

Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel's Idealism: Negotiation and Administration in Hegel's Account of the Structure and Content of Conceptual Norms

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This paper could equally well have been titled 'Some Idealist Themes in Hegel's Pragmatism'. Both *idealism* and *pragmatism* are capacious concepts, encompassing many distinguishable theses. I will focus on one pragmatist thesis and one idealist thesis (though we will come within sight of some others). The pragmatist thesis (what I will call 'the *semantic* pragmatist thesis') is that the *use* of concepts determines their *content*, that is, that concepts can have no content apart from that conferred on them by their use. The idealist thesis is that the structure and unity of the *concept* is the same as the structure and unity of the *self*. The semantic pragmatist thesis is a commonplace of our Wittgensteinian philosophical world. The idealist thesis is, to say the least, *not*. I don't believe there is any serious contemporary semantic thinker who is pursuing the thought that *concepts* might best be understood by modelling them on *selves*. Indeed, from the point of view of contemporary semantics it is hard to know even what one could *mean* by such a thought: what relatively unproblematic features of selves are supposed to illuminate what relatively problematic features of concepts? Why should we think that understanding something about, say, personal identity would help us understand issues concerning the identity and individuation of concepts? From a contemporary point of view, the idealist semantic thesis is bound to appear initially as something between unpromising and crazy.

My *interpretive* claim here will be that the idealist thesis is Hegel's way of making the pragmatist thesis workable, in the context of several other commitments and insights. My *philosophical* claim here will be that we actually have a lot to learn from this strategy about contemporary semantic issues that we by no means see our way to the bottom of otherwise. In the space of this essay, I cannot properly justify the first claim textually, nor the second argumentatively. I will confine myself of necessity to sketching the outlines and motivations for the complex, sophisticated, and interesting view on the topic I find Hegel putting forward.

I

The topic to which that view is addressed is the nature and origins of the *determinate contents of empirical conceptual norms*. Of course Hegel talks about *lots* of

other things. This is merely the strand in his thought I'm going to pursue here. But it may seem perverse to identify this as so much as *one* of Hegel's concerns. After all, what he spends most of his pages talking about (in both of the books he published during his lifetime, the *Phenomenology* and the *Science of Logic*) is the *pure, logical, or formal* concepts (the pure form-determinations of the Concept), that are the successors in his scheme to Kant's categories: concepts such as *particularity, universality, and individuality* and the distinction between what things are *in themselves* and what they are *for* consciousness or for another. But one of the overarching methodological commitments that guides my reading of Hegel is that the *point* of developing an adequate understanding of these categorial concepts is so that they can then be used to make explicit how ordinary empirical concepts work. I would say the same thing about Kant. And I think that one of the things that makes these philosophers hard to understand is that they devote relatively too much time to developing and motivating their (in the transcendental sense) logical apparatus, and relatively too little time to applying it to the use of ground-level concepts. In both cases I think one does well to keep one's eye at all times on the significance of what is being said about pure concepts for our understanding of the use of ordinary empirical concepts. Again, Hegel's idealist thesis is directed in the first instance towards what he calls *the* Concept: the holistic inferential system of determinate concepts and commitments articulated by means of those concepts. But we will see that the abstract structural claim embodied in the idealist thesis holds of both the system and its elements – and holds of the elements in part *because* it holds of the system, and vice versa.

As I read him, Hegel thinks that Kant has been insufficiently critical regarding two important, intimately related issues. First, he has not enquired deeply enough into the conditions of the possibility of the *determinateness* of the rules that specify the contents of ordinary empirical concepts. Second, Kant is virtually silent on the issue of their *origins*. He has not presented a developed account of how those determinate empirical concepts become available to knowers and agents in the first place. Kant takes over from Leibniz the rationalist understanding of knowledge and action as consisting in the application of concepts. Awareness, Leibniz's 'apperception', whether theoretical or practical, consists in classifying particulars by universals – that is, for Kant, bringing them under *rules*.

Hegel inherits from Kant a fundamental philosophical commitment (I'm prepared to say 'insight'): a commitment to the *normative* character of concepts. One of Kant's most basic and important ideas is that what distinguishes judgements and actions from the responses of merely natural creatures is that they are things we are in a distinctive way *responsible* for. They are undertakings of *commitments* that are subject to a certain kind of normative assessment, as correct or incorrect. The norms¹ that determine what counts as correct or incorrect, he calls 'concepts'. So the genus of which both judgement and action are species is understood as the activity of *applying concepts*: producing acts the correctness or incorrectness of which is determined by the rule or norm by which one has implicitly bound oneself in performing that act. By taking this line, Kant initiates a shift in attention from *ontological* questions (understanding the difference

between two sorts of fact: physical facts and mental facts) to *deontological* ones (understanding the difference between facts and norms, or between description and prescription). This move entailed a corresponding shift from Cartesian certainty to Kantian necessity. This is the shift from concern with our grip on a concept (is it clear? is it distinct?) to concern with its grip on us (is it valid? is it binding?). ('Necessary' for Kant just means 'according to a rule'.) The urgent task becomes understanding how it is possible for us to *commit* ourselves, to make ourselves *responsible* to a norm that settles the correctness of what we do.² The problem of understanding the nature and conditions of the possibility (in the sense of intelligibility) of *conceptual normativity* moves to centre stage. (This view about the nature of the practice of using concepts might be called '*normative pragmatism*'.)

Kant tells us rather a lot about the process of applying concepts in ordinary judgements and actions. And I take it that his account of the origin, nature, and functioning of the pure concepts of the understanding, whose applicability is implicit in the use of any empirical concept, is intended to serve as a transcendental explanation of the background conditions with respect to which alone normativity in general is intelligible. But he says very little about how knowers and agents should be understood as getting access to the determinate empirical concepts they deploy. What he does say is largely programmatic and architectonic. It is clear, however, that one important structural dimension distinguishing Kant's from Hegel's account of conceptual norms concerns the relation between their production and their consumption, that is, between the process by which they become available to a knower and agent, on the one hand, and the practice of using them, on the other. For Kant tells a *two-phase* story, according to which one sort of activity *institutes* conceptual norms, and then another sort of activity *applies* those concepts.³ First, a reflective judgement (somehow) makes or finds⁴ the determinate rule that articulates an empirical concept. Then, and only then, can that concept be applied in the determinate judgements and maxims that are the ultimate subjects of the first two Critiques.⁵

Very roughly, Kant sees experience, the application of concepts, as beginning with the *selection* of concepts. The potential knower has available a myriad of different possible determinate rules of synthesis of representations. Experience requires picking one, and trying it out as a rule for combining the manifold of presented intuitions. If it doesn't quite 'fit', or permits the synthesis only of some of the intuitions that present themselves, then a mistake has been made, and a related, overlapping, but different determinate concept is tried in its place. Thus, although it is up to the knower what concept to try out, the *success* of the attempted synthesis according to that rule is not up to the knower. The exercise of spontaneity is constrained by the deliverances of receptivity.⁶

The workability of a story along these lines depends on its being settled somehow, for each rule of synthesis and each possible manifold of representations, whether that manifold can be synthesized successfully according to that rule. This might be called the condition of *complete* or *maximal determinateness* of concepts. Only if this condition obtains – only if the empirical concepts made

available by judgements of reflection are *fully* and *finally* determinate – does the Kantian account make intelligible the application of concepts as being *constrained* by the deliverances of sense, the correctness of judgements as constrained by the particulars to which we try to apply the universals that are our determinate empirical concepts. Hegel wants us to investigate critically the transcendental conditions of the possibility of such determinateness of concepts. He does not find in Kant a satisfactory account of *this* crucial condition of the possibility of experience.⁷ The question is how we can understand the possibility of applying, endorsing, committing ourselves to, or binding ourselves by one completely determinate rule rather than a slightly different one. This problem is related to the one Kripke attributes to Wittgenstein.⁸ It is the issue of understanding the conditions of the possibility of the *determinateness* of our conceptual commitments, responsibilities, and obligations. I don't want to dwell on what I take Hegel to see as the shortcomings of Kant's answer. For my purposes it suffices to say that Hegel takes a different approach to understanding the relation between the institution and the application of conceptual norms. In fact I think Hegel's idealism is the core of his response to just this issue, and it is here that I think we have the most to learn from him.⁹

