Recollection and Recognition:
Semantic and Practical Dimensions of Hegel's *Phenomenology*

Representation, Expression, and Recollection[11]

I. Articulating Idealism

On the ground floor of Hegel's intellectual edifice stands his non-psychological conception of the conceptual. This is the idea that to be conceptually contentful is to stand in relations of material incompatibility and consequence (his "determinate negation" and "mediation") to other such contentful items. The relations of incompatibility and consequence are denominated "material" to indicate that they articulate the *contents* rather than *form* of what stands in those relations. This is his first and most basic semantic idea: an understanding of conceptual content in terms of modally robust relations of exclusion and inclusion.

The next move is to think of the relation between conceptual content, so understood, and the forms such contents can take. The result is a *hylomorphic* conception of the conceptual. Conceptual contents, understood as roles with respect to relations of material incompatibility and consequence, are amphibious: they show up in two different forms. They have a *subjective* form and an *objective* form. The subjective form articulates what things are or can be *for consciousness*, and the objective form articulates what things are or can be *in themselves*. The

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second is the form of empirical *reality*; the first is the form in which that empirical reality *appears* to knowing subjects. They are related as the two poles of the intentional nexus: what can be *known* and the attempted *knowing* of it, noumena and phenomena. Genuine knowledge requires that one and the *same* content shows up in *both* different forms: the subjective form of thought and the objective form of fact. Conceptual contents of the two forms stand in a broadly representational relation to one another, as subjective represent*ings* of reality and the objective realities represent*ed*. Hegel's second semantic idea is this consequence of the hylomorphic development of the first: the two forms of conceptual content stand to one another in *representational* relations. These two dimensions of semantic contentfulness, the intelligible and the representational, can be thought of as Hegelian versions of the Fregean metaconcepts of sense and reference (*Sinn* and *Bedeutung*): thoughts and what thoughts are about, what can be expressed and what can be represented.

Hegel's semantic explanatory strategy is to explain the representational dimension of conceptual contentfulness in terms of the basic sense of conceptual contentfulness as articulated by relations of material incompatibility and consequence. What it is to represent something is to be understood in terms of relations among conceptual contents. The idea of a noumenal reality is to be explained in terms of how phenomenal appearances point beyond themselves, in virtue of their relations to one another. This is one sense in which his book counts as a "phenomenology." This account is essentially expressivist and historical. Its key concept is recollection.

Another idea that is of the first importance for this enterprise is that conceptual content in the most basic sense is an essentially *modal* notion. The relations that in the first instance articulate

conceptual contents of either form are *modal* relations. Incompatibility relations codify conjunctions (in a broad sense) that do not merely *happen* not to hold, but that are *forbidden* or *ruled out.* Consequential relations codify conjunctions that do not just happen to hold, but that are *obligatory* or *must* hold. The relations of incompatibility and consequence Hegel understands as articulating conceptual contents are related to one another as the two paired modalities of necessity and impossibility, or obligation and prohibition are related to one another. (That is one of the ways *negation* is built so deeply into his system.)

Of course it matters a lot for such a view how the modal force in question is understood. Here Hegel's revolutionary idea is that the two forms conceptual contents can show up in correspond to two different kinds of modality. Modal relations of incompatibility and consequence have both *alethic* and *deontic* forms. They can be given both *nomological* and *normative* readings. These are the modalities that articulate the objective realm of being (reality, how things are in themselves) and the subjective realm of thought (appearance, how things are for consciousness, how they are taken to be), respectively.

On the objective side of reality, the properties of being a mammal and being a reptile are incompatible in the sense that it is *impossible* for them to be conjoined in one object at the same time. The property of being a mammal has being a vertebrate as a consequence in the sense that it is *necessary* that any creature that is a mammal is a vertebrate. On the subjective side of thought, it is not impossible to take one and the same creature to be both a mammal and a reptile. Those thoughts are incompatible rather in the sense that one *ought not* conjoin them. If one takes a creature to be a mammal, it is possible that one does not take it also to be a vertebrate. But one

ought to do so, one is *committed* or *obliged* to do so. The relations of incompatibility and consequence that articulate the conceptual contents of objective properties and states of affairs are alethic modal relations of noncompossibility and necessity, codified in laws of nature. The relations of incompatibility and consequence that articulate the conceptual contents of subjective thoughts are deontic normative relations. Two thought-contents are incompatible when one cannot be *entitled* to commitments to both, though one might do so anyway. One thought-content is a consequence of another when commitment to one entails commitment to the other—though the actual attitudes of individual thinking subjects might not always actually include acknowledging that normative status. In addition to Hegel's terms "determinate negation" and "mediation" having these paired senses, one for each form content can take, so too do "independence" and "dependence". On the side of subjects, they are read normatively or deontically, as authority and responsibility, on the side of objects, alethically, in terms of necessity.

The resulting view is a kind of *conceptual realism*. For it takes the reality thought about, no less than thoughts about it, already to be in conceptual shape. It does that by starting with a conception of the conceptual that is not restricted to thoughts as thinkings, as psychological events or processes. It ties the conceptual to thought only in the Fregean sense of thinkables. (Frege says "A fact is a thought that is true."[12]) On this conception, to be conceptually contentful is to stand in relations of incompatibility and consequence: to exclude and include other conceptually contentful items. The relations of incompatibility and consequence that articulate conceptual contents (and so count as "material" relations) are modally robust ones. So

[12] "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry" *Mind* Vol. 65, No. 259 (July, 1956), pp. 289-311.

Hegel's is a modal conceptual realism. His particular version is hylomorphic. Conceptual contents can take two forms: subjective and objective. Those two forms correspond to two different kinds of modality, alethic and deontic, nomological and normative. What accordingly becomes visible as *bimodal hylomorphic conceptual realism* makes intelligible the possibility of genuine knowledge, by understanding conceptual content as actualizable in two forms: an objective form articulated by alethic nomological relations of necessary consequence and noncompossibility and a subjective form articulated by deontic normative relations of obligatory consequence and prohibited conjunction.

