

PART II

Chapter Three

Overcoming Self-Consciousness: Identity and Difference in Hegel's *Phenomenology*

As we saw last chapter, Hegel faced the problem of reconciling the absolute identity of freedom and nature with the principle of self-consciousness without thereby 'subjectivising' the Absolute. A philosophical system had to be developed capable of overcoming the *formalism* of self-consciousness, the abstract identity of the I = I which remained in opposition to the Whole.^[1] In response to this formalism problem, Hegel developed an *intersubjective* theory of self-consciousness as Spirit, one that conceptualised our self-identity in otherness as achieved through relations of mutual or reciprocal recognition. In this chapter I reconstruct aspects of Hegel's *PhG* in light of the problem of identity and difference, which here takes the form of overcoming the subject-object paradigm in Hegel's account of the phenomenological experience of consciousness and self-consciousness. I shall argue that analysing this problem-complex can shed much needed light on Hegel's novel theory of the *intersubjective* constitution of self-consciousness, a theory that foregrounds the crucial moral-practical issue of recognition.

The *Phenomenology*, in general terms, has a threefold task: to transform the theory of self-consciousness into a theory of Spirit as social and cultural intersubjectivity, to exhibit these forms of intersubjectivity in phenomenological experience, and to overcome historical alienation *in thought* through a conceptual comprehension of this dialectical movement. This *philosophical* overcoming of alienation makes possible a reconciliation or 'acceptance' of the dynamic, self-reproducing, but at the same time self-superseding contradictions of modernity. In this way the PhG attempts to lead us, as philosophically educated but unsatisfied modern individuals, to philosophical self-knowledge in absolute Spirit. Identity and difference, I shall argue, remain operative concepts for this dialectical movement, particularly in the chapters on consciousness and self-consciousness^[2]. Hegel's overall aim in the PhG is thus to overcome the difference of consciousness and formalism of self-consciousness through the intersubjective unity of Spirit which preserves both difference and identity. The PhG thus attempts to engage in a critical legitimation of modernity while also criticising the deficient conception of identity, difference, and the relation between subjectivity and objectivity within modern philosophy.

The Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit

Although drawing on aspects of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling, Hegel's project of a "phenomenology of Spirit" represents a novel and original approach to the problems of consciousness, self-consciousness, and our moral-practical experience in modernity. The idea of devising a philosophical method of observing, from the standpoint of reason, the development of "consciousness" in its cognitive experience, was taken over from Fichte and Schelling but developed into a fully fledged philosophical "science" in Hegelian phenomenology. Indeed, Hegel describes the PhG as depicting the "coming-to-be of *Wissenschaft* as such or of *knowledge*" (PhG 24/¶27). *Wissenschaft* or philosophical Science, according to Hegel, refers to the self-organising system of speculative knowledge, whose introduction consists of phenomenology itself. Such a system—comprising Logic, the philosophy of Nature, and philosophy of Spirit—is the appropriate philosophical expression of the Absolute as *Spirit*—"the most sublime Concept and the one which belongs to the modern age and its religion" (PhG 22/¶25). Spirit has moved beyond the unity and immediacy of ethical life and faith in ancient and medieval lifeworlds, but also beyond the formal self-reflection that defines the lifeworld of the Enlightenment. In fact the contemporary cultural context, Hegel remarks, is one of a crisis in legitimation, a situation of cultural diremption and alienation: "Spirit has not only lost its essential life; it is also conscious of this loss, and of the finitude that is its own content" (PhG 12/¶7). Referring to romantic intuitionism, positivist philosophy, and resurgent religiosity, Hegel notes that philosophy now seems to demand edification rather than insight, a restoration of the feeling for the Absolute rather than a conceptual comprehension of the cultural, social, and historical condition of modernity. Thus, for Hegel, the "need of philosophy" in modernity is to overcome this reversion to intuitionism and edification. Our modern philosophical need is no longer to return from the supersensible to the world of sensuous experience (already accomplished by Enlightenment utilitarianism and positivism). Rather, it is to supersede the one-sided emphasis on sensuous, empirical experience as opposed to the domain of the supersensible, which according to Kant we can think but never know.

"Formalism"—the formal self-reflection in which substantial identity and empirical particularity are dissolved—is another symptom of this cultural condition. As we have seen Hegel argue, contemporary attempts to overcome this tension through the construction of an absolute standpoint, in the manner of Fichte and Schelling, still suffer from a one-sided formalism. Rather than successfully developing consciousness to the standpoint of reason, Hegel finds in post-Kantian idealism a reversion to the standpoint of reflection through the elevation of either the subjective or objective pole of the

“absolute identity”. For Hegel, Fichte, Schelling, and their followers have thus lapsed into a “monochromatic formalism” that constructs the Absolute through an abstract universality devoid of concrete difference and determination. Hegel’s complaint is that such an approach to the Absolute distorts genuine speculative method. It constructs an abstract or non-actual Idea that fails to unify form and content, an Idea that dissolves all determinate entities “into the abyss of vacuity without further development or any justification” (PhG 17/¶16). In Hegel’s famous formulation:

Dealing with something from the perspective of the Absolute consists merely in declaring that, although one has been speaking about it just now as something definite, yet in the Absolute, the $A = A$, there is nothing of the kind, for there all is one. To pit this single insight, that in the Absolute everything is the same, against the full body of articulated cognition, which at least seeks and demands such fulfilment, to palm off its Absolute as the night in which, as the saying goes, all cows are black—this is cognition naively reduced to vacuity. (PhG 17/¶16).

Hegel’s criticism, directed obliquely at Schelling, is that contemporary philosophy fails to “give difference its due”.^[3] It does not unite form and content in rational comprehension of *what is* [*das Seiende*] but dissolves determinate content into an empty universality. The latter, however, fails to comprehend the complex interplay of form and content, identity and difference, subject and object, which defines rational actuality. Consequently, there is a failure to construct an organic system of reason in which these antitheses are reconciled within a self-comprehending unity.

Hegel’s basic thesis in the PhG is that the True or the Whole must be comprehended “not only as Substance, but equally as Subject” (PhG 18/¶17). Spinoza’s speculative conception of God or Nature as Substance must be mediated with the Kantian and Fichtean conception of transcendental self-consciousness as the principle of all intelligibility. Dogmatic metaphysics and critical Idealism must be superseded by the speculative theory of Spirit. This thesis can be justified only by performing the exposition of the system itself; that is, by demonstrating the suspension of the opposition between substance and subject within self-knowing Spirit. One important sense of what Hegel calls the “Subject” is free activity or simple *negativity*, a “doubling” movement of self-positing that sets up another in opposition to itself, negates this opposition, and then returns to itself in its self-identity that has integrated otherness. This self-reflexive process of positing substance as subject, of reconciling necessity with freedom, is the unfolding of Spirit in history, a ‘circular’ process that becomes reflexively comprehended in speculative philosophy.

The Absolute is thus essentially a result; it is the Whole in the complete process of its historical unfolding and cultural self-recollection in absolute Spirit. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* aims, then, to reconstruct this dialectical experience of the cultivation of “natural consciousness” to the reflexive

standpoint of philosophical self-knowledge. The phenomenological exposition aims to lead the philosophically and culturally situated individual “from his uneducated standpoint” to speculative Science, the aether of “pure self-recognition in absolute otherness” (PhG 19/¶26). The loss of identity, the experience of diremption and alienation that generates the need of philosophy, is transfigured, Hegel claims, by the self-recognition of alienated subjectivity in the ultimate, self-grounding form intersubjective Spirit, namely speculative philosophy. At the end of this philosophical-historical odyssey, the naïve consciousness comes to recognise itself, indeed return to itself, in the philosophical self-consciousness of Spirit in its historical-cultural development.

Hegel's Phenomenological Method

A few brief remarks concerning Hegel's phenomenological method of inquiry are pertinent at this point, since the PhG is in many respects and unprecedented, and indeed unrepeated, work of philosophical comprehension of the conditions of (modern) self-experience. In the “Introduction” to the PhG, Hegel states that the proper subject matter of philosophy, in accordance with its ancient vocation, is “the actual cognition of what truly is” (PhG 53/¶73). Unlike ancient wisdom, Hegel's phenomenology seeks to be not only the *love* of wisdom but also a “science of wisdom” itself, the philosophical comprehension of the experience of the Whole. Such a phenomenological exposition requires a definite method for examining the coming-to-be of speculative knowledge, and thereby immediately raises the problem of establishing a *criterion* for examining *appearing knowledge* or knowledge taken as an appearance in the (social and historical) world. This last point is significant, since Hegel takes knowledge to be an appearance, an appearing knowledge, in the sense that knowledge is made manifest to consciousness as a series of claims to truth within a definite configuration and historical-cultural context. Such claims to knowledge, moreover, are never given in their full complexity but need to be developed through the “dialectical experience” of testing various patterns of knowing and truth. Hegel thus says of philosophical Science that it manifests itself historically and culturally in an underdeveloped form: “in coming on the scene it is not yet Science in its developed and unfolded truth” (PhG 55/¶76). What we shall observe in the course of the PhG is precisely how philosophical knowledge develops itself into a reflexive, self-grounding, and conceptually articulated Whole.

In general, configurations of knowledge, Hegel argues, involve a process of comparison with a standard that is accepted as the *essence* or as *the in-itself*. This self-examination of knowledge, however, would seem to presuppose a criterion already belonging to the knowledge being examined. We have moved from the forms of appearing knowledge, as knowledge claims, to their disputation and conflict: the question now arises concerning the *criteria* of knowledge. Hegel points out that we are seemingly at

an impasse: disputes over knowledge seem to imply either an infinite regress of standards of truth within a particular configuration of knowledge, or else an authoritative decision concerning accepted standards of knowing and truth. Hegel's solution is to point to the immanence of these standards within consciousness itself: the object of consciousness is neither outside consciousness nor empty (it is something *to*, although not always *for*, consciousness). Hegel underlines in this context the *ontological* sense of consciousness as a relation to otherness that is also a self-relation: "Consciousness simultaneously distinguishes itself from something, and at the same time relates itself to it" (PhG 58/¶82). Consciousness is a bipolar relation comprising the two moments of *being-for-another* and *being-in-itself*, or *knowing* and *truth*: *knowing* designates the *being* of something *for* consciousness; while *truth* is this being-in-itself that consciousness knows to be posited outside itself. Because consciousness itself posits the distinction between knowing and truth in each configuration, consciousness *itself* provides the standard for the self-examination of knowledge.

Consciousness provides its own criterion from within itself, so that the investigation becomes a comparison of consciousness with itself; for the distinction made above [between being-for-another and being-in-itself – R.S.] falls within consciousness (PhG 59/¶84).

What consciousness itself sets up as being-in-itself or the True provides the standard for the phenomenological investigation of the various figures of appearing knowledge. External criteria are unnecessary within the phenomenological self-examination of knowledge, since concept and object are present within consciousness itself. All we need do is to observe the process by which consciousness examines itself and consequently transforms its own configurations of knowing and truth.

In this sense, consciousness comprises a *hermeneutic unity* of knowing and truth, concept and object. Consciousness takes something or other to be the in-itself or the object, while knowledge is the being of the object for consciousness. Where examination shows that these moments of knowing and truth do not correspond, our usual experience is that consciousness must alter its knowledge so as to conform to the object. The phenomenological experience, however, is quite different: knowledge and object form a hermeneutic unity in which a change in our knowledge of an object implies a change in the object of our knowledge. What consciousness previously took to be the in-itself turns out to have been only an in-itself *for consciousness*; consciousness in turn posits a new standard of truth according to which objects are now understood. This self-testing of knowledge thus results in a transformation in the hermeneutic pattern of knowing and truth. In this sense, the self-examination of consciousness is "not only a testing of what we know, but also a testing of the criterion of what knowing is" (PhG 60/¶85).

This self-transformation of consciousness is what Hegel calls *experience*: “this *dialectical* movement which consciousness exercises on itself and which affects both its knowledge and its object” (PhG 60/¶86). Phenomenological experience involves a dialectical movement of *reflection* that produces a new object and figure of consciousness through *determinate negation*: the productive negation of content that produces another determinate content necessarily related to its predecessor.^[4] Indeed, in knowing an object as the essence or in-itself, consciousness has *two* objects, the object as such, as in-itself; and the *knowing* itself as object, “the *being-for-consciousness of this in-itself*,” which appears to consciousness as a reflection upon its knowing of the object (PhG 60/¶86). In reflecting upon its knowledge, the object alters for consciousness. It is now something that is the *in-itself* only *for consciousness*; this reflected knowledge is now the essence or truth of the object. The process of moving from the in-itself to the being-for-consciousness of this in-itself is the *dialectical* experience of consciousness: an experience which converts the ‘falsity’ of the first object, its partial and limited character, into the truth of the second object of consciousness, which now reflectively takes as its object a new configuration of knowing and truth. From the viewpoint of ‘natural’ consciousness, it seems as though a new object has emerged which refutes the former object. *We*, by contrast, observe how the new object of consciousness originates through a dialectical *reversal* of consciousness that we are observing.

