Knowing and Representing:

Reading (between the lines of) Hegel's *Introduction*

Lecture 2:

Representation and the Experience of Error:
A Functionalist Approach to the Distinction between Appearance and Reality

Part One: Strategy

I.   Introduction

1.   I began my previous lecture by formulating a central criterion of adequacy for theories of conceptual content that Hegel sees as put in place by the crucial role they play in theories of knowledge. He opens his *Introduction* to the *Phenomenology* by insisting that our *semantic* theory must not already doom us to *epistemological* skepticism. Our understanding of discursive contentfulness must at least leave open the possibility that by undertaking conceptually contentful commitments we can (in some cases, when all goes well) come to know how things really are.[1] He then argues that that condition cannot be met by any account that opens up a gulf of intelligibility separating how things subjectively appear to us (how they are "for consciousness") from how they objectively are ("in themselves").

Modern epistemological theories since Descartes's have understood knowledge as the product of two factors: the knower's grasp of subjective thoughts, and those thoughts' representational relations to objective things. Knowers' cognitive relations to those represented

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[1] I use "commitment" for what Hegel will come to talk about as "setzen": positing.

things are accordingly mediated by representings of them. On pain of an infinite regress, the relations between the knowers and their representings cannot then in general be understood as themselves mediated and representational. At least some of the representings must be grasped immediately, in the sense of nonrepresentationally.

I do not think that Hegel rejects as in principle broken-backed all epistemological theories exhibiting this two-stage representational structure (though some of his rhetoric invites us to think otherwise). Rejecting theories of this form is *not* an essential element—and certainly not *the* essential element—in the metaconceptual revolution from thinking in terms of categories with the structure of *Verstand* to thinking in terms of categories with the structure of *Vernunft*, which he is recommending. Rather, Hegel begins the *Phenomenology* proper with the claim that the two-stage representational epistemological explanatory strategy leads inexorably to skeptical conclusions *if* it is combined with a particular auxiliary hypothesis concerning the difference between representings and representeds—one that is tempting and in many ways natural.[2] This is the idea that only representings (appearances, phenomena) are in conceptual shape, while what is represented by them (reality, noumena) is not. On such a view, cognitive processes must transform or map nonconceptual reality into or onto conceptual presentations, since the representational relations those processes institute relate nonconceptual representeds to conceptual representings. Getting this picture in view is, I take it, the point of Hegel's metaphors of knowing as an "instrument" or a "medium" in the opening paragraphs of the *Introduction*. The culprit, the semantic assumption that threatens to enforce epistemological skepticism by excavating a gulf of intelligibility between thought and the world thought about, is the idea that only what we think, and not the world we think about, is conceptually articulated.

2.   The constructive suggestion Hegel offers as an alternative to this assumption is a radically new, nonpsychological conception of the conceptual. According to this conception, to be conceptually contentful is to stand in relations of material incompatibility ("determinate negation") and material consequence ("mediation") to other such contentful items. I call this a "nonpsychological" conception of the conceptual because it can be detached from consideration of the processes or practices of applying concepts in judgment and intentional action. Objective

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[2]   The *Preface*, like most prefaces, was written after the body of the book ("the *Phenomenology* proper") was completed. Unlike most, I think it is also best read after the rest of the book.

states of affairs and properties, too, stand to one another in relations of material incompatibility and consequence, and are accordingly intelligible as already in conceptual shape, quite apart from any relations they might stand in to the cognitive and practical activities of knowing and acting subjects. Indeed, if objective states of affairs and properties did not stand to one another in such relations, they would not be intelligible as so much as *determinate*. We could not then make sense of the idea that there is some definite way the world actually is. For that idea essentially involves the contrast with other ways the world might be (other properties objects might have). And the contrasts in virtue of which states of affairs and properties are determinate must involve modally exclusive differences ("It is impossible for a piece of pure copper to remain solid at temperatures above 1085° C.") as well as mere differences. (**Red** and **square** are different, but compatible properties.)

This nonpsychological conception of the conceptual is not elaborated in the *Introduction* itself. Rather, it is the principal topic of the succeeding chapters on *Consciousness*. I nonetheless discussed it in my first lecture, because it is important to understand how Hegel proposes to avoid the danger of excavating a gulf of intelligibility separating subjective conceptual representings from objective nonconceptual representeds. It is the danger of excavating such a gulf in the semantic theory of representation that he sees as potentially fatal to the epistemological enterprise. If the process of knowing must span such a gap, then, Hegel thinks, the possibility of genuine knowledge—knowledge of how things are "in themselves," not just how they are "for consciousness"—will be ruled out in principle as unintelligible. Conceptual realism about the objective world, understood in terms of the new, nonpsychological conception of the conceptual, is Hegel's alternative response.

As I read it, the job of the last two-thirds of the *Introduction* is to sketch a way of thinking about representation, once the two-stage representational semantic model has been shorn of the objectionable collateral commitment to understanding representation as relating conceptual representings to nonconceptual representeds. This means showing how to satisfy two of the key criteria of adequacy identified in the previous lecture. The Mode of Presentation Condition (MPC) requires an account of what it is to be, or even to purport to be, a representing *of* some represented: an appearance *of* something. Satisfying this condition is explaining what representation is. Laying out the structure and rationale of Hegel's account of representational

purport and success will also shed light on the second *desideratum*. The Rational Constraint Condition (RCC) requires that we explain how what knowing subjects ("consciousness") is talking or thinking *about* (what is represented) can provide *reasons* for what they say or think about it.[3] Explaining the account of representation Hegel sketches in the *Introduction*, and how it proposes to satisfy these conditions, is the task of this lecture.

II.   Two Dimensions of Intentionality and Two Orders of Explanation

3.   Our ordinary, presystematic, nontheoretical thought and talk about thinking and talking distinguishes between what we are thinking or saying, on the one hand, and what we are thinking or talking *about*, on the other. We may accordingly say that intentionality, the contentfulness of thought and talk, has two dimensions: what we express when we say or think something, and what we represent in doing so.[4] We can say both "Kant came to believe *that* Lampl was betraying him," and "Kant believed *of* his faithful servant that he was betraying Kant." In the first, the declarative sentence that follows the 'that' expresses the content of the belief, and in the second, the noun-phrase within the scope of the 'of' says what the belief is about.