On an account of this shape, the subjective and objective poles of the intentional nexus, representings in thought and what in reality is represented thereby, correspond to the two modal forms conceptual contents can take. So implementing the semantic explanatory strategy of showing how to understand the representational dimension of conceptual contentfulness ('of'-intentionality) in terms of the expressive dimension ('that'-intentionality) requires explaining the relations between nomological and normative preclusion and inclusion, between alethic and deontic incompatibility and consequence. For it is those notions of incompatibility and consequence that articulate the basic notion of conceptual content.

At the grossest level of structure, the objective realm of being is articulated by nomological *relations*, and the subjective realm of thought is articulated by norm-governed *processes, activities* or *practices*. It can be asked how things stand with the intentional nexus between these realms. Should it be construed in *relational* or *practical-processual* terms? If these are not mutually exclusive (as Hegel in fact understands things), so that both semantic relations and

pragmatic discursive activities of knowing and acting are essential, does one have conceptual, that is, explanatory priority over the other? Hegel takes there to be an explanatory *a*symmetry in that the semantic *relations* between those discursive practices and the objective relations they know about and exploit practically are *instituted by* the discursive practices that both articulate the subjective realm of thought and establish its relations to the objective realm of being. This asymmetry claim privileging specifically recollective discursive practices over semantic relations in understanding the intentional nexus between subjectivity and objectivity is the thesis of *conceptual idealism*.

The view Hegel develops in the *Phenomenology* is being expressed here by means of two radical, distinctively Hegelian theses: bimodal hylomorphic conceptual realism, and recollective conceptual idealism.

Because the objective world is both the cause of sense and the goal of intellect—the first a nomological matter and the second a normative one—cognition involves both alethic modal and deontic normative relations between the objective realm of being whose structure is articulated by alethic modal relations and the subjective realm of thought whose structure is articulated by deontic normative relations. The first are relations of *epistemic tracking*. They support subjunctively robust conditionals of the form: "If the objective facts *were* different (or were to change) in such-and-such ways, the commitments endorsed in thought *would* be different in these-and-those ways." These conditionals articulate a dimension of *authority* (independence) of the objective world over subjective thoughts—a dimension of *responsibility* (dependence) of thought to fact. This is the subjunctive sensitivity of thoughts to things. The second sort of

relations are relations of *normative responsibility* of thought to fact. What things are for consciousness *ought* to conform to what things are in themselves. Those normative relations, too, express the authority of the objective over the subjective. Because the objective world is both the arena of action and the target of intention, intentional agency involves both alethic modal and deontic normative relations between the subjective and objective realms. Agency is *efficacious* insofar as subjunctively robust conditionals of the form "If the agent's practical commitments *had* been different, the events in the objective world *would have* been different." These articulate a dimension of authority of the subjective over the objective—a dimension of dependence of the objective world on subjective practical commitments. The normative standard of *success* of intentional agency is set by how things objectively are after an action. The idea of action includes a background structural commitment to the effect that things *ought* to be as they are intended to be. Conceptual idealism focuses on the fact that *all* these alethic and normative modal *relations* are instituted by the recollective *activity* that is the final phase of the cycle of cognition and action.

Conceptual realism asserts the identity of conceptual content between facts and thoughts of those facts. (Compare Wittgenstein: "When we say, and mean, that such-and-such is the case, we—and our meaning—do not stop anywhere short of the fact; but we mean: this—is—so." [*PI* §95]) Conceptual idealism offers a *pragmatic* account of the practical process by which that semantic-intentional relation between what things are for consciousness and what they are in themselves is established. Pragmatics, as I am using the term, is the study of the *use* of concepts by subjects engaging in discursive practices. Conceptual idealism asserts a distinctive kind of explanatory priority (a kind of authority) of pragmatics over semantics. For this reason it is a

pragmatist semantic explanatory strategy, and its idealism is a *pragmatist idealism*. The *sui generis* rational practical activity given pride of explanatory place by this sort of pragmatism is *recollection*.

II. Recollection: How the Process of Experience Determines Conceptual Contents and Semantic Relations

The beating heart of the *Phenomenology* is the concept of experience [*Erfahrung*]. That is why Hegel's original title for it is "The Science of the *Experience* of Consciousness." Even after, in the course of writing the work, he came to see that "consciousness" picks out only one aspect of his real topic, *Geist*, he could still with full fidelity to his intentions have called it "The Science of the Experience of *Geist*." Experience is the process by which the Concept develops, and so the process by which its constituent concepts develop. It is of the essence of the reading presented here that the notion of experience functions at two levels, corresponding to the two fundamental kinds of concepts Hegel distinguishes. These are "logical," speculative [*begrifflich*, *begreifend*], or philosophical concepts, on the one hand, and ordinary empirical and practical "determinate" concepts, on the other.

The origin of the distinction lies in Kant's revolutionary idea that besides the concepts that we deploy to describe and explain empirical goings-on, there are concepts whose distinctive expressive role is to make explicit crucial structural features of the framework that makes

description and explanation possible. (Among them are alethic modal and deontic normative concepts.) Kant thought there was a single set of such categories that could express the structure of discursive activity *überhaupt*. The recollective story Hegel tells in the *Phenomenology* is a rationally reconstructed history of the expressively progressive development of "shapes of (self-)consciousness," which are articulated by different, more-or-less adequate categorial metaconcepts. It culminates, however, in a single set of expressively adequate philosophical concepts. The master-strategy animating this reading of Hegel (and of Kant) is *semantic descent*: the idea that the ultimate point of studying these metaconcepts is what their use can teach us about the semantic contentfulness of ground-level concepts, so the best way to understand the categorial metaconcepts is to use them to talk about the use and content of ordinary concepts. It is because it is aimed at extracting such lessons that what I am offering can be thought of as a *semantic* reading of the *Phenomenology*. It is a *pragmatist* semantic reading because the key to understanding the conceptual contentfulness common to the objective empirical world of lawfully related facts about objects and their properties and the normative subjective activity of thinking (undertaking commitments by inferring and claiming, referring and classifying) is found to lie in the discursive practice and process of experience. The lead role in his account of experience as instituting semantic relations is played by recollection.

