

## Handout for Week 3: Hegel's *Introduction*

### Two-stage Representational Model and the Semantic Possibility of Knowledge

1. Knowledge...tends to be regarded as the instrument with which one takes hold of the absolute or as the medium through which one discovers it. [PG §73]
2. [I]f knowledge is the instrument to take hold of the absolute essence, one is immediately reminded that the application of an instrument to a thing does not leave the thing as it is, but brings about a shaping and alteration of it. Or, if knowledge is not an instrument for our activity, but a more or less passive medium through which the light of truth reaches us, then again we do not receive this truth as it is in itself, but as it is in and through this medium. In both cases we employ a means which immediately brings about the opposite of its own end; or, rather, the absurdity lies in our making use of any means at all. [PG§73]
3. [This model]...presupposes notions *about knowledge* as an instrument and a medium, and also the notion that there is a *difference between ourselves and this knowledge*; but above all, it presupposes that the absolute *stands on one side* and that *knowledge*, though it is *on the other side*, for itself and separated from the absolute, is nevertheless something real. Hence it assumes that knowledge may be true despite its presupposition that knowledge is outside the absolute and therewith outside the truth as well. By taking this position, what calls itself the fear of error reveals itself as a fear of the truth. [PG §74]
4. Descartes's *two-stage*, representational story sharply distinguishes between two kinds of things, based on their intrinsic intelligibility. Some things, paradigmatically physical, material, extended things, can by their nature only be known by being *represented*. Other things, the contents of our own minds, are by nature *representings* and are known in another way entirely. They are known *immediately*, not by being represented, but just by being *had*. They are intrinsically intelligible, in that their mere matter-of-factual occurrence counts as knowing or understanding something. Things that are by nature knowable only as represented are not in this sense intrinsically intelligible. Their occurrence does not entail that anyone knows or understands anything.
5. The gulf, the "difference," "separation," the two "sides" of one divide separating appearance and reality, knowing and the known, that he complains about is this gulf of intelligibility. His critical claim is that any theory of this form is doomed to yield skeptical results.
6. Kant shares with Descartes the two-stage representational structure, but does not take over the idea that our relation to our own representations is one of immediate awareness. His view still falls within the range of Hegel's criticisms, however, because he maintains the differential intelligibility of representings and representeds.
7. Kant has a new model of intelligibility: to be intelligible is to have a content articulated by *concepts*.

8. Hegel learned from Kant that the soft underbelly of *epistemological* theories is the *semantics* they implicitly incorporate and depend upon. And he thinks that two-stage representational theories committed to the strong differential intelligibility of representings and what they represent *semantically* preclude genuine knowledge of those represented.
9. The “Genuine Knowledge Condition” (GKC): Epistemological theories must not be committed to a semantics—in particular, a theory of representation—that rules out as unintelligible the very possibility of knowing how things really are (“genuine” knowledge).
10. The Intelligibility of Error Condition (IEC): Epistemological theories must make intelligible the possibility of error.
11. The Mode of Presentation Condition (MPC): Appearances (senses, representings) must be essentially, and not just accidentally, appearances *of* some purported realities. One does not count as having grasped an appearing unless one grasps it *as* the appearance of something.
12. The Rational Constraint Condition (RCC): Any adequate theory of representation must portray what is represented as exerting *rational* constraint on representings of it. That is, how it is with what is represented must, when the representation relation is not defective, provide a *reason* for the representing to be as it is.

Distinction between Appearance and Reality (Represented/Representing) is Internal to Consciousness

1. Hegel begins the *Phenomenology* proper with the claim that the two-stage representational epistemological explanatory strategy leads inexorably to skeptical conclusions *if* it is combined with a particular auxiliary hypothesis concerning the difference between representings and representeds: the idea that only representings (appearances, phenomena) are in conceptual shape, while what is represented by them (reality, noumena) is not.
2. What we must understand, then, is the sense in which, as Hegel says, which “consciousness provides itself with its own standard,” how “in what consciousness within its own self designates as the *in-itself* or the true, we have the standard by which consciousness itself proposes to measure its knowledge.” [PG §84] How is it that: “the difference between the *in-itself* and the *for-itself* is already present in the very fact that consciousness knows an object at all. Something is *to it* the *in-itself*, but the knowledge or the being of the object for consciousness is *to it* still another moment.” [PG §85]
3. What Hegel tells us is something *to* consciousness (using the dative “*ihm*”) is just the distinction between what things are *for* consciousness and what they are *in* themselves. I take it that what something is *for* consciousness is the content of a judgment: something that is *explicit*. By contrast, what things are *to* consciousness is a functional matter of how they are *implicitly* taken or practically treated by consciousness.
4. Consciousness is, on the one hand, consciousness of the object, and on the other, consciousness of itself; consciousness of what to it is the True, and consciousness of its knowledge of the truth. [PG §85]

