

Knowing and Representing:
Reading (between the lines of) Hegel's *Introduction*

Lecture 3 Handout:

Following the Path of Despair to a Bacchanalian Revel:
The Emergence of the Second, True, Object

1. In my first lecture, I suggested that the key to the picture Hegel wants to put in place lies in the non-psychological conception of the conceptual he introduces and develops in the *Consciousness* section of the *Phenomenology*. According to this conception, conceptual contents are articulated by relations of material incompatibility: his “determinate negation” or “exclusive difference” (Aristotelian contrariety).
2. Starting with the notion of conceptual contents as articulated by the relations of material incompatibility they stand in to other such contents, my second lecture showed both what one must *do* in order thereby to count as *cognitively grasping* such contents, and how doing that amounts to practically acknowledging the *representational purport* of those contents. Grasping or understanding a conceptual content is engaging in the process of *experience*, which is the experience of *error*.
3. Treating two commitments as incompatible in the deontic normative sense *is representing* two properties or states of affairs as incompatible in the alethic modal sense. What one must *do* in order to manifest practically one’s grasp or *understanding* of conceptual contents is suitably engage with them in the practice or process of experience, especially the experience of error, by fulfilling one’s obligation to resolve acknowledged incompatibilities. Doing that *is* treating incompatible commitments as *representing* incompatible states of affairs.
4. In the experience of error the subject (“consciousness”): ...is consciousness of what *to* it is the true, and consciousness of its knowledge of this truth. Since both are *for consciousness*, consciousness itself is their comparison; whether its knowledge of the object corresponds or fails to correspond with this object will be a matter *for consciousness itself*. [PG §85]
5. Recall the crucial distinction, which Hegel marks grammatically, as was pointed out in Lecture II, between what things are *implicitly*, “*to*” consciousness [“ihm”] and what they are *explicitly*, “*for*” consciousness.
6. Something is *to it the in-itself*, but the knowledge or the being of the object for consciousness is *to it* still another moment. It is upon this differentiation, which exists and is present at hand, that the examination [Prüfung] is grounded. And if, in this comparison, the two moments do not correspond, then it seems that consciousness will have to alter its knowledge in order to bring it into accord with the object. [PG §85]
7. In the alteration of the knowledge, however, the object itself becomes to consciousness something which has in fact been altered as well. For the knowledge which existed was essentially a knowledge of the object: with change in the knowledge, the object also becomes an other, since it was an essential part of this knowledge. Hence it comes to pass for consciousness that what had been to it the *in-itself* is not in itself, or, what was *in itself* was so only *for consciousness*. When therefore consciousness finds its knowledge not corresponding with its object, the object itself will also give way. In other words, the standard [Maßstab] of the examination is changed if that whose standard it was supposed to be fails to endure the course of the examination. Thus the examination is not only an examination of knowledge, but also of the standard used in the examination itself. [PG §85]
8. This *dialectical* movement, which consciousness exercises on its self—on its knowledge as well as its object—is, *in so far as the new, true object emerges to consciousness* as the result of it, precisely that which is called *experience*. [PG §86]
9. Consciousness knows *something*, and this object is the essence or the *in-itself*. But this object is also the *in-itself* for consciousness; and hence the ambiguity of this truth comes into

play. We see that consciousness now has two objects; one is the first *in-itself* and the second is the *being-for-consciousness of this in-itself*. The latter seems at first to be merely the reflection of consciousness into its self, a representation, not of an object, but only of its knowledge of the first object. But, as already indicated, the first object comes to be altered for consciousness in this very process; it ceases to be the *in-itself* and becomes *to consciousness* an object which is the *in-itself only for it*. And therefore it follows that this, the *being-for-consciousness of this in-itself*, is the true, which is to say that this true is the *essence* or consciousness' new *object*. This new object contains the annihilation of the first; it is the experience constituted through that first object. [PG §86]

10. Hence it comes to pass for consciousness that what had been to it the *in-itself* is not in itself, or, what was *in itself* was so only *for consciousness*. [PG §85]

11. What the subject discovers is that what it had taken to express the way things really are (the stick is bent), actually only expresses an appearance. The role the bent-stick representation plays for consciousness, what it is to consciousness, has changed. It "becomes to consciousness an object which is the *in-itself* only for it." The "new, true object" is the bent-stick representation revealed *as* erroneous, as a *misrepresentation* of what is now *to* the subject the way things really are: a straight stick. This representing is "true" not in the sense of representing how things really are, but in the sense that what is now to consciousness is what *it* really is: a mere appearance, a misrepresenting. That is why "This new object contains the annihilation of the first; it is the experience constituted through that first object."