The pragmatic metaconcept of the process of experience is first put in play in the *Introduction*, at the very beginning of the book, in the form of the experience of *error*. It is invoked to explain how the consciousness-constitutive distinction-and-relation between what things are *for* consciousness and what things are *in* themselves shows up *to* consciousness itself. Hegel assumes that, however vaguely understood it might be at the outset, it is a distinction-and-

relation that can at least be a topic *for us*, the readers of the book, the phenomenological self-consciousness that under his guidance is rehearsing the development of phenomenal self-consciousness. Hegel's terminology of what things are explicitly "for consciousness" and what things are "in themselves" [*an sich*] ("implicitly") is his preferred way of talking about what I have been calling the "intentional nexus," which relates the subjective realm of thought, the way things *appear* to subjects, with the objective realm of being, the way things *really* are. It is, as emerges already in the *Introduction*, the phenomenon addressed by the distinction between subjective represent*ings* and objective represent*eds* (baked into Early Modern philosophical thought about mind and knowledge by Descartes). Partly on that basis, I have urged that we can think about it as the fundamental *semantic* relation between what Frege calls "sense" and "referent" (*Sinn* and *Bedeutung*). The question is how this crucial distinction already shows up practically for even the most metatheoretically naïve knowing subject. How are we to understand the basic fact 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 [*PG* 85].

This is the most primitive, practical form of *self*-consciousness—awareness of what consciousness is—available even to conceptually untutored "natural consciousness."

Hegel traces its origin to the experience of *error*—to what happens when a subject inevitably eventually discovers that it is in some instance *wrong*, that things are not in fact as they seemed. It is in having to *give up* a view that becomes untenable that it becomes visible as a

view (a representing), normatively answerable for its correctness to how things actually are (what is represented). When an error is practically acknowledged, what was *to* the subject a reality is unmasked and revealed as merely a guise, an appearance, a way things were only *for* the subject. One took the stick to be bent. On pulling it all the way out of the water, one sees that it was really straight all along. One's prior view shows up as just a view, a way it looked. That change of view involves distinguishing how things merely look from how they really are.

Hegel finds the roots of this sort of experience in our biological nature as desiring beings. For a kind of desire, such as hunger, comes with a characteristic associated sort of practical activity: eating. And responding to something in the environment by engaging in that activity, eating it, is according it a distinctive sort of practical significance: food. The very same desire that motivates the associated activity and defines that practical significance then serves as a proto-normative standard of correctness. What a creature practically takes or treats *as* food, by eating it, can turn out *not really* to *be* food, if eating it does not satisfy the hunger that motivated it. Eating something that turns out to be disgusting, or just unsatisfying, is the most primitive form of the experience of error. In it one learns that what one took to be food, what appeared to one as food (what one orectically represented as food), was not in fact food. When a creature goes through that process of error and discovery, the distinction between what things are *for* it (the practical significance it practically assigned to them) and what things are *in themselves* (the practical significance they actually have, as assessed by the satisfaction of desire) becomes something *to* that creature. It is how a distinction between appearance and reality shows up practically already for preconceptual, merely desiring organisms. This sort of experience is the basis and practical form of *learning*. It is because it is also for Hegel the practical basis for the

semantic distinction between representings and representeds, sense and referent, that his deserves to be called a "pragmatist semantics

We saw that the most basic concept in the purely semantic strand of Hegel's thought is his understanding of the conceptual—in the sense of the graspable, what thoughts have in common with facts—in terms of relations of incompatibility and consequence. This is the semantic basis from which the expressive-recollective account of the representational dimension of conceptual content is elaborated. It, too, is explained in terms of the experience of error. For an essential part of the acknowledgment of error is practically taking or treating two commitments as incompatible. Such genuinely conceptual activity goes beyond what merely desiring beings engage in. The origins of Hegel's idea here lie in Kant's earlier broadly pragmatist account of what knowing subjects must *do* in order to count as apperceiving. Apperception is *sapient* awareness, as opposed to the merely *sentient* awareness exhibited by desiring animals. For Kant, to be aware in the narrower sense is to synthesize a constellation of commitments that exhibits a distinctive kind of unity: apperceptive unity. This is a *rational* unity—and hence, he thinks, a *discursive* unity, in the sense of one that is *conceptually* articulated. It is a rational unity because of the distinctive kinds of norms that govern its synthesis.

Synthesizing a constellation of commitments (both doxastic and practical) exhibiting the rational unity distinctive of apperception is practically acknowledging a variety of task-responsibilities. The one that matters most for Hegel's later construal of the experience of error is the *critical* task-responsibility to extrude incompatible commitments. When one finds oneself

with commitments that are incompatible, by one's own lights, that is, according to the contents one thereby counts as attributing to them, one must practically acknowledge the responsibility to *do* something: to change or relinquish at least one of them. There is also a rational *ampliative* task-responsibility to acknowledge commitment to the *consequences* of one's commitments: to draw conclusions that rationally follow from them. Further, there is a *justificatory* responsibility, to be able to give *reasons* justifying the commitments one incorporates in the evolving constellation. Being apperceptively aware or conscious of something is *discursive* awareness of it, bringing it under a *concept*. The concept is for Kant accordingly a rule that determines what is incompatible with what (giving specific content to one's critical rational task-responsibility) and what is a consequence of what (giving specific content to one's ampliative and justificatory task-responsibilities). Conceptual contentfulness is suitability to play a functional role in the process of synthesizing a constellation of commitments exhibiting the rational unity characteristic of apperception. So conceptual content is a matter of standing in relations of material incompatibility and consequence to other such conceptually contentful items. This is a broadly pragmatist account, because the notion of conceptual content, which is the subject of *semantics*, is understood functionally in terms of the norm-governed practical synthetic *activity* by which one's commitments evolve and develop, which is the subject of *pragmatics*.

