

Hegel's Twofold Critique of Empiricism: Cognition, Ontology and the Question of Universality

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ABSTRACT: Hegel's seemingly contradictory assessment of empiricism can be rendered consistent if one distinguishes between two ways in which he interprets it: Firstly, as a theory of cognition and secondly, as a theory of ontological truth. While Hegel argues that the former undermines itself due to its inability to establish the universal and necessary validity of its own perspective, he praises the latter for defending the irreducibility of particularity. Still, from Hegel's own stance, a successful notion of ontological truth must accommodate what empiricism lacks: A dynamic notion of universality that forms a negative unity with particularity, in which both moments are acknowledged but neither is prioritised. Hegel calls this unity 'the concept' and deduces his own notion of cognition from it, thus equipping it with the universal and necessary status that he finds empiricism's notion of cognition unable to account for.

KEYWORDS: Hegel, Empiricism, Hume, Spinoza, Rationalism, Cognition, Universality, Particularity, Concept.

1. Introduction

The relationship between Hegel's idealism and empiricism continues to engage researchers.¹ While some contrast Hegel from Kant by arguing that the former has a notion of

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¹ While most studies on Hegel's relationship to empiricism focus on the *Phenomenology of Spirit's* chapter of *Sense-certainty*, the present investigation will concern itself mostly with Hegel's systematic engagement with empiricism, i.e. with the arguments made from the perspective of the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences* and his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. This is done for the following reasons: The *Phenomenology's* arguments are made from the perspective of consciousness and its implied consciousness-world separation (HEGEL, G.W.F. **Philosophy of Mind**. W. Wallace and A.V. Miller (Trans.); M. Inwood (Revision, Introduction and Commentary). Oxford:

'content' that the latter lacks, tracking this content to empirically accessible, historical² and social³ circumstances,⁴ others emphasize absolute idealism's concern with necessary⁵ and unconditioned truth,⁶ thereby at least implicitly differentiating it from empiricism's rejection of it.

When one turns to Hegel's own remarks on empiricism, a seemingly contradictory picture presents itself: On the one hand, Hegel seems to speak as a staunch critic of (mostly Lockean and Humean) empiricism, claiming that it is "void of metaphysics,"⁷ without "firm standing"⁸ and that one can hardly "sink even lower"⁹ than the empiricist's point of view. On the other hand, he also praises empiricism for going beyond rationalism's 'dogmatism' with its demands that philosophical principles have to be justified rather than simply assumed¹⁰ and crucially, for its insistence that truth must have "content."¹¹

Clarendon Press, 2007, §§413-439). Since this constitutes only the 'appearance' (HEGEL. **Philosophy of Mind**, §413, p. 142) of spirit and not how it truly is, the position of consciousness self-contradicts due to its inability to explain the very kind of successful cognition it must imply to warrant its own perspective. In contrast, the *Encyclopedia's* section on spirit (HEGEL. **Philosophy of Mind**, §440, p. 165) and the *Lectures* take the perspective of spirit in its true self-identity (what Arndt quotes as 'Befreiung' ARNDT, A. Wer denkt absolut?. In: **Revista Eletrônica Estudos Hegelianos**, Jan./Jun. de 2012 n. 16, v.01, p. 24). Furthermore, while Humean empiricism can be argued to undercut the *Phenomenology's* criticism since Hume does not commit to the categories of 'consciousness' and 'world' that the *Phenomenology* assumes, Hegel's systematic critique establishes why Hume must commit to these categories if he is to have a philosophical position. For a treatment of empiricism as 'sense-certainty' in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, see e.g. WESTPHAL, K. Hegel's Phenomenological Method and Analysis of Consciousness. In: Westphal, K. (Ed.). **The Blackwell Guide to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit**. Oxford: Blackwells Publishing, 2009, p. 1-36.

² PIPPIN, R. **Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 91.

³ DELIGIORGI, K. **The Scope of Autonomy**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 185.

⁴ DEBOER, K. Hegel's Conception of Immanent Critique: Its Sources, Extent and Limit. In: deBoer, K.; Sonderegger, R. (Eds.). **Conceptions of Critique in Modern and Contemporary Philosophy**. London, Palgrave MacMillan, 2012, p. 95.

⁵ PINKARD, T. **German Philosophy 1760-1860: The Legacy of Idealism**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 185. STERN, R. **Hegelian Metaphysics**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 67.

⁶ See e.g. HOULGATE, S. **The Opening of Hegel's Logic: From Being to Infinity**. La Fayette: Purdue University Press, 2006, p. 153-154.

⁷ HEGEL, G.W.F. **Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III**. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986, p. 276.

⁸ HEGEL. **Geschichte der Philosophie III**, p. 269.

⁹ HEGEL. **Geschichte der Philosophie III**, p. 279.

¹⁰ HEGEL, G.W.F. **The Encyclopedia Logic (with the Zusätze): Part I of the Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze**. Geraets, T.F.; Suchting, W.A.; Harris, H.S. (Eds., Trans., Introduction and Notes). Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1991, §37, p. 77. I.e. that each thinker must think for him- or herself. Alfredo Ferrarin quotes Hegel calling this 'being at home' (FERRARIN, A. **Hegel and Aristotle**. Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 60) in the experienced content.

¹¹ HEGEL. **Encyclopedia Logic**, §38, p. 77.

This gives rise to the questions whether Hegel did have a single, coherent critique of empiricism, how he differentiates between empiricism and rationalism and from what perspective his judgments were made. In the present attempt to address these puzzles, I will argue that Hegel's seemingly contradictory critique of empiricism can be rendered consistent if one differentiates between two ways of looking at empiricism: Firstly, as a theory of empirical cognition (EC), i.e. a theory that explains how empirical knowledge is gained, and secondly, as an ontological position that represents a certain notion of ontological truth (OT), i.e. a notion of what the necessary and universal unity of thought and reality¹² is like.

While Hegel finds empiricism wanting as an account of EC and argues that it is incapable of capturing the relationship between EC and OT, he also maintains that if one reads empiricism as an account of OT, it is able to account for the one dimension of OT that escapes rationalism: Particularity, i.e. contentfulness. This argument becomes more relatable when one considers that Hegel's claims are made from the particularity-accommodating, ontological perspective that he calls 'the concept'¹³ and which informs his own notion of EC.

The argument will proceed in three steps: In part I, I will describe Hegel's interpretation of empiricism as a theory of empirical cognition (EC) and his criticism that it fails to justify its own inevitably implied claim to universality. This enables part II's discussion of Hegel's limited appraisal of empiricism as a theory of ontological truth (OT) that rightfully emphasises the irreducibility of particularity, leading into part III's analysis of Hegel's own, OT- and EC-combining, perspective. The contribution will conclude that while absolute idealism and empiricism as OT share some ground on the question of particularity's irreducibility, Hegel consistently criticizes empiricism for its inability to conceptualise universality.