Phenomenological interpretation raises the experiences of natural consciousness to the level of a conceptually articulated movement of interconnecting figures of consciousness. This process proceeds through the *determinate negation* of a given figure of consciousness, which ensures the progress and completion of forms of knowledge (PhG 57/¶79). In this process of determinate negation, an untrue mode of knowledge itself produces a more complex configuration of consciousness as a definite result. This result is “the nothing of *that from which it results*—a result that contains what was true in the preceding knowledge” (PhG 61/¶87). The goal of this progression is to attain the point “where knowledge finds itself, where Concept corresponds to object and object to Concept” (PhG 57/¶80). At this point, the distinction in consciousness between cognition and being, or certainty and truth, is suspended in absolute knowing. From our phenomenological viewpoint, this dialectical progression of knowledge appears as a “process of becoming” which we can comprehend in its entire logical development. This dialectical process of experience continues until the disparity between knowing and truth is finally superseded. Substance and subject are no longer opposed but shown to be an identity: substance is essentially subject. At this point the difference of consciousness is overcome in the self-consciousness of Spirit. The phenomenology concludes with this attainment of the level of the Concept, the overcoming of alienation in self-knowing Spirit: the subject-object opposition is suspended, immediacy proves to be mediation, and the separation of knowing and truth is overcome in

the self-comprehending Concept.^[5] With the completion of the phenomenological exposition, the justification of the standpoint of speculative knowledge is concluded.

In this sense, according to Hegel, the phenomenological path to science is not merely propaedeutic but is itself philosophical Science. Phenomenology is “the Science of the *experience of consciousness*” (PhG 61/¶88): a conceptual-historical presentation of the dialectical experience of consciousness and its transformation into self-knowing Spirit. We observe the development of appearing knowledge in its progression to the level of Science, at which point we comprehend philosophy as the self-consciousness of absolute Spirit. This system of consciousness as a whole consists of discrete moments or *figures of consciousness*—cognitive and practical attitudes towards the world that are exhibited as they appear for (natural) consciousness—which together comprise the “entire realm of the truth of Spirit” (PhG 61/¶89). The goal of the PhG, in short, is to present the (philosophical) self-overcoming of alienated consciousness in the self-consciousness of Spirit: to show how consciousness “gets rid of its semblance of being burdened with something alien” and arrives at its true existence as Spirit (PhG 61-2/¶89).

A brief remark is pertinent here concerning *our* role in the phenomenological exposition, the problem of who “we,” the phenomenological observers, might be.^[6] I shall take the “we” to refer to the historically and culturally situated, philosophically educated reader, who is desirous of attaining, but does not yet possess, philosophical science. *Contra* many interpretations (such as Heidegger’s), the “we” cannot refer to the philosophical standpoint of absolute knowing, for then the programme of the *Phenomenology* as an immanent justification for Science would collapse even before it begins. Phenomenology would then impose a presupposed pattern of absolute knowing onto the material of consciousness, which would make superfluous the phenomenological exposition of its dialectical experience.^[7] In this sense the PhG presents, I suggest, a simultaneous exposition and critique of the philosophical-cultural prehistory of modernity.

A. Consciousness

The first paradigm of knowledge that Hegel examines is “consciousness” as the simplest form of the subject-object relation defining cognitive experience of the world of sensuous objectivity (nature). According to Hegel’s exposition, “Consciousness” comprises three interconnected figures or formations of consciousness, beginning with the immediacy of sense-certainty, moving through the mediated character of perception, and culminating in the reflection of consciousness in the understanding.^[8] The dialectical interplay of identity and difference within various configurations of

the subject-object relationship sheds light on the phenomenological experience of consciousness as a whole. This is so, I want to argue, since identity and difference serve as operative concepts within the various figures of the subject-object relation of consciousness under examination. As we shall see, the overall experience of consciousness consists in its failure to reconcile immediacy with determinate knowledge. Consciousness thus learns that knowledge of objects is mediated by concepts and categorical determinations: the truth of consciousness is *self-consciousness*, that which grounds sense-certainty, perception, and the understanding within a more complex subject-object configuration, indeed an *intersubjective* relationship of self-identity in otherness. This movement of consciousness and self-consciousness is transformed, through the course of the phenomenological exposition, into the concrete unity of universal, particular, and individual within self-conscious reason and historical forms of Spirit. In what follows, I shall focus primarily on the role of this movement between identity, difference, and identity-in-difference in the various configurations of the subject-object relationship in the interconnected paradigms of consciousness, self-consciousness, and self-conscious reason.

Sense-Certainty: The Immediacy of Identity and Difference

Hegel famously begins the phenomenological exposition with sense-certainty [*die sinnliche Gewißheit*]: *knowledge of the immediate* or of what simply *is* (PhG 63/¶90). Sense certainty appears *to itself* as the *richest* and the *truest* kind of knowledge, since it deals with the manifold of spatio-temporal intuition, neither adding to, nor altering, what is immediately present. This *certainty* of immediate knowledge, however, will turn out to be the ontologically poorest or most abstract *truth*.^[9] Sense certainty intends immediate certainty in pointing to the ‘This,’ or by intending the immediate ‘I’, but it can only express *indeterminate* being.^[10] In itself this “pure being” is just an empty abstraction, the empty “there is”. Indeed, consciousness adds nothing from itself to the object, but simply takes it as immediately apprehended. Although consciousness assumes that there is a complete identity between knowledge and object, this will prove to be a difference or non-identity, while the object, which is taken to be equivalent to difference, will prove to be an identity. Consciousness will be forced to recognise that the pure identity of unmediated consciousness cannot be sustained, and that the interplay of identity and difference between subject and object poles must be given its due within a more complex configuration of knowing and truth.

Our task as phenomenological observers is to see whether immediate consciousness meets its own claims to truth. What follows are three experiences of sense-certainty. First, consciousness posits the immediate object (as ‘pure this’ or immediately given identity) to be essential and the ‘I’ (the pure ‘I’ as immediate and variable difference) to be inessential. Secondly, the failure of this experience results in

a reversal: consciousness posits the immediate 'I' ('this I' here and now as immediate identity) to be essential, while the object (as immediate and variable difference) becomes inessential. Finally, consciousness has a third experience in which the essential becomes the entire 'I'–object relation within pure spatio-temporal intending (a first attempt at an 'identity of identity and difference' which remains immersed in immediacy but proves to be mediated by abstract universality). This last experience reveals immediate consciousness to be mediated by the 'abstract universals' of space, time, and the cognitive 'I'. Hegel's analysis of sense-certainty thus provides a phenomenological deduction of Kant's transcendental aesthetic: immediate intuition presupposes mediation by the pure forms of space and time and by the categories of the understanding.[11] Immediate sense-certainty will reveal itself to be in truth a mediated perception of things with properties, which in turn presupposes a categorical structuring of nature according to the law-like rules of the analytic understanding.

Immediacy and Difference in Sense-Certainty

The 'pure This' intended within the experience of sense-certainty has a twofold configuration: the spatio-temporal immediacy of the here and now, of the singular item given in its pure immediacy.[12] If we ask, "What is the Now?" the answer will be a contingent example: "The Now is the Night".[13] If we preserve the truth of this experience in writing, we find that next *day* this truth has "become stale". This "experiment," for Hegel, shows that the Now we attempt to preserve is indifferent to whether it is night or day. This Now that subsists through temporal change is what Hegel calls a "negative in general": "A simple thing of this kind which *is* through negation, which is neither This nor That, a *not-This*, and is with equal indifference This as well as That—such a thing we call a *universal* [*Allgemeines*]" (PhG 65/¶96). The true content of sense-certainty is the *abstract* universal, the empty and indifferent 'Now' and 'Here,' a claim that Hegel supports by turning to language, which enables us to articulate the universal in speech or in writing.[14]

A similar experience unfolds for the Here. The Here, for example, is the tree; yet this truth vanishes if I turn around (the Here has become a house). The Here, like the Now, remains indifferent to the vanishing of various immediately given objects, hence the Here is similarly a "*mediated simplicity* or a *universality*". In this first experience, sense-certainty reveals its truth to be *pure being* as an *abstraction* involving mediation and negativity. The experience of sense certainty is of an empty and indifferent Now and Here, the abstract universals of time and space. Immediate consciousness is thrown back to the *identity* of *its own* intending [*Meinen*].

As a result of this first experience, the relation between knowing and object is *reversed* [*umgekehrt*]. The immediate object (or abstract universal) becomes inessential, while immediate

consciousness or knowing, a solipsistic sense-certainty, becomes the essential or that which *is* in Truth. “Its truth is in the object as *my* object, or in its being *mine* [*im Meinen*]: the object is, because *I* know it” (PhG 66/¶100). Consciousness retreats from the immediately given object, as singular This, and is driven back into the solipsistic ‘I’ of immediate intending, the immediate identity of This ‘I’ that intends something in sense-certainty. This second experience displays a parallel movement with the first: the singular intending ‘I,’ as This ‘I’ here and now, reveals itself to be an abstract universal, wherein the abstract identity of the ‘I’ fails to articulate immediately given difference in determinate knowledge.

The truth of sense-certainty now lies in the immediacy of my own sensations. The vanishing Now and Here is preserved by the fact that *I myself* hold these sensations fast: The Now is the day because *I* see it. I, as *this* singular I, claim that the Here is a tree; another I asserts that the Here is a house. Both perspectives have the same certainty, yet my own self-certainty is as valid, or invalid, as that of any other ‘I’; for the simple singularity of my own ‘I,’ its indubitable immediacy, is as valid as that enjoyed by any other singular ‘I’. The persistence of the I, its general and indifferent character, shows us that it too is an abstract universal. The I as a universal does not disappear; its seeing is a ‘seeing in general’ that is mediated by, and indifferent to, immediate objects. While I might intend my own ‘I’ in its immediate simplicity or singularity, as this ‘I’ here and now, I can no more say what I mean than previously. My immediate ‘I,’ in its immediacy and singularity, is at the same time a mediated and universal ‘I’. The singularity of this item intuited or intended by this singular ‘I’ is possible only through the mediation of not only the forms of Space and Time but also the ‘I’ as an abstract universal. It is impossible to articulate pure immediacy, whether of the singular object or unique and singular ‘I,’ without conceptual-linguistic mediation. The moment of immediate intuition, articulated in Kant’s transcendental aesthetic, is unified with the moment of conceptual mediation.[\[15\]](#)

Sense-certainty learns that what it intends is actually the inessential. The immediate identity and difference or simple singularity that it intends in each case (either of the object or of the ‘I’) reverts to abstract identity or universality. We thus arrive at the third attempt to preserve immediacy: sense-certainty now takes the *whole* relation, encompassing immediate object and immediate ‘I’, as essential. This direct intending marks an immediate *self-identity* between knowing and truth, and makes *no distinction* between the essential and the inessential. Within direct pointing “I am a pure [act of] intuiting”. I remain within the one immediate relationship of intending: the Now is day.[\[16\]](#) The experience now turns on the spatio-temporal immediacy of direct intending, the experience of pure presence in the present moment.

Hegel’s description of the evanescent character of the temporal present (PhG ¶106-107) is

worth discussing further in this context. What Hegel attempts here is a phenomenological description that indicates the underlying ‘logical’ structure of the Now as experienced by ‘natural’ consciousness. As soon as a Now is pointed out, it has ceased to be: *this* Now becomes another Now than what was originally pointed out. The Now *is*, Hegel states, when it *no longer is*: the truth of the Now is *to have been*, to be both present and absent at once. What essentially has been [*gewesen ist*], Hegel remarks, is no essence [*kein Wesen*]. The presence of the present reveals itself also as an absence. Hegel describes the structure of this pointing out of the present moment as follows: in pointing out the Now, I am pointing out something that has been; in indicating that the now is not simply present but also past or has been, I am also pointing out that the now is past as well as present. In short, the present moment always carries a trace of the past, which is how the present itself is disclosed to us. The movement of the present, though past and future ‘Nows’, shows that the ‘present moment’ is at the same time related to the past Now that has been and the future Now that is to come.^[17]

This analysis shows us, within the experience of the flow of Now moments, the ‘logical’ movement that Hegel calls *the negation of the negation*: the immediate present is negated in that it is now past; this pastness of the now is then negated in that it is a past that is also present; hence we return to a new present or Now moment as a result of this negative movement. Hegel concludes from this analysis that the immediate Now *is reflected into itself*: it is a complex presence that remains what it is (present) in its otherness (absence). We have moved to a more complex conception of the Now, a “*reflected Now*” that comprises a plurality of Nows—hours, minutes, and so forth—all taken together. This *pointing out* [*Aufzeigen*] of the Now has shown us a more complex type of universality than “the negative in general” mentioned earlier, one which contains its immediately given singular items (the succession of interrelated Now moments) collected within itself. Like the Now, the Here is also a specific and inadequate conception of the universal (or identity) as a sum-total of singular items.^[18] The experience of sense-certainty shows that the intuited identity and difference of immediately given singular items, whether as immediate objects or the immediacy of the intuiting subject, is mediated by the abstract universals of space, time, and the ‘I’. These have proven to be abstract universals containing, so to speak, these singular items or moments collected ‘indifferently’ within themselves.

As we have seen, it is precisely the contradiction between *immediacy* and *determinacy* that drives consciousness through these stages of its self-testing. Sense-certainty is just this movement from immediacy to (abstract) universality or identity, but it is equally the forgetting of this experience.^[19] The failure to reconcile immediacy and determinate knowledge teaches consciousness that the truth of sense certainty is to be found in abstract universality. The truth of self-certainty lies in the universal that abstracts from sensuous plurality, and unifies singular items, given in their immediacy, as a sum-total of indifferent related units. The result of this entire experience has thus been to show that immediacy is

itself mediated. Sense-certainty does not only intend singular items given in immediate intuition, but now encounters complex determinate objects with ‘universal’ properties that are perceived by sensuous consciousness. This sensuous universality, the universal properties given in perception, remains opposed to the sensuous manifold from which it abstracts; and such universal properties are supposed to be directly apprehended by sensuous consciousness. We have arrived at the new standard for the next shape of consciousness, namely *perception* or taking-for-true [*Wahrnehmung*]. In perception, the conscious ‘I’ *perceives* [*nehme ich wahr*] or takes this abstract or sensuous universality as true, a *conditioned* universal that will remain “afflicted with opposition”.