Hegel builds on Kant's model and develops it in his account of the experience of error. In doing so, he naturalizes Kant's account, in a broad sense, bringing it down to earth by grounding it in the preconceptual experience of desiring animals. But he also radicalizes and generalizes both the methodological pragmatism that consists in reading off an account of conceptual contentfulness from an account of rational activity and the specific focus on

incompatibility and consequence as the relations that articulate conceptual content. He further substantially adds to the picture of the experiential process that shapes the development of the constellation of commitments that the Concept comprises. As Kant would, Hegel sees a single episode of experiencing error as beginning with the *registration* of an anomaly: the acknowledgment that one finds oneself with commitments that are *incompatible*, in the sense that one cannot become entitled to them both (or to all of them). They preclude jointly fulfilling one's justificatory responsibility. Practically acknowledging that incompatibility is taking oneself to be obliged to *do* something, *change* something. This is the obligation to engage in a process of *repair* of the anomaly, to replace rational discord with rational harmony, by altering or giving up some of the offending commitments. At this point, Hegel breaks from the Kantian picture by adding a crucial constraint on what counts as successful repairs. Not just any rejiggering that removes the incompatibility suffices. Successful repairs must *explain* and *justify* the changes made, in a special way, by taking a distinctive form. The addition of this requirement, the characterization of this constraint, is one of Hegel's Big Ideas, and stands at the center of the conceptual idealism (and so the pragmatist semantics) of the *Phenomenology*.

Hegel's idea is that vindication of a proposed reparative strategy in response to acknowledgment of incompatible commitments must take the form of a special kind of *historical* narrative: a recollection. One must tell a retrospective story that rationally reconstructs an idealized expressively progressive trajectory through previous changes of view that culminates in the view being endorsed after the repair of the most recently discovered anomaly. In the first stage of the experience of error, the previous conception of how things are, what played the role *to* consciousness of what things are *in* themselves, has been unmasked as appearance, and has

accordingly shifted status. It now plays the role *to* consciousness of being only what things were *for* consciousness: an erroneous view of how things really are. To justify endorsing a new view as veridically representing how thing really are in themselves, one must show how, assuming that things are that way, one did or could have come to *know* that things are that way.

Doxastic commitments are for Hegel implicitly knowledge claims. He has characteristic versions of all three of the dimensions of classical conceptions of knowledge as justified true belief. What I have been calling commitments, a kind of normative status, are the analogues of thoughts or beliefs (putative knowings), in his deontically inflected conception of the *geistig* realm of thought. Conceptual realism teaches that the truth dimension of such claims to knowledge is a matter of thought and fact sharing a common conceptual content. The demand for recollective vindication of one's commitments codifies Hegel's version of the justification dimension of claims to knowledge. This distinctive kind of justification requires showing how the previous views one held in the process leading up to the current candidate can properly be understood as views, appearances, or representings *of* what one now endorses as the reality one claims was all along being viewed, appearing, or being represented. To be entitled to claim that things are as one now takes them to be, one must show how one *found out* that they are so. Doing that involves explaining what one's earlier views got right, what they got wrong, and why. It involves rationally reconstructing the sequence of one's previous views of what one now takes to be the same topic so as to exhibit it as a process of *learning*, of gradual *discovery* of how things actually are. This is the progressive emergence into explicitness, the ever more adequate expression, of what is retrospectively discerned as having been all along implicit as the norm governing and guiding the process by which its appearances arise and pass away.

Offering such a retrospective historical rational reconstruction of the process leading up to the constellation of commitments whose endorsement is being vindicated as the lesson properly to be learned from the earlier registering and reparative phases is the final, *recollective* phase of an episode of the experience of error. Recollection (Hegel's "Erinnerung") turns a *past* into a *history*. It transforms a mere description of past commitments into a progressive narrative of a sequence of lessons whereby how things really are, in themselves (according to one's current commitments) gradually came to be revealed, through that progressive sequence of ever-more-adequate appearances, culminating in one's current happy state of (as one takes it to be) *knowledge* of how things really are. A recollecting narrative is a narrative of *expressive* progress. It is a story about how what is now revealed to have been all along *implicit* in prior commitments, as the reality they were appearances of (the noumena behind the phenomena), gradually emerged to become fully *explicit*, showing up as what it really is, in the view currently endorsed, in which that process culminated. It is a story of how what things are in themselves ("an sich") becomes what they are for consciousness. A recollection accordingly exhibits past commitments that have been discarded because of their incompatibility with others as genuine (if only partially correct) appearances *of* reality as it is now known to be, and in that sense as not *merely* illusory.

This recollective phase of the experience of error is meant to explain 'of'-intentionality in terms of 'that'-intentionality—the representational dimension of thought in terms of its conceptual contentfulness. Conceptual contentfulness in Hegel's sense is what thoughts and facts (phenomena and noumena) can share: being articulated by relations of material

incompatibility and consequence to other similarly contentful items. What practically distinguishes what is *taken* or *treated* by a conscious subject *as* noumenal, as how things really are, in themselves, from what it takes or treats *as* phenomenal, as presenting an appearance of things, is just the subject's *commitment* or *endorsement* of the content. (This is adopting an attitude that undertakes a normative status.) Doxastically endorsing a conceptual content *is* taking it to be a fact. That *what* one takes to be facts (which contents, exactly, one endorses) *changes* is just a change in status of the contents involved during the registration and repair stages of the experience of error. The old content changes status from being endorsed to not being endorsed, and its replacement changes status from not being endorsed to being endorsed. What was *to* consciousness noumenal reality is unmasked as phenomenal appearance, and replaced by a different content, newly endorsed as objectively factual. The recollective stage of an experience of error justifies this change of status by forging a distinctive kind of link between the content newly endorsed as noumenal and all the previously endorsed contents that now are taken to be phenomena. It is a representational link, in virtue of which they show up to the conscious subject as phenomenal appearances *of* that noumenal reality. The link is forged by offering a retrospective recollective rational reconstruction of a sequence of phenomena culminating in the facts as one currently takes them to be. That rational reconstruction exhibits them as all along implicitly normatively governed by their link to that noumenal reality, in the sense it serves as the normative standard by which their adequacy *as* phenomenal appearances of it is to be assessed.