A good way of understanding the general outlines of Hegel's account of the relation between the activity of instituting conceptual norms and the activity of applying them is to compare it with a later movement of thought that is structurally similar in important ways. Carnap and the other logical positivists affirmed their neo-Kantian roots by taking over Kant's two-phase structure: *first* one stipulates *meanings*, *then* experience dictates which deployments of them yield true *theories*.¹⁰ The first activity is prior to and independent of experience; the second is constrained by and dependent on it. Choosing one's meanings is not empirically constrained in the way that deciding what sentences with those meanings to endorse or believe is. Quine rejects Carnap's sharp separation of the process of deciding what concepts (meanings, language) to use from the process of deciding what judgements (beliefs, theory) to endorse. For him, it is a fantasy to see meanings as freely fixed independently and in advance of our applying those meanings in forming fallible beliefs that answer for their correctness to how things are. Changing our beliefs can change our meanings. There is only one practice – the practice of actually making determinate judgements. Engaging in that practice involves settling at once both what we mean and what we believe. Quine's *pragmatism* consists in his development of this *monistic* account in contrast to Carnap's two-phase account. The practice of using language must be intelligible as not only the *application* of concepts by using linguistic expressions, but equally and at the same time as the *institution* of the conceptual norms that determine what would count as correct and incorrect uses of linguistic expressions. The actual *use* of the language settles – and is all that *could* settle – the *meanings* of the expressions used.¹¹

Hegel is a pragmatist also in this monistic sense. He aims at a conception of experience that does not distinguish two different kinds of activity, one of which is the application of concepts in (determinate) judgement and action, and the

other of which is the institution or discovery of those concepts (by 'judgements of reflection'). For Hegel, empirical judgement and action is not (as for Kant and Carnap) just the *selection* of concepts to apply, or the replacement of one fully formed concept by another. It is equally the *alteration* and *development* of the content of those concepts. Conceptual content arises out of the process of applying concepts – the *determinate* content of concepts is unintelligible apart from the *determination* of that content, the process of *determining* it. Concepts are not fixed or static items. Their content is altered by every particular case in which they are applied or not applied in experience. At every stage, experience does presuppose the prior availability of concepts to be applied in judgement, and at every stage the content of those concepts derives from their role in experience.¹²

Hegel often couches this point in terms of a distinction between two meta-concepts of the conceptual: Reason (his good, dynamic, active, living conception), and Understanding (Kant's, and everyone else's, bad, static, inert, dead conception). Understanding concepts in terms of the categories of the Understanding is treating them as fixed and static. It allows progress only in the sorting of *judgements* into true and false, that is, in the *selection* from a repertoire fixed in advance of the correct concepts to apply in a particular instance. But Hegel wants to insist that if one ignores the process by which concepts *develop* – what other concepts they develop out of, and the forces implicit in them, in concert with their fellows, that lead to their alteration (what Hegel will call their 'negativity') – then the sort of content they have is bound to remain unintelligible.¹³

II

My principal aim in this essay is to show how the idealist thesis that I put on the table at the outset contributes to the working out of Hegel's pragmatist strategy for understanding the nature and origins of the determinateness of the content of empirical concepts. That idealist thesis, recall, is the claim that the structure and unity of the concept is the same as the structure and unity of the self-conscious self. Some of the clearest statements of this central Hegelian thought are in the *Science of Logic*:

It is one of the profoundest and truest insights to be found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the *unity* which constitutes the nature of the *Notion* [Begriff] is recognized as the *original synthetic* unity of *apperception*, as unity of the *I think*, or of self-consciousness...¹⁴

Thus we are justified by a cardinal principle of the Kantian philosophy in referring to the nature of the *I* in order to learn what the *Notion* is. But conversely, it is necessary for this purpose to have grasped the *Notion* of the *I*...¹⁵

What I want to do next is to sketch Hegel's notion of the structure and unity characteristic of self-conscious selves – the fixed end of the idealist analogy by means

of which we are to come to understand the structure and unity of concepts, including the Concept (which is what this passage officially addresses).

Hegel takes over Kant's fundamental idea that to call something a self, to treat it as an 'I', is to take up an essentially *normative* attitude toward it. It is to treat it as the subject of *commitments*, as something that can be *responsible* – hence as a potential knower and agent. The question then is how to understand the nature of the normative attitudes and statuses that distinguish being a *who* from being a *what*. One of Hegel's most basic ideas is that normative statuses such as being committed and being responsible – and so knowledge and agency – must be understood as *social* achievements. Normative statuses are a kind of social status. Kant thought normativity could be made intelligible only by appeal to something beyond or behind our empirical activity. For Hegel all transcendental constitution is social institution.¹⁶

The practical attitude of taking or treating something as able to undertake commitments and be responsible for its doings – in the sense articulated by *concepts*, that is the sense in which at least part of what one is committed to or responsible for is being able to give *reasons* – Hegel calls 'recognition' [Anerkennung]. The core idea structuring Hegel's social understanding of selves is that they are synthesized by *mutual recognition*. That is, to be a self – a locus of conceptual commitment and responsibility – is to be taken or treated as one by those one takes or treats as one: to be recognized by those one recognizes. Merely *biological* beings, subjects and objects of desires, become *spiritual* beings, undertakers (and attributors) of commitments, by being at once the subjects and the objects of recognitive attitudes. At the same time and by the same means that *selves*, in this normative sense, are synthesized, so are *communities*, as structured wholes of selves all of whom recognize and are recognized by each other.¹⁷ Both selves and communities are normative structures instituted by reciprocal recognition.

This is a *social* theory of selves in the sense that selves and communities are products of the same process, aspects of the same structure. But it is a social theory in a stronger sense as well. For being a self in this sense is not something one can achieve all on one's own. Only part of what is needed is within the power of the candidate self. It is up to the individual who to recognize. But it is not up to the individual whether those individuals then in turn recognize the original recognizer. Only when this 'movement' is completed is a self constituted. I think the structure is clearest when one considers *specific* recognition – that is, attribution of some specific normative status, not just treating someone as having some normative status or other (as the subject of some responsibilities, or entitlements, commitments, or authority, which is recognition in general). For instance, it is up to me whom I recognize as a good chess player. I can settle for recognizing any old woodpusher who can play a legal game, or I can set my standards so high that only Grand Masters qualify. But it is not then up to me (certainly not up to me in the same sense) whether those I recognize as good players recognize me as a good player. If I've set my sights low enough, it will be easy to qualify. But if my aspirations for the sort of self I want to be, and so to be recognized as, are higher, it will be correspondingly more difficult for me to earn the recognition of those I

recognize. This account of what it is to be a good chess player, in the various senses that term can take – and more generally, what it is to have some specific normative status – gives the candidate a certain sort of authority: the authority to constitute a community by recognizing individuals as members of it. But doing that is also ceding another sort of authority to those one recognizes: the authority to determine whether or not the candidate qualifies as a member of the community so constituted by the standards to which I have subjected myself. Having a normative status in this sense is an essentially social achievement, in which both the individual self and the community must participate. And both the self and the community achieve their status as such only as the result of successful reciprocal recognition.

So when we talk about the structure and unity of the ‘I’ or of self-conscious *selves* according to Hegel, we are talking about the structure and unity produced by this process of reciprocal recognition, by which normative communities and community members are simultaneously instituted. This is what the idealist thesis proposes to use as a model for understanding the structure and unity of *concepts*. Here is a hint, to be followed up below. In recognizing others, I in effect institute a community – a kind of *universal* common to those others, and if all goes well, to me too. If they recognize me in turn, they constitute me as something more than just the particular I started out as – a kind of *individual* (self), which is that *particular* (organism) as a member of the community, as characterized by that universal. The (recognizing) particular accordingly exercises a certain sort of authority over the universal, and the universal then exercises a certain sort of authority over the individual. It is at something like this level of abstraction that we will find a common structure between the social institution of selves and communities by reciprocal recognition, and the relation between concepts, as universals, and the particulars that fall under them, yielding the characterized individuals (particulars *as* falling under universals) that are presented by judgements.