¹² Hegel bases his claim that philosophy's concern must be this unity on an analysis of the failure of all available alternative notions of philosophical enquiry. He discusses these in the *Encyclopedia's* 'Positions of Thought with Respect to Objectivity' (HEGEL. **Encyclopedia Logic**, p. v) the *Science of Logic's* illustrations of categorial instabilities (HEGEL, G.W.F. **The Science of Logic**. Di Giovanni, G. (Transl. and Ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 1-734) and his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (HEGEL. **Geschichte der Philosophie III**). He finds that any notion of philosophy that fundamentally differentiates between thought and reality or that privileges one over the other fails to justify philosophy's inevitably implied notion of knowledge as (speculative) identity.

¹³ HEGEL. **Encyclopedia Logic**, §160, p. 236.

2. Analysis

2.1. Empiricism as a theory of cognition

In the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences* and his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel directs the majority of his critical comments on empiricism at its status as a theory of empirical cognition (EC), i.e. as a theory that explains how empirical knowledge is gained. Read in this way, empiricism differentiates between an “inner,”¹⁴ where ideas and representations are located and an “outer”¹⁵ that is related to by experience.¹⁶ Immediate impressions of the outer become inner ideas based on singular instances of experience and perception, e.g. the experience of an outer anemone flower results in an inner idea based on this experience.¹⁷ Within, ideas and categories of variable strength are then related, associated, differentiated and identified — based on the strength of the experience they are derived from — without the experiencer having anything like a spontaneity-informed ability to actively influence a specific idea's importance or status within the web of ideas:¹⁸ If there had been a deeply impressive experience of religious fervour at some point in someone's life, the idea of the importance of religious experience will take a central place.

Self-contradictorily, so Hegel, empiricist philosophers like Locke and Hume then aspire to make what Hegel calls “universal claims”¹⁹ based on such particular ideas — or in the case of moral claims, based on particular feelings — by means of “abstracting”²⁰ from the singular

¹⁴ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 276.

¹⁵ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 276.

¹⁶ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 276. While Hegel might at times be insufficiently careful in his usage of the terms ‘experiencing subject’ or ‘external world’ (cf. FERRARIN, A. *The Powers of Pure Reason: Kant and the Idea of Cosmic Philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 34) given that Hume calls the reality of both into question, his main point of critique is not affected by it. In any case, empiricism's experiencer does not meet Hegel's standards of subjectivity, i.e. making a spontaneous contribution to the process of experience.

¹⁷ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 276. Since empiricism's subject is neither spontaneous nor active in the creation or relating of ideas in contrast to an objective, experienced world, one may argue that empiricism does not differentiate between subject (experiencer) and object (world) but rather between inner and outer within the overarching category of what it calls ‘experience.’

¹⁸ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 276. See e.g. FERRARIN. *Hegel and Aristotle*, p. 270.

¹⁹ HEGEL. *Encyclopedia Logic*, §38 Remark, p. 78. Cf. ROCKMORE T. *Hegel's Circular Epistemology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986, p. 92, 93.

²⁰ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 222.

episodes of experience and the ideas based on them.²¹ For example, when Hume argues that by and large, people have morally adequate sentiments or that they naturally know what conduct is good,²² he can only refer to his own particular experience, be it of the world or of other people's particular behaviour.²³ This not only opens him to the counterargument that this statement itself is but his particular idea but also that what he appeals to is merely others' particular behavior. So it is the logical property of this 'given,' this 'logical first,' of empiricism as particular instances of experience and ideas that according to Hegel dooms its universalist aspirations to failure: Since their logical status is 'just' particular, the instances of experience and ideas that empiricism begins with cannot generate any conceptual insights of truly universal validity.²⁴

2.2. *Empiricism's lack of universality*

Instead, the best empiricism can achieve in terms of universality is (global) 'generality,'²⁵ i.e. that several instances of particular experience are externally identified to make a kind of experience 'generally' the case or that several thinkers support an idea, rendering it generally accepted. At best, a particular idea is supported by 'all' particular thinkers or a particular experience is confirmed by 'all' available experience. However, so Hegel, even such global acknowledgment or unending confirmation does not make an idea or experience 'properly' universal since it remains logically defined as particular: Even a constantly confirmed experience remains a 'particular' experience that is being confirmed by particular thinkers and a globally accepted idea remains a 'particular' idea that is accepted by all particular thinkers: If all there is, are particular experiences and ideas, also the sum total of all particular experiences and ideas is itself particular.

²¹ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 276.

²² HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 268.

²³ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 268.

²⁴ "[D]as Sinnliche ist als leer an Allgemeinheit bestimmt" [The sensual is defined as void of universality] (HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 276) and 'Daß etwas existiert, empfindet die Erfahrung; aber so ist das Allgemeine noch nicht in derselben.' [Experience senses that something exists but this does not mean that universality is in it] (HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 278)

²⁵ I.e. by a sum of particular individuals

Since the experience's regularity or the idea's acceptance come logically 'after' the experience's and the idea's particularity, generality remains conditioned by particularity. And since particularity remains logically prior, generality cannot liberate itself from particularity's in-built fallibility: From the fact that a particular idea of a social institution, e.g. the family, is accepted globally, we cannot infer that the institution is true, i.e. that all rational beings 'must' accept the institution.²⁶ Similarly, global rejection of institution does not establish that it is false, i.e. that it 'must not' be accepted. The fact that empiricism's ideas are based on particular experience and held by particular thinkers implies that they might just as well not be held, i.e. that they might be rejected with equal right.²⁷

The same goes for experience: Even if all particular individuals regularly experience the sun, it does not follow that the sun 'must' be so experienced: Experience's logical foundation in particularity implies that any particular experience is just as good as its negation, i.e. any particular experiencer might reject a particular idea 'with equal logical right.'²⁸ So it is 'by definition,' i.e. conceptually, that the particularity of empiricism's experiences and ideas implies its negation and thus undermines its own universal validity and necessity: Any particular experience or idea is by definition 'not universal' and thus not universally true. While it might make an 'empirical' difference how many times experiences are associated and how many experiencers support an idea, it does not 'conceptually' matter regarding the normative validity of the idea or the experience.

According to Hegel, this rather inconveniences empiricism when it comes to the evaluation of conduct as moral or immoral: When Hume muses that one cannot get an ought from an is,²⁹ he refers to precisely the root cause of empiricism's main weakness: Without true universality and thus necessity, there is no ought and without ought, there is no criterion of moral behaviour.

