

Part Two **Mediating the Immediate: The *Consciousness* chapters of the *Phenomenology***

Lecture 7:

**Infinity, Conceptual Idealism, and the Transition to *Self-Consciousness***

I

The last five paragraphs of *Force and the Understanding* sketch the final shape of empirical consciousness conceiving itself as understanding, and the lessons we, the phenomenological consciousness, are to learn from the achievement of this form of phenomenal consciousness as the culmination of the process of development of the others that have been rehearsed. The discussion is maddeningly compressed and telegraphic, both in its characterization of understanding conceiving itself under the concept of infinity, and in its account of how our understanding of that form of consciousness motivates turning our attention from consciousness to *self-consciousness*, and so the crucial expository transition in the book from *Consciousness* to *Self-Consciousness*.

“Infinity” [Unendlichkeit] is Hegel’s term for a distinctive structure of identity

constituted by necessary relations among different “moments”, each of which is what it is only in virtue of its relations to the others and its being comprised by the whole it is a moment of. It the final form of understanding consciousness. The alarming term “infinite” has actively misleading mathematical connotations (for us Cantorians), and unhelpful (at least at this point) theological ones. It is probably

best regarded here as a merely suggestive label. The structure of identity and difference that it labels, we are told “has no doubt all along been the soul of all that has gone before,” that is, it is the fully adequate conception of the actual structure of consciousness, which all the shapes considered up to this point (under the rubrics of empirical consciousness conceiving of itself as sense-certainty, as perceiving, and as understanding) are less adequate conceptions of.<sup>1</sup>

The principal lesson we are to learn from the final experience of understanding consciousness is that this holistic structure of identity and difference that results from this progressive process of making explicit what is implicit in empirical consciousness, which Hegel calls “infinity”, is the structure of *self-consciousness*. It is this discovery, that the key to understanding empirical consciousness lies in self-consciousness, that motivates for us the expository narrative transition from the *Consciousness* chapter to the *Self-Consciousness* chapter.

It is true that consciousness of an ‘other’, of an object in general, is itself necessarily *self-consciousness*, a reflectedness-into-self, consciousness of itself in otherness. The *necessary advance* from the previous shapes of consciousness for which their truth was a Thing, an ‘other’ than themselves, expresses just this, that not only is consciousness of a thing only possible for a self-consciousness, but that self-consciousness alone is the truth of those shapes.<sup>2</sup>

There are three claims here. Each of the “shapes of consciousness” considered up to this point, including the final one, is a conception of, a way of understanding, empirical consciousness. As such, they are forms of *self-consciousness*: ways of being conscious of consciousness. Further, “consciousness of a thing is possible only for a self-consciousness.” That is, any empirical

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<sup>1</sup> [163].

<sup>2</sup> [164].

consciousness must have some such “shape”. For it must be aware of the distinction between what *to* it things are *in* themselves and what *to* it they are *for* consciousness.<sup>3</sup> It is taught that by the experience of error. That aspect of consciousness incorporates a conception of consciousness, and hence constitutes a form of self-consciousness. This much of Hegel’s picture was already on offer in the *Introduction*. What is new is a third claim, about what becomes visible for us only in contemplating the final experience resulting in understanding consciousness conceiving its object as infinite. This is the realization that so-conceived, the object of consciousness is no longer *to* it something other than consciousness. What things as they are *in* themselves is *to* consciousness just what it is *to* itself. This is the final sense in which consciousness is revealed to us as being self-consciousness.

The challenge is to understand this claim. It is, to begin with, not a lesson understanding consciousness is in a position to learn. It is only we who are looking on over its shoulder who are in a position to understand it.

But it is only *for us* that this truth exists, not yet for consciousness. But self-consciousness has at first become *for itself*, not yet *as a unity* with consciousness in general.<sup>4</sup>

But even the phenomenological consciousness does not at this point in the book understand everything it needs to understand fully to appreciate the lesson. There are reasons why we should not expect to be able to extract a detailed characterization of this view from the brief remarks Hegel makes in these five paragraphs. I think that the principal reason for the gnomonic terseness of this brief but important part of the book is that Hegel is not pretending to lay out the view he is characterizing in any detail here. He cannot, for we do not yet understand what self-consciousness is, and will not, not just until the end of the *Self-Consciousness* chapter, but until the end of the *Reason* chapter. Only then will we be in a position to understand what it means that the final form of understanding consciousness not only *is*, like all the “shapes of consciousness” considered in the *Consciousness* chapters, a form of self-consciousness (because it is a conception of, a way of understanding, empirical consciousness), but also

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<sup>3</sup> Recall from the discussion of the *Introduction* the crucial distinction between what things are *to* consciousness and what they are *for* consciousness—unmarked in extant translations, save for Kenley Dove’s.

<sup>4</sup> [164].

understands consciousness itself *as* a kind of *self*-consciousness. The characterizations Hegel offers here are placeholders, statements we will be able to understand as ones we were entitled to at this point, even though we are not yet in a position to understand them very well. We, like phenomenal consciousness as understanding, have only the most abstract and general conception of self-consciousness available. Empirical consciousness understanding itself under the concept of infinity understands consciousness as

consciousness of a difference that is no less *immediately* cancelled...it is a distinguishing of that which contains no difference, or *self-consciousness*. I distinguish myself from myself, and in doing so I am directly aware that what is distinguished from myself is not different [from me]. I, the selfsame being, repel myself from myself; but what is posited as distinct from me, or as unlike me is immediately, in being so distinguished, not a distinction for me.<sup>5</sup>

The only feature of self-consciousness that is being invoked as that on which consciousness is now modeled is that the distinction the latter involves, between consciousness and what it is consciousness of, is a difference that essentially involves assimilating the distinguished items, as the self which is self-conscious is both nominally distinguished from and also necessarily identified with the self of which it is conscious. The functions of self as *subject* of self-consciousness and self as *object* of self-consciousness can be distinguished, as for instance when we, or Hegel, (traversing the moments) say of a less than fully self-conscious subject that there are features of the object of self-consciousness of which the self-conscious subject is not aware. That is compatible with nonetheless claiming that the two selves are identical. The task of understanding these passages is accordingly a matter of understanding what sort of identity-in-and-through-difference empirical consciousness understanding itself as infinite takes to characterize the intentional nexus: the distinction that (as we were reminded already at the beginning of the *Introduction*) consciousness essentially involves, between what things are *in*

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<sup>5</sup> [164].

themselves and what they are *for* consciousness. What sort of assimilation of the two distinguished elements, one on the side of the objective world, the other on the side of subjective activity, is it that consciousness conceiving itself as having the structure Hegel calls “infinity” performs, which *Hegel* is telling us amounts to taking the two to be two ways of regarding one thing, as the self which *is* self-conscious and the self *of which* it is conscious are one self?

Two sorts of assimilation are already on the table: conceptual realism and objective idealism.

Conceptual realism says that what things are in themselves, no less than what things are for consciousness, is in conceptual shape. So when he says that in its final form “the Understanding experiences only itself,” Hegel could mean just that what is *to* it what things are in themselves is already in conceptual shape, just as its thoughts are.<sup>6</sup> I think this is indeed part of what is meant. But only part of it. Objective idealism says that the concepts articulating what is *to* understanding consciousness what things are *in* themselves and the concepts articulating what is *to* it what things are *for* consciousness are reciprocally sense-dependent. One consequence of the objective idealist thesis is that a necessary condition of understanding the ontological structure of the objective world empirical consciousness is consciousness of is that one must also understand the epistemic activities by which consciousness becomes conscious of it. That (like the conceptual realist thesis) is certainly a sense in which in experiencing the world, “Understanding experiences itself.” It was just pointed out that conceptual realism also offers a sense in which “Understanding experiences *only* itself”: it experiences only *conceptual* contentful states of affairs, whose content can also be the content of thoughts. It is a little more difficult to see objective idealism as making it sensible to say that understanding consciousness experiences *only* itself. We can say that it experiences only what cannot be understood apart from understanding what consciousness does in understanding it.

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<sup>6</sup> [165].

I think that Hegel is here also invoking a third idealist thesis—gesturing at something not explained here, marking it as something we, his readers, will be in a position to understand only later in the book. He is doing what Sellars called “issuing a promissory note,” to be redeemed later on. When we are in a position to unfold it, the thesis is what I will call “conceptual idealism.” It is an account of the intentional nexus, that is, of the distinction (and relation) that consciousness consists in, the distinction between what things are in themselves, objectively, and what they are for consciousness, or subjectively. This is the distinction between reality and appearance, noumena and phenomena, between what is thought and talked *about* (what empirical consciousness is consciousness *of*) and what is thought or said about it. Another way of characterizing the distinction and relation conceptual idealism addresses, one that will prove particularly telling in the light of the use made of these terms in formulating objective idealism, is that it is the distinction and relation between *referents* and *senses*, between what is represented and *representings* of it. Its focus is on the process of *experience*.