I think we can understand the force of this idealist line of thought by situating it in the tradition of thought about the nature of normativity out of which it grew. Enlightenment conceptions of the normative are distinguished by the essential role they take to be played by normative *attitudes* in instituting normative *statuses*. Commitments and responsibilities are seen as coming into a disenchanting natural world hitherto void of them, as products of human attitudes of acknowledging, endorsing, undertaking, or attributing them. (Hobbes’ and Locke’s social contract theories of the basis of legitimate political authority are cases in point.) The version of this idea that Kant develops from his reading of Rousseau has it that the distinction between force, coercion, or mere *constraint* on me, on the one hand, and legitimate *authority* over me, on the other, consists in the latter’s dependence on my *endorsement* or *acknowledgment* of the authority *as* binding on me. This way of demarcating a kind of normativity might be called the *autonomy thesis*. It is the basis for Kant’s distinction between the realm of nature, whose denizens are bound by rules in the form of laws of nature, and the realm of freedom, whose denizens are bound rather by their *conceptions* of rules – that is, by rules that bind

them only in virtue of their own *acknowledgment* of them *as* binding. In this distinctive sense, rules get their normative force, come to govern our doings, only in virtue of our own attitudes. One is genuinely responsible only for that for which one *takes* responsibility; one is genuinely committed only to that to which one has committed oneself.

To be a self, a knower and agent, is, according to Kant's original normative insight, to be able to take responsibility for what one does, to be able to undertake or acknowledge commitments. It is to be bound by norms. According to the autonomy thesis, one is in a strict sense bound only by rules or laws one has laid down for oneself, norms one has oneself endorsed. What *makes* them binding is that one *takes* them to be binding. Maintaining such a view is a delicate matter. For a question can arise about how, if I myself am doing the binding of myself, what I am doing can count as *binding* myself. If whatever I acknowledge *as* correct – as fulfilling the obligation I have undertaken – *is* correct, then in what sense is what I did in the first place intelligible as *binding* myself? (Compare Wittgenstein's claim that where whatever *seems* right to me therefore *is* right, there can be no question of right or wrong.) The autonomy thesis says that one only *is* committed to that to which one *has* committed oneself. But this must not be allowed to collapse into the claim that one is committed to exactly whatever one then takes oneself to be committed to, on pain of so emptying the concept of commitment of content as to make it unrecognizable as such. The authority of the self-binder governs the *force* that attaches to a certain rule: it is endorsement by the individual that makes the rule a rule for or binding on that individual. But that authority must not be taken to extend also to the *content* of the rule: to what is and isn't correct according to the rule one has endorsed. For if it does, then one has not by one's endorsement really bound oneself by a rule or norm at all. What is chosen – the rule or law I bind myself to by applying a concept – must have a certain independence of the choosing of it. Only so can we make sense of both sides of the idea of autonomy: of making oneself subject to a law by taking oneself to be so.¹⁸ Maintaining sufficient distinction between what one *does*, in binding oneself, by applying a concept, and the content of the commitment so instituted is particularly challenging for any theorist committed to what I've called 'semantic pragmatism'. For that is just the view that it is what one does in applying concepts – undertaking commitments – that determines their content.¹⁹

I hope it is clear that this problem is a version of the question I earlier pictured Hegel as raising about the *determinateness* of the contents of the concepts I apply. If I have available a rule (one of many) with a content that is determinate, in the sense that it is already settled for any particular whether or not the particular falls under it (whether or not applying the concept to it would be *correct*), then I can bind myself by applying the concept. For the concept will then settle what I have obliged myself to do. But Hegel thinks Kant leaves it mysterious how I could have access to concepts, rules, or norms that are determinate in this sense. In effect, Kant just assumes there can be such things. Hegel thinks a rigorously critical thinker should enquire into the conditions of the possibility of such determinateness.

Hegel's idea is that the determinacy of the content of what you have committed yourself to – the part that is *not* up to you in the way that *whether* you commit yourself to it is up to you – is secured by the attitudes of *others*, to whom one has at least implicitly granted that authority.²⁰ His thought is that the only way to get the requisite distance from my acknowledgments (my attitudes, which make the norm binding on me in the first place) while retaining the sort of authority over my commitments that the Rousseau-Kant tradition insists on, is to have the norms *administered* by someone else. I commit myself, but then they hold me to it. For me to *be* committed, I have to have *acknowledged* a commitment, and others must *attribute* it to me. Only so is a real, contentful commitment instituted. Only so can I really be understood to have *bound* myself. This is, at base, why the possibility of *my* freedom (in the normative sense of the autonomy thesis: my capacity to commit myself, to bind myself by norms) depends on *others*. Thus Hegel maintains the apparently paradoxical view that the possibility of my autonomy depends on others adopting attitudes toward me. But the paradox is merely apparent: autonomy does not on this conception collapse into heteronomy.

Having a commitment with a definite content is intelligible, Hegel thinks, only in the context of a division of labour between the one who undertakes the commitment and those who attribute it and hold the undertaker to it. I get to decide which piece in the game I will play – say, the one labelled 'That metal is molybdenum,' or 'I promise to drive you to the airport tomorrow morning,' – but I do not then get to decide what I have committed myself to thereby, what further moves are appropriate or obligatory for one who has played that piece. My authority is real, but it is partial. And the same can be said of the others, who play the game with me and simultaneously referee it. For they have no authority over my acknowledging of commitments. Their authority is only operative in the administration of those commitments – holding me to a commitment with a determinate content to which they are responsible no less than I. (Compare: the legislative and judicial functions of government.) As Hegel puts it, I have a certain *independence*, in which commitments I embrace. Apart from my acknowledgment, they have no normative force over me. But in exercising that very independence, I am at the same time *dependent* on the attitudes of others, who attribute and hold me to the commitment, and thereby administer its content. And the others, reciprocally dependent on my recognition, display a corresponding moment of independence in their attitudes of attribution and assessment of my commitments and responsibilities. 'Independence' and 'dependence' are for Hegel always *normative* independence and dependence. In fact, these are ways of talking about *authority* and *responsibility*.²¹

The actual *content* of the commitment one undertakes by applying a concept (paradigmatically, by using a word) is the product of a process of *negotiation* involving the reciprocal attitudes, and the reciprocal authority, of those who *attribute* the commitment and the one who *acknowledges* it.²² What the content of one's claim or action is *in* itself results both from what it is *for* others and what it is *for* oneself. I see the account Hegel offers of this process of normative negotiation of reciprocally constraining authority by which determinate conceptual

contents are instituted and applied as his main philosophical contribution, at least as assessed from the frame of reference of our contemporary concerns. This process of negotiation of competing normative claims is what Hegel calls 'experience' [Erfahrung]. Making explicit what is implicit in this process is saying how the *institution* of conceptual norms is related to their *actual application* in acknowledging, attributing, and assessing specific conceptually articulated commitments in judgement and action. It is this relationship that fills in Hegel's single-levelled, unified monistic notion of experience, the aspiration for which I have taken him to share with Quine, in contrast to the two-phase, bifurcated approach common to Kant and Carnap. It is also what the notion of reciprocal recognition is offered as a model of. The idealist claim we are considering is that concepts are instituted in the same way, and hence have the same structure and unity, as self-conscious selves.

III

Hegel thinks of Spirit – the realm of the normative – as produced and sustained by the processes of mutual recognition, which simultaneously institute self-conscious selves and their communities. I have presented this picture as motivated by the problem of how to construe *autonomy* in a way compatible with the determinateness of conceptual contents, while seeing those conceptual contents as *instituted* in the same process of experience in which they are *applied* (the pragmatist's fundamental commitment). I have suggested that Hegel thinks that the boundaries around what one has and has not committed oneself to by using a particular concept (and what is and is not a correct application of it) are determined by a process of *negotiation* among actual attitudes of application and assessments of applications.²³

This motivation for understanding *selves* – the subjects of determinately contentful commitments and responsibilities, concept users, and hence subjects of experience, knowers and agents – in terms of mutual recognition explains why the process of reciprocal specific recognition should be taken to provide the *context* within which concepts are both applied and their contents instituted and determined. But it does not yet evidently explain why the structure and unity imparted to selves and communities by their institution by reciprocal recognition should be taken to provide a *model* for concepts – to explain *their* structure and unity. The reason that the process of reciprocal recognition, and so the structure and unity of selves, provides not only the *context* of but the *model* for the institution and application of conceptual norms is that it is not just one example of how norms are constituted by reciprocal authority (mutually dependent moments). *Wherever a norm can properly be discerned, there must be distinct centres of reciprocal authority and a process of negotiation between them.* For this, Hegel thinks, is the nature of the normative as such, the *only* way in which determinate contents can be associated with norms according to the conception of the normative embodied in the

autonomy thesis. The commitment one undertakes by applying a concept in judgement or action can be construed as determinately contentful only if it is to be *administered* by others distinct from the one whose commitment it is. So in acknowledging such a commitment, one is at least implicitly recognizing the authority of others over the content to which one has committed oneself.²⁴