²⁶ The same goes for representations like blueness: So far, particular perceptions of the daytime earth's sky have shown it blue, as have all particular instances of anemone flowers. But one cannot deduce from this that the sky must be blue or that all anemones must be blue or swans must be white. The fact that an experience or an idea is not rejected empirically does not make a conceptual difference since empirical rejection and acceptance are themselves particulars and thus no criterion for universal validity.

²⁷ Cf. HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 268.

²⁸ Whether they do or do not makes no conceptual difference.

²⁹ HUME, D. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Online: The Floating Press, 2009, p. 715.

2.3. *Empiricism's lack of normativity*

While it might be true that 'positive' attitudes, 'well-meaning' inclinations and 'ethical' behaviour³⁰ are found in some particular men and women because they 'are already judged as being ethical,' one cannot refer to particular instances of observed behaviour to justify evaluative judgement: No particular behaviour or inclination can be regarded as properly ethical, i.e. as normative, unless one already has an idea of proper universal validity at hand to appeal to in the evaluation-process: Logically, any particular behaviour is just as 'good' as its negation.

However, such a universal idea is not available to empiricism because 'all' its ideas are particular. Unless the desired universal standard is always already, non- or pre-empirically available to the judge,³¹ he or she cannot rightfully judge particular instances of behaviour since any particularity-based judgment carries the possibility of its own invalidity: The judged, particular instance's non-conformity to the particular criterion does not entail that the criterion is right and the judged instance wrong. It might just as well mean that the criterion is wrong and the instance right and therefore none is 'right' or 'wrong.' While the criterion might be empirically based on more frequent or impressive particular ideas than the judged instance, this does not change the logical fact that the criterion is just as particular as the judged instance: Independent of all possible experience, 'logically,' criterion and judged instance remain equals in particularity.

So to Hegel, a criterion based on particular ideas is no criterion at all: From the fact that some particular thinkers call something just, it does not follow that it 'must' be so. Even if all particular judges validate the same particular behaviour based on their own particular ideas and experience, their judgement is logically still as particular as any contrary judgement. As in the case with perception, so Hegel, general and even global acceptance of particular behaviour does not make for normative validity: Independently of how many particular experiences or ideas speak in its favour, a particular judgement or idea will always remain particular and therefore just as valid as its equally particular negation.³²

³⁰ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 268.

³¹ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 268.

³² So while particular instances of behaviour can instantiate universally valid, ethical norms, so Hegel, it cannot ground them.

2.4. *Hegel on Hume's critique of necessity and causality*

Crucially, the same particularity-based logic affects — especially in the case of Humean empiricism — some central categories of thought: As was the case with universality, the true meaning of the categories of “necessity”³³ and “causality”³⁴ escapes empiricism because it cannot be found in the realm of particular instances of experience: The necessity of the causal relationship is replaced by “succession”³⁵ and the regularity of behaviour is defined as “habit.”³⁶

As opposed to the ‘essential’ identity between two differentiated episodes that according to Hegel defines the categories of necessity³⁷ and causality³⁸, empiricism’s experiencer only projects identity “subjectively”³⁹ onto experience and its essentially differentiated episodes: Every particular instance is ‘first’ different from each other ‘and then’ (externally and thus illegitimately) identified by the experiencer. In contrast, so Hegel, true necessity and causality imply that identity is essential to the instances of experience, i.e. it is real: E.g. the cause of the water flowing and its effect of destructing a house are essentially — and thus really — identical and not just externally judged to be so.

Their fundamental differentiation entails that the relationship between particular instances is at best contingent and arbitrary and no notion of “habit”⁴⁰ or regularity of “succession”⁴¹ could alter this. Particular instances of experience that are identified and thought to be repetitions or that are associated are still just that: Different particular instances. And since difference between particular instances is all there truly is, all identity-based connectedness must be imposed by the experiencer: Just because one perceives a stream of water and a house collapsing does not mean

³³ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 276.

³⁴ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 276.

³⁵ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 278.

³⁶ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 279.

³⁷ HEGEL. *Encyclopedia Logic*, §147 and §147 Remark, p. 220-221.

³⁸ HEGEL. *Encyclopedia Logic*, §153 Remark, p. 228.

³⁹ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 278.

⁴⁰ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 278.

⁴¹ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 278.

that the stream 'caused' the house's collapse⁴² just as it is not necessary for the sun to rise tomorrow just because it has done so in the past.⁴³

2.4. *Empiricism and Rationalism: Justification and assumption*

It is this fundamental commitment to differentiated particulars, so Hegel, that forces empiricism to oppose all philosophical positions that appeal to the notions of essential identity, universality, necessity and causality, such as Spinozist rationalism. Against these, empiricism is able to argue that its ideas, definitions, categories of thought etc. are "derived"⁴⁴ (abgeleitet) in a way rationalism's are not: The empiricist can explain how he or she has arrived at his or her ideas because they are informed by a 'method,' the ideas can be traced back to empirical experience. In contrast, rationalism has to assume the truth and intelligibility of categories like 'substance,' 'necessity,' 'modi,' 'attributes,' "accidents"⁴⁵ etc. and can only "oracle-like"⁴⁶ point to the evidence of their always already presupposed presence in the thinker's consciousness:⁴⁷ On Hegel's reading, rationalism thus lacks a method that could explain the logical origins or formation⁴⁸ of its core notions.⁴⁹

This concern with particularity and experiential justification also gives empiricism an advantage over rationalism in the fields of natural science and mathematics: It enables

⁴² HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 278.

⁴³ Since Hume locates necessity in the inner 'consciousness' (HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 279) and not in the 'outer' (and strictly speaking there are neither external world nor experiencing subject but only the stream of experience), i.e. it is falsely superimposed and only what has necessity is real, Hume's empiricism is truly an 'idealism' (HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 279), albeit one 'without thought or concept' (HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 279) since it ultimately rejects necessity and it is necessity that according to Hegel defines true thought and concept.

⁴⁴ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 223.

⁴⁵ SPINOZA, B. d. *Complete Works*. Translated by S. Shirley and edited by M. L. Morgan. Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002, p. 221.

⁴⁶ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 223.

⁴⁷ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 222.

⁴⁸ It can be argued that Hegel integrates a variety of the empiricist notion of method into his own account of philosophical knowledge — albeit not in the form of deriving the determinations, categories and concepts of philosophical knowledge from empirical experience but instead deriving them from conceptual experience, i.e. the observation of unconditioned thought's self-determining.⁴⁸

⁴⁹ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 222. Hegel will substitute empiricism's experiential derivation of ideas by their conceptual derivation, finding the origins of categorial determinations not in sensual experience but in the self-determining activity of unconditioned thinking (i.e. the concept).

empiricism to capture ever more complex and fine-grained particulars and their relations, allowing for their increasingly subtle observation and association.⁵⁰ Still, while this might lead to the creation of ever more precise natural scientific observations, productive experiments and categories,⁵¹ i.e. empirical success that philosophy can refer to when it explains the ontological structure of natural and spiritual phenomena, it does not amount to 'conceptual' success and does nothing to amend empiricism's failure to qualify as philosophy, i.e. as a science of what is necessary and universal and is known to be so.⁵²

'So what?' might the empiricist reply. If this is how experience and the thinking based on experience works, then any demand for non-particularity based universality, a priori-normativity, essentialist identity-implying necessity or causality is simply misplaced. While Hume might have gone too far when he implied knowledge of universals like justice or only figuratively referred to such knowledge, a consistent empiricist can avoid doing so and is able to acknowledge the fallibility of all experience and thought.

