

The Concept as Self-Determination: Hegel on the Conceivability of Self-Determination

Herein I investigate how four dogmas underpinning the traditional concepts of universality, the genus, class, and abstract universal, generate four paradoxes of self-reference. The four dogmas are the following: (1) that contradiction entails the total absence of determinacy, (2) the necessary finitude of the concept, (3) the separation of principles of universality and particularity, and (4) the necessity of appealing to foundations. In section III I show how these dogmas underpin the paradoxes of self-reference, and how one cannot make progress on these paradoxes as long as these four dogmas are in place. Corresponding to the abovementioned dogmas are the four paradoxes of self-reference: (1a) the problem of the differentia, (1b) the problem of psychologism, (3c) the problem of participation, and (4d) the problem of onto-theology.

Section I enumerates the three traditional concepts of the concept and some of the basic limitations to which they are subject. Section II elucidates the four dogmas shared by these concepts. Finally, Section III shows how four paradoxes of *self-reference* follow from the dogmas elucidated in Section II. Though philosophers have been struggling with these problems for centuries, philosophers have never systematically connected each of these problems nor have philosophers derived them all from a single principle. It is my contention that the four paradoxes of self-reference are systematically connected insofar as they all follow from a single principle.¹ This principle is *formal* universality. Though I do not provide a solution to these paradoxes, in Section III I suggest that the history of Western philosophy has already provided us with the only two viable ways to eschew these paradoxes. Section IV discusses the structure of Hegel's solution, namely the concept of self-differentiation, and critically evaluates some problematic directions in the secondary literature.

I.

Mostly a feature of ancient Greek philosophical systems², a genus is a universal containing different species within itself, e.g. "quantity" contains "discrete" quantities and "continuous" quantities. The differentia differentiates these species from one another. The genus and the differentia together define the species. Genera, insofar as they contain species, have an internal

relation to other universals, and do not exhibit a merely external relation to other universals. Since each species is a differentiation of the genus, the genus contains its particulars within itself. Each species, insofar as it is a genus for another species, also contains species, its particulars, within itself.

Although the genus immediately contains its own differentiations within itself, and is constituted by the totality of its species, the genus itself does not provide an account of the process by which the genus is differentiated. Although the genus contains the differentia of its species without which the species would not be defined, the differentia are not themselves derived from the genus, since the genus is in common to all of its species. For example, “animal” is a genus, and “ox” and “man” are species. Both “ox” and “man” are animals, and “being an animal” does not provide us the differences by which “ox” and “man” are defined. Hence, the genus is not a sufficient condition to derive the differentiation of the species, even though it contains them. Instead, a prior difference must be imported in order to differentiate the contents. Hence, the principle of differentiation is still missing from the genus.

Any species that is not a genus for other species, the infima species, will not have any conceptual means for differentiating the particulars falling within it, since there is no lower species to differentiate the particulars falling within the species. In this case, the species is constituted by individuals it cannot differentiate. Hence, at the lowest level of differentiation, the species is a class whose members can neither be determined by genera nor species. The genus, although providing some differentiation of the particular, fails to differentiate its own species without a prior difference, and fails to differentiate its own particulars at the highest and lowest levels of universality.

Most prevalent in modern philosophy³, although not at all absent from ancient Greek thought, abstraction is perhaps the most common way of thinking about universality. The most traditional construal of this kind of universal is the “one over many”. Since the content must be culled from some given, the universal must be discovered in and abstracted out of multifarious individuals. This process requires either discovering a common feature shared by many things and separating it from the individuals in which it inheres, or simply selecting an individual content to stand for other contents. Whether one speaks of selecting an individual content or discovering a common feature, one is engaged in a process of removing content and giving it some kind of universal significance. In a simple abstraction, the concept is thought to be distinct from and prior to a mere collection of individuals, since it specifies what property individuals must have in order to be an instance of the universal. Having completed the process of separating the universals from the

individuals and from each other, the most abstract universals will contain all of the individuals under them as instances. Since the abstraction is only a common feature, neither could it in principle specify how many instances there are, nor would any reasonable person expect the abstraction to account for the number of instances. Moreover, as a common feature, it fails to distinguish particular instances from one another. Hence, for the abstract universal there is no account of the differentiated particular, or the individuality of the instances.

The concept underpinning the structure of contemporary deductive systems, the class, consists of a collection of individuals. Unlike the abstract “one over many” each individual is one member of the class, and taken all together, the class is an aggregate of individuals. As an aggregate, the universal is not distinct from the totality of the particulars, as the abstract universal is, for it is neither itself a separate member of the class, nor is it distinct from the aggregate itself. The universal simply is the totality of the particulars. Since the class is not distinct from the totality of the particulars, universality is not as divorced from particularity in class membership as it is in the abstract ‘one over the many’. On the one hand, unlike abstract universals, in the class the particular members are set in relation with each other when they are brought into the class. Accordingly, ‘membership’ signifies a relation between particulars, namely that they all *belong* to the same class. On the other hand, unlike the abstract universal, the identification of the universal with the aggregate precludes providing any standard by which particular members belong to any particular class or are excluded from the class. Moreover, the individuals in the class may be universal, but qua members of the class the universals are thought merely in terms of their membership. Since the class only specifies that each is a member of the class, it does not specify that in virtue of which each member is different from the others. Hence, the class does not provide any means of differentiating the particulars within itself. Just as abstract universality fails to distinguish instances, class-membership also fails to individuate members. Accordingly, even the most universal classes will also be unable to differentiate the particular members from one another. Although the class is united with the particulars, its form of unity precludes any account of what individuates the members and the condition upon which membership ought to be granted.⁴

In sum, we find three basic forms of universality enumerated in the Western tradition: genus, abstraction, and class. It is important to note that in the tradition of Western philosophy the abstract universal has not always been conceived as totally separated from the other forms of universality, but we have listed it as a separate form of universality because it *can* be conceived separately from

the others and is *not reducible* to the other forms. Prima facia, we find a common constraint to each conception of the concept, namely the inability to account for individuality, or the differentiation of the particular. In the exposition that follows, we will re-construct paradoxes systematically connected with this constraint.

II.

By analyzing the traditional concepts of universality, we arrive at four dogmas. Each type of universal heretofore considered has an external relation to other universals. The first dogma states what this external relation to others really supposes, namely a relation to self which excludes others.

In order to uncover the first dogma, consider the following reductio: suppose that it is possible for universality not to be self-identical. If universality as such could be different from itself, then the universal would not necessarily be universal. Formalized, this proposition states that “A is not necessarily A.” If A is not necessarily A, then A could be not A. If A could be not A, then it is possible for the proposition “A is not A” to be true. Thus, if it were possible for the universal not to be self-identical, then it would be possible for a contradiction to be true.⁵

Why is it impossible for the universal not to be self-identical? Why is “A is not A” not capable of being true? Simply put, it violates the principle of non-contradiction. The principle of non-contradiction states that A as A cannot be not A. It is supposed that the PNC can be translated into the principle of excluded middle, the principle also implies that everything is either A or not A. It is presumed that contradictions are explosive: if A were not A, then A would be not A. Hence, if A were contradictory, A would be A and not A, which is well, everything: a philosophy text, a hamburger, a well, etc. This is absurd. Thus, according to the PNC and excluded middle, “A is not A” cannot be true.

Why accept the PNC? Why accept that it is absurd for A to be not A? Well, since it is a principle of inference we cannot infer it without begging the question. It is just a dogma. It is presumed that in “A is not A” I fail to even make a claim, since I immediately take away what I posit. Of course, why do we presume that the contradiction “A is not A” fails to make a claim? We assume this because we accept that contradictions are explosive, namely that “A is not A” entails that A is everything. Hence, if we do not heed the principle of non-contradiction, it is supposed that no content can in principle be ascribed to the universal. Since the explosiveness of the contradiction undermines the content of the universal, and to have content the universal must exclude some content, we must accept the principle of non-contradiction in order to preserve

content.⁶ Since the contradiction does not exclude its own negation, and the negation includes everything else, it is presumed that the contradiction does not exclude any content. To be sure, the assumption that “anything follows from a contradiction” presumes that no content can include its own negation and still be a determinate content. Hence, in order for the concept to have content, the one over many must necessarily be the same as itself, otherwise it is nothing.⁷ Note that the argument hinges on the unsupported suppositions that to be determinate is to be one thing, and that a contradiction of the form “A is not necessarily A” generates the total removal of all content, thereby freeing it from all determinacy.⁸