But how, exactly, are we to understand the structure and unity of concepts on the model of reciprocal recognition among selves? For Hegel, as for Kant, *all* norms are *conceptual* norms: talk of norms and talk of concepts are alternatives for addressing one fundamental common phenomenon. The first thing to realize is that Hegel understands concepts, the contents of norms, as essentially *inferentially* articulated.²⁵ Hegel discusses this inferential articulation (in the *Phenomenology* beginning in the section on Perception) under the headings of 'mediation' [Vermittlung] and 'determinate negation'. The paradigm of mediation, the case responsible for this choice of terminology, is the role played by the middle term in a syllogism. The application of the mediating concept serves as the *conclusion* of one inference, and the *premise* of another.²⁶ The claim that *mediation*, the capacity to play this role, is essential to concepts is the claim that being able to figure both in the premises and in the conclusions of *inferences* is essential to concepts. This is what I mean by talking about their 'essential inferential articulation'.²⁷

In a similar way, when Hegel talks about 'determinate negation' he means material incompatibility relations among concepts: the way the applicability of one concept normatively precludes the applicability of another. An example would be the way calling a patch of paint 'red' precludes calling it 'green'. Formal or logical negation (what Hegel calls 'abstract' negation) is definable from the determinate or material version. The abstract negation of *p* is its minimum incompatible: what follows from everything materially incompatible with *p*. It abstracts from the determinate content of those incompatibles, and so is *merely* incompatible.²⁸ Together the material inferential and material incompatibility relations (relations of mediation and determinate negation) articulate the contents of conceptual norms.²⁹

We are now in a position to approach the central question. The model of the sort of reciprocal recognition that institutes *selves* and their *communities* applies to the institution and application of concepts in experience at two levels. First, it describes the relations of reciprocal authority that relate *particulars* to the *universals* or determinate concepts that they fall under: the way in which determinate concepts are instituted and the judgements that present characterized individuals are made. Individuals, which are particulars characterized by concepts, and determinate concepts are simultaneously instituted or synthesized – just as in the model, individual self-conscious selves, *as* members of a community (as characterized by a universal), and their communities (universals) are simultaneously instituted or synthesized. Second, it describes the relations of reciprocal authority that relate determinate concepts to each other. At this level, determinate concepts and what Hegel calls 'the Concept', the great holistic, inferentially articulated *system* of determinate concepts and judgements articulated by those concepts – a sort of universal or community comprising them all – are simultaneously instituted or synthesized.

Judgements, acts of judging, come in two flavours: *mediate* and *immediate*. The mediate ones are the results of *inferences* from other judgements – that is, from the application of *other* concepts one has already made. The immediate ones are *noninferentially* elicited, paradigmatically *perceptual* judgements or observations.³⁰ Desiring animals already sort their world by responding differentially to it – treating something as food, for instance, by ‘falling to without further ado and eating it up.’³¹ Immediate judgements are ones that a properly trained and tuned animal who has mastered the responsive use of the relevant concepts will make automatically, when confronted with the perceptible presence of a reportable or observable state of affairs. These noninferential applications of concepts (= immediate judgements) are wrung from or elicited by the *particulars* to which the concepts are on that occasion applied. By contrast, responsibility for (= authority over) *inferentially* elicited applications of concepts (= mediate judgements) is vested in the concepts or *universals*, whose inferential relations underwrite the judgement that is the conclusion.

Immediate judgements express a dimension along which particulars exert an authority over the universals or concepts that apply to them. Mediate judgements express a dimension along which universals or concepts exert an authority over the particulars to which they apply. The characterized individuals – particulars *as* falling under universals – that are presented by judgements (= applications of concepts) emerge as the product of *negotiation* between the two reciprocal dimensions of authority (each with its own dual, correlative sort of responsibility). This is the feature of concept use and development – the process of experience that is for this reason intelligible at once as the application and as the institution of conceptual norms – that is modelled by reciprocal recognition. Hegel's *Logic* is the completed story of how this works.

Evidently the two sorts of authority may collide. One may find oneself immediately with commitments incompatible with those to which one is inferentially committed. Then one must *alter* some of one's commitments – either those that are authorized by the particulars (immediately) or those that are authorized by the universals (mediately). This necessity is *normative*: one is *obliged* by the incompatibility of one's judgements, by the commitments one has oneself undertaken, to adjust either the authority of the particulars or of the universal. Making an adjustment of one's conceptual commitments in the light of such a collision is what is meant by *negotiating* between the two dimensions of authority.³² The process of adjusting one's dispositions to make immediate and mediate judgements in response to actual conflicts arising from exercising them is the process Hegel calls ‘experience’. It drives the *development* of concepts. It is the process of *determining* their content. It is how *applying* conceptual norms is at the same time the process of *instituting* them. Conceptual contents are *determinate* only because and in so far as they are the products of such a process of *determining* them by applying them in inferential concert with their fellows.³³

This process of *negotiation* between acknowledged authorities upon their disagreement is the process of *administering* the sometimes opposed authorities of particulars and universals. It is constitutive of *both* the Concept, as the holistic

system of all the determinate universals (empirical concepts) related by material inference and incompatibility (mediation and determinate negation), and the characterized particulars presented by a set of judgements, a set of commitments that are actual applications of universals to particulars. Concepts and judgements, meanings and beliefs, languages and theories, are two sides of one coin, intelligible only together, as elements of the process of experience. This view should sound familiar: it is Quine's in 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism'. Seeing change of meaning and change of belief as aspects of a single process of experience, of adjusting our beliefs (including those we find ourselves with perceptually) to one another, is Quine's way of working out his pragmatist commitment. We are now in a position to see it also as Hegel's way of working out his idealist commitment.³⁴

IV

Hegel often discusses the relation between selves and concepts in the language of *identity*. For instance:

The Notion [Begriff], when it has developed into a *concrete existence* that is itself free, is none other than the *I* or pure self-consciousness. True, I *have* notions, that is to say determinate notions; but the *I* is the pure Notion itself which, as Notion, has come into *existence*.³⁵

We have seen how the *I*, self-conscious selves in general, as the normative subjects of conceptually articulated commitments – judgements (and actions) – are synthesized as essential aspects (Hegel says 'moments') of the process of experience whose other essential elements include both those judgements and the concepts that are applied in them. And we have seen that the structure and unity of this process in all its aspects should be understood in terms of the kind of reciprocal authority relations Hegel calls 'recognitive'. Still, the different aspects of this process and of recognitive structures generally remain distinct and distinguishable. They are not *identical* to one another in a strict or logical sense. Hegel acknowledges this. The passage above continues with a characterization of recognitive structures that is abstract in the way characteristic of the Logic, concluding:

...this [structure] constitutes the nature of the *I* as well as of the Notion; neither the one nor the other can be truly comprehended unless the two indicated moments are grasped at the same time both in their abstraction and also in their perfect unity.³⁶

The unity of the recognitive structure leads Hegel to talk (in my view, unfortunately) of the essentially related moments of that structure as *identical*. They are not identical in the ordinary sense, since they are also essentially distinct. But he wants us to recognize them nonetheless as identical in a *speculative* sense. In this

speculative sense, elements of a recognitive structure of reciprocal authority that are intelligible only *as* elements related to one another in such a structure are described as 'identical' with one another. It is in this sense that Hegel talks about selves as being identical with their communities, about particulars as identical with the universals that characterize them, about determinate concepts as identical with the holistic Concept that comprises them as a system of inferentially related elements, and so on. Only confusion results if this speculative sense of 'identical' is confused with the ordinary notion of identity. For then the specific structure of recognition by which these different elements are at once distinguished and related is in danger of collapsing. Collapsing them renders unintelligible determinately contentful normative statuses: the judgements (and actions) that make up experience, the selves that undertake, attribute, and are responsible for them, their recognitive communities, the determinate concepts that articulate those responsibilities by the relations of material inference and incompatibility that make up the greater universal that is the Concept, the particulars to which judgements have a responsibility mediated by immediate judgements, and so on.

