

Towards a Moderate Metaphysical Interpretation of Hegel: Lucy Allais' Interpretation of Kant's Critical Idealism and Its Relevance to Contemporary Hegel Scholarship

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Abstract

Divergent readings of G. W. F. Hegel's work have proliferated over recent decades, alternating between the two extremes of deflationary or metaphysical interpretations. This paper seeks to bridge the divide between these incompatible perspectives. On the one hand, deflationary views reduce Hegel's system to an epistemological methodology that makes no metaphysical claims. On the other hand, metaphysical views claim that Hegel develops an ontology from Kant's philosophy. Interestingly, an analogous divide exists among scholarship of Kant's critical idealism which Lucy Allais' moderate metaphysical interpretation addresses directly. As such, I aim to adapt Allais' interpretation of Kant to help resolve the anarchy that permeates studies of Hegel. First, I outline the deflationary and metaphysical readings of Kant; the incompleteness of the former and the inconsistency of the latter; and present Allais' moderate metaphysical interpretation as a synthesis of these views which combines their respective advantages. I then outline an analogous divide among Hegel interpretations to uncover an implicit reading of Kant that

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dominates Hegel scholarship, leading towards a new typology of Kant-Hegel scholarship. This analysis foregrounds my adaptation of Allais' approach to Hegel's case, allowing me to sketch a tentative, moderate metaphysical interpretation of Hegel's philosophy.

§ 0. Introduction

Interpretations of G. W. F. Hegel's theoretical philosophy are as extensive and varied as schools of thought in contemporary English-speaking academia. Among these contested interpretations of Hegel's theoretical philosophy, I discern two extremes: deflationary and metaphysical interpretations. The deflationary interpretation reduces Hegel's system to an epistemological methodology, which makes no claims that transcend the limits of possible human experience. Comparatively, the metaphysical view of Hegel's work posits that Hegel develops a post-critical ontology—that is, he develops a metaphysical system which builds upon and overcomes the impasses of Kant's critical idealism.² Due to Hegel's considerable output, readings of his work necessarily focus on particular texts (for example, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* [1807/2018]) rather than his oeuvre as a whole.³ This partiality presents a problem for any survey seeking to adequately organise these disparate interpretations. A more fine-tuned approach is thus required.

A similar division between deflationary and metaphysical interpretations persists among scholars of Kant's transcendental idealism.⁴ Here one should not forget that Kant's critical philosophy is of central significance to Hegel since his approach

² It should be mentioned that the deflationary approach can already be observed in attempts to bridge Kant and Hegel through a “category theory” (*Kategorienlehre*) among the Marburg School of Neo-Kantianism (Ollig, H-L (1979) *Der Neukantianismus*, Sammlung Metzler, 111-118.). However, this historical period (i.e., from Hermann Cohen's publication of *Kant's Theorie der Erfahrung* (Kant's Theory of Experience) in 1871 to Ernst Cassirer's death in 1945) is beyond the scope of the present paper, which has the ambition to address unresolved issues in contemporary Anglophone scholarship. Be that as it may, I hope that the problems addressed here have implications for other periods of Kant-Hegel scholarship. Here, I take “deflationary” and “metaphysical” interpretations to only refer to tendencies in 20th- and 21st- century English-speaking scholarship. The metaphysical approach has been called “traditionalism”—specifically, the view that Hegel wanted to go beyond Kant's limits to experience—which has its roots in the work of Charles Taylor (Taylor, Charles (1975) *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139171465>) and derives from an emphasis on Hegel's notion of “Spirit” (*Geist*). Similarly, the deflationary interpretation has been referred to as “nontraditionalism”—that is, the view that Hegel sought to ‘eliminate’ the limits of experience ‘from within’ Kant's critical project. I am particularly interested in the “non-metaphysical” current within “nontraditionalism”, which has its recent origin in the work of Klaus Hartmann. This latter interpretation is popular among contemporary analytic and pragmatist philosophers who seek to ‘reconstruct Hegel's theoretical philosophy in non-metaphysical terms, setting aside those Hegelian aspirations which do not fit the mould.’ (Kreines, James (2006) ‘Hegel's Metaphysics: Changing the Debate’, *Philosophical Compass* 1, 466-468. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-9991.2006.00033.x>)

³ Hegel, G W F (1807/2018) *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Terry Pinkard, trans, Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139050494>

⁴ By transcendental idealism, Kant understands that objects external to us have empirical reality, but they are also transcendently ideal, i.e., they are ‘nothing as soon as we leave out the condition of the possibility of all experience and take it as something that grounds the things in themselves.’ (Kant, I (1781/1998) *Critique of Pure Reason*, Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, trans, Cambridge University Press, A28/B44. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511804649>)

attempts to systematise transcendental idealism while eliminating what he considered to be its problematic dualisms.⁵ Put simply, Kant's primary aim was to argue that knowledge claims must be restricted to the bounds of possible experience if they are to remain valid, for theoretical claims beyond these limits lead to irresolvable paradoxes. Rather than the broader context of this project, readings of Kant are generally divided over the more specific issue of how to best characterise the distinction between appearances and things.⁶ The deflationary interpretation rejects the view that Kant's distinction between the sensible world of appearances and the non-sensible world (or the *noumenal* realm—that is, what is not given in any possible experience) is ontological. Instead, they posit that Kant's distinction is either purely methodological or epistemological. Meanwhile, metaphysical interpreters argue that Kant's critical idealism asserts the existence of non-sensible, non-spatio-temporal things which can be only accessed through reflection.⁷

Both of these approaches have significant limitations that fail to capture Kant's enterprise as a whole. Briefly put, the deflationary view minimises the metaphysical commitments implicit in Kant's notion of the thing-in-itself as a source of sensory content irreducible to the subject. Conversely, the metaphysical interpretation overemphasises the role of things-in-themselves—in particular, by claiming that they have a causal relationship with our senses—which leads to a neglect of Kant's central (epistemological) concerns in the *Critique* and often proves inconsistent with the limits he places on knowledge claims. These limits are central to Kant's project, for he does not think the validity of knowledge can be guaranteed without restricting our claims to the bounds of possible experience. The careful exegete thus demands a middle approach that adopts the advantages and avoids the limitations of each interpretive extreme while maintaining consistency.

Fortunately, Lucy Allais' moderate metaphysical interpretation (hereafter MMI) offers this balanced view. Put simply, Allais argues that, for Kant, *the things about which we know possess an independent existence that remains beyond our cognition; conversely, appearances are mind-dependent while being irreducible to mental entities*.⁸ This reading of Kant is advantageous due to its exhaustive treatment and convincing synthesis of the prevailing interpretations of Kant. To date, a comparable approach has yet to emerge in scholarship on Hegel's philosophy, which remains in a state of unresolved sectarianism. This predicament is perhaps due to the long-politicised character of Hegel's philosophy. Indeed, immediately following his death, the Left and Right Hegelians disagreed on the correct interpretation of his views regarding

⁵ Beiser, F (2002) *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781-1801*, Harvard University Press, 370. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvjghtq5>

⁶ Kant defines the term "appearance" [*Erscheinung*] as 'the undetermined object of an empirical intuition.' Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A20/B34.