Perception: or the Thing and Deception

The new in-itself or standard of truth for perception or perceptual consciousness is *sensuous universality*, an abstract universal that remains opposed to, and therefore conditioned by, the sensuous plurality from which it has been abstracted. Perception will experience the collapse of this abstract universality in each of its attempts to directly apprehend the One/Many relation of the thing and its properties. Three experiences of perception ensue in which consciousness struggles to reconcile this standard of abstract universality or identity with the plurality of properties constituting the thing’s self-identity. In these experiences, consciousness will come to recognise the inadequacy of its presupposed standard of abstract identity and universality, and to recognise the role of categories, posited by the understanding itself, which structure its own perceptual consciousness.[\[20\]](#)

The *logic* of these experiences of perception may be summarised as follows: Perception takes as its standard of truth the immediately grasped or apprehended determinate and unitary “object”: the One. Given the previous analysis, the One is taken to be the indivisible perceived thing that—as the sum-total of its simple properties—is a *universal* that is supposed to be apprehended without any further mediation. The question for consciousness concerns that which *truly is* (the True) from the standpoint of perception, a process resulting in the necessary oscillation between the variously conceived ‘One’ and the variously conceived ‘Many’. Plurality constantly intrudes into the immediate perception of the thing as a One, where its meaning, *what the One is*, constantly shifts: from the particular object, the general medium or substrate that supports various properties, to the independent and exclusive properties themselves. Consciousness posits the One as an exclusive self-identity that is continually countered by plurality, whether a plurality of other objects, of multiple properties, or of constitutive relations with other objects.

In its first experience, perception falls back to the standpoint of sense-certainty in that it takes these exclusive properties in their sensuous independence to be immediately apprehensible, but

irreconcilable with the exclusive unity of the thing as such. In the second experience, the purity of its simple apprehension of the thing as a One has been disturbed or “deflected” by the contribution of consciousness itself. Consciousness recognises this contribution, the possibility of “deception,” but then strives to subtract its own contribution from its perception of the thing. The One/Many opposition is now to be distributed in various ways between the in-itself (the object) and consciousness (as knowledge). In its final experience, consciousness takes as its object the whole movement previously shared between the object and consciousness. It finds that our perception of the thing is both a passive apprehension and an active reflection. In this third experience, the thing is taken or perceived as both self-related and as related to otherness, both self-subsistent in its self-identity and as dependent on other things for its identity. “In and for itself the Thing is self-identical; but this unity with itself is disturbed by other Things” (PhG 77/¶123). The thing as an independent entity is a single, unique One; but in its (accidental) interactions with other things, it appears as the mere bearer (an Also) of a plurality of changing properties that remain indifferent to each other. The thing finds its self-identity no longer as subsisting in itself, but rather in its reaction to the action of these other things upon it.

At the same time, each thing is determined as being a *different thing*, and has within it an essential difference that distinguishes it from other: an *actual* difference consisting in the thing’s own constitution. We arrive at the distinction between the simple *determinateness* of the thing and its *manifold constitution*. The thing’s determinateness now constitutes its essential character, which is defined by the Thing’s opposition to other things. Indeed, the thing is essentially only this relating to otherness, which at the same time negates its self-subsistence. This essential property of the thing—its determinateness in being related to another—dissolves its self-subsistent identity. The contradiction here between the thing’s determinateness and its constitution is resolved by positing the thing’s *relational identity*: the object has within it a diversity that is *necessary*, but *inessential*, to its constitution. But as Hegel points out, this is merely a verbal distinction: what is *inessential*, but also *necessary*, cancels itself. The self-subsistent thing thus finds its essential being in its interactions with other things. Consciousness recognises that the thing is “the opposite of itself,” related to itself in being related to otherness: “*it is for itself, so far as it is for another; and it is for another, so far as it is for itself*” (PhG 79/¶128). With this experience, consciousness confronts the *collapse* of the “in-itself” of perception as a whole: the abstract self-identity or sensuous universality which can be simply ‘apprehended’ by consciousness collapses in the experience of the thing’s self-identity in relation to otherness. Perception learns that its conception of abstract or sensuous universality is inadequate to conceptualise the unity of identity and plurality.

The play of these “empty abstractions—of a ‘singleness’ [*Einzelheit*] and of an inessential ‘essence’”—make up the *perceptual understanding*. The various ruses adopted by perception and “sound common sense” demonstrate its abstract conception of identity.^[21] Consciousness attempts to

reconcile these abstractions by moving from sensuous to true or unconditioned universality. The static conception of the thing's self-identity as a contradiction-free stability is replaced by a dynamic conception of the thing's self-identity in the totality of relations with other things. Consciousness shifts to the law-like realm of the understanding, which will supersede the opposition between these deficient determinations—universality and singular being, the One and the Many—through a more complex conception of unconditioned universality. With the latter, we arrive at a pure thought-determination or categorical condition encompassing the relation of identity-in-difference between universal and singular in the conceptual mediation of our experience of nature.

Force and the Understanding [Verstand]: The Inversion of Consciousness

Perceptual consciousness could not bring together the self-identity of the thing and the plurality of its properties because of its deficient concept of universality and identity. The static, contradiction-free, non-relational conception of self-identity is now replaced by a dynamic, relational, and reflective conception of identity: a self-identity in otherness and unconditioned universality. The latter refers to a more complex conception of universality that is no longer conditioned by sensuous perception; a determination of pure *thought* that unifies the moments of self-being and other-being that are essential to consciousness. The recognition that sensuous universality must be supplanted by unconditioned universality, and that consciousness itself posits the concepts that structure its experience, now becomes the in-itself or truth for the understanding. The understanding, however, *reifies* its concepts (unconditioned universals), which are posited as independent of consciousness. The “pure concepts” of the understanding are unitary determinations that are posited as the *true reality* behind the phenomenal flux or multiplicity in which these concepts also disclose themselves. The sensuous manifold is determined but also dominated by the concepts of the understanding, which articulate the law-like universality of nature over against its phenomenal multiplicity and change. In its experience, however, the understanding comes to recognise that the conceptual distinctions necessary to explain this multiplicity, to understand and interpret objects of experience in nature, do not simply refer to pre-existent though supersensible entities, but are the work or products of the understanding itself. With this insight, the understanding is superseded by self-consciousness: the recognition that finite consciousness is grounded in self-consciousness as an *infinite* structure of self-relation in otherness.

The perception of things has passed over into a reflection on “force”. The latter concept is understood as the non-perceivable hidden *power* or underlying essence that manifests itself in multifarious ways in appearance. The static perception of the thing in its abstract self-identity has passed over into the dynamic presentation of force with its movement of attraction and repulsion. The

proper meaning of the concept of force presupposes various distinctions, such as between force proper and its expression, the relation between soliciting and solicited force, and the play of opposed forces. All these, however, prove to be merely *thought-distinctions*, distinctions posited in the conceptualisation of force, and are thus taken to be “unreal”. This realisation prompts the understanding to shift to a conception of the universal which contains in itself an *inner difference*, an articulation of the relation between stable non-sensuous entities (theoretical concepts) and changing sensuous phenomena (empirical nature) in *scientific law*.

The concept of “force” as non-perceptible power articulates the essence or *inner being* of things manifested in appearance. Consciousness thus encounters the distinction between *appearance* and *essence*, and learns that the true essence of things is always *mediated*. Indeed, consciousness “has a mediated relation to the inner being and, as the understanding, *looks through this mediating play of forces into the true background of things*” (PhG 88/¶143). The mediating term that unites [*zusammenschließt*] the understanding and the inner being of things is the developed being of Force. The latter, which appears as a *vanishing* for the understanding, is what we call *appearance* [*Erscheinung*], a *totality* of seeming or showing [*Schein*] (PhG 88/¶143). Appearance is being that is immediately a *non-being*, a universal seeming or showing [*Schein*] which expresses the unceasing flux of subjective phenomena. Appearance names the phenomenal world which, however, not only conceals but also discloses, amidst its flux and change, the realm of constant and unchanging *inner essences*, the realm of supersensible laws as its truth. Thus there emerges for consciousness the distinction between the *sensible world of appearance* and the *supersensible world*: “above the vanishing *present* there opens up a permanent *beyond*” (PhG 89/¶144). With the emergence of this distinction, we encounter a supersensible *in-itself* that is “the first, and therefore imperfect appearance of Reason” (PhG 89/¶144).

This supersensible beyond, however, is mediated by appearance; *appearance* is in fact the *essence* of the supersensible, that which gives it determinate content. The supersensible, grasped by the understanding, is the reflection of appearance, the positing of its truth. “The supersensible is the sensuous and the perceived posited as it is *in truth*; the truth of the sensuous and perceived is to be *appearance*. The supersensible is therefore *appearance qua appearance*” (PhG 90/¶147). This does not mean the collapse of the distinction between appearance and supersensible essence. Rather, the sensuous world is taken as *superseded*, as an *inner world*, a *supersensible beyond* that can nonetheless be grasped by the understanding. In short, appearance is the expression of a supersensible world of stable laws that are intelligible to the understanding. These supersensible ‘scientific’ laws are grasped in terms of the unitary and stable relation between non-sensuous entities (theoretical concepts and variables) and the changing flux of appearance. Laws of nature articulate a stable relation between various theoretical entities (mass, velocity, gravity, for example) and the phenomenal multiplicity which they govern.

Indeed, the very concept of *law* articulates “the *stable* image of unstable appearance” (PhG ¶149). The supersensible world of laws is consequently a tranquil image of the flux of appearances, a realm of universality and identity beyond the flux and difference of the perceived world—which exhibits law only through incessant change. We arrive at a cognitive attitude suggesting the scientific, but also Platonic and Kantian, world-views.

The problem now is to account for the difference articulated within such laws (between various theoretical-conceptual entities), as well as for the plurality of different laws in empirical nature, which would in turn demand unification under a higher law. This *plurality* of laws contradicts the basic principle of the understanding: that the True must be universal *unity*. To counteract this plurality, the understanding collapses these back into a single law—for example, universal gravitation—but one which lacks all specificity. Whereas the understanding believes it has discovered a universal law, this unification expresses, rather, *the Concept of Law itself* (PhG 92/¶150). The understanding must learn how to supersede the rigid distinction between supersensible law, as the essence of appearance, and phenomenal flux, as the way laws are manifested in appearance. Consciousness will learn that its bipolar structure of knowing and truth collapses in the experience of the theoretical understanding of nature.

It would seem that the concept of law has superseded that of force; the positing of laws unifies the flux of forces; but this plurality of laws is then “explained” by recourse to fundamental forces. Hegel alludes here to the confusion in scientific explanation between theoretically useful distinctions and theoretically distinct entities. This confusion proves to be an intractable problem for the understanding in its attempts to maintain the distinction between Law and Force. Do such Laws explain or merely describe? What is the *necessity* that is ascribed to laws of nature?[22] The problem of the necessity attributable to natural Laws suggests the need for a more complex conception of identity and difference, what Hegel will call *inner difference* or *contradiction*: the identity-in-difference of theoretical and empirical, supersensible and sensible, appearance and essence, of knowing and truth, within the conceptual understanding of nature.

Hegel arrives at this conception of inner difference through an analysis of the simultaneous positing and suspension of differences in the process of scientific *explanation*. In this process, the understanding posits an internally differentiated law—which unifies theoretically posited variables such as mass, velocity, acceleration, and so on—but then immediately suspends these conceptual distinctions. The relation between the so distinguished theoretical terms, however, lacks inner necessity (as, for example, in the case of freely falling bodies). To provide this necessity, the law is then explained in terms of a unitary force (in this case, ‘gravity’) that serves as the ground of the law. But this posited force in turn has no other content than the law itself; hence the relationship between law and force here

is tautologous: a law is posited whose explanatory ground is Force, but where Force is also indistinguishable from law. As Hegel observes:

A *law* is enunciated; from this, its implicitly universal element or ground is distinguished as *Force*; but it is said that this difference is no difference, rather that the ground is constituted exactly the same as the law (PhG 95/¶154).

Force is posited to explain the unity of law, but force is itself defined in terms of law. Avoiding this tautology means that force becomes contingently related to the law, which therefore loses its conceptual necessity. The tautological character of explanation thus collapses the distinction between force and law.

Within this tautological movement, however, we detect precisely that which was missing in the law: the absolute flux of difference. For this movement both posits and immediately suspends (theoretical-conceptual) differences: “it posits a difference that is not only *no difference* for us, but one which the movement itself suspends as a difference” (PhG 95/¶155). This movement of posited and self-suspending difference results in an inversion: the alteration present in the flux of appearance now penetrates the supersensible world itself. What this reversal implies is that we discover the reflective character of all our phenomenal experience; as in Kant’s Copernican turn, the understanding finds that objects conform to its own categorical conditions. The theoretical understanding finds itself ‘reflected,’ so to speak, in the objects of experience that it proceeds theoretically to interpret and understand according to conceptually articulated laws. The understanding learns that the theoretical-conceptual distinctions that it itself posits in fact structure and organise the intelligibility of the flux of appearance. The distinction between a supersensible world of stable laws and a sensible world of fluxing appearances begins to collapse, since it is the understanding itself that posits this distinction between essence and appearance.

We thus arrive at the second type of law, the law of *pure change*, whose content expresses the self-identity of non-identity, a permanence of impermanence. Hegel describes the collapse of the simple opposition between supersensible law and sensible flux, which results in an inversion of the former schema between essence and appearance, and a mutual conversion of identity into difference and difference into identity. Identity and difference are not rigidly opposed as fixed opposites, but interrelated and mutually transforming (attracting and repelling) aspects of a dynamic whole. With this insight, we arrive at the principle of *absolute difference*, that which articulates this simultaneous positing and suspension of difference, that is, difference in the matter [*Sache*] itself, the simultaneous positing

and dissolution of antitheses.