2.5. Empiricism's first self-contradiction

However, so Hegel, this reply is not available to empiricism if it wants to think of itself as a 'philosophical' position.⁵³ Insofar as it does, it cannot but commit to the necessity and universal validity of its statements:⁵⁴ When Hume argues that 'all' experience 'must' consist of particular episodes and that 'all' thought 'must' be based on particular ideas, i.e. that it is 'necessarily' the case that there is no necessity or causality etc., he inevitably claims to have universal knowledge of what 'must' be the case. If he did not, he would just tell a subjective story, for example a tale

⁵⁰ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 224.

⁵¹ HEGEL. *Science of Logic*, p. 13.

⁵² HEGEL, *Philosophy of Mind*, §420 Addition, p. 149-150.

⁵³ "It is an interest of philosophy to cognise the truth. Here, this is supposed to be achieved empirically; it serves to direct attention towards universal determinations." (HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 222.)

⁵⁴ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 222. For a challenge to this position, see UTZ, K. *Die Notwendigkeit des Zufalls: Hegels spekulative Dialektik in der Wissenschaft der Logik*. München: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 2001. "Aber solches Philosophieren ist nicht nur der Standpunkt des gewöhnlichen Bewußtseins, dem alle Bestimmungen seines Denkens als gegeben erscheinen, demütig mit Vergessen seiner Tätigkeit; sondern bei diesem Ableiten und psychologischen Entstehen ist das, was allein der Philosophie obliegt, der Gesichtspunkt, ob diese Gedanken und Verhältnisse an und für sich Wahrheit haben, gar nicht vorhanden." (HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 222.)

or a myth, unable to compete with accounts that explicitly lay claim to universality and necessity and that he rejects, such as those of classical and Hellenistic philosophy, rationalism and scholasticism.⁵⁵

So when Hume claims that contingent and arbitrary thoughts based on singular perceptions and experiences are 'all'⁵⁶ there is, this has to apply to this very claim itself:

(1) All thought is contingent (= Thought must be contingent)

(2) (1) is thought

 Conclusion: Contradiction: (1) implies to be universal and necessary but cannot be.

This contradiction is fatal since empiricism must imply that at least (1) is necessary and universally valid since it is presented as a philosophical claim:⁵⁷ If philosophy is concerned with what is necessary and universal, so Hegel, then empiricism's failure to conceptualise necessary and universal knowledge means that it is a philosophy, i.e. a "metaphysical"⁵⁸ position that is none:⁵⁹

Hegel's first reading of empiricism as a theory of EC thus leads him to conclude that empiricism not only lacks normativity but that it undermines itself because it cannot explain the kind of universal and necessary, i.e. non-empirical, knowledge it must lay claim to in virtue of

⁵⁵ "[The rationalists] think it a reproach to all literature, that philosophy should not yet have fixed, beyond controversy, the foundation of morals, reasoning, and criticism; and should for ever talk of truth and falsehood, vice and virtue, beauty and deformity, without being able to determine the source of these distinctions." (HUME, D. **An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding**. Tom, L. Beauchamp, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 87-88.)

⁵⁶ "Hume negates all universality." HEGEL. **Geschichte der Philosophie III**, p. 269.

⁵⁷ Were Hume to argue that his own claim that all is contingent is itself contingent as it is based on himself observing his own thought, Hegel would reject the appeal to 'as it is based on...' as this implies that there is a philosophically valid account establishing that all thought is observation-based. Cf. "But if we are supposed to be talking about philosophy, then we must rise above the demonstration that remains tied to presuppositions, above empiricism's demonstration, to the proof of the absolute necessity of things." (HEGEL, **Philosophy of Mind**, §420 Addition, p. 149-150.)

⁵⁸ HEGEL. **Geschichte der Philosophie III**, p. 276.

⁵⁹ Cf. INWOOD, M. **A Hegel Dictionary**, Oxford: Blackwells Publishers, 1992, p. 96.

being a philosophical position.⁶⁰ However, so Hegel, empiricism's failure as theory of EC does not entail that there is nothing of philosophical value in it.

2.6. *Empiricism as a theory of ontological truth*

Empiricism's merits, so Hegel, become apparent when one reads it in the second sense that Hegel's critique of empiricism implies: Not as a (self-undermining) theory of EC but as an account of ontological truth (OT). 'Onto-logical' refers to what Hegel thinks of as the most fundamental, unconditioned and dynamic unity of reality (being, 'on') and thought ('logic'),⁶¹ i.e. what he calls 'truth,'⁶² and the logical, natural and spiritual⁶³ determinations that follow from its (self-determining) activity. By definition, so Hegel, it is this unity and its determinations alone that is truly universal and "necessary"⁶⁴ and accordingly the only adequate object of philosophical knowledge.⁶⁵

So if one leaves aside the question of whether empiricism as EC⁶⁶ is able to justify such a notion of ontology and simply grants that it 'is' an ontology, i.e. that it describes the necessary and universal unity of reality and thought, the question becomes: How does empiricism describe the universal and necessary unity of reality and thought, i.e. what is empiricism's ontology? Hegel's answer is in line with his interpretation of empiricism as EC: All there necessarily and universally (and thus ontologically) is according to the most consistent, i.e. Humean empiricism,

⁶⁰ see e.g. PIPPIN, R. *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-consciousness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 121.

⁶¹ Cf. HOULGATE. *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, p. 117.

⁶² HEGEL. *Science of Logic*, p. 17-18.

⁶³ By avoiding any conceptual assumptions about a fundamental difference between thought and reality, e.g. thinker and actuality, consciousness and external world, *whilst* acknowledging that such a difference deserves conceptual recognition within the unity of thought and reality, Hegel clearly distances himself from accounts that he reads as implicitly or explicitly grounded in such a difference, e.g. Kant's or Locke's or Bacon's.

⁶⁴ HEGEL. *Science of Logic*, p. 29. "[T]he necessary forms of thinking, and its specific determinations, are the content and the ultimate truth itself." (HEGEL. *Science of Logic*, p. 29.)

⁶⁵ "For philosophy's aim is to cognise that, which never passes, is eternal and in and for itself; philosophy's aim is the truth." HEGEL, G.W.F. *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie I*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986, p. 24.