It is telling that in the formulation quoted above, Hegel says that what we discover (what we will later on be able to tell, once we have eyes to see it, was already visible at this point) by looking at consciousness understanding its object as infinite is that on that conception “Understanding *experiences* only itself.” As we saw in our discussion of the *Introduction*, experience, which is the process that makes intelligible the possibility of genuine knowledge (the goal of empirical consciousness), is the experience of *error*: the unmasking of what was *to* consciousness reality, the way things are *in* themselves, as *appearance*, the way things are *for* consciousness. What still lies ahead for us readers of the book in the order of exposition, the developmental narrative of the education of phenomenological consciousness, is understanding the recollective, rational-reconstructive phase of the experience of error, by which something new becomes *to* consciousness what things are in themselves. Gestured at in the *Introduction*, this dimension of experience first officially comes on stage, darkly, at the ground level in the experience of empirical consciousness understanding itself as sense-certainty. It takes the form there of the discovery of the anaphoric-recollective dimension of repeatability, contrasting with and complementing the dimension of repeatability as

universality, required to make sense of the epistemic significance of the sort of immediacy expressed explicitly by the use of demonstratives and indexicals. It will not be fully on the table until we learn how to think about intentional agency in the *Reason* chapter. (“Reason is purposive agency,” as Hegel says in the *Preface*.<sup>7</sup>)

## II

The argument of the closing passages of *Force and Understanding* has three phases. It starts with a characterization of the lessons to be learned from consideration of the final form of the supersensible world understanding takes itself to confront: the inverted world. The second phase consists of remarks about the structure of identity in and through difference that Hegel calls “infinity.” The concluding phase is the claim that *we* can see (though *it* cannot yet) that in conceiving its object on the model of such an infinite structure, phenomenal understanding consciousness has put itself in a position to recognize itself in its object—that it has actually become a form of consciousness that does not merely presuppose self-consciousness, but *is to* itself, but not explicitly, *for* itself, a form of consciousness *as* self-consciousness. (Specifying the exact register of the state of understanding (self-)consciousness is a delicate matter. I would put it like this: Infinity has been “no doubt all along the soul of all that has gone before,”<sup>8</sup> *in-itself*. Consciousness, *however* it understands itself (as sensuous certainty, as perceiving, as understanding), has no doubt always been *self*-consciousness, in the sense we finally come to understand it. *None* of the forms of (self-)consciousness considered in *Consciousness*, including the final form of understanding consciousness, which takes its object to be infinite, recognizes *itself* in its object and so is *for* itself self-consciousness in the sense Hegel tells us *we* can recognize consciousness as being. But the *self-conception* of that final form of understanding consciousness is *in itself* self-consciousness, even though

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<sup>7</sup> [22].

<sup>8</sup> [163].

that is not what that conception is *for* understanding consciousness.) The task of understanding these crucial, gnomic passages is accordingly the task of understanding the three lessons being taught about the inverted world as the final form of supersensible world, infinity, and consciousness being in a position to recognize itself in its object, and the rationales that move us from one to the other of these three thoughts.

Here is the first thought, leading into the second:

From the idea, then, of inversion, which constitutes the essential nature of one aspect of the supersensible world, we must eliminate the sensuous idea [Vorstellung] of fixing the differences in a different sustaining element; and this absolute Notion of the difference must be presented and understood [darstellen und auffassen] purely as inner difference...

Certainly, I put the ‘opposite’ here, and the ‘other’ of which it is the opposite there; the ‘opposite’, then, is on one side, is in and for itself without the ‘other’. But just because I have the ‘opposite’ here in and for itself, it is the opposite of itself, or it has, in fact, the ‘other’ immediately present in it. Thus the supersensible world, which is the inverted world, has at the same time overarched [übergriffen] the other world and has it within it; it is for itself the inverted world, i.e. the inversion of itself; it is itself and its opposite in one unity. Only thus is it difference as inner difference, or difference in its own self, or difference as an infinity.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> [160]. I have tweaked Miller’s translation. It is important that Hegel uses “Vorstellung”, representation just where he does, and that makes it misleading to translate “darstellen” as “represent” here.



What is wrong with the inverted world [verkehrte Welt] is not the inversion, but the reification of it into a *world*—just as what was wrong with the conception of a supersensible “calm realm of laws” was the reification of laws into superfacts. In that case the mistake was to assimilate statements of laws to ordinary empirical statements, taking the former to represent something in the same sense in which the latter represent facts. The representational semantic paradigm of representings and represented (‘Fido’ and Fido) is extended beyond ground-level empirical (but not necessarily observable) statements and states of affairs to include modal statements of necessity in the form of laws or of impossibility and necessity in the case of the inverted world.

The difference between the two cases is diagnosed as a difference in the kind of state of affairs that is represented. This is what Hegel means by the “sensuous representation fixing the differences in a different sustaining element.”

The supersensible worlds are thought of as worlds just like the world of empirical facts—only supersensible.

Merely possible states of affairs (worlds) are thought of as just like the actual world—only merely possible.

(Compare the boggling Cartesian response to Leibniz’s idea of “petites perceptions,” described as just like Cartesian episodes of conscious awareness—except “inconscient”.<sup>10</sup>)

The inverted world is the result of inverting a world. But the result of doing that is not a world.

It is the world--the actual world, the only world, which is *partly* supersensible--*as* inverted.

Hegel is here diagnosing the mistake that Sellars calls “descriptivism.”<sup>11</sup>

[O]nce the tautology ‘The world is described by descriptive concepts’ is freed from the idea that the business of all non-logical concepts is to describe, the way is clear to an *ungrudging* recognition that many expressions which empiricists

<sup>10</sup> G. Leibniz, *Les nouveaux essais sur l'entendement humain*, Préface.

<sup>11</sup> In “Counterfactuals, Dispositions, and the Causal Modalities,” in H. Feigl, M. Scriven, and G. Maxwell (eds.), *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, vol. II (Minneapolis:University of Minnesota Press, 1957), §79. I discuss Sellars’s critique of descriptivism in the Introduction and Chapter 1 of *From Empiricism to Expressivism: Brandom Reads Sellars* [Harvard University Press, 2014].

have relegated to second-class citizenship in discourse are not *inferior*, just *different*.

To be a descriptivist about a vocabulary or kind of discourse is to take its characteristic expressive role to be describing (representing) how things are. One should, of course, be a descriptivist about descriptive discourse. Hegel is rejecting descriptivism or representationalism for alethic modal discourse (which, as we have seen, is the approach characteristic of contemporary possible worlds metaphysics for semantics).

The alternative he is recommending in place of descriptivism is a distinctive kind of *expressivism*. The image Hegel is working with in the passage above is that instead of picturing the exclusive contrasts in virtue of which actual states of affairs are the determinate states of affairs they are as further states of affairs, separated from the actual by being across some ontological boundary (“jenseits”), we picture them as *within* the actual, as *implicit in* it. Alethic modal statements, about what is impossible (incompatible) or necessary express explicitly something that is implicit in ordinary descriptive statements about actuality. Part of what it is to be copper, a necessary feature of copper, is to be an electrical conductor. That excludes the possibility of being an electrical insulator. Those modal features of copper are internal to it, implicit in something’s being copper. Thinking of them as facts about *another* world, a shadow world over and above the actual world is mislocating them. Modal claims, it is true, do not simply describe the actual. (Laws are not superfacts.) But that is not because they describe something else. It is because they express something implicit in the actual. They express the exclusive differences in virtue of which any actual state of affairs is the state of affairs it is.

In the final sentences of the passage quoted above, Hegel says that understanding the sense in which these determining exclusive differences are implicit in and constitutive of the determinate

identity of any thing or state of affairs will be understanding the structure he is calling “infinity.” That structure is the model for a nondescriptivist expressivist semantics that encompasses representational structure but is more comprehensive, extending to the use of concepts whose principle expressive role is not to describe how things are. A first step toward understanding the expressivism Hegel is recommending is noting that it is a version of Kant’s fundamental claim that some concepts, paradigmatically those expressed by alethic modal vocabulary in subjunctively robust conditionals such as those underwritten by laws, have as their principal expressive role not empirical description but making explicit features of the *framework* that makes empirical description possible. Since every empirical description presupposes what those concepts express, Kant says they must be knowable *a priori*, that is, in a way that does not depend on knowing whether any particular empirical description actually applies to something. They are his *categories*. In Hegel’s version, empirically describable states of affairs (possible and actual) are intelligible as determinate only insofar as they stand in relations of material incompatibility and consequence (his “determinate negation” and “mediation”) to one another. Those content-conferring relations are what are expressed explicitly by statements of law and of the relations articulating what is misunderstood as the inverted world. So they play that framework-explicating nondescriptive expressive role that Kant discovered (even though Hegel’s account of the nature and significance of that discovery is different from Kant’s).<sup>12</sup>

A further step toward understanding how Hegel’s notion of infinity differs from the Kantian idea on which it is built shows up in this passage (already cited above in a different context):

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<sup>12</sup> I discuss this Kantian categorial idea and what subsequent philosophers such as Carnap and (especially) Sellars make of it in the first half of Chapter 1 of *From Empiricism to Expressivism*, and the alethic modal case specifically in Chapters 4 and 5.