⁷ For an excellent critical survey of the deflationary and metaphysical interpretations of Kant's transcendental idealism, see Ameriks, Karl (2017) 'Recent Work on Kant's Theoretical Philosophy', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 19, 1-11.

⁸ Allais, Lucy (2015) *Manifest Reality: Kant's Idealism & his Realism*, Oxford University Press, 9.

politically polarising concerns like the state and religion.⁹ But what is important for our purposes is that interpreters of Hegel often contrast him with undefended deflationary readings of Kant. Although this approach likely owes its source to the constraints demanded by academic writing, it has contributed to a lack of communication between the two spheres of scholarship.

To help remedy this situation, I propose to adapt Allais' MMI to our reading of Hegel to alleviate the limitations of both deflationary and metaphysical readings. It should be noted that this essay is, therefore, not a comparative study of Kant and Hegel. Rather, it seeks to demonstrate structural affinities between Kant and Hegel scholarship and thereby motivate the relevance of Allais' interpretive methodology for our understanding of Hegel. As such, this essay will not require a close study of Kant's and Hegel's writings but only their reception in English-speaking academia.¹⁰

To be sure, in § 1, I will briefly outline key features and authors of the deflationary and metaphysical readings of Kant. In § 2, I will summarise Allais' MMI as a compromise between these views, which proposes innovative strategies concerning Kant's understanding of intuition and his relational account of perception. I argue, accordingly, that Allais preserves the exegetical advantages of previous Kant interpretations (that is, his spirit in the deflationary and his letter in the metaphysical)¹¹ while avoiding the incompleteness of the deflationary interpretation and the inconsistency of the metaphysical interpretation. In § 3, I will present the analogous divide between Hegel interpretations that I draw from Karl Ameriks to argue that an implicit deflationary reading of Kant dominates scholarship on Hegel's philosophy.¹² To resolve the impasses of these interpretive tendencies, in § 4, I will sketch a tentative MMI of Hegel that is enriched by Allais' strategies. As will become clear, a unique feature of this MMI is its open-ended interpretive framework which expands and organises the diversity of specific Hegel interpretations.

⁹ Two Left Hegelians of particular note are Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Due to their massive posthumous political influence in the 20th century, Hegel's work often became associated with socialist politics and the fortunes of communism (for further detail, see Rockmore, Tom (2006) *In Kant's Wake: Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, Blackwell Publishing, 49-53). Additionally, Karl Popper wrote an influential text which propagated the idea that Hegel was an authoritarian thinker, whose worship of the state influenced 20th-century totalitarianisms (Popper, Karl (1971) *The Open Society and its Enemies* The High Tide of Prophecy: Hegel, Marx, and the Aftermath, Princeton University Press). A limitation of Popper's analysis is that it lacks an appreciation for Hegel's (albeit not unqualified) support for the Prussian Reform movement, which was a relatively progressive political force in its day. For some more balanced and historically sensitive accounts of Hegel's political views, see Beiser, Frederick (2005) *Hegel*, Routledge, 222-223; Losurdo, Domenico (2004) *Hegel and the Freedom of Moderns*, Marella Morris and Jon Morris trans, Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822385608>; and Pinkard, Terry (2000) *Hegel: A Biography*, Cambridge University Press, 418-494.

¹⁰ For examples of studies that engage in a comparative investigation of Kant and Hegel, see Huseyinzadegan, Dilek (2015) 'On Hegel's Radicalization of Kantian Dualisms: "The Debate between Kant and Hegel"', *Hegel-Jahrbuch* 1: 149-154. <https://doi.org/10.1515/hgjb-2015-0125>; and Ferrarin, Alfredo (2016) 'Reason in Kant and Hegel', *Kant Yearbook* 8: 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1515/kantyb-2016-0001>

¹¹ Here I mean to say that the centrality of epistemological concerns in Kant's critical philosophy ("the spirit") is emphasised in the deflationary interpretations. On the other hand, the ontological assumptions implicit in Kant's written works ("the letter") are highlighted by the metaphysical interpreters.

¹² Ameriks, Karl (1992) 'Review Essays: Recent Work on Hegel: The Rehabilitation of an Epistemologist?' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 52, 177-202. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2107755>

§ 1. The deflationary and metaphysical interpretations of Kant's idealism

The interpretations of Kant's transcendental idealism fall between two extremes: the deflationary interpretation and the metaphysical interpretation.¹³

As the reader will recall, the deflationary interpretation posits that Kant's distinction is methodological or epistemological. Writers, such as Peter Strawson,¹⁴ praise Kant's aim to establish limits to experience but reject Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism. Though Strawson reignited interest among Anglophone scholars in Kant's work, there has been a proliferation of interpretations since him. L. W. Beck, Gerold Prauss, H. E. Allison, and Rae Langton interpret the noumenon-phenomenon distinction (drawn originally by Kant) as two perspectives of a single thing.¹⁵ However, these theorists diverge in their interpretation of what exactly distinguishes Kant's conception of appearances and things-in-themselves: Langton argues that it is distinct properties; Beck holds different explanations to be central—that is, the causal and empirical framework of natural science describes appearances, whereas things cannot be described by natural scientific explanations; and Allison and Prauss believe the distinction relies upon different perspectives.¹⁶ To be more specific: Allison holds that appearances and things in themselves are two different ways of considering an (ontologically) singular thing, and thus the distinction is purely epistemic.¹⁷ By contrast, though Langton agrees that there is one world, she holds that the distinction is characterised by the unknowable, intrinsic properties of things as opposed to the knowable, extrinsic/relational properties of appearances.¹⁸ Consequently, Allison provides a more idealist reading of the distinction as mind-independent/mind-dependent, whereas Langton posits a more realist reading of the distinction as the difference of properties belonging to the thing. Despite these divergences, all aforementioned scholars reject the view that Kant made metaphysical claims—that is, that he made claims about a mind-independent reality beyond the limits of any possible experience.

¹³ I take this distinction from Lucy Allais' work, *Manifest Reality*. Frederick Beiser makes a related, yet broader, distinction between subjectivist and objectivist interpretations of Kant (Beiser, *German Idealism*, 17-19.). However, I avoid using this dichotomy to guide my review of the secondary literature on Kant for two reasons. First, Beiser's distinction encompasses interpretations of Kant's general philosophy, whereas I only survey interpretations of Kant's critical idealism. Second, Beiser's distinction considers work such as Neo-Kantian interpretations, whereas I only consider secondary literature situated in contemporary debates in Anglophone Hegel scholarship.

¹⁴ Strawson, Peter (1966/2019) *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429447075>

¹⁵ "Phenomena" denote appearances that are cognised through our sensibility and categories (e.g., substance and causation), whereas "noumena" denote knowledge of an object insofar as it exists independently of appearances. Beck, Lewis W (1960) *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, University of Chicago Press; Prauss, Gerold (1971) *Erscheinung bei Kant: Ein Problem der "Kritik der reinen Vernunft"*, De Gruyter; Allison, Henry E (2004) *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense, Revised and Enlarged Edition*, Yale University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1cc2kjc>; Langton, Rae (2001) *Kantian Humility: Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves*, Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/0199243174.001.0001>

¹⁶ Beiser, *German Idealism*, 607.