Since the concept is governed by the principle of non-contradiction, it necessarily excludes what it is not. Since what is not A is excluded by A, it follows that what is not A is external to A. Insofar as what is not A is external to A, A is necessarily limited by not A. Since A is limited by what is not A, A is finite. Clearly, A cannot be infinite, since the infinite is what has no limit, and A has a limit: not A. Since there is no middle between A and not A, and the principle of non-contradiction requires that everything is either A or not A, it follows that A excludes everything there is except itself. The finitude of the concept is a very ingrained dogma, for it stems from the basic assumption characteristic of Greek thought that Form is *itself by itself*.^{9,10}

The results of the first and second dogmas show that universals are unities excluding difference. The principle of identity, $A=A$, expresses self-relation. The universal is held to be subordinate to this principle, and to be identical with itself. As self-related, the universal is not related to others, or what is the same, its only relation to the other is mere exclusion. Such self-isolation, in positive terms, expresses the independence of the universal. Any relation to what the universal qua universal is not is something totally external to the being of the universal. To express the independence another way, we may say that from the finitude of the self-relation, the universal must be utterly by itself. In Hegelian nomenclature, their being as universal is indifferent to the content of their universality. For example, $A=A$, or one over many does not specify whether we are

⁸ The schematic argument presented here is structurally similar to some of the arguments that Aristotle gives in favor of the principle of non-contradiction in Book Gamma of the *Metaphysics*. See, for example, 1006b where he states that “But if one were not to posit this, but said it [“human being”] meant infinitely many things, it is clear that there would be no definition, for not to mean one thing is to mean nothing, and when words have no meaning, conversation with one another, and in truth, even with oneself, is impossible.” Also see 1007b 20 where he claims that if we reject the principle of non-contradiction, then “all things will be one. For the same thing would be a battleship and a wall and a human being [...]”

discussing the concept “number,” “quality,” or any other particular universal. The principle $A=A$ does not specify the particulars falling under it. In other words, it does not specify what the content of “A” is. Hence, these principles of identity are merely formal. No other information about what is unified is given by the self-identity of universality. Or, what is the same, any differences in virtue of which A is specified as “differentiated A” is incidental to what A is. While the contradictory concept is deemed explosive, the concept as such is utterly empty. Contradiction and tautology are correlated.¹¹ Of course, we do not want to say that concepts with content are not concepts. But given the formal constraints on conceptual determination, it is not the content of the universal, e.g. ‘number’, ‘unity’, etc., *in virtue of which* the content is universal, but ‘universality itself’. The principle in virtue of which universality is differentiated into various contents, e.g. ‘unity’, ‘number’, etc. is not the same as that in virtue of which it is universal.

If we wish to know what is united, the content of the universal, we must look outside of universality as such, for it only tells us that to be a universal is to unite a plurality. In other words, since universality is only a principle of the oneness of the particulars, the universal itself cannot account for that which differentiates the particulars or the universals from one another. For this reason, the principle by which universals are distinguished from one another, as particular instances of universality, must be sought in a principle external to unification. Given the formal unity of universality, the principles of unity and differentiation must remain distinct. If we apply these three dogmas we shall see that the one over many has been a perennially privileged definition of the universal exactly because it abides by these four dogmas. As a one over many, it is a finite, self-same content that fails to provide a principle of the differentiation of the particulars.

The main assumptions at work in the third dogma are the first two dogmas: finite self-identity necessarily precludes the universal from differentiating its own content, thereby forcing a distinction between the principle of unity, what tells us what unites particulars, and the principle of difference, or what differentiates particulars. Because the universal does not differentiate the particulars falling under it, there is no account of the individuality of the particular instances of the universals. The universal is not a principle of individuation, and engenders a separation of universality, particularity, and individuality. Even if this principle of individuality were another universal, the differentiation of its contents would still be undetermined. To distinguish the particulars of a universal, one must eventually appeal to something external to the region of universality, otherwise the particulars falling under universals will remain un-individuated.

Accordingly, the inability to know the individual as such has been a perennial problem in the history of philosophy.¹²

Given that the principle of universality and particularity are distinct, there cannot be an account of *the content of the particular universal*. Hence, it is necessary to appeal to a non-conceptual, external given, e.g. experience or intuition, in order to differentiate the particular universal and establish the content of the universal. As I have abstractly argued here, this given could initially be a universal. But since this universal will also be in need of differentiation of particulars, if there are no universals to appeal to, these must be individuated by an appeal to a given source of content external to the region of universality. Indeed, since these forms of universality each requires an appeal to a foundation, one cannot uncover universality as such without taking as a starting point given universals, from which one asks “what is it which concepts have in common?” This question seems to beg the question, since one must know what a concept is in order to inquire into what all concepts have in common. (Indeed, one might argue that I must already know what it is for a concept to be a concept in order to pick out particular concepts. Only once I am already able to pick out what counts as a concept am I able to ask: “what do the common terms have in common?”) Accordingly, an appeal to the given is necessary to get an inquiry started, for the universal does not generate its own content. Hence, the fourth dogma follows from the third: since the principle of differentiation is external to the principle of unity, the philosopher must import something from outside universality to arrive at particularity and individuality. Applying this argument reflexively, the philosopher must reach outside of thought in order to initially determine what any particular universal is, without which the inquiry into the constitution of universality cannot begin. To put this another way: it is not possible to inquire into the universal because it has not content. Hence, answering the question “what is the universal as such?” relies on initially importing what is not universal.

In summary, we have established four dogmas: (1) that contradiction entails the total absence of content, (2) the finitude of the concept, (3) the separation of principles of unity and difference, and (4) the necessity of appealing to non-conceptual givens. Important to note is the fact that the principle of non-contradiction is the locus of these four dogmas. Perhaps on their own these four dogmas do not appear so pernicious. On the contrary, when any of these three traditional forms of universality, i.e. genus, class, or abstraction, are taken as the sole form of universality, paradoxes are generated which compromise the very content of universality itself.

III.

As stated above, four paradoxes follow from the four dogmas: (1a) the problem of the differentia, (2b) the problem of psychologism, (3c) the problem of participation, and (4d) the problem of onto-theology. Though these problems deserve a proper historical analysis on account of their appearance in ancient, modern, analytic, and continental thought, we should make an effort to lay bare the systematic foundations of these problems in order that we may seek a systematic solution to them. This should make the universality of the problems clearer to all philosophers irrespective of their background. In order to achieve this I will make every effort to express the problems in a purely systematic way. I do not wish to argue that there is a one to one correspondence of each dogma to each paradox. Instead, I will argue that the dogmas, taken together, generate four paradoxes. In what follows I hope to show that problems (2b)–(4d) follow from (1a).

In Section I we introduced three forms of universality: genus, class, and abstraction. The four paradoxes of self-reference ought to annihilate any hope that the abstraction, the genus, or the class could be the form of universality as such. At best, each of these forms of the universal may be particular forms of the universal, but none of these can be universality as such. If this is the case, then the identification of universality with the class, abstraction, or genus is fallacious. Historically, this means that the particular forms of universality have been substituted for the form of universality as such. Let us work out the problem of the differentia to understand why this is the case.

Since I contend that the problem of the differentia results from the concept as it is taken in its mediated form, let us motivate the mediated model of universality. By advocating that the concept abide by the four dogmas, it appears on first glance that there ought not be a conflict between the concept of the concept and the dogmas requiring the separation of the principles of universality and particularity.¹³ If we take the universal and the particular to be separate, we are taking up the concept in its mediated form, wherein the difference is absolute.¹⁴ If we assume that the universal and the particular are separate, then the universal cannot differentiate itself into different kinds of universals. Since the universal cannot differentiate itself into kinds of universals, every determinate type of universality must have its source in another universal external to it. In generic terms, this means that if a genus is divided into species, the difference by which the species is divided must come from outside of that genus. But already we have a problematic scenario, for

the difference must be simultaneously internal to the divided genus, and external to that genus, since the difference dividing the genus must be external to that genus.¹⁵ Why is this a problem?

Since the universal as such is a self-identical finite being, and thereby excludes everything that it is not, the universal is utterly independent. Each category, as a category, is independent of others. But if this is the case, then the universal cannot be differentiated into kinds of universals without undermining the independence of the universal. In other words, the universal cannot include the difference by which it is divided. Hence, either the universal is not independent, and differentiation is possible, or it is independent, and the universal is undifferentiated. If the former were the case, the universal could have content.¹⁶ Unfortunately, the four dogmas preclude this as a possibility. Thus, only the latter is a plausible option. But if the latter is the case, the universal cannot have any determinate content. This is (1a), the problem of the missing differentia.