The Inverted World

With the emergence of the concept of *absolute difference*, consciousness encounters a crisis in the experience of the “inverted world”. The latter emerges out of the collapse of the distinction between appearance and essence, and subsequent movement from a rigid opposition between identity and difference to a dynamic conception of inner difference or contradiction. This movement supersedes the bipolar relation between knowing and truth that structures consciousness, leading to the reconciliation of appearance and essence, knowing and truth, within self-consciousness structured as *infinitude*.

The problem of adequately conceptualising identity and difference became evident in the collapse of the distinction between force and law. The ‘first’ supersensible elevated the universal flux of difference into a tranquil world of laws governed by identity (PhG 96/¶157). These laws, however, could never fully account for all of the particular features of the appearances that fall under the universality of the law. This first supersensible world, as Hegel puts it, lacked the principle of difference, but now acquires it in the *inverted world* [*verkehrte Welt*], which inverts the relation between appearance and essence and collapses their fixed opposition. The self-identical world of laws is thus transformed into its opposite, a second supersensible or inverted world governed by difference. Difference now becomes what is essential in the thought of law; absolute flux becomes what is ultimately real. We have arrived at a more complex conception of inner or absolute difference (contradiction), a dynamic transformation of identity into difference and difference in which the identical is non-identical to itself and the non-identical identical to itself. At this point, the distinction between essence and appearance collapses; categorical difference disappears, hence we can no longer distinguish between sensible and supersensible worlds. Indeed, the inverted world will prove to be *the same* as the phenomenal world. Appearance and thing-in-itself are now grasped in a relation of *inversion*: the beyond is the inverted present world.[\[23\]](#)

Let us consider a case that Hegel anticipates “from another sphere.”[\[24\]](#) Crime and punishment present an inversion of the opposition between appearance and the supersensible. In the world of appearance, crime is the enactment of a wrong, while punishment is the exercise of justice or the right. This opposition between crime and punishment, however, undergoes an inversion: the phenomenal world is now confronted by an *inverted* supersensible world, one in which all moral principles appear as inverted and perverted. Everything is despised that was honoured in the first world, and everything despised there is now honoured in the second.[\[25\]](#) Whereas in the phenomenal world crime is wrong

and punishment is right, in the inverted world crime is right and punishment is wrong; but these two worlds, as consciousness will learn, are actually one and the same. Crime is the exercise of freedom against the dead letter of the law or custom, while punishment is the exercise of mere revenge, an intentional wronging or harming of the individual. Each pole in the opposition is thus inverted in itself: crime is an exercise of freedom that destroys the basis of freedom; punishment is the destruction or restriction of this freedom for the sake of the freedom of all. Crime is a free act that destroys the universal conditions of freedom; punishment is the “negation of the negation” that nullifies the crime and restores the validity of law. This inversion shows that the world of appearance is inverted in itself; it is not opposed to, but rather identical with, the supersensible world.

The experience of the inverted world implies that we must overcome the sensuous representation of identity and difference, the opposition between appearance and essence, in favour of a conception of inner difference or *contradiction*. The latter attempts to think “pure change,” to think antithesis within antithesis itself, the simultaneous inversion of identity into difference and difference into identity. Identity and difference are not two opposing poles fixed in a rigid opposition or distributed in a dualism across two different substances or elements. Rather, each is itself the opposite of itself; each is an opposite of an opposite, or has its opposite within itself (PhG 98-99/¶160). This thinking of contradiction emerged already in the experience of the inverted world: formerly the supersensible world was assumed to be the rigid ‘opposite’ of the sensuous world, but this opposition is suspended in the experience of the inverted world. The understanding now finds that each pole is the opposite of itself; the distinction between appearance and essence collapses and is transformed into a dynamic unity of opposites. Hence the supersensible world, as inverted world, has inverted itself; it has overarched the perceived world, containing it within itself, embracing itself and its opposite in one unity. The supersensible world thus articulates *inner difference*, difference in *its own self*; it articulates *identity* in and through *difference*, thus suspending their opposition within a higher unity.

This inner difference or contradiction introduces the concept of *infinitude* [*Unendlichkeit*] (PhG 99/¶160). The infinite, which embraces the finite within itself by both positing and suspending opposition, describes the organic unity of Life and the relational structure of self-consciousness. Indeed, the concept of Law posited by the understanding already evinced this structure of infinitude. For Hegel this means: a) that the law is *self-identical*, but is also *differentiated* in itself (it unifies phenomenal diversity but is diverse in its own theoretical structure, unifying conceptual-theoretical entities); b) that we can only understand the unity of appearance and the supersensible as an inner difference or as a relation of infinitude (as evinced in the “inverted world” experience); and c) that these non-identical moments in the law (the theoretical variables of space and time, distance and velocity, etc.) are conceptual distinctions that make up “a *difference* which is no *difference*, or only a

difference of what is selfsame” (PhG 99/¶161). They are conceptual distinctions that are both posited and suspended by the understanding itself. The infinitude of the law thus expresses the identity-in-difference of knowing and truth—the overcoming of the opposition between the for-consciousness and in-itself for the reflexive understanding.

Once the understanding experiences the collapse of the rigid distinction between appearance and essence, the experience of inner difference or contradiction that points to the concept of infinitude, consciousness has arrived at the threshold of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness emerges from the breakdown between knowing and truth, a breakdown that reveals the categorical structuring of experience. As in Kant’s Copernican turn, we realise that scientific explanation is a description of the activity of our reflexive understanding: “The Understanding’s *‘explanation’* is primarily only the description of what self-consciousness is” (PhG 100-101/¶163). Although the scientific world-view implicitly presents the movement of self-consciousness, the understanding is not yet aware that, in conceptually mediating its own objects of experience, it merely finds itself “reflected” in grasping the objects of experience rather than penetrating to the hidden essence of things. Indeed, the understanding finds itself reflected in the phenomenal world by reflexively explaining the supersensible essence of appearance according to its own conceptual schemata.[\[26\]](#)

Once the concept of infinitude becomes an object for consciousness, it recognises that it finds itself in its own conceptual grasp of cognitive experience. Consciousness recognises that its own self-identity consists in the simultaneous positing and suspension of difference: it realises that the distinction between knowing and truth is a distinction posited and sublated by consciousness itself. In other words, consciousness comes to be self-conscious in that it *recognises* in the object confronting it the same lawfulness and life that it finds within itself. In sum, consciousness recognises itself as *self-consciousness*, the infinite relation in which “*I differentiate myself from myself, and in doing so I am immediately aware that what is differentiated from myself is not different from me*” (PhG 101/¶164). The concept of infinitude, however, has not been properly grasped, for the understanding still redistributes inner difference or contradiction across two different worlds or substantial elements (PhG 101/¶164). The apprehension of difference as infinitude is available for us, the phenomenological observers, but is as yet merely implicit for consciousness itself.

We saw how consciousness gazed through the appearing world into the background of the supersensible world. Now both extremes have vanished with the coincidence of the understanding and the supersensible world. The ‘I’ disempts and posits itself as other to itself, immediately suspends this otherness, and thus returns to its reflected self-identity. We witness the supersession of the ‘two-world’ metaphysics of sensuous appearance and supersensible essence:

It is manifest that behind the so-called curtain which is supposed to conceal the inner world, there is nothing to be seen unless *we* go behind it ourselves, as much in order that we may see, as that there may be something behind there which can be seen (PhG 102/¶165).

The distinction between appearance and essence has been superseded by the identity-in-difference or inner difference of self-consciousness. We have arrived at a *formal* conception of self-consciousness as infinitude, but have not yet observed the experience of self-consciousness as an *intersubjective* relation of self-identity in otherness.

B. Self-Consciousness

Hegel's discussion of self-consciousness represents one of the pivotal moments in the unfolding of the PhG. Consciousness of an otherness distinct from itself has been superseded by self-consciousness in the Other; the conscious subject has begun its transformation into self-conscious (inter)subjectivity. This transition, I shall argue, is from the finite consciousness of difference to the infinite identity-in-difference of self-consciousness. Three aspects of the Concept of self-consciousness emerge, corresponding to the elements of universality, particularity, and individuality: the *abstract identity* of self-consciousness or 'I = I' (universality); self-consciousness as *desire*, leading to the life and death struggle and master/slave relationship (particularity); and the *intersubjective 'doubling'* of self-consciousness that marks the emergence of Spirit (individuality). In the following section I shall first consider Hegel's transitional passage on the "truth of self-certainty," secondly, the problem of recognition in the experience of mastery and servitude, and thirdly, the movement from the abstract self-identity of Stoicism, the self-contradictory subject of Scepticism, to the deficient identity-in-difference or alienated subjectivity of the Unhappy Consciousness. The mediating role of the Other in the latter signals the moment of intersubjective mediation—albeit within a thoroughly *alienated* self-consciousness—which introduces *reason*, in its abstract and immediate guise, as the dialectical unity of self-consciousness and consciousness.

The Truth of Self-Certainty

This short transitional passage (¶¶166-177) describes the inversion or reflection of the bipolar structure of consciousness into a tripolar model of self-consciousness. The True is no longer otherness or external objectivity but consciousness in its own knowing: "the *in-itself* turns out to be a mode in which the object is only for an other" (PhG 103/¶166). Consciousness takes its own knowing as its object,

and finds that the distinction between knowing and truth is posited and suspended within the self-knowing 'I' (PhG 103/¶166). With this infinite relation of self-consciousness, we have “entered the native land of truth” (PhG 103/¶167). The three moments of consciousness we have observed—the mere *being* of sense-certainty, the *singleness* [*Einzelheit*] and the opposing *universality* of perception, and the *empty inner* or *supersensible being* of the understanding—are suspended as conceptual distinctions within the unity of self-consciousness (PhG 104/¶167). The circular movement of self-consciousness is a simultaneous positing and suspension of difference, a consciousness of difference that is also identical with a consciousness of itself, but which has not yet attained the comprehension of this infinite relation.

As self-consciousness, it is movement; but since what it distinguishes from itself is *only itself* as itself, the difference, as an otherness, is *immediately superseded* for it; the difference *is not*, and *it* [self-consciousness] is only the motionless tautology of: 'I am I'; but since for it the difference does not have the form of *being*, it is *not* self-consciousness (PhG 104/¶167)

The infinitude of self-consciousness is still characterised at this point as an *abstract self-identity*, the “motionless tautology of the 'I am I'”: “tautology” because it marks an identity without difference, and “motionless” because it lacks mediation between self and other.^[27] Indeed, this formal conception of self-consciousness lacks any element of personal self-identity—the consciousness of the Ego as different from Others. This *formal* universality of the 'I' (the 'cogito') is a necessary aspect of all self-consciousness, but cannot be said to be real self-consciousness at all, since self-consciousness is always that of a singular and unique individual. Consequently, we must consider self-consciousness in terms of its *particularity* and its *individuality*, its attempt to produce itself in its distinctive but stable self-identity through the experience of *desire*, and the experience of reflective “doubling” in an Other that characterises the interaction of mutual *recognition* between individuated self-conscious subjects.

At this point in the phenomenological exposition, consciousness reverts from the subject-object relationship with the world to the self-relation that underlies the cognitive experience of consciousness. Self-consciousness is essentially the reflection out of sensuous otherness (PhG 104/¶167), a reflection from the world of sensuous objectivity back to the subject as conscious of itself. But how does self-consciousness establish its particular self-identity in relation to this otherness? Is there a kind of relation to something different or distinct from me that in the very same relation *negates* this difference and thus returns me to myself? The answer is *desire* [*Begierde*]: a relationship that negates sensuous otherness so as to establish the unity of one's own definite self-identity. Desire is a relation to objectivity, as distinct from the subject, which negates this objectivity, and thus returns to the subject in its self-identity. Within the relationship of desire, moreover, self-consciousness has a *doubled*

object: the immediate phenomenal object of desire, and self-consciousness as the “objective” of desire, that for the sake of which something is desired (oneself or one’s life). The object is negative in relation to me in two senses: as that which is other to me as subject, and as that which I lack and hence desire to possess. It is in this sense that desiring self-consciousness attempts to establish and consolidate this unity of its singular self-identity by “incorporating” the other into itself through its negation, that is, by assimilating the object of desire.

Self-consciousness thus attempts to ‘objectify’ its own self-certainty by possessing its objects of desire, in the first instance, by destroying and assimilating living beings. The experience of desire, however, shows self-consciousness that the objects it consumes have their own independence; self-consciousness will learn that it is in fact dependent on these objects, which fail to establish an abiding unity of the Ego. The assimilation of sensuous objects of desire destroys rather than sublates them; once consumed, they cease to objectify the self-certainty sought after by desiring self-consciousness. Indeed, the dependence on these objects of desire must continually fail to satisfy self-consciousness, since the satisfaction of its desire simply creates a further desire for satisfaction, without ever objectifying an enduring and stable self-identity. Consequently, the desired object must be preserved such that desiring self-consciousness both overcomes and incorporates its otherness into itself, and at the same time preserves it in its independence as other. The object of desiring self-consciousness must therefore be capable of negating itself: it must be a living object capable of renouncing its independence for the sake of the desiring self-consciousness, and in this very renunciation preserve itself in its difference from this self-consciousness. The only object capable of satisfying this desire is another subject, a living, singular Other: “*Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness.*” (PhG 108/¶175).