¹⁷ Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 16.

¹⁸ Langton, *Kantian Humility*, 12-13.

While Kant is clearly concerned with epistemology, a problem arises for the deflationary interpretation when considering his opposition to Berkeleyan idealism,¹⁹ which is apparent in his reaction to the Göttingen Review, an influential journal which disseminated philosophical, scientific, and literary scholarship in the late 18th century. One of its reviews of his key work, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), claimed that transcendental idealism is merely a variation of Berkeley's idealism, the view that we perceive only ideas which are modifications of ourselves. For example, when I observe the colours of a book before me, Berkeley believes that these colours are perceptions in my mind. To diffuse these criticisms, Kant wrote the Refutation of Idealism for the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787/2007).²⁰ Briefly put, he argues that objects are not simply products of our perception but exist independently of how they appear to us—that is, he argues that the possibility of objective experience presupposes an external world.²¹ Allais supports this view that Kant does not reduce objectivity to perceptions, writing that Kant rejects the idealist approach 'that sees the immediate objects of perception as mental items on the basis of which external objects are inferred.'²² According to this reading, Kant cannot be identified with any type of psychologism which aims to reduce the totality of appearances to cognitions in the mind, as has become popular among cognitive scientist interpretations of his work.²³ Seen in this light, deflationary interpretations obfuscate Kant's efforts to distinguish himself from idealisms that reject or are sceptical of the existence of a mind-independent reality. Alternatively, deflationary interpretations have the benefit of providing a clear explanation of the epistemological aspects of Kant's idealism. The problem nonetheless remains that these readings provide an incomplete picture of his general philosophy—that is, while they correctly emphasise Kant's central focus on the status of knowledge, they fail to grasp his underlying realist commitments.

Comparatively, the metaphysical interpretation holds that the thing–appearance distinction indicates the existence of non-sensible, non-spatio-temporal things which are only accessed via the intellect. This interpretation is represented by authors including M. S. Gram, who argues that Kant holds that things exist independently of

¹⁹ George Berkeley was an Irish philosopher who promoted the doctrine of immaterialism: the view that objects only exist as perceptions, which is summarised by his expression "*esse est percipi*" (to be is to be perceived; Berkeley, George (1710/1972) *The Principles of Human Knowledge with Other Writings*, G J Warnock ed., William Collins Sons.). 61421980348

²⁰ Beiser, *German Idealism*, 88-91.

²¹ It is beyond the scope of this essay to determine whether Kant's critique of Berkeley is cogent, for I merely wish to indicate his opposition to such a position. For further details of this argument, see Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B275-276.

²² Allais, *Manifest Reality*, 9.

²³ Although these interpretations may have significance to contemporary science, care should be taken in separating the historical Kant and the contemporary Kant. For a critical analysis of the psychological interpretation of Kant's notion of the transcendental, see Beiser, *German Idealism*, 166-169. Of course, this is not to say that discourse between these fields is not significant unto itself. I concede to the view that there are potential insights made available through engaging with contemporary interpretations of Kant. And so, one should not merely segregate historical and contemporary interpretations of Kant. It is nonetheless important to hold this distinction in mind when engaging in these discussions, as one may unintentionally project their own attitudes and perspectives onto Kant if they are not adequately sensitive to his historical and philosophical context (I thank the anonymous referee who pointed out this subtlety to me).

our real experience because if we have knowledge of something, then we must be affected by it.²⁴ Similarly, R. E. Aquila criticises Allison's two-aspect view and argues that things must be ontologically distinct from appearances if things-in-themselves are not in space or time—that is, given in our experience of the natural world.²⁵ Regardless of the differences among the metaphysical interpreters, they agree that Kant makes irreducibly metaphysical claims about the nature of things-in-themselves which remain fundamental to the success (or failure) of his epistemology.

Analogous difficulties arise for the metaphysical interpretation of Kant. Recall that this interpretation claims that things-in-themselves possess an existence which is distinct from the objects of knowledge. From this, we can see that this reading violates the limits which Kant imposed on himself in his critical idealism. Indeed, critical idealism aims to guarantee the validity of our knowledge claims, and Kant holds that such a guarantee is possible only if we restrict those claims to what may be given in any possible experience.²⁶ Kant thus calls the existence of something that is independent of any possible experience the thing-in-itself (*Ding an sich*). The necessity for this concept arises because Kant assumes that appearances are purely relational; however, if we were to assume only appearances exist, each appearance would refer to another, leading to an infinite regression of relations. To remain consistent, therefore, he concludes that something other than appearances must act to ground them.²⁷ Accordingly, if, as the metaphysical interpreters claim, Kant holds the view that there is an existence of non-sensible, non-spatiotemporal entities, then the positing of things-in-themselves does not actually commit Kant to an existing feature of reality.²⁸ Rather than the appearances that compose empirical reality presenting a substantial frame of reference, they appear as a veil of illusion superimposed over some more substantial reality. For this reason, the metaphysical interpretation proves equally unsatisfactory as the deflationary interpretation because it ultimately contradicts the spirit behind Kant's critical philosophy—that is, his aim to provide an epistemological account of human experience.²⁹

²⁴ Gram, Moltke S (1975) 'The Myth of Double Affection', in *Reflections on Kant's Philosophy*, William H. Werkmeister, ed, University Press of Florida.

²⁵ Aquila, Richard E (1979) 'Things in Themselves and Appearances: Intentionality and Reality in Kant', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 61, 293-308. <https://doi.org/10.1515/agph.1979.61.3.293>

²⁶ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A20/B33.

²⁷ Allais, *Manifest Reality*, 258.

²⁸ Allais, *Manifest Reality*, 10. By "reality" I simply mean that which exists independently of any concrete instance of empirical observation. E.g., Kant would hold that if I look at my bookshelf, its spatio-temporal features are structured by my cognition; however, he would reject the potential inference that the bookshelf would cease to exist if I looked away from it to gaze out my window.

²⁹ This has been an ongoing issue within Kant studies for some time. Indeed, several authors have attempted to address this gap before Allais (see, e.g., Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*; Ameriks, Karl (2000) *Kant's Theory of Mind: An Analysis of the Paralogisms of Pure Reason*, Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/0198238975.001.0001>; Palmquist, Stephen (1993) *Kant's System of Perspectives: An architectonic interpretation of the Critical Philosophy*, University Press of America; McDowell, John (1996) *Mind and World: With a New Introduction by the Author*, Harvard University Press, <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674417892>). However, in contrast to Allais' interpretation, these texts still tend to reproduce predominantly metaphysical or epistemological readings of Kant.

