Kant acknowledges, even a league of nations can never guarantee that the good is realized, for no international body has the binding authority of domestic government. The “perpetual peace” that can assure that civil government functions remains an unrealized ideal.⁹ Hence, the realization of the good remains an imperative. Instead of ever having a secured embodiment, the good calls for action aiming to transform the given so as to conform to duty.

The good’s predicament is the opposite of the theoretical securing of truth. Whereas truth is obtained theoretically by altering subjective determinations to conform to the objective given, the good is realized practically by altering given reality to conform to subjective lawful intentions. With truth and the good so determined, theory and practice are irrevocably opposed. Theory never achieves what practice intends, just as practice never accomplishes what theory seeks.

These converse determinations of truth and the good have become prevailing dogmas, so entrenched that any alternative seems inconceivable. Theorizing has been broadly assumed to consist in a subjective activity in which the knower obtains truth by altering subjective determinations to accord with what is given in opposing objectivity. Practice, by contrast, has been presumed to consist in the attempt to alter the world as it is given so as to conform to as yet unrealized, subjective ends.

Can theory distinct from practice be true? Can practice distinct from theory be good? These questions need to be asked and an answer has been provided in the far

⁹ Kant, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, in Kant, Immanuel, *Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 114, 130.

reaches of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, where few dare to tread. In the section on "Cognition" addressing the so-called theoretical and practical ideas, Hegel lays out arguments exposing the decisive pitfalls of theory and practice that remain separate from one another.¹⁰ When these are understood, we will be in a position to comprehend how philosophy depends upon combining truth and the good and uniting theory and practice.

The Limits of Theory without Practice

Let us follow the broad outline of Hegel's account of the theoretical idea, whose cognition is not philosophical knowing but the theorizing that is distinct from practice. Such theorizing pursues truth, which consists not in the correct fit of representations with phenomena but in the correspondence of concept and objectivity. Theory aims not at qualified opinion, confined to representations that are relative to a particular subject and phenomena that are relative to external conditions. Theory recognizes that what can be the only proper object of truth is objectivity, which is not some appearance relative to some concealed ground, but that which is determined in its own right. It can be known as such provided theory modifies its own concepts so as to conform to objectivity. Concepts rather than representations are the vehicles for true theory because they have a universality that is independent of the particulars that relativize representations. Truth is to be obtained by the knowing subject altering its own conceptual formulation or theory so that it corresponds to what exists in and of itself.

¹⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Humanities Press, 1969), pp. 775-823.

Given that theory addresses objectivity as given independently of theorizing, theory can operate either analytically or synthetically, but not both at once. On the one hand, theorizing can proceed by analyzing given objectivity, uncovering conceptual determinations in what it confronts. On the other hand, theorizing can begin with thought determinations and combine them with what it finds given in opposing objectivity. These alternative options involve the familiar procedures that have been taken to exhaust the possibilities of theory, given the prevalent assumption that theory and practice are separate. Although all such analytic and synthetic theorizing aim at attaining truth, the way they operate makes it impossible for them to achieve their goal.

Analytic knowing comes first insofar as theory without practice seeks truth as something to be attained by molding concepts to fit what cognition finds its object to be. Consequently, theory has no true determinations until the subjectivity of knowing has altered itself to accord with given objectivity. There are no valid concepts to combine with what subjective knowing encounters in objectivity until cognition has uncovered conceptual content in what it confronts. Synthetic knowing must therefore follow upon analysis.

Can theory capture its prey by proceeding analytically? Opposing objectivity is to be known in truth by finding in its individual being universal determinations that can be theorized. Theory seeks to arrive at truth by achieving an identity between concept and objectivity in the subjective domain of theory construction. For this to be possible, theorizing must presume that objectivity contains conceptual determinations. Otherwise analysis will be fruitless and theory without practice will be a vain endeavor.

Operating on this basis, analytic theorizing faces three insurmountable problems.

