

Notes for Week 4  
*Consciousness I*

1. **For Introduction to Week 4:**

a) Rehearse the large structure of the book as I see it:

Consciousness: cognitive relation to objective world

Self-Consciousness: normativity, selves as normative subjects

Reason: intentional agency.

Spirit: pulling together all three strands, lining them up historically. (Use the quote from *Religion*.)

On Structure of PG:

The course of the exposition of the first half of the *Phenomenology* proceeds by considering **different aspects of us as knowers and agents**.

Beginning with the perceptual language-entry moves expressed in noninferential reports, it opens up the topic of the empirical knowledge of things, in which they play such a crucial role.

The topic of the *Consciousness* chapters is **empirical knowledge**.

It then looks at the **subjects** of that knowledge, the **recognitive attitudes and normative statuses they institute**, including the crucial status of being a normative subject in Kant's sense: someone with the authority to bind oneself, to make oneself responsible. This is the topic of the *Self-Consciousness* chapter.

Finding their selves, self-conceptions, and empirical consciousness to be developments of purposive activity, we turn to considering language exits in deliberate, **intentional action**. This is the topic of the *Reason* chapter, because in Hegel's usage, "Reason is purposive action" [22].

At this level the order of exposition of the book is *not* progressive. Although there are reasons for the order of presentation, we are discussing **aspects** of self-conscious beings—**cognition, recognition, and intentional agency**—**not stages** in their development.

[T]he moments of the whole, consciousness, self-consciousness, Reason, and Spirit, just because they are moments, have no existence in separation from one another. [PG 679]

Here "Spirit" means the community. In another sense, what they are all aspects of is Spirit.

"Their totality, taken together, constitutes Spirit in its mundane existence generally."

[PG 679]

Within the discussion of each aspect or “moment”, there *is* historical, cumulative development:

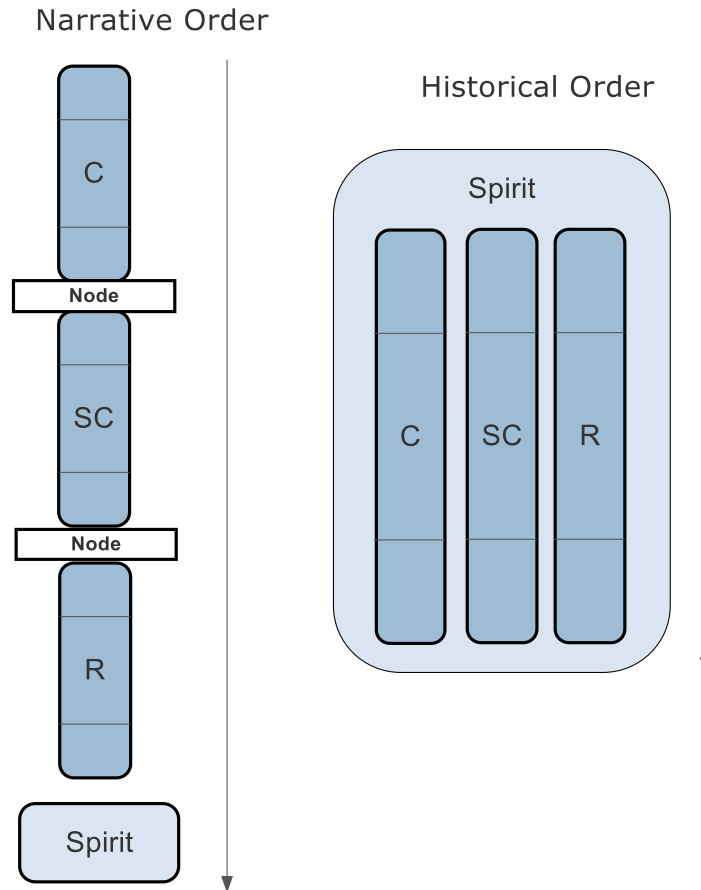
We saw that each of those moments was differentiated again in its own self into a process of its own, and assumed different “shapes”: as, e.g., in consciousness, sense-certainty and perception were distinct from each other. These latter shapes fall apart in Time and belong to a particular totality... These, therefore, exhibit Spirit in its individuality or actuality, and are distinguished from one another in Time, though in such a way that the later moment retains within it the preceding one. [PG 679]

So, paradigmatically, the progression from the categorial conceptions of empirical cognition Hegel calls “sense certainty,” “perception,” and “understanding” *do* develop sequentially from one to the next, not just in the order of exposition, but in the historical order.