What I have called "Hegel's nonpsychological conception of the conceptual," which construes conceptual contentfulness as consisting in standing in relations of material incompatibility and consequence, is a model of what one says or thinks: the first dimension of intentionality or contentfulness ('that'-intentionality). For that reason, I will call this the

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[3] Hegel's undifferentiated talk of "consciousness" in the *Introduction* carefully does not distinguish between *a* consciousness and consciousness in general. Later on, in the *Self-Consciousness* chapter, we will see that the *social* articulation of consciousness in general into mutually recognizing individual *self*-consciousnesses is essential to understanding either one.

[4] Saying much more than this immediately raises more systematic and theoretical questions. Can this distinction be paraphrased as that between what we represent and how we represent it? Does the rough and ready distinction of ordinary language involve running together two distinctions that ought to be kept apart: that between Sinn and Bedeutung, and that between the content expressed by declarative sentences and that possessed by singular terms? What further commitments are involved in taking it that in thinking or saying that things are thus-and-so I am representing a state of affairs? My principal purpose here—rationally reconstructing the fundamental considerations, commitments, and ideas that shape the views Hegel expounds in his *Introduction*—is best served by not rushing to engage such theoretically sophisticated semantic issues.

"conceptual dimension" of intentional contentfulness.[5] The question on the table now is how he understands the other, representational dimension ('of'-intentionality).

The empiricists pursued an order of explanation that begins with representational contentfulness and seeks, in effect, to understand and explain conceptual contentfulness more generally in terms of it. One potential advantage of such an approach is that representation shows up as a genus, of which *conceptual* representation is only one species. As I understand him, Hegel pursues a complementary order of explanation. The project he outlines in the *Introduction* is to explain the notion of <u>representation</u> in terms of his nonpsychological concept of <u>conceptual contentfulness.</u> In what follows, I want to explain how I understand his strategy for pursuing this *conceptualist* order of explanation. For one of the principal lessons I think we ought to learn from Hegel concerns his working out of an alternative to the *representationalist* order of explanation of the two dimensions of intentionality, which has dominated the philosophical semantics of the philosophical tradition of the past century that we inherit, as much as it did the (necessarily somewhat shorter) philosophical tradition he inherited.[6]

III. <u>Two Kantian Ideas</u>

4. Hegel has a big new idea about how to explain representational content in terms of conceptual content, understood nonpsychologically, as he does, in terms of articulation by relations of material incompatibility and consequence. The way he fills in that conceptualist idea is best understood as a way of combining and jointly developing two Kantian ideas. The first is Kant's *normative* account of judgment. What distinguishes judgments from the responses of merely natural creatures is that we are in a distinctive way *responsible* for our judgments. They express *commitments* of ours. Judging is a kind of *endorsement,* an exercise of the subject's *authority*. <u>Responsibility</u>, <u>commitment</u>, <u>endorsement</u>, and <u>authority</u> are all *normative* concepts.

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[5] This usage has the potential to mislead, since, as we will see, Hegel takes it that conceptual contentfulness essentially, and not just accidentally, exhibits also a representational dimension.

[6] Of course, these complementary reductive approaches are not the only strategic possibilities. One might offer independent accounts of conceptual and representational intentionality, and then explain how they relate to one another. Or one might, perhaps most plausibly, insist that the two can only be explained together and in relation to one another.

Kant understands concepts as "functions of judgment" in the sense that the concepts applied in a judgment determine *what* the subject has made itself responsible for, committed itself to, endorsed, or invested with its authority. In judging, subjects normatively bind themselves by rules (concepts) that determine the nature and extent of their commitments.

By pursuing an account with this shape, Kant makes urgent the question of how to understand the normative bindingness (his "Verbindlichkeit") of the concepts applied in judging. Where the early Modern tradition, beginning with Descartes, had worried about our ("immediate", i.e. non-representational) grip on concepts, for Kant the problem becomes understanding their normative grip on us. What is it to be committed to or responsible for the claim that *p*? The second Kantian idea on which Hegel's conceptualist approach to the representational dimension of intentionality is based is that the responsibility in question should be understood as a kind of *task* responsibility: it is the responsibility to *do* something. What one is responsible for doing in committing oneself to *p* is *integrating* that new commitment into the constellation of prior commitments, so as to sustain its exhibition of the kind of unity distinctive of apperception. (Apperception is cognitive or sapient awareness, awareness that can amount to knowledge. Apperceiving is judging. Judgment is the form of apperception because judgments are the smallest unit for which one can take cognitive responsibility.) This integration is a species of the genus Kant calls 'synthesis' (which is why the structural unity in question is a *synthetic* unity of apperception).

This integrative task-responsibility has three dimensions: critical, ampliative, and justificatory. These are species of *rational* obligations, for they are articulated by which commitments serve as *reasons* for or against which others.

- One's *critical* integrative-synthetic task responsibility is to reject commitments that are materially *incompatible* with other commitments one has acknowledged.
- One's *ampliative* integrative-synthetic task responsibility is to acknowledge commitments that are material consequences of other commitments one has acknowledged.
- One's *justificatory* integrative-synthetic task responsibility is to be able to provide reasons for the commitments one has acknowledged, by citing other commitments one acknowledges of which they are material consequences.

These are ought-to-do's that correspond to the ought-to-be's that one's cognitive commitments, judgments, or beliefs ought to be consistent, complete, and justified. They are norms of rationality. When explicitly acknowledged, they are the norms of *systematicity*. Since judging consists in implicitly committing oneself to fulfill the critical, ampliative, and justificatory integrative-synthetic task responsibilities, in judging at all one implicitly undertakes these rational, systematic commitments. Collectively, they define the rational, normative, synthetic unity of apperception.