⁶⁶ Empiricism might not be able to explain *how* it has a metaphysical commitment but it has one.

are differentiated particulars — particular episodes of experience that are ontologically equivalent to particular ideas and representations.⁶⁷

2.7. *From particulars to the universal and vice versa: Spinoza's empty universality*

Empiricism's insistence on the irreducible status of differentiated particulars thus deprives it of any adequate notion of universality and proves fatal for its attempt at presenting itself as a philosophically warranted account of EC. Nevertheless, from an ontological point of view, it enables an explanation of determinateness, i.e. what Hegel calls ontological 'content.' Since empiricism ontologically begins with determinate particulars — arguing only they define the unity of thought and reality, i.e. only they are ultimately real — it does not share in the trouble of, for example, Spinozist rationalism that according to Hegel successfully conceptualises universality but fails to deduce particularity⁶⁸ from its ontologically prioritized notion of non-particular, universal substance:⁶⁹

Spinoza's simple reality [*das Einfache*] is absolute substance; only absolute substance truly is, it alone is actual or is actuality. It is also the unity of thinking and being [...]. We have before us two determinations, the universal or what has being in and for itself, and secondly the determination of the particular [...] Now it is not hard to demonstrate that the particular or the singular is something altogether limited, that its concept altogether depends upon an other, that it is dependent, does not truly exist for itself, and so is not truly actual. Hence only the non-particularized or the universal *is*. It alone is

⁶⁷ Whether the (external) world consists of particulars is not — at least not for Hume — a valid question as answering it would require going beyond the bounds of experience. Hence Hegel's interpretation of Hume's empiricism as an idealism (cf. BOWMAN, B. **Hegel and the Metaphysics of Absolute Negativity**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 138): By excluding the notion of an experience- and thus experiencer-independent world from the domain of philosophically permissible entities, Hume argues that all there (philosophically) is, is experience and thought based on it. So when Hegel argues that Humean empiricism is an 'idealism' (HEGEL. **Geschichte der Philosophie III**, p. 279), he suggests that empiricism's notion of thought — i.e. that all thinking is based on ideas that are based on particular instances of sensual experience — structurally coincides with its notion of reality: All there is ontologically (i.e. in terms of thought and reality) according to empiricism are particular, differentiated instances of experience. This defines Hegel's ontological reading of empiricism, i.e. as an account of what there universally and necessarily, i.e. ontologically, is.

⁶⁸ HEGEL. **Encyclopedia Logic**, §37, p. 76.

⁶⁹ HEGEL. **Encyclopedia Logic**, §37, p. 76. In contrast to empiricism and its explicit commitment to particularities, Spinozist rationalism champions an explicit notion of universality i.e. it (onto-)logically begins with it when it finds it 'oracle-like' as a universal in consciousness.

what is substantial and therefore truly actual. [...] Therefore [the singular thing] does not have genuine actuality.⁷⁰

Since the universality of Spinoza's substance is all there ontologically is,⁷¹ it cannot explain the logical independence and thus irreducibility of particularity: What seems like particularity (i.e. the *modi*), is truly universality in disguise: Substance's *modi* 'are' substance and thus universality. If the *modi* were not substance, they would not be. So while the universal might manifest itself in the form of particular *modi*, it remains (with) itself in doing so: One cannot think *modi* and substance at the same logical time because this would suggest that the *modi* cannot be reduced to substance. According to Hegel, this entails that to Spinozism, particularity is 'not' irreducibly real because it can (and must) be explained in terms of universality.⁷² And if substance ultimately explains away particularity, substance itself is without particularity and thus 'nothing particular:' It is empty.⁷³

While the ontology of Spinozism is the exact opposite of empiricism's insistence on the irreducible reality of particularity, so Hegel, it is equally self-undermining: Both empiricism and Spinozist rationalism⁷⁴ tragically fail to account for the ontological opposite of what they begin

⁷⁰ HEGEL, G.W.F. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy: The Lectures of 1825-1826 Volume III Medieval and Modern Philosophy**. Brown, R.F. (Ed.); Brown, R.F.; Stewart J.M.; Harris, H.S. (Transl.). Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, 153-154.

⁷¹ Cf. "There can be, or be conceived, no other substance but God." (SPINOZA. **Complete works**, p. 224).

⁷² For Hegel, particularity is the opposite of universality, individuality is the unity of the two: Universality individualises itself and is the opposite of particularity. While Spinoza does argue that the universal substance manifests itself in form of particular or individual *modi* (SPINOZA. **Complete Works**, p. 227), Hegel thinks he cannot explain how these could be real if the only truly real entity is universal substance: If *modi* are ultimately substance, then they are not 'just as *modi*.' Faced with the decision whether substance or *modi* are what is ultimately the case, Spinoza must opt for substance since otherwise, substance would be limited by (i.e. horizontally comparable with) the *modi*.

⁷³ I.e. by being everything, substance is nothing. Against this reading, see MELAMED, Y. *Acosmism or Weak Individuals?: Hegel, Spinoza, and the Reality of the Finite*. In: **Journal of the History of Philosophy**, Volume 48, Number 1, January 2010, p. 77-92. (From Hegel's point of view, Melamed's doctrines 'A. - D.' (MELAMED, *Acosmism*, p. 90-91) are at best metaphorical, at worst illegitimate ways of speaking that Spinoza uses to communicate his insight into God's all-encompassing, universality-only nature in response to philosophical debates of his day. The fact that Spinoza talks about individuality does not automatically entail that he can *deduce* it. One or a variety of "infinite *modi*" (ibid.) that cannot be reduced or explained in terms of God, seems to undermine God's universality: If there is a truly infinite *modus*, it can be but God and is therefore no *modus*.)

⁷⁴ Hegel thinks Leibniz's monad-based metaphysics undermines itself for reasons related to the instability of the category of 'mechanical objectivity:' The monad is all of reality and *at the same logical time*, it is one of many differentiated individuals. Since Leibniz cannot explain this dual status of the monad(s) with reference to a speculative (i.e. difference-preserving, dynamic) identity, there is not justification (i.e. identification) of the monads' different roles. (HEGEL. **Science of Logic**, p. 632.)

with: Spinozism's beginning with universality entails its failure to establish the reality of particularity (i.e. the particularity of reality) while empiricism's beginning with particularity entails its failure to establish the reality of universality (i.e. universality of reality).