But the transitions from *Consciousness* to *Self-Consciousness* to *Reason* are *not* like this.

In this way, the arrangement of the “shapes” which have hitherto appeared differs from the way they appeared in their own order... Thus while the previous single series in its advance marked the retrogressive steps in it by **nodes** [Knoten], but continued itself again from them in a single line, it is now, as it were, broken at these nodes, at these universal moments, and falls apart into many lines which, gathered up into a single bundle, at the same time combine symmetrically so that the similar differences in which each particular moment took shape within itself meet together. [PG 681]

The “retrogressive steps” are from a developed conception of empirical knowledge (the Concept as infinite) to the most primitive conception of selves (as desirers), and from a developed conception of selves to a primitive conception of agency. The expository strategy of *Spirit* is to lay the various stages of our understanding of knowledge, selves, and agency alongside one another, breaking the exposition at the “nodes” between the discussion of different moments, and bundling together the lines of development within those discussions. *Spirit* discusses the whole phenomenon of which *cognition*, *recognition*, and *agency* are aspects.



This is not to say that the *exposition* of the *Phenomenology* up to this point is not cumulative at all, however. It is only to say that it is not an account of a cumulative development, except *within* the sections discussing each aspect of Spirit:

***Consciousness, Self-Consciousness, and Reason.***

We learn something as we progress through these parallel discussions of different aspects of the whole.

What we are learning about is the conditions of the intelligibility of determinately contentful **conceptual norms**, hence about the nature of *Geist*, of Nature, and of their relations to one another in the **practical (including the cognitive) doings** of the individual self-conscious selves (normative subjects) and the recognitive communities that comprise and are instituted by them. (“**No cognition without recognition.**”)

*Reason* focuses on that practical interaction of subjective-social with objective norms—of commitments, recognitive claims of authority and acknowledgments of responsibility, on the one hand, and lawful (modally robust) empirical necessities, on the other—as it shows up in the phenomenon of intentional agency. It does so, as elsewhere, by presenting in allegorical form different forms of practical self-consciousness focused on that phenomenon: ways of understanding ourselves as agents.

- b) I am concerned to articulate and convey the principal philosophical lessons that I think make the portion of the book that provides this week's topics worth reading and thinking hard about. In the text of *ST* and the other tellings of the story, I have provided at least clues about the connections between the sentences Hegel wrote and the lessons I claim are to be learned from them. Even there, a *lot* of distance is left to be filled in by more detailed readings. This is good and important work, and I hope people will continue to do it. But I do think there is a huge forest-and-trees problem with the Hegel readings my generation inherited. More than anything else, what I hope to have accomplished with the book is to provide a different conception of the overall project and shape of thought Hegel is providing in *PG*, which can provide a new, reorienting context in which people can then engage in the traditional close reading of particular puzzling passages, such as the "inverted world" section of *Force and Understanding*—which I'll talk about next week.

It might seem that there is a distinctive kind of irresponsibility consequent upon saying: "These are the philosophical lessons I think we are being taught by this text. I am in effect leaving it as an exercise to you, the reader, to catch the author I am interpreting as teaching us those lessons." I am not doing that—or at least not *exactly* that, not *merely* that. I am also not *not* doing that at all. The shreds of responsibility I am shouldering, that distinguish what I am doing from that, are in the text of *ST*. But even after one has taken into account the connections to the text established there, there remains a residue of the "leaving as an exercise to the reader" the detailed connection of text to lesson that I am asserting. So be it. The challenge is understood to be substantial, and the possibility is acknowledged that able readers might look at the text and not find the connection to the alleged lesson—and not just as a mark of their disability as readers.

The two handouts for *Sense Certainty* and *Perception* (available on the web and distributed by chat during the session) provide an initial bridge between the more general remarks I'll make here and the more detailed reading of these chapters to be found in *ST*.