III.   Hegel's Functionalist Idea

5.   Hegel sees that this account of the *activity* of judging has immediate consequences for the understanding of the *contents* judged: for what one has taken responsibility for, committed oneself to, in judging that *p*. The *rational* articulation of the normative synthetic-integrative task-responsibility Kant identifies as the kind of endorsement distinctive of judging means that we can understand judgeable contents in terms of what we are *doing* in judging. For those contents must determine the rational relations such judgeable contents stand in to one another: what is a reason for and against what. The critical integrative-synthetic task-responsibility requires that judgeable contents stand to one another in relations of material *incompatibility*. The ampliative and justificatory integrative-synthetic task responsibilities require that judgeable contents stand to one another in relations of material *consequence*. And that is to say that judgeable contents must have *conceptual* content, in just the sense Hegel himself endorses. That concept of the conceptual is already implicit in Kant's account of judging.

Hegel extracts his conception of conceptual contentfulness from what is required to synthesize a constellation of commitments exhibiting the rational, normative unity distinctive of apperception. This is a broadly *functionalist* idea. For it is the idea of understanding judgeable contents in terms of the role judgings play in the integrative process that is Kantian apperceiving.

This functionalist explanatory strategy is of the first importance in understanding not only Hegel's conception of the expressive dimension of intentionality ('that'-intentionality), but also the way he builds on that to offer an account of the representational dimension ('of'-intentionality).

What is functionally reconstructed in terms of role in the synthesis of apperception is, of course, at most a part of Kant's understanding of the conceptual. For this abstract, top-down approach to concepts does not essentially depend on their contrast and collaboration with intuitions. Kant himself would insist that for this reason, understanding concepts solely in terms of relations of material incompatibility and consequence apart from any relation to intuitions must be a purely formal one. So conceived, concepts would be empty in the sense of being devoid of representational content. From the point of view of Hegel's conceptualist explanatory strategy, this conception of the *expressive* or *conceptual* dimension of intentionality provides the raw materials in terms of which the *representational* dimension is to be understood.

6.   Hegel sees that Kant envisages a *normative* approach not only to the *expressive-conceptual* dimension of intentionality (*de dicto*, 'that'-intentionality), but also to the *representational* dimension (*de re*, 'of'-intentionality). The conceptual content of a judgment is what one makes oneself responsible *for* in judging, and its representational content (what is represented by it) is what one makes oneself responsible *to*. For Hegel's Kant, we have seen, being responsible for a judgment to the effect that *p* consists in being responsible for integrating it into the constellation of one's prior commitments, so as to sustain the rational normative unity characteristic of apperception. What the judgment is *about*, what is represented by it, is what exercises a distinctive kind of *authority* over assessments of its correctness—*as*, we might want to say, a representing of that represented. Something (paradigmatically, a judging) is intelligible as being a representing just insofar as it is responsible for its correctness to something that thereby counts as represented by it.

In Kant's terms, the objective form of judgment is the "object=X" which every judgment as such is responsible to (for its correctness). (The subjective form of judgment, the "I think"

which can accompany every judging, marks the knower who is responsible for the judgment—that is, responsible for integrating it with the others for which that knower takes the same kind of responsibility.) In the form in which this thought appears in Hegel's *Introduction*, represented objects are what serves as a normative *standard* [Maβstab] for assessments of commitments that count as representing those objects just in virtue of that constellation of authority and responsibility. Hegel's idea is to apply the functionalist explanatory strategy, which looked to normative role in the synthetic-integrative activity of judging for understanding the *conceptual* dimension of judgeable contents, also to the understanding of the *representational* dimension of content. That is, he looks to what knowing subjects need to *do* in order thereby to count as acknowledging the authority of something to serve as a standard for assessing the correctness of a judgment, in order to understand representational relations. If he can exhibit that kind of doing as an aspect of the synthetic-integrative activity in terms of which the conceptual dimension of content is explained, he will have carried out the conceptualist explanatory strategy of understanding the representational dimension of intentionality in terms of the expressive-conceptual dimension ('of'-intentionality in terms of 'that'-intentionality).

I take it that the main task of the last two-thirds of the *Introduction* to the *Phenomenology* is to sketch this way of working-out the conceptualist explanatory strategy for understanding the relations between the two dimensions of intentionality. The logical flow as I see it is this.

1. The starting-point is Kant's *normative* conception of judgment, which sees judging as endorsing, committing oneself to, taking responsibility for some judgeable content.
2. This idea is made more definite by the Kantian account of judging as integrating a new commitment into a constellation of prior commitments, so as to maintain the rational normative unity distinctive of apperception.
3. That idea in turn is filled in by understanding the synthetic-integrative activity as having the tripartite substructure of satisfying critical, ampliative, and justificatory task-responsibilities.
4. To this idea is conjoined the *functionalist* strategy of understanding judgeable contents as articulated by the relations they must stand in in order to play their role in that activity, as what one is endorsing, committing oneself to, or taking responsibility for.

5. In light of the tripartite substructure of synthesizing a constellation of commitments exhibiting the rational unity distinctive of apperception (intentionality), this thought yields a conception of judgeable contents as articulated by rational relations of material incompatibility (appealed to by the critical task-responsibility) and material consequence (appealed to by the ampliative and justificatory task-responsibilities). The result is Hegel's conception of conceptual contentfulness in terms of determinate negation and mediation (which he will develop and motivate in more detail in the *Consciousness* section of the *Phenomenology*).

The strategy for implementing the conceptualist order of explanation is to treat this account of the expressive-conceptual dimension of intentionality both as providing the raw materials and the model for an account of the representational dimension of intentionality and conceptual content.

6. Alongside Kant's normative conception of *judgment*, a normative conception of *representation* is discerned. A judgment counts as representing some represented object insofar as it is responsible to that object for its correctness, insofar as that object exercises authority over or serves as a standard for assessments of its correctness.