Infinity, or this absolute unrest of pure self-movement, in which whatever is determined in one way or another, e.g. as being, is rather the opposite of that determinateness, this no doubt has been all along the soul of all that has gone before...but it is as '*explanation*' that it first freely stands forth...<sup>13</sup>

I have referred to infinity as a “structure”, and in the broadest sense I think that is appropriate. But it is correct only if the term is not restricted to something static. This key claim is that infinity can only be understood in terms of the movement of understanding consciousness, which first shows up as “traversing the moments” inferentially in explanation. Statements of necessary lawful consequence and expressions of exclusive difference as noncompossibility play their distinctive role in expressing norms governing these explanatory movements of the understanding. In this game, empirical descriptions specify *positions*, while modal statements of necessity and possibility constrain *moves*. The reifying descriptivist mistake Hegel diagnoses in the last two conceptions of supersensible worlds, the realm of laws and the inverted world, is to think of specifications of the moves on the representational model of specifications of further positions—which then must be thought of as positions of a special kind. (What was wrong with the supersensible world of theoretical entities postulated by invidious Eddingtonian theoretical realism was not that theoretical entities were understood as empirically describable, just as observable ones are, but the invidious contrast between them as exclusively real and their observable expressions as mere appearance.) Thought of this way, the mistake Hegel is diagnosing belongs in a box with that made by the Tortoise in Lewis Carroll’s “Achilles and the Tortoise”: treating rules in accordance with which to reason as though they were premises from which to reason.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> [163]. “Stands forth” is translating “hervortreten.”

<sup>14</sup> “Conclusions are drawn from premises in accordance with principles, not from premises that embody those principles,” as Gilbert Ryle puts the point “‘If,’ ‘So,’ and ‘Because’”, in *Philosophical Analysis: A Collection of Essays*. Max Black (ed.) [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950] p. 328.

To understand the sense in which the modal articulation of the objective empirical world is not to be understood to be something alongside the actual world (even in a universe of merely possible worlds) but as something *within* it, something *implicit* in it, then, we must focus on the *process* that Hegel calls the “movement of the understanding.” He tells us that that movement first shows up in the development of understanding consciousness in the guise of understanding conceiving of itself as explaining. That is the process, *inter alia*, of making what is implicit in the actual empirical world as it is in itself explicit for consciousness. (“An sich” can mean both in itself and implicit, and Miller uses both translations.) It is a general principle for Hegel that we are to understand what is implicit in terms of the process by which it is made explicit. One of the reasons it is so hard to understand these concluding paragraphs of the *Consciousness* chapters is that at this point in the book we have not been told much about this process. We can bring to bear what we learned about the experience of error in the *Introduction*, and the anaphoric recollective dimension of repeatability in *Sense Certainty*, but I take it that the principal conceptual raw materials that need to be deployed to fill in what Hegel says here about the movement that reveals the understanding as infinite only become available for us in the *Reason* chapter. We are told that understanding consciousness conceiving itself as infinite is in a position to see itself in its object even though it does not yet do so. That insight is something to understanding consciousness, implicit in what it does, but not yet explicitly for understanding consciousness. Hegel discusses consciousness that *does* explicitly see itself in the world that is the object of its knowledge and the arena of its action under the rubric of *reason*:

Reason is the certainty of consciousness that it is all reality; thus does idealism express its

Notion.<sup>15</sup>

So it makes sense to appeal to what we learn by the end of the *Reason* chapter to fill in the account that is sketched in such spare terms at the end of *Consciousness*. In particular, this will let us understand the further strand of idealism that is added here: the sense in which understanding consciousness conceiving itself as infinite is in a position to see itself in the object of its knowledge, beyond what is afforded by the conceptual realism and objective

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<sup>15</sup> [233].

idealism already on board. This is what I am calling “conceptual idealism,” which is explicitly invoked in the passage just quoted.

### III

The movement of the understanding that first shows up as inferentially traversing the moments in explanation is an aspect of the larger movement that in the *Introduction* Hegel calls “*experience*.” (At the time he wrote the *Force and Understanding* chapter, the working title of the book was still *Science of the Experience of Consciousness*.)

The focus of the discussion of experience in the *Introduction* is the experience of *error*. The aspect of conceptual content on which inferential explanation turns is necessary consequential relations of the sort made explicit in statements of law. The aspect of conceptual content on which the experience of error turns is material incompatibility or exclusive difference—since the experience of error is triggered by finding oneself with incompatible commitments. The broadening of topic from what is representationally reified by descriptivist understanding consciousness as the calm realm of laws to what it representationally reifies as the inverted world accordingly corresponds to a widening of focus from one focused on explanation to one that encompasses also the experience of error.

In the discussion of Hegel’s *Introduction* I offered an account of the experience of error that was also informed by looking ahead to the lessons I take to be put in place in the later *Reason* chapter. Hegel’s conception of experience is built on Kant’s account of the cognitive activity that, as he puts it, “synthesizes an original unity of apperception.” The unity in question is a

rational unity of doxastic commitments, governed by a regulative ideal that I take to comprise three dimensions of rational obligation. Knowers have an *ampliative* rational task-responsibility to acknowledge commitment to the inferential consequences of their commitments. They have a *justificatory* rational task-responsibility to have reasons providing evidence for their commitments. And they have a *critical* rational task-responsibility to acknowledge and repair incompatibilities among their commitments. A constellation of judgments that evolves (is “synthesized”) in response to these rational demands exhibits the rational structural unity distinctive of apperception. Practical acknowledgement of these normative rational demands is the self-consciousness in virtue of which the elements of that constellation count as *judgments*, which are the unit of Kantian consciousness. They are the minimal units for which one can take rational responsibility, which is the responsibility to integrate them into a constellation exhibiting the distinctive kind of unity normatively governed by rational ampliative, justificatory, and critical obligations.

In his conception of experience as the experience of *error*, Hegel emphasizes the *critical* rational task-responsibility: the responsibility to resolve conflicts arising from the *material incompatibility* of judgments. Already with Kant, judgments are intelligible as such, as semantically contentful, just in virtue of standing in the relations of material incompatibility and necessary consequence appealed to by the rational task-responsibilities governing their synthetic integration into an apperceptive unity. Hegel is impressed by the *pragmatist* order of explanation implicit in Kant’s story: the way in which the notion of semantic content is to be understood in terms of *pragmatics*, that is, functionally, in terms of the role of (what then become intelligible as) judgments in the practical discursive process (Hegel’s “experience”) that synthesizes a constellation of doxastic commitments exhibiting a rational apperceptive unity. As we saw in discussing the *Introduction*, the rational requirement to revise one’s commitments in the face of their incompatibility gives experience the shape of a continual unmasking of what

was *to* consciousness the way things are in themselves, what it took to be the facts expressed by true judgments, as appearance, as merely what things were *for* consciousness. In addition to this emphasis on and interpretation of the significance of the critical dimension of the rational responsibilities constitutive of Kantian apperception, Hegel adds a further one that is decisive for his account of experience. It first comes to the fore explicitly in the discussion of agency in the *Reason* chapter, but its centrality is emphasized in the final account of self-consciousness as reciprocal recognition taking the shape of confession and forgiveness at the end of the *Spirit* chapter. It is a *recollective* rational task-responsibility, given prominent place at the metalevel in *Absolute Knowing* under the heading of “Erinnerung.”

The basic idea, I think, is that one cannot claim to know how things are in some respect unless one can offer a suitable explanation of how one came to know it or could have come to know it. If I claim to know what my sister in Seattle, 2500 miles away from me, is right now thinking, I owe a story about how I came by that information. (Perhaps she is texting me or talking to me on the phone.) In the absence of such a story, I am not entitled to my claim. This responsibility can, as in this case, overlap with the justificatory responsibility to have reasons for my beliefs, but is not identical to it, as Kant emphasizes in accusing “the celebrated Mr. Locke” of offering a mere “physiology of the understanding,” a causal account of the antecedents of belief, in place of a proper epistemology, which would inquire not into modes of causal transmission of information but reasons justifying a belief. I might now be able to give sufficient reasons for a belief I acquired some time ago, even though those reasons were not available to me at the time. The requirement might be part of a KK principle: one cannot know unless one knows that one knows. But it incorporates what was right about Locke’s emphasis on the processes that led to knowing. One might designate it an HK principle: one does not know unless one knows *how* one knows. Taking a candidate knower to have no idea, or a defective idea, about this would infirm the attribution of knowledge to that candidate. This much *epistemological self-consciousness* is required for the epistemic status of knowledge (the defining paradigm of consciousness). Having a belief that is *justified* by reasons, but not *vindicated* by a recollective story that rationally reconstructs a path by which one could find out that things are thus and so is, in Davidson’s terms, believing *with* reasons but not yet believing *for* those reasons. By contrast to Davidson, for Hegel what is asked for



is not a mere causal story, for that would not rationalize the conclusion. (Davidson defines the difference in brute causal terms: believing *for* reasons requires only that the justifying reasons *somehow* cause the belief.) But it is not purely an inferential matter either.