First, the assumption that objectivity is conceptually determinable cannot be established by analysis. This is because every engagement in analysis takes that assumption for granted. Of course, this problem of circularity might seem remediable by simply proceeding with analysis and arriving at truth by finding concepts in objectivity. Any success in that endeavor would seem to vindicate the underlying presupposition of analytic theorizing.

Secondly, however, the opposition from which analytic theorizing proceeds precludes the success for which it is aiming. Insofar as the subjectivity of knowing confronts given objectivity as something it opposes, the unity of concept and objectivity that theorizing achieves occurs only in the subjective domain of analytic concept formation. Although analysis may presuppose that concepts are found in its object, the uncovering of conceptual determinations is the work of the abstraction of theorizing. Objectivity remains exactly what it was before the engagement of theory building. Although truth unites concept and objectivity, analysis produces that unity only in a subjective manner in the medium of conceptualization. In this respect, the unification of concept and objectivity that analysis achieves cannot conform to what objectivity is its own right.

Thirdly, this discrepancy is manifest in the inability of analytic abstraction to produce results that are in unity with the given individuality of objectivity. The abstractions of analytic thought leave behind everything individual and changing in the given. Objectivity necessarily contains more than analysis extracts, which is patently obvious in how any theorizing by abstraction must select among the manifold determinations of the given and privilege some as against others. Moreover, not only

does analytic theory not correspond to objectivity as it is in its own right, but analytic theory cannot verify the strict universality and necessary of any of its abstractions. To the extent that theorizing approaches objectivity as something it confronts, it always finds objectivity in individual encounters that can never guarantee the ubiquity of any extracted determinations. That those determinations are there to be encountered in every such confrontation can never be established by any particular engagement or engagements in abstraction. Consequently, analytic theorizing can neither grasp objectivity as it is in full, nor validate that the concepts it abstracts have any genuine objective universality.

Can synthetic theorizing overcome these limitations? The attempt to do so underlies the efforts of each of the familiar options of theoretical synthesis: definition, division, and the proving of theorems through construction. In contrast to analytic theorizing, all these types of synthetic theorizing supplement abstracted concepts with further determinations found in the given. By combining these found specifications with abstract concepts, definition, division, and theorem proofs all seek truth in an enriched unity of concept and objectivity.

Definition starts with an abstraction, some preliminary preconception of its subject matter and then seeks to find the particular differentia sufficient to define that entity. By combining the preliminary abstraction with found particular features, synthetic theory attempts to find the true nature of its object. The preliminary abstraction does not contain these differentia, for if it did, the definition would not be synthetic but analytic. Theorizing must instead go outside the abstract determinacy of the term to be defined and uncover in objectivity the particular specifications that are essential. Definition itself does not contain any justification for what it combines with its subject. It connects

subject and differentia with just the copula of its judgment, leaving its alleged truth in the form of a mere assertion. Insofar as the abstract subject does not contain the essential particulars, the appeal to objectivity must supply the need evidence. Objectivity, however, confronts theory with a given manifold offering no sufficient basis for discriminating between incidental and essential features. Due to the particularity of observations, they cannot certify any selected difference to be a genuine differentia. Hence, definition cannot succeed in obtaining the truth for which it aims.

Division fares no better. It begins with some putative genus which it then proceeds to divide into its constituent species so as to arrive at a true determination of some object. Insofar as the putative genus does not already explicitly contain the determinations that division will lay out, theorizing must turn to objectivity to supply the content for its differentiations. Once more, the indifferent manifold of objectivity does not already supply the organized differentiation that theorizing must accomplish. Accordingly, what divisions are made are ultimately subjective in origin and authority. The differentiated content may be at hand, but how it is to be divided is something decided by the theoretical activity. As with analysis, the accomplished specification occurs in the arena of conceptualization, rather than in objectivity itself.