7. The strategy is then to apply the functionalist idea *again*, to understand representational content in terms of what is required to serve as a normative standard for assessments of the correctness of judgments, as an aspect of the synthetic process of integrating those commitments into constellations of antecedent commitments exhibiting the rational unity distinctive of apperception.

Part Two: Implementation

    IV.   The Mode of Presentation Condition

7. The task of making sense of the representational dimension of intentionality according to the conceptualist strategy is explaining what it is for some judgeable conceptual content,

articulated by its relations of material incompatibility and consequence to other such contents, to function as representing some worldly state of affairs. Saying what role in the synthetic-integrative process of judging a judgeable content must play in order to count as purporting to represent something is then satisfying what in the first lecture I called the "mode of presentation" condition (MPC). For it is saying what it is to be or to purport to be a mode of presentation of something else: a represent*ing* of some represent*ed*. Hegel's preferred way of talking about what I have called "representings" is "what things are *for* consciousness." What things are for consciousness purports to be the appearance of a reality: what things are *in* themselves. Satisfying the MPC is saying what it is for something to show up as an appearance *of* something. The representing/represented, appearance/reality, what things are *for* consciousness/what things are *in* themselves, and certainty/truth distinctions also line up for Hegel with the Kantian phenomena/noumena distinction.

The question Hegel is asking is: What is it for something to be something *for* consciousness? This is asking the deepest and most important question about the representational dimension of intentionality. Hegel is not at all presupposing the notion of <u>things being something *for* consciousness</u>. It is not one of his primitives. Rather, he offers a functionalist account of representational *purport* and representational *content* that is modeled on, embedded in, and a development of the *functionalist* account of propositional content in terms of the activity of judging that he sees as implicit in Kant's way of proceeding. There Hegel answers the question that would later be put as that of specifying the distinctive "unity of the proposition" holistically, in terms of standing to other such judgeable contents in relations of material incompatibility and material consequence. Those relations show up as *rational* relations because they articulate what judgments serve as reasons for and against what others. That "unity of the proposition" is understood functionally, in terms of the synthetic unity of a constellation of commitments that is characteristic of apperception: the dynamic unity that is created and sustained by integrating new commitments with old ones subject to the triadic systematic critical, ampliative, and justificatory task-responsibilities. That the unity of propositional *content* can be so understood in terms of the unity that defines the rational norms that must govern what one *does* in order for such doings to count as judgings having contents exhibiting the unity

characteristic of the propositional is what it means to say that, in the end "there is only one unity": ultimately, the synthetic unity of apperception.[7]

We have seen that the first piece of the puzzle is the idea that for something to be something *for* consciousness is to be understood in normative terms of the distinctive kind of *authority* it exercises over assessments of the *correctness* of the judgments consciousness consists in. Judgments must be *responsible to* what is represented, for their correctness, for them to be intelligible as representing it, being about it, being an appearance of it. As Hegel puts the point, what is represented must serve as a normative *standard* for judgings. The next question is how this thought can be operationalized in a functionalist spirit—that is, understood in terms of what one must *do* to count as acknowledging that authority, the responsibility of what things are *for* consciousness, which is to say judgments, to what things are *in* themselves. Consciousness itself must take its judgments to be representations *of* some reality—that is, to point beyond themselves to something that they answer to for their correctness. Otherwise it would not be taking it that in judging a consciousness is taking a stand on how things are in themselves. Its judgments would not be how things really are *for* consciousness.

What we must understand, then, is the sense in which, as Hegel says, "consciousness provides itself with its own standard," how "in what consciousness within its own self designates as the *in-itself* or the true, we have the standard by which consciousness itself proposes to measure its knowledge."[8] How is it that: "the difference between the in-itself and the for-itself is already present in the very fact that consciousness knows an object at all. Something is *to it* the in-itself*,* but the knowledge or the being of the object for consciousness is *to it* still another moment."[9] The distinction between what things are *in* themselves and what they are *for* consciousness must itself be something *to* consciousness. This passage marks an absolutely crucial (if seldom acknowledged) distinction: between things being something *for* consciousness and things being something *to* consciousness. It is easy to miss this distinction, because unlike the phrases "*for* consciousness" ("für Bewußtsein") "*in* themselves" ("an sich"), "*to*

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[7]   [ref.] to Kant "there is only one unity" from transcendental deduction.
[8]   M§84.
[9]   M§85.

consciousness" is expressed without an explicit preposition, in the dative (and anaphoric) construction "ihm."[10]

8.   What Hegel tells us is something *to* consciousness is just the distinction between what things are *for* consciousness and what they are *in* themselves. I take it that what something is *for* consciousness is in the first instance the content of a judgment: something that is *explicit*. Judgeable contents are explicit in the sense of being thinkable and statable in declarative sentences (or 'that'-clauses). They are *propositional* contents. As we have seen, Hegel understands such contents in terms of the relations of material incompatibility and (hence) material consequence they stand in to one another. And he understands those relations in turn in terms of the role judgeable contents play in the rational synthetic process of integration and rectification of commitments so as to maintain the unity characteristic of apperception. By contrast, what things are *to* consciousness is a functional matter of how they are *implicitly* taken or practically treated by consciousness. In what it *does*, consciousness practically distinguishes between what things are *for* it and what they are *in* themselves: between appearance and reality. Consciousness, he says, *is* their comparison.[11] We must understand how what consciousness *does* that is essential to its being intelligible *as* consciousness can be understood as practically acknowledging this distinction. This will be understanding how "consciousness is, on the one hand, consciousness of the object, and on the other, consciousness of itself; consciousness of what to it is the True, and consciousness of its knowledge of the truth."[12] What consciousness as such *does* is judge: engage in the synthetic-integrative activity that creates and maintains the synthetic unity of apperception. So the distinction between appearance and reality, what things are *for* consciousness and what they are *in* themselves, represent*ing*s and represent*ed*s, must be intelligible in terms of functional roles with respect to that activity. What Hegel calls "natural consciousness" itself does not need to have these metaconceptual concepts, does not need to be able to apply them explicitly in judgments.[13] But we (the "phenomenological consciousness") who are thinking about its activity must be able to attribute to it a grasp of what these concepts make explicit, a grasp that is implicit in what consciousness *does*.