The conclusion of desire is supposed to be that genuine satisfaction can be achieved only in *mutual recognition* between self-conscious subjects. The “falsity” of desire is overcome in intersubjective recognition: “A self-consciousness exists *for a self-consciousness*. Only so is it in fact self-consciousness; for only in this way does the unity of itself in its otherness become explicit for it” (PhG 108/¶177). We should note here, however, that this intersubjective moment of self-consciousness—like the moments of abstract identity and desire—has not been phenomenologically deduced. Rather, it has been *presupposed* as a fixed aspect of the Concept of self-consciousness that anticipates the truth of self-consciousness as Spirit. Consider Hegel’s famous formulation:

A self-consciousness, in being an object, is just as much ‘I’ as object. With this, we already have before us the Notion of *Spirit*. What still lies ahead for consciousness is the experience of what Spirit is—this absolute substance which is the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which, in their

opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: ‘I’ that is ‘We’ and ‘We’ that is ‘I’” (PhG 108-9/¶177).

Hegel claims that we have already attained reciprocal recognition in the concept of self-consciousness, which will prove to be the Concept of Spirit.^[28] But this intersubjective turn has not emerged from the experience of self-consciousness itself. On the contrary, the “experience of what Spirit is”—as a recognitive intersubjective unity of self-consciousnesses—still lies far ahead for consciousness, and will not explicitly emerge until the section on mutual forgiveness in the section on religion. This suggests that Hegel, in characterising self-consciousness as reciprocal recognition, presupposes the standpoint of absolute knowing and the logical category of infinitude in both deficient and positive modes. To be sure, with self-consciousness, consciousness steps out into the “spiritual daylight of the present” (PhG¶109/177). But we have not yet seen how the reciprocal recognition assumed in the *Concept* of self-consciousness can be reconciled with the non-reciprocal recognition in its *experience*.

Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness

Section A of chapter IV begins with what seems like a description of the Concept of self-consciousness “for us” as phenomenological observers. Hegel commences with a bold statement: “Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being recognised [*ein Anerkanntes*]” (PhG 109/¶178). This has prompted a number of interpretations that emphasise the important role of reciprocal recognition in Hegel’s theory of self-consciousness.^[29] The difficulty is to understand how this exposition of mutual recognition fits with the experience of desire, the subsequent “life-and-death struggle,” and experience of domination and subjection. Let us consider this issue in the context of the description of recognition as the intersubjective unity of self-consciousnesses (¶¶178-184). This Concept of self-consciousness, Hegel observes, “embraces many and varied meanings” (PhG 109/¶178). The exposition of the Concept of self-consciousness will present for us the process of recognition [*Bewegung des Anerkennens*]. Let us consider this exposition of the Concept of self-consciousness in more detail.

Hegel’s account of the process of mutual recognition is extremely compressed and difficult. Hence I shall attempt to reconstruct only the central aspects of mutual recognition while also discussing certain difficulties that arise in Hegel’s exposition. The movement of recognition begins with one self-consciousness being faced by another. Individual self-consciousness has *come out of* itself in the sense that it has ‘lost’ itself or ‘identifies’ itself with an Other, but at the same time refuses to see the latter as an essential being since it sees in the Other only its own self (PhG 109/¶179). This process, Hegel tells us, is fundamentally ambiguous: each self-consciousness attempts to supersede the Other in

order to become certain of itself, to affirm its own self-identity as independent, but in doing so it supersedes its *own* self since it also identifies itself with the Other (PhG 109/¶180). By superseding the Other each self-consciousness at the same time “receives back its own self” (or affirms its own self-identity), and by superseding itself each “thus lets the other again go free” (or implicitly recognises the Other as independent)[30] (PhG 109/¶181). In this reciprocal movement, I supersede the Other and thereby affirm myself, but in superseding myself I also allow the Other to be free. As Pinkard remarks, the relation to the Other that constitutes self-consciousness is “double-edged” in the sense that “the other both affirms and undermines that subject’s sense of himself, and it is this double-edged quality that leads to the dialectic of dependence and independence that structures the discussion of mastery and servitude.” (1996, 54).

Hegel underlines that this process of recognition is an *interaction between* self-consciousnesses, where the action of one has the *dual significance* of also being the action of the other (PhG 110/¶182). We are no longer dealing with action by consciousness upon a desired object, but with mutual interaction between independent self-consciousnesses. The movement of recognition is thus a “double movement” in which self-consciousnesses act and react in accord with each other: “each does itself what it demands of the other, and therefore also does what it does only in so far as the other does the same” (PhG 110/¶182). Recognition between self-consciousness is an *intersubjective* relation in which self-identity is mediated through the Other: “They *recognize* themselves as *mutually recognizing* one another” (PhG 110/¶184). As Pinkard notes, the dialectical complexities at work here are “luxuriant”: “The subject must secure his independence by becoming dependent on the recognition by an “other” such that the subject finds his independence affirmed by virtue of being dependent on an “other” who confers his recognition by virtue of affirming his own dependence on the subject” (1996, 54). As we shall see, the dialectical complexity of mutual recognition is precisely not what self-consciousness experiences at this stage; rather, it undergoes the experience of unequal recognition, a relationship of domination that is (partially and inadequately) resolved, through the intersubjective mediation of the Other, in the experience of the unhappy consciousness.

In any case, Hegel remarks that we phenomenological observers must now see how “the process of this pure Concept of recognition” *appears to self-consciousness*. One question we might raise here is what it means to observe phenomenologically the pure Concept of recognition: does this presuppose that we are already in possession of this pure Concept in the sense of already comprehending speculative Logic? This point remains unclear in Hegel’s exposition, and I shall return to it later. In any event, the first experience of cognitive self-consciousness will be of a “life-and-death struggle”: a confrontation between initially *equal* ‘proto-subjects,’ each striving to prove its own self-certainty.[31] In this struggle, each proto-subject discloses and creates its own *difference* to the other

in the way that it relates itself to Life. The *outcome* of this violent struggle between these protagonists will be an *unequal recognition* relation between opposing extremes of a *recognising* self-consciousness and a *recognised* self-consciousness (PhG 110/¶185). Hence the first experience of self-consciousness is that of *domination*: the unequal, non-reciprocal recognition relation between *master* and *slave*.

In this first experience, each individual self-consciousness assumes its abstract self-identity through the negation of all otherness, that is, through the confrontation with an Other: “What is ‘other’ for it is an unessential, negatively characterised object. But the ‘other’ is also a self-consciousness; one individual is confronted by another individual [*Individuum*]” (PhG 111/¶186). These “proto-subjects” of desire each seek to establish a stable sense of self-identity, which (unbeknownst to them) is mediated by the Other: “Each is indeed certain of its own self, but not of the other, and therefore its own self-certainty still has no truth.” (PhG 111/¶186). In order to establish a stable sense of self-identity and independence that is also recognised by the other, each self-consciousness must show that it is not attached *to life* or any determinate existence; hence the relation becomes a violent conflict in which each protagonist stakes its own life in seeking the death of the other. They attempt to prove themselves and each other through a life-and-death struggle, the outcome of which is the establishment of a relation of domination (PhG 111/¶187).

This outcome emerges because such a struggle could of course result in the death of either protagonist. To succeed in destroying the other, however, would be to fail to gain the recognition that was the point of the struggle. The experience of this “trial by death” thus cancels the truth and self-certainty that it aimed to demonstrate. For the two struggling proto-subjects “do not reciprocally give and receive one another back from each other consciously, but leave each other free only indifferently, like things” (PhG 112/¶188). This outcome, namely death, is an “abstract negation” that destroys the reciprocity necessary for genuine recognition. What self-consciousness requires is a *determinate negation* of the Other that will preserve what is superseded, and thus allow the protagonists to survive their struggle and achieve mutual recognition (PhG 112/¶188).

This first experience teaches self-consciousness that Life is as essential to it as pure self-consciousness. The simple unity of immediate self-consciousness, its sense of independence, dissolves in this experience of the life-and-death struggle. What emerges instead is a pure self-consciousness that exists merely *for-itself* (the independent consciousness or master), and a consciousness tethered to thinghood that exists solely *for-another* (the dependent consciousness or slave). Hegel indicates that both moments—*recognised* and *recognising* self-consciousness or master and slave—are essential, even though they are unequal and opposed within a relation of domination. Indeed, at this stage, their “reflection into a unity”—namely an intersubjective unity of mutual recognition—has not yet been achieved; independent master and dependent slave exist rather in an oppositional relationship of domination.

Self-consciousness must still undergo the experience of domination and subjection.

Experience of mastery and servitude

The experience of mastery and servitude presents a socially objectified relationship of non-reciprocal recognition. The master's affirmation of his self-identity and independence proves to be dependent on recognition *by* the Other but not *of* the Other as such. The slave's subjection, by contrast, provides the preconditions for the development of autonomy through the experience of the *fear of death* (the *recognition of finitude*), and service, discipline, and cultivation within social objectivity as responses to this experience of finitude and being-for-self. What follows are three attempts by recognitive self-consciousness to articulate its freedom and overcome its self-alienation: stoicism, scepticism, and the unhappy consciousness.

Who are the protagonists in the struggle for recognition and experience of mastery and servitude? What Hegel describes here, in exceedingly abstract terms, is an account of the “mythic origin” of sociability[32] in a violent struggle for recognition. Hegel acknowledges as much in his compressed account in the so-called “Berlin Phenomenology”:

It is through the *appearance* of this struggle for recognition and submission to a master, that *states* have been initiated out of the social life of men. Consequently, the *force* [*Gewalt*] which is the foundation of this appearance is not the basis of right, although it does constitute the necessary and justified moment by which self-consciousness makes the transition from the condition of being immersed in desire and singularity into that of its universality (Enz §433/PM 173).[33]

Hegel's description of this “mythic origin” of sociability in a struggle for recognition evokes philosophical accounts of the “origin” of sociability from Plato and Aristotle to Hobbes and Rousseau, and draws on quasi-historical features of Asiatic despotism, Greek slave culture, and medieval feudalism. This phenomenological myth of origins, I suggest, can be read as a challenge to the Enlightenment topos of a “social contract” between asocial individuals as the origin of the social and political state. Unlike other versions of this philosophical fiction, such as Hobbes' life-and-death struggle in the state of nature, Hegel presents the struggle for recognition as a decisive experience in the constitution of self-conscious subjectivity and individuality. At the same time, we should note that this episode is superseded in the more complex configurations of reason and Spirit, configurations of world-experience that present further levels and types of recognition possible within the intersubjectivity of subjective, objective, and absolute Spirit.

Hegel's exposition commences with the experience of the master, a consciousness existing

solely for itself, but mediated with itself through the consciousness of the slave. The slavish consciousness, by contrast, chose life rather than independence and thus remained enslaved to thinghood, the “chain from which he could not break free in the struggle” (PhG 113/¶190). Since the master has power over thinghood, as something merely negative to him, it follows that the master holds the slave in subjection (PhG 113/¶190). The master relates himself mediately to the thing as an object of desire, as well as to the “reified” consciousness of the slave. Indeed, the slave does not annihilate the thing but rather *works* or *labours* upon it for the master; the master, by contrast, *consumes* and *enjoys* the thing prepared by the slave, thereby annihilating it altogether. In this one-sided relation of domination, the master achieves recognition only through the dependent and “reified” consciousness of the slave. In other words, the master/slave relation lacks the *moment of reciprocity*: although the slave sets aside his own being-for-self, and thereby does to himself what the master does to him, the master does not do to himself what he does to the slave, nor does the slave do to the master what he also does to himself. The master learns that his independence or being-for-self has not yet been raised to truth, for the master’s self-identity as independent is constituted through the “reified” and dependent consciousness of the slave (PhG 114/¶193). The truth of independent or mastering consciousness lies in the dependent or slavish consciousness. The independent master is in fact dependent upon the slave, both for the material needs of life and for his recognition as master. By contrast, the dependent slave, through the experience of service and discipline, will set the preconditions for overcoming domination and subjection.

Let us turn to the slave’s experience of the fear of death, service, labour, discipline and cultivation. From our phenomenological standpoint, the slave’s experience of subjection introduces the possibility of overcoming domination. For while the slave recognises the master as an independent consciousness, he also acknowledges his own dependency and finitude. The slave has experienced the profound dread of death, “the absolute master,” an experience in which the slave’s consciousness “has been dissolved inwardly, has trembled in every fibre of its being, and everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations” (PhG 114/¶194). In experiencing its own finitude, the slave’s consciousness has shown itself to be no longer identical with any concrete determination. The slave experiences “the pure, simple, essential nature of self-consciousness, absolute negativity, *pure being-for-self*, which consequently is *implicit* in this consciousness” (PhG 114/¶194). Self-consciousness reveals itself to be in truth a *negativity* that can regard every concrete determination as inessential. The slave encounters his own finitude, experiences himself as a self-relating power of negativity, as a potential for self-determination or even self-destruction, and hence is implicitly self-consciousness.

At the same time, the slave also has *actual* experience of its own finitude and loss of self: through service to the master and disciplining his desires, “he rids himself of his attachment to natural

existence” by labouring for another (PhG 114/¶194). This objectification of his powers produces a “humanised” nature and objectified social world in which consciousness can recognise itself. The slave thereby becomes “conscious of what he truly is”; he learns that work is “desire held in check, fleetingness staved off” (PhG 115/¶195). Here the recognition of finitude is essential for the experience of domination and subjection. For labour undertaken purely for self-interested ends does not reflect universal self-consciousness; it becomes mere technical skill [*Geschicklichkeit*], an expertise that fails to master the universal power of reason and the whole of social objectivity (PhG 115-116/¶196). Self-consciousness can overcome this “freedom still enmeshed in servitude” only through socially recognised labour, the process through which it comes to recognise itself historically within social objectivity.