It remains to consider one final dimension of the recognitive structure within which the relation between selves and concepts must be understood. This is a dimension Hegel also discusses in the language of identity, but in a way that should be understood, I think, neither in the strict nor in the speculative sense. I have in mind here the considerations that are raised by Hegel's claim – which looms large for instance in the Preface to the *Phenomenology* – that Spirit as a whole should be understood as a *self*. I understand the 'geistlich' as the realm of conceptually articulated norms, of authority and responsibility, commitment and entitlement. Spirit as a whole is the recognitive community of all those who have such normative statuses, and all their normatively significant activities. It is, in other words, the topic of the pragmatist's enquiry: the whole system of social practices of the most inclusive possible community. Claiming that Spirit has the structure and unity of the self is another idealist thesis, and it, too, should be understood in terms of Hegel's pragmatism.

In making this second idealist claim, Hegel obviously does not mean for us to think that Spirit as a whole is just one more of us ordinary selves, an element of some community of which we are also members. But neither, I think, does he just mean that Spirit is an element of the recognitive structure of which we individual selves are elements – so that we could talk about us and the great community that comprises us recognitively as identical in the speculative sense. He means that Spirit as a whole – the whole recognitive community of which we individual selves are members, and all of its activities and institutions – has the structure and unity characteristic of the self-conscious self. In that technical sense, it is an individual, though not one associated with a particular organism, as we human selves are.

I think that there is all sorts of evidence that Hegel means his remarks about Spirit as Self to have something like this import. Certainly that is the way he is usually read. It is much less often remarked that attributing such a view to Hegel

in the *Phenomenology* raises a substantial interpretive problem. For Hegel clearly subscribes there to the following three claims:

1. Spirit is a self-conscious self.
2. Self-conscious self-hood is an essentially *social* achievement, requiring actual recognition *of* and *by* an *other*, to whom the individual self achieving self-consciousness in this way is then bound in a recognitive *community*.
3. Spirit has no other; there is nothing 'outside' it.

The trouble is of course that these claims are jointly incompatible. But Hegel commits himself to them all – not just casually or in a way that could represent a slip, but as essential elements of his view. Now much of what I have said in this essay does not represent conventional wisdom about Hegel's views. But attributing *these* three claims is not an idiosyncratic feature of my reading: it *is* conventional wisdom. Yet discussion of the conceptual problems these theses present does not loom large in the secondary literature. (The claim one sometimes hears that Hegel is in the end a kind of *subjectivist* is, I take it, at least an indirect acknowledgment of these difficulties.) It seems to me that the extent to which a reading acknowledges and provides a convincing response to this issue should serve as a fundamental criterion of adequacy for assessing it.

The account I have been sketching of the nature and significance of reciprocal recognition for understanding the nature of normative statuses provides the raw materials for such a response. Further, in doing so it fills in an important piece of the story about how *applying* conceptual norms by making judgements can be understood as a process of *determining* their content, and so as *instituting* those norms. In so far as it does, it offers a final respect in which Hegel's *idealism* and his *pragmatism* (in the senses I have been discussing) illuminate one another.

Reciprocal recognition, I have claimed, is for Hegel the structure that makes the normative intelligible as such. In its paradigmatic *social* form, it institutes both individual self-conscious *selves* (the subjects of commitments and responsibilities) and their communities (the selves bound together by attributing and assessing commitments to each other, holding each other responsible). In its *inferential* form, this structure characterizes the relationship between particulars and universals in the process of making *judgements* that is experience: the application of determinate concepts. It is exhibited as well in the relations of reciprocal authority by which applications of some determinate concepts condition the applicability of other, inferentially related concepts, thereby constituting the 'community' of all determinate concepts, structured by relations of mediation and determinate negation, that is the Concept. In addition to these two forms of reciprocal recognition, we should recognize a third: the *historical*. It arises because negotiating and adjudicating the claims of reciprocally conditioning authorities, administering conceptual norms by applying them in actual cases (to particulars that immediately present themselves) is a *process*. In that process of experience, conceptual norms *develop*, along with the body of claims or judgements expressing the commitments that arise from applying those concepts. This developmental process of progressively determining the content of concepts by applying

them in concert with their fellows is to be understood as the way determinately contentful conceptual norms are *instituted*.

Experience – at once the application and the institution of conceptual norms – is not merely a *temporal* process, but a *historical* one. By this I mean that it exhibits a distinctive *recognitive* structure that is the product of the reciprocal authority exercised on the one hand by past applications of concepts over future ones, and on the other hand by future applications of concepts over past ones. All there is to institute conceptual norms, to determine *what* we have committed ourselves to by applying a concept, is *other* applications of the concept in question, together with applications of concepts inferentially related to it. Thus the applications of the concept (and its relatives) that have actually been made already have a certain sort of *authority* over candidate future applications of that concept (and so of its relatives). The prior applications are authoritative regarding the meaning or content of the concept. This is the authority of the past (applications of concepts) over the future (applications of concepts) – providing a sense in which future applications are responsible for their correctness to the past ones.

But authority needs to be administered. Applications of norms instituted by prior applications need to be assessed for their correctness, according to the norms they answer to. For current applications of a concept to *be* responsible to prior applications of that concept (and its relatives), they must be *held* responsible, taken or treated *as* responsible. That is the lesson of Hegel's analysis of the conditions under which the *bindingness* of norms is intelligible, according to what he made of the Kant-Rousseau insistence on autonomy as a condition of genuine normativity – the lesson that is the basis for the model of reciprocal recognition. For we can ask in the present context: How is it possible for an application of a concept to count as *incorrect* according to the commitments implicit in prior applications? If there is nothing to the content of the concept except what has been put into it by actual applications of it (and its relatives), how can any actual application be understood as incorrect according to that content? If it cannot, then no norm has been instituted.

Here, I think, is Hegel's answer: The authority of the past applications, which instituted the conceptual norm, is administered on its behalf by *future* applications, which include assessments of past ones. It is for later users of a concept to decide whether each earlier application was correct or not, according to the tradition constituted by still earlier uses. In doing so, the future applications exercise a reciprocal authority over past ones. The model of this process that I find it most useful to keep in mind is the development of concepts of common law by precedent. Common law differs from statute law in consisting entirely of *case* law. It is not the interpretation of explicit founding laws, rules, or principles. *All* there is to it is a sequence of applications of concepts to actual sets of facts. It is for this reason often thought of as judge-made law.

Consider an idealized version of this process. Each judge inherits a tradition of cases, which can be thought of as a set of particulars (the facts of the case, described in non-legal vocabulary) to which legal universals such as 'tort',

'strictly liable', and so on have been applied (or withheld). The judge is in turn confronted with a novel particular case (set of facts), and must decide whether to apply or withhold application of one of those universals – classifying the actions in question as constituting a specific tort, or as involving the assumption of strict liability. The authority of the tradition consists in the fact that the *only reasons* the judge can appeal to in justifying his decision are precedential: the fact that the universal in question was actually applied or withheld in previous cases that resemble the one in question in respects the judge specifies (while of course differing in other respects). The concepts the judge is charged with applying have their content entirely constituted by the history of their actual application (along with the history of actual application of any other legal concepts that have in the tradition actually been taken to be inferentially related to them). It is this tradition to which the judge is *responsible*. The contents of those concepts have been instituted entirely by their being applied. The reciprocal authority of the judge includes³⁷ the authority to sort the previous cases into those that are and those that are not *precedential*. These are the previous applications that, according to the judge, demarcate the content of the concept. A prior decided case can be treated as not precedential, as not potentially authoritative with respect to the case in question, because the judge sees it as *mistaken*, given the decisions that articulate the content of the concept, that is, in light of the qualitative or quantitative preponderance of precedent. (Here the inferential connections to other concepts the judge takes to have been established by prior decisions, together with the precedents for applying those concepts can weigh in as well.) This sort of assessment must itself be justified, by a sort of rational reconstruction of the tradition of applying the legal concept in question, along with the precedents selected as most relevant, in framing the rationale for deciding the case one way rather than the other. It is because *every* decision of a case has this shape, involves the exercise of this sort of discretion or authority, and there is *nothing more* to the content of the legal concepts being applied than the content they acquire through a tradition of such decisions, that the principles that emerge from this process are appropriately thought of as 'judge-made law'.³⁸ But the contents the judges in this sense *make* is also constrained by what they *find*, the precedential applications of concepts (both immediate and inferential) whose authority the judges are subject to, at the same time that they inherit it and administer it.