12. In this presentation of the course of experience, there is a moment in virtue of which it does not seem to be in agreement with the ordinary use of the term "experience." This moment is the transition from the first object and the knowledge of that object to the other object. Although it is said that the experience is made in *this other object*, here the transition has been presented in such a way that the knowledge of the first object, or the *being-for-consciousness* of the first *in-itself*, is seen to become the second object itself. By contrast, it usually seems that we somehow discover another object in a manner quite accidental and extraneous, and that we experience *in it* the untruth of our first Concept. What would fall to us, on this ordinary view of experience, is therefore simply the pure *apprehension* of what exists in and for itself. From the viewpoint of the present investigation, however, the new object shows itself as having come into being through an *inversion of consciousness* itself. [PG §87]

13. This way of observing the subject matter is our contribution; it does not exist for the consciousness which we observe. But when viewed in this way the sequence of experiences constituted by consciousness is raised to the level of a scientific progression. [PG §87]

14. As a matter of fact, the circumstance which guides this way of observing is the same as the one previously discussed with regard to the relationship between the present inquiry and skepticism: In every case the result which emerges from an untrue mode of knowledge must not be allowed to dissolve into an empty nothingness but must of necessity be grasped as the nothingness *of that whose result it is*, a result which contains what is true in the previous knowledge. Within the present context, this circumstance manifests itself as follows: When that which at first appeared as the object sinks to the level of being to consciousness a knowledge of the object, and when the *in-itself becomes a being-for-consciousness of the in-itself*, then this *is* the new object. [PG §87]

15. Spinoza did not appreciate the distinctive *normative* character of the "order and connection of ideas," which distinguishes it from the order and connection of things. Hegel's synthesis of Spinoza with Kant depends on Kant's grounding of semantics in pragmatics: his account of what one must *do* in order to take responsibility for a judgeable conceptual content.

16. In my second lecture, I rehearsed how Hegel's account of the experience of error—what he makes of Kant's critical integrative task-responsibility in synthesizing a constellation of commitments that has the rational unity distinctive of apperception—underwrites an implicit, practical grasp of representational purport. Downstream from Kant, Hegel's conception of

determinate negation accordingly incorporates an essentially *dynamic* element. It arises out of the crucial residual *asymmetry* between the order and connection of ideas and that of things. It is *impossible* for one object simultaneously to exhibit materially incompatible properties (or for two incompatible states of affairs to obtain), while it is only *inappropriate* for one subject simultaneously to endorse materially incompatible commitments. Representings are articulated by deontic normative relations, while representeds are articulated by alethic modal ones. Finding oneself with materially incompatible commitments obliges one to *do* something, to revise those commitments so as to remove the incoherence. It is only in terms of that obligation to repair that we can understand what it is practically to *take* or *treat* two objective properties or states of affairs as incompatible in the alethic modal sense. Understanding the *representational* dimension of conceptual content—the relation and connection between the deontic and alethic limbs of the cognitive-practical constellation of subjective and objective—requires understanding how the experience of error, articulated in normative terms, is intelligible as the (re)presentation of objective alethic modal relations of incompatibility.

17. This new object contains the nothingness [Nichtigkeit] of the first, it is what experience has made of it. [PG §86]

18. [T]he presentation of untrue consciousness in its untruth is not a merely *negative* movement, as natural consciousness one-sidedly views it. And a mode of knowledge which makes this onesidedness its basic principle is... the skepticism which sees in every result only pure *nothingness* and abstracts from the fact that this nothingness is determinate, that it is the nothingness *of that from which it results*. In fact, it is only when nothingness is taken as the nothingness of what it comes from that it is the true result; for then nothingness itself is a determinate nothingness and has a *content*. The skepticism which ends up with the abstraction of nothingness, or with emptiness, cannot proceed any further but must wait and see whether anything new presents itself to it, and what this is, in order to cast it into the same abysmal void. But if, on the contrary, the result is comprehended as it truly is, as *determinate* negation, a new form has thereby immediately arisen... [PG §79]