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[10]   For instance "daß ihm etwas das *An-sich*…ist," in M§85.
[11] M§85.
[12] M§85.
[13] In M§77-78.

The normative construal of representation teaches us that the role something must play in practice in order to be functioning as a reality that is represented by or appearing in a judgment is that of a normative *standard* for the assessment of its correctness.[14] What in the first lecture I called the "rational constraint condition" tells us that what serves as a *standard of assessment* of judgeable contents must be able to serve as a *reason* for the assessment. This is to say that it must, at least in principle, be available *to* consciousness *as* a reason. To be serviceable as a reason, what plays the role of a standard of assessment must be in conceptual shape; it must stand to representings and representables in relations of material incompatibility and consequence. That is what is required for it to be able to serve as a reason for or against judgments, a standard with respect to which they can be assessed as correct or incorrect.

V.   The Experience of Error

9.   With that thought, we arrive at the crux of Hegel's functionalist account of representational purport. Hegel's term for the process by which new commitments are integrated into a constellation of old ones is 'experience' (Erfahrung). The aspect of that process on which his account of the representational purport of judgeable contents turns is the critical one, in which incompatibilities that result from adding a new judgment are acknowledged and resolved. The systematic normative obligation along this dimension is a task responsibility: the responsibility to do something. What one is obliged to do is to restore the synthetic unity characteristic of apperception by repairing the incoherence that results when a subject finds itself with incompatible commitments. This process is the experience of *error*.

Consider an example. A naïve subject looks at a stick half-submerged in the water of a pond and perceptually acquires a belief that the stick is bent. Upon pulling it out, she acquires the belief that it is straight. Throughout she has believed that it is rigid, and that removing it

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[14] The assessment in question is Hegel's 'Prüfung', in M§85.

from the water won't change its shape. These judgments are jointly incompatible. Acknowledging that is acknowledging that a mistake has been made. Those acknowledgements are acknowledgements of the practical responsibility to restore compatibility to one's commitments (the critical task-responsibility). What one must do is reject or modify at least one of the commitments in the offending constellation. Suppose our subject gives up the belief that the stick is bent, keeping the belief that it is straight (as well as the other collateral commitments). Our subject might have made the choice she did concerning what to retain and what to reject in the light of her belief that she is much more experienced and reliable at visually judging shapes looked at through air or water than through both.

Notice first that in treating the two shape-commitments as materially incompatible (in the context of the collateral commitments to rigidity and shape-constancy), the subject is implicitly treating them as having a common subject: as being *about* one and the same object. For commitments to stick A being bent and to stick B being straight are *not* incompatible. It is only if it is the *same* stick to which one is attributing those incompatible properties that the resulting judgeable contents are incompatible with one another. (Hegel discusses this issue at some length in the *Perception* chapter of the *Phenomenology*.) Taking two commitments to be incompatible (by acknowledging in practice the obligation to revise at least one of them) is treating them as being about one object, and to be attributing incompatible properties to *it*. In other words, it is treating them as representings of a common represented. Practically acknowledging the incompatibility of two commitments involves a kind of representational *triangulation*. It is implicitly treating them as sharing a topic, as being about the same thing. To say that this acknowledgment of common representational purport is *implicit* is to say that the representational purport is acknowledged in what the subject *does*, rather than explicitly, as the propositional content of a judgment—a judgment to the effect that these different senses (conceptual contents, articulated by their relations of material incompatibility and consequence) pick out the same referent. That is, it is a matter of what these commitments are *to* consciousness, not what they are *for* consciousness. (The stick is both bent and straight *for* consciousness, but the incompatibility of those commitments is in this simplest case only something *to* consciousness.)

10.   This is a point about the first stage of the process that is the experience of error: *acknowledgment* of the material incompatibility of some commitments the subject has made. At this stage, the incompatible commitments are all on a level. No invidious assessments of their relative authority (credibility) have yet been made. What I have said so far is that even at this stage, we can understand an acknowledgment of the joint representational purport of two commitments as being implicit in the practical acknowledgment of their material incompatibility.[15] This purely formal dimension of practical representational purport is complemented by another, richer dimension that emerges only at the next stage of the experience of error. For *acknowledgment* of incompatibility (that is, of the presence of some error or other among the commitments being taken to be mutually incompatible) is to be followed by *revision* of at least some of those commitments. The second, *rectification*, stage of the experience of error consists in doing what at the first stage one acknowledged one's practical obligation to do: repair the acknowledged incompatibility by revising or rejecting some of the offending commitments.

In our example, in relinquishing the bent-stick belief and retaining the straight-stick belief, the subject is treating the first as presenting a mere *appearance*, and the second as presenting the corresponding *reality*. For at this stage in the experience of error, the mistake has been localized and identified. The problem, the subject takes it, is the bent-stick commitment. It is in error. Rejecting it is practically taking it *not* to express how things really are. For *endorsing* a judgeable content is what one must do in order thereby to be taking or treating it in practice as expressing how things *really are*. The subject had previously practically accorded that status to the bent-stick judgment. Repudiating that prior commitment is taking it no longer to deserve that status. The subject takes it to have been revealed (by its collision with other commitments) as merely *purporting* to express how things really are, that is, as being a *mere appearance*.

Furthermore, the triangulation point ensures that the rejected bent-stick judgment is practically construed not just as *an* appearance, but as an appearance *of* the reality presented by

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[15]   The point generalizes to constellations of more than two jointly incompatible commitments (so long as all the members of the set are essential to their collective incompatibility, in the sense that dropping them would leave a mutually compatible remainder). For simplicity, I will stick to the two commitment case.

the retained commitment: What appeared as bent (the stick) has been revealed as really straight. In the experience of error, both the straight-stick and the bent-stick commitments are practically taken or treated as *modes of presentation* of a reality (the stick), one veridically representing and one *mis*representing it. Both of these stages of the process that is the experience of error, the acknowledgment of incompatibility and its rectification, contribute to the satisfaction of the mode of presentation condition on a construal of intentional content. For the way judgments function, the roles they play, in these phases of the experience of error show what it is one must *do* in order thereby to count as acknowledging in practice the representational dimension of conceptual content: what it is to take or treat judgments as representings or appearances of how some represented thing really is.