This recollective story about the representational dimension of conceptual content is, crucially, an *expressive* account of it. It explains how what was, according to each recollection,

always *implicit* ("an sich", what things are in themselves), becomes ever more *explicit* (for consciousness). The recollective story is an *expressively* progressive one. The representational relation between senses and referents is established by displaying a sequence of appearances that are ever more adequate expressions of an underlying reality. In general Hegel thinks we can only understand what is implicit in terms of the expressive process by which it is made explicit. That is a recollective process. The underlying reality is construed as implicit in the sense of being a norm that all along governed the process of its gradual emergence into explicitness. Without at any earlier point being fully explicit to the consciousness undergoing the experience, according to the recollection that unveils it as what the appearances were appearances of, it nonetheless practically (hence, implicitly) governed the process. According to the retrospective rational reconstruction that is the recollection, it served as a normative standard for better and worse appearances, accordingly as they revealed (expressed) that reality more adequately. And according to the recollection, those assessments were efficacious. The metanorm that governs recollection (determining better and worse recollections) demands *expressive* progress: progress in making explicit what shows up as having been all along implicit. This recollective notion of expression is more fundamental than the notion of representation it is called on to explain.

A recollective reconstruction does that by exhibiting the various erroneous beliefs *that* things are thus-and-so (phenomena) as appearances *of* the facts as they really are (noumena). A recollection performs a great reversal: what eventuates from a process of repeated experiences of error, as its final (thus far) *end* or result, is placed, as it were, also at the *beginning* of the sequence.

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.[13]

(Hegel often uses circular imagery in this connection.) For the fact is seen as what drives its progressive revelation. How things actually are is recollectively revealed as normatively governing the process both deontically, as a standard of assessment of expressive success, and alethically, as that to which the episodes that count as expressively progressive are subjunctively sensitive. It is at once the cause of a course of experience and its goal.

Stories of this recollective-vindicating sort are familiar from various institutional practices. Old-fashioned histories of science typically took the form of pointing to some feature of current scientific theories (genes are encoded by sequences of DNA base-pairs, the division between subatomic particles described by Fermi-Dirac statistics and those described by Bose-Einstein statistics is exclusive and exhaustive…) and then offering a canned Whiggish account of the process by which this truth was gradually discovered, one feature emerging from this experiment or conceptual break-through, another from that one. False starts, wrong turns, and dead ends are ignored, except insofar as some bit of the truth is taken to have been revealed thereby. For another example, the final results of complex medical diagnoses are explained by telling stories of this sort: "Even though the patient *did* have an infection, the absence of cytokines in the blood showed that, contrary to what we had thought, the fever must be exogenous…." And—to invoke a comparison I have returned to repeatedly in this work—recollective vindications also play an absolutely essential role in jurisprudential practice. This is

[13] T. S. Eliot "Little Gidding" V.

clearest in case law, and (because it is essentially, "case law all the way down") especially common law. For there the principal form of justification a judge can offer for her application of a legal concept (strict liability, duty of care…) is a suitable rational reconstruction of prior applications, which are considered precedential in that they reveal explicitly some of the contours of the underlying law that is implicit in the juridical tradition.

Kant had the idea that representation is a normative concept. Something counts as a representing in virtue of being *responsible to* something else, which counts as represented by it in virtue of exercising *authority* over the representing by serving as a standard for assessments of its correctness *as* a representing. It is in precisely this sense that a recollective story treats the commitments it surveys as representings of the content currently treated as factual. The current commitment in which the sequence being reconstructed culminates is treated as authoritative for the previous commitments that sequence comprises (and them as responsible to it) in that it provides the standard for assessing the extent to which they are successful or adequate expressions (and so representations) of it. In picking out a trajectory from the actual experiences of error that led up to the currently endorsed conceptual content (all of which exhibit 'that'-intentionality by standing in relations of incompatibility and consequence), a trajectory that is expressively progressive by that standard—thereby turning a mere past into an intelligible history of discovery—the recollection treats them as responsible *to* it in the sense required for them to be representations *of* it (to exhibit 'of'-intentionality). It is the sort of process that institutes representational relations—the process whereby conceptual contents become representations "*to* (a) consciousness."

It is accordingly by engaging in a course of experience, a sequence of episodes of the experience of error each of which exhibits all three phases—critical registration of an incompatibility of commitments, constructive repair of the incompatibility by alteration of commitments, and recollective vindication of the new constellation of commitments—that knowing subjects establish representational semantic relations between what play the roles for Hegel of senses and referents. Hegelian senses are, for him as for Frege, thoughts as thinkables. For Hegel that means conceptual contents, apt both to be thinkable and, when all goes right, factual: to be the facts thought or, as we could also say, thought about. They are thinkable, conceptually contentful, in virtue of standing in relations of material incompatibility and consequence to other such contents. As such, they exhibit 'that'-intentionality. For they can be the content of thoughts *that* things are thus-and-so. Recollective rational reconstruction of an expressively progressive trajectory culminating in a thinkable endorsed as factual precipitates out a representational relation. That anaphorically structured representational relation exhibits the elements of the favored trajectory as exhibiting also 'of'-intentionality by expressing contents that are more-or-less adequate explicit expressions, and so representations of the content finally endorsed, which accordingly shows up as having been all along implicit in them. This is Hegel's story about what a subject has to *do* in order to bring about representational semantic relations between its thoughts and the facts. Recollection is accordingly the core of his pragmatist semantics, and of his conceptual idealism.

