

Hegel, Adorno and the origins of immanent criticism

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Hegel, Adorno and the Origins Immanent Criticism¹

1. The German writer and critic Gotthold Ephraim Lessing recommends a little maxim by Lactantius as a guide to criticism: ‘primus sapientiae gradus est, falsa intelligere; secundus, vera cognoscere.’ One should, Lessing wrote, “first seek out someone with whom to argue; one thereby gradually finds one’s way into the question at issue, and the rest will follow of itself.”² Although there is discussion (or at least talk) of immanent criticism by philosophers of quite different persuasions, working in separate areas and in different traditions of philosophy, almost all of them agree somewhat surprisingly on the same story about the its origins. The story is so widespread, it should be familiar to anyone who knows the literature.³ It is that Hegel invented immanent criticism, that Marx later developed it, and that the various members of the Frankfurt School, particularly Adorno, refined it in various ways, and that they are all paradigmatic practitioners of immanent criticism.⁴ Continuity is the story from Hegel to Adorno, so let us call this the Continuity Thesis.⁵

There are four different claims in the Continuity Thesis that interest me.

- i. Hegel is the originator of immanent criticism.⁶
- ii. Hegel’s dialectical method is that of immanent criticism.
- iii. Adorno practices immanent criticism and endorses the term as a description of his practice.
- iv. Adorno’s dialectical method is fundamentally Hegelian.

The first two claims concern Hegel, and the second two concern Adorno’s theory and its relation to Hegel. As is usually the case with such stories that are supposed to help us make rough and ready sense of the history of philosophy, the truth is more complicated. In my view, though, this particular story is more of a hindrance than a help, and is in need of substantial revision.

2. Before examining the thesis in more detail, we must say something about the concept of criticism, and of immanent criticism, whose putative origins are in question. Concisely formulated, to criticize immanently is to criticize an object ‘on its own terms.’ This is how ‘immanent criticism’ is usually presented, and how it is summarized in the relevant entry in Ritter’s *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*: “the judgment of historical epochs, cultures, literary texts and so forth ‘according to their own standards.’”⁷ Concision is commendable, but is only to be had at the cost of considerable compression. So it will help to unpack the idea.

Let’s begin with the component notion of criticism, which is itself a multifaceted concept.⁸ There are actually seven facets worthy of comment, but I shall restrict myself to brief remarks on the four features most relevant to the present discussion. Criticism is a judgment (a), that is informed, discriminating and rational, which is always evaluative and sometimes normative (b) and nearly always negative (c) of an appropriate object of criticism, in the light of some standard (d) for a practical aim or purpose.

(a) A criticism is a judgment, which may be implicit or explicit. It need not take the grammatical form ‘s is p’ and need not even be vocalized. Throwing a stone at the window of a bank, or burning a flag, are forms of judgment.

(b) Criticisms are evaluative judgements in the broadest sense. Some are also normative, in the sense that they appeal to norms (sometimes to moral norms) and thus have implications for what one ought to do.⁹

(c) Criticism is almost invariably negative. We can see this in the Oxford English Dictionary definition of criticism, which is: “1. The action of criticizing, or passing judgement upon the qualities or merits of anything; esp. the passing of unfavourable judgement; fault-finding, censure” as evidence that criticism is virtually always negative. It is equally true however, that, in principle, criticism can be entirely positive.¹⁰ It is true of art criticism and film criticism for example, although the same holds in principle, albeit much more rarely in practice, for social criticism.¹¹ So it is certainly not a platitude that criticism is nearly

always negative. Indeed, it is a good question why in practice most criticism tends to be so.¹²

(d) Criticism, as a form of implicit or explicit judgment, has recourse to some kind of standard. For criticism is not just the passing of any old judgment, but of an ‘informed’ ‘discriminating’ and ‘rational’ judgment, and as such it rests on an appropriate standard. This idea dates back to 18th century notions about judgments of taste and beauty, but it is also firmly part of the commonplace view of immanent criticism.

3. The above characterization of the concept of criticism, as a negative evaluative judgment made on the basis of some standard can help us to grasp what it is about criticism that makes it immanent. What makes a criticism immanent is that the standard of criticism belongs *to* or inheres *in* (in a suitably specified sense) the object of criticism. This still leaves a lot of questions open, but I shall pass over these because here I am merely setting out the commonplace view of immanent criticism. On this commonplace view, criticism, by virtue of being immanent, exhibits certain virtues. Immanent criticism is supposed to be: firstly, meaningful, contentful, relevant, or applicable; secondly, persuasive, credible, and convincing; and thirdly, effective, practical, or useful. In other words, it is widely accepted that immanent criticism delivers three different kinds of goods; cognitive and epistemic goods; psychological and dialogical goods; and practical instrumental goods.

Now part of the widespread view is that immanent criticism is different from and opposed to another way of doing criticism usually called ‘transcendent criticism’.¹³ It is claimed, virtually across the board, that there are a corresponding list of vices that criticism that is not immanent, but rather transcendent, exhibits; namely it is: first, meaningless or empty; irrelevant, inapplicable; second, unpersuasive, unconvincing; and third, ineffective, impractical, and useless.¹⁴ In addition transcendent criticism is, it is claimed, apt to be paternalistic, elitist, better knowing; manipulative, imposed by force, oppressive, imperialist. In making these observations I am simply collating and curating some familiar claims made by numerous authors in different times and places. For our purposes here it is unnecessary to drill down into the detail and resolve such questions as whether, for example, immanent criticism is opposed to or inclusive of moral criti-

cism. It suffices to note that the commonplace view of immanent criticism is redolent with assumptions about merits of immanent criticism and the demerits of non-immanent, transcendent criticism.¹⁵

Hegel and the Origins of Immanent Criticism

4. Let us now turn to the Continuity Thesis and in particular to the first two claims concerning Hegel. It is striking, given how widely shared the story of its Hegelian origins is, that the term ‘immanent criticism’ is nowhere to be found in Hegel’s corpus (or Marx’s come to that.) Hegel was methodologically self-aware, and took great care with his philosophical terminology. Not only did he not call his own philosophy or philosophical method ‘immanent criticism,’ he did not and would not call any of his mature philosophies works of ‘criticism’. Of course, some commentators even recoil at the suggestion there is such a thing as a philosophical method in Hegel, on the grounds that Hegel is loath to construe his own dialectic as a formal method or “lifeless schema” that can be carried out on any content, because, as he puts it in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, scientific cognition “demands surrender to the life of the object”, where a lifeless method would be “merely the reflection of the cognitive process away from the content and back into itself” (PS 32/W 3, 51). Nevertheless, it can be argued that Hegel had a method, the one he labels in the Science of Logic the “absolute method of knowing” (SL 28/W 5, 17). And one can describe this method more or less aptly, as Michael Forster does: “it is a method of exposition in which each category in turn is shown to be implicitly self-contradictory and to develop necessarily into the next (thus forming a continuously connected hierarchical series culminating in an all-embracing category that Hegel calls the Absolute Idea).”¹⁶ Forster’s description captures the structure and movement from one shape of consciousness to the next Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, and the dynamic of Hegel’s Logic in the chain of transitions from one category to another.