5. Hegel's term for the process by which new commitments are integrated into a constellation of old ones is 'experience' (Erfahrung).
6. In the experience of error the subject ("consciousness"): ...is consciousness of what to it is the true, and consciousness of its knowledge of this truth. Since both are *for consciousness*, consciousness itself is their comparison; whether its knowledge of the object corresponds or fails to correspond with this object will be a matter *for consciousness itself*. [PG §85]
7. Recall the crucial distinction, which Hegel marks grammatically, as was pointed out in Lecture II, between what things are *implicitly*, "to" consciousness ["ihm"] and what they are *explicitly*, "for" consciousness.
8. Something is to it the *in-itself*, but the knowledge or the being of the object for consciousness is to it still another moment. It is upon this differentiation, which exists and is present at hand, that the examination [Prüfung] is grounded. And if, in this comparison, the two moments do not correspond, then it seems that consciousness will have to alter its knowledge in order to bring it into accord with the object. [PG §85]
9. In the alteration of the knowledge, however, the object itself becomes to consciousness something which has in fact been altered as well. For the knowledge which existed was essentially a knowledge of the object: with change in the knowledge, the object also becomes an other, since it was an essential part of this knowledge. Hence it comes to pass for consciousness that what had been to it the *in-itself* is not in itself, or, what was *in itself* was so only *for consciousness*. When therefore consciousness finds its knowledge not corresponding with its object, the object itself will also give way. In other words, the standard [Maßstab] of the examination is changed if that whose standard it was supposed to be fails to endure the course of the examination. Thus the examination is not only an examination of knowledge, but also of the standard used in the examination itself. [PG §85]
10. This *dialectical* movement, which consciousness exercises on its self—on its knowledge as well as its object—is, *in so far as the new, true object emerges to consciousness* as the result of it, precisely that which is called *experience*. [PG §86]
11. Consciousness knows *something*, and this object is the essence or the *in-itself*. But this object is also the in-itself for consciousness; and hence the ambiguity of this truth comes into play. We see that consciousness now has two objects; one is the first *in-itself* and the second is the *being-for-consciousness of this in-itself*. The latter seems at first to be merely the reflection of consciousness into its self, a representation, not of an object, but only of its knowledge of the first object. But, as already indicated, the first object comes to be altered for consciousness in this very process; it ceases to be the in-itself and becomes to consciousness an object which is the *in-itself only for it*. And therefore it follows that this, the *being-for-consciousness of this in-itself*, is the true, which is to say that this true is the *essence* or consciousness' new *object*. This new object contains the annihilation of the first; it is the experience constituted through that first object. [PG §86]
12. Hence it comes to pass for consciousness that what had been to it the *in-itself* is not in itself, or, what was *in itself* was so only *for consciousness*. [PG §85]

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

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

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

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

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

18. Natural consciousness will show itself to be merely the Concept of knowledge, or unreal knowledge. But since it immediately takes itself to be real knowledge, this pathway has a negative significance for it, and what is actually the realization of the Concept is for it rather the loss and destruction of its self: for on this road it loses its truth. The road may thus be viewed as

the path of doubt, or, more properly, as the path of despair... [T]his road is the conscious insight into the untruth of phenomenal knowledge...[PG §78]

19. Hegel's invocation of *recollection* [Erinnerung], to which he returns at the very end of the *Phenomenology*, is a gesture at the *third* phase of the experience of error. We have already considered the first two: acknowledging the material incompatibility of some of one's commitments and revising one's commitments (including those concerning what is incompatible with what) so as to repair the discordance. What Hegel calls "recollection" is a subsequent rational reconstruction of the extended process of experience that has led to one's current constellation of commitments. What is reconstructed is a sequence of episodes, each of which exhibits the three-phase structure of acknowledgment, repair, and recollection of materially incompatible commitments one has endorsed. From the actual process of past experience the recollector selects a trajectory that is exhibited as expressively progressive—that is, as having the form of a gradual, cumulative revelation of how things really are (according to the recollector). It is a Whiggish story (characteristic of old-fashioned histories of science) of how the way things are in themselves came to be the way they veridically appeared *for* consciousness. That in this way the *past* is constantly turned into a *history* (differently with each tripartite episode of experience) is how Hegel understands reason as retrospectively "giving contingency the form of necessity."

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

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

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