However, even if one grants empiricism the ontological status that it is not able to explain with its own resources, and thereby enables it to claim that particularity is 'all' there 'must' be,⁷⁵ it does not make this universality explicit: Empiricism as OT's 'content only'-ontology leaves it implicit that there is a universal and necessary reality, i.e. that there is an 'all' that must consist of particulars: Its particulars are ontologically infinite⁷⁶ so that there is no 'world' that consists of them, just the infinite particulars themselves. The mere thought of 'there are only particulars' does not imply that there is a reality 'in' which they are.⁷⁷

And unless the notion of such a universal and necessary reality is explicit, there is nothing that is defined as consisting of 'particularity only:' If there is no reality that consists of particulars only, then particulars themselves are not part of reality, they are not real. To avoid this self-contradiction, empiricism as OT would have to conceptually 'explicate' that apart from particulars, there 'also' is a universal, necessary reality that is 'all particularity.' However, it cannot do so because its defining ontological commitment is to particulars only.⁷⁸

It thus seems that while Spinozist rationalism's ontology is without particularity, empiricism's ontology does not explicate that it is an ontology, i.e. it does not explicate that there is a necessary and universal reality that consists in the particularity it implies is universal and necessary: Since empiricism's ontology is 'particularity only' 'by definition,' it cannot also be

⁷⁵ I.e. is all there must be.

⁷⁶ Cf. Kant's discussion of the first antinomy: "Yet in order to think the totality of such a multiplicity, where we cannot appeal to boundaries which would of themselves constitute this totality in intuition, we have to give an account of our concept, since in such a case it cannot go from the whole to a determinate multiplicity of parts, but must establish the possibility of a whole through the successive synthesis of the parts. Now since this synthesis has to constitute a series that is never to be completed, one can never think a priori to it and thus also through it. For in this case the concept of the totality itself is the representation of a completed synthesis of the parts, and this completion, hence also its concept, is impossible." (KANT, I. **Critique of Pure Reason**. Guyer, P., Wood, A. (Transl. and Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 474.

⁷⁷ In contrast, Spinozism does define what the world is, i.e. substance.

⁷⁸ Unlike existents, particular experiential episodes do not share in common ground(s) but prioritise difference in a similar way existents do: "Existence [...] is the indeterminate multitude of existents [...] which are relational; and they form a world of interdependence and of an infinite connectedness of grounds with what is grounded. The grounds are themselves existences, and the existents are also in many ways grounds as well as grounded." (HEGEL. **Encyclopedia Logic**, p. 192-193).

universal and necessary in the way that being a theory of ontological truth requires: It is an ontology that is none:

- (1) Ontology describes what is universal and necessary. (i.e. How all must be)
- (2) Empiricism as OT: There is only particularity and contingency
- (3) (2) is an instance of (1)

Conclusion: Contradiction: It is universally true and necessary that all is particular and contingent.

So even if taken as an account of OT, empiricism ultimately fails to explicate the universality and necessity it must imply to qualify as OT. Hegel can thus be read to have designed his own theory of ontological truth, i.e. what he calls 'the concept',⁷⁹ in reaction to Spinozism's and empiricism's perceived ontological shortcomings. 'The concept' is to explicate both, its own universality 'and' particularity, bestowing the status of reality onto both without prioritising one over the other.⁸⁰

2.8. Hegel's own ontology

Since it was impossible to deduce the respective other element from the logically prioritised one, so Hegel, both elements can only coexist when they mutually deduce each other by forming

⁷⁹ To Hegel, the concept and its freedom is everything that must be. There is nothing external to the concept. Cf. REDDING, P. **Analytic Philosophy and the return of Hegelian thought**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007, p. 185. Cf. STERN. **Hegelian Metaphysics**, p. 67.

⁸⁰ '[T]he *universal* is self-identical only in that the *determinateness* that it holds within is *sublated*, hence it is the negative as negative, it immediately is *the same negativity* that *singularity* is. And the singularity, because it equally is the determinedly determined, the negative as negative, immediately is *the same identity* that *universality* is. This, their *simple* identity, is the *particularity* that, from the singular, holds the moment of *determinateness*; from the universal, that of immanent *reflection* – the two in immediate unity. These three totalities are therefore one and the same reflection that, as *negative self-reference*, differentiates itself into the other two totalities – but as into a *perfectly transparent difference*, namely into the *determinate simplicity*, or into the *simple determinateness*, which is their one same identity. – This is the *concept*, the realm of *subjectivity* or of *freedom*.' (HEGEL. **Science of Logic**, p. 505.)

a “negative unity.”⁸¹ This unity is driven by Hegel’s ‘active’ (i.e. “spontaneous”⁸²) notion of universality, i.e. a notion of universality that is not statically defined as ‘non-particularity’ but that has the qualities commonly associated with subjectivity⁸³ or “freedom.”⁸⁴ This ‘dynamic’ or spontaneous universality is able to actively posit particularity by “negating itself”⁸⁵ into the moment of particularity and then to actively negate itself once more to return from this particularity to its universality without losing particularity on the way. Once returned from and now equipped with particularity, it is the particularity-enriched universality that Hegel calls the “true,”⁸⁶ or “concrete”⁸⁷ universality of “individuality” (i.e. “singularity”⁸⁸). (or more concretely, the idea⁸⁹):

[F]or as the negation of negation, [individuality] contains the opposition of those determinations and this opposition itself at its ground or the unity where the determinations have come together, each in the other. [...]The turning back of the determinate concept into itself means that its determination is to be *in its determinateness* the whole concept.⁹⁰

As dynamic universality, the concept thus describes the unity of itself (universality) with itself (individuality) as its own other (particularity).⁹¹ Since all determinations of the concept are forms of universality, any determinacy of the concept is “self-determinacy.”⁹²

⁸¹ HEGEL. *Science of Logic*, p. 717.

⁸² HEGEL. *Science of Logic*, p. 631.

⁸³ HEGEL. *Science of Logic*, p. 515ff.

⁸⁴ HEGEL. *Science of Logic*, p. 505. Cf. DEBOER, K. *On Hegel: The Sway of the Negative*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 75. As opposed to Spinoza’s impersonal, static yet empty substance. (Cf. MOYAR, D. *Thought and metaphysics: Hegel’s critical reception of Spinoza*. In: FÖRSTER, E. MELAMED, Y. Y. (Eds.), *Spinoza and German Idealism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 206.

⁸⁵ BOWMAN. *Negativity*, p. 50.

⁸⁶ HEGEL. *Science of Logic*, p. 615.

⁸⁷ HEGEL. *Science of Logic*, p. 585.

⁸⁸ HEGEL. *Science of Logic*, p. 505.

⁸⁹ “Now it must certainly be conceded that the *concept* is *as such* not yet complete, that it must rather be raised to the *idea* which alone is the unity of the concept and reality; and this is a result which will have to *emerge* in what follows *from the nature of the concept itself*.” (HEGEL. *Science of Logic*, p. 518.)

⁹⁰ HEGEL. *Science of Logic*, p. 548.