At this point we should mention certain difficulties with Hegel’s exposition. The main one is how the mutual recognition inherent in the Concept of self-consciousness is to be reconciled with the unequal recognition presented in the experience of self-consciousness. Although its ethical and political significance is clear, Hegel does not phenomenologically demonstrate why recognition must be reciprocal in principle even though it is non-reciprocal in experience. Indeed, the experience of domination and subjection even appears to be a necessary stage in the transition from alienated self-consciousness to reason. One could perhaps argue that self-consciousness presupposes reciprocal recognition because Spirit is always concretely articulated in *language*. Indeed, Hegel remarks that we can observe “language as the existence of Spirit” (PhG ¶652).^[34] Indeed, even with the framework of a social-institutional inequality (a lack of reciprocity in recognitive relations), reciprocal recognition must have already taken place at a deeper level, namely at the level of linguistic interaction. A reciprocal recognition of speakers within intersubjective contexts of meaning must be presupposed in order to account for the possibility of linguistic communication. Nonetheless, Hegel does not explicitly argue that reciprocal recognition has its basis in the intersubjectivity of communication. On the contrary, rather than *demonstrate* the need for reciprocal recognition, Hegel uses linguistic phenomena to *illustrate* the universal and mediated character of Spirit.^[35]

The problem in general is that Hegel appears to conflate structural and normative senses of recognition: the *structural* requirement of intersubjective recognition for the constitution of self-consciousness in general comes to legitimate the *normative* requirement of achieving reciprocal recognition in Absolute Spirit. But how do we reconcile the experience of historical alienation with the requirement of reciprocal recognition? One answer might be that precisely our *finitude* prevents any such final reconciliation. The historical experience of recognition, for self-consciousness, will be of its non-correspondence with its Concept. The non-correspondence between the Concept of recognition and the historical experience of non-reciprocity is constitutive of our finite social and historical

existence. As consciousness learns, finitude can be “worked off” through social labour but never finally abolished. It is only in absolute Spirit that finitude can be suspended and genuine reciprocity achieved. It is only in the philosophical comprehension of the “end of history” in social and cultural modernity that reciprocal recognition can be fully realised.

Hegel thereby attempts to guarantee the historical achievement of mutual recognition by making two crucial assumptions: 1) by presupposing the “logical” structure of self-consciousness as infinitude, a self-relation in otherness articulated through reciprocal recognition; and 2) by making the achievement of reciprocal recognition the *telos* of historical development that reaches its end in the philosophical self-comprehension of modernity. From this point of view a metaphysical narrative in which historical necessity is supposed to bridge the gulf between structural and normative senses of recognition underwrites Hegel’s teleological conception of modernity. It is only the assumption of an end of history, achieved in the social and cultural institutions of modernity, that ensures that the historical experience of non-recognition is superseded in the self-comprehension of absolute spirit.

[\[36\]](#)

Abstract Freedom: Stoicism, Scepticism, Unhappy Consciousness

The experience of mastery and servitude concluded with a contrast between the *self-willed* consciousness that had not recognised its finitude, and the *self-reflection* of the “slavish” consciousness that attempted to “work off” its finitude through social labour. The latter is nonetheless still caught within domination and subjection, and therefore does not experience its own self-conscious *freedom*. A new shape of consciousness emerges out of this domination-relation, one that finds its freedom and self-identity in the universal power of *thought*. Hegel thus proceeds to analyse stoicism, scepticism, and the unhappy consciousness as three figures of the experience of *abstract freedom*. These figures, however, each fail to posit rational freedom as an intersubjective relation of self-identity in otherness. Indeed, this failure points to the underlying limitations of the logic of reflection to conceptualise the relation between universal, particular, and individual. Stoicism, which affirms the abstract identity of self-consciousness, loses all its concrete singularity, and remains caught within an abstract universality of thought; scepticism, which affirms this self-identity *and* concrete singularity of consciousness, becomes divided against itself as a contingent ego and a universal ‘I,’ and finds its freedom in the self-undermining power of abstract negativity. Finally, the unhappy consciousness becomes aware of this internal self-contradictoriness, attempts to overcome the opposition between abstract universality and its concrete singularity, and posits a still abstract freedom that manifests itself as *self-alienation*. Although the possibility of transiting to the unity of universality and individuality in reason is adumbrated, namely through the intersubjective mediation of the Other, the unhappy consciousness remains divided

and self-alienated but marks the transition to the immediate (that is to say abstract and as yet undeveloped) self-certainty of reason.

Stoicism and Scepticism

Stoicism is a form of self-mastery in thought that emerges out of the experience of domination and subjection. It is the self-consciousness of the master raised to the level of empty thought; it is not *genetically* derived from the experience of the master, however, but must emerge from the side of the slave. The slave's experience of *actual* domination cannot be reconciled with the figure of independent and "free" consciousness represented by the master. Hence the dominated consciousness withdraws from the manifold activity of life, detaches what it understands to be its true essence and being from natural existence, and retreats into the "pure essentiality of thinking" (PhG 117/¶199). Stoicism finds its authentic self-identity in the (abstract) freedom of thought: "In thinking, I *am free*, because I am not in an other but remain simply and solely in communion with myself [*bei mir selbst bleibe*]; and the object that is essential being for me is in undivided unity my being-for-self" (PhG 117/¶197). The problem is that this abstract self-identity and freedom of thought remain completely devoid of determinate content. Stoicism is an empty freedom devoid of determinate criteria. "To the question, *What* is good and true, it again gave for an answer the *contentless* thought: The True and the Good shall consist in reasonableness [*Vernünftigkeit*]. But this self-identity of thought is again only the pure form in which nothing is determined" (PhG 118/¶200). This empty freedom of thought proves to be unsatisfying for the Stoical consciousness. Stoic freedom remains a form of bondage to the world, since it fails to perform the *absolute negation* of the objectivity that confronts it. This task will be completed by the *sceptical* self-consciousness which destroys the world of its experience, and is thus "the actual experience of what the freedom of thought is" (PhG 119/¶202).

Scepticism *realises* the concept of independent consciousness in that it becomes conscious of the dependent character of natural existence, and enacts a thinking "which annihilates the being of the world in all its manifold determinateness" (PhG 119/¶202). It makes universally valid (in thought) that *negative* attitude toward otherness which desire and work (tethered to matter and particularity) could never fully accomplish. Indeed, scepticism becomes conscious of its own negativity and certain of its own freedom precisely by *actively negating* the otherness of objective reality (PhG 120/¶204). In doing so, it also annihilates its *own* relationship to objective reality, yet finds its self-identity, as universal freedom of thought, in this very annihilation. It experiences its unchanging self-certainty amidst self-dissolution in the flux that it negates. For scepticism,

consciousness itself is this *absolute dialectical unrest*, this medley of sensuous and intellectual representations whose differences coincide, and whose identity is again equally dissolved, for it is itself determinateness as contrasted with the non-identical (PhG 120/¶205).

Sceptical consciousness learns that it is both the unchanging consciousness of the groundlessness of all beliefs, and the flux of arbitrarily assumed beliefs that are posited only in order to be negated again. It is a self-contradictory consciousness that fails to establish a secure self-identity and freedom; it oscillates between a self-conception of its freedom as rational thought and its immersion in the very flux of contingency that it actively negates. It cannot unite this abstract self-identity with its contingent singularity; its abstract freedom of thought continually undermines itself: “Point out likeness or identity to it, and it will point out unlikeness or non-identity; and when it is now confronted with what it has just asserted, it turns round and points out likeness or identity” (PhG 121/¶205). The sceptical consciousness concludes its experience by realising it is a self-contradictory consciousness that sceptically turns against itself. Once self-consciousness *knows* itself as internally contradictory, and attempts to reconcile universal self-identity and contingent singularity, it becomes the alienated or *unhappy consciousness*.

Unhappy Consciousness

The “unhappy consciousness” describes an *alienated* self-consciousness that attempts to unify its abstract universality with its contingent individuality or singularity [*Einzelheit*], but is also aware of its failure to do so, that is, aware of its inner self-contradictoriness. This alienated consciousness will recur in various figures of Spirit such as Neoplatonism, Jewish-Christian religious consciousness, Enlightenment faith, and the romantic “beautiful soul”. Such a consciousness “*knows* itself, as self-liberating, unchangeable, and self-identical, and as self-bewildering and self-perverting,” and it is the self-conscious awareness of its own self-contradictory character (PhG 121/¶206). It has internalised the abstract freedom of the stoic, and the unstable self-identity of the sceptic, but cannot reconcile these within a coherent “spiritual unity” of universality and individuality or singularity [*Einzelheit*]. The irreconcilability of the unchanging aspect of universality and the contingent aspect of the singularity of consciousness provides the source of the drama of the unhappy consciousness. Indeed, the unhappy consciousness provides an abstract version of the internal “doubling” of self-consciousness, a form of recognition that has not yet attained genuinely reciprocal, intersubjective unity:

The doubling of self-consciousness within itself, which is essential in the Concept of Spirit, is thus here before us, but not yet in its unity: the *Unhappy Consciousness* is the consciousness of self as a dual-natured, merely contradictory being (PhG 121/¶206).

The unhappy consciousness recognises itself as divided between a changing self or empirically contingent ego, and the unchanging self of universal thought that remains self-identical amidst the flux of the empirical world. However, it *cannot* achieve their unification, because the unchanging, or essential self as universal is conceived in relation to an utterly *transcendent* Absolute or Infinite. The unhappy consciousness strives for a unification between universal and individual, the unchanging and the changing, self-identity and otherness, but this unity is one that remains a mere ‘Ought’.

The unhappy consciousness proceeds to deal with its internal dichotomy by reifying the changing and unchanging aspects of its own self. It separates itself into a changeable or *inessential* self from which it must liberate itself, and an unchangeable *essential* self, projected into a supersensible beyond, to which it is necessarily related. In the course of its experience, the unhappy consciousness will move into a series of increasingly severe forms of alienation, from pious devotion, the performance of good works, to ascetic self-renunciation. Unhappy consciousness remains unhappy, however, since it cannot divest itself of its singularity and merge with the universal. Instead, it learns that every attempt to supersede its own individuality and attain universality only reiterates its self-contradictory or self-alienated character. As Hegel states, the unhappy consciousness experiences “this emergence of individuality in the Unchangeable [*der Einzelheit AM Unwandelbaren*], and of the Unchangeable in individuality [*des Unwandelbaren AN der Einzelheit*]” (PhG 123/¶210). For us, as phenomenological observers, the truth of this movement is in fact “the *oneness* of this dual consciousness,” the rational unity of universality and individuality. For the unhappy consciousness, however, this experience is not yet rational, not yet that of the unity of universal and individual, indeed, it is one in which the *difference* of universality and individuality is “still the dominant feature” (PhG 123/¶210).

There are three experiences of this failure by unhappy consciousness to unite its individuality with the universal. First, consciousness takes itself to be *opposed* to the Unchangeable and struggles to divest itself of its singular individuality. Second, consciousness learns that individuality belongs to the Unchangeable, where the latter assumes the *form* [*Gestalt*] of individuality. Third, consciousness finds its own self-identity as a definite individual within the Unchangeable itself (PhG 123/¶210).^[37] These modes of the relationship of consciousness with the Unchangeable express “the *experience* through which the divided self-consciousness passes in its wretchedness [*Unglücke*]” (PhG 123/¶211). Similarly, there are three attempts to unite with the universal: 1) it attempts, as a pure consciousness, to merge with the Unchangeable, expressed through pious *devotion* [*Andacht*]; 2) as a singular individual it comports itself towards this actuality through labour and desire, *good works* and *thanksgiving*; and 3) as a consciousness aware of its own independence, it undertakes ascetic *self-renunciation*. This self-surrender

of individual will prepares the transition to the self-consciousness of universal will. Unhappy consciousness learns that this unity between universality and individuality is achieved only through the *mediation* of an Other. Once it recognises the *necessity* of a mediator, it suspends the opposition between its individuality and universality, and begins to overcome its self-alienation by moving towards self-conscious reason, but at first only in this utterly alienated, ‘irrational’ form.

In its first experience, unhappy consciousness moves *towards* thinking and so comports itself as *devotion* [*Andacht*], an intuition of the Unchangeable that lacks comprehension. Its intuition of the divine is “a musical thinking that does not get as far as the Concept” (PhG 125/¶217). This is a figure of religious rapture, the “infinite yearning” of the “pure heart” of romanticism, which feels itself painfully dirempted, and thus strives to unite with the Unchangeable (PhG 125-126/¶217). Its self-transcendence turns out to be self-deception; for every attempt to transcend its own unique individuality only emphasises the inescapability of its feeling self. What it takes for union with the divine is in fact its own self-enjoyment. The “feeling heart” thus returns into itself as the self-feeling of an actually existing individual.

As in the experience of mastery and servitude, self-certainty is now found through desire and work. Unhappy consciousness undertakes pious works and the practice of thanksgiving, but is not aware that this formative activity actually consolidates its own self-identity. It does not know that the feeling of the alien Unchangeable is really its own self-feeling (PhG 126/¶218). Instead it attempts to cancel its independence by attributing the significance of the products of its own desire and labour to an inaccessible Beyond. In doing so, it experiences an increasing alienation both from itself and from actuality. It therefore divides itself into an independent self that *alters actuality* through work, and an inherent self that comprises its *capacities* and *powers* as gifts from God (PhG 127/¶220). Although it thereby *appears* to renounce its self-feeling, it nonetheless has actually *desired*, *acted*, and *enjoyed* (PhG 128/¶222). In denying its agency and in thanking the Divine, this renunciation performed by the unhappy consciousness simply reinforces or emphasises the *extreme of individuality* [*Einzelheit*] (PhG 128/¶222).