Theorem proofs might seem to overcome this subjective residue in synthetic knowing by demonstrating the non-analytic connections that are made. This is done by employing constructions to provide intuitive evidence that theorem relations are true. Here synthetic theorizing knows the truth to reside in what it makes. What it makes, however, is made in theory alone. The construction of theorem proof is purely ideal. It does not transform objectivity. Rather, it operates in the subjective arena of theory

construction, just as does all other engagements in theory without practice. Consequently the truth of theorems depends upon the assumption that what occurs in theory corresponds to what applies to objectivity. That assumption can no more be verified by any theorem than can the global assumption of theory without practice.

The Limits of Practice without Theory

Theorem proofs may not secure truth, but they indicate that the limitations of theory without practice lie in a failure to make over objectivity in a way that corresponds to the making of theory. Practice without theory takes up this task in its completely converse pursuit of the good. Truth, as sought by theory without practice, consists in the identity of concept and objectivity achieved subjectively by theory formation. The good, as sought by practice without theory, consists in the identity of concept and objectivity achieved objectively through the alteration of the world through action.

On these terms, the good is something that has yet to be realized. Practice without theory will bring the good into being by making objective subjective determinations that are the ends of action. The ends of the good, however, are not just any subjective ends. They rather comprise ends that are universally valid. As such, they are conceptually determinate ends. Consequently, the pursuit of the good is not just teleological action, which translates some subjective aim into reality. Action to realize the good aims more specifically at something conceptually necessary. Nonetheless, this practical truth is not yet embodied in the world and can only be realized through action that transforms given objectivity to accord with what ought to be its true determination.

The pursuit of the good aims at making objectivity true, whereas the pursuit of truth aims at making subjectivity accord with given objectivity.

Can the pursuit of the good possibly succeed? Whereas theory, as distinct from practice, presumes that objectivity accords with conceptual determinacy, practice, as distinct from theory, presumes the objectivity does not accord with valid concepts. Valid concepts comprise the end that practice seeks to realize by transforming given objectivity. If objectivity does not conform to the valid concept of the good, how can the pursuit of the good succeed? The transformation that is required must occur in objectivity itself and for that reason it requires objective means. This requirement has two sides: one within the objective presence of the agent and one within the world upon which the agent acts.

On the one hand, agency itself must have a worldly, objective actuality that can be made to conform to the realization process of the good. The embodiment of the agent must itself undergo the appropriate alterations to act upon the world. Otherwise, the good remains an unfulfilled, merely subject end. On the other hand, the world that confronts the agent must also be susceptible of providing the means for its own alteration in accord with the good. If, however, the whole basis of the pursuit of the good is that objectivity is not in accord with its valid concept, it is unclear how objectivity can possibly be made good.

In order for objectivity to be made good, objectivity must itself cooperate and, in effect, make itself good. If that is the case, however, the whole pursuit of the good is just a sham. Practice simply occasions what is already inherent in objectivity.

Moreover, if objectivity were to be made good, practice, as the pursuit of the good, would be eliminated. Since the achievement of the good renders the pursuit of the good superfluous, the pursuit of the good only makes sense so long as the good is not achieved. Hence, practice not only presumes that given objectivity does not conform to the good, but that practice itself cannot be good.

In all of these conundrums of practice, what puts the achievement of the good in question is the opposition of subjectivity and objectivity or of valid concept and self-subsistent actuality that is presupposed by the pursuit of the good. What would remove this opposition is the unity that the pursuit of truth takes for granted. The good would already be realized if objectivity were in unity with valid concepts as theory presupposes in order to take seriously its own quest for truth.

Conversely, the difficulties of theory without practice would equally be overcome if the activity of theorizing did what practice aims to do. If theorizing equally transformed objectivity to accord with its concepts, the achievement of truth would be not just subjective, but be objective as well. What takes place in theory formation would occur equally in objectivity. Then, the quest for truth would succeed in capturing objectivity in full and with universal necessity.

Philosophy and the Unity of Theory and Practice

What then would the unity of theory and practice comprise?

First of all, it would signify a unity of concept and objectivity that is just as much subjective as objective. The process of conceptual determination that is in accord with

objectivity, that is, true, would equally comprise a process of its object by which it becomes conceptually determinate, that is, good. What knowing undergoes in its own domain would be equivalent to what the object of knowing undergoes in itself.