§ 2. Allais' moderate metaphysical interpretation of Kant

In *Manifest Reality* (2015), Allais explicates her MMI of Kant's epistemology in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.³⁰ This compromise appears as the thesis that Kant maintained: that things-in-themselves possess an existence independent of our cognitive knowledge and that appearances are mind-dependent while not being merely intellectual entities.³¹ The MMI is thus neatly summarised by three key propositions:

- (1) Kant considers appearances and things-in-themselves as aspects of the same things.
- (2) Kant holds there to be an aspect of reality which we cannot cognise.
- (3) Kant believes that the mind-dependent objects of our cognition are grounded by this uncognisable reality.³²

The MMI therefore supports the claim of the metaphysical interpretation that there are some metaphysical claims in Kant's work—that is, there is an aspect of reality independent of our cognition. Yet it also accords with arguments from the two-aspect view (the most widespread deflationary interpretation).³³ As we have already seen in § 1, there are significant drawbacks to both interpretations. Now we shall see how Allais overcomes these issues.

Allais' MMI approach combines the advantages of the deflationary and metaphysical positions while parrying the incompleteness of the former and the inconsistency of the latter. Allais clarifies this synthesis in stating that '[on] my reading, Kant's

³⁰ This book is the culmination of a long-term study of Kant's work (Allais, Lucy (2004) 'Kant's One World', *The British Journal for the History of Philosophy* **12**, 655-684. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0960878042000279314>; (2006) 'Intrinsic Natures: A Critique of Langton on Kant', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* **73**, 144-169. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1933-1592.2006.tb00608.x>; (2007) 'Kant's Idealism and the Secondary Quality Analogy', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* **45**, 459-484. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hph.2007.0050>; (2009) 'Kant, Non-conceptual Content, and the Representation of Space', *Journal for the History of Philosophy* **47**, 383-413. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hph.0.0134>; (2010a) 'Transcendental Idealism and Metaphysics: Kant's commitment to things as they are in themselves', *Kantian Yearbook* **2**, 1-31. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110222937.1>; and (2010b) 'Kant's argument for Transcendental Idealism in the Transcendental Aesthetic', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* **110**, 47-75. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9264.2010.00279.x>). However, I will only refer to *Manifest Reality* because it is the most complete expression of her MMI.

³¹ Allais, *Manifest Reality*, 9.

³² Allais, *Manifest Reality*, 19.

³³ The two-aspect view is summarised by Allison, who writes that his 'epistemologically based understanding of transcendental idealism requires that the transcendental distinction between appearances and things in themselves be understood as holding between two ways of *considering* things (as they appear and as they are in themselves) rather than as, on the more traditional reading, between two ontologically distinct sets of entities (appearances and things in themselves)." *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 16. For a critique of the two-aspect reading, see Allais, Lucy (2015) 'Against Deflationary Interpretations', in *Manifest Reality*, 77-97.

distinction is based on epistemological considerations, and has epistemological consequences,' as in the deflationary interpretation; she writes that 'it also involves metaphysical claims about what exists and about the mind-dependence of the aspect of reality of which we can have knowledge,' as in the metaphysical interpretation. Hence, Kant's view is a 'careful combination of realism and idealism.'³⁴ The MMI is advantageous because it does not overstep the bounds of critical philosophy by claiming knowledge independent of experience, as present in the metaphysical interpretation. This is a serious problem to avoid, given that a key motivation for Kant's critical idealism was to guarantee the validity of cognition by restricting knowledge claims to what can be an object of possible experience.³⁵ Nor does the MMI provide an incomplete presentation of Kant as a purely epistemological thinker, as in the deflationary interpretation. Such a view is incomplete because it fails to reckon with Kant's broader philosophical goals of establishing an attenuated variety of realism—that is, to demonstrate the 'empirical reality of the external world.'³⁶ Thus, if the thing-in-itself is merely taken as a problematic or heuristic concept, it undermines his conviction in an independent reality, without which 'there would follow the absurd proposition that there is an appearance without anything that appears.'³⁷ For Kant, while we cannot *know* about this independent reality in any determinate way, that certainly does not preclude the *thinking* of it.

This synthesis of the prevailing tendencies of Kant interpretation leads to two unique features of the MMI:

- (A) Allais emphasises the central role of intuition (*Anschauung*) as our acquaintance with objects in Kant's epistemology. By acquaintance, Allais means 'a relation to an object that guarantees the existence of the object and which individuates a specific particular.'³⁸
- (B) Allais recognises that our interpretation of Kant is dependent upon the assumptions about the nature of perception that we bring to a given reading.

To resolve point (B) regarding the nature of perception in Kant, the MMI adopts a direct realist or relational account. According to Allais, this account of perception proposes that 'restricting what is empirically real to what can feature in a possible perception is not restricting it to what exists in the mind, but instead to what can be directly or immediately presented to minds like ours.'³⁹ In the context of Kant's epistemological terminology, this relational approach permits a more subtle

³⁴ Allais, *Manifest Reality*, 11.

³⁵ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxxvi, B26.

³⁶ Beiser, *German Idealism*, 24.

³⁷ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxxvi-Bxxvii. Also, see Ameriks, K (2003) *Interpreting Kant's Critiques*, Oxford University Press, 33-35. <https://doi.org/10.1093/0199247315.001.0001>

³⁸ Allais, *Manifest Reality*, 14.

³⁹ Allais, *Manifest Reality*, 13.

translation of the term *Vorstellung*, which is often translated as “representation” or “idea”. In a relational approach, it may be better translated as “presentation”. That is, [rather] than saying that appearances are things which exist only in minds...Kant can be read as saying that what counts as part of the empirically real world is only what can be presented to us in (relational) perceptual experience.⁴⁰ Allais’ relational approach has significant consequences for our appreciation of the thing–appearance distinction, which divides interpretations in Kant scholarship.⁴¹ According to this reading, appearances are not ‘just perceptible things,’ but rather ‘essentially perceptible or *essentially* manifestable.’⁴² Empirical reality is thus restricted to what is presentable to our consciousness, against the metaphysical interpreters. Yet such a position does not necessitate that presentations are reducible to something that exists in the mind, against the deflationary interpretations.

Another consequence of the direct realist account of the nature of perception is its centring of the role of intuition in Kant’s epistemology. While concepts allow us to generalise our immediate knowledge of the world, cognition requires that we are also acquainted with objects. Allais understands that what is specific to intuition is that it supplies us with objects (that is, intuition is equivalent to our acquaintance with objects). This view goes against an interpretive tendency in recent Kant studies that tends to identify or obscure the distinction between our sensibility (our ability to be affected by things) and intuition.⁴³ Moreover, Allais’ account accords with Kant’s argument that we cannot cognise transcendent ideas such as God, because we can never be acquainted with such entities. And so, the “intuition as acquaintance” aspect of Allais’ argument reflects the deflationary aspect of her interpretation. It indicates, further, how the MMI strikes a fine balance between the two extremes while remaining faithful to the spirit and letter of Kant’s work.

In short, the success of the MMI of Kant demonstrates how useful resolving interpretive differences can be in driving philosophical research. While I acknowledge that the interpreting of Kant’s and Hegel’s idealisms remain distinct endeavours, I will show that Allais’ strategies can be creatively adapted to resolve analogous problems in scholarship on Hegel’s philosophy. However, before this solution is investigated, we must first appreciate the structurally similar but contentually distinct secondary literature on Hegel.

§ 3. Deflationary and Metaphysical Readings of Hegel’s Absolute Idealism

⁴⁰ Allais, *Manifest Reality*, 13.