⁹¹ Cf. KOCH, A. *Sein – Wesen – Begriff*. In: Koch, A.F.; Oberauer, A. und Utz, K. (Eds.). *Der Begriff als Wahrheit. Zum Anspruch der Hegelschen ‘Subjektiven Logik’*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2003, 17-30, p. 29.

⁹² Cf. MARTIN, C. *Ontologie der Selbstbestimmung*. Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2012, p. 185ff.

Crucially, this universality-generated and constantly self-constituting unity of universality and particularity is a 'process'⁹³ — its turning from universality to particularity and back into 'enriched' universality is a self-referring and thus circular, ontological (i.e. non-temporal) 'movement' in which all steps take place at the same logical time. It is in virtue of this dynamic character that it avoids prioritising one ontological dimension, be it particularity or universality, which in turn would force it to (tragically) attempt to derive the respectively other dimension from the prioritised — as Spinozism fatally attempts to derive particularity from the prioritised universality and empiricism fails to derive proper universality from particularity.

In contrast, according to Hegel's 'dynamic' theory of OT, both universality and particularity are irreducible 'and' derived:⁹⁴ The concept is always already universal 'and' always already particular. Each element is first and the origin of the other 'and' each element is second and deduced from the other 'at the same logical time': Universality is the origin of particularity — particularity is because universality negates itself into it — and universality is derived from particularity — universality is a particular dimension, it is 'not-particularity'. At the same logical time, particularity defines universality — 'universality is a particular determination'⁹⁵ — and is derived from it — particularity is 'not-universality'. The 'dynamic' character of the elements' mutual deduction and positing is crucial: Unlike rationalism's assumed, i.e. statically posited, universality, the concept's universality is justified with reference to particularity: It is what particularity is not. 'At the same logical time,' unlike empiricism's statically assumed particularity, the concept's particularity is justified with reference to universality: It is what particularity is not.

This ontology, so Hegel, is able to avoid rationalism's emptiness and empiricism's lack of universality: The concept's individuality is universal 'and' determined — it accepts the reality of both moments without positing one first and deducing the other from it, thereby declaring the posited one real and the deduced one unreal. In the concept's concrete and true, i.e. particularity-

⁹³ HEGEL. *Science of Logic*, p. 529.

⁹⁴ This simultaneity makes the concept an inherently 'speculative' notion. See e.g. STEIN, S. Hegel and Kant on rational willing: The relevance of method. In: *Hegel Bulletin*, 35, pp 273-291, p. 281.

⁹⁵ HEGEL. *Science of Logic*, p. 514.

enriched “negative unity,”⁹⁶ particularity and universality are both irreducibly real ‘and’ deduced so that ‘mere’ particularity or ‘mere’ universality only exist as “abstractions.”⁹⁷

So from the ontological perspective of the dynamic concept, both rationalism with its abstract, particularity-negating universality and empiricism with its abstract, universality-negating particularity only manage to capture one of the concept’s elements in self-undermining isolation from the respective other.

2.9. *Hegel’s theory of cognition as a special case of ontological truth*

While this explains why Hegel appreciates empiricism’s ontological commitment to particularity in the face of rationalism, one might still wonder how this relates to his criticism of empiricism as EC: If the problem of empiricism as EC was that it could not establish the universal and necessary validity of its own notion of cognition, how does Hegel’s ontology of ‘the concept’ enable him to do better? Hegel’s answer: By deriving the conceptual architecture of cognition from what is necessary and universal, i.e. the concept.

In the *Encyclopedia’s* section of ‘subjective spirit’ Hegel does just that when he describes his theory of EC: Cognition is the concept that has determined itself into “spirit,”⁹⁸ which in turn determines itself as an objective world that is to be known about on the one hand and as an embodied, minded subjectivity that cognises⁹⁹ by means of feeling, intuiting, representing, remembering, syllogising¹⁰⁰ etc. on the other.

The [spirit] has determined itself into [...] an infinite form and [is] thus [...] knowledge of the substantial totality that is neither [just] subjective nor [just] objective. [Spirit], therefore, sets out only from its own being and is in relationship only with its own determinations.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ HEGEL. *Science of Logic*, p. 212.

⁹⁷ HEGEL. *Science of Logic*, p. 508.

⁹⁸ HEGEL, *Philosophy of Mind*, §385, p. 20.

⁹⁹ This renders it an instance of what M. Bordignon calls the “speculative structure of logical-ontological determinations” (BORDIGNON, M. Contradiction or Non-Contradiction? Hegel’s dialectic between Brandom and Priest. In: *Verifiche* XLI (1-3), 2012, p. 221-245, p. 245.

¹⁰⁰ HEGEL. *Philosophy of Mind*, §446ff.

¹⁰¹ HEGEL. *Philosophy of Mind*, §440, p. 165. Cf. “Free mind, or mind as such, is reason [i.e. the concept] as it divides into, on the one hand, pure infinite form, boundless knowledge, and, on the other hand, the object identical with this knowledge. Here, this knowledge still has no other content than its own self, with the determination that the

So when the concept as spiritual subjectivity applies a variety of categories when it thinks and represents objective reality,¹⁰² e.g. being, nothing, becoming, Dasein, existence, ground, appearance, identity, actuality etc. and empirically informed representations such as sky, grass, blue, constitutional court etc., it does so always within the context of a subject-object relationship in which objectivity is the presupposed standard to which subjectivity's mind must live up to:¹⁰³ The best that the cognising subject can do is thus to map objectivity the way it (seemingly) subject-independently is.¹⁰⁴

Crucially, successful EC — i.e. knowledge — consists of the identity between the cognised objectivity and the cognising subject and is only actual because both are structurally always already the same: Both are the concept (as spirit), just in different configuration¹⁰⁵ Since the initial separation of (ignorant) subjectivity and objective world takes place 'within' the concept's self-identity and the cognising subject renders explicit the always already obtaining (individuality-based) identity between itself and objectivity by means of cognition, the structure of cognition parallels the structure of the concept: Fundamentally, cognition is the rendering explicit of the concept's negative unity of particularity and universality,¹⁰⁶ where particularity takes the form of a presupposed, cognisable world and universality the form of the cognising subject. Since the ontological, i.e. necessary and universal concept is 'behind' the ontological

knowledge embraces within itself all objectivity, that consequently the object is not something coming to the mind from outside and incomprehensible to it. Mind is thus the absolutely universal certainty of itself, free of any opposition whatever." (HEGEL **Philosophy of Mind**, §440 Addition, p. 165).

¹⁰² That have proven to be contained in but to be inadequate descriptions of the concept.

¹⁰³ Cf. HEGEL, **Philosophy of Mind**, §443: "[The way of mind is to be] *theoretical*, dealing with the rational as its immediate determinacy and now positing it as *its own*; or to liberate knowledge from presupposition and therefore from its abstractness, and to make the determinacy subjective."