Hegelian vindicating recollective stories at the ground level of empirical knowledge have the same structure as the ones Hegel tells in the *Phenomenology* at the metalevel of “shapes of consciousness.” They exhibit a sequence constellations of commitments, each stage of which is leads to the next by a recounted experience of error. That is, each stage is found to contain an anomaly, a set of materially incompatible commitments, which might have been acquired either inferentially through the exercise of the knower’s ampliative task-responsibility to extract necessary consequences of prior commitments, or immediately, through the exercise of noninferential perceptual capacities. The next stage is reached as a result of a determinate attempt to repair the anomaly that is thereby acknowledged as such, as the exercise of the knower’s critical task-responsibility. The response to critical registration of the joint material incompatibility of a set of commitments that is *acknowledging* them *as* incompatible is practically accepting a normative obligation to *do* something to repair the epistemic situation, resolving the incompatibility. The repair phase can re-establish material coherence by revising on the one hand the doxastic commitments and on the other hand the consequential-and-incompatibility commitments relating them to other possible doxastic commitments. Revision might involve rejection of some commitments of either kind, or it might consist in less drastic adjustments and refinements. So finding oneself with commitments to the liquid tasting sour and turning Litmus paper blue, one is obliged to revise one’s acid-concept that says that whatever would taste sour is an acid and whatever is an acid would turn Litmus paper red. One might do so by further qualifying the circumstances of appropriate application one takes to articulate the concept’s content, so that only clear liquids that would taste sour count as acids, while preserving

the consequences of application. Vindication differs from justification in part by its wider scope. For recollective rehearsal retrospectively rationally reconstructs not just the development of the *beliefs* currently held, but also of the *concepts* that articulate them. On the side of the objects of knowledge, it addresses the full modal spectrum, explaining not only how one came to believe how things *actually* are, but also how one came to take the necessities and (noncom)possibilities implicit in those actualities to be as they are.

Hegel thinks that there is no safe resting-place for this process of experience. For there is no constellation of doxastic and inferential-incompatibility commitments—commitments as to what is actual and what is necessary-(noncom)possible—that is stable. *Every* such repertoire of empirical commitments is such that by applying the norms it incorporates *correctly* to the deliverances of sensuous immediacy, anomalies in the form of commitments that are incompatible according to those very norms will result. This is his version of the conceptual inexhaustibility of sensuous immediacy, the recalcitrance of empirical reality to being completely captured by determinate concepts. Every set of judgements and the concepts articulating them carries within it the seeds of its own destruction, in the form of liability to an eventual experience of error normatively requiring its repair and revision. This is part of what he means when he says that the final form of understanding consciousness takes the empirical world that is the object of knowledge to have the structure of “infinity.” This conception of the conceptual inexhaustibility of sensuous immediacy contrasts strongly with that of Kant (and his empiricist forebears).<sup>16</sup> For Kant capturing sensuous actuality conceptually in judgments is an infinite task, in the sense that whatever set of empirical judgments one has does not exhaust the empirical judgments that could correctly be made, given the intuitions one is or will be presented with. My judgments can correctly capture conceptually what I see when I look at my hand, it is just that the task of capturing it *all* will require me to make a series of judgments that is infinite in the sense of never-ending. This is what Hegel calls “bad infinity.” Construing the conceptual inexhaustibility of immediacy instead as the in-principle instability of any constellation of empirical concepts and doxastic commitments (commitments as to what material incompatibilities and consequences govern the actuality captured in judgments) means taking the experience of error to be a necessary structural feature of discursive practice. Because that

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<sup>16</sup> I discuss these two contrasting approaches to the conceptual inexhaustibility of sensuous immediacy further in “Sketch of a Program for a Critical Reading of Hegel.” [ref.]

experience is the unmasking of what was to consciousness reality as actually appearance, what things were taken to be in themselves as merely what they were for consciousness, it is a commitment to “appearance as the passing away that does not itself pass away,” a structured sequence of what turn out to be phenomena.<sup>17</sup> The study of that structure of experience is phenomenology.

Focusing exclusively on the in-principle instability of determinate empirical concepts manifested in the ineluctability of the experience of error threatens to portray experience as a skeptical “path of despair.” In the *Introduction*, Hegel sets out avoiding building that conclusion into our picture of knowledge as a principal epistemological criterion of adequacy on semantics. It is the recollective dimension of experience that redeems it as revelatory of the real. In doing so, it shows how acknowledging the evanescence of any and every particular constellation of discursive commitments properly leads not to *skepticism*, but to a particularly radical kind of *fallibilism*. It is radical in that Hegel’s fallibilism not only permeates the web of belief at every stage of its development but penetrates through it, reaching all the way to the concepts that are implicit in and articulate that web as relations of material incompatibility and consequence relating candidate believables to what is actually believed.

#### IV

To understand this role of the recollective phase of experience it is helpful to think of it in Fregean terms of sense and reference. This terminology was already invoked at two prior points in my story: in explaining first conceptual realism and then objective idealism. Thinking in these terms about how recollective rational reconstruction vindicates constellations of discursive commitments comprising both explicit doxastic and implicit incompatibility-and-inferential species provides a framework into which to set both conceptual realism and objective idealism,

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<sup>17</sup> [ref.] to *Introduction*.

so as to deepen our understanding and appreciation of their significance. In the generic way in which I want to approach these terms, talk about “senses” is talk about what is sayable and thinkable. It is what is in suitable conceptual shape to be the content of (possible) knowings, in Hegel’s terms what things can be *for* consciousness. Talk of “reference” is talk about what is talked or thought *about*, what is there to be (possibly) known, the objective realm of things as they actually are *in themselves*.

Expressed in this idiom, conceptual realism is the claim that reality, how things objectively are, in themselves, the totality of facts, no less than its appearances to consciousness in thought (how things are for consciousness), is conceptually structured and so sense-like. The realm of referents is a subregion of the realm of senses. The conceptual realm of graspable senses has no outer boundary. This is the view that McDowell expounds in *Mind and World*:

[T]here is no ontological gap between the sort of thing one can mean, or generally the sort of thing one can think, and the sort of thing that can be the case. When one thinks truly, what one thinks *is* what is the case. So since the world is everything that is the case . . . there is no gap between thought, as such, and the world. Of course thought can be distanced from the world by being false, but there is no distance from the world implicit in the very idea of thought.<sup>18</sup>

Quoting this passage, Timothy Williamson objects to this way of thinking about things on the basis that it does not respect the distinction between sense and reference, as he understands it:

[O]n a coherent and natural reading of “the sort of thing that can be the case,” such things are individuated coarsely, by the objects, properties, and relations that they involve. Thus, since Hesperus *is* Phosphorus, what is the case if Hesperus is bright *is* what is the case if Phosphorus is bright: the objects are the same, as are the properties. On this reading, McDowell’s claim “When one thinks truly, what one thinks *is* what is the case” is false, because what one thinks is individuated at the level of sense while what is the case is individuated at the level of reference.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> John McDowell, *Mind and World* [Harvard University Press, 1994] p. 27.

<sup>19</sup> Timothy Williamson, *The Philosophy of Philosophy* [Blackwell Publishing, 2007], p. 16.

Considering recollective processes will make visible a distinctively Hegelian rendering of the distinction and relation between sense and reference that vindicates conceptual realism in the face of this objection. It will also explain and justify the appeal made to the sense/reference distinction in formulating the thesis of objective idealism, asserting the reciprocal sense-dependence, but not reference-dependence, of concepts articulating the ontological structure of the objective world, such as object, property, fact, and law, on the one hand, and concepts articulating the processes and practices of talking and thinking about that world, such as referring, describing, judging or asserting, and inferring, (and so singular term, predicate, declarative sentence, and subjunctive conditional), on the other. The interpretive claim that objective idealism is an important component of Hegel's absolute idealism is substantially strengthened by showing that he made available (meta)conceptual raw materials underwriting versions of the concepts of sense and reference I have used to formulate that thesis specifically as a claim of sense-dependence without reference-dependence.