If the universal is differentiated, then the dogmas cannot be true, since the dogmas engender the independence of the universal. If the universal is not differentiated, then the universal not only loses all content, but the four dogmas fail to be consistent with their own principles. Consider the following: if we assume that the universal is not differentiated by universals, and is just undifferentiated, then the concept will remain wholly formal and will lack all content whatsoever, since it is undifferentiated. If we cannot attribute any conceptual content to the universal, then we cannot attribute self-identity, finitude, and the separation of universality and particularity to the universal. Thus, if we take up the concept in the form of absolute mediation in which universality and particularity are absolutely separate, the formal concept, the concept governed by the principle of non-contradiction, will *exclude itself from itself*. In other words, every dogma must be expunged from the content of universality as such.

At every stage of differentiation, the undifferentiated universal will fail to appear, since the universal as such cannot be differentiated. Every time some content is posited, this content will fail to signify the universal. Thus, there will be an infinite regress towards the undifferentiated universality that cannot appear.¹⁷ As undifferentiated, the self-identical concept cannot exclude itself from or be differentiated from every negation that it purports to exclude: otherness, infinitude, the identity of the principles of universality and particularity, existential implication, and self-reference.

¹⁵ I am utterly indebted to Edward Halper on this point, who first introduced me to the problem of the differentia in his Metaphysics seminar in the fall of 2007 on philosophical categories.

¹⁶ See Edward Halper, "Hegel and the Problem of the Differentia" in *Form and Reason* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 197-209. Halper points out that for Aristotle the difference must be in the genus but not as an instance. See 197-200.

If the undifferentiated universal is indeed undifferentiated, then it cannot be differentiated from differentiation.¹⁸ In short, if we accept the dogmas, then we must also reject the dogmas.

Truth be told, the finite concept is not just that which is limited, but that which contains its limit within itself. What contains its limit within itself contains that which limits its own negation, or its own nonbeing. The self-negation of the concept is a function of its finitude.

Clearly, the problem of the differentia applies to all universals that adopt the four dogmas, irrespective of where those universals fall in the classification schema. In fact, what we have here is the impossibility of having any classification schema at all. If we adopt multiple categories, e.g. “quality”, “quantity”, and so on, then each will collapse into the other. If we have just one category, e.g. “being” or “substance”, it will fail to be distinguished from nothing. The number of categories is not essential. Instead, it is their quality of independence that is problematic. What is key to notice here is that any absolute separation of form from content engenders the negation of that separation. Thus, we find ourselves in the following paradoxical situation: if we accept the principle of non-contradiction which underlies the other dogmas, then we violate the principle of non-contradiction. Thus, either the principle of non-contradiction engenders a contradiction, or in order to avoid the self-contradiction of the principle of non-contradiction, we must negate the principle of non-contradiction. But if we negate the principle of non-contradiction, then we shall have run back into the arms of contradiction. Thus, it appears that at the heart of universality there is an inexorable contradiction. Indeed, that philosophy should despair of itself and become mystical appears to be the only path forward, since contradiction appears inevitable. But any move to mysticism would assume that the principle of non-contradiction is the necessary form of thinking as such, which has been undermined. Thus, it is not even clear that mysticism is a possible way out of the problem. Indeed, one could have named this chapter “The Four Nihilities” because the four dogmas fail to be what they are.¹⁹

From the problem of the differentia we can also derive (2b), the problem of psychologism. The identification of the concept with a psychological state is a historical position that reoccurs quite often in the history of philosophy.²⁰ If psychologism follows from the problem of the differentia, then it would be evident why it constantly re-appears, since the differentia problem is endemic to the very question concerning the being of universality.

According to the traditional dogmas, universality as such is external to itself. Thus, we cannot derive the content of universality on its own terms, or from any of the traditional forms of universality that abide by these dogmas by themselves. Hence, we are forced to stipulate what it is to be universal. This stipulation of a given content must appeal to non-conceptual content, since the conceptual as conceptual contains no content whatsoever. In other words, the stipulation of the conceptual content must flee the a priori and appeal to what is in itself a posteriori: a spatio-temporal or merely temporal given. That “universality is such and such” can only be stipulated, since the concept excludes its own self from what it unifies. If we stipulate what it is to be universal, we have given an arbitrary answer. Since even universality as such is subject to the third dogma, we know that it is grounded by an appeal to something external to universality as such: an external positing. This external positing can take many forms. Psychologism, the identification of the concept itself with a psychological content, is at least one form of this external positing.

Psychologism fails for many reasons. To name one, psychologism is fallacious since it undermines the normativity of the concept. On this model, the universal is reduced to some particular presentation, be it a particular relation-presentation or thing-presentation, in the mind of a thinker.²¹ In this state, what the particular thinker thinks is what the universal is. Since the universal is identified with a particular mental content, there cannot be a distinction between what the universal is and what the universal is thought to be. In such a case, everyone is always correct about the being of the universal that they think.²² As we would expect, the stipulative nature of the universal results in a radical relativism that compromises the possibility of philosophy. Moreover, when the universal is reduced to this state, the same universal cannot be thought by multiple thinkers, or by the same thinker multiple times, for neither can the universal be separated from the temporal duration of the particular representation with which it has been identified, nor can anyone immediately experience the same presentation of another subject.

In any case, the act of identifying the non-conceptual with the conceptual is an act of transference. The necessity of metaphor for the elucidation of the concept is justified on these grounds, for we possess no conceptual means to identify the concept. In itself, the concept is empty. The concept is, on this model, the result of the appropriation and transformation of some non-conceptual content into a conceptual unity. In metaphor, we “carry” the difference over”²³

from its original a posteriori context and give it an ideal, i.e. non-temporal, a priori significance. We think in pictures because our concepts are empty of pure conceptual content. As the empiricist will always remind us, regarding general names such as “table” we all have separate pictures with which we identify those names. Formal logic, as Hegel noted long ago, must be correlated with empiricism, in order that it have any contents to connect. Since psychologism follows from the assumption of these dogmas, as long as we accept these dogmas, we shall commit this fallacy whether we like it or not. In more self-aware thinkers, the central place of metaphor, if you will, has become a central principle. For these thinkers, it is either an act of ignorance or dishonesty when the intellectual fails to recognize the central importance of metaphor. But what is also important to recognize is that the one who appeals to metaphor as central to thinking has already admitted the necessity of contradiction in the heart of thinking as such. Hannah Arendt captures the centrality of metaphor in *Life of the Mind*:

The metaphor provides the 'abstract,' imageless thought with an intuition drawn from the world of appearances whose function it is to 'establish the reality of our concepts' and thus undo, as it were, the withdrawal from the world of appearances that is the precondition of mental activities.²⁴ With speculative concepts—ideas that transcend the world of appearances—the metaphor achieves the carrying over—*metapherein*—of a genuine and seemingly impossible...transition from one existential state, that of thinking, to another, that of being an appearance among appearances.²⁵

Let us now show why the problem of participation follows from the problem of the differentia. The self-identical, finite concept cannot help but fail to be what it is, and the mediated form of universality becomes indistinguishable from the immediate form. Or what is the same, the problem of the differentia showed that any absolute separation of form from content, universal from particular, engenders the negation of that separation. Since we cannot keep the universal separate from the particular, the universal becomes inseparable from the particular. Thus, the universal is in the form of immediacy: the universal is identified with the particular. As such, we cannot help but admit that “the universal is a universal.” In other words, self-predication appears to be the position into which the problem of the differentia has forced thinking.

Prima facie, the necessity of self-predication appears to be a helpful advance. For the very question “what is the universal” appears to require self-predication. The question “what is universality as such?” implores us to treat universality itself as a particular. For upon answering the question “what is the universal as such?” we must say that “universality is such and such”. To say

“is such and such” is to predicate a universal to the subject. Thus, to heed the call of the question “what is the universal?” requires us to answer with the following formula: universality is a universal.

If we briefly consider the four dogmas again, it becomes obvious that the four dogmas preclude us from ever taking this question seriously, since the form in which the answer must be posited is utterly verboten by the dogmas. According to the first dogma, the universal is indifferent to its particulars, for the universality is only universal and not particular. According to the third dogma, the principles of differentiated particularity must come from outside of the universal. Hence, the universal itself cannot be a particular universal merely in virtue of itself. The third dogma precludes us from treating universality as a particular, since universality and particularity are separate. For this reason, it is clear that the traditional answers to the question concerning universality, e.g. genus, class, and abstraction, fail to qualify as proper answers to the question. Instead, as we know, the third dogma forces us to stipulate the content of universality by appealing to a non-conceptual content. Generally stated, the traditional dogmas prevent us from justifying any claim concerning the content of universality.