Sensitized as I hope we are by now to the structure of reciprocal authority (and so of responsibility) Hegel calls 'mutual recognition', we should be able to discern it in the idealized judicial process I have sketched. Past applications of concepts (decisions of cases) exercise an authority over future ones. For they supply the precedents that constitute the only rationales available to justify future decisions. They are the source of the content of the concepts later judges are charged with applying. This is the moment of independence, of recognition, of constitutive authority of the past over the future, and so the future's dependence on its past. But reciprocally, later applications of concepts by the judges who inherit the tradition exercise an authority over the earlier ones. For the significance of the authority of the tradition, what conceptual content exactly it

is taken to have instituted, is decided by the judges currently making decisions. They *administer* the norms, *make* them determinately binding. This is the moment of independence, of recognition, of constitutive authority of the future over the past, and so of the past's dependence on its future. For except in so far as the current judge *recognizes* or acknowledges the authority of some prior decision, it has none. What the norm *really* is (what it is *in* itself) is the product of recognitive *negotiation* between these two poles of reciprocal authority (what the content is *for* the past judges and what it is *for* the present one).

Now it may seem that the situation here is not symmetric. For the present judge may seem to have the last word. After all, the judge deciding a case now can ignore or at least dismiss inconvenient prior decisions, treating them as misapplications of the concepts in question – as wrongly decided cases – or as irrelevant because dissimilar from the case at issue in the respects the present judge has decided to treat as most important. So it seems that the current judge owes to the past only the debts she herself decides to acknowledge. And if and in so far as that is true, the authority of the past decisions, the content they have conferred on the legal concepts, is empty and indeterminate. The fact that the judge must justify her present decision by appealing to prior decisions then would impose a merely *formal* constraint. Her discretion in choosing and applying precedents – in effect, retrospectively reconstructing the tradition by selective omission and selective emphasis – would render that constraint contentless. The voice of the past cannot be thought of as having authority over the present, if the present can decide both which bits to listen to, and how to interpret them.

This is an intelligible description of the situation, and the worries it engenders have properly engaged jurisprudential theorists. But in fact symmetry of authority, genuinely reciprocal recognition, *is* achieved in this process. Genuine authority, I have claimed on Hegel's behalf, must be *administered*. Talk of my being responsible to something is appropriate only where there is someone to *hold* me responsible to it. The current judge administers the norms instituted and determined by past applications. But who is there to hold the current judge responsible to the tradition of prior applications, to assess the fidelity of her decision to the content actually conferred on the legal concepts by the tradition she inherits? The appearance of *asymmetry* of authority between past and present is the result of not considering the answer to this question. But it is clear what the answer is. The current judge is held accountable to the tradition she inherits by the judges yet to come. For her decision matters for the content of the concept in question only in so far as its precedential authority is acknowledged or recognized in turn by future judges. If they take her case to have been *misdecided*, given *their* reading of the tradition she inherited, then the current judge's decision has no authority at all. The authority of the past over the present is administered on its behalf by the future. Since this process has no endpoint in principle, no finally authoritative authority not dependent in turn on its acknowledgment or recognition, the normative situation is entirely symmetrical. And to say that is to say, according to Hegel's way of working out the Kant-Rousseau autonomy thought in terms of reciprocal recognition, that genuine, determinately contentful conceptual norms *are* instituted by a process of applying

them that has this historical structure.³⁹ Determinate conceptual norms are intelligible only as features of an actual tradition that is structured recognitively, having reciprocal authorities negotiating and administering along all three cognitive dimensions: social, inferential, and historical.

Hegel's pragmatism, I have claimed, consists in his commitment to understanding determinately contentful empirical conceptual norms as instituted by *experience*, the process of *using* those concepts by applying them in practice: making judgments and performing actions. His idealism consists in understanding this process of experience as exhibiting a constellation of reciprocal authority whose paradigm is mutual recognition: the structure and unity of the self-conscious individual self. Thus we are to use the same concepts in terms of which we understand *selves* to understand *concepts*. The cognitive structure of reciprocal authority necessary to make intelligible the bindingness of determinately contentful norms has three dimensions: social, inferential, and historical. In this essay I have not been able to pursue the intricate interactions among these dimensions that Hegel delineates for us. But I have tried to sketch what I take to be Hegel's most basic thought: his way of working out the Kant-Rousseau insight about a fundamental kind of normativity based on autonomy according to the model of reciprocal authority and responsibility whose paradigm is mutual recognition. I think this is the master idea that animates and structures Hegel's metaphysics and logic.⁴⁰

And as a sort of a bonus, we have also, I hope, seen enough to know how to respond to the puzzle I raised about how to understand Hegel's talk of Spirit as a whole as a self-conscious individual *self*, in the context of his insistence on the irreducibly *social* character of the achievement of self-consciousness. The reciprocal cognitive structure within which Spirit as a whole comes to self-consciousness is *historical*. It is a relation between different time slices of Spirit, in which the present acknowledges the authority of the past, and exercises an authority over it in turn, with the negotiation of their conflicts administered by the future. This is the cognitive structure of *tradition*, which articulates the normative structure of the process of *development* by which concepts acquire their contents by being applied in experience. This process is what Hegel's pragmatism and his idealism aim ultimately to illuminate. Making that structure explicit is achieving the form of self-consciousness Hegel calls 'Absolute Knowledge', some of the outlines of which I have been trying to convey here.

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NOTES

¹ Kant usually says 'rules' but he means something that, though storable, can be implicit, not just what is already explicitly stated.

² To be able to do that is to be *free*. To be free is accordingly to be able to bind oneself by the norms that are concepts. The *only* thing that Kantian agents can *do*, in the strict sense of *do* that involves the exercise of freedom, is apply concepts – whether theoretically in judgement, or practically in action. Activity that consists in the application of concepts is *rational* activity. So we are free exactly in so far as we are rational.

³ 'Judgment in general is the faculty of thinking the particular as contained under the universal. If the universal (the rule, the principle, the law) be given, the judgment which subsumes the particular under it...is *determinate* [bestimmend]. But if only the particular be given for which the universal has to be found, the judgment is merely *reflective*.' Kant 1790 [*Critique of Judgment*, Introduction, Section IV, first paragraph.]

⁴ Given Kant's other commitments, neither term can be applied without qualification, which fact sets up the problematic of the third Critique.

⁵ Only the 'ultimate' subjects, since the role of the pure concepts in making them possible is the proximate subject.

⁶ I'll indicate briefly below how Hegel sees immediacy as exercising an authority that constrains the application of concepts, and so how particulars are given a normatively significant voice that must negotiate with the reciprocal authority of mediating universals, all of it administered by those who attribute determinately contentful conceptual commitments.

⁷ It should be noticed in this connection that invoking the temporal *schematism* of concepts is not a responsive answer to this challenge (quite apart from the obscurity of the details). For the schematism of the understanding at most explains how a concept could get a grip on (apply or not apply to) a particular intuition. But the question regarding determinateness is rather what it is for us to get a hold of one completely determinate universal rather than a closely related one that applies to almost, but not quite all the same particulars.

⁸ Kripke 1982. Only 'related to' because Kripke imports constraints on the problem that Hegel would not share. It is fair to ask what it is about how we have *actually* applied concepts in the past that determines how we *ought* to apply them in the future, what determines how we have *committed* ourselves to do so. For to ask that is to ask how the actual practice of *application* manages to *institute* one norm rather than another. But there is no legitimate standpoint from which one is entitled to restrict one's specification of that practice of application, as Kripke implicitly does, to what can be stated in a *nonnormative* vocabulary. Using an expression *correctly* or *incorrectly* is also something we *actually* do.

⁹ The origins of this way of thinking about Hegel's problems lie in Robert Pippin's pathbreaking work, Pippin 1989.

¹⁰ Among the many nontrivial differences between them is that Carnap's is a *globally* two-phase picture, while Kant's is only *locally* two-phase. That is, nothing in Kant's account suggests the possibility of making *all* one's reflective judgements first, only then to begin making determinant judgements. The structural similarity consists only in the common commitment to there being two quite different sorts of things one is doing, in making meanings or concepts available, and then in employing them.