A recollective clarification of what I am talking about as Hegel's understanding of the distinction between senses and their referents (thinkables and what is thought about, representings and representeds) might begin with the Tarskian order of semantic explanation, whose greatest poet and prophet is Quine. It starts with a domain of objects and sets of those objects, as extensions, that is, referents, of singular terms and predicates. The strict Tarski-Quine semantics remains rigorously extensional, that is, it appeals only to reference--indeed, only to objects as merely different. Extensions can, it is true, be tracked from domain to domain, model to model (relational structure to relational structure), but nothing corresponding to *senses* emerges from doing so, except for purely logical vocabulary. Taking its cue from the constant intensions logical vocabulary exhibits in the framework of extensional model theory, however, the possible-worlds framework elaborated by Montague, Lewis, and Stalnaker shows how to erect a full-blown intensional semantics as a theory of senses, as a superstructure resting on the extensional Tarskian base. Senses show up as

intensions, represented semantically by functions from indices (paradigmatically, possible worlds) to extensions. Seen from the vantage-point of the Lewisian possible worlds framework, extensional properties show up as *modally insulated*. That is, the question of what objects have what extensional properties is settled entirely by the facts at that world, depending not at all on what is true at any other point of evaluation. This intensional semantics remains true to its Tarskian roots, in that the order of explanation is from reference to sense, extension to intension.

By contrast, the originator of the terminology of Sinn and Bedeutung we are considering, Frege as I read him introduces it in the context of an order of explanation that begins with senses and explains reference in terms of them. Senses are something like inferential roles. They are the successors of the “conceptual contents” (begriffliche Inhalten) he devises his Begriffsschrift to express perspicuously. Of them he says:

[T]here are two ways in which the content of two judgments may differ; it may, or it may not, be the case that all inferences that can be drawn from the first judgment when combined with certain other ones can always also be drawn from the second when combined with the same other judgments. The two propositions 'the Greeks defeated the Persians at Plataea' and 'the Persians were defeated by the Greeks at Plataea' differ in the former way; even if a slight difference of sense is discernible, the agreement in sense is preponderant. Now I call that part of the content that is the same in both the conceptual content. Only this has significance for our concept script [Begriffsschrift] ... In my concept script...only that part of judgments which affects the possible inferences is taken into consideration. Whatever is needed for a correct inference is fully expressed; what is not needed is...not.<sup>20</sup>

In his *Grundlagen der Arithmetik*, Frege considers how to talk about the objects referred to by singular terms in terms of the inferential roles of the singular terms. (He is particularly interested in the numbers referred to by numerals, but his discussion is fully general.) He identifies “recognition judgments” as the key to understanding what I am saying is in effect the path from senses to referents. Recognition judgments express the “recognition of

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<sup>20</sup> Frege, *Begriffsschrift* [ref.] section 3.

an object as the same again” when specified in two different ways. This is what in the idiom of “Über Sinn und Bedeutung” becomes two senses picking out one and the same referent. Recognition judgments are identity claims, whose distinctive inferential role is to serve as intersubstitution licenses for the terms flanking what counts as an identity sign in just virtue of playing this substitution-inferential role. In effect, Frege explains referents by appealing to this dyadic relation among senses. That relation, intersubstitutability *salva veritate* (commitment to any claim essentially involving the primary occurrence of one term entails commitment to the corresponding claim formed from it by substituting an occurrence of the other term) is reflexive, symmetric, and transitive. Having these structural properties qualifies it as an equivalence relation. So it determines equivalence classes of singular term senses. Bedeutungen are introduced as corresponding to (in one sense determining, in another sense determined by) these equivalence classes of senses. It is this difference in fineness of grain that Williamson appeals to in his objection to McDowell’s conceptual realism. If the world is indeed everything that is the case, that is, if it is a world of *facts*, the question is how finely individuated facts are. Frege himself, like McDowell, takes them to be as finely individuated as thoughts, that is, thinkables, senses. But he sharply distinguishes the realm of reference from the realm of sense, to which facts, as true thoughts=thinkables, belong.

Michael Dummett takes it that there is more to Frege’s concept of Bedeutung than can be derived from this line of thought.<sup>21</sup> He distinguishes it, as articulating the “semantic role” conception of referents, which he credits Tugendhat with having identified, from what he calls the “name-bearer model.” Frege does not seem to distinguish these two ways of approaching the concept of Bedeutung—possibly because of the universal truth for him of identity statements expressing recognition judgments of the form

$$[t] = \text{the Bedeutung of } [t].$$

Dummett attributes his failure to distinguish what he takes to be two different senses of “Bedeutung” to confusion on Frege’s part. Another hypothesis is that Frege offers the “semantic role” conception associating referents with equivalence classes of senses as an *analysis* of the name-bearer (“Fido”-Fido) model. More plausible than either of these readings, in my eyes, is that Frege thinks the name-bearer model gives us a merely intuitive grip on his technical concept, which cannot be made perspicuous and in any case applies only to the middle-sized bits of dry goods from which our concept object generalizes. In hard cases, it misleads.

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<sup>21</sup> Michael Dummett, *Frege’s Philosophy of Language* [ref.] Ch. xxxx .

In particular, when the issue is the nature of the numbers thought about in arithmetic, or more generally when the referents in question, like numbers, fall under sortals defined by recognition judgments formed from other kinds by appealing to abstraction—as the “semantic role” conception shows is the case with Bedeutung itself—invocation of the name-bearer model is a font of confusion. For that model invites ultimately bootless metaphysical speculation about the nature of the bearers associated with, say, numerals, and about the spooky (because, unlike the case with “Fido” and Fido, noncausal) nature of the relation between names and bearers. This is the sort of situation Wittgenstein warned us against (diagnosing the origin of distinctively philosophical puzzlements in misunderstanding the grammar when we extend one discursive practice to another) with his observation that thinking about the fact that if I have gold in my tooth it makes sense to ask where it was before it was in my tooth can lead one mistakenly to think that if I have a pain in my tooth it must make sense to ask where it was before it was in my tooth, and that if we had only used proper names for people and then started naming rivers, we might be tempted to think it must make sense to ask after the mother and father of the river. In any case, it seems clear that Frege adopts an order of explanation according to which the source of our first semantic grip on the concept of the referents determined by senses is the concept sense.

Hegel’s account of the distinction and relation between what things are for consciousness and what they are in themselves, which I am recommending thinking of in terms of senses and referents, is like the Fregean and unlike the Tarskian in that the semantic order of explanation it adopts begins with senses rather than referents. It is distinguished from the Fregean account in that where Frege looked to a *dyadic symmetric* relation between senses, namely intersubstitutability *salva veritate*, to forge the link between sense and referent, the Hegelian account looks to *asymmetric sequences* of senses to do so. A recollective reconstruction assembles appearances, ways things have been *for* consciousness, into *histories* that display them as successive, appearances *of* an underlying reality, presented by the constellation of claims and concepts in which that history culminates (so far). The recollection exhibits a *process* by which how things really are, in themselves (according to it), was gradually, fitfully, but ultimately successfully revealed by different appearances of it. It traces an *expressively progressive*



trajectory through the senses by which the referent was presented to the consciousness that thereby comes to know about it as it is in itself.

The sequence of senses is expressively progressive in that each successive step shows up as the making explicit of some feature of how things really are that can now be seen, retrospectively, to have been all along implicit in prior appearances of it. Each progressive step consists in an experience of error: the presence of an anomaly in the form of incompatible commitments, acknowledgement of the anomaly in the form of an effective practical obligation to repair it, a revision of beliefs and concepts (doxastic and commitments concerning material incompatibility and inferential consequence) that resolves the difficulty, and a story about what it was about the situation as it is thus discovered to be that accounts for the prior appearance, both insofar as it is now taken to have been veridical and insofar as it is now taken not to have been veridical. The rationally reconstructed history vindicates both the beliefs (doxastic commitments) the currently endorsed view comprises and the concepts (material inferential-and-incompatibility commitments) that articulate them.

A paradigm here is the acknowledgement by each successive scientific theory of an obligation to explain, given that things are as they are taken to be by that theory, why the theories it supplants were as right as they were, and why they erred and failed in just the ways they did. So Newtonians had to explain how the massless Cartesian system was correct about the things it was correct about, and why it could not explain what it could not explain, and Einsteinians correspondingly had to show how Newtonian mechanics approximated theirs for sufficiently slow, relatively small masses. Recollections offer the sort of Whiggish retrospective rational reconstruction traditional textbooks in science and math do. It is explained how we found out how things are, ignoring wrong turns, blind alleys, bad ideas, and degenerating research programs in favor of a step-by-step account of how inquiry revealed reality. The story is progressive in the sense Kant and his empiricist predecessors recognized: false beliefs are discarded and true ones accrued. But in addition to *doxastic* progress, it is also a story of *conceptual* progress, of how inferential norms that do not express alethically necessary consequences are discarded, and those that do

endorsed, how commitments that were taken to be incompatible are discovered not to be, and *vice versa*. (When Frege thought about sortal predicates, he did not investigate their origins or credentials, or worry about the fact that people cheerfully count witches, humors, sins, and races.)