⁴¹ See Ameriks, ‘Recent Work on Kant’s Theoretical Philosophy’, 1–11.

⁴² Allais, *Manifest Reality*, 13.

⁴³ E.g., Strawson writes that ‘we can suppose that the “affecting” objects upon the existence of which – since our intuition is “sensible” – our awareness of particular items non-logically or causally depends are simply those spatially and temporally ordered items themselves to which we apply general concepts.’ (*The Bounds of Sense*, 45.) Similarly, Jonathan Bennett asserts: ‘For Kant, an intuition is just a sensory state.’ (Bennett, Jonathan (1966) *Kant’s Analytic*, Cambridge University Press, 54. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511554506>)

A unique difficulty of surveying the secondary literature on Hegel, in contrast to Kant, is the lack of a clear dichotomy between approaches. This problem is arguably due to the long and controversial history of Hegel's reception. Whether it be the disagreements between the Left and Right Hegelians following his death; the synthesis of Hegel's work with Freud by the Frankfurt School; the renewed appreciation of Hegel's theoretical and practical philosophy in Analytic philosophy; or the revival of studies of Hegel among Lacanian psychoanalysts, Hegel's philosophy appears less as an individual's coherent body of thought and more like a philosopher's Rorschach test. To organise these varying tendencies, my survey of the secondary literature adopts Allais' distinction between the deflationary and the metaphysical interpretations of Kant.

This section will first briefly discuss Terry Pinkard, Robert Pippin, and Tom Rockmore as exemplars of the deflationary interpretation. Second, it will delineate the metaphysical interpretations of Sally Sedgwick, Stephen Houlgate, and Frederick Beiser. From both these tendencies, I will draw out their shared deflationary reading of Kant regardless of whether they affirm his theoretical continuity or discontinuity with Hegel. Following this, I will highlight Slavoj Žižek as a unique interpreter who at different times claims both deflated and metaphysical readings of Kant in contrast to Hegel, despite retaining a discontinuous view of their relationship. These discussions will finally lead to a typology of Kant-Hegel studies which highlights the tendency among Hegel interpreters to understand Kant in an exclusively deflationary or metaphysical way. Using this survey of the literature will motivate the concluding argument in § 4: that a moderate metaphysical interpretation of Kant can aid in the resolution of the differing readings of Hegel.

According to this classification, I consider deflationary interpretations of Hegel as approaches that reduce his theoretical philosophy to an epistemological enterprise. Frederick Beiser clarifies the contemporary impetus for the emergence of these deflationary interpretations. Indeed, he writes that 'since the Hegel renaissance of the 1970s, this scholarship has been under pressure to make its subject appear more respectable to contemporary analytic philosophy.' As a consequence, '[much] recent Hegel scholarship...has attempted to separate Hegel's "rational core" from his "mystical shell."' ⁴⁴ According to Beiser, examples of the 'mystical shell' are Hegel's Spinozistic metaphysics, his dialectical logic, and his *Naturphilosophie*. On the other hand, examples of the 'rational core' are the system of categories, Hegel's adherence to Kant's critical project, and 'related arguments.'⁴⁵ The epistemological reading of Hegel as a category thinker is represented by Terry Pinkard, who argues that Hegel aims to determine 'how it could even be possible to think coherently about some basic category.'⁴⁶ Similarly, Robert Pippin argues that Hegel adheres to and expands Kant's critical project by providing transcendental arguments without the problematic notion of the thing-in-itself.⁴⁷ Finally, Tom Rockmore exemplifies a

⁴⁴ Beiser, *German Idealism*, 508.

⁴⁵ Beiser, *German Idealism*, 508.

⁴⁶ Pinkard, Terry (1988) *Hegel's Dialectic: The Explanation of Possibility*, Temple University Press, 5.

⁴⁷ Ameriks, 'Recent Work on Hegel', 183.

broader strategy adopted by deflationary interpretations, arguing that Hegel is concerned with justifying the claim to know absolutely while still rejecting foundationalism.⁴⁸ Hegel is thus an epistemologist who wants to provide a consistent justification for the certainty of our knowledge claims. This reading leads to the conclusion that Hegel's idealism is essentially a form of pragmatism, a view notably proposed by Robert Brandom.⁴⁹

However, the inherent difficulty of separating the metaphysical and "rational" aspects of Hegel's thought undermines the strength of the deflationary interpretations. Beiser observes that Hegel's philosophy of nature—a metaphysics by any definition—arose from his desire to resolve the problem of knowledge in Kant.⁵⁰ What makes Hegel's philosophy unique is the way he introduces the epistemological issues of transcendental idealism into the very heart of standard metaphysical topics. For example, without taking sides in the debate prematurely, it is important to appreciate that Hegel recasts the notion of the absolute—a rather traditional metaphysical concept—by showing its interrelationship with our cognition, whose structure he derives from Kant, rather than statically opposing the absolute and cognition. He criticises, for example, 'the concept of logic [which] has hitherto rested on a separation, presupposed once and for all in ordinary consciousness, of the *content* of knowledge and its *form*.' ⁵¹ Therefore, the deflationary interpretation is an incomplete reading of Hegel's work, as we found in Kant's case. This is ultimately because, despite elucidating significant features of Hegel's epistemology, these readings fail to appreciate its inseparability from his metaphysical commitments.

In general, metaphysical interpretations of Hegel argue that his theoretical philosophy makes ontological claims. Such a view is represented by Sally Sedgwick, who believes that Hegel aims to overcome the inconsistencies in Kant's idealism. This line of thought holds that Kant's epistemology does not guarantee that the form of experience of the knowing subject reveals the reality of what we intuit through our senses and leads Sedgwick to a naturalist interpretation that understands the relationship between intuition and concepts as an organic whole.⁵² Unlike Sedgwick's naturalist reading, Stephen Houlgate provides a metaphysical interpretation that focusses on the conceptual aspects of Hegel's philosophy, reflected by his privileging of Hegel's work, *The Science of Logic* (1832/2010).⁵³ Houlgate contrasts his position to Pippin's deflationary reading, arguing that the structures of 'reflexivity' and 'concept' described in the *Logic* are not subjective

⁴⁸Rockmore, Tom (1986) *Hegel's Circular Epistemology*, Indiana University Press, 73. <https://doi.org/10.2979/HegelsCircularEpiste>

⁴⁹ Brandom, Robert (2019) *A Spirit of Trust: A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology*, Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvfjczmk>

⁵⁰ Beiser, *German Idealism*, 509.

⁵¹ Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 24. For a detailed analysis of this interconnection of the absolute and cognition, see Stern, Robert (2009) *Hegel's Metaphysics*, Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199239108.001.0001>

⁵² Sedgwick, Sally (2012) *Hegel's Critique of Kant: From Dichotomy to Identity*, Oxford University Press, 70, 136.