¹¹ Notice that this is not yet to say anything about the vocabulary in which the use is to be specified by the theorist. In particular, focusing on *use* is not the same thing as focusing on *use specified in a nonnormative vocabulary*.

¹² So one of Hegel's fundamental claims is that a suitable *dynamic* account of the relation between conceptual contents and experience, the institution of concepts and their application, can reconcile the rationalist insight and the empiricist insight (that the content of empirical concepts must be understood as deriving from experience), while rejecting

both innateness and abstractionism. This *pragmatist* strategy looks to the *development* of concepts through their use in experience, that is, in the practices of judging and acting.

¹³ Recognizing that every concept actually applied in any empirical judgement is only a more or less adequate expression of the implicit articulation of things entails acknowledging that no determinate judgement ought to be taken to be unqualifiedly true. (For Hegel, it is different with the concepts of logic, whose distinctive expressive task it is to make explicit the process by which the system of determinate concepts and judgements – the Concept – progresses and develops.) So to take the judgement to be the unit of cognition (as Kant does, because it is the minimal unit of cognitive *responsibility*) is already to commit oneself to an unsustainable view of the nature of the determinateness of conceptual content.

¹⁴ Hegel 1831: 584.

¹⁵ Hegel 1831: 585.

¹⁶ The phrase is from Haugeland 1982. Of course, the social institution is not unconstrained. As we will see, the history of previous applications of a concept, including those immediately elicited by the particulars to which they are applied, exercises a crucial authority over such an institution.

¹⁷ For Hegel, true general recognition is an equivalence relation: symmetric, reflexive, and transitive.

¹⁸ The discussion of the Law of the Heart in the *Phenomenology* is one place where this issue of the conditions of the possibility of determinately binding oneself is explored.

¹⁹ So it would be a mistake to assert a strict identity between the application and the institution of determinately contentful concepts: to say, for instance, that meaning *is* use. It is essential to see the identity that is genuinely involved (according to the pragmatist) as what Hegel calls a ‘speculative’ identity – that is, one that essentially incorporates a difference.

²⁰ Though to say it is ‘secured’ by others is not to say that it is fully *determined* by them. As will emerge below, the authority of particularity, asserted through immediate judgements, according to the other two recognitive dimensions (inferential and historical), constrains the community, and constitutes an essential element of the content they administer – the content of the norms that have reciprocal authority over them.

²¹ If X has some sort of authority over Y, then Y is in so far such responsible to X. But Hegel’s way of working through the Rousseau-Kant understanding of autonomy as the essence of normative bindingness (validity, *Gültigkeit*) requires that if X has some sort of authority over Y, then X also has some sort of responsibility toward Y – that is, that Y has a reciprocal authority over X. This is a claim about the very nature of authority and responsibility: the nature of the normative as such. A commitment to the coherence of construing X as having authority over Y (dually: Y’s responsibility to X) that is not balanced by Y’s reciprocal authority over X (dually, X’s responsibility to Y) is an index of thinking that remains at the meta-conceptual level Hegel calls Understanding, failing to advance to the meta-conceptual level he calls Reason. It is failing to make the categorial conceptual move from *independence* to *freedom*, in the sense of *autonomy*: being bound by norms, but by exactly those one has bound *oneself* by.

Analyzing commitments and other normative statuses as products instituted by attitudes of both acknowledgment and attribution (and so two sorts of independence or authority, and two corresponding sorts of dependence or responsibility) is appealing to the idea of mutual recognition. But the recognition involved is *specific*, rather than *general*. To recognize someone in the general sense is to take her to be a normative subject of commitments and responsibilities. One does that by attributing specific commitments and

responsibilities. That is, recognition in general is an abstract notion. It is what is common to all instances of specific recognition. To be a self, one must have some actual, specific commitments and responsibilities. Recognition in general is just an abstract way of talking about what is common to all specific recognition. One cannot *merely* recognize someone. Recognizing someone is always attributing some specific commitments and responsibilities – though perhaps different ones in each case. This is why *actual* reciprocal recognition is required for me to *be* a self in the normative sense.

²² Talk of *negotiation* is bound to sound far too irenic a rendering for the sort of strife and confrontation of inconsistent demands Hegel depicts. But, though the issue cannot be pursued here, I think there are good reasons to treat the martial, uncompromising language Hegel is fond of as misleading on this point. Nothing is absolutely other, nor are any claims or concepts simply inconsistent, for him. It is always material incompatibilities of content (rather than formal inconsistencies) whose mutual confrontation obliges an alteration of commitments.

²³ This argumentative structure has not been obvious to Hegel's readers, and I think one reason is the order of exposition he adopts in the *Phenomenology*. For Hegel starts by introducing a notion of *general* recognition (in the section on Self-Consciousness) – that is, taking or treating someone as a normative subject of commitments and responsibilities in general. He asserts the essentially social character of recognition, and explores some consequences of not appreciating the essentially *reciprocal* structure that can alone make sense of normative statuses. But the content of the concept does not really emerge until later (in the section on Reason), when he discusses *specific* recognition – that is, the acknowledgment and attribution of the specific, *determinate* commitments and responsibilities involved in the use of particular, determinately contentful *concepts*, in judgement and action. It is only looking back from this vantage point (at the end of the discussion of *Reason*) that we can see recognition in general as an abstraction from specific recognition, as what all specific cognitive attitudes (the only ones that are actual) have in common. And it is at this level that the account of recognition as essentially social and reciprocal must be motivated. For this reason, the social dimension of recognition, with which I began my exposition, in the end shows itself not to be fully intelligible apart from the inferential and historical dimensions, since the determinately contentful conceptual commitments that are attributed by specific cognitive attitudes are not.

²⁴ It is up to me both what concept I apply in judging or acting, and who has the authority to administer it. For a norm to be intelligible as *binding*, as having genuine normative *force*, though, the moment of independence (authority) exercised by the one on whom it is binding (in virtue of his acknowledgment of that normative status) must be understood as balanced by a moment of dependence on (responsibility to) those who attribute and assess it. And as we'll see, this is not the only moment of normative dependence in play. Those who attribute and assess the commitment are obliged also to acknowledge the authority of prior applications (which includes the authority of immediacy), in their administration of the content those applications institute.

²⁵ Readers of my book *Making It Explicit* are liable, at this point, to suspect me of simply reading my own views into Hegel, starting with a socially perspectival normative approach to pragmatics, and now moving on to an inferential approach to semantics. The similarity is not coincidental, but the order of influence runs in the other direction: I came to these thoughts from reading Hegel, and went on to develop them in my own way. I construe what I'm doing now as trying to acknowledge the debt, rather than foisting my views on Hegel.

²⁶ In the syllogism:

Judgements are applications of concepts,
Applications of concepts are inferentially articulated,
therefore

Judgements are inferentially articulated,

the concept *application of concepts* plays the role of the middle term, which mediates the inference from the applicability of the concept *judgement* to the applicability of the concept *inferentially articulated*. The mediating concept formulates the conclusion of the inference from 'X is a judgement' to 'X is the application of a concept' and the premise of the inference from 'X is the application of a concept' to 'X is inferentially articulated'.

²⁷ The inferences in question are not (just) formally or logically good inferences, such as the syllogism, but also the *materially* correct inferences that are implicit in their premises. These are inferences whose goodness depends on and articulates the *nonlogical content* of the concepts involved. In the example above, that judgements (and actions) are applications of concepts is an element essential to the contents of those particular concepts. An example would be the inference from 'Pittsburgh is to the West of New York,' to 'New York is to the East of Pittsburgh'. Given material, that is, content-articulating, proprieties of inference, various sorts of formally valid inferences can be understood as material proprieties that are robust under corresponding kinds of substitution.

²⁸ One can derive relations of mediation from those of determinate negation – that is, relations of material *inference* from those of material *incompatibility*. For p incompatibility-entails q just in case everything incompatible with q is incompatible with p (though perhaps not conversely). Thus being a dog entails being a mammal, because everything incompatible with being a mammal is incompatible with being a dog. Hegel often talks as though *negation* were the fundamental content-articulating notion.