On this Hegelian account, what is *to* consciousness the way things are in themselves (the reality that has been being thought *about* all along, a referent) is a way they can be *for* consciousness (an appearance of that reality, a sense) that is *rationaly endorsed*, i.e. to which it is committed *as* how things really are. The endorsement is rational in acknowledging rational task responsibilities of all four kinds governing the experience of error: ampliative, critical, justificatory, and recollective. That is, the endorsement is shown by recollection to arise in response to acknowledging material inferential consequences and incompatibilities, giving reasons, and historically vindicating the concepts articulating the commitments and their applications in judgment. The retrospective recollective rational reconstruction of how the truth was discovered at every point culminates in an appearance then endorsed as *veridical*, as one in which how things are in themselves shows up as being just how they are for consciousness. The other appearances are displayed as a sequence of progressively more and more adequate appearances *of* that eventually revealed reality. In this way the noumenon/phenomenon distinction is drawn within the realm of phenomena. Referents are a privileged kind of sense. Intentional aboutness, representation, is reconstructed as a relation within the conceptually articulated realm of graspable senses. Descriptions and what is described are the same kind of thing: Hegelian individuals, which are particulars *as* characterized by universals (this-suches, in effect, that state of affairs *that* S is P). What is described is presented by the true description of it.

## V

This is an account of how the distinction that consciousness essentially involves, between how things are in themselves and how they are for consciousness (between truth and certainty) arises *within* consciousness and is something *to* it. It is, accordingly, a story about consciousness of consciousness, that is it is a story about *self*-consciousness. It is an understanding of what *experience* consists in. It is at every stage an experience of *error*, and at the same time the revelation of the *truth*. Error, in the form of the acknowledgment of anomalous commitments, commitments materially incompatible with one another according to the conceptual norms implicit in those commitments, unmasks the commitments hitherto endorsed as not veridical, as not simply revealing how things have all along really been. They are seen now for what *they* really are: in some ways misleading, unveridical *appearances* of how things really are. (This is what Hegel talked about in the *Introduction* under the rubric of the “emergence of the second, new, true object.”) The response to the realization that the knower has materially incompatible commitments (commitments that determinately negate one another) is not to negate those commitments *abstractly*, but *determinately*. That is, it is to replace them with another constellation of commitments (both the doxastic and those concerning inferential and incompatibility relations, which determine the conceptual contents available for endorsement) recollectively vindicated as expressing the reality that appearance is an appearance of. That is, the result of the experience of error is the revelation of the truth.

In the *Preface* Hegel describes how we are to think about this once we fully understand it (as phenomenal consciousness conceiving itself as understanding even at this stage in the book does not):

...in speculative [begreifenden] 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 content as well.<sup>22</sup>

This is the process we have been talking about:

...experience is the name we give to just this movement, in which the immediate, the unexperienced, i.e. the abstract, whether it be of sensuous being, or only thought of as simple, becomes alienated from itself and then returns to itself from this alienation, and is only then revealed for the first time in its actuality and truth, just as it then has become a property of consciousness also.<sup>23</sup>

It is essential to this conception that there is in principle no stable resting-place for the process of experience. No set of determinate concepts is such that by applying them correctly according to the norms governing them and exercising one's ampliative, rational task responsibility (tracing material inferential relations) one will not eventually find oneself with commitments that are materially incompatible with one another according to the norms governing them, so requiring the exercise of one's critical task responsibility. Error and truth are made intelligible as inextricably interwoven aspects of the process of experience. They are two sides of one coin.

To know something falsely means that there is a disparity between knowledge and its Substance.

But this very disparity is the process of distinguishing in general, which is an essential moment [in knowing]. Out of this distinguishing...comes their identity, and this resultant identity is the truth...Disparity, rather, as the negative, the self, is itself still directly present in the True as such.<sup>24</sup>

For understanding consciousness to conceive itself under categories of *infinity* is for it to understand its object, the objective world as it really is, in itself, as what is revealed, discovered, by the process of experience, understood as having this character.

This truth therefore includes the negative also, what would be called the false, if it could be regarded as something from which one might abstract. The evanescent itself must, on the contrary, be regarded as essential, not as something fixed, cut off from the True...

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<sup>22</sup> [59].

<sup>23</sup> [36].

<sup>24</sup> [39].

Appearance is the arising and passing away that does not itself arise and pass away, but is in itself, and constitutes actuality and the movement of the life of truth.

The True is thus a vast Bacchanalian revel, with not a one sober; yet because each member collapses as soon as he drops out, the revel is just as much transparent and simple repose....

In the *whole* of the movement, seen as a state of repose, what distinguishes itself therein, and gives itself particular existence, is preserved as something that *recollects* itself, whose existence is self-knowledge, and whose self-knowledge is just as immediately existence.<sup>25</sup>

Saying that the arising and passing away that is the unmasking of commitments as appearances of an at least somewhat different reality does not itself arise and pass away is saying that experience will always include the experience of error, the motor of change and development of views and concepts. That is what is, according to each rationally reconstructed retrospective recollection, the process that also reveals the truth about how things really are, in themselves. It is the “movement of the life of truth.” In Hegel’s striking metaphor of truth as a “vast Bacchanalian revel” [Taumel], the tipsiness of the revelers marks their being in constant motion, lurching uncertainly, now in one direction, now in another. The wine (Hegel’s favorite tippie already from his school days) that in the metaphor fuels the commotion is *reason*, in particular the ampliative and critical rational task-responsibilities that are practical norms corresponding to semantogenic relations of material consequence and incompatibility. Hegel says “Thus *Verständigkeit* too is a becoming, and, as this becoming, it is reasonableness *Vernünftigkeit*.”<sup>26</sup> The same wine that fuels the revel guarantees that each member of the drinking party, each constellation of commitments, will eventually wear itself out and collapse beneath the table, only to have its place taken by a still somewhat soberer successor. Truth is not a property of any particular stage in the party, but of how it develops. “The True is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development....”<sup>27</sup>

The process of recollectively retrospectively rationally reconstructing an expressively progressive trajectory through the welter of actual experiences of error to yield senses (a constellation of commitments, both doxastic and the material consequential and incompatibility

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<sup>25</sup> [47]. Emphasis added.

<sup>26</sup> [55].

<sup>27</sup> [21].

commitments that articulate them) that are endorsed as presenting how things actually are in themselves, what all the other senses have been all along and more and more faithfully representing, defines a distinctive sense in which what is discerned as having been implicit is expressed explicitly. The reality that the successive appearances are presented as appearances *of*, the represented referents that they have all along been *about*, is seen as having been *implicit* in them. The recollected sequence of experience vindicates the constellation of commitments in which it culminates by showing how what was implicit comes gradually to be expressed, how it emerges step by step into the light of explicit day. This sense in which experience is the path of truth as the making explicit of the reality that was semantically implicit in the sequence of never-wholly-veridical appearances, in the sense of being what those representings represent must be carefully distinguished from the sense in which relations of material incompatibility and consequence of the sort expressed explicitly by statements of law are implicit in the determinate facts and possible states of affairs they govern.

This latter is the sense put in place as the lesson Hegel draws for us from consideration of the reifying “two worlds” views, which treat the consequences and incompatibilities as more determinate things like those described by empirical statements of fact, just things located “jenseits”, in a kind of supersensible world, whether the calm realm of laws or the inverted world. The mistaken thought behind these conceptions is that the facts about which objects exhibit which properties are *modally insulated*—in that sense, extensional. That is, it is the thought that they are intelligible as the determinate facts they are independently of what else *might*, or *must*, or *cannot* be true.

Statements expressing those additional modal relations are construed as descriptive, fact-stating statements, just like the ordinary ground-level empirical descriptive claims that state how things merely are. They just describe a different *kind* of world, state a different *kind* of fact. The proper conception, Hegel tells us, is one in which the *conceptual articulation* of objective facts, made explicit in statements of necessary consequence and noncompossibility, are *implicit* in the objective determinate facts described by ground-level empirical statements of how things are. The crucial insight Hegel is offering, as I read him, is that *all* objective empirical properties (a class

we have learned is not to be taken to be restricted to *observable* properties) are *modally involved*. Asserting that they obtain always essentially involves committing oneself to subjunctive consequences, to what would, could, and could not happen *if* other states of affairs *were* to obtain. The culprit here is the idea that there is a distinction between modally insulated and modally involved properties, and further that the former are antecedently intelligible independently of the latter. This is the fundamental idea on which the Tarski-Quine extensional order of semantic explanation is based, and through it, the Lewis-Stalnaker possible worlds picture of modality built on it—what Hegel is prophetically, if proleptically criticizing under the rubric of the “inverted world.” It is this conception I used as the starting-point of the recollective sketch of an expressively progressive development from a Tarskian order of semantic explanation through a Fregean one to the Hegelian—counter-chronological though this rational reconstruction is.