⁵³ Hegel, G W F (1832/2010) *The Science of Logic*, George di Giovanni, trans, Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9780511780240>

operations of self-reflexivity, as in Kant, but are ontological.⁵⁴ This reading thus rejects Pippin's claim that Hegel's *Logic* is indebted to Kant's view that the cognition of objects presupposes subjective activity that is 'apperceptive.'⁵⁵ Finally, as discussed above, Beiser criticises approaches that reduce Hegel to an epistemologist, despite acknowledging that 'post-Kantian philosophy arose from an internal critique of Kant.'⁵⁶ With that in mind, Beiser positions Hegel's absolute idealism as a 'revival' of metaphysics 'in the very sense prohibited by Kant and Fichte,' which resolves problems in Kant's idealism.⁵⁷ This contradicts those deflationary readings which deny Hegel made any positive metaphysical claims that break with Kant's critical idealism. Although Beiser aims to avoid the metaphysical and deflationary readings, he rejects the claim of Allais' MMI that Kant holds that there exist things that are more ontologically fundamental than appearances.⁵⁸ Additionally, Beiser holds that the dispute between the two-worlds view (metaphysical) and the two-aspects view (deflationary) is 'sterile and irresolvable.'⁵⁹ This position naturally contrasts with Allais' MMI, which aims to resolve the two interpretations. Therefore, Beiser views Kant from a more deflationary perspective than Allais.⁶⁰ And consequently, he affirms the discontinuity between Kant's critical idealism and Hegel's absolute idealism, seeing them as 'antithetical.'⁶¹

To summarise, all these metaphysical interpretations of Hegel view Kant through the deflationary perspective. Perhaps this is because the strategy bolsters a metaphysical view of Hegel by juxtaposing it with the epistemological aspects of Kant's work. Conversely, it could be that their centring of Hegel's metaphysics leads to a deeper contrast with Kant's own metaphysical claims, thereby undermining the possibility of a moderated interpretation of Kant on his own terms. Nonetheless, there is a clear tendency to minimise the diversity of secondary readings of Kant among Hegel interpreters. This not only results in an incomplete picture of the diversity of our contemporary understanding of Kant, but it also undermines the possibility of a comparative account of Kant and Hegel that grasps both their epistemological and metaphysical differences.

From the preceding discussion, we see that some variation of the deflationary interpretation of Kant is shared by both the metaphysical and deflationary interpreters of Hegel. By contrast, when we restrict ourselves to the scholarly context

⁵⁴ Houlgate, Stephen (2005) *Opening to Hegel's Logic: From Being to Infinity*, Purdue University Press, 137-143.

⁵⁵ Pippin, Robert B (1989) *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*, Cambridge University Press, 19-21. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511621109>. Kant understands (transcendental) "apperception" to be the unity of consciousness that is presupposed by unity of an individual's empirical experience (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A106-107).

⁵⁶ Beiser, *German Idealism*, 662.

⁵⁷ Beiser, *German Idealism*, 368-369.

⁵⁸ Beiser, *German Idealism*, 662.

⁵⁹ Beiser, *German Idealism*, 22.

⁶⁰ It is beyond this essay's scope to compare Allais' and Beiser's approaches. Although I cannot justify this argument here, I suggest that Beiser's reading is more faithful to the historical Kant, while Allais' is more internally consistent.

⁶¹ Beiser, *German Idealism*, 355.

of Kant interpretation, there is broad disagreement over the degree to which Kant made metaphysical claims. Whether interpreters argue that Hegel's thinking is continuous with Kant's by affirming the foundational role of transcendental conditions or apperception (the continuity thesis: hereafter CT) or discontinuous by emphasising Hegel's makes claims beyond Kant's critical limits (the discontinuity thesis: hereafter DT), they share the position that Kant's approach is essentially epistemological and hence does not make metaphysical claims. As a consequence, these readings of Hegel are limited in comparison to Allais' MMI of Kant. Yet there is at least one interesting exception to these readings.

Slavoj Žižek's interpretation presents a unique case that focusses on the transformation between Kant and Hegel, contrasting their work in two different ways. In *Less Than Nothing* (2012), Žižek argues that Kant's 'epistemological dialectics' is 'ontologised' by Hegel. In other words, the logical paradoxes that arise in Kant's treatment of the antinomies are extended to be immanent features of reality as such.⁶² However, in other instances, Žižek argues that 'Kant...only goes half-way in his destruction of metaphysics, still maintaining the reference to the Thing-in-itself as an external inaccessible entity...' and thus 'it is not that Hegel 'ontologises' Kant...it is Hegel who 'deontologizes' Kant, introducing a gap into the very texture of reality.'⁶³ To put it another way, for Žižek, Hegel's removal of the thing-in-itself results in a 'deontologization' of philosophy, as he considers it to be a metaphysical remanent within Kant's critical project. Adrian Johnston identifies this inconsistency in Žižek's work, arguing that the latter position is the more 'dialectical' of the two.⁶⁴ Regardless of the consistency of Žižek's positions, both affirm DT. Either Kant is an epistemologist who does not explicate the ontology implicit in his own work as does Hegel (Ž1), or Kant is an ontologist who does not see that his critical methodology already constitutes a radically modern 'de-ontologised' epistemology as does Hegel (Ž2). In summary, his conflicting positions are indicative of the deadlock that scholarship on Hegel's philosophy finds itself in. And so, as original as Žižek's position may be, it coincides with the predominant interpretive schemas that propose a radical discontinuity between Kant and Hegel. Although I concede that Žižek is unique in his argument (Ž2) where he positions Kant as the metaphysician and Hegel as the epistemologist. This contrasts with the tendency of the previous Hegel interpretations which view Kant through a deflationary lens.

In consideration of the above discussion, we have the following typology of interpretations of Hegel in relationship to the given author's reading of Kant:

⁶² As an example of one of Kant's antinomies, he argues that one can theoretically justify both the infinitude and finitude of the world. He thinks that this paradox arises because the world is not able to be an object of experience and thus such arguments cannot appeal to empirical evidence for verification (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A497-A498/B525-527).

⁶³ Žižek, Slavoj (2012) *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*, Verso, 40.

⁶⁴ Johnston, Adrian (2019) *A New German Idealism: Hegel, Žižek, and Dialectical Materialism*, Columbia University Press, 15-17.

	Deflationary Kant	Metaphysical Kant
Deflationary Hegel	Pippin, Pinkard, Rockmore, Brandom (CT)	Ž1 (DT)
Metaphysical Hegel	Sedgwick, Beiser, Houlgate, Johnston, Ž2 (DT)	Bertrand Russell (CT)

Table 1: Typology of Kant-Hegel Studies

As can be seen in Table 1, the bottom-right quadrant (Bertrand Russell) claims that both Kant and Hegel made metaphysical claims. Hence, they are continuous with traditional metaphysics, thereby supporting CT. Indeed, the Analytic movement, at least as it is often presented, arose as a reaction to classical philosophical approaches that lacked rigour.⁶⁵ The top-left quadrant (Pippin, Pinkard, Rockmore, Brandom) claims, although Hegel may go beyond Kant, that both philosophers are epistemologists, thus supporting CT. The top-right quadrant (Ž1) reads Kant as a metaphysician whose metaphysical assumptions are ironically eliminated by Hegel's move towards an immanent metaphysics, thereby supporting DT. The bottom-left quadrant (Sedgwick, Beiser, Johnston, Houlgate, Ž2) assumes the deflationary view of Kant and argues that Hegel radicalises critical idealism, thus supporting DT.