Secondly, the individuality of objectivity would cease to be alien to conceptual determination. The universality of thought would accordingly individuate itself just as the individuation of objectivity would be inherent in its conceptually determinate nature. Theory would no longer confront an object distinct from its own process. Conceptual determination would neither involve a merely analytic theorizing nor a merely synthetic theorizing. Theory at one with practice would no longer wield concepts lacking individual determinacy, requiring theorizing to obtain their content by finding in given objectivity some content to extract to which universality would be externally conferred. Nor would theory need to supplement the results of analysis by combining abstracted concepts with further content found in objects, given or constructed in intuition. Instead, theorizing that obtains truth and realizes the good would be analytic and synthetic at once. On the one hand, the process of conceptual determination would generate its own individuated subject matter, without having to depend upon forays into something beyond itself. On the other hand, the process of conceptual determination would just as much comprise the self-constitution of its object, whose differentiation would remain within the unity of its concept. The unification of concept and objectivity that occurs both subjectively and objectively would thus be synthetic and analytic at once. It would be synthetic since conceptualization engenders an objective differentiated content, becoming something other than what it is at the outset. It would equally be analytic since this differentiation remains immanent to the unity of theorizing.

What could possibly comprise the thinking and the object of thinking that could exhibit the combination of truth and good, where conception is in a unity with its object and that unity is both in the process of conception and in the process of the object? The theorizing would be objective and not confront an opposing given objectivity, whereas the objectivity would comprise the same process of determination that the thinking of it involves.

The answer is brutally simple. Thinking that thinks itself will be an objective thinking, realizing in its conceptual formation the self-constitution of its object. This is the genuine recipe of logic, which eliminates the difference between knowing and its subject matter by thinking thinking.

Formal logic does not achieve this unification because merely formal logic conceives a thought process whose operation is external to what it thinks. Formal logic models a thinking that is mired in the opposition between knowing and its object, method and subject matter, and theory and practice. It models a thinking that operates either analytically or synthetically, but never both at once. Formal logic describes a conceptualization whose character does not determine the content of its subject matter, but informs thinking irrespective of what its object may be. Formal logic is the recipe for a thinking that is empty and must seek its content from intuition or linguistic usage. It is anything but a model of philosophical thought.

By contrast, a logic that is truly reflexive, that is what it thinks, achieves what philosophical knowing must comprise to overcome the limits of theory that is opposed to practice. To escape the dilemmas of all confrontation with the given and all opposition of theory and practice, philosophy must think without appeal to any assumptions concerning

its own form or its subject matter. To have any hope of being true, its thinking must develop autonomously, engendering its own content by itself, and in so doing provide the determination of its object as it is in and of itself. Logic, as the thinking of thinking, provides the starting point that unifies the pursuit of the truth and the good by being the process that is at once the subjective and objective corresponding of conception with what is conceived. Logic achieves this insofar as its thinking of thinking generates simultaneously its form and content, its knowing and its object, in correspondence with one another. Moreover, to the extent that logic provides the valid thinking of valid thinking, it ends up knowing the correspondence of its conception and its object to be at hand both subjectively and objectively. The object of logic knows itself to be in accord with its own conception, just as the subject of logic knows itself to be an objective thinking.

Logic cannot, however, begin with any given form or content, for doing so would beg the question of what the thinking of thinking turns out to be. Instead, logic must proceed without any given form or content and this indeterminate starting point is precisely what philosophy requires for avoiding presupposing its method or subject matter. If philosophy instead began with a given form or a given topic, its thinking would be different from its object, theory and practice would once more fall asunder, and its pursuit of truth would be fruitless. Only what follows from a beginning stripped of any determinate form or content can comprise an objective thinking that unites what the separate pursuits of truth and the good seek to no avail.

Nonetheless, the unification of theory and practice in philosophical logic is only the beginning of philosophical inquiry. It leaves us with the looming challenge of

determining how philosophical thinking can move beyond logic to think what is other than thought without reverting to a confrontation with the given.