Anyway, call it a method or not, Hegel has detailed and determinate ideas about how to do philosophy, and he refused to call any of the approaches that he developed in his mature work ‘criticism’.¹⁷ He called them simply “Science” [*Wissenschaft*]: in the case of the *Phenomenology*

of Spirit 1807, which was the first part of “The System of Science”, “The Science of Logic” 1812-16, and “The Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Science” of 1817/1832. Hegel reserves the term “criticism” and “critical philosophy” exclusively for the philosophies of Kant, Fichte and Jacobi whose methods and approaches to philosophy he rejects. Furthermore, famously, in the preface to his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* he counsels that the properly philosophical task is “to comprehend what is” rather than to “instruct the state on how it ought to be” (PR 23/W7, 27-8). The proper task of Science, as Hegel understands it, is that of traditional metaphysics, to comprehend what is. So if criticism “an informed, negative evaluative judgment of an appropriate object of criticism” and is immanent when the standard of criticism is internal to its object, then it looks like Hegel denies that the proper task of philosophy is criticism immanent or not: its proper task is that allotted to it by classical metaphysics, to comprehend being.

In the light of all this, we can see that thesis i. is false, if it implies that Hegel coined the term “immanent criticism” or even that he was the first to develop a conception of ‘immanent criticism’ if developing a ‘conception’ implies he used the term or welcomed it as a description of his philosophical practice.

5. If Hegel did not use the term ‘immanent criticism,’ and a fortiori did not invent the term, we might ask who did. It is a hard question to answer definitively. The answer given in the entry on ‘immanente Kritik’ in the *Historisches Wörterbuch*, which is usually an impeccable source, is that the earliest recorded use of the term in German occurs in Walter Benjamin’s 1919 doctoral dissertation on ‘The Concept of Art Criticism in German Romanticism’.¹⁸ Although this puts the first use of the term suspiciously late, it has a certain plausibility. Schlegel’s idea of criticism bears some striking resemblances to the commonplace view of immanent criticism. On Schlegel’s conception criticism is, first, not based on any external rule. (Schlegel presumably has in mind rules such as those of French neo-classical drama, the unities of time, place and action supposedly derived from Aristotle, which came to be treated as norms governing the composition of tragedies.) Second, it does not consist in a judgment or evaluative assessment of the art work.¹⁹ On the basis of this evidence some scholars infer that the term (and the idea) worked its

way from Benjamin into Frankfurt School critical theory, which is also plausible since Adorno was familiar with Benjamin's thesis, even though he did not share the Benjamin's enthusiasm for the early Romantics.²⁰

Unfortunately, almost everything in this story is wrong. As Adorno put it: "Truth is Objective, not plausible"²¹ There are uses of the term 'immanent criticism' as early as the 1840s. For example, F. A Trendelenburg, a trenchant critic of Hegel's logic claims in his book, *Die logische Frage in Hegel's System* (1843), that all his various objections to Hegel's *Phenomenology* "stem from an immanent criticism of the concept, to use the terminology of the school, from its own demands claims and consequences." Trendelenburg's phrase "um mit der Schule zu reden" which refers back to the noun phrase "immanent criticism of the concept" suggests that this is current jargon among the Hegel school.²² Indeed it was. Karl Rosenkranz, the pupil of Hegel, in the introduction to his *History of Kant's Philosophy* asserts that Hegel "proved the interrelation of the categories on their own terms, and determined the value of each one by means of an immanent criticism of the progress of the Idea."²³

Here are two examples of the term 'immanent criticism' being used nearly 80 years before Benjamin's doctoral dissertation. (Benjamin, even as he gives the term his own distinctive twist, must have known that the term was current in the latter half of the 19th Century.) Notice also that it is being used in two distinct senses. In the first example, the term is used in the slender, commonplace sense. Trendelenburg, who appears to endorse the term and use it himself, most assuredly does not equate it with Hegel's dialectical method, which he repudiates. He criticizes Hegel for violating the principles of Aristotelian logic, which Hegel himself claims to accept, and thereby refutes its claim to be 'scientific'.²⁴ In the second example, Rosenkranz uses the term in a much thicker sense which he explicitly equates with the dialectical method by which Hegel deduces the categories through the development of the absolute Idea. These two different senses: the slender commonplace sense and the thick Hegelian sense, are distinct, for the former notion does not presuppose Hegel's conception of philosophy and can be held by any non-Hegelian, while the latter does and cannot.

6. In many ways the more interesting and substantial question concerns not the origin of the term, but the origin of the idea, which may not be coeval. It is well known, for example, that Hegel on numerous occasions endorses the idea that criticism is the better for being based on the opponent's presuppositions. Take the following passage from the Science of Logic:

[T]he refutation must not come from the outside, that is it must not proceed from assumptions lying outside the system in question and which it does not accord with (denen es nicht entspricht). The genuine refutation must penetrate the opponent's stronghold and meet him on his own ground. No advantage is gained by attacking him somewhere else and meeting him where he is not.²⁵

This passage is about how to construct a self-grounding system of absolute philosophy. But it also propounds a version of the commonplace idea: the best way of refuting a philosophical system such as Spinoza's, Hegel claims, is to do so on its own grounds. So certainly Hegel has the commonplace idea of 'immanent criticism.' And even if he does not call it 'immanent criticism' he endorses it as a good method of philosophical criticism. Nevertheless, this does not support the claim that Hegel *invented* that idea. He was not the first to come up with it. Indeed, it was a philosophical commonplace in his day, and long before, that argument is the more successful at convincing people for being based on premises avowed by the opponent, or on the premises of the opponent's philosophical system. It might be claimed for example that this is the characteristic feature of the Socratic method of argumentation, and that therefore 'immanent criticism' in the commonplace sense originates with Socrates.²⁶

7. But 'immanent criticism' as we have seen was also understood in the much richer sense as designating Hegel's dialectical method, the method that Hegel calls Science. It is of course much more plausible, not to say uncontroversial, to claim that Hegel originated the idea of 'immanent criticism' in that sense. All of which brings us to thesis ii, and the various difficulties that it poses.

Let us note, though, that thesis i cannot be rescued by interpreting it as a thesis about 'immanent criticism' in the rich Hegelian sense. For, once the notion of 'immanent criticism' is used to refer

to Hegel's dialectical method, then it turns out that Hegel is being proclaimed to be the inventor only of the Hegelian dialectic, which no-one disputes. In other words, this interpretation salvages the truth of thesis i. only at the cost of rendering it uninteresting.

Still, the question of origins aside, it is well worth examining whether there is any merit in the claim that Hegel's dialectical method is that of 'immanent criticism'. We have already seen that some interpreters of Hegel, like his follower Karl Rosenkranz, do claim that Hegel's dialectical method takes the form of an immanent criticism of the concept. And in more more recent times, several prominent Hegel scholars have made similar arguments.²⁷ The claims being made here, on pain of being uninformative, must be claims about 'immanent criticism' in the slender commonplace sense. But what are we to make of the argument that Hegel's dialectical method consists in immanent criticism in the slender commonplace sense? Or perhaps the argument is that the slender idea of immanent criticism is an essential feature of the Hegelian method, along with other more substantial components. To answer such questions we need to look in more detail at Hegel's dialectical method.

8. Hegel calls the microstructure of the dialectical transition between shapes of consciousness or concepts an '*Aufheben*' or 'sublating', a transition which he explains thus: "Das *Aufheben* exhibits its true double meaning which we have observed in the negative: it negates and at the same time preserves."²⁸ Taking Hegel's description as the last word one might think that this transition is merely a concurrence of change and persistence somewhat like what Aristotle calls 'nature' in the *Physics*.²⁹ But this is not so. Hegel's *Auf-heben* is also crucially an *Up-lifting*. The prefix 'auf' meaning 'on,' 'up' or 'upon' is not idle. The transition from shape of consciousness (or category in the Logic) to another involves a necessary movement upwards to something better and higher. I'm going to call this upwards movement dialectical ascent, though one has to be careful with that designation.