Although this table presents Kant-Hegel scholarship at a high level of abstraction, it clarifies the limited appreciation of Kant that results when his work is juxtaposed with Hegel's. This limiting effect suggests that the variety of Kant interpretations is diminished rather than enriched by the comparison. Now, recall my argument in § 2 that Kant's critical idealism is not adequately represented either by the deflationary or metaphysical interpretations but rather Allais' MMI. Here we can also observe that these interpretations of Hegel are limited by their one-sided views of his most significant predecessor. To resolve this impasse, I will now sketch a possible MMI of Hegel's work.

§ 4. Towards a moderate metaphysical interpretation of Hegel

A difficulty in adapting the MMI to Hegel is that his work reorganises and reinterprets Kant's terminology in ways distinct to Kant's intentions. This problem derives principally from Hegel's desire to unite the critical aspects of Kant's philosophy with the monism of Spinoza, resulting in a tendency to creatively adapt Kant's ideas to follow the spirit of his work rather than remain strictly to the letter of transcendental idealism.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Redding, Paul (2007) *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought*, Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511487620>

⁶⁶ Beiser, *German Idealism*, 351-352, 361-364.

This asymmetry between Kant's and Hegel's terminologies results in the need to use the strategies in Allais' reading of Kant to establish a MMI of Hegel, outlined in § 2. First, Allais emphasises that intuition is acquaintance in Kant's epistemology. Second, she asserts that any interpretation is conditioned by the reader's prior view of the nature of perception.

To appropriate Allais' second strategy (B), I claim that any interpretation of Hegel is conditioned by our prior assumptions about the nature of being. This claim becomes clearer when we consider that Hegel is an anti-foundationalist thinker. That is, at least in principle, he refuses to make a claim about the nature of being prior to the unfolding of his system. For example, he writes that Logic—the system of the categories of being—'cannot say what it is in advance, rather does this knowledge of itself only emerge as the final result and completion of its whole treatment.'⁶⁷ If we are to take Hegel at his word, then there is no *a priori* ontology implicit in his epistemology. Yet I take Alain Badiou's view that the nature of thought is axiomatic.⁶⁸ Axiom, understood in the precise mathematical sense, does not here mean self-evident assumption but rather a statement that is posited at the beginning of a line of logical reasoning.⁶⁹ An example of an axiomatic proposition is: "there is only one straight line between two points". In the context of mathematics, this statement is considered self-evident and thus the ground for the proof of other non-self-evident propositions, such as: "If the corresponding sides of two triangles are of equal length, then the triangles are congruent." By contrast, a non-axiomatic proposition is something such as the latter statement which requires a proof or it may be a claim that requires empirical evidence, such as: "Some leaves of trees are green." An axiomatised form of thought legitimates itself, therefore, only through the consistency of its discourse. Such an axiom is a decision made by thought prior to its unfolding. And hence, for Badiou, axiomatics is not only a model for mathematics but for thought as such.⁷⁰ If we are to think with Hegel, then Badiou's view necessitates explicitly bringing our ontological axioms into the interpretation. Our interpretation of Hegel's presuppositionless philosophy in the *Logic* is thus dependent upon the view of being that we presuppose, consciously or otherwise.

To resolve this issue for my interpretation, I will assume that the nature of being is inconsistent. *Prima facie*, this view of being is not preferable to any other. As we shall see, it is one among many possibilities. Yet I hope to demonstrate in what follows that the unique consequences of this view elucidate the interpretation of Hegel's system. Now, the view that being is inconsistent is articulated by Badiou in *Being and*

⁶⁷ Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 23.

⁶⁸ While my inclusion of Badiou may not appear directly relevant to Hegel, Badiou proves to be a singular figure in contemporary philosophy who attempts to bridge an axiomatic approach—one of the key additions I bring to Hegel interpretation—and the German philosophical tradition. A discussion of the compatibility of Badiou's and Hegel's philosophies would, however, constitute a paper unto itself. Therefore, I simply wish to draw attention to the axiomatics present in Badiou's work and some structural parallels between his ontology of inconsistency and Allais' MMI. For discussions on Hegel and Badiou's broader philosophical relationship, see Vernon, Jim and Antonio Calcagno, eds. (2015) *Badiou and Hegel: Infinity, Dialectics, Subjectivity*, Lexington Books.

⁶⁹ Bhattacharyya, Anindya (2015) 'Axiom', In *The Badiou Dictionary*, Steven Corcoran, ed, Edinburgh University Press, 21-23. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748669646>

⁷⁰ Bhattacharyya, 'Axiom', 22.

Event (2007). In essence, he posits that being, prior to our counting of its parts or prior to its presentation, is a multiple of multiples. That is, it has no atomic parts and cannot be gathered into a whole; it is neither composed of ones nor is a One. Being as such is pure multiplicity. According to Badiou, although being prior to our counting is without structure, there are 'ones' that are an 'operational result' of counting.⁷¹ At this point, I hope the reader sees the motivation for my proposal of inconsistent multiplicity, as its rejection of a rigid notion of being may be understood as the ontological analogue to Hegel's presuppositionless metaphysics. This highly abstract ontology becomes more familiar if we relate it to Allais' relational account of perception. Indeed, if being is inconsistent, then there is an aspect of it that we cannot cognise (Allais' point [2]) or count/present (Badiou). The inconsistent account of being thus supports Allais' point (3) that there are mind-dependent objects (those counted as ones) that are grounded by this uncognisable being (inconsistency). Additionally, whether being is inconsistent or consistent is dependent upon whether we consider being prior to or after the counting process (Allais' point [1] that appearances and things-in-themselves are aspects of the same things). I suggest, therefore, that this view of the nature of being is analogous to Allais' second strategy (B). And so, it permits us to emphasise a key notion in Hegel's work, as Allais does with intuition.

In consideration of the inconsistent interpretation of being prior to the count, I suggest that the notion of intellectual intuition as acquaintance with the universal is central to understanding Hegel's idealism, just as Allais holds that intuition as acquaintance with things is central to understanding Kant's idealism in point (A).⁷² This view of the centrality of intellectual intuition accords with Beiser's reading of Hegel, which arguably achieves the nearest MMI of Hegel among previous scholarly work.⁷³ The centrality of intellectual intuition is apparent in F. W. J. Schelling's absolute idealism, a fundamental influence on Hegel's system. Beiser clarifies this notion in stating that it 'consists in my grasping an individual as a member of a whole, in seeing how its essential nature or inner identity depends on the totality of which it is only a part.' This grasping consists not in my explanation or deduction of an object but rather in my contemplation of it. In other words, I consider the object 'in itself' and 'apart from its relations with other objects' yet also 'see how it is part of a wider whole.'⁷⁴ In the language of inconsistent being, this description is analogous to counting, which locates any 'one' as a particular that itself refers to the universal process of counting. Intellectual intuition is thus our ability to be acquainted with the universal in the particular. As such, we need not posit the universal as the framework of being in itself, because being is inconsistent prior to our acquaintance with (or counting of) a particular. There is, however, an important aspect of the metaphysical interpretation that is preserved in this reading: the claim that

⁷¹ Badiou, Alain (1988/2007) *Being and Event*, Oliver Feltham, trans, Bloomsbury, 26-27.