In the first phase of the experience of error, the authority of the straight-stick belief collides with that of the bent-stick belief. In the second phase, the authority of the straight-stick belief is endorsed, while that of the bent-stick belief is rejected. In the context of collateral beliefs concerning rigidity, what can change the shape of rigid objects, and the relative reliability of visual perception under various conditions, the straight-stick belief is accepted as a *standard* for the assessment of the *correctness* (veridicality) of the bent-stick belief. Since they are incompatible, the latter is rejected as incorrect according to that standard. The bent-stick belief is assessed as responsible to the constellation of commitments that includes the straight-stick belief. All of this is to say that as presented in the straight-stick judgment, the straight stick is performing the *normative* functional office characteristic of the reality represented by some representing: it is practically treated as being, it is *to* consciousness, an authoritative standard for assessments of the correctness of representings that count as *about* it just in virtue of being *responsible to* it for such assessments. So when we look at the role played by various commitments in the experience of error, we see that the mode of presentation condition is satisfied in the sense required by the normative construal of representing.

Furthermore, the rational constraint condition is also satisfied by understanding representational purport functionally in terms of the role conceptually articulated judgeable contents play in processes that have the structure of the experience of error. For, in the context of the constellation of collateral commitments in our example, the straight-stick belief provides a

reason for rejecting the bent-stick belief. The collision between the two is *rationally* resolved. Belief in the differential reliability of visual perception under the conditions that led to the endorsement of the bent-stick and straight-stick perceptual judgments conjoined with the straight-stick belief constitute an argument against the bent-stick belief. In undergoing the experience of error, our subject in practice treats reality (the straight stick) as providing *rational* constraint on the assessment of various appearances as veridical.

In proceeding this way, the subject in practice takes or treats the bent-stick belief as expressing just what things are *for* consciousness, and the straight-stick belief as expressing what things are *in* themselves. These statuses, in turn, are what the beliefs are *to* consciousness, or implicitly. For the subject of the experience of error ("natural consciousness") need not explicitly deploy concepts of <u>reality</u> and <u>appearance</u>, <u>represented</u> and <u>representing</u>, <u>what things are *in* themselves</u> and <u>what things are *for* consciousness</u>, <u>noumena</u> and <u>phenomena</u>, in order for what it does in retaining one of the (contextually) materially incompatible dyad of commitments and rejecting the other to be intelligible as practically taking or treating one as presenting how things *really are* and the other as presenting a *mere appearance*. One is *to* consciousness what the stick is in itself (straight), and the other is *to* consciousness what the stick is (was) merely *for* consciousness.[16] This is what Hegel means when he says that "consciousness provides itself with its own standard," how "in what consciousness within its own self designates as the *in-itself* or the true, we have the standard by which consciousness itself proposes to measure its knowledge."[17]

This account of consciousness's practical, implicit grasp of the distinction and relation between what things are *for* it and what those things are *in* themselves, how that distinction is something *to* consciousness, but not yet necessarily *for* consciousness, is the solution to the challenge of the Bradleyan regress, which in the previous lecture I pointed out as a successor to the Cartesian regress of representation. This is the regress that threatens, not when one worries that representings must themselves be known representationally, but rather the one that threatens when one worries that the representational *relation* between representings and representeds must

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[16] As Hegel puts it in M§84 and M§85, quoted above.
[17] M§84.

be known representationally. The regress is avoided because the representational relation is not required to be something explicitly *for* consciousness, but only something *to* consciousness, a matter of how it is implicitly treated in what consciousness *does* as part of the experience of error.

VI.   The Two Sides of Conceptual Content are Representationally Related

11.   On Hegel's model the conceptual content shared by representing and represented, appearance and reality, phenomenon and noumenon, commitment and fact is abstracted from the two different forms that relations of material incompatibility and consequence can take: the *subjective* form made explicit by *deontic normative* vocabulary and the *objective* form made explicit by *alethic modal* vocabulary. Conceptual content is essentially, and not just accidentally, what can take these two forms. The central metaphysical concept that incorporates and expresses this point is <u>determinate negation</u>. It articulates the sense in which anything (thoughts, facts, properties, conceptual contents) can be *determinate*: by strongly contrasting with, precluding, excluding, other determinates (Spinoza: "Omnis determinatio est negatio."). On the objective side, that means that how things are is essentially also a matter of the structure of its alethic modal relations to what it makes impossible and what it makes necessary. On the subjective side, it means that commitments can be understood as determinate only in the context of the functional role they play in the *process* of acquiring and revising commitments. For it is that process that is governed by the deontic normative relations of incompatibility and consequence that articulate the conceptual content of those commitments. One of the things that has always been hard to understand about Hegel's conception of (determinate) negation, and (so) his conception of concepts and their contents, is his connection of these traditional logical notions with *dynamic* categories, of movement, process, and restlessness.[18] What lies behind it is

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[18] In the *Phenomenology*, this is a theme emphasized in the *Preface*, in partial explanation of why "everything hangs on apprehending and expressing the truth not merely as *substance* but also equally as *subject*." [M17]

this connection between incompatibility in the normative sense and the process of commitment acquisition and revision.