Hegel strongly contrasts the way of thinking he wants to recommend—the expressive paradigm—with representational ways of thinking. His recollective elaboration of expression is designed to give semantic representationalism its due, by reconstructing in expressive terms what

representationalists were right about. Conceptual content does have a representational dimension, and it can and ought to be understood ultimately in recollective expressivist terms. To explain Hegel's expressivist rational reconstruction of representational relations we can use Frege's semantic vocabulary of sense and reference as an amphibious intermediary between representationalist and expressivist semantic idioms. On the one hand, it is recognizably a way of talking about representings and representeds. Senses do refer to, and in that sense represent, their referents. On the other hand, the senses that semantically determine reference are also thought of as intrinsically graspable. For Hegel, following Kant, that means they are conceptually contentful. Hegel's understanding of conceptual contentfulness as articulation by relations of material incompatibility and consequence provides a model of thoughts as senses.

Hylomorphic conceptual realism then underwrites the idea of the categorial homogeneity of senses as graspable thoughts and their referents (what they represent) as correspondingly conceptually contentful, statable facts. This makes intelligible the idea that thoughts are the explicit expressions of facts. They make explicit (for consciousness) how the world is (in itself, implicitly, "an sich"). The objective idealist appeal to a reciprocal sense-dependence between specifications of objective facts and their modal relations, on the one hand, and norm-governed processes of practically acknowledging the consequences of one's commitments by rejecting others and accepting yet others is one step in filling in the expressivist story. That story is completed by appealing to the model of practical agency to yield an understanding of *expression* in terms of *recollection*. The result is an expressive account of the representational dimension of conceptual content in the form of a recollective account of representation.

III. From Metacategories of *Verstand* to *Vernunft*: Determinateness of Conceptual Content

At the end of each successful episode of the experience of error rational harmony has been restored to the subject's commitments. The incompatibility detected has been repaired and the resulting constellation of commitments recollectively vindicated by recollecting it as the result of a course of experience that has been selected and rationally reconstructed as an unbroken expressively progressive triumphalist narrative of revelation and discovery—as the gradual making explicit of what is presented as having been all along implicit. But Hegel takes it that *every* achievement of this sort of rational equilibrium is temporary. It is fated to be disrupted by the eruption of new anomalies. Acquiring new empirical commitments immediately (in the sense of noninferentially, perceptually), and mediately, by inferentially extracting consequences from one's current commitments (fulfilling one's ampliative rational task-responsibility) will inevitably, sooner or later, result in one's finding oneself once again with commitments that are incompatible with one another, by one's own lights (the contents one takes them to have). The plight of finite knowing and acting subjects metaphysically guarantees liability to empirical error and practical failure. The experience of error is inescapable. What I earlier called the "false starts, wrong turns, and dead ends" of inquiry can be retrospectively edited out of the sanitized, Whiggish vindicating recollective narrative, but they cannot be avoided going forward.

Why not? In short because the rational, conceptual character of the world and its stubborn recalcitrance to mastery by knowledge and agency are equally fundamental primordial features of the way things are. On the one hand, the world is lawful, articulated by alethic modal relations of incompatibility and necessary consequence, so conceptually contentful and graspable. ("To him who looks on the world rationally, the world looks rationally back," Hegel says elsewhere.[14]) It is, in Hegel's terms, thoroughly "mediated." On the other hand, it is shot through with brute immediacy, which impinges on thought through perception. Kant, following the empiricist tradition, conceives the task of conceptualizing sensuous immediacy as an uncompletable, infinite task. For him, sensuous immediacy is conceptually inexhaustible. There is no aspect of what you see when you look at the palm of your hand that you cannot express in a perceptual judgment. But no matter how many such judgments you make, you will never run out of new, as yet unexpressed judgments that would codify genuine features of what you see. One of Hegel's most original ideas is his understanding of the sense in which the immediacy of objective being outruns what can be captured conceptually in subjective thought, not in terms of its necessary *inexhaustibility* by empirical *judgments*, but in terms of the necessary *instability* of determinate empirical *concepts*.

For Hegel, the experience of error requires not just the revision of *beliefs* (doxastic commitments) but also of *meanings*—the concepts or conceptions that articulate empirical judgments. If my conception acid includes as circumstances of appropriate application tasting sour and as appropriate consequences of application turning Litmus paper red, then if I run

[14] Introduction to *Chapters on the Philosophy of History*, published separately as *Reason in History*, tr. R.S. Hartman 1953, p. 13; Suhrkamp Hegel edition, volume 12, p.23.

across something that tastes sour and turns Litmus paper blue, I will find myself with commitments that are incompatible by my own lights. The world, it seems, will not let me have that conception of acid, because it commits me to consequences that do not in fact follow in the objective world. In response to registered anomalies, I might need to revise not just my doxastic commitments, but also my broadly inferential commitments concerning what is incompatible with what and what follows from what. In fact Hegel (in striking contrast to Kant) thinks that there is and could *in principle* be no set of determinate empirical concepts that when *correctly* applied to things (according to the circumstances and consequences of application defining those concepts) will not eventually lead to the undertaking of incompatible commitments articulated by those concepts, and hence to an experience of error. This is his way of registering immediacy as an irreducible, ineliminable aspect of objective being, and hence of thought about it.

The manifestation of stubborn, residual immediacy in thought is the inevitability of the experience of error. Every recollectively vindicated, rationally harmonious constellation of commitments achieved along the way is fragile, precarious, and temporary—doomed eventually to be riven by incompatibility and unmasked as presenting one more appearance of a reality that is thereby shown to be elusive.