Understanding consciousness conceiving itself and its object as having the structure Hegel calls “infinity” has won through by its metalevel experience (as Hegel recollects it for us) to the realization that objective facts are conceptually structured, they and the properties they involve are determinate only insofar as they stand in modal relations of necessary consequence and incompatibility to each other and to other possible states of affairs and properties. All properties are modally involved because being determinate is incompatible with being modally insulated. It is in this sense that the alethic modal relations made explicit by statements of laws are implicit in the objective facts, whatever they are. On Hegel’s hylomorphic conception of conceptual content, this same structure visible in the objective pole of the objects of knowledge is mirrored on the deontic side of the subjects of knowledge. Doxastic commitments as to how things really, objectively, are have the determinate conceptual contents they do only in virtue of being articulated by commitments to the goodness of subjunctively robust material inferential relations and relations of material incompatibility. On the side of the cognitive activity of subjects, these are deontic normative relations: norms according to which a commitment with one content necessarily commits one to endorsing other contents that follow from it, and precludes one from

entitlement to still others. In each case the modal relations of consequence and incompatibility, whether alethic or deontic, are to be understood as implicit in, as conceptually articulating, the contents of thinkables, both facts and judgments. We have seen that this hylomorphic *conceptual realism* is explicated further by the claims of *objective idealism*. It asserts the reciprocal sense-dependence of concepts expressing the ontological structure of objective reality, concepts such as object, property, fact, and law, and concepts expressing framework-constituting features of norm-governed discursive activities, practices, or processes, such as referring, classifying, asserting, and inferring. The *Perception* chapter explains the sense in which relations of material incompatibility and consequence must be thought of as implicit in taking the objective world to consist of facts about properties characterizing objects, and the *Force and Understanding* chapter does the same for a broadened conception of facts and the subjunctively robust consequential and incompatibility relations implicit in them.

This is *not* the sense of “implicit” in which recollection displays how things are in themselves as the explicit expression of what was all along implicit in the earlier stages of a reconstructed sequence of appearances of that reality for consciousness. To understand the recollective sense, we must already understand the sense that emerges already from the hylomorphic picture of conceptual content as showing up both in objective form as facts implicitly articulated by alethic modal relations of necessary consequence and noncompossibility and in subjective form as judgments articulated by deontic normative relations of material inference and incompatibility.<sup>28</sup>

And the recollective sense of implicitness and its expression, understood as a theory of the semantic relation between senses and their referents, progressively transforms our understanding

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<sup>28</sup> Hylomorphic conceptual realism is what Hegel makes of Spinoza’s thought that “the order and connection of things is the same as the order and connection of ideas,” [ref.], which in turn is what Spinoza made of Descartes’s modeling of the relation between mind and world on the global isomorphism between discursive equations and extended figures in his analytic geometry.



of the distinction between reference-dependence and sense-dependence, which is critical to the specification of the claims constitutive of objective idealism, by making possible the transposition of the sense/reference distinction from the Fregean key in which it was introduced into a Hegelian one. The path to what I have been calling “conceptual idealism” is paved by the recollective construal of the sense in which the in-itself (“Ansichsein”) is implicit in how things are for consciousness.

Already something thought, the content is the property of individuality; existence has no more to be changed into the form of what is in-itself and implicit [Ansichsein], but only the implicit into the form of what is explicit, of what is objective to self [Fursichseins].<sup>29</sup>

Miller translates the middle part of this passage as: “but only the implicit—no longer merely something primitive, nor lying hidden within existence, but already present as a *recollection*—into the form of what is explicit...” I think the parenthetical remark is just right. The best way to understand what Hegel is saying here is to pair it with one of the claims with which the meta-recollection that is the *Phenomenology* concludes: “[R]ecollection, the inwardizing, of that experience, has preserved it and is the inner being, and in fact the higher form of the substance.”<sup>30</sup>

Conceptual idealism is ultimately to be understood in terms of this *process* of *making* what is implicit explicit. This is a dimension of *making* that turns out to be an essential aspect of *finding*. Engaging in the full, ongoing experience of error, including the recollective reconstructive phases that show it also to be the revelation of truth, is what subjects must *do* in order thereby to *discover* how things anyway already objectively were. One important strand in German

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<sup>29</sup> [29].

<sup>30</sup> [808].

Idealism, starting with Kant, is a recoil from the idea of knowing as having as its ideal the passive reflection of how things are, with no omissions and no alterations. In its place they put an orienting concern with knowing as a distinctive kind of practical doing. Hegel's conceptual idealism, as I understand it, develops from consideration of the sense in which recollection *produces* the in-itself that it reveals as what is represented by the sequence of more-or-less adequate representings of it.

This sense of making or producing the reality behind its appearances (the referents those senses represent) is *sui generis*. To begin with, it is emphatically not to be confused with reference-dependence. The claim is not that recollectively reconstructing a course of experience, so revealing it as at once driven by error and the process by which truth is discovered, *causally* brings into existence the objective reality it comes to know. On the contrary, things would still largely be as they objectively are even if there were no knowers. Nor is it a relation of mere sense-dependence. Recollection is the *doing* that *produces* the distinction, essential to consciousness, of what is *to* consciousness what things objectively are, in themselves and what is *to* consciousness only how those things appear *for* consciousness. It is what we must understand to understand how that distinction can show up to consciousness itself, and hence why and how the concept of consciousness essentially involves the concept of self-consciousness. But sense-dependence is an essentially *semantic* relation: a relation between *senses* or contents.

Conceptual idealism asserts rather a dependence of *semantics* on *pragmatics*. For it explains the semantic relation between sense and reference in terms of *recollecting*: an activity, a practice, a process. In its broadest usage, pragmatics is the study of discursive activities, practices, or processes—such things as referring, describing, fact-stating, and inferring. This dependence of

semantic relations on pragmatic activities does underwrite the more controversial direction of sense-dependence asserted by objective idealism: the dependence of concepts of an ontological metavocabulary, such as object, property, fact, and law on concepts of a pragmatic metavocabulary, such as referring, describing, asserting, and inferring. For that sense dependence reflects the dependence of the first set of concepts on the *practices expressed by* the second set of concepts.

So the *sui generis* asymmetric dependence relation asserted by conceptual idealism is not to be assimilated either to reference-dependence or to sense-dependence, for two reasons. First, the semantic relations it addresses are not between referents and referents or senses and senses, but between senses and referents. Second, the dependence it asserts is not in the first instance a *semantic* dependence at all. It is rather the mode of dependence of the semantic relation between senses and referents on the pragmatic activity of subjects, who manipulate senses through all the phases and aspects of experience in order to determine the relation between representing senses and the referents they represent. If we view how it stands between thought in the sense of episodes of thinking and the thinkable facts that are thought about from the retrospective vantage point afforded by a recollective vindication of some endorsed constellation of doxastic commitments concerning what is actual and subjunctively robust commitments concerning relations of consequence and incompatibility (which is Hegel's dynamic analog of sensuous immediacy and conceptual articulation each make their distinctive contributions to judgment), we can regard that intentional nexus either from the objective side of what is known or from the subjective side of the knowing of it. The currently endorsed commitments are presented as constituting genuine knowledge, which is to say that things are in themselves what they are for consciousness. One constellation of conceptual contents takes two forms: on the objective side, as facts and their implicit alethic modal involvements, and on the subjective side as judgments and their implicit deontic normative involvements.

The recollective vindication of this culminating (so far) stage of the development of what Hegel calls “the Concept” explains how representing senses came to *track* the represented referents *nomologically*, and also by the same process how represented referents came to *govern* the representing senses *normatively*. The first is matter of alethic modal relations, of the kind characteristic of the represented objective world. The second is a matter of deontic normative practices, of the kind characteristic of the representing subjects’s activity. They are both systematic dependences, but neither of the reference-dependence nor of the sense-dependence semantic variety, even when reference and sense are understood on the Hegelian rather than the Fregean model. They concern rather the semantogenic alethic relations and deontic processes that *institute* the semantic relations between senses and their referents. The recollective reconstruction of experience exhibits the progressive achievement of, on the one hand, an alethic modal tracking relation supporting subjunctively robust inferences from how things are for consciousness to how they are in themselves, and on the other hand, deontic normative practices whereby how things are in themselves serves as a normative standard for assessments of the correctness of the deontic commitments that constitute how they are for consciousness.

Conceptual idealism, in asserting the distinctive kind of explanatory and conceptual priority of pragmatics over semantics that is embodied in taking the recollective dimension of experience to provide the framework within which to understand the institution of semantic relations between representing senses and represented referents, thereby asserts a practical priority of, and asymmetric dependence relation between, norm-governed experiential practices made explicit by the use of deontic vocabulary and nomological tracking relations made explicit by the use of alethic vocabulary. The fact that the ampliative, critical, and recollective rational task-responsibilities normatively govern the manipulation of conceptual contents (senses) in the

process of experience constitutes the experiencing subject's practically treating how things are in themselves as providing a normative standard for assessing the correctness of how things are for consciousness. (The reciprocal sense-dependence asserted by the thesis of objective idealism is a reflection of this fact.) And it is that norm-governed process that selectively institutes, shapes, and refines the nomological tracking of how things are in themselves by how things are for consciousness, of referents by senses. Hylomorphic *conceptual realism*, which makes intelligible the possibility of genuine knowledge by understanding conceptual content as actualizable in two forms, an objective form articulated by alethic modal relations of necessary consequence and noncompossibility and a subjective form articulated by deontic normative relations of necessary consequence and noncompossibility, and *objective idealism*, which asserts the reciprocal sense-dependence of concepts articulating the ontological structure of the objective world and concepts articulating the pragmatic structure of subjective discursive practices, both exhibit the intentional nexus in terms that are *symmetric* as between its objective and its subjective poles. The *conceptual idealism* that digs deeper to explain these less radical Hegelian theses breaks this symmetry. It asserts a both a practical and a conceptual priority of norm-governed discursive practices over alethic modal relations in understanding what it is for there to be an objective world that is at once the cause of sense and the goal of intellect (the first a nomological matter, the second a normative one).