Hegel regards the *subjective* articulation of the conceptual content of commitments by *deontic normative* relations of material incompatibility-and-consequence and the *objective* articulation of the conceptual content of facts (and properties) by *alethic modal* relations of material incompatibility-and-consequence as two sides of one coin, two aspects of one conception. His substantive claim is that his concepts of determinate negation and conceptual content do not equivocate. Rather, they have a fine structure that is articulated by the relations between the two intimately related forms, subjective and objective, that conceptual contents defined by determinate negation (and mediation) can take. This claim plays a central role in his strategy of understanding the subjective and objective sides of the intentional nexus of knowledge (and later, agency) by abstracting them as complementary aspects of conceptual content—a strategy he contrasts, already in the *Introduction*, with traditional approaches that seek to take antecedently and independently specified conceptions of subject and object and somehow bolt them together to get an intelligible picture of their intentional relations. That approach, he claims, is doomed so long as a psychological conception of the conceptual (and hence of the intelligible) restricts conceptual content to the subjective side of what then inevitably appears as a gulf of intelligibility separating knowing and acting subjects from the objective world they know about and act on and in.

12.   How are we to understand the conception of conceptual content (articulated by relations of determinate negation and mediation) as *amphibious* between its two forms: subjective-

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Subjects are the ones who must respond to the normative demands implicit in applying a concept whose content is articulated by the relations of determinate negation (material incompatibility) and mediation (inferential consequence) it stands in to other such contents. That they must respond by *doing* something, *changing* their further commitments (rejecting some and accepting others) is the context in which we must understand his talk of the "movement of the Begriff" [M34]. This is what he is talking about when he refers to "…the self-moving concept which takes its determinations back into itself. Within this movement, the motionless subject itself breaks down; it enters into the distinctions and the content and constitutes the determinateness, which is to say, the distinguished content as well as the content's movement, instead of continuing simply to confront that movement. [M60] It is why: "Determinate thoughts have the 'I', the power of the negative, or pure actuality, for the substance and element of their existence…" [33]

normative and objective-modal? (This question obviously goes to the heart of our understanding of Hegel's *idealism*.) I think it should be understood in terms of two claims. First, deontic normative vocabulary is a *pragmatic metavocabulary* for alethic modal vocabulary. Second, as a consequence, there is a kind of *sense-dependence* relation between these vocabularies. On the first point, deontic normative vocabulary lets one *say* what one must *do* in order thereby to be *saying* what alethic modal vocabulary let's one say.[19] For what one must do in order to count as grasping the contents expressed by alethic modal vocabulary—by the claims that it is *impossible* that both *p* and *q*, that if *p* then *necessarily r* (which Hegel claims have the expressive function of making explicit the relations in virtue of which *p*, *q*, and *r* have the conceptual contents they do)—is in practice take or treat *commitments* to *p* and *q* as *normatively* incompatible (so one cannot be *entitled* to both) and commitment to *p* as normatively *entailing* commitment to *r* (so if one is committed to the first, one counts as thereby committed to the second). It is only by knowing how to accord with the norms expressed in the *deontic* vocabulary that one can count as able to understand and apply *modal* vocabulary. Practically treating one's commitments as standing in these normative relations to one another *is* implicitly understanding them as commitments concerning what is *objectively* impossible and necessary—that is, as appearances *of* a reality articulated by such alethic modal relations. As we have seen, engaging in the experience of error, governed by practical norms that respect deontic relations of incompatibility, is what taking or treating one's commitments as appearances (representings) of some (represented) reality consists in.

That deontic normative vocabulary in this way plays the expressive role of being a pragmatic metavocabulary for alethic modal vocabulary means that one cannot understand *alethic modal* vocabulary, cannot deploy it with understanding, unless one has mastered the *normatively* governed practices made explicit by *deontic* vocabulary. This is a claim about practically *grasping* what is expressed by alethic modal vocabulary—about what one must be able to *do* in order to *say* what it says. It is *not* a claim about what must be *true* for what one *says* using that modal vocabulary to be true. That is, the claim is *not* that unless some claims formulable in deontic normative vocabulary were true, no claims formulable in alethic modal vocabulary could be true. It is not, and does not entail, the claim that unless some concept-users

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[19]   I offer some background, clarification, and examples of the concept of <u>pragmatic metavocabulary</u> in Chapter One of *Between Saying and Doing* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

could apply normative vocabulary, no modal claims would be true. The claim is that unless one *practically* understands what is said by normative vocabulary—can *do* the things, engage in the practices, that are specifiable in normative vocabulary—one cannot understand what is *said* by modal vocabulary. That is, the claim is that there is a kind of *sense*-dependence of modal vocabulary on what is expressed by normative vocabulary, not a kind of *reference*-dependence.

That distinction can be made clear by an example that has nothing to do with normativity or modality. Regardless of whether or not this would be a good way to think about the concept of <u>beauty</u>, we can define a *response-dependent* concept <u>beauty*</u> by stipulating that some object or situation counts as beautiful* just in case it *would*, under suitable circumstances, produce a response of pleasure in a suitable subject suitably exposed to it. (The use I want to make of the example won't depend on how these various parametric notions of <u>suitability</u> get filled-in.) Then the property of being **beautiful*** is sense-dependent on that of **pleasure**: one could not *understand* the (amphibiously corresponding) *concept* <u>beautiful*</u> unless one *understood* the concept <u>pleasure</u>. For the one is defined in terms of the other. It does not at all follow that something could not *be* beautiful* unless something responded with pleasure. On this definition, there were sunsets that were beautiful* before there were any suitable, pleasure-capable responders, and they would still have been beautiful* even if there never had been such responders. For it still could be the case that *if* there *were* such responders present, they *would* respond (or *would have* responded) with pleasure. In just the same way, if we define a planet or star as "supraterran" just in case it has a mass more than twice that of the Earth, we are not thereby committing ourselves to denying that a planet could have that property in a possible world in which the Earth did not exist. Depending on how they are specified, properties can be *sense-dependent* on other properties (as **beautiful*** is on **pleasure** and **supraterran** is on **has at least twice the mass of the Earth**), without being *reference-dependent* on them. That is, something can exhibit a property P that is sense-dependent, but not reference-dependent, on a property P' in a world in which nothing exhibits the property P'.