²⁹ It is ultimately in terms of them that we must understand the analogue of recognitive relations for concepts: what plays the role for concepts that reciprocal recognition in the paradigmatic sense plays for individual self-conscious selves, according to the idealist thesis. But we must remember the pragmatist thesis as well. That thesis, common ground between Hegel and Quine, says that *instituting* conceptual norms and *applying* them are two sides of one coin, two aspects of one process. Doing the former is settling *meanings*, determining the boundaries distinguishing *correct* or *appropriate* application from applications that would be incorrect or inappropriate. Doing the latter is making judgements (and performing actions), and assessing such performances – in practice *taking* particular applications to be correct or incorrect, *treating* them as appropriate or not. Thus Quine insists that settling one's meanings is not a process separate from settling one's beliefs. For Hegel, it is in making and assessing judgements and actions – that is, in experience – that we determine the contents of the conceptual norms that govern that process. The coordinate status of concepts and judgements is an essential feature of the monistic approach to which these pragmatists are committed. So material inferential and incompatibility relations among concepts must be understood as features of the process of adopting actual attitudes, actually applying those concepts: taking or treating some applications *as* appropriate by undertaking conceptually articulated commitments in the form of judgements (or actions), and by assessing the appropriateness of such commitments. It is this process that, according to the idealist, can usefully be construed as involving constitutive relations of mutual recognition.

³⁰ Of course, even these are inferentially *articulated*: they are applications of concepts, and so essentially something that can serve as premises for inference. Their immediacy consists in their being *noninferential only* in the sense that commitment that is the judgement was not undertaken as the result of a process of inference. That this is the only sense

in which judgements can be noninferential is one of the central lessons of the Perception section of the *Phenomenology*, and of Wilfrid Sellars' seminal essay 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind'. See my discussion in Sellars 1997.

³¹ Hegel 1807: §109, p. 65.

³² For empirical concepts, at any rate, I don't think that Hegel is committed to there being in every case a unique answer that can be settled in advance to the question of how such conflicts ought to be resolved, which commitments should be modified or relinquished. Such a concrete conflict might be resolved, for instance, by judging that one cannot reliably noninferentially apply colour terms if the objects in question are illuminated only by incandescent electric lights, or that the applicability of *Q* is entailed only by the applicability of *P&S*, not of *P* by itself.

³³ Talk of this process of experience as driven by the 'restless negativity' of concepts is an appeal to the role played in it by the fact that makes our empirical concepts permanently subject to the possibility of revision: their potential to give rise to determinately incompatible judgements (immediate and mediate). And though the point cannot be pursued here, it is of the utmost significance that because concepts develop and become more determinate in this way *immediacy*, *contingency*, and *particularity* are *incorporated* into the contents of those concepts. Suppose we have well-developed differential responsive dispositions leading us immediately to classify particulars as *sour* and as *red* or *blue*, and inferential commitments to the propriety of inferring the applicability of the universal *acid* from that of *sour*, and to acids turning Litmus paper red. Then upon being confronted with something that tastes sour and turns Litmus paper blue (which by our own lights again is incompatible with its being red), we are committed to changing our commitments. Whether it is our noninferential differential responsive dispositions, or our inferential commitments that we adjust, the world's immediacy has been incorporated into our concepts by this development. What is required by our concepts is denominated 'necessary', so what is here incorporated is also intelligible as the *contingency* of the world. And it is the authority of particulars over our universals that is thereby exercised by the judgements we find ourselves with immediately.

³⁴ Recognitive relations model the reciprocal dimensions of authority in play here at two levels. On the one hand, the Concept stands to its constituent determinate empirical concepts as community to individual self. On the other hand, the determinate empirical universal stands to the characterized individual as community to self. It is judgements that tie together the two limbs of this structure. In fact this one process of experience *is* – not just is modelled on – the process by which *self-conscious selves* are synthesized. Selves in the *normative* sense introduced by Kant are the loci of responsibility for sorting out incompatibilities. The transcendental unity of apperception is what is responsible *for* judgements, its obligation to sort out incompatibilities among applications of concepts being what makes them *its* judgements. So it is misleading to think of the mutual recognition synthesizing selves as available in principle in advance of understanding the inferentially articulated reciprocal authority of universals and particulars. For general recognition is an abstraction from specific recognition, which involves negotiating the potentially competing authority of particulars and universals. That requirement constrains and makes determinate the content those who attribute a commitment administer.

The responsibility you and I have to negotiate the claims of different authorities so as to eliminate incompatibilities between *your* empirical judgements and *mine*, while real, is in principle secondary to and derivative from the responsibility each of us has to sort out incompatibilities among our *own* commitments. (Although I cannot pursue the matter here, in the Perception section of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel develops an account of *objects*

(particulars) – what our judgements are responsible *to* on the side of particularity – as units of account for the responsibilities triggered by incompatibilities in a parallel fashion. To say that two colours are incompatible properties is to say that no *one particular* can exhibit both, not that two different objects cannot exhibit them severally. And it is in terms of just this fact that we are to draw boundaries around particulars. A corresponding dual condition applies to the individuation of properties or concepts.) The self-conscious individual self is the self who exerts specific recognitive authority and is subject to specific recognitive responsibility, the self who undertakes and attributes determinately contentful conceptual commitments by making judgements (including assessments of the judgements of others). We understand the structure and unity of such selves, and of their communities, in terms of reciprocal recognition. And it is in exactly the same terms that we understand the structure and unity of both the characterized individuals that are the topics of (the most basic form of) judgement, and the determinately contentful concepts or universals that are applied in making those judgements. This is Hegel's fundamental idealist thesis.

³⁵ Hegel 1831: 583.

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ Only 'includes' because it has other dimensions as well. For instance, the judge has the authority to sort the various respects of similarity and dissimilarity between the facts of the present case and the facts of the previously decided cases, treating some as more important than others for the issue of whether the legal concept in question should be applied or withheld to the present facts. This makes some of the prior cases already classified as properly decided more, and others less, relevant to the decision in question. That in turn affects the authority of prior applications of inferentially related concepts.

³⁸ Kant's two-phase account would correspond to an insistence that every tradition of common or case law be grounded in some prior statute. This is a kind of intellectualism, which insists that behind every norm implicit in a practice there must be a norm explicit in a rule. (Pragmatism is the converse of intellectualism in this sense, insisting that any sort of explicit, theoretical knowing *that* have as its background some sort of implicit practical knowing *how*.) The intellectualist thinks that only if *fully* and *finally* determinate norms have already been instituted has any distinction between their correct and incorrect application been made available for the next phase. Hegel, the pragmatist, denies that any concepts are fully and finally determinate in this sense, that is, independently of the actual course of the practice of applying them. For Hegel's purposes (and mine) the details (such as they are) of Kant's account of the institution or discovery of conceptual norms in judgements of reflection doesn't matter at all. *All* that is important is the two-phase structure he envisages.

³⁹ Hegel thinks that because concepts acquire determinate content only as a result of their role in such a tradition of being applied, their contents can only be presented or conveyed by offering a rationally reconstructed trajectory by which they might have developed. This is what he does for his most basic logical concepts in both the *Phenomenology* and the *Science of Logic*. The proprieties that govern the use of the vocabulary Hegel uses to make explicit the workings of ordinary concepts are conveyed by exploring various *misuses* and *misunderstandings*, which while capturing some of the eventual content, still lead to discordant and incompatible commitments. In taking the explanatory tack that I do in this essay, I am implicitly disagreeing that this procedure is necessary. I think the logical concepts are different from ordinary empirical concepts (Hegel's 'determinate' concepts), since they get their content from their explicating role. I think it is possible to bypass the rehearsal of a path of development of their content and directly present the contents those concepts are taken to have at the end of Hegel's two books. My strategy here has been to use the model of reciprocal recognition to do that.

⁴⁰ Though the emphases are different in each of the great systematic works – more on the social and historical dimensions in the *Phenomenology*, more on the inferential in the *Science of Logic* – I think the whole three dimensional structure is present throughout. The big test for this reading will be the sense it can make of Hegel's radically new construal of the relation of reciprocal authority (and so responsibility) between subject and object (certainty and truth, what things are *for* consciousness and what they are *in* themselves, concept and being), which articulates the structure at once of consciousness (including the relation between spontaneity and receptivity, making and finding) and of the Idea. I think that we can learn a lot about this central relation by examining the interactions among the three dimensions of reciprocal authority that I have examined here. I hope to be able to tell this story on another occasion.

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