In vindicating one constellation of senses as veridical, conferring on them the normative status of expressing explicitly how things have all along implicitly really been as what was represented by the representing senses that were its more-or-less adequate appearances, which is the status of serving as a normative standard for assessing the correctness of all such appearances, a recollective reconstruction of experience *selects* the alethic relations of senses tracking referents

that matter semantically. This sense in which recollection *produces* what things are in themselves, the represented referents semantically implicit in the representing senses, is *noncausal* production, because talk of causation is couched in an alethic modal vocabulary. I have described it as “*sui generis*” because of the way in which it is distinguished from the semantic relations of reference-dependence (of which causal dependence is a principal species) and sense-dependence.

There is however, as we will discover, in reading the *Reason* chapter, an analogous sort of production that arises in considering exercises of intentional agency. The analogy there is not, as one might be led to expect by popular misunderstandings that assimilate Hegel’s idealism to Berkeleyan subjective idealism, the sense in which a practical agent produces a *deed*. Rather, it is the sense in which the agent recollectively produces an *intention* as what the deed makes explicit. The deed is indeed causally reference-dependent on the intention, as the knowing is causally reference-dependent on what is known. But the cause that is in each case *found* by the agent-knower is in the *sui generis* sense *made* “produced as the product” of the vindictory retrospective recollective process. They are both, the cognitive and the practical species of recollective producings, instances of the distinctive kind of constrained *making* that is *finding* out how things always already anyway were. We readers of the *Phenomenology*, the phenomenological consciousness looking over the shoulder of different shapes of phenomenal consciousness at the meta-experiences by which its self-conception is transformed, will not be in a position fully to appreciate this genus until we consider self-consciousness and (so) agency: the distinction that action essentially involves as well as the distinction that consciousness essentially involves. So we won’t fully understand this expressive model of making the implicit explicit on the cognitive side until we understand it on the practical side. What we are looking for is the cognitive analog of understanding the sense in which an intentional doing can be intelligible as the expression of an implicit intention, so that the acting consciousness can see itself in the actual deed it performs.

It is this analogy between knowing and doing in virtue of which understanding consciousness taking its object to have the structure of infinity finds itself in its object, and thereby *to* it consciousness shows up (*we* can see) as a form of *self*-consciousness. Although “it is only *for us* that this truth exists, not yet for consciousness,” in fact the final form of understanding consciousness is distinguished from the previous shapes of consciousness for which their truth was a Thing, an ‘other’ than themselves, expresses just this, that not only is consciousness of a thing only possible for a self-consciousness, but that self-consciousness alone is the truth of those shapes.<sup>31</sup> At this final stage, “what is, for the Understanding, an object in a sensuous covering, is *for us* in its essential form as a pure Notion.”<sup>32</sup> For that reason we can see that “the Understanding experiences only *itself*,” not something experienced as other than itself.<sup>33</sup>

Since this Notion of infinity is an object for consciousness, the latter is consciousness of a difference that is no less immediately cancelled; consciousness is for its own self, it is a distinguishing of that which contains no difference, or self-consciousness.<sup>34</sup>

What does this mean? In what sense is the distinction between the subject of knowledge and the object of knowledge now considered to be not a distinction? What sort of difference is being denied? The three theses into which I have divided the idealism being recommended here, conceptual realism, objective idealism, and conceptual idealism, offer a succession of ever-deeper answers to this question. Each offers a sense in which the intentional nexus is understood as a distinctive kind of unity that in different senses cancels the distinction between its necessarily related poles, in virtue of their necessarily being bound into the sort of unity they are.

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<sup>31</sup> [164].

<sup>32</sup> [165].

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> [164].

The first thesis tells us that among the differences being denied is a *strong difference of intelligibility* between what is known and the knowing of it, of exactly the sort that in the *Introduction* was diagnosed as leading to the impossibility of satisfying the Genuine Knowledge constraint, and hence to semantically enforced epistemological skepticism. Conceptual realism says that when the understanding consciousness looks out at what to it is the in-itself, it sees something already in conceptual shape, a world that is conceptually contentful just as its own thinking is. Consciousness's own thinkings confront a thinkable world. When all goes well epistemically, its representings and what they represent share the same conceptual content: how things are *for* consciousness just *is* how they are *in themselves*. There is no gulf of intelligibility separating intrinsically intelligible thinkings from intrinsically *unintelligible* (or at least *not* intrinsically intelligible) things thought *about*. Consciousness is conceptually structured, and the world it knows about is conceptually structured. This is one sense in which it no longer sees anything alien when it pushes aside the curtain of appearance and contemplates things as they are in themselves. According to the hyломorphic conception, mind and world alike consist of thinkables. Those thinkable contents just show up in two different forms: an *objective* one in which the relations of noncompossibility or exclusive difference and necessary consequence articulating the conceptual contents are *alethic modal* ones, and a *subjective* one in which the relations of noncompossibility or exclusive difference and necessary consequence articulating the conceptual contents are *deontic normative* ones.

Objective idealism goes further, showcasing the particularly intimate connection between these two forms conceptual content can take. That connection manifests itself in the fact that at the metalevel, the concepts used to express explicitly key features of the modal ontological structure of the objective world and the concepts used to express explicitly key features of the deontic normative structure of discursive practices and processes are reciprocally sense-dependent.



What it means to say or think that the world consists of facts about the possession of properties by objects and lawful connections among them has to be understood in terms of concepts making explicit what one is *doing* in asserting declarative sentences (judging) by referring to objects with singular terms and classifying them by applying predicates, and in endorsing subjunctively robust inferences between what those sentences express. In this sense, neither form conceptual content can take, objective and subjective, is intelligible considered all on its own, apart from its relation to the other. In this sense, too, there is no gulf separating them. They mutually presuppose one another—not in a causal reference-dependence sense, but in the rational sense-dependence sense. The task of understanding the most basic ontological structure of the world turns consciousness back to the terms it uses to make explicit its own discursive activity.

In a final further step, conceptual idealism asserts that when, as self-conscious in the sense of being conscious of itself *as* conscious, consciousness distinguishes between its certainty and truth, between what things are for it and what they are in themselves, between appearance and reality, representings and representeds, it is neither alienating itself from itself, nor acknowledging a confrontation with something alien to it. Its finding out how things really is a distinctive kind of active recollective *making* of that distinction, which is essential to consciousness as such, through its experience. The world as it is in itself *as* distinct from how it is for consciousness is not a brute other but in that distinctive sense the product of its own recollective activity in experience. In this sense it finds only what it has made—and not only made findable. In this sense, it sees itself in the objects of its knowledge, even insofar as they transcend that knowledge.

Understanding the object of knowledge conceptually, as Begriff, means reconstruing representational relations within a model of practices of explicitly expressing the implicit. The

focus is not on the object as something simply there, but on what Hegel calls the “coming-to-be of the object,” its emergence into explicitness. By contrast to representational thinking

Speculative [begreifendes] thinking behaves in a different way. Since the Notion [Begriff] is the object's own self, which presents itself as the *coming-to-be* [Werden] *of the object*, it is not a passive Subject inertly supporting the Accidents; it is, on the contrary, the self-moving Notion which takes its determinations back into itself. In this movement the passive Subject itself perishes; it enters into the differences and the content, and constitutes the determinateness, i.e. the differentiated content and its movement, instead of remaining inertly over against it...[A]nd only this movement itself becomes the object.<sup>35</sup>

In a move foreshadowed by understanding the modal relations of necessity and noncompossibility articulating the conceptual contentfulness in virtue of which objective states of affairs are not understood representationally, as denizens of some other ontological realm, but expressively, as *implicit in* how things actually are, conceptual idealism presents how things are in themselves as *implicit in* how they are for consciousness—in a sense of “implicit” operationalized by recollective recovery of the reality exhibited as implicit in a rationally reconstructed sequence of partial expressions of it in appearance.

This realization is the rationale for turning our narrative attention in the *Phenomenology* from consciousness to *self*-consciousness, which has turned out to be, in Hegel’s terms, its truth.

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<sup>35</sup> [60].

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