I don't mean by that an erotic ascent à la Plato, whereby lower forms of thought seek the higher for the sake of the higher.³⁰ There is no Platonic heaven where the ideas are. If anything the ascent in Hegel is driven from below. What makes the upwards movement necessary, according

to Hegel, is the internal contradiction in the initial category, a contradiction that it has merely by virtue of being finite (W 8, 172).

We can see what Hegel calls the contradiction in the finite in the very first transition of Hegel's Logic: Being, Nothing: and Becoming (W 8, 181). Hegel divides the dialectic into two moments. The first is the "*dialectic*," strictly speaking, which is the moment of the "self-sublation of a finite category" and its "passing over into its contrary". This is what happens in the case of pure being, which because of its indeterminate immediacy passes into its opposite, nothing, which is what it is. The second moment is the "*speculative*" or "positive-rational" moment, which represents the unity of the previously opposed categories. Both the first moment, the dialectical moment strictly speaking, the passing of one finite category into its contrary, and the second, speculative moment, where the opposition is reconfigured as a higher unity, are essential to Hegel's 'dialectical method'. My claim that there is an ascent is supposed to rule out that this a process of collapse and recuperation. Rather the transition marks a gain in complexity, refinement, stability, and coherence on the initial category and thus marks epistemological and ontological progress. A dialectical transition without uplift and ascent, without these gains is simply not *dialectical in Hegel's sense*.

In its macrostructure too, Hegel's dialectic is, just as much as its ancient predecessors, an ascent, in Hegel's case, an ascent towards the end of absolute knowing. Hegel is a teleologist of the modern world and for him, just as for Aristotle, the final end is the highest and the best.³¹ However in Aristotle (as in Plato) dialectical ascent is a movement from concretion and particularity towards increasing abstraction and universality, whereas the movement in Hegel is a d³²velopment from abstract particularity to concrete universality (for example the *Phenomenology of Spirit* traces a path from sense-certainty to absolute knowing.) And indeed, Hegel's teleological metaphysics is structured very differently to Aristotle's. Hegel's system is not pyramidal in form, but circular. In macrostructure the chain of transitions between logical categories (or shapes of consciousness) forms a self-completing circle. Thought thus moves onwards and upwards, and finally comes to itself in the absolute identity of subject and object, where it thinks itself and nothing but itself. So a dialectical transition in Hegel's sense, qua

‘speculative’ or ‘scientific,’ is not just a shift upward (in the sense that it is a cognitive gain), for that might be part of a limitless bad infinity based on the elimination of error; it is also a step in a development toward the end, i.e. a moment in a self-completing circle. But this is just to say that Hegel’s dialectic is essentially dependent on his systematic Logic and Metaphysics, and it is this that makes it superior, he claims, to the kind of sophistic, skeptical dialectic, which absent the speculative moment remains stuck as it were on the first level, and which he dismisses as “a subjective see-saw system of ratiocination to and fro” (W 8, 172).

The upshot of all this is that, if we look closely both at the micro and macrostructure of Hegel’s dialectic, we see that epistemological cum ontological ascent are essential to it, and this ascent has to be thought of both as movement away from error (or falsity) and progress towards an end.³³

9. As one would expect, much the same point can be made in respect of Hegel’s doctrine of determinate negation. Determinate negation involves two moments. There is the initial negativity, which consists, as we have seen, in the object’s or the category’s finitude.³⁴

Recall that for Hegel there is only one absolute spirit and one absolute idea, and it is only here that the object truly and perfectly corresponds to its concept. There is, consequently, an important contrasting sense in which every finite thing, and every finite category is false.³⁵ This is the first moment. Ontological negativity or falsity resides in the fact that each finite individual thing is only what it is by virtue of its relations to other things, which it is not. Conceptual negativity consists in the fact that each finite individual concept (or object) only means what it does by virtue of its relations to all the other concepts (objects) from which it differs.³⁶

The second moment is the negating power of thought. Thought proceeds negatively by bringing to light the non-correspondence of the object and its concept, by showing that the object, qua finite, fails fully to instantiate the concept. This failure forces thinking to come up with a new and more adequate concept of the object. This process of refinement is not a one way adjustment of thought to thing; rather, Hegel claims, “as the concept changes, so too does the object, for it

essentially belonged to this object” (PS 54/W 3, 78). The new concept preserves and reconfigures elements of the former concept at a higher level of adequacy. Moreover, something new results from this process, namely a new concept and a new conceptually determined object. Each determinate negation, the negating power of thought on the inherent negativity of finite categories, and the ontological negativity of finite things, yields a positive result.

The dialectic has a positive result, because it has a determinate content, or because its result is in truth not the empty, abstract nothing, but the negation of certain determinations, which are contained in the result...” (W 8, 177).

So, determinate negation involves not just a cancellation and a preservation of something that already obtains, but also the production of something **new, higher and better**.³⁷

Hegel’s point of contrast is abstract negation a process by which something is dismissed, as if destroyed. Michael Rosen uses the nice example of the wiping clean of a blackboard, no matter what is written on it. Determinate negation differs in two respects. Unlike abstract negation determinate negation adapts itself to, and engages with, its objects; and unlike abstract negation it produces something new, like the chiseling away of marble (to use the Plotinian metaphor for negation) which always leaves a new shape. Rosen is quite right to insist that the productivity of negation, the positive result, is present from the first moment, not isolated in the second negation, the negation of the negation.³⁸ However, we must add something to Rosen’s account, for negation can be thought of as adaptive and productive, always engaging with its objects and giving rise to new shapes, and yet as a moment of what Hegel thinks of as a bad infinity. As I see it, the positive result is not just the production of a new shape, but, crucially, a gain in determinacy, only because it is both movement away from error and a movement towards the end, the true, or the absolute idea. There can be no determinate negation, and hence no Hegelian dialectic, without uplift and ascent, and no uplift and ascent without Hegel’s whole system. What a thing is in truth is unfolded and developed in the context of its relation to all other things, and can properly be known only in its full development.³⁹ The crowning moment of the logic of the concept is the absolute idea: “the true content is nothing but the whole system, whose development we have all this while been observing” (W 6 389).

10. Our exposition has shown that Hegel's dialectic and its component ideas, 'Aufhebung' and 'determinate negation,' are freighted with the much more heavyweight philosophical and ontological commitments of Hegel's absolute idealism.⁴⁰ In the final analysis, both notions depend essentially on Hegel's systematic Logic and Metaphysics, and they cannot be detached from this context without losing the specific sense that Hegel gives them.

Now it almost goes without saying that this heavyweight theory is no part of the slender commonplace idea of immanent criticism, which claims only that the critical judgment be based on a standard internal to its object. There is indeed a parallel with how Hegel thinks of negation (both first and second negation) as adaptive to its object, and this feature of Hegelian negation might be considered to be part of the slender idea immanent criticism. For criticism that is immanent also adapts to its object in that it is based on a standard inherent in the object. But the parallel obtains between negation and criticism, and it to be expected because what is true of negation, is also true of immanent criticism qua negative evaluative judgment. However, the further ideas that negation produces a positive result, and the ideas of uplift and ascent that are essential to Hegel's dialectic and its component notions of *Aufhebung* and determinate negation form no part of the commonplace idea.

11. How does this inquiry into Hegel's dialectical method bear on the first two claims of the Continuity Thesis? Well we can now see that:

- i. Hegel is not the inventor or originator of immanent criticism in any interesting sense. The slender, commonplace idea of immanent criticism, dates back at least to Socrates.
- ii. Hegel's dialectical method cannot be reduced to the commonplace idea of immanent criticism. That would give a Bowdlerized account of his philosophical method.