In my discussions of both chapters I will be highlighting the philosophical lessons I think can and should be drawn from them.

Hegel is both linguistically and conceptually one of the most difficult philosophers in the history of thought. Because I think it is so important for us to understand what he has to teach us, I am translating his language and rearranging and re-presenting those lessons.

Recall Harold Bloom's slogan, which I cited in my first presentation:

"Every strong reading is a rewriting."

I'll be indicating how I think these chapters might be rewritten so as better to convey what we can now see as their principal philosophical lessons.

We will see that in these first two epistemological chapters Hegel offers us a rich harvest of philosophical distinctions, conceptions, and moves.

## 2. For Part 1, on Sense Certainty:

### Mediating the Immediate.

Sense Certainty as a form of understanding of empirical consciousness—  
so a kind of *self*-consciousness.

It construes sensory knowing as pure immediacy, without risky mediation = conceptualization.  
If the mind doesn't *do* anything—"just stands back and lets it all be"—it cannot make an  
*mistakes*.

On the conception of sense certainty: avoid error by not making risky judgments, not applying  
concepts.

"Who governs least governs best."

What would be expressed by a Strawsonian feature-placing language.

This is how *we* the phenomenological consciousness, thinking about this form of self-  
consciousness, would have to express the contents *it*—the form of phenomenal self-  
consciousness being considered—would have to use.

"This-such"s, like "this triangle" does duty for judgments: "This is a triangle."

a) Overarching theme as I read it is H's dissection of Kant's notion of intuition.

He starts by considering its dimension of *passivity*.

These are representations we find ourselves with. They are borne in on us or wrung from us by  
the merely triggered or causally occasioned exercise of responsive dispositions (RDRDs: reliable  
differential responsive dispositions).

But Hegel is also concerned that Kant culpably does not distinguish two further dimensions  
(from each other, and does not query why they not only go together but come in a package with  
passivity).

**Though he is careful about and warns us of the importance of distinguishing  
representations of relations from relations of representations, Kant does *not* distinguish the  
roles of  
intuitions as representations of particularity from their  
particularity of representation.**

The first has to do with the *representeds*, which are particular objects as opposed to  
properties or universals (classifiers). The second has to do with *representings*: they are  
unrepeatable in the sense of being token-reflexive (in Reichenbach's terminology). That is, their  
semantic content can vary from tokening to tokening of the same type, like demonstratives and  
indexicals.

(Perhaps quick stern aside on the dangers of grouping these together by assimilating  
demonstratives to indexicals, as David Kaplan does.)

Kant's concept/intuition distinction runs together (on purpose, this is a view not just a confusion) 3 in fact orthogonal dimensions:

- i) Being representings *passively* responsively **elicited** (by the exercise of noninferential responsive dispositions)
- ii) Being **representings of particular representeds**, that is being singular-term-like, and
- iii) Being unrepeatable (token-reflexive rather than type-constant) in that sense *particular representings*,

**receptivity vs. spontaneity of episodes,  
particularity vs. generality of what is represented, and  
unrepeatability (token-credibility) vs. repeatability (type-credibility) of representings.**

These are all orthogonal features, which can vary independently of one another.

So can noninferentially respond to something as red or a dog, not just as this or Fido, can demonstrate properties as well as objects, and apply token-reflexives as the result of active inference (since anaphorically dependent tokenings are also token-reflexive).

Note that these three dimensions of the intuition/concept distinction are distinguished in Chapter 9 of *MIE*.

There are lessons Hegel is teaching concerning *each* of these three dimensions of the intuition/concept distinction in Hegel's form as "immediate/mediated":

- b) The first theme, re (i) is the EPM lesson: to be noninferentially (passively) elicited, as the result of a stimulus causally triggering an RDRD is one thing. To be "noninferential" in the sense of not having a conceptual content, in the sense of one essentially (to being the content it is) that stands in inferential (consequential plus incompatibility) relations to other such contents is another. Having cognitive significance, potentially being an episode of knowing, is compatible with *noninferentiality of origin* of representing, but not with *noninferentiality of content* of representing. This is the basic lesson, contra Givenness, of *EPM*.