¹⁰⁴ While the cognising subject essentially represents the concept's dynamic universality, the cognised object originates in the concept's particularity. See also: STEIN, S. Freedom for free: Hegel on cognition, willing, free mind and the methodological cost of finite freedom. In: Ziglioli, L.; Herрман-Sinai, S. (Eds.). **Hegel's Philosophical Psychology**. New York: Routledge, forthcoming in 2015.

¹⁰⁵ If subjectivity and object, cognising subject and cognised world, were irreconcilably different *by definition*, (as happens in consciousness (HEGEL, **Philosophy of Mind**, §413, p. 142) objectivity would not be subjectively accessible, i.e. it could not be intuited, represented, thought etc. *how it truly is* but would forever escape the subject. And if this were fundamentally the case, so Hegel's worry, *any* objective knowledge, including philosophical knowledge about the necessary and universal ontological structure of thought and reality and thus knowledge of the ontological structure of cognition itself, would be impossible. So the notion that subject and object of EC fundamentally differ contradicts the very nature of philosophy and by extension the notion of a philosophy of cognition.

¹⁰⁶ I.e. of individuality. which also informs the (ontological) idea's unity of subject and object.

architecture of EC's subject-object-relationship, i.e. is what determines itself in form of this relationship, the ontological architecture of the elements of EC is as necessary and universal as the structure of the concept itself.¹⁰⁷

So unlike empiricism's theory of EC, that has no notion of 'any' necessary and universal reality and therefore also not of the reality of cognising subject and cognised object,¹⁰⁸ Hegel's notion of EC not only explicates that the cognising subjectivity¹⁰⁹ and the cognised objectivity are themselves necessary and universal but also that they are fundamentally identical in virtue of being determinations of the one universal and necessary concept. Hegel's category of EC is thus grounded in the necessity and universal validity of its defining elements, which in turn rest on the universal and necessary reality of the concept as definition of OT.

2.10. *Cognition according to Hegel and empiricism*

This also allows for an explanation of how Hegel's critique of empiricism from the ontological perspective of the concept is at once a critique of empiricism as theory of EC and as OT: If empiricism as EC had a notion of the universal necessity of subject and world, it would not fall victim to self-contradiction because it could claim that everything is particular and contingent apart from the reality of subject and world. If pressed where their necessity stems from, the empiricist would have to describe some more fundamental, ontological structure from which to deduce them, i.e. it would have to define a most basic notion of OT that is able to account for the universality in general and for the universality of its own claims.

¹⁰⁷ Ultimately, all abstract determinations of pure thought and reality (*Science of Logic*), of nature (*Philosophy of Nature*) and of spirit (including finite, minded beings and their feelings, intuitions, thoughts, actions, art, religion and philosophy etc.) are distinct ways in which the concept manifests itself. (HEGEL, **Philosophy of Mind**, §577, p. 276). And ultimately, it is the concept as idea that actively relates to itself as "self-knowing reason" (HEGEL, **Philosophy of Mind**, §577, p. 276) via all its categorial determinations: Its self-knowing includes and takes place via finite, spiritual activity as much as it manifests itself (un-selfconsciously) as nature (HEGEL, **Philosophy of Mind**, §385, p. 20). So because there is OT'S self-knowing, there are the necessary and universal categorial determinations (logic), nature (philosophy of nature) and all spiritual phenomena (philosophy of spirit). OT is not because there are finite, minded subjects but vice versa: Finite, minded subjects are as aspects of OT's self-knowing.

¹⁰⁸ This makes Hegel's systematic criticism of empiricism more fundamental than the *Phenomenology's* critique of sense-certainty: While the *Phenomenology* assumes the existence of consciousness and (sensed) world (thereby ignoring e.g. Hume's scepticism regarding both), the systematic critique attempts to avoid assuming any conceptual framework.

¹⁰⁹ Including the categories it applies and its forms of cognition.

Hegel thinks of himself as doing exactly that when he argues that the most basic, universality-accommodating, ontological structure of the concept defines the structure of EC: The ontological elements of EC 'are' the concept and so they 'are' OT. While EC might represent a richer logical configuration than the 'just' (onto-)logical concept — i.e. the ontological architecture of minded, embodied subjectivity is conceptually richer than the concept's dynamic universality and the notion of a mind-accessible objective world is richer than the concept's particularity — EC remains defined by the concept's universal and necessary moments and their relation.

Hegel's argument against empiricism as OT is thus consistent with his argument against empiricism as EC: Empiricism as OT fails to conceptually explicate universality and necessity, i.e. it has no notion of the universal and necessary reality that it claims consists of particulars only. Similarly, empiricism as EC fails to conceptually explicate (i.e. it is 'uncritical'¹¹⁰ in its usage of) the universality and necessity of the categories that are required for having a philosophical (i.e. ontology mapping) notion of EC in the first place.¹¹¹ So in both cases, as OT and as EC, empiricism fails to explicate what is universal and necessary.

3. *Conclusion*

From Hegel's point of view, empiricism as EC is conceptually (i.e. 'metaphysically') unaware of the universal and necessary, always already implied categories that a self-consciously philosophical account of EC relies on: It has no notion of OT from which to derive its own ontological architecture. At the same time, while empiricism as OT correctly insists on the irreducibility of particularity in the face of Spinozist rationalism's all-absorbing universality, it fails to explicate the notion of the universal and necessary reality it must imply in virtue of being an ontology and thereby undermines its own status as OT.

However, from Hegel's own ontological perspective of 'the concept', empiricism rightly insists on the ontological dimension that escapes Spinozist rationalism, i.e. particularity. In

¹¹⁰ HEGEL. *Encyclopedia Logic*, §38 Remark, p. 78.

¹¹¹ HEGEL. *Geschichte der Philosophie III*, p. 223. I.e. of the categories of 'cognising subject' and 'cognised world' and of those categories that are always already at play in all cognition, such as 'force,' 'individuality,' 'particularity,' 'quality,' 'quantity,' 'existence' etc.. (HEGEL. *Encyclopedia Logic*, §84, p. 135).

contrast to empiricism's account of EC, Hegel's own is informed by a universality- and necessity-guaranteeing notion of OT: The ontological reality of the cognizing subject, the cognized world and the categories employed in the process of cognition can all be traced back to the universal and necessary concept.

So despite empiricism's inability to account for universality and the resulting ontological and cognition-concerning differences between itself and Hegel's absolute idealism, it can be argued that Hegel learned at least two major lessons from empiricism: Firstly, philosophy needs a method to derive its claims, i.e. trace them back to their ontological origins, and cannot simply 'find' its categories in consciousness. Secondly, the dimension of particularity must form part of any self-sustaining notion of ontological truth.

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