The Hegel side of the Continuity Thesis looks *prima facie* plausible because the following rather different and more modest claims are true. Hegel has the concept of immanent criticism in the sense that he subscribes to the commonplace idea. He puts this notion into practice in his

criticisms of other philosophical positions. Finally, one feature of his account of negation in general, holds for the richer idea of immanent criticism understood as a negative evaluative judgment of an appropriate object on the basis of a standard inherent in it.

Adorno and Immanent Criticism

12. Let us turn to the Adorno side of the continuity thesis, and examine its two claims. Adorno welcomes immanent criticism as a description of his critical theory (CT iii).

Adorno often welcomes the description of his own philosophy as ‘immanent criticism.’ He endorses the view that criticism is the better for being immanent and likes to present himself as an immanent critic. Adorno writes “The dialectical procedure is immanent criticism,” and he approvingly cites the very passage of Hegel’s ‘Science of Logic’ cited above, which begins “[T]he refutation must not come from the outside...” where Hegel endorses the commonplace idea of immanent criticism.⁴¹ Consistently with his conceiving his own approach to be one of immanent criticism, Adorno can be found repudiating transcendent criticism.

It was transcendent and not immanent critique that clings rigidly to that standpoint, whose very fixity and arbitrariness of which, philosophy turned against in equal measure. Transcendent critique sympathizes with authority in its very form...” (HTS 146/GS 5 374).

We have seen that there are two distinct conceptions of immanent criticism: the slender commonplace notion, and the thick Hegelian notion, which occur in the literature from at least 1840 onwards. Adorno does not distinguish between these. Rather, he conflates the two. Nonetheless, they are distinct and Claim iii of the Continuity Thesis can refer to either notion. So we must first ask whether Adorno embraces the slender commonplace view. The answer to that question is: Yes, for the most part he does. For example, in an essay written in 1949 he claims: “The procedure is immanent, because it takes the objective idea of a work, whether it is

sociological, musical or literary, and ‘confronts it with the norms which it has crystallized itself.’” (P 31/GS 10.1 26) Secondly, we must also ask whether Adorno conceives his own approach to philosophy as immanent criticism in the thick Hegelian sense. The answer to this question is, for the most part yes. In “Cultural Criticism and Society” written in 1949, Adorno defends “the immanent procedure (of cultural criticism - GF) as the more essentially dialectical” in a passage where he treats ‘immanent criticism’ as equivalent with Hegel’s dialectic (P 32/ GS 10.1, 27). Later, in the Dedication to *Minima Moralia* he claims that his method was “schooled in Hegel” (MM 16/GS, 4, 14.) Given that this work is explicitly anti-systematic, one infers that by ‘method’ here he means the dialectic.

Moreover, there is a lot of indirect evidence pointing to the same conclusion. At the same time as embracing ‘immanent criticism’ he welcomes Hegelian notions of ‘Aufhebung’ and ‘determinate negation’ as descriptions of his own critical theory, as he does in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, where he avers that the “adjustment to reality and adaptation to power”, that critical theory opposes, are processes “of liquidation rather than sublation, of formal rather than determinate negation.” (DE 205/GS 3, 231) Elsewhere he writes: “Insofar as philosophy determines, contra Hegel, the negativity of the whole, philosophy ultimately fulfills the postulate of determinate negation, which is the position” (HTS 87/GS, 5, 324-325). Not Hegel, who tries to develop the concrete universal conceptually by means of it, Adorno suggests, but rather he, who repudiates Hegel’s system, is the true inheritor of determinate negation. In brief, Adorno thinks of his own approach as an immanent criticism of Hegel. But where Trendelenburg, who explicitly repudiates Hegel’s dialectic and his system, conducts an immanent criticism of Hegel in the slender commonplace sense, Adorno does something quite different: He attempts to rescue *Hegel’s dialectic* from the system. For example, he says in the conclusion to *Hegel Three Studies*, that “Hegel violates his **own conception of the dialectic, which** should be defended against him...” (HTS 147/GS, 5 375). In other words, Adorno’s conceives of his own philosophy, as an immanent criticism of Hegel in the rich sense.

This view of Hegel’s immanent criticism, as a version of Hegel’s dialectic, is widely shared among Adorno scholars. Brian O’Connor claims that Hegel’s method is a version of Hegel’s

dialectic qua immanent criticism, one that deploys the notion of ‘determinate negation’.⁴² Rahel Jaeggi, claims outright that “Adorno’s negativism is a *dialectical negativism* in the tradition of immanent critique (in the strong, Hegelian sense).⁴³

13. So Adorno at various places embraces immanent criticism in both senses and conceives of his own approach as immanent criticism. That said, even if we confine our consideration to Adorno’s explicit statements on the matter, the evidence about whether Adorno does (never mind whether he should) embrace the approach immanent criticism his own is messier and more conflicted than these interpretations would suggest. In an important essay written in 1949 Adorno writes: “The alternatives - either calling culture as a whole into question from outside under the general concept of ideology, or confronting a culture with the norms that it has crystallised out of itself, cannot be recognized by critical theory. To insist on the choice between immanence and transcendence is a relapse into the traditional logic which was the object of Hegel’s polemic against Kant” (P 31/ GS10.1, 25). This looks like an acknowledgement that immanent criticism taken alone will not do the job that a critical theory of society asks of it, and has to be supplemented by some form of transcendent criticism.

In *Hegel: Three Studies* Adorno makes the claim that the essays there are preparations “for a revised conception of the dialectic”(HTS xxxvi). This raises the questions of in what respects, and how far, is Adorno’s dialectic revised, and of what relation the revised (negative) dialectic has with Hegel’s? It leaves open whether these revisions are so radical as to break completely with the Hegelian dialectic.

From around 1950, I suggest, Adorno is increasingly troubled by the notion of immanent criticism. He is also increasingly preoccupied by forms of transcendence, as is evidenced by the ‘theological’ images of transcendence, redemption, and utopia that come to leaven his later writings. Indeed, he is even tempted by the possibility of a transcendent criticism of society. Adorno writes in *Minima Moralia*: “The only philosophy which can be responsibly practised in the face of despair is the attempt to contemplate all things as they would represent themselves from the

standpoint of redemption” (MM247/GS 4, 283). Somewhat later, in *Negative Dialectics*, he claims that “No light falls on people and things, in which transcendence is not reflected” (ND 404-5/GS 6, 396). In *Probleme der Moralphilosophie*, he writes in praise of the sublimity and infinity of Kant’s moral law and remarks approvingly that “A philosophy like Kant’s...evidently does not repeat what occurs in social reality, but has the tendency to level criticism at existing society and to hold out to it another image of the possible, or an imageless image of the possible” (PDM 224/PMP 151). Only the last of these is an explicit endorsement of the virtue of transcendent criticism, but the assertion that philosophy must contemplate things from the standpoint of redemption, and attempt to understand this world in the light of transcendence nevertheless sit ill with the assumptions that he (or his philosophical method) is at bottom Hegelian, and that his method is that of ‘immanent criticism’ on either conception of it.

Although such passages are less frequent than others where Adorno is happy to play up the Hegelian origins of his thought, and to endorse immanent criticism, they are no less important. They are deeply rooted in his thought. For this reason, Andrew Buchwalter has gone so far as to argue that Adorno’s use of the terminology of ‘immanent criticism’ is a sleight of hand, since “he embraces a concept of immanence that is little more than a code-word for transcendence.”⁴⁴ Buchwalter makes two claims. He concludes, controversially, that Adorno is (like Hegel!) an exponent of transcendent critique. But he also allows that Adorno practices immanent critique, for he rejects the idea that criticism if it is not immanent, must be transcendent, and argues that Adorno’s considered view is that criticism must be both.