Given the internal collapse of the four dogmas, the philosopher is forced into (3c) the problem of participation. As we know from Plato’s *Parmenides*, self-predication is central to the problem of participation. Although there are many ways of expressing the paradox, one very clear way may be formulated in this context. Answering the question “what is universality as such?” requires that one posit what is common to all universals. Is each a genus, or an aggregate, or an abstraction? What is the one universal which all universals have in common? By answering the question, one must posit a particular universal, one “one over many”, despite the fact that this universal is a higher order universal. Universality itself must be a universal, for it is some one element all universals share. Since universality itself is also a universal, distinct from other universals, it must be a particular universal. In other words, as a particular universal, it is an individual member of the plurality of universals just as all other universals are. Because the universal is a unification of all universals, it must include itself, since it is a universal.

If the universal includes itself, as immediately universal and particular, neither “universal” nor “particular” retain any determinate sense. Instead, it appears that we are simply saddled with a contradiction. In order for the universal to include itself as a particular, it must be other than itself, or exceed itself, if you will. The immediate identity of the universal and particular expressed in ‘the universal is a universal’ appears to leave us without any determinate content, since no negation may be invoked by which either could be differentiated from the other. “The” universal cannot be “a”

universal without ceasing to be “the” universal. Likewise, “a” universal cannot be “a” universal if it is “the” universal.

The problem of participation, in its attempt to do justice to the question concerning the being of universality, predicates the universal to itself. In so doing, it collapses the difference between the universal and the particular. Because there is no longer a difference between universal and particular, the universal is no longer in a mediated form. Instead, it is grasped in its immediacy. The immediate grasp of the universal claims that “the universal is universal”. This immediate grasp of the universal renders the concept indeterminate. Thus, we could represent the self-referential view of the universal as pure immediacy, in which the universal and the particular are indistinguishable, and no content is grasped. In order to undermine the indeterminacy of the concept, and achieve determinacy, it seems that self-reference must be rejected, since it is self-reference that fails to allow for any difference between universal and particular. No determinate concept is grasped when the concept is in the mode of immediacy. Only if the concept abides by those dogmas can the concept have determinacy.

Instead of tarrying in the immediacy of universal and particular, we are forced back into the four dogmas in order to retrieve the determinacy of the concept. By the second dogma, the universal is not a particular, and therefore universality itself cannot be one of the particulars it unifies. If universality as such were a particular, then it would not be universality as such, for universality as such is not a particular, and it would be unified by another more comprehensive universal. If universality were treated as the one feature something must have to count as a universal, its own content would not be something that it could include within itself. Hence, another universal would be needed in order to give unity to the particulars. But insofar as this unity is a universal, it cannot unify all the universals, since it is also a particular, and is in need of another principle of unity to unite it with other universals. This regress continues to elude us in our search for universality as such. The paradox shows us that we must beg the question at every step, for if we have arrived at universality as such, either it does not include its own content, and is thereby not universality as such, which is absurd, or it does include itself, which is absurd, since no universal is a particular universal, by the second dogma.²⁶ Thus, we can infer with confidence that (3c), the problem of participation, follows from (1a) the problem of the differentia. By adopting the dogmas, we never arrive at the universal we desire to know, for any answer is precluded by the very fact that

the proposed answer ought not be a particular. By treating any one of the particular forms as the sole form of universality, we cannot generate the content of universality as such.

Indeed, the problem of participation expresses the paradox of self-reference at its most reflexive moment. If we remain in the mediate model of universality that accords with the four dogmas, then we encounter the problem of the differentia. As a result, we are thrust into the self-referential immediacy of universal and particular. Yet, since there is no content in the immediacy of the universal and the particular, we must abandon that immediacy for the mediate model of universality that accords with the four dogmas. Of course, this gives rise to the differentia problem, and we are forced back into the self-predicative immediacy of the universal and the particular. Apparently, the only constancy in the result is the constant flipping back and forth from the immediate to the mediate. But this is hardly a solution. Instead, it reflects the problem at its most developed level.

Given the problem of participation, we can derive (4d) the problem of onto-theology. It was Heidegger who first brought this problem to light in an explicit way in his seminal work *Being and Time*. Here he accuses the Western tradition of identifying “Being” with “a being.” In general, he is correct that Ancient, Medieval, and Modern Thinkers took this position in various ways. But he does not explicitly identify its conceptual origin. To identify “Being” with “a being” is to identify the universal with the particular. Since at every stage of the regress in the participation problem we must identify the universal with the particular, he who has not escaped the coils of participation will not escape onto-theology either. Whenever we attempt to think about universality as such, we force ourselves, by necessity, into the problem of onto-theology, since we cannot help but identify the universal with the particular.

The problem of participation necessitates that the universal be a universal, and from this it is obvious that the universal as such is self-referential. Unlike empirical kinds, e.g. “animal”, which are not self-referential²⁷, in this problem, the universal as such is self-referential. Thus, it appears that the universal qua self-referential, cannot be a posteriori. Indeed, when we confront the principle of a totality, e.g. “universality” as such, we find that there is nothing external to universality as such. Though it is the principle of the totality, it is nonetheless one member of the totality. If universality were not the principle of the totality, it could be one member of the totality without contradiction.²⁸

Indeed, participation cuts to the root of the problem: if we tarry long enough with the question at hand we see that it does not require us to merely specify universality as such, but also how that universality is a particular, or an instance of itself. If it is precluded from what it unifies, we have not found what is universal as such, since there is always one universal left out, namely the universality stipulated to be true of all of them. The separation of a universal from its particulars also severs the relation between the universal and its own content.²⁹ On the one hand, the universal must relate to itself as a particular instance of itself, yet on the other hand, the universal must be common to all of its particular instances. It is important to note that the problem generating the paradox is not only the lack of self-reference, although this is necessary to properly answer the question, but the dogmas precluding the universal from being an instance of itself which generates the ban on self-reference in the first place.

What is generally ignored in traditional attempts to answer the question is the reflexivity of the question, inclining us to posit a particular form of universality for universality as such. The form of the question asks for a self-referring and self-referential answer, yet that answer seems impossible. “What is universality as such?” “Universality is such and such a universal.” Self-reference is the proper form of the answer. Yet traditional answers either include self-reference without retaining any determinacy for the concept, or they exclude self-reference, and lose the determinacy of the concept, all while failing to answer the question. Whether we adopt self-reference or reject it, whether we begin immediately or in a mediated way, we lose the determinacy of the concept. The question asks us to provide an answer which is not indifferent to particularity, while at the same time preserves the determinacy of the concept. This requires us to re-think the relation between universal, particular, and individual.

On the one hand, the result is that each answer traditionally put forward may only give us a particular form of universality, but never accounts for the thought positing these particular forms. On the other hand, if the concept is self-referential, it appears that we have no ground on which we may legitimately posit these various forms of universality, e.g. genus, class, and abstraction, as forms of the universal. The thought positing these forms seems to violate the traditional dogmas as well as the traditional forms of universality. Moreover, it invites us to re-think the relation of universal to particular. The history of Western philosophy has already provided us with the two possible solutions to this problem. Either we can, with Wittgenstein, admit the meaninglessness of our own

philosophical propositions, or we can, with Hegel, embark on a logic free from the principle of non-contradiction, and the appeal to givens. To put it in ahistorical terms, thinking qua thinking is contradictory. This is the upshot of the paper: either thinking qua thinking is mystical, since it exceeds its own principles, or we must make a place for contradiction in our logic. The choice is ours. Here I do not want to make a choice. Instead, I want us all to feel the pressure to make the choice: to stand in fear and trembling before philosophy.

Because each of the traditional forms of universality is indebted to the four dogmas, each of these traditional forms of universality falls victim to the four paradoxes of self-reference. Although we must treat the universal as a particular according to the demands of the question, each traditional answer to this question precludes treating the universal as a particular. The principle unifying the particulars is not allowed to function as the same principle that differentiates the particulars. In order to save philosophy, the universal as universal ought to function as a principle of individuality, or the differentiated particular, while at the same time retaining the determinacy of the universal. Each universal posited as an answer to the question concerning the constitution of universality posits a third term superceding it which it is at a loss to identify. Accordingly, the tradition itself seems to be caught in the *Euthyphro* problem: instead of specifying the universal character of the universal, a particular form of universality is offered in its stead. But what we want to know is the universal. In order to achieve this it seems that we must give up on the traditional dogmas impeding our pursuit.