This brings us to the third and most extreme experience in which unhappy consciousness utterly renounces its independent self. Having *experienced* and *known* that it is active and independent, it tries to divest itself of this independence through ascetic self-renunciation. The unhappy consciousness now takes its action to be void and its self-enjoyment to be wretchedness. Work and enjoyment “thus lose all *universal content and significance*,” for to acknowledge the latter would be to restore its own independence (PhG 129/¶225). Consequently, the unhappy consciousness completely surrenders its actual individuality through ascetic self-denial. The difficulty is that every attempt to cancel its own singularity through ascetic self-mortification only emphasises its bodily contingency. The unhappy

consciousness remains caught in a self-defeating self-abasement, “a personality brooding over itself, as wretched as it is impoverished” (PhG 129/¶225).

In all these experiences, the unhappy consciousness learns that every attempt to annul itself is always *mediated* by the thought of the Unchangeable. In accordance with the Concept of self-consciousness, this relation is the moment of mutual recognition or spiritual unity-in-doubling. It is the moment of *mediation by the Other*, of intersubjective recognition in which the unhappy consciousness realises the necessity of an *other* self-conscious being, the mediator (minister or priest) as the mediator between the extremes of individuality and abstract universality, a mediator who, in the particularity of his recognised social role, extinguishes in the process his own individuality in favour of the universal. Indeed, Hegel describes this threefold relation as a “syllogism” [Schluß] in which the extremes of abstract universality (the Unchangeable or God) and singularity (the finite individual initially “fixedly opposed” to the Unchangeable) are mediated by a third term, in this case, the particularity of the priest or minister, whose own singularity is extinguished insofar as he mediates between Unchangeable and individual.[38] Hegel’s reference to the “syllogism” at play in the mediating relationship between universal, individual, and particular points to the underlying “logical-conceptual” structure of self-conscious reason. According to Hegel’s treatment of the syllogism in the Logic (his modification and transformation of the Aristotelian figure to a logical structure of conceptual relations of inference and judgment), the extreme terms are the poles of the ‘universal’ and the ‘individual’, with the mediating term (the minister or priest in his recognised social role) assuming the role of ‘particular’ that unites these two extremes. As we shall see, this is still a deficient configuration of intersubjectivity or inadequate rational unity of universal and individual, since the individual remains subordinated to the abstract universal as mediated by the particular, without attaining the concrete individuality that would unite universal and particular within a genuine intersubjective unity and equality of recognition.

Indeed, the problem is that this transition from unhappy consciousness to reason via intersubjective mediation emerges in a completely *alienated* form. It involves the complete abnegation of the individuality of the self and utter subordination of one’s will to the prescription of an Other (the *priest* as the representative of the Universal). The unhappy consciousness renounces its independent moral judgement, its property, its self-enjoyment, and finally its very independence of mind (PhG 130/¶229). It now has “the certainty of having truly divested itself of its ‘I’, and of having turned its immediate self-consciousness into a Thing, into an objective existence” (PhG 130/¶229). We thereby return to the unequal recognition of the master/slave relation, but now in the form of an *internalised* relation of domination and subjection. The alienated consciousness now completely reifies itself in submitting to the will of an innerworldly alien individual upon whom the unhappy consciousness *freely* confers the significance of ‘mediator’ of the universal. This self-renunciation of judgment, action, and

independence leaves the unhappy consciousness still hopelessly divided between its present wretchedness and its redemption in the Beyond. The overcoming of its self-alienation remains a mere Ought that can never be achieved. In sum, the dialectical reversal of unhappy consciousness into self-conscious reason proceeds through the experience of self-alienation, of the inequality of universality and individuality, culminating in the attempted obliteration of individuality in favour of a still abstract universality. The first appearance of reason, via the moment of intersubjective mediation of and by the Other, takes the form of an ‘irrational’ abnegation of freedom.

C. Certainty and Truth of Reason

In the experience it has undergone, the unhappy consciousness has become aware of the unity between the Universal and its own individual action and being. It has attained the level of the *representation* of reason [*Vernunft*], but not that of the unity of universal and individual in reason itself. Consciousness now has the knowledge or certainty that, in its singularity or individuality, it is identical with universal being (PhG 131/¶230). In the course of its experience, however, the unhappy consciousness came to realise its unity with universality only in the alienated form of its self-renunciation before a transcendent Other. Three major changes now emerge after the experience of unhappy consciousness: self-consciousness as Reason inverts its negative relation to otherness [*Anderssein*]; in recognising that it is the principle of all reality, self-consciousness attains the standpoint of (Kantian) idealism; finally, self-conscious reason experiences a “rediscovery” of the world. As desiring and as unhappy, alienated self-consciousness failed to understand the world: “it desired it and worked on it, withdrew from it into itself and abolished it as an existence on its own account, and its own self *qua* consciousness” (PhG 132/¶232). The “negation of the negation” of the world performed by the unhappy consciousness returns it to actuality in the form of rational (thinking and acting) self-consciousness.

Rational self-consciousness now affirms the equal essentiality of the world as itself, and finds itself reflected within universal objectivity; it discovers its self-identity in otherness, the unity of the consciousness of its own individuality and of universal being. The identity of reason and actuality now becomes explicit: reason is certain of itself being all reality, or that actuality [*Wirklichkeit*] is the same as reason (PhG 133/¶233). In this sense, it comports itself towards actuality in the philosophical form of *Idealism* (PhG 133/¶233). As we have seen, the immediate self-certainty of reason is expressed in the ‘I am I’: the Ego that is both object and subject, which unifies subjective and objective in self-positing thought (PhG 133/¶233). Rational self-consciousness must demonstrate that it *is* and knows itself *as* this reality, and does so along the paths of the experience of consciousness and of self-consciousness that we have traversed so far. “Consciousness” is the path in which “otherness as an *intrinsic being* vanishes” in the dialectical movement of ‘meaning’, perceiving and understanding. “Self-

consciousness” is the movement in which otherness vanishes *for consciousness* itself in the experience of mastery and servitude, through the conception of abstract freedom, the liberation of thought in scepticism, and the “absolute liberation” of the (unhappy) self-alienated consciousness (PhG 133/¶233). *Consciousness* (which took the determinateness of *being* as the True) and *self-consciousness* (which took the determinateness of being *for consciousness* as the True) are now unified in the standpoint of *reason*: the knowledge of the identity of *being for consciousness* and *intrinsic* being (PhG 133/¶233).

Rational self-consciousness, however, “has this path behind it and has forgotten it, and comes on the scene *immediately* as Reason” (PhG 133/¶233). At this point, it is only the *certainty* of reason, what Hegel calls “reason as instinct,” which merely asserts that it is all reality but has forgotten the phenomenological path of its own historical development. Indeed, the claims of Idealism, Hegel maintains, can be understood only by comprehending the phenomenological experience of consciousness and its transformation into rational self-consciousness. The Idealism that does not exhibit this development of self-conscious reason can only proclaim (rather than demonstrate) its self-certainty of being all reality. We should note that this reflection out of alienated self-consciousness introduces an *historicist* conception of self-conscious reason: “Consciousness will determine its relationship to otherness or its object in various ways, according to the precise stage it has reached in the development of World-Spirit into self-consciousness” (PhG 134/¶234). The manner in which self-consciousness immediately finds and determines itself and its object will depend on the history of self-consciousness and its historical situation (PhG 134/¶234). The immediate appearance of reason, however, is an abstraction of its truth, which will prove to be “the absolute Concept,” namely the *historical-conceptual movement which produces reason* (PhG 134/¶234). This movement is phenomenologically reconstructed as the self-disclosure of reason in modernity, the entire movement or process of the development of Spirit that is finally comprehended in absolute knowing.

This brings us to the standpoint of Kantian and Fichtean idealism, which takes the truth of all reality to be the *abstract* universal (PhG 134/¶235). According to Idealism, the ‘I’ is the simple or unified *category* that unites being and thinking, that essentially unifies self-consciousness and being; on the other hand, the categorical unity of self-consciousness and being also possesses difference in itself. The essence of this categorical unity, as Hegel remarks,

is to be immediately one and the selfsame in *otherness* [*Anderssein*], or in absolute difference. The difference [between self-consciousness and being] therefore *is*, but is perfectly transparent, and a difference that is at the same time none (PhG 134/¶235).

We recognise here the characterisation of the Concept of self-consciousness as inner difference or

infinite. The difference in self-conscious reason, however, appears as a *plurality* of categories.^[39] The scandal of Kantian idealism is that it cannot provide an adequate deduction of this plurality of categories, nor demonstrate the generation of difference out of the pure 'I' of the pure understanding (PhG 135/¶235). Although self-consciousness begins to *comprehend* or to *think* the *Concept*, the need for a genuine transcendental deduction of the categories remains unfulfilled. Hegel therefore moves from the empty Idealism that has forgotten its path of experience to the philosophical possibility of two speculative paths or perspectives: a *logical* deduction of the plurality and validity of the categories as a systemic whole (undertaken in the *Science of Logic*), and the *phenomenological* disclosure (performed by the *Phenomenology*) of the path through which Reason, as a mere self-certain *assertion*, proves itself and attains a genuine understanding of its own fundamental claim: that Reason is Spirit.

As we have seen, the phenomenological exposition of the experience of consciousness and self-consciousness crucially involves the categories of identity, difference, and contradiction in articulating the various configurations of the subject-object relationship. To summarise this long journey, the negation of otherness and assertion of self-identity in desire resulted in the struggle for recognition wherein the independent self-consciousness sought to prove its self-identity through the destruction of the Other. The deficient resolution of this struggle in the master/slave relationship raised the problem of recognition: how to explain the disparity between the requirement of *reciprocal* recognition and the experience of *non-reciprocal* recognition in the experience of mastery and servitude. The non-resolution of this problem reappears in the experience of the *freedom* of self-consciousness, whose phenomenological experience of *self-alienation* resulted from failed attempts to overcome the dichotomy between the abstract universality of self-consciousness and the contingent singularity or individuality of consciousness. The goal of attaining reciprocal recognition passes through the recognition of individual self-consciousness in the universal and of the universal in individual self-consciousness. This moment of intersubjective mediation (provided by the Other) brings us to the representation of immediate reason as the unity of universality and individuality.

At this point, one can ask to what extent Hegel's exposition presupposes the Concept or *Begriff* as the structure of subjective Spirit, the dialectical unity of universality, particularity, and concrete individuality. Indeed, in describing the "syllogism" of self-consciousness, Hegel alludes to this conceptual-logical structure underlying the shape or configuration of the unhappy consciousness. This "syllogism" of the (unhappy) self-consciousness is taken to encompass the relation between the opposing extremes of universality and individuality, which are mediated by the Other conceived as the particular. By pointing to the unification of the formal opposition between the individual and the

universal in the syllogism, Hegel seems to allude to the Kantian account of the structure of the judgment (as that which unifies ‘concept’ and ‘intuition’), but then implies that this complex relationship is better conceptualised in terms of the function of reason, namely, as inference within the structure of the syllogism. This underlying logical or “syllogistic” structure is supposed to provide the ground or truth for the various shapes of consciousness and self-consciousness that we have so far observed in the *Phenomenology*. And the experience of the unhappy consciousness is a crucial one in this regard, since it presents this underlying logical structure of reason, as unifying universal and individual, in the shape of an alienated consciousness that strives to unite its individuality with the Unchangeable through the mediation of the Other, but does so through the utter renunciation of its freedom of decision and action. As we have seen, however, this first adumbration of the “syllogistic” structure of Conceptuality, which finds its adequate shape only in the mutual recognitive relations of intersubjective Spirit, initially manifests itself in a thoroughly inadequate, one-sided, and “abstract” manner. It still remains to unfold and develop the repetition of the experience of consciousness within the complex configurations of reason, whose theoretical and practical dimensions are in turn unified within the intersubjective relational structure of Spirit. For it is only in the phenomenological exposition of figures of Spirit that the abstract unity and opposition characterising self-consciousness can finally be overcome, that is to say simultaneously grounded and suspended in the Conceptually articulated unity of universal, particular, and individual.

This chapter has examined Hegel’s phenomenological exposition as moving from the consciousness of otherness to the abstract self-identity of self-consciousness. The freedom of self-consciousness, as inner difference or infinitude, is developed into the concrete universality of reason. The remaining opposition between theoretical and practical reason will finally be overcome in the intersubjective unity of absolute Spirit: the ‘I’ that is We and the We that is ‘I’. In this process of reflexive development, ‘we’ phenomenologists come to recognise that we have been observing the odyssey of our own historical becoming *in* and self-comprehension *as* Spirit. The aim of phenomenology is thus to perform a suspension of alienated self-consciousness through the philosophical comprehension of this dialectical experience. This presupposes, however, that we understand, or come to understand through phenomenology and thence speculative logic, the wider categorical structure (namely, the Concept) that already underlies and grounds the experience of consciousness, self-consciousness, and self-certain reason. At the end of the interconnected series of phenomenological experiences, as Hegel writes:

Spirit has concluded the movement in which it has shaped itself, in so far as this shaping was burdened with the difference of consciousness, a difference now overcome. Spirit has won the pure element of its existence in the Concept (PhG 432/¶805).

