

Sense Certainty Notes

A. Idea of SC

a). The opening argument of the *Introduction* was that if one understands the world (what things are in themselves, objectively, what is represented, noumenal reality) as not being in conceptual shape, but our knowing of it (what things are for consciousness, our subjective uptake, our representings, phenomenal appearance) as being in conceptual shape, then genuine knowledge will be ruled out from the outset, not just as *unobtainable*, but as *unintelligible*.

What I called the “Genuine Knowledge Condition” requires that our *semantics* (theory of intentionality) not rule out, not just the *possibility* of genuine knowledge (maybe skepticism is true), but its *intelligibility* (which is presupposed by skepticism). So Hegel is objecting, on structural grounds to a conception envisaging:

- i) Nonconceptual reality and conceptual appearances: instrument/medium view of cognition.

According to me, he is recommending:

- ii) Conceptual reality and conceptual appearances: conceptual realism.

Sense Certainty considers a third alternative:

- iii) Nonconceptual reality and nonconceptual appearances. Passively taking in what is given.

What about the fourth position in this 2x2 table:

- iv) Conceptual reality and nonconceptual appearances.

Q: Has anyone tried this out? A: Best I can do is that some versions of Buddhism understand reality as the “veil of Maya” actually to be conceptually articulated, and our task as “knowers” to be achieving the “no mind” that would ignore that articulation, achieving nonconceptual mere awareness.

Reminder of some history:

b) Cartesian regress to immediately knowable, vs mediate (representational). Error only with rep. So what can be known without the possibility of error is what is known *immediately*, in the sense of *nonrepresentationally*: just by *having* it. But for RD, *only* our own representings can be known that way. They *are* representings, and don’t need to be represented to be known. The SC strategy is different: we are to know nonrepresentationally something that is *not* a representing. By just taking it in. Relationally. Direct realism.

c) Kantian A Deduction cog sci. (he later decides this “mere physiology of the understanding” is out of place in a “deduction”, which in traditional German law is the vindication of a *right* by tracing back its title).

Kant sees 3 stages in knowing something:

synthesis of apprehension in intuition,
synthesis of reproduction in imagination,
synthesis of recognition in concepts.

(If your “Aha!” meter is set to be as sensitive as I hope it is, you are perhaps thinking:

So *Kant*, not Fichte, is the source from whom Hegel picks up the term “recognition.”

No: “recognition” here is not “Anerkennung”, but “Wiedererkennung.”

To reference a corresponding disappointing possible connection I was considering some years ago: This latter is also the term Frege uses in the *Grundlagen* for his crucial concept of identity claims as “recognition judgments”—making explicit our “recognition of an object as the same again.”

Note that the *philosophischen Wörterbücher* even up through the 1940s don’t so much as have an entry for “recognition”).

(Cf. Stages in experience of error).

Idea is that one can only go wrong in latter two steps. Stick with former and one gets immediate knowledge—but not just of one's own reps.

d) “apprehension in intuition.” Faculty of intuition in Kant. History: Descartes's transformative assimilation of thoughts and sensations (contra Aristotelian tradition): i) as reps, ii) on epistemic grounds.

Rats and emps put them on continuum: for rats (L), sensations are confused ideas. For emps, concepts are abstractions from (assimilation of) sense impressions.

Kant: Intuitions/concepts perform different, complementary cognitive functions.

Idea of consciousness understanding itself according to categories (metaconceptual structure) of “sense certainty”—what Hegel calls a “shape of consciousness”, really, of *self*-consciousness, not in the later sense of consciousness of *self* (the subject of consciousness) but as consciousness of consciousness—is that Genuine Knowledge can be achieved by just *taking in what is given*. So long as we don’t *do* anything to what is given, we can’t *falsify* it. (Cf. “Who governs least, governs best.”) If we *don’t* try to “conceptualize the nonconceptual,” but just “stand back and let it all be” (like the Buddhist poets of Atlantic City that Bruce Springsteen says “don’t write nothin’ at all, but just stand back and let it all be.”) we can’t make mistakes. We don’t try to classify what is given, and we don’t even try to repeat it—since we might make mistakes in doing those things. We don’t allow a gap between representing and represented, because we don’t represent at all. Direct realism, relationism.

Main philosophical thrust of *SC* is a critique of the Myth of the Given (“il Mito del Dato”). Sellars marks his acknowledgement of this antecedent by calling, in its opening ‘graphs, his *EPM* “incipient *meditations Hegeliennes*”, and by invoking Hegel as “that great foe of immediacy.”

But in Kantian terms, the claim that givenness is a myth is just the claim that “intuitions without concepts are blind.”

B. 3 distinctions of function (cognitive faculties or abilities) Kant lines up under heading of intuition/concept:

i) receptivity/spontaneity. (Will be noninferential/inferential, in good sense of act or origin. Not until FU will H consider *purely* inferentially elicited (theoretical terms) cognitions. But already he *does* contest that the *contents* can be nonconceptual, even though the *act* is elicited noninferentially (receptively).

ii) singular/general. (Terms/predicates) This is *representings of particularity* vs. generality. That is, it is what is represented that is particular.

iii) untreatable/repeatable (deictic or demonstrative, token reflexive (Reichenbach) vs type repeatable. This is *particularity of representings*.