Hegel presents the tension between the ineluctability of error and the realistic possibility of genuine knowledge as not only a destructive, but also a productive one. Both express valid perspectives on what is always at once both the experience of error and the way of truth. The important thing is not to seize exclusively—and so one-sidedly—on either aspect, but to understand the nature of the process as one that necessarily shows up from *both* perspectives. It

is of the essence of the historical process of experience to afford both retrospective and prospective temporal perspectives on it. Looking back, from the vantage-point of each recollectively vindicated constellation of commitments resulting from the repair of acknowledged incompatibility, one sees unbroken epistemic expressive progress culminating in the achievement of genuine knowledge of truths, as construed by bimodal hylomorphic conceptual realism. Looking forward, one sees the inevitable decay of each such beautiful harmony by the unavoidable advent of commitments incompatible with one another by their own lights, and the initiation of new trifold episodes of the experience of error. The retrospective point of view, recollectively producing by rational reconstruction an expressively progressive tradition in which what was implicit (*an sich*) becomes explicit for consciousness, makes visible the sense in which subjective thought can genuinely grasp the objective world: how things can be for consciousness what they are in themselves. The prospective point of view focuses on the ruptures occasioned by the disparities between successive recollective reconstructions, as what is endorsed by one is rejected by a later one. It makes visible the sense in which the immediacy of actual being, reflected in sensuous immediacy, inevitably outruns what is captured by any determinate conceptual (mediated) structure, inferentially articulated by relations of material incompatibility and consequence. One of Hegel's animating ideas is that the independence of immediacy (its distinctive authority over structures of mediation) is manifested in its role as a principle of instability, as providing a normative demand for change, for both rejection and further development of each constellation of determinate concepts and commitments articulated by them. The independence of mediation (its distinctive authority over immediacy) is manifested in all the retrospective recollective vindications of prior constellations of

commitments as genuine knowledge, as resulting from the expressively progressive revelation of reality by prior claims to knowledge.

Determinate negation, material incompatibility, is not only the fundamental *conceptual* structure, but also marks the moment of *immediacy* within what is conceptually articulated, whether on the side of being or of thought. Immediacy in the realm of being necessarily produces/reveals, via perception of cognitive error and practical failure, the incompatibilities of commitment that normatively oblige the knowing and acting subject to *do* something, to engage in the reparative and recollective phases of experience. The forward-looking obligation to repair acknowledged incompatibilities of commitment acknowledges error and the inadequacy of its conceptions. The backward-looking recollective obligation to rationalize as expressively progressive previous, now superseded, repairs and recollections institutes knowledge, truth, and determinate concepts whose incompatibilities and consequences track those articulating (in a different modal key) the objective world. Acknowledging this obligation by constructing retrospective expressively progressive recollective narratives is the form of Reason's march through history. It is what "looking on the world rationally" consists in.

The recollective process is also what Hegel calls "giving contingency the form of necessity." Objective immediacy, what brutely is, shows up cognitively (becomes something for consciousness, is expressed) as sensuous immediacy in the deliverances of commitments by perception. The "form of necessity" is a *normative* form. ("Necessary," "notwendig," for Kant meant "in accordance with a rule. That is why it had for him two species: natural necessity, articulated by alethic modal relations, and practical necessity, articulated by deontic normative

relations.) The intrusions of commitments arrived at noninferentially in perception give rise to anomalies through engendering incompatibilities. Giving those eruptions the form of necessity is incorporating them into an expressively progressive recollective narrative that exhibits them as the agents whereby the true contents of concepts are gradually revealed and become more explicit.

Understanding the experiential process, which comprises both what shows up when that process is viewed retrospectively and what shows up when it is viewed prospectively, so as to see truth and error as equally essential, complementary aspects of it—as two sides of one coin—requires reconceptualizing both truth and determinateness. The key in each case is to understand them not as properties, states, or relations that can be instantiated at a single time, but as structural features of enduring experiential processes. This is making the shift between the static modern metaconceptual structure Hegel calls "Verstand" and the dynamic successor metaconceptual structure he calls "Vernunft." According to the categories of *Verstand*, as articulated by Kant, for instance, the understanding has available to it a stock of concepts that are determinate, in that it is already settled in advance what manifolds of intuition they can successfully synthesize. What is recognizably a cognate *Verstand* conception of determinateness shows up in Frege as the requirement that concepts fix extensions, in the sense of determining, for every possible object, whether that object does or does not fall under the concept. The view is that fixed, permanent truths can be formulated using concepts that are determinate in this sense, and that progress in knowledge consists in endorsing more and more such truths, and rejecting more and more falsehoods formulated in terms of those same determinate concepts. By

contrast, the metaconceptual standpoint of *Vernunft* focuses on the malleability of concepts. In the toy example of an experience of error mentioned above, a subject finds herself with commitments incompatible by her own lights because she endorses a concept of acid that includes tasting sour as a sufficient reason for applying the concept, and turning Litmus paper red a necessary consequence of its application. Immediate perceptual experience of a liquid that tastes sour and turns Litmus paper blue precipitates a crisis. While either of the perceptual judgments might be relinquished, progress can consist in amending the content attributed to the concept. Perhaps only substances that both taste sour and combine with metals to form salts should count as acids. Insofar as this emendation is successful, progress is made in that the subject deploys concepts that better track what really follows from what in the objective world. The experience of error obliges not only change of belief, but change of meaning.

The metaconceptual move that takes us from *vorstellen* to *begreifen* (*Verstand* to *Vernunft*) is the replacement of the model of experience as *representation*, an external relation between independently specifiable realms of representings and representeds, confronting each other across a gulf, by a model of experience as *expression*. This is an internal process of development whereby each single content, retrospectively recollectively identifiable as persisting throughout the process of its development, shows up originally in implicit form and is expressed or unfolds, becoming available in explicit form. Experience is the process whereby the determinate, and so mediated contents implicit in immediacy come to appear as explicitly mediated. Representational relations take their explanatorily subsidiary place as arising from one aspect of the activity of developing conceptual contents.

The residue of traditional *Verstand* ways of thinking about cognitive progress that consists in understanding experience as progressive insofar as it asymptotically approaches objective facts and relations of incompatibility and consequence is, according to the more capacious *Vernunft* picture, one-sided and incomplete. It results from appreciating only the retrospective-recollective perspective on experience, which underwrites talk of "facts" (true claims) and "what really follows from (excludes) what" (objective consequences and incompatibilities) from within each vindicating recollective rational reconstruction. Experience is indeed the royal road of truth and knowledge—but it is not that alone. Taking into account also the prospective perspective on experience, which focuses on the fragility and necessarily temporary character of any and every set of doxastic and inferential commitments, requires thinking of truth and determinateness as features of the process of experience, rather than as goals it asymptotically approaches. Experience is the truth-process. And it is the process of *determining* conceptual contents. It is expressively progressive, in the sense that the retrospective-recollective perspective shows it to be genuinely revelatory of reality. That experiential process *both* institutes (on the subjective side) and discovers (on the objective side) conceptually articulated contents, and so truths, that are determinate in the Kant-Frege *Verstand* sense (in its recollective phase), *and* engenders their dissolution in the discovery of residual error.