The claimed dependence of modal properties (via their amphibiously corresponding concepts) on norm-governed activities of accepting and rejecting commitments is of the sense-dependence, rather than the reference-dependence kind. The objective world would still be conceptually structured in the sense of consisting of facts about objects and their properties and

relations, articulated by alethic modal relations of relative compossibility and necessitation, even in worlds that never included knowing and acting subjects who applied normatively articulated concepts in undertaking and rejecting commitments. The mind-dependence of the objective world asserted by this dimension of Hegel's idealism—call it "objective idealism"—is not the objectionable Berkeleyan reference-dependence kind (Kant calls it "subjective idealism"), but of the much more plausible (or at least colorable) sense-dependence kind. *We* can understand and describe possible worlds without subjects to whom deontic normative vocabulary applies as nonetheless making applicable alethic modal vocabulary. But our capacity to make sense of such possibilities depends on *our* being able to engage in practices made explicit by the application of deontic normative vocabulary.

The sort of model that Hegel constructs to contrast with two-stage representational models committed to a strong difference of intelligibility between representings and representeds depends on an account of conceptual contentfulness committed to the amphibiousness of conceptual content between a *subjective* form articulated by *deontic normative* relations of incompatibility-and-consequence and an *objective* form articulated by *alethic modal* relations of incompatibility-and-consequence. The relation of correspondence between them is that of a pragmatic metavocabulary that induces a kind of practical sense-dependence. According to this approach, *modal* realism entails *conceptual* realism, which entails objective *idealism*. In his *Introduction*, Hegel is introducing us not just to his book, but also to the metaconceptual categorical framework he elsewhere calls "Vernunft," by contrast to the traditional modern metaconceptual categorical framework that reached its most explicit and revealing form in Kant, which he calls "Verstand." Thinking in the *Vernunft* way involves saying things that are strange indeed from the standpoint of the traditional framework of *Verstand*. These are such claims as that since there is some determinate way the world objectively is, it, no less than thought about it, comes in conceptual (hence intelligible) form, and would do even if there never had been concept-applying subjects. Accordingly, thought and being, representing and represented (subject and substance, in the idiom of the *Preface*) are essentially paired forms that conceptual content can take. The concept of <u>negation</u> (incompatibility) in terms of which we should understand determinateness (whether of subjective thought or of objective fact) essentially involves a principle of *motion*, of *change,* of active, practical *doing*—as odd as this seems from the point of view of the logical tradition indigenous to *Verstand*. Subjective practices and

processes specifiable in deontic normative vocabulary and objective relations and facts specifiable in alethic modal vocabulary are two complementary aspects or dimensions of whatever is determinate, and hence intelligible. (We are now in a position to see these as claims about practical sense-dependence relations, consequent upon the pragmatic metavocabulary relation between normative and modal vocabularies.) Hegel's aim in the opening paragraphs of the *Introduction* to the *Phenomenology* is to convince us that if the epistemological possibility of genuine knowledge and so much as the intelligibility of error are not be semantically ruled out of court at the outset, we must broaden the range of models of the possible relations between appearance and reality so as to encompass not only the familiar *Verstand* semantic paradigm, but also the new, unfamiliar *Vernunft* one—in spite of the initially strange and unpalatable consequences it embraces.

VII.   Conclusion

13.   I ended my first lecture with a discussion of the two forms conceptual content can be seen to take, once we adopt Hegel's non-psychological conception of it (as articulated by relations of material incompatibility and consequence), namely subjective and objective forms. It is this conception that is to make it possible for us to avoid excavating a gulf of intelligibility between knower and known, appearance and reality, representings and represented, in our *semantics*, which then must lead to skepticism in our *epistemology*. We are now in a position to understand the relation between propositional commitments (judgments, beliefs) articulated by *normative deontic* relations of incompatibility, on the *subjective* side of *certainty*, what things are *for* consciousness, and facts and possible states of affairs, articulated by *alethic modal* relations of incompatibility, on the *objective* side of *truth*, what things are *in* themselves, as itself a *representational* one: a matter of representings and represented. We can see how our commitments are intelligible as *appearances of* an objective reality. That intelligibility is *functionalist*, and *pragmatist*. Now we know what we must *do* in order thereby implicitly to be practically taking or treating our commitments *as* appearances *of* a reality—so that the distinction between what things are *for* consciousness and what they are *in* themselves is something *to* consciousness.

The account rehearsed here of representational purport in terms of the experience of error operationalizes what in my first lecture I called the "Intelligibility of Error" and the "Genuine Knowledge" criteria of *epistemological* adequacy on *semantic* accounts of intentional contentfulness and aboutness. This whole lecture has been an extended discussion of how in the same terms the Mode of Presentation Condition can be satisfied: how to understand the representational dimension of intentionality in terms of the expressive conceptual dimension. I have concluded this lecture by talking about how that first dimension, and so the second, can be understood in terms of what one is *doing* in undergoing the experience of error. That is, I have been talking about how the knowing subject's activity, which is discussed in deontic normative terms of commitment and entitlement (and the subjective aspect of the notion of <u>material incompatibility</u> they articulate), can be understood as involving *representational* purport: as an *appearance* (what things are *for* consciousness) of the *reality* (what things are *in* themselves) constituted by the objective states of affairs discussed in alethic modal terms of necessity and possibility (and the objective aspect of the notion of <u>material incompatibility</u> they articulate).

What in the first lecture I called the "Rational Constraint" condition is the requirement that what is represented be intelligible as providing *reasons* for assessments of the *correctness* of representings. It has shown up here as a consequence of the normative construal of representation that Hegel sees as already introduced by Kant. In the context of the account offered here of representational purport in terms of functional role in cognitive processes characterized by the experience of error, we can see how the reciprocal sense-dependence of the subjective and objective dimensions of the (meta-)concept of <u>material incompatibility</u> (determinate negation), consequent upon deontic normative vocabulary serving as a pragmatic metavocabulary for alethic modal vocabulary, articulates a deep connection between satisfaction of the Mode of Presentation Condition and the Rational Constraint Condition.

In the next lecture, I pursue further Hegel's conception of how our grasp of the concept of <u>truth</u> depends on the practical experience of error, and offer detailed readings of some of the most puzzling passages at the end of the *Introduction*.