IV. Hegel and the Self-Differentiating Concept

In *The Notion*³⁰ Hegel's *Science of Logic*, Hegel provides *one* solution to all four paradoxes, and provides us a place to begin searching for a way to solve these classic problems. In *The Notion in General* Hegel begins by pointing out that it is difficult to discover what others have thought about the concept. In the history of philosophy the concept itself has rarely been treated as its own object of inquiry:

But it is not easy to discover what others have said about the nature of the Notion. For in the main they do not concern themselves at all with the question, presupposing that everyone who uses the word automatically knows what it means. Latterly one could have felt all the more relieved from any need to trouble about the Notion since, just as it was fashion for a while to say everything bad about the imagination, and then the memory, so in philosophy it became the habit some time ago, a habit which in some measure still exists, to heap every kind of slander on the Notion, on what is supreme in thought, while the incomprehensible and non-comprehension are, on the contrary, regarded as the pinnacle of science and morality.³¹

³⁰ See Hegel's *Science of Logic*, 600-622, or for the original German, see Hegel, G.W.F. *Wissenschaft der Logik II*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, (1986), 273-301.

³¹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 583.

In this passage Hegel recognizes the attraction of mysticism in his own time, and speculates that the attraction of mysticism has encouraged thinkers to ignore the issue altogether. In the history of philosophy, discussions of concepts in general are often bound up with other issues of greater import to philosophers, such as Form, God, or objectivity.³² By attending to what the concept is, Hegel aims to thematize a question rarely asked in its own right³³, and hopes to thereby avoid the appeal to mysticism.

In the *Logic of the Concept* Hegel presents the reader with a *novel* answer to these classic questions. If the universal is self-differentiation³⁴, then all four dogmas are undermined. As self-differentiating, the universal can escape the traditional dogmas, and thereby escape the problems associated therewith.

Self-differentiation is both the determiner and the determined. Insofar as self-differentiation negates any difference between determiner and determined, self-differentiation determines what it is, for it is not differentiated by any other principle external to it. Since it determines for itself what it is, it must be the source of its own content and is rightfully called ‘self-determining’. For if it does not differentiate itself, it is either differentiated by another, and acquires determinacy by an external principle, or it is not differentiated at all. But in the former case, self-differentiation is not self-differentiating, and in the latter case self-differentiation is indeterminate, for without any differentiation, there can be no relation to an other and hence no determinacy.

Since it contains what is different from itself, the concept is determinate only in lieu of *the contradiction* it contains.³⁵ Since the universal contains its own difference, it is not simply a self-

³² I do not wish to claim that the concept has no bearing on these issue, but that the issues are separate and the systematic treatment of the concept can be investigated without appealing to these terms.

³³ Hegel thematizes this issue again at the very end of *The Notion in General*. He points out that neither in the critical philosophy of Kant nor in the description of Aristotle were the forms of concept ever subject to philosophical criticism. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 595.

³⁴ Numerous scholars, such as Kenley Dove, Richard Dien Winfield, Edward Halper, Henrich and others, have recognized the importance of self-determination in Hegel’s philosophy. For this reason, it is not unique to my account. Most recently, see Christian Georg Martin, *Ontologie der Selbstbestimmung, Eine operationale Rekonstruktion von Hegels “Wissenschaft der Logik”* Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck 2012. What I believe is unique about my account is the way that I use Hegel to solve the four paradoxes of self-reference. Although Trisokkas employs Hegel to solve different, yet related problems of skepticism that stem from the ancient skeptics, his approach is similar to mine insofar as he applies Hegel to solve problems that stem from Ancient philosophy: Trisokkas, *Pyrrhonian Skepticism and Hegel’s Theory of Judgment: A Treatise on the Possibility of Scientific Inquiry*, Boston and Leiden Pub., 2012.

³⁵ Earlier in the *Logic of Essence*, Hegel points out that contradiction is the result of the dialectical process of identity and difference. For this see Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik II*, 64. Here I use the term ‘contradiction’ because we have just showed in Section III that the concepts of identity and difference have become indistinguishable. Because this leads to a contradiction, I employ this term here as a pedagogical tool in order to maintain continuity with the problems raised in Section III as well as employ terms that are consistent with Hegel’s own description. In addition, these remarks are *anticipatory*. We shall later give more systematic support to the claim that the concept is contradictory.

identical ‘one’.³⁶ Since it is not simply self-identical, but contains its own differentiating principle, it is not beholden to the principle of non-contradiction. As self-differentiating, it is both the principle of its unity and the principle of its difference. Hence, self-determination does not presume the separation of the principles of universality and particularity, for it has no need to appeal to an external principle of differentiation to account for its content. Because it differentiates itself, there is no non-conceptual content to which the concept must appeal in differentiating its various aspects. Thus, it also avoids the appeal to foundations and the psychologistic and naturalistic fallacies that follow from such appeals. The self-differentiating universal *only stays itself* in virtue of differentiating itself into various contents distinct from it, but which it nonetheless contains within itself. *To be a universal is to admit what is other* to itself, and to *maintain its identity* in lieu of the self-differentiation. Moreover, because the difference is not external to the universal, there is nothing that limits the universal. Insofar as there is nothing that limits the universal, the universal is no longer finite. Accordingly, it is without a limit or *infinite*. Thus, if the universal is self-differentiating, universality is no longer beholden to the four dogmas of universality. Since the universal escapes the dogmas, it also escapes the problems that follow from them.³⁷

The problems of participation followed from the apparent necessity to discover the principle of the content outside of the universal itself, a necessity apparently demanded by the dogmatic requirement separating principles of unity and difference. To avoid this problem, Hegel posits that universals must provide for their *own* content. If the universal self-differentiates, it must be responsible for creating its own content. On the traditional model, an appeal to the given seems necessary since the content of a category is determined by something other than the category, e.g. an external category, an appeal to a given content in experience, or to beings. ‘Intellectual intuition’

³⁶ In his remark on particularity, Hegel points out that as self-differentiation, the concept is just as much *opposed* to itself as it is *self-contradictory*: “The nature and the essential transition of the forms of reflection which they express have been considered in their proper place. In the Notion, identity has developed into universality, difference into particularity, opposition, which withdraws into the ground, into individuality. In these forms, those categories of reflection are present as they are in their Notion. The universal has proved itself to be not only the identical, but at the same time the different or contrary as against the particular and individual, and in addition, also to be opposed to them or contradictory;” [...]. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 615-616. Here Hegel makes the point that unlike in ordinary logical analysis the difference between contrariety and contradiction is not a relevant difference in his system of the concept. Contrariety is usually conceived as a form of opposition in which there is a middle, such as ‘white’ and ‘black’, whereas contradictory terms signify a form of opposition in which there is no middle, such as ‘white’ and ‘not-white’. Hegel himself describes the concept in terms of contradiction as well as the unification of contraries. The concept of diversity also arises in the concept, but as we shall see, the diversity of the concept is dependent upon the self-opposing and self-contradictory aspect of the concept that is constitutive of particularity.

³⁷ Oddly, Julie Maybee, in her book *Picturing Hegel*, does not list the self-differentiating universal as one of the senses of the concept. She has all the senses of the concept qua particular represented: abstraction, class, and set, yet leaves out the principle from which they follow. Maybee, Julie E., *Picturing Hegel: An Illustrated Guide to Hegel’s Encyclopaedia Logic*. Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2009, 16-18.

signifies the process whereby the content of what is thought is created by the very act of thinking that content. Because self-differentiation is nothing more than the act by which the universal itself creates what its universal content is, self-differentiation exhibits ‘intellectual intuition’. Hegel develops Intellectual Intuition into a principle, by showing that the very content of the universal, its self-differentiating character, is inseparable from particularity as such. Hegel develops this principle by showing that it is in virtue of the universal’s capacity to *refer to itself* and to thereby *make itself particular* that it is intellectually intuitive, or what is the same, that it is able to create its own content from nothing but itself. The activity by which the concept gives itself its own content must be both *self-referential*³⁸ and *self-particularizing*.³⁹ In Hegel’s conception of universality, it is in virtue of self-reference and self-particularization that the universal establishes for itself what its content is. For this reason, self-particularization establishes the *true* content of the universal, or the content to which the universal corresponds. The concept must, by itself, give itself its own ‘truth’.