⁷² It should be noted that the view that Hegel preserved intellectual intuition after his break with Schelling is controversial. For a defence of this argument, see Schwartz, Daniel (2018) 'The Intellectual Intuition of Hegel's Psychology', Thesis, Georgia State University. <https://doi.org/10.57709/12548820>

⁷³ In particular, Beiser criticises both overly metaphysical and deflationary approaches in *German Idealism*, 662.

⁷⁴ Beiser, *German Idealism*, 580.

intellectual intuition reflects the metaphysical relationship between human subjectivity and the structure of being.

Despite this concession to the metaphysical view, metaphysical interpreters of Hegel may still criticise my reading of intellectual intuition in the context of inconsistent being. For does Hegel not consider the identity of the universal and the particular to constitute the whole universe (the Absolute)? However, this problem is less significant when we recognise that he intends to preserve the critical aspects of Kant's system while eliminating its apparent inconsistencies. That is to say, Hegel does not seek to contradict the critical limits set by Kant in carrying out his own philosophical project, but rather he seeks to draw what he considers to be the logical conclusion of Kant's philosophical standpoint.⁷⁵ Therefore, there remains an interpretive ambiguity implicit in the notion of intellectual intuition, given that, prior to our acquaintance with a particular, we cannot decide the nature of being in itself (in line with Kant's critical demands). This decision can only be made once we have axiomatically presupposed the nature of being that we bring to Hegel's epistemology. Although this reading of intellectual intuition is one among many, my argument is that due to the basic ambiguity in this notion, which cannot be resolved unless a prior (axiomatic) decision has been made about the nature of being, one cannot *a priori* assume that one notion of intellectual intuition is preferable to another. This diversity is already clear from the conflicting characterisations of intellectual intuition that J. G. Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel gave to complete Kant's philosophy. However, a textual justification of this reading is beyond the scope of this essay.⁷⁶

On this MMI, Hegel is not reducible to the deflationary or the metaphysical reading. Against the deflationist, I have argued that Hegel is not making purely epistemological claims. For if one is to concretely understand the central category of intellectual intuition as acquaintance with the universal, they must presuppose a view on the nature of being. When this position is assumed, intellectual intuition is revealed to be analogous to a structuring of being via counting. Against the metaphysician, this MMI of Hegel is not reducible to the standard metaphysical readings, because it does not imply that Hegel made transcendent metaphysical claims. Instead, the view that holds being in itself to be inconsistent is argued to be most adequate to appreciating Hegel's philosophical methodology. Furthermore, on this MMI, the prior ontological decision is left open to the reader interpreting Hegel. The axiomatic assumption about being is thus groundless and cannot be justified from within the system Hegel outlined. If there is a justification to prefer one view of being over another, it is only the consequences of any two positions that can be meaningfully compared. I think this reading sheds light on why Hegel remains a

⁷⁵ See, e.g., Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 26.

⁷⁶ Nonetheless, there are significant implications if the reader is willing to accept my argument that an axiomatic decision precedes the interpreting of Hegel. In particular, it undermines the tendency among metaphysical interpretations to assert that Hegel supposed determinate (or positive) metaphysical claims in order to construct his system. As such, while my reading undermines strict metaphysical interpretations, it attenuates these views to a degree that retains the metaphysical aspects of Hegel's idealism.

Rorschach test for any philosopher; the many faces of Hegel interpretation reflect the many ontological positions that one may assume (consciously or otherwise) prior to the exegesis and consequent unfolding of Hegel's system.

An advantage of this MMI of Hegel is that it offers a reading that does not unproblematically juxtapose his idealism with a one-sided version of Kant's. Rather than affirm CT or DT, the MMI challenges these standard interpretive approaches and offers a reading of Kant and Hegel as singular thinkers. This singularity thesis (ST) opposes CT and DT by refusing to grasp philosophical thought as embedded in homogeneous linear time. Instead, ST understands that thinking is something that may result in novel philosophical ideas that are irreducible to the historical circumstances in which they emerged.

§ 5. Conclusion

In this essay, I adapted strategies (A) and (B) of Allais' MMI of Kant to resolve the impasse between the two interpretive extremes of Hegel scholarship. After outlining the deflationary and metaphysical interpretations of Kant, I summarised the main features of Allais' MMI. Given its ecumenical and technical strengths, I suggested this approach could similarly resolve Hegel studies' interpretive dichotomy. To address the problem of the asymmetry between Kant and Hegel scholarship, I argued that Allais' interpretive strategies may be adapted to sketch a MMI of Hegel.

The ensuing sketch of a Hegel MMI made two principal arguments. First, thought is essentially axiomatic, and thus any interpretation of Hegel is conditioned by the reader's ontological assumptions. In view of Hegel's aim to create a presuppositionless philosophy, I claimed that the view that being is inconsistent is the most adequate for reading Hegel, in parallel to Allais' point (B). Following from this first claim, I argued that the notion of intellectual intuition as acquaintance with the universal is central for understanding Hegel's metaphysics, in parallel to Allais' point (A).

The implications of the MMI for future readings of Hegel are twofold.

In the first instance, if the reader adopts my argument, then it becomes clear that one cannot reduce Hegel's work to a fixed epistemological methodology or metaphysical position. Nor can they claim that he repeats the errors of pre-critical metaphysics by making transcendent claims about being in itself. Rather, Hegel's theoretical philosophy depends upon an elision of positive metaphysical claims. Importantly, this undermines attempts to reduce Hegel to a traditional metaphysical position that can be easily categorised, for my approach highlights how his project seeks to systematise the logic of these positions through a kind of meta-logic. On the other hand, the epistemological aspect of his system reappropriates the notion of universality in a phenomenological rather than ontological way. As a consequence, any set of ontological presuppositions can fill the interpretive gap implicit in the notion of intellectual intuition. Beyond resolving the interpretive tensions of Hegel's

work, this approach implies that future research should not merely emphasise the epistemological aspects of Hegel's arguments nor the metaphysics underlying them. Research should be instead focussed on how his unique form of idealism provides a mode for thinking through both ontological and epistemological themes in a wholly original way that stands apart from much of the Western philosophical tradition. And that is precisely in his dynamic yet universalistic conception of philosophy.

In the second instance, while Hegel interpreters have consistently situated his work in relation to Kant's to either affirm CT or DT, I propose ST is most adequate for appreciating Hegel's contribution. Moreover, ST indicates a broader way of reading philosophy, which allows for the creative appropriation of philosophers' work in different contexts while avoiding the danger of obscuring the specificity of their philosophical views.

While I aimed to stay faithful to Allais' MMI, I do not claim that my Hegelian adaptation is unique. In fact, given that I argued that any reader will bring their own presuppositions about being to their reading of Hegel, I expect there to be as many MMIs of Hegel as there are clear and distinct ontological positions within philosophy. To that I say:

Let a hundred flowers bloom; let a hundred schools of thought contend.

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