The phenomenological exposition overcomes the difference of consciousness, which is superseded by the self-identity in otherness of self-conscious reason. Phenomenology is completed in the conceptual comprehension of this whole development within absolute Spirit, at which point we transit to speculative logic. Having explored the phenomenology of consciousness and self-consciousness, we now must consider the transition from the categories of identity and difference to the Conceptual structure of Spirit as a speculative unity of universality, particularity, and individuality. We need to uncover the hidden structure of Hegel's conception of self-conscious reason and intersubjective Spirit by turning to the critical examination of the categories of pure thought themselves. As we shall see, the problem of identity and difference remains crucial, but is now subsumed and transformed within the larger project of a speculative logic of the interrelated paradigms of Being, Essence, and Conceptuality.

[1] The problem of formalism arises once the *principle* (the Absolute as identity of identity and difference) is no longer the same as the *result* (self-consciousness as abstract identity). Hegel's speculative claim is that we can comprehend the Absolute only as the *result* of a developmental process which returns to, and thereby grounds, its own origin.

[2] See Eugen Fink (1977) for a discussion of the distinction between operative and thematic concepts in the PhG.

[3] See Harris's discussion of this famous remark (1997, 52ff.), where he suggests that the "dark night in which all cows are black" is in fact "the *Umwahre* of Reinhold in which all empirical truth is lost to sight" (1997, 52).

[4] The phenomenological process appears as purely destructive only from the restricted and partial standpoint of natural consciousness. Indeed, the problematic of nihilism emerges in the wake of the negative, self-undermining experience of consciousness, a point which Jacobi already observed in relation to Kant See Pöggeler (1970).

[5] Cf. "Being is then absolutely mediated; it is a substantial content which is just as immediately the property of the 'I', it is self-like or the Concept [*Begriff*]" (PhG 29-30/20-21).

[6] See K. R. Dove (1970) for an interesting discussion of the problem of the phenomenological "we" and Heinrichs' helpful interpretation (1974).

[7] As I discuss in a later chapter, the problem of the "we" presents one of the fundamental difficulties with Heidegger's interpretation of the *PhG* as a dialogue between ontic and ontological consciousness.

[8] Cf. Westphal's remark that the three chapters concerning consciousness simultaneously deal with three chapters in the history of philosophy: a retelling of Plato's *Thaetetus*; the emergence of Galilean-Newtonian science and the epistemological turn in Bacon, Descartes, Locke and Hume; and the emergence of Kantian critical idealism along with "Kant's discovery of the importance of rules and the concept of nature in general for the way we experience objects" (1979, 60-61).

[9] As Fink remarks: "Its ontical richness and ontical concreteness correspond to its ontological poverty and its ontological abstractness" (1977, 63).

[10] Cf. “It *is*; this is the essential point for sense-certainty, and this pure *being*, or this simple immediacy, constitutes its *truth*” (PhG 63/¶91).

[11] But this Kantian opposition between spatio-temporal intuition and discursive conceptuality will be undermined and transformed in the PhG.

[12] Hegel consistently uses the term simple or singular [*einfache* or *einzelne*] to designate the pure ‘This’ of immediate knowledge in sense-certainty, which Miller elsewhere misleadingly translates by using the term *particular*, as in “*this* particular I, am certain of *this* particular thing” (PhG 64/¶91), a line in which the German term for “particular” never appears. Hegel, by contrast, speaks of the simple or singular item immediately given in sense-certainty: Cf. “consciousness is ‘I,’ nothing more, a pure ‘This’; the singular consciousness knows a pure ‘This’, or the single item” (PhG 64/¶91). This is confusing, since it suggests, on the one hand, Hegel’s technical usage of “particular” in the sense of *das Besondere* as one moment of the triune structure of Conceptuality comprising universal [*das Allgemeine*], the particular [*das Besondere*], and the singular or individual [*das Einzelne*]. On the other hand, Miller’s translation (as PhG ¶91) blurs the point that Hegel precisely *distinguishes* the particular from the individual, such that particularity is made a distinct moment of the Concept’s determinateness. I am indebted to Paul Redding for this point.

[13] Here we should note the peculiar, even ungrammatical, formulation: “*Das Hier* ist zum Beispiel *der Baum*” (PhG 65/¶98). This suggests that Hegel is not interested in epistemic arguments about direct acquaintance, or linguistic arguments about the conventional usage of indexicals, so much as a phenomenological argument about the presuppositions or mediated character of immediate knowledge. “The Here” or “the Now” are not grammatical indexicals such as “now” and “here” but phenomenological markers of the spatial or temporal immediacy that sense-certainty intends in its knowing.

[14] This is not a linguistic refutation of immediate knowledge so much as an explanation of why articulating immediacy requires (linguistic and conceptual) mediation. What we bring to *utterance* as the content of sense certainty is *also* articulated as a universal: “What we say is: ‘This’, i.e. the universal This: or, ‘it is,’ i.e. *Being in general*” (PhG/¶97). Language performs for us a disclosure of the truth of sense-certainty: that the immediacy we intend is mediated by a universal. Cf. Houlgate’s discussion (1986, 167-174), which considers, with regard to the later Wittgenstein, Hegel’s demonstration that determinate reference “must situate what is referred to in the context of publicly understood terms” (1986, 171).

[15] It is worth noting that Hegel’s attempt to preserve “difference” within the logical-speculative approach appropriates aspects of Kant’s account of the role of non-conceptual or “intuitive” forms of representation in cognition. According to Kant’s taxonomy of representational forms, a concept refers “mediately by means of a feature which several things have in common”, while an intuition “relates immediately to the object and is single [or singular, “*einzelne*”]. (A320/B377). Along with the other post-Kantians, Hegel rejects, as we have seen, the Kantian dichotomy between concept and intuition, but nonetheless here appropriates, in the discussion of sense-certainty, the aspect of immediate intuition of the simple or singular item given in immediate spatio-temporal intuition. Indeed, as pointed out to me by Paul Redding, Hegel proceeds to incorporate the “singularity” attributed by Kant to intuitions into the structure of conceptual thought itself, thus attempting to avoid the problem of “formalism” that Hegel charges to both Kant and Fichte. As I later discuss, the moment of singularity, along with that of particularity, and of universality, is one essential aspect of the threefold structure of Conceptuality. At this early stage of Hegel’s analysis, however, Hegel’s aim is to show that sense-certainty, which involves Kant’s single or singular item given in immediate intuition, always implies conceptual mediation. This point will be developed and demonstrated further in the remaining experiences of perception and the understanding, thus arriving at self-consciousness as the truth of the

movement of consciousness as a whole.

[16] Since sense-certainty now will no longer respond to our questioning, we, the phenomenological observers, must approximate the direct standpoint of sense-certainty ourselves. This lapse into silence is also a move away from the initial “naïve” presupposition about the expressibility of truth in language to a non-linguistic standpoint, sense-certainty’s “sophistication” concerning the ineffability of truth.

[17] One could suggest that Hegel here adumbrates what Husserl will describe as the threefold movement of intention, retention, and protention in the phenomenological experience of “internal time-consciousness”. See Husserl’s detailed analysis of the temporality of intentional consciousness, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness* (1927), edited by his most famous student and successor, Martin Heidegger (Husserl, 1991).

[18] The immediacy of the Here shows a similarly *abstract universality*. I point out a *this Here* that is also *not this Here*: an Above and a Below, a Right and a Left, and so on. This ‘Here’ is a manifold otherness; this Here makes sense only in relation to that There. What abides is a plurality of Heres; the Here is a plurality of other Heres just as the Now is a simple plurality of Nows.

[19] Cf. “That is why natural consciousness, too, is always reaching this result, learning from experience what is true in it; but equally it is always forgetting it and starting the movement all over again”. (PhG 68-69/¶109). Evidence for this forgetting of experience, Hegel remarks, can be found throughout the history of philosophy; Plato’s *Theaetetus*, for example, documents how immediate knowledge remains indeterminate. Hence it is “astonishing,” Hegel remarks, when (modern) scepticism asserts, “that the reality or being of external things taken as Theses or sense-objects has absolute truth for consciousness”.

[20] Cf. Heidegger’s discussion of the “truth of a thing as a ‘just this’ in *die Frage nach dem Ding* (1962, 20ff.). It is interesting to note that Heidegger alludes to Hegel’s analysis of sense-certainty (1962, 28) in the course of his own discussion. Heidegger focusses on the singular identity of things as ‘just this’ but without also addressing their complex difference as analysed in Hegel’s account of the thing and perception. See the section concerning the thing as a “bearer of properties” (1962, 24ff.).

[21] Indeed, the ‘thing’ remains the fundamental category belonging to the standpoint of everyday consciousness, and has dominated substance-ontologies from Aristotle to Kant.

[22] Hegel touches here on Hume’s questioning of the purported necessity of causal laws. The problem is whether the determinations ascribed to phenomena, such as positive and negative electricity, are definitional or real, necessary or contingent. If electricity, for example, simply has the contingent property of being positive and negative, how then can we also say that this positivity and negativity belongs to its definition, its Concept and essence?

[23] Cf. Fink (1977, 151). Hegel’s examples of inversion seem to confuse speculative levels of phenomenology, logic and philosophy of nature, since they come from the world of natural science (positive and negative electricity, north and south poles in magnetism, etc.); the inversion to which these dichotomies are subject seem to refer to the categorical structure of our scientific understanding of natural phenomena. Indeed the exposition of the concept of infinitude, of inner difference as contradiction, belongs to logic rather than phenomenology.

[24] This example does not belong to this stage of the phenomenological exposition; crime and punishment will appear later in the section on reason and the ethical life of spirit. The ‘justification’ here is perhaps only that it provides a concrete embodiment of the movement of inversion and reflection that Hegel is attempting to describe.

[25] As Gadamer remarks, Hegel’s inverted/perverted world describes something akin to a *satirical inversion*: “this reversal in which everything is the opposite of itself makes visible in a kind of fun house mirror the covert perversion of everything as we know it. If this is so, the topsy-turvy world would be

the perversion of perversity. ... satirical inversion presupposes that the world will recognise in the reversal of itself its own perversion and thus come to see its true possibilities. ... In that the topsy-turvy world displays itself as reversed, it exhibits the wrongness of the established world as it stands” (1976, 48-49).

[26] Hegel thus ‘explains’ the satisfaction scientific explanation affords consciousness as grounded in the fact that “in it consciousness is, so to speak, communing directly with itself, enjoying only itself” (PhG 101/¶163).

[27] Westphal (1977, 125-126).

[28] Houlgate describes this intersubjective-communicative aspect of self-conscious Spirit as follows: “Hegel is not denying that each human subject is a unique individual, conscious of himself as distinct from all other selves, but he is insisting that such unique individuality, and the freedom of self-determination which individuals can enjoy, is itself made possible by social relations and by the public medium of language that constitutes the element of consciousness” (1986, 167).

[29] See Siep (1992, esp. 172-181), Honneth (1992, 11-105), Williams (1992), Redding (1996, 99ff).

[30] There is an error in Miller’s translation at this point. The passage should read: “but secondly, it equally gives the other self-consciousness back to itself again, for the first self-consciousness was conscious of itself in the other; it suspends this being in the other and thus lets the other again go free”.

[31] Hegel signals, moreover, that these “proto-subjects” have not yet attained that movement of self-relating negativity characterising the self-identity of consciousness: “they have not as yet exposed themselves to each other in the form of pure being-for-self, or as self-consciousness” (PhG 110/¶186).

[32] I am indebted to György Márkus for this phrase.

[33] Hegel also makes the curious remark, in a *Zusatz* to §432, that suggests a “state of nature” version of the struggle for recognition which marks the transition from the “natural condition” to the social and political state: “the fight for recognition pushed to the extreme here can only occur in the natural state, where men exist as only as single, separate individuals; but it is absent in civil society and the state because here the recognition for which the combatants fought already exists” (Enz §432/PM 172).

[34] Indeed, Hegel claims that “language is self-consciousness existing *for others*, self-consciousness which as such is immediately *present*, and as *this* self-consciousness is universal” (PhG ¶652).

[35] Hegel’s 1803/4 Jena Philosophy of Spirit does not claim that language as a medium of lasting recognition. Within the PhG, however, language enjoys a privileged position as a medium of universality and embodiment of Spirit which performatively enacts the universality of the ‘I’: “The ‘I’ that utters itself is *heard* or *perceived*; it is an infection in which it has immediately passed into unity with those for whom it is a real existence, and is a universal self-consciousness” (PhG 276/¶508).

[36] Cf. Hegel’s account of the mutual recognition achieved in revealed religion: “the relation of the eternal Being to its being-for-self is the immediately simple one of thought. In this *simple* beholding of itself in the ‘other’, the otherness is therefore not posited as such; it is the difference which, in pure thought, is immediately *no difference*; a *loving* recognition in which the two sides, as regards their essence, do not stand in an antithetical relation to each other” (PhG 411/¶772).

[37] We have here a correspondence to the Trinitarian religious doctrine: consciousness knows the Unchangeable at first as the alien being that passes judgment on the individual (God the Father), this Other then assumes the figure of individuality just as consciousness itself (Jesus the Son), and finally consciousness experiences the joy of finding itself within the Unchangeable (the Holy Spirit), and becomes conscious of the reconciliation of its own individuality with the universal (PhG 123/¶210).

The latter, however, is no longer a figure of unhappy consciousness but rather an appearance of absolute Spirit (as religion).

[38] Cf. “This mediated relation is thus a syllogism [Schluß] in which the individuality, initially fixed in its antithesis to the *in-itself*, is united with this other extreme only through a third term. ... This middle term is itself a conscious Being [the mediator], for it is an action which mediates consciousness as such” (PhG 129-130/¶227).

[39] What Hegel calls here the “pure category” is the Kantian transcendental unity of self-consciousness taken as a *genus* which falls apart into a plurality of categories as *species*; the pure or negative unity of these categories is the singular individual as distinct from the immediate pure unity (PhG 135/¶236).