Hegel also argues that universals must exhibit *self-particularization*. Hegel painstakingly shows how the universal achieves self-particularization through *self-reference*. Self-reference is obviously implied in the very concept of self-differentiation. Because self-differentiation differentiates *itself*, its activity is not directed at anything other than itself. Its activity is only directed *at itself*. ‘Self-reference’ expresses the *self-directed activity* of self-differentiation. Self-reference does not exhaust the concept of self-differentiation, but self-differentiation is necessarily *self-referring*.⁴⁰ The term ‘self-reference’ does not necessarily imply any connection to the structures of judgment. Indeed, judgment is the attribution of a predicate to a subject, and ‘self-reference’ neither invokes the term ‘subject’ nor ‘predicate’. In addition, the reference involved in ‘self-reference’ does not appeal to a mind or another principle in virtue of which something is pointed out, for it is the universal that refers to itself. Finally, because Hegel himself uses this term throughout his analysis of the concept, (the original German is *Beziehung auf sich* or *sich beziehen*) I find it a relatively uncontroversial way of communicating the overall structure of the *Logic of the Concept*.⁴¹

³⁸ As we noted in the Introduction, self-reference is the activity whereby a concept applies its own content to itself.

³⁹ This term signifies the activity whereby i) the universal creates its particulars by itself, and ii) the universal itself from which the particulars are generated is itself one of the particulars. ‘Self-particularization’ is, as we shall point out shortly, a synonym for ‘existential implication’.

⁴⁰ Because one claims that ‘self-differentiation’ is self-referring’ it does not follow that ‘self-differentiation’ is just self-reference or reducible to it self-reference.

⁴¹ There are numerous passages in which self-reference arises. Miller sometimes translates them as “self-relation”, sometimes as “self-reference”. See for example, ‘diese reine Beziehung des Begriffs auf sich’ (pure relation of the Notion to itself) (601, 274), ‘die einfache Beziehung auf sich selbst’ (simply relation to itself) (602, 275) ‘self-relating’ (*sich auf sich beziehende*) (601), and “self-reference” (*Beziehung auf sich*) (619). Note that “sich beziehen auf” can mean relation and

Hegel has many ways of expressing the logical structure constitutive of self-reference. In the *Encyclopedia Logic* Hegel employs various terms such as ‘having turned back into itself’ (*Zürückgekehrtsein in sich selbst*)⁴², ‘withdrawing inwards’ (*Insichgehen*), ‘sinking deeper into itself’ (*ein Vertiefen desselben in sich selbst*)⁴³, ‘return into themselves’ or ‘back turning into themselves’ (*ibrer Rückkehr in sich*)⁴⁴.

The self-referential aspect of the universal is already evident in our earlier discussion: when we think the self-identity of self-identity, we cannot help but encounter non-self-identity. Hegel’s *Logic* also exhibits *Existential Implication*. Here I refrain from employing the term ‘existential implication’ only because there is some concern that the use of the term may unintentionally introduce other terms from the section on *Judgment* in the *Science of Logic*.⁴⁵ Because existential implication is that process whereby the universal gives rise to its particulars by itself, existential implication is nothing more than the process of *self-particularization*. For this reason, in the exposition on Hegel’s *Logic of the Concept*, I have replaced the term ‘existential implication’ with ‘self-particularization’ in order that the logical structure might be more effectively communicated. Because I have used the term ‘existential implication’ to mean ‘self-particularization’ all along, I understand this replacement to be a merely *terminological* emendation.⁴⁶

Pippin, in his book *The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness* confuses the conceptual content of judgment with that of the concept. He writes:

The determinacy of the concept is not (or is not wholly and not fundamentally) a function of such abstraction, according to Hegel; instead the concept’s determinacy (its own particularity or content) is primarily a function of the role it can and cannot play in judgments, judgments that originally determine the particular as the distinct particular that it is. Hegel is following Kant here in understanding concepts as “predicates of possible judgments” and likewise insisting that to understand a concept is not to represent some abstracted common quality, but to understand how to use it in a variety of judgments.⁴⁷

reference. Miller has taken the nominal form “Beziehung” as “self-reference”, and the participle as “self-relation”, but he could have taken the participle as “self-referring”.

⁴² See Paragraph 83 of Hegel’s *Logic*, 121. See Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Hegel’s Logic*. Translated by William Wallace. NY: Oxford UP, 1975.

⁴³ See paragraph 84 of Hegel’s *Logic*.

⁴⁴ See paragraph 162 of Hegel’s *Logic*, 225.

⁴⁵ For example, in *The Judgment* Hegel writes, “The Judgment can therefore be called the proximate realization of the Notion, inasmuch as reality denotes in general entry into existence as a determinate being.” Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 633. ‘Existential implication’ may give the impression that at the stage of the concept we are already dealing with forms of judgment, or the *existence* of determinate beings.

⁴⁶ ‘Self-particularization’ also has the benefit of expressing in what sense the universal can be a principle of particularity. Not only does ‘self-particularization’ express the concept that the universal creates particulars *by itself*, but it also implies that the particulars themselves that are implied by the universals are nothing but the universal themselves. In other words, it expresses that the universals are their *own particulars*.

⁴⁷ Pippin, Robert B., *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness*. Cambridge New York, NY University Press Cambridge, 1989, 237-238.

Pippin does indeed contrast the concept with abstraction, yet fails to see the affinity of abstraction with the concept of the concept as a “predicate of possible judgments”. In stark contrast to Kant, Hegel is not following Kant here, for the concept cannot be identified with a predicate of possible judgments. Judgments, for Hegel, follow from the concept. Instead of following Kant here, Hegel is giving *the condition for the possibility of any judgment whatever*: the self-differentiating concept. As Hegel points out, speculative truths, and in this case the concept, cannot be properly expressed in judgment. In judgment, the particular has been separated from its concrete unity with the universal and individual, and if anything, *fails* to express the concept proper.

In his essay *Sketch of a Program for a Critical Reading of Hegel: Comparing Empirical and Logical Concepts*, Robert Brandom appears to conflate the content of concepts proper with empirical representations. He argues that the difference between empirical and logical concepts is merely an *expressive* one.⁴⁸ For Brandom, the goal of the logic is to “to develop conceptual tools that are necessary and sufficient to express explicitly the essential structures that are implicit in our use of ordinary concepts (including those of the empirical sciences) in judgment and action.”⁴⁹

Unfortunately, such a description of the *Logic* fails to acknowledge the elephant in the room. Hegel is explicit, as it were, that concepts proper are not mere explications of ordinary empirical concepts.⁵⁰ To the contrary, our ordinary empirical concepts do not have the form of the concept proper: self-reference and self-particularization. The relationship cannot be one of *mere expression* when the form of the concept is *radically* at odds with what it is purported to express.⁵¹

One simple way to draw the contrast between properly logical and empirical concepts is the way that each related to the principle of non-contradiction. Indeed, the difference in their relationship to that principle provides us a clue to clarifying the role of non-contradiction in Hegel’s

⁴⁸ Robert Brandom, *Sketch of a Program for a Critical Reading of Hegel: Comparing Empirical and Logical Concepts*, German Idealism and Contemporary Analytic Philosophy, Ameriks, Karl (ed) 131-161 Berlin De Gruyter, 2005 (Apr 2, 2005), 3.

⁴⁹ Brandom, *Sketch of a Program for a Critical Reading of Hegel: Comparing Empirical and Logical Concepts*, 4.

⁵⁰ Apparently this confusion is quite rampant in Hegel scholarship. Robert Stern appears to make this error by reading EL 24Z p 37, which concerns empirical universals, as a lesson regarding universality as such. He claims that for Hegel universals must be exemplified in individuals. Therefrom he claims that Hegel rejects the Platonic view of universal as *ante res* and endorses an Aristotelian view of universals. (59) He goes on to write that “the universal constitutes the real nature of the particular individual by claiming that the universal determines what sort of being each individual is and unless it exemplified a substance kind it could not exist.” I find this comparison quite unhelpful. Because Stern confuses the logical and the empirical in Hegel’s position, his comparison only serves to further obscure Hegel’s position. See Robert Stern, *Hegel, Kant, and the Structure of the Object*, Routledge 1990, New York, NY.

⁵¹ De Laurentiis, in “On Hegel’s Concept of Thinking”, makes an important point that in order for any serious discussion of Hegel’s *Realphilosophie* to take place, such as the issue of recognition that fascinates the Pittsburgh school, Hegel’s concept of thinking as self-determination must first be recognized. See De Laurentiis, Allegra “On Hegel’s Concept of Thinking.” *Societas Rationis: Festschrift für Burkhard Tuschling zum 65. Geburtstag*. Dieter Huening, Gideon Stiening, Ulrich Vogel (eds) 263-285.

logic. On the one hand, for empirical thinking, the classical principle of non-contradiction is the principle. Because empirical notions rely on the difference between universal and particular, the principle of non-contradiction must remain in place. For this reason, when empirical knowing contradicts itself, the result is an error.⁵² When the understanding is separated out from the self-differentiating process of the concept, the contradiction in the understanding does not lead to a new concept. Instead, the contradiction is a road that is closed and leads nowhere.