It is this lesson that leads directly to the consideration of empirical consciousness understood according to the categories of perception: There is no cognitively significant sensory representation without the application of inferentially articulated observational concepts.

- c) Seeing this *conceptual* character of the deliverances of sense, showing up in the relations among sensory contents—expressed for us by the "features" in the feature-placing language—leads us to worry about *universality*, in the sense of the "representation of particularity/universality", i.e. functioning as a singular term picking out an object-particular, or as a predicate, picking out a property-universal. Here we see universals grouping together everything that contrasts with, e.g., "night" or "tree" or "fine"—in "It is night," "Lo, a tree," or "It is fine."

A bad argument for universals: (what is expressed by) demonstratives and indexicals is universal, because they are repeatable.

It is important to put aside (not attribute to Hegel and certainly not to do that *and* to endorse it!) the Bad Argument from the “genericness” of demonstratives or indexicals “this” or “now” that consists in these expressions having many tokenings that can pick out different situations.

- d) As to the third sense of “immediate/mediated”, particularity of representation, in the sense of token-reflexiveness of tokenings (each tokening potentially having a different significance), the lesson is:

**Deixis and indexicality presuppose anaphora.**

Unrepeatable (token-reflexive) representings can be cognitively significant only if they can initiate anaphoric chains that can pick up the content and use it as a premise from which to draw conclusions (as a reason for or against) anaphorically tied to it. This requirement of the possible *persistence* of content, as common to (throughout) a *process* is the first official manifestation in Hegel’s text of what will become recollective rationality.

The big insight: deixis presupposes anaphora. This is the introduction of **the temporal-historical dimension that culminates in recollective rationality.**

No philosophers after Hegel, until Frege, worried about indexicals and demonstratives (*not* the same thing!), and others, e.g. Russell and Wittgenstein didn’t, until Reichenbach on token-reflexives.

But even Kaplan, Lewis, and Stalnaker didn’t appreciate the necessary presupposition of anaphoric uptake for performances to have the significance of demonstratives/indexicals. (Anscombe on ‘I’ does.)

I began my discussion of *Sense Certainty* by urging that Hegel fills in Kant’s notion of immediacy by analyzing his intuition/concept distinction as conflating three distinctions that are actually orthogonal to one another:

**receptivity vs. spontaneity of episodes,  
particularity vs. generality of what is represented, and  
unrepeatability (token-credibility) vs. repeatability (type-credibility) of representings.**

I then argued that we can acquit Hegel of commitment to the Bad Argument if we disentangle two good lines of thought that are not sufficiently clearly separated in his discussion of them. Both start with the observation that the epistemic authority of sensory episodes that are immediate (noninferential) in their provenance is a *kind* of authority.

- It is a kind of authority that, first, can be invested in *different, even incompatible* contents.

- And it is a kind of authority that, second, can be inherited anaphorically *from* one unrepeatable demonstrative or indexical (tokening-reflexive) episode *by* others that have the *same* content, but are *not* themselves immediate in their origin as the originating episode was.

The epistemic authority conferred by sensuous immediacy of origin is genuine and important. But it is in principle intelligible only in a larger context that involves both **generality** and **anaphoric repeatability structures** relating immediately authoritative episodes to ones that inherit that authority in a way that is *not* immediate. This latter recollective structure picks up on a theme from Hegel's *Introduction*, and foreshadows the *recollective* structure that will be attributed to agency in the *Reason* chapter.



### 3. For Part 2, on Perception:

- a) Transition from *SC* to *P* (Ch. 1 to Ch. 2 in *PG*, Ch. 4 to Ch. 5 in *ST*).
  - i. The principal lesson we learn from *Sense Certainty* is that to be cognitively significant, the deliverances of sense must include the application of concepts, in the sense of repeatable universals that stand to one another in relations of incompatibility and consequence. So the topic it bequeaths to the *Perception* chapter and to the next form of empirical self-consciousness, empirical consciousness understanding itself as perceiving, is **sense universals**—that is, repeatables that have *observational* uses, applications elicited passively from the subject, by the exercise of RDRDs.
  - ii. The principal lesson we learn from *Perception* is that what is expressed by the feature-placing (Peter Strawson’s term in *Individuals*), since it must stand in relations of material incompatibility and consequence to other such contents, already *implicitly* contains the subject-predicate structure of the aristotelian framework of objects and properties, particulars and universals.
  - iii. Empirical consciousness understanding itself according to the categories of Perception, that is, as the passively elicited (one dimension of Kantian intuition) application of sense-universals, that is **observational concepts**.