I don’t agree with Buchwalter’s conclusions, though his interpretation has the merit of being sensitive to discrepant textual evidence and lines of thought that subscribers to the Continuity Thesis ignore or downplay. In my view, transcendent criticism is conceptually opposed to immanent criticism in the commonplace sense. The two cannot be combined. Moreover, transcendent criticism as it is normally conceived, is not such as can be incorporated into immanent criticism in the rich Hegelian sense either, because transcendent criticism is incompatible with Hegelian negation, and determinate negation in particular. Hence, Buchwalter’s brave attempt to find a overall interpretation which accounts for all the conflicting evidence, won’t wash.

By contrast my interpretative claim is more modest. I neither claim to be able to identify a point where Adorno makes a clean break with the notion of immanent criticism that he had hitherto endorsed, and switches to transcendent criticism instead; nor do I attribute to Adorno a hybrid conception of criticism that is both immanent and transcendent.⁴⁵ My argument is just that from about 1950 onwards, Adorno's begins to doubt the viability of immanent criticism (on either conceptions of it) as an approach to critical social theory, and that these doubts move him to problematize a the conception of criticism that he had hitherto somewhat naively endorsed, and to explore alternatives to it. However, he does not do this consistently. And he does not manage to work out an adequate answer to the problem.

14. So what are the reasons that shake Adorno's confidence in the virtues of immanent criticism? They are two fold. The first is that Adorno becomes sensitive to the implications of his diagnosis of social reality as pervasively evil, that is, to a view of society as a single integrated system that is completely denuded of worthwhile ends, and fully instrumentalized, such that no part of it is immune from complicity with forms of domination that reached their abominable culmination in the Final Solution, and that, in his view, persist also in post-war civil society.⁴⁶ I call this position austere negativism. The diagnosis is set out vividly in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) and is the backdrop to *Minima Moralia* (1951). In that book it is expressed in hyperbolic aphoristic pronouncements such as:

There is no right living in the false life...

The whole is the untrue...

There is nothing innocuous left...

In my view, these should be read these as literally true statements about what Adorno considers to be an actually existing, though extreme, state of affairs (MM 18, 32, 25). The same line of thinking occurs in *Negative Dialectics* (1963) in the idea that the "context of immanence" just is the "context of delusion" namely the very context from which critical theory has to break free

(ND 406/GS 6 393). If society, as Adorno maintains, is a self-maintaining whole, and if it is also pervasively and irredeemably evil; if nothing in it is free from complicity with the atrocities which have taken place in its midst, then the idea that it contains reliable standards of criticism, however conceived, has to be abandoned. To the extent that they are integrated into the context of immanence, standards of criticism, whatever they are, are not transcendent enough. They are not capable of pointing beyond existing relations to a society that, were it to be realized, would be completely different to, and better than, the presently existing one. To the extent that they belong to the object of criticism – society – they are continuous with it and contaminated by it. In which case they are not the appropriate standards for a critical theory of society. Adorno correctly concludes that:

The limit of immanent criticism is that the law of the context of immanence is one with the delusion that has to be overcome. (ND182/GS 6, 183)

In such passages, it seems to me Adorno clearly acknowledges that given austere negativism, a merely immanent criticism of society will not do: for it will not realize the aim of critical theory.

I reiterate that austere negativism puts paid both to the slender commonplace idea of immanent criticism, and to the thick Hegelian one. The former idea must go, because standards of criticism by virtue of their being inherent in a radically and pervasively evil society are *eo ipso* unsuitable as a basis for that society. It is somewhat harder to see why the idea of immanent criticism as Hegelian dialectic must go. For one might think that the capacity of determinate negation to produce something new, to transform the object of criticism in the process of negating what exists, is exactly what Adorno needs, given his dire social diagnosis. A moment's reflection shows that this won't work, however. For, as we saw, in Hegel the dialectic succeeds in producing something new and better, just because it goes to work on the rational in the actual, but the inherence of the rational in the actual is exactly what is ruled out by austere negativism, by the view of society as a pervasively evil social totality. Austere negativism rules out the possibility of critical theory's deploying Hegelian determinate negation.

15. The second set of reasons for Adorno's loss of confidence in immanent criticism (in the rich Hegelian sense) has to do with his criticism of Hegel. Although, when polemicizing against various different forms of 'positivism,' neo-Kantianism and Husserlian phenomenology Adorno is wont to emphasize the continuity and the affinity between his way of thinking and Hegel's dialectic, when he reflects on Hegel's philosophy a different and more fractured picture emerges.⁴⁷

Essentially, Adorno levels two sets of objection against Hegel. The first are Hegel-logical objections. For example, Adorno criticizes Hegel's *Begriffslogik* for failing to live up to its own promise of conceiving of concrete universality. By the 'concrete universal,' Hegel means a universal that is not the result of an abstraction (by the subject) away from all particulars, and which remains distinct from and opposed to those particulars, in the way (he believes) empiricists or Kantian idealists might hold. Hegel calls the latter 'abstract universals'.⁴⁸ By contrast, the 'concrete universal' results from and consists in the self-particularization of the universal, its immersion in the particulars that instantiate it and its inseparability from them.⁴⁹ Hegel's claim is that the concrete universal, unlike the abstract universal, does not exist apart from and at the expense of particulars, but in and through the particulars. The universal does not subsume and subordinate particulars but does justice to them in its development by elevating them to their truth. Moreover, this development, Hegel claims, takes place through a process of determinate negation (SL 603/W6, 277-8). Adorno's criticism of Hegel is that, in the final analysis, the requirement of the system to establish the 'identity of identity and non-identity' betrays its aspiration to concrete universality. Particularity and non-identity are sacrificed to the system's demand for unity.

What does not tolerate anything which is not like itself, thwarts the reconciliation for which it mistakes itself. The act of violence of making others equal to oneself reproduced the contradiction which it stamps out. (ND 146)

The very idea of the whole, as Hegel understands it, claims Adorno, "is a perversion of particularity."⁵⁰ The unity of the whole is achieved at the price of violence perpetrated against the particulars and that violence, as we shall see, is not just an innocent conceptual violence according to Adorno (HTS 27).

Many of these criticisms by Adorno of Hegel's Logic and System are immanent criticisms in the slender commonplace sense. Although different in tone, in the form in which they are expressed, and in their immediate target, they are of a kind with Trendelenburg's criticism, mentioned above.

However, Adorno has other criticisms of Hegel, which are of a quite different ilk. This second group of criticism reflect Adorno's peculiar technique of reading philosophy, that he also displays when interpreting the literary works of Beckett, Kafka and Proust, and which he sums up as follows: "What these works say, is not what their words say" (AT 184/GS, 7, 274). By reading Hegelian spirit as enciphered social labour, Adorno finds in Hegel an encrypted foil for understanding and criticizing contemporary society. Adorno sees in Hegel's system and the violence it perpetrates on particulars (in spite of its aspirations to the contrary) an analogue to the presently existing social system and the real violence it perpetrates on individuals. Hegel's system, he claims, provides a model for understanding twentieth century totalitarian society *avant la lettre*, which can help critical theory to unmask and to denounce its mechanisms.

Satanically, the world as grasped by the Hegelian system, has only now, a hundred and fifty years later, proved itself to be a system in the literal sense, namely that of a radically societalized society... A world integrated through "production" through the exchange relationship, depends in all its moments on the social conditions of its production, and in that sense actually realizes the primacy of the whole over its parts, in this regard the desperate impotence of every single individual now verifies Hegel's extravagant conception of the system. (HTS 27/GS5 273)

We should not be distracted by Adorno's tendency to conflate the whole part-relation and the universal particular-relation in Hegel, nor by the fact he claims these conceptual relations prefigure the social domination of individuals in capitalist society, which seems historically and textually cavalier. We must focus on the bottom line: Hegel's philosophy, he writes "sides with the big guns."⁵¹ It is totalitarian and is complicit with actual totalitarianism. This line of criticism, then,

is anything but an immanent criticism, on either conception of it: it is, at bottom, nothing less than a moral and political condemnation.