The comprehensive view that encompasses both what shows up as progressive from the retrospective-recollective perspective and what shows up as disruptive and erroneous from the prospective perspective (corresponding to different phases of the process of experience) is summarized in a central passage from the *Preface*:

> …this whole movement constitutes what is positive [in it] and its truth. This truth therefore includes the negative also, what would be called the false, if it could be regarded as something from which one might abstract. The evanescent itself must, on the contrary, be regarded as essential, not as something fixed, cut off from the True, and left lying who knows where outside it, any more than the True is to be regarded as something on the other side, positive and dead. Appearance is the arising and passing away that does not itself arise and pass away, but is 'in itself', and constitutes the actuality and the movement of the life of truth. [*PG* 47]

"Appearance" here is the phenomena, the world as it shows up for consciousness, in the form of conceptual contents articulated by relations of material incompatibility and consequence, which are endorsed by the knowing, acting subject of the cycle of cognition and action that is the process of experience. Although each such phenomenon is unmasked as erroneous, as an *appearance* that in some ways *mis*represents reality, the recollective phase of experience also reveals each such constellation of commitments to be an appearance *of* a noumenal reality (what things are in themselves) represented by it, visible as having been all along implicit in it, gradually but inexorably emerging into greater explicitness. The passage continues with one of the most justly famous images of the whole book:

> The True is thus the Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunk; yet because each member collapses as soon as he drops out, the revel is just as much transparent and simple repose. 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 [*sich erinnert*]…

(The older Baillie translation has the somewhat more poetic "The truth is a vast Bacchanalian revel, with not a soul sober….") In interpreting this allegory, it is important to keep in mind the two levels of concepts I have claimed are being considered. The surface topic is "shapes of Spirit," various forms exhibited by the normativity articulating the thinkings and doings of self-conscious subjects, traditional, modern, and beyond. This is one of the places where Hegel explicitly marks that besides thoughts and concepts at this categorial metalevel, he is also addressing the nature and evolution of ground-level determinate thoughts and concepts. A characteristic feature of the "pragmatist semantic" reading I have been presenting here is "semantic descent": focusing on what we are supposed to learn about the use and content of these ordinary empirical and practical "determinate" concepts and commitments. Here the party-goers participating in the moveable feast are those commitments: doxastic, practical, and inferential—in the broad sense that articulates conceptual content and so includes commitments concerning what is materially incompatible with ("determinately negates") what. The revel is the process of experience. What matters about the image of their drunkenness is its picturing of the restless, woozy jostling and elbowing of each other as different contents of potential commitments that are incompatible with each other in the company of the others already on board seek a place at the table. Those that are forced out are immediately replaced by others, so the party continues, though with a shifting cast. The crucial contribution to the festivities that was made by the departed members, those who at some earlier point slipped insensible beneath the table, is still "preserved as recollected," in the story the later revelers tell about how they got where they are.

This recollective activity establishes the relation between a sequence of phenomena (appearances, senses, representings) and noumena (reality, referents, representeds) in which the latter shows up twice: both as the currently constellation of explicitly endorsed conceptual contents in which the rationally reconstructed sequence culminates and also as having been all along implicit in and normatively governing that sequence, by serving as the standard for assessing the expressive success of all of its members. It is because the account grounds the semantic *relations* between senses and referents, representings and representeds, in this recollective *activity* of the experiencing subject that it deserves to be thought of as offering a *pragmatist* semantics.

Conceptual idealism (the *begreifen* that comprehends *vorstellen*) claims that that semantic, representational relation is both only to be understood expressively, in terms of recollective activity, and that it is actually produced or instituted by that activity. The distinctive kind of doing that is experience for Hegel is, in its reparative and recollective phases, shaping and determining the conceptual contents the subject endorses at the end of each tripartite episode. In that sense it is making or producing conceptions (conceptual contents)—for instance, of acids as what both taste sour and combine with metals to produce salts. This is one sense of "determining conceptual contents": determining as making up. But the recollective process essentially includes a commitment to having *found* what it in this sense makes. It is a process of *discovery* of what has according to it all along been being expressed and represented, first less and then more adequately, by the sequence of always partly erroneous constellations of commitments in the expressively progressive trajectory retrospectively recollectively rationally

reconstructed. This is another sense of "determining conceptual contents": determining as finding out.

That it is a finding rather than a making is an essential, constitutive commitment even of the jurisprudential species of recollection, which develops and determines legal concepts that are not empirical concepts, in that they are not controlled by perceptually immediate (in the sense of noninferentially elicited) applications of other legal concepts. Repair of an anomaly and its recollective vindication produce new conceptions, articulated by deontic normative relations of material incompatibility and consequence. But the result of those activities as such purports to find alethic modal forms of those relations in the objective world being represented. In this hylomorphic sense, the conceptual contents consciousness finds in the world are just those that it has recollectively made. Conceptual idealism asserts that when, as self-conscious in the sense of being conscious of itself *as* conscious, self-consciousness distinguishes between its certainty and truth, between what things are for it and what they are in themselves, between appearance and reality, representings and representeds, it is neither alienating itself from itself, nor acknowledging a confrontation with something alien to it. Its *finding out* how things really are is a distinctive, *sui generis* kind of active recollective *making* of that distinction, which is essential to consciousness as such, through its experience. The world as it is in itself *as* distinct from how it is for consciousness is not a brute other, but in that distinctive sense the product of its own recollective activity in experience.