Since universals posit their own content, foundationalism can be avoided, for there is no need to look outside of the universals for their content or for the differentiation of the particulars. Since the participation problem is generated by an appeal to an external content, and the universal as self-determining eschews this appeal, the universal as self-determining eschews the problem of participation. For Hegel, the universal is neither an abstraction, nor a class, nor a genus. For Hegel, each of these is a determinate universal, but for Hegel the universal itself is not wholly identifiable with the determinate universal.

Each of the classic answers to the question concerning the constitution of universality precludes any derivation of the differentiated particular from universality itself. If the universal is self-differentiating, it must contain not only particularity, but also the differentiated particular or individuality. Perhaps more perplexing is the fact that the four dogmas, as well as the four paradoxes of self-reference that follow from them, must also be *contained in* the structure of the self-differentiating totality. Any reconstruction of Hegel's chapter on *the Notion* must show how universality, particularity and individuality are all constituents of the self-determining universality. By removing the dogmatic limits on conceptual determination, the universal as self-differentiating must individuate its own particulars. Since the universal as self-differentiating creates its own content, and must be its own particular, it must also *determine itself to be self-determining*. It must include *self-differentiation as such* in the forms of its own self-differentiations. In other words, insofar as self-differentiation can account for its own content, unlike other forms of universality, the universal as self-determining *individuates itself*.⁵³

⁵² As Bordignon point out, one sense of contradiction in Hegel is the "error of the understanding". Michela Bordignon, Padua *Contradiction or not-contradiction? This is the problem* 163-171 Akademie Verlag Editors: Andreas Arndt, Myriam Gerhard and Jure Zovko 2013 Deutschland, (163).

⁵³ Though it cannot be made fully clear at this point, the self-particularization of the universal results in the creation of the universal as individuality. The universal's self-particularization results in the creation of itself as individuality. As individuality, the self-particularization of the universal transcends particularity. Yet, because this individuality is *distinct* from particularity, and Hegel identifies the particular with the determinate universal, individuality itself must also become *a particular universal*.

On the one hand, since abstractions, classes, and genera do not differentiate their own individuals or generate their own content, it is unclear how the self-differentiating universal could derive these, since they are not self-differentiating. On the other hand, it seems that the self-differentiating universal could help in providing the other forms of universality with the source of their content, given that the universal as self-differentiating eliminates the assumption which generates the problem of the differentia and the problem of participation in the first place. As a principle of unification and differentiation, the universal, construed as self-determining, must be both a universal and a particular and should thereby be able to function as the universal that puts forward the traditional forms of universality: abstraction, class-membership, and genera. On the one hand, this would only work if the other forms of universality, i.e. abstraction, class-membership, and the genus, could be viewed as distinct forms of universality. Hegel argues that abstraction, class-membership, and the genus are all particular forms of universality. If these are forms of the self-differentiating universal, they should also exhibit, in some respect, the structure of self-differentiation. On the other hand, this would mean that each form of universality, e.g. abstraction, class membership, and genus, could not each be treated as the *sole* form of universality as they have been traditionally viewed.

Dr. Gregory S. Moss
Clemson University

Endnotes

¹ Admittedly, my argument is inspired by G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Amherst: Humanities Press, 1969) and in particular the introductory material in his *Introduction and With What Must Science Begin?* Indeed, Hegel's revolutionary text is grounded on the insight that the problem of the differentia follows from the dogmatic assumption of the principle of non-contradiction. Though Hegel does not explicitly draw out the connection between these four problems and dogmas, my arguments are all implied by Hegel's critique of traditional reason. I should note that Edward Halper has already connected the problem of the differentia to the logic of self-predication in Edward Halper, *Form and Reason* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 197-209. Moreover, Richard Dien Winfield has devoted his career to showing the absurdity of foundationalism. For a good sampling of his arguments, see the General Introduction to his recent book Richard Dien Winfield, *Hegel's Science of Logic: A Critical Rethinking in Thirty Lectures*. (Plymouth: Roman and Littlefield Publishers, 2012). I understand my own arguments as a way of augmenting and strengthening those arguments.

² The most obvious historical example of the concept of the 'genus' is found in Aristotle. See, for example, Aristotle's discussion of the problem of grasping Being as a genus at 998B 20 in the *Metaphysics*.

³ George Berkeley's work illustrates this concept well, as do the various adherents to the school of British Empiricism. Historical examples of such universals are quite numerous, ranging from the Rationalist and British Empiricist traditions to Phenomenology in the twentieth century.

⁴ Because this conception is more amenable to formalization, many nineteenth and twentieth century philosophers, e.g. Mill and Tarski, prefer this conception of universality to other conceptions.

⁵ Analytic philosophers have a term for those thinkers who believe that contradictions can be true: *Dialetheism*.

⁶ This is basically Aristotle's argument in Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Trans. Joe Sachs (Sante Fe: Green Lion Press, 2002), 1006a1 through–1007a20.

⁷ As the paper progresses, I will show that retaining self-identity is impossible, and that the universal cannot help but fail to meet its own standard.

⁸ The Greek phrase 'itself by itself' is *auto kath' auto*.

⁹ This dogma has remained in place despite the abandonment of 'Forms', and the revolutions in our understanding of the universe which were initiated by the rise of Christian Theology and Modern Science. Though God and the universe were transformed from finite to infinite entities, the cognition of each remained a function of finitude. God, as infinite, remained unknown in himself. The infinite universe, including space and time, though it has been re-conceived to be knowable in itself, *is not known because it is infinite*, instead it is the indefinite re-iteration of a *finite mathematical principle* that makes it knowable. We do not know the universe because it is infinite, but in spite of it. Instead of positing a finite universe known through finite principles, we know the infinite universe through the infinite re-iteration of a finite principle. For example, though the counting numbers are unending, they have a finite principle. As Cassirer's work, most notably *Substance and Function*, on functions has illuminated, though the instances of the counting numbers may be generated from the successor function, and these are infinite, the successor function itself is finite, and is the principle of the knowledge. The concept of the 'deductive multiplicities' in Husserl's *Formal and Transcendental Logic* also has its origin in this concept.

¹⁰ It appears that the reason 'anything follows' is because no content is posited in the concept in the first place. In fact, it is exactly because there is no content that nothing and everything follows. In other words, everything and nothing is engendered in the concept of this notion! If logic contained some necessary content, then the negation of that content would not engender everything and nothing- instead it would be the negation of that particular content. This would give it a determinacy of its own set into relation with the immediate content.

¹¹ An example of this problem may be found in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* at 999b30. Here Aristotle argues that if the principles were one in number (particular), then there would be no knowledge. Knowledge is not possible if there are only particulars. Even to know the particular as particular we know the *particular as universal*, not as it is in its particularity.

¹² Note that the separation of principles of universality and particularity is the same as the assumption that Kant makes in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, namely that the concept is not sufficient for its existence, where to exist is not to be a predicate, but a particular.

¹³ Though I tend to think that the dogmas listed above prevent us from even asking the question "what is it to be universality?" so that any view of universality that abides by these dogmas shall not be able to engage the question, let us assume for the sake of argument that the assumption of the duality of principles provides the necessary conditions for asking the question.

¹⁴ In fact this infinite regress is identical to the regress in the participation problem. Though I wish to acknowledge this here, I postpone a more in depth discussion of the issue until after I have elucidated the problem of psychologism.

¹⁵ Note that this conceptual development is identical to Eckhart's dialectic concerning the relationship between the three persons of the trinity.

¹⁶ Aristotle's problem concerning the generic character of Being raised in Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 998b, is another expression of the problem of the differentia. If we assume that there is just one genus of Being, then we take the category "Being" to be independent. As Parmenides noted, if Being is independent, since Being cannot differentiate itself, and there will be nothing to external to Being to differentiate Being, Being will not be differentiated. If that one Being is differentiated into species, it will be differentiated by another being, and thus will not remain independent, for it would be dependent upon an external genus. The latter option would be absurd because there are no beings independent of the genus of Being. Thus, Being will either remain independent, and undifferentiated, or it will be differentiated, yet not independent. Of course, both options appear problematic.

¹⁷ Examples are not hard to find. The whole tradition of British Empiricism commits the error, as well as its many reincarnations, from Ernst Mach to early Wittgenstein and the logical positivists. If my argument is correct, there may be good reason why the position consistently re-occurs.

¹⁸ Ernst Cassirer, *Substance and Function*, Trans. William Curtus Swaby and Marie Swaby (NY: Dover Pub.,1953) makes this point succinctly in his critique of modern philosophy.