16. These, then, are the various reasons why Adorno begins to worry about whether ‘immanent criticism’ is appropriate for his critical social theory, and they are good reasons. My claim is not just that Adorno has these worries, but that he is right to. He should not endorse ‘immanent criticism’ in either of the two senses as his approach to critical theory of society. I think that the arguments canvassed above are enough to show convincingly that Adorno’s own dialectical cannot be fundamentally Hegelian, in the sense that he cannot help himself to **Hegel’s own dialectical method**, nor to its component ideas.

Moreover, I believe that on rare occasions, in his mature work, Adorno comes to the same realization. Adorno realizes that given his critique of Hegel, and given austere negativism, he must either give the notion of determinate negation, or completely revise it, such that it no longer the Hegelian presuppositions he rejects. For example, at one point Adorno claims that an “anti-dialectical principle” governs “the inmost core of dialectics.” (ND 158/GS 6, 161) The principle Adorno has in mind is the Hegelian thesis “that the negation of the negation is positive” which, he claims is an affirmation that “cannot be sustained” (LND, 17). He realizes that what makes a negation determinate according to Hegel, i.e. what gives rise to something new, and not just new but something better and higher, is its being a moment in the development of the absolute idea.

Adorno tends to isolate as an “anti-dialectical principle” the idea that the *second* negation, the negation of the negation yields a positive result. “The thesis that the negation of a negation is something positive can only be upheld by one who presupposes positivity – as all-conceptuality – from the beginning.” (ND160/GS 6, 162) In fact, as we have seen, it is Hegel’s idea of negation, *tout court* that presupposes positivity. This means that Adorno must devise a conception of determinate negation that is quite different from Hegel’s, and which does not rely on the “positive postulate...of spirit in which everything is included” if he is to succeed in his aim (LND, 17). In my view, Adorno comes to the realization of why a new conception of the grounds of de-

terminacy of determinate negation is needed, but never manages to develop an adequate solution. He does however make two attempts in this direction.

17. The first is where he canvasses a notion of the false as an ‘index of itself and of the true’ in explicit contrast to Spinoza’s conception of the true. Spinoza’s view, which, incidentally Adorno claims to be “characteristic of identity philosophy” - the kind of philosophy Adorno opposes – is that “the true and the false can both be directly read off from the true.” Adorno’s counterproposal is that the true can be read off “the false, that which should not be” (LND, 29). This move does not work though. The reason is that, as Theunissen convincingly argued decades ago, Adorno has a quasi-medical idea of the false, qua what ought not to be, where the false is bad because it is a pathology or corruption. Such a notion of falsity depends upon an implicit prior notion of truth qua health or wholeness, for pathological notions of illness are parasitic on prior notions of health.⁵² And the latter are inherently positive notions. Hence Adorno’s own notions of the false and the bad depend illicitly on positive ideas of the true (and the good). In relaxed and offhand moments of reflection, Adorno recognizes this too. For example he writes in a letter to Thomas Mann “if it is true that the power of the positive has passed into the negative, it is no less true that negation draws its rights solely from the power of the positive.”⁵³

The second attempt is where Adorno proposes that criticism works like homeopathy. On this view, reason that wounds also heals. Thus in *Negative Dialectics* Adorno claims: “Concepts alone can bring about what the concept prevents, cognition is a τρώσας ἰάσεται.”⁵⁴ At times, he writes as if the mimetic moment in (some) works of modern art can work in this quasi-medicinal way.⁵⁵ At others, he suggests that critique can do this. However, the mere assertion that determinate negation, or more broadly, immanent criticism can work like homeopathic remedies is not convincing. Homeopathic remedies succeed (insofar as they do) by stimulating immune responses that cure illness and thus promote bodily health and well-being, but the latter are positive normative notions that have no place in Adorno’s austere negativist critical theory.

18. I submit that neither of these two related attempts to work out an alternative conception of determinate negation, and by extension, also of immanent criticism, succeeds. They fail for very

similar reasons: the model of falsity as pathology is reliant on prior positive notions. It is thus inconsistent with austere negativism. And it fails to provide an adequate account of the determinacy of determinate negation that could substitute for the Hegelian account, which Adorno rejects. Indeed, they are not arguments or solutions so much as motifs, ideas that flicker into life momentarily in Adorno's writings, and which have the merit of reflecting light on the to the real theoretical problems confronting Adorno.

Of course it could be, that were Adorno to come up with a viable alternative account of the determinacy of determinate negation, which was compatible with both his critique of Hegel and his austere negativism, this would still undermine the Continuity Thesis, for such radically revised and recalibrated notions of 'dialectic', 'determinate negation' and 'Aufhebung' would resemble their Hegelian ancestors in name only. In which case Adorno still could not claim with any semblance of validity that his own arguments against Hegel fulfill the postulate of "determinate negation" or that they defend "Hegel's own' dialectic against him. As things presently stand, that claim, and indeed the entire Continuity Thesis rests on the unreliable basis of some of the things Adorno says, which are inconsistent with what at his most insightful he is willing to acknowledge, but which, as one who does not value consistency that highly as a theoretical virtue, is nevertheless unwilling to retract.

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² *A History of German Literary Criticism, 1730-1980*, edited by Peter Uwe Hohendahl, and Klaus L. Berghahn (Lincoln Nebraska, 1988) 57.

³ What I say here about 'immanent criticism' is meant to apply equally to what other people may call 'immanent critique'.

⁴ See for example, Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York, 1986); Robert J. Antonio, 'Immanent Critique as the Core of Critical Theory: Its Origins and Developments in Hegel, Marx and Contemporary Thought', *The British Journal of Sociology* 32 (1981) no. 3: 330-345; Karin de Boer, 'Hegel's Conception of Immanent Critique: Its Sources, Extent, and Limit', in *Conceptions of Critique in Modern and Contemporary Philosophy*, edited by Ruth Sonderegger and Karin de Boer (London, 2004) 83-101; Titus Stahl, *Immanente Kritik. Elemente einer Theorie sozialer Praktiken*. Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2013; Antti Kauppinen, 'Reason, Recognition, and Internal Critique', *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, 45 (2002) no 4: 479-498; William Bristow, *Hegel and the Transformations of Philosophical Critique* (Oxford, 2007); Andrews Buchwalter, 'Hegel, Marx, and the Concept of Immanent Critique', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 29 (1991) no 2: 253-279, and 'Hegel, Adorno and the Concept of Transcendent Critique,' in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 12 (1987) no. 4: 297-328. The latter is not counter evidence to the Widespread Story, rather it presupposes it as the standard view, which Buchwalter then radically reinterprets. "My intention was not to imply that Hegel is not also a theoretician of immanent critique. Adorno is right to argue that he is. In Hegel's account, however, a concern for immanence does not rule out one for transcendence."

⁵ For some differing views on the question Marx's method see the following: Georg Lohmann, 'Marx's Capital and the Question of Normative Standards', *Praxis International* 6 (1986) No. 3: 354-372; Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (Cambridge 1996); Joe McCarney, *Social Theory and the Crisis of Marxism* (London 1990); and James Furner, 'Marx with Kant on Exploitation', *Contemporary Political Theory* 2014 doi:10.1057/cpt.2013.49.