19. Natural consciousness will show itself to be merely the Concept of knowledge, or unreal knowledge. But since it immediately takes itself to be real knowledge, this pathway has a negative significance for it, and what is actually the realization of the Concept is for it rather the loss and destruction of its self: for on this road it loses its truth. The road may thus be viewed as the path of doubt, or, more properly, as the path of despair... [T]his road is the conscious insight into the untruth of phenomenal knowledge...[PG §78]

20. Truth...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...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. [PG §47]

21. The True is thus a Bacchanalian revel, with not a member sober; yet because each member collapses as soon as he drops out, the revel is just as much transparent and simple repose. [PG §47]

22. Judged in the court of this movement, the single shapes of Spirit do not persist any more than determinate thoughts do, but they are as much positive and necessary moments, as they are negative and evanescent. 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. [PG §47]

23. Hegel's invocation of *recollection* [Erinnerung], to which he returns at the very end of the *Phenomenology*, is a gesture at the *third* phase of the experience of error. We have already considered the first two: acknowledging the material incompatibility of some of one's commitments and revising one's commitments (including those concerning what is incompatible

with what) so as to repair the discordance. What Hegel calls “recollection” is a subsequent rational reconstruction of the extended process of experience that has led to one’s current constellation of commitments. What is reconstructed is a sequence of episodes, each of which exhibits the three-phase structure of acknowledgment, repair, and recollection of materially incompatible commitments one has endorsed. From the actual process of past experience the recollector selects a trajectory that is exhibited as expressively progressive—that is, as having the form of a gradual, cumulative revelation of how things really are (according to the recollector). It is a Whiggish story (characteristic of old-fashioned histories of science) of how the way things are in themselves came to be the way they veridically appeared *for* consciousness. That in this way the *past* is constantly turned into a *history* (differently with each tripartite episode of experience) is how Hegel understands reason as retrospectively “giving contingency the form of necessity.”

24. I take it that any understanding of Hegel (or Kant) must start with what he has to teach us about ordinary, ground-level empirical and practical experience—for him (as for Kant) a matter of applying what he calls “determinate concepts”. These are concepts like stick and straight, blue and sour. What he calls “speculative,” or “logical” concepts are theoretical philosophical metaconcepts whose distinctive expressive role it is to make explicit features of the conceptual contents and use (the semantics and pragmatics) of those ground-level concepts. The *Phenomenology* is a story about the development of those higher-level concepts in terms of which his readers (“phenomenological consciousness”) can be brought to comprehend discursive activity in general (“phenomenal consciousness”).

25. So far in these lectures I have talked a lot about the experience of consciousness, but not officially about the *science* of the experience of consciousness. Though I have not explicitly been talking *about* it, what I have been doing is an exercise of the “science of the experience of consciousness.” For that “science” is the explicit, self-conscious *understanding* of the “experience of consciousness.”

26. The *Phenomenology* recounts the *experience* of the science of the experience of consciousness: the process by which meta-concepts adequate to comprehend explicitly the process of experience are themselves developed and determined.

27. When that which at first appeared as the object sinks to the level of being to consciousness a knowledge of the object, and when the *in-itself becomes a being-for-consciousness of the in-itself*, then this *is* the new object. And with this new object a new Shape of consciousness also makes its appearance, a Shape to which the essence is something different from that which was the essence to the preceding Shape. It is this circumstance which guides the entire succession of the Shapes of consciousness in its necessity. But it is this necessity alone—or the emergence of the new object, presenting itself to consciousness without the latter’s knowing how this happens to it—which occurs for us, as it were, behind its back. A moment which is both *in-itself and for-us* is thereby introduced into the movement of consciousness, a moment which does not present itself for the consciousness engaged in the experience itself. But the *content* of what we see emerging exists *for it*, and we comprehend only the formal aspect of what emerges or its pure emerging. *For consciousness*, what has emerged exists only as an object; *for us*, it exists at once as movement and becoming. This, then, is the necessity in virtue of which the present road toward science is itself already a *science*. And, in accordance with its content, it may be called the science of the *experience of consciousness*. [PG §87]

28. In these lectures I have focused on what Hegel will have to say about the semantics and pragmatics of the concepts deployed and determined through base-level experience, by way of preparation for understanding the course of the experience of meta-level *self*-consciousness that he recollects for us in the body of the *Phenomenology*.