Last two related as reps of particulars vs. particular reps.

Kant has available the conceptual apparatus to make this distinction: Cf. 2nd Analogy: relations of representations (subjective) vs. Representations of relations (objective).

These are actually *orthogonal* distinctions. Kant runs them together. *That* they coincide is the core of his theory of cognition. But they just don't. 3 distinctions K runs together under heading of concept/intuition.

There is a version of the MoG for *each* of these dimensions of the intuition/concept distinction: Immediacy in the sense of noninferentiality of *act* does not require noninferentiality of *content*. Referring (using singular terms), without characterizing (using predicates), is not an autonomous discursive stratum. One must make judgments to refer.

No deixis without anaphora.

Sellars in *EPM* is concerned only with the first of these. Hegel in *SC* is concerned with *all* of them.

Hegel will discuss these under the headings—defining the three “dialectics” of the *Sense Certainty* chapter—of “knowledge of the immediate,” “immediate knowledge,” and “immediate knowledge of the immediate.”

Recall that “mediation” is a matter of standing in *inferential* relations (where a “middle term” is required for the Schluss = syllogism = inference).

- “knowledge of the immediate”: the idea that the *content* known is nonconceptual. Nonconceptual content. Immediacy here is the content being noninferential, so that grasp of the content does not depend on grasp of any relations it stands in to other contents. Problem: not determinate.
- “immediate knowledge”: immediacy of the *act*. The act of knowing is noninferential, in the sense that it is not the result of a process of inference (which might go wrong). This is OK, but does *not* require that the *content* so known is itself immediate. So try:
- “immediate knowledge of the immediate”: Here the *non-repeatability* of the act is the key, in the way *demonstratives* (deixis) or *indexicals* exhibit. Note: demonstratives are *not* a kind of indexical.

The first of the two *good arguments* I'll attribute to H concern "knowledge of the immediate" and "immediate knowledge." The second concerns "immediate knowledge of the immediate." Note that discussion of the term/predicate (representation of particularity vs. representation of universality or generality) dimension is held off until the next chapter, on *Perception*. The two good arguments concern the other two dimensions of the intuition/concept distinction.

1. The first good argument is essentially
 - a) The *distinction* between noninferentiality of *content* and noninferentiality of *act* (or origin). And
 - b) The observation that *determinateness* of content requires *relation* to other contents. To convey *information* something must be *excluded*. Not to be *idle*, commitment to the content must have *consequences*.

The knowledge of the immediate as knowledge with a nonconceptual content, a content that is noninferential in the sense of not standing in broadly inferential relations to other contents, is not an intelligible concept.

The second sense of "noninferential knowledge", knowledge acquired "immediately", not as the product of a process of inference, but just responsively (passively, receptively) is OK, if kept separate from the first.

2. The second good argument describes the stage-setting needed for deictic expressions to have cognitive significance. They must initiate anaphoric chains that can "recollect" their content, and make it inferentially available.

So:

Noninferentially acquired knowledge (episodes of knowing) must have inferentially articulate content. And

Unrepeatable demonstratives and indexicals must be part of a larger repeatability context, to be cognitively significant.

Each of the three senses of "intuition", in the contrast intuition/concept, is OK. But *each* of them is intelligible *only* in relation to the other, contrasting term. The stage-setting required to make sense of noninferentially acquired knowledge (receptivity), singular terms, and demonstratives (cf. McD and Evans on demonstrative concepts) requires inferentially acquired knowledge (to get determinate contentfulness), predicates (to get judgments) and anaphora (to "hold onto" the unrepeatable deixis, *recollecting* it, so that it can become cognitively significant: not a gear that connects to nothing else in the mechanism.

C. Bad argument. [The handout has the passages and the gist of the attribution.]

D. 2 good arguments: content plus Recollective repeatability.

Discuss W.E. Johnson's determinable/determinate distinction, and its rationale. **Red** is not a species of the genus **colored**, because there are no differentia to distinguish it from other determinates under that determinable except being red.

a) Universality of content out of repeatability of force plus incompatibility of content it can be invested in.

b) deixis to anaphora: holding on to the unrepeatable.

A couple of fussy points:

- Types/tokens. But really need unrepeatable tokenings. Why. (Can re-use some tokens.)
- Demonstratives are not properly assimilated to indexicals. For there is no index (corresponding to time or place of utterance, speaker or world). Usually can't say what the "demonstration" is without interpreting the remark.
- Deixis presupposes anaphora.

1. Two Good Arguments.

Both involve the observation that the authority of immediacy is a *kind* of authority.

- a) The Good Argument to the necessity of representation of generality as a condition of the authority of immediacy as representation of particularity is that that authority can be invested in *different* contents.
Feature-placing. Mere difference. Exclusive difference threatens inconsistency-incoherence of the authority, unless we take these to *be different* contents. But now we are taking them to stand in relations of exclusion and inclusion, and that is enough to give kinds.
- b) The Good Argument to the necessity of repeatability of content of particular representings is that that *same* authority must be able to be appealed to by *different* tokenings with the *same* content. And those different tokenings cannot themselves be immediate.