⁶ Put so starkly, the claim is ambiguous. It can mean both that Hegel first minted the concept: it occurs first in his work. Or it can mean that Hegel was the first to develop the concept. One finds both claims in the literature. Whether either claim is true will depend what is meant by 'immanent criticism' on which more below.

⁷ This gloss is taken from the entry on 'Immanente Kritik' in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, edited by Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer und Gottfried Gabriel (Basel, 2007) Vol. 4, 1292.

⁸ See Reinhart Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise: Eine Studie zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt* (Frankfurt am Main, 1959) 87. See also the entry in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historische Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, edited by O. Brunner, W. Conze and R. Koselleck (Stuttgart, 1982), vol.3, 660. Kant gave his own technical philosophical meanings to the quasi-technical term 'Kritik' that he inherited, from English and French with referred to the scholarly practice of restoring and authenticating ancient manuscripts. One of the most important of Kant's technical meanings is to vindicate philosophical concept or principle by demonstrating the right to its legitimate use.

⁹ Not all evaluative judgements are normative. For example, nothing follows about what ought to be done from evaluative judgments such as 'The Bezier Apartments are the ugliest buildings in London,' though the judgments is evaluative, and justified.

¹⁰ The OED puts this down as a distinct, ancillary meaning of the term. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/44598?redirectedFrom=criticism#eid> I dispute that this is either a distinct sense of the word, or a different concept. Rather, I take the OED definition as confirmation that criticism although more frequently negative, can be positive, depending on the type of criticism and the kind of object in question.

¹¹ Friedrich Schlegel, for example argues that criticism is and should be, essentially positive, in that it is an elevation and perfection of the work itself, and also claims that criticism eschews evaluative assessment ‘Beurteilung’. F. W. Schlegel, *Kritische Ausgabe*, Vol. II (Paderborn, 1972) 134.

¹² In my view the practice of criticism varies according to domain, according to its object, and according to its purpose, so the fact that criticism is nearly always negative requires a topic-specific explanation. In the case of social criticism, an explanation for criticism’s nearly always being negative is readily available. Social criticism is often, as Michael Walzer rightly notes, concerned to diagnose what is wrong with social institutions or practices: “The special role of the critic,” he writes, “is to describe what is wrong in ways that suggest a remedy.” Michael Walzer, *The Company Of Critics: Social Criticism And Political Commitment in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 2002) 10.

¹³ There somewhat less agreement about what transcendent criticism is, whether for example, moral criticism is by its very nature transcendent.

¹⁴ I am here merely curating various claims that are commonly made in the literature. Axel Honneth sums up the widespread view, when he writes that “it is customary to suspect that any use of a transcendent standard forces one to adopt a perspective that is too alien, too external to the criticized object to be able to find any application within it.” A. Honneth, ‘The Possibility of a Disclosing Critique of Society. The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in Light of Current Debates in Social Criticism’, *Constellations* 7 (2000) No.1: 117

¹⁵ For some representative examples see Honneth *ibid.*; Rahel Jaeggi, "Kein einzelner vermag etwas dagegen." Adorno's *Minima Moralia* als Kritik von Lebensformen', in *Dialektik der Freiheit. Frankfurter Adorno-Konferenz 2003*, ed. Axel Honneth (Frankfurt am Main, 2003) 136; David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory* (Berkeley, 1980) 183, 184, 185; M Postone, *Time, Labour and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (Cambridge, 1996) 87; Michael Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism. Tanner Lectures on Human Values 1985* (Cambridge Mass., 1993) 39, 64.

¹⁶ Michael Forster, "Hegel's Dialectical Method" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, edited by F. C. Beiser (Cambridge, 1993) 132.

¹⁷ In his Jena period 1802/3 Hegel edited with the help of Schelling the "Kritisches Journal der Philosophie", the first issue of which has an introduction "Über das Wesen der philosophischen Kritik überhaupt, und ihr Verhältnis zum gegenwärtigen Zustand der Philosophie insbesondere". (See Hegel, *Werke* Vol. 2.) However, to my mind this shows that the eschewal of the term as a philosophical term of art designating Hegel's method in his later work is deliberate, and all the more significant. It is also true that in Hegel's Berlin period his students formed an organization called the "Berliner kritischer Assoziation" and Eduard Gans, Hegel's student founded the "Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik" which was seen, as the main organ of the Hegelian school. However this was not Hegel's initiative, and the term 'critical' is being used here in the pre-Kantian sense associated with expert scholarship.

¹⁸ "Immanente Kritik" in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Vol. 4, 1292.

¹⁹ Benjamin claims that "Schlegel freed the work from heteronomous aesthetic doctrines...by setting up a different criterion than the rule, namely "certain determinate immanent configuration of the work itself." W. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann und Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main 1972–1999) 71.

²⁰ Rüdiger Bubner, "Adorno's Negative Dialektik," *Adorno-Konferenz*, ed. Ludwig von Friedeburg and Jürgen Habermas (Frankfurt, 1983).

²¹ T. W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, translated by E. B. Ashton (London, 2000) 41.

²² F. A. Trendelenburg, *Die logische Frage in Hegel's System: Zwei Streitschriften*. (Leipzig, 1843) 25. Elsewhere he uses the term in its commonplace sense. For example he writes that we measure “ein system nicht nach fremdem Gewicht, sondern nach eigenem Maaß. Ein solche immanente Kritik muss nach dem dargelegten Zusammenhange für Spinoza um so wichtiger sein....” F. A. Trendelenburg, *Historische Beiträge zur Philosophie*, Vol. 2 (Berlin, 1845) 39.

²³ K. Rosenkranz, *Geschichte der Kant'schen Philosophie, Kant's Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. 12 (Leipzig, 1840) 161. Thanks to Matthew Wall and Iain Macdonald for this reference.

²⁴ F. A. Trendelenburg, a trenchant critic of Hegel's Logic claims that all his objections to Hegel's *Phenomenology* “stem from an immanent criticism of the concept, to use the terminology of the school, from its own demands claims and consequences.” His phrase “um mit der Schule zu reden” which refers to the “immanent criticism of the concept” suggests that this is current jargon among the Hegel school. F. A. Trendelenburg, *Die logische Frage in Hegel's System: Zwei Streitschriften* (Leipzig, 1843) 25.

²⁵ Hegel, *Werke*, 6, 250. This passage is quoted in full by Adorno in his *Against Epistemology: A Metacritique (Studies in Husserl and the Phenomenological Antinomies)* translated by W. Domingo (Oxford, 1982) 5.

²⁶ Raymond Geuss talks in passing of “a strand of ethical thought that starts...with Socrates, threads its way through Hegel ideal of ‘internal criticism’ and culminates in Adorno.” *Morality, Culture, and History: Essays on German Philosophy*, (Cambridge, 1999) 75.

²⁷ For example, Rüdiger Bubner, in *Dialektik und Wissenschaft* (Frankfurt, 1973) argues for such a reading of Hegel. Also Michael Rosen broadly supports the interpretation that Hegel's dialectic is immanent criticism, albeit, on his view “immanent critique is not so much a method as a commitment to take one's philosophical method from the exigencies of the particular critical situation.” See for example Rosen, *Hegel's Dialectic and its Criticism* (Cambridge, 1985) 39. Rosen is critical of Bubner's interpretation for not acknowledging the weightiness of the metaphysical presuppositions behind the dialectic construed as immanent critique. See also Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia*, 9.

²⁸ I'm using Kaufmann's translation of a passage from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in *Hegel: A Reinterpretation. Texts and Commentary* (New York, 1966) 33. "Das *Aufheben* stellt seine wahrhafte gedoppelte Bedeutung dar, welche wir an dem Negativen gesehen haben; es ist ein *Negieren* und ein *Aufbewahren* zugleich." W 3, 94

²⁹ Aristotle, *Physics* 2.1, 192b20–23.