¹⁹ On this model, the universal, and thinking more generally, becomes a function of the personality of the thinker. Accordingly, the universal is always 'for someone'.

²⁰ Metaphor, from Greek, is the difference that is “carried over”.

²¹ Hannah Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, Ed. Mary McCarthy (Orlando: Mariner Books, 1981), 103.

²² Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, 103.

²³ Note that we are providing the paradoxical context in which Russell’s paradox is located. This context does not allow us to take Russell’s solution to that paradox seriously, for Russell rejects the very assumption that must be in place in order to take the question concerning the being of the concept seriously: self-predication.

²⁴ For example, ‘animal’ is not an animal. Any a posteriori kind, insofar as it is spatio-temporal, or merely temporal, is not self-predicative. Time and space, as the form of the a posteriori, do not appear to be self-predicative. Time is not a time and space is not a space. If time and space constitute the form of whatever is a posteriori, we should expect that the a posteriori to exclude self-predication. Moreover, here we have examples of possible a priori concepts that do not seem to be self-predicative: time and space. In Hegelian language, they are ‘indifferent to self-predication’.

²⁵ Still, this problem could be repeated at a lower level as well. If we consider the member as the whole member, and not just as a member of a larger whole, we can generate the same regress that applies at the highest level. Plato already recognized this in his *Parmenides*.

²⁶ Insofar as Plato’s problem of participation is a problem concerning the possibility of truth, we cannot with any certainty know how truth is possible without a solution to the problem of participation.

Bibliography

Arendt, Hannah. *The Life of the Mind*. ed. Mary McCarthy. Orlando: Mariner Books, 1981.

Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. Translated by Joe Sachs. Santa Fe: Green Lion Press, 2002.

Augustine. *On Free Choice of the Will*. Hackett Pub., 1993.

Barnes, Jonathan. *Early Greek Philosophy*. Penguin Books, 2001.

Bordignon, Michela. "Contradiction or not-contradiction? This is the problem." Edited by Andreas Arndt, Myriam Gerhard and Jure Zovko. Akademie Verlag, (163), (2013): 163-171.

Brandom, Robert. "Sketch of a Program for a Critical Reading of Hegel: Comparing Empirical and Logical Concepts", German Idealism and Contemporary Analytic Philosophy. Edited by Karl Ameriks. Berlin De Gruyter, (2005): 131-161.

Brient, Elizabeth. The Immanence of the Infinite. Catholic University of America Press, 2002.

Burbidge, John. "Concept and Time in Hegel." Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review 12, (1973): 403-422.

Cassirer, Ernst. Substance and Function. Translated by William Curtus Swaby and Marie Swaby. NY: Dover Pub., 1953.

Collingwood. An Essay on Philosophical Method. Oxford University Press, 2008.

De Boer, Karin. "Hegel's Account of Contradiction in the Science of Logic Reconsidered." Journal of the History of Philosophy vol. 48, no. 3. (2010): 345-374.

De Laurentiis, Allegra. "On Hegel's Concept of Thinking." Societas Rationis: Festschrift für Burkhard Tuschling zum 65. Geburtstag. Edited by Dieter Huening, Gideon Stiening, Ulrich Vogel: 263-285.

Descartes. Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies. Edited by John Cottingham. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Foster, M.B. "Christian Theology and Modern Science of Nature (I)". Mind XLIV, (1935): 439-466.

Foster, M.B. "Christian Theology and Modern Science of Nature (II)". Mind Vol. 45, No. 177 (1936): 1-27.

Foster, M.B. "The Christian Doctrine of Creation and the Rise of Modern Science". Mind Vol. 43, No. 172 (1934): 446-468.

Halper, Edward. "The Origin of Aristotle's Metaphysical Aporiai" Apeiron, 21 (1988): 1-27.

Halper, Edward. "The Origin of Aristotle's Metaphysical Aporiai" Apeiron, 21 (1988): 1-27.

Halper, Edward. "Hegel and the Problem of the Differentia" In Form and Reason, 197-208. Albany: State University of New York, 1993.

Haas, Andrew. Hegel and the Problem of Multiplicity. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2000.

Hawking, Stephen. The Grand Design. Bantam, 2011.

Hegel, G.W.F. Science of Logic. Translated by A.V. Miller. Amherst: Humanity Books, 1969.

- . Wissenschaft der Logik II. Frankfurt Am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986.
- . Hegel's Logic. Translated by William Wallace. NY: Oxford UP, 1975.
- Heidegger, Martin. Being and Time. Translated by John Marcquarrie and Edward Robinson. NY: Harper Collins Pub, 1962.
- Heidegger, "Language" In Poetry, Language, Thought. Translated by Albert Hofstadter. Harper UP., 1975.
- . Feldweg. <http://pdfcast.org/pdf/heidegger-feldweg>.
- . The Concept of Time. Wiley Blackwell Pub., 1992.
- Heisenberg, Werner. Physics and Philosophy. The Revolution in Modern Science. NY: Harper Collins Pub., 2007.
- Henrich, Dieter. Hegel Im Kontext. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971.
- Hoesle, Vittorio. Hegels System. Der Idealismus der Subjektivität und das Problem der Intersubjektivitaet. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1987.
- Hume, David. An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Hackett Pub., 1993.
- Husserl, Edmund. Shorter Logical Investigations. Translated by J.N. Findlay. Edited by Dermot Moran. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Iber, C. "Hegel's Konzeption des Begriffs" in G.W.F. Hegel: Wissenschaft der Logik, 181-201. Edited by A.F. Koch and F. Schick. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002.
- Ioannis, D. Trisokkas. "Hegel on the particular in the "Science of Logic"", Owl of Minerva 43(1-2), (2011-2012): 1-40.
- . "The Speculative Logical Theory of Universality". Owl of Minerva 40 (2), (2009): 141-172.
- . Pyrrhonian Skepticism and Hegel's Theory of Judgment: A Treatise on the Possibility of Scientific Inquiry, Boston and Leiden Pub., 2012.
- Kant, Immanuel. Critique of Pure Reason. Translated by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood. Edited by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.
- Mann, Gottfried, Zum Begriff des Einzelnen, des Ich, und des Individuellen bei Hegel.
- Druckerei Winter, Heidelberg. Referent: Karl Jaspers, (Doktorarbeit).
- Martin, Christian Georg. Ontologie der Selbstbestimmung, Eine operationale Rekonstruktion von Hegels "Wissenschaft der Logik. Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2012.

- Maybe, Julie. *Picturing Hegel: An Illustrated Guide to Hegel's Encyclopaedia Logic*. Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2009.
- McTaggart, John. *A Commentary on Hegel's Logic*. Cambridge University Press 1910, London: Fetter Lange, 194.
- Mill, John Stuart. *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive*. BiblioBazaar, 2009.
- Nishitani, Keiji. *Religion and Nothingness*. University of California Press, 1983.
- Owens, Joseph. "Common Nature: A Point of Comparison Between Thomistic and Scotistic Metaphysics", *Medieval Studies* 19, (1957): 1-14.
- Pippin, Robert B. *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness*. New York, NY University Press: 1989.
- Plato, Parmenides. Translated by Albert Keith Whitaker. Focus Philosophical Library, 1996.
- Plotinus. *Enneads*. Loeb Classical Library. Translated by A. H. Armstrong. Harvard UP, 1988.
- Priest, Graham. *Beyond True and False*. Aeon Magazine, <http://aeon.co/magazine/world-views/logic-of-buddhist-philosophy/>, 2014.
- Schaefer, Alfred. *Der Nihilismus in Hegel's Logik Kommentar und Kritik zu Hegel's Wissenschaft der Logik*. Berlin Verlag Arno Spitz GmbH, Berlin, 1992.
- Schelling, F.W.J. *On the History of Modern Philosophy*. Translated by Andrew Bowie. Edited by Raymond Geuss. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994.
- Schick, F. *Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik—metaphysische Letztbegründung oder Theorie logischer Formen?*. Freiburg/München: Karl Alber, 2002.
- Spinoza, *Ethics in The Complete Works*, Translated by Samuel Shirley. Hackett Pub., 2002.
- Stern, Robert. *Hegel, Kant, and the Structure of the Object*. NY: Routledge, 1990.
- Vlastos, Gregory. "The Third Man Argument in Plato's Parmenides" In *Philosophical Review*, LXIII, (1954): 319-349.
- Winfield, Richard Dien. *Hegel's Science of Logic, A Critical Rethinking in Thirty Lectures*. Plymouth, UK: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2012.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus*. Translated by C. K. Ogden. Dover Publications, 1998.
- Woody, J. Melvin. *Freedom's Embrace*. Penn State University Press, 2007.