³⁰ Hegel can and has be read in this Neo-Platonic way. See Cyril O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel* (Albany, 1994) for a recent and comprehensive discussion.

³¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a1.

³² This feature of Hegel's method is also implicit in Forster's characterization, from which we started. (See note 16 above)

³³ The metaphors of circularity and ascent are captured in the image of an 'upward spiral' often used to depict Hegel's system. In reality even upwards spirals do not complete themselves, so the two metaphors appear to be in tension. Whatever the limits of the spatial metaphors, or 'representational thinking' to use Hegel's term, these two (ascent and circularity) are essential features of Hegel's dialectic. Moreover, and more importantly, they are not logically inconsistent. See on this Scott F. Aitken, "The Problem of the Criterion and Hegel's Model for Epistemic In-finitism," *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 27, (2010) No. 4: 379-387.

³⁴ This is also the case in the *Phenomenology*. "In speculative (conceptual) thinking...the negative belongs to the content itself, and is the positive, both as the immanent movement and determination of the content, and as the whole of this process. Looked at as a result, what emerges from this process is the determinate negative, which is consequently a positive as well." PS 36/W 7, 57

³⁵ "The individual for itself does not correspond to its concept and this limitedness of its existence constitutes its finitude and its demise." W 8, 368.

³⁶ Hegel criticizes empiricism and transcendental idealism for ignoring this. "Thoughtless opinion regards the existing things as only positive, and holds these things fixed above the form of being itself." W 8, 196.

³⁷ Retrospectively, each category negates or denies its predecessor, but also, as McTaggart rightly points out, prospectively each category affirms its successor as its complement. John McTaggart, *Studies in Hegel's Dialectic* (Cambridge, 1896) 125.

³⁸ See for example Rosen, *Hegel's Dialectic and its Criticism* (Cambridge, 1985) 30-35.

³⁹ This is characteristic of teleological metaphysics. Compare Aristotle: "For what each thing is when fully developed, we call its nature, whether we are speaking of a man, a horse or a household. Besides, the final cause and end of a thing is the best, and to be self-sufficing is the end and the best." *Politics* 1253b31-1253a1.

⁴⁰ This is not to say that immanent criticism is to be equated with what Hegel calls 'abstract negation' either, namely with the idea that to negate is merely to remove or destroy, against which he is apt to contrast determinate negation.

⁴¹ See above note 25.

⁴² Brian O'Connor, *Adorno* (Oxford, 2013) 46 & 63. This is a good evidence, because, in this introduction O'Connor as an Adorno expert is broadly representing the entire field of Adorno interpretation. J. M Bernstein also contends that Adorno is a Hegelian, albeit not an orthodox Hegelian, but an "Hegelian after Hegel" who accepts "the rudiments of Hegelian idealism." If by "rudiments" he means the dialectic and its component ideas, he is in this group of commentators I am criticizing. J. M. Bernstein, 'Negative Dialectics as Fate. Adorno and Hegel' in *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, edited by Tom Huhn (Cambridge, 2004) 19 & 20. Commentators who oppose the view that Adorno can help himself to Hegel's dialectic and its component ideas are few and far between, but include notably Michael Rosen and Natalia Baeza.

⁴³ Rahel Jaeggi, "'No Individual can Resist': *Minima Moralia* as a Critique of Forms of Life," *Constellations* (2005) vol. 1: 75. This is not a new claim. Perry Anderson, for example, who says nothing original about Adorno, claims that, in spite of his critique of Objective Idealism, Adorno "explicitly based his major work on the procedures of the *Phenomenology of Mind*." *Considerations on Western Marxism*, (London, 1976) 62.

⁴⁴ Andrew Buchwalter, "Hegel, Adorno and the concept of transcendent critique," *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 12, no. 4 (1987): 320. Buchwalter gives a typically perceptive account of the reasons behind what he thinks of as Adorno's transcendent criticism. However, he goes too far in my view, by arguing that both Adorno and Hegel are in the final analysis exponents of transcendent criticism. He basically attaches the label 'transcendence' to the fact that the standards of criticism, on which immanent criticism goes to work, are not yet realized in actuality.

⁴⁵ Adorno can be found straightforwardly endorsing the notion of 'immanent criticism' right up to the late 1960s, even after he has thoroughly analyzed the problem the notion poses for his own critical theory. Iain MacDonald brought the following passages to my attention where Adorno endorses immanent criticism from 1962 and 1968. "Dialectics is not a third standpoint, but rather the attempt through immanent critique to develop philosophical standpoints beyond themselves and the despotism of a thinking based on standpoints." Adorno 'Why Still Philosophy' in Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, translated by Henry W. Pickford (New York, 2005) 12/ GS, vol. 10.2, 467. See also Adorno, 'Spätkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft' in GS, vol.8, 579.

⁴⁶ See Michael Theunissen, 'Negativität bei Adorno' in *Adorno-Konferenz 1983*, edited by Jürgen Habermas and Ludwig von Friedeburg, (Frankfurt am Main, 1983) 41-65, and Andrew Buchwalter, 'Hegel, Adorno and the Concept of Transcendent Critique', *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 12 (1987) No. 4: 297-328.

⁴⁷ See for example, *The Positivism dispute in German Sociology* (London, 1967) 23.

⁴⁸ See Robert Stern's "Hegel, British Idealism, and the curious case of the concrete universal", in this journal, 15 (2007) no. 1: 115-153.

⁴⁹ EPS III, #467, 227/W 10, 286-7.

⁵⁰ Theodor W. Adorno, *Zur Lehre von der Geschichte und von der Freiheit* (Frankfurt am Main, 2006) 68. See on this also Charlotte Baumann, 'Adorno, Hegel and the Concrete Universal' in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 37 (2011) no. 1: 73-94.

⁵¹ HTS 82-3/GS 5, 320. As Henk de Berg pointed out to me this is probably a reference to something that Napoleon Bonaparte is said to have remarked: "God is on the side of the best artillery." It is known that Hegel was an enthusiastic supporter of Napoleon, in the struggle against a politically fragmented, somewhat backward, semi-feudal Germany. Adorno in the Preface to "Dialektik der Aufklärung", explicitly links Napoleon with the affirmative role of philosophy and the oppressive, conquering force of the Enlightenment: "Die Philosophie, die im achtzehnten Jahrhundert [...] der Infamie der Todesfurcht einflöesste, ging unter Bonaparte schon zu ihr ueber". See *Modern German Thought from Kant to Habermas* edited by Henk de Berg and Duncan Large (London, 2012), 322

⁵² Theunissen, 'Negativität bei Adorno' 46-9.

⁵³ *Theodor W. Adorno and Thomas Mann, Correspondence 1943-1955*, edited by Christoph Gödde and Thomas Sprecher, translated by Nicholas Walker (Cambridge, 2006) 98.

⁵⁴ ND 53/ GS 6, 62. For an illuminating discussion of the origins of the trope and its use in Hegel and Adorno, see Iain Macdonald, 'The Wounder Will Heal: Cognition and Reconciliation in Hegel and Adorno' in *Philosophy Today*, vol. 44 (2000), 132-9. In *Minima Moralia*, Adorno writes, that, on the contrary. "The existing cannot be overstepped except by means of a universal derived from the existing order itself." MM150/ GS 4, 171.

⁵⁵ For example AT 289: "The opposition of artworks to domination is mimesis of domination. They must assimilate themselves to the comportment of domination in order to produce something qualitatively distinct from the world of domination."