Will learn the lesson that any concepts that have observational uses must also have nonobservational ones (cf. EPM), i.e. uses ruled in or out by consequential and incompatibility relations among observable repeatables.

This will set up the discovery, in FU, of concepts=universals that have *only* nonobservational (inferential) uses =theoretical (rather than observable) empirical concepts.

- b) That lesson is taught in three steps:
  - i. Observationally (noninferentially in the sense of noninferentiality of *origin*) discerned *features* stand to one another in conceptual relations of incompatibility (contrariety) and consequence (implication). Here there is a *holist* lesson: one can only grasp one of them by grasping a whole lot of them, because the relations among them are essential to the content of each of them. (One sense of “identity as consisting in differences.”)  
To understand these features (what is placed by feature-placing expressions such as “It is raining”) we must distinguish **two sorts of difference**:  
**Mere difference**, as in “It is raining” in relation to “It is night,” and  
**Exclusive difference**, as in “It is raining,” and “It is fine.” (or night/day)
  - ii. Those **features need bearers**, which are not themselves features. These are what is marked by the ‘now’s in “Now it is night,” and “Now it is day.”  
For it is only the *same* ‘now’ that cannot be both raining and fine, night and day.

The bearers are not features: they do *not* stand to one another in (conceptual) relations of incompatibility and consequence.

The bearers are accordingly of a different *ontological kind* than the features.

We must distinguish particulars from universals, objects from properties.

This is another kind of difference.

And again, the distinguished items can only be understood in terms of their relations to each other—a kind of *categorical holism*.

- iii. There is a distinction in *roles* that particulars-objects play that reflects the distinction between *mere* and *exclusive* difference among universals-properties.

This is **the object as**:

- **Exclusive ‘One’** and
- **Inclusive ‘Also’**.

The first is the object as **excluding (all) incompatible** = exclusively different properties.

The second is the object as **including (some) compatible** = merely different properties.

As a lagniappe, we can at this point appreciate the Aristotelian observation-and-argument that objects and properties (particulars and universals) are distinguished in that:

- i. Properties have *opposites*: not just contraries but contradictories. **Triangular** contrasts not just with **circular** and **pentagonal**, but with **not-triangular**. The contradictory is implied by each contrary. It is the *opposite* of **triangular** in that every object that does *not* have the property **triangular** *does* have the property **not-triangular**. The opposite of a property holds of all and only the objects the property does not hold of.
- ii. Objects do *not* have *opposites* in this sense. The opposite of an object would be another object which had all and only the properties the object does not have. But there is and can in principle be no such object. Consider my left hand. It has the properties of not being identical to the second Brandenburg Concerto and also of not being identical to my right hand. Its opposite would have to have the property of being identical to both. But they are incompatible. In general, the properties incompatible with a given property are not all (are mostly not) compatible with each other.

Note that this point will be important when we consider the famous “inverted world” discussion in the next chapter, *Force and Understanding*.

c) The large philosophical contrast I want to emphasize as coming out of the discussion of the metaconceptual framework H calls “perception” (“Wahrnehmung”) is between two orders of explanation:

1) Tarskian-extensional:

Begin with i) *mere* difference of ii) *objects*. Domains of models construed as relational structures: domains plus sets of sets of domain elements.

Understand *properties* as *sets of objects*.

Introduce formal negation by enforcing *complementation* of extensions across models, and consequence by inclusion relations among extensions across models.

Understand *contrariety* = *exclusive* difference in terms of complementation and inclusion relations among property extensions that are enforced across models.

This basically yields the possible worlds development of Tarskian model theory.

But we only get to modality at the *end* of this story.

2) Hegelian-modal:

Begin with i) *exclusive* difference of ii) *properties*.

Understand *objects* as *units of account* for exclusions and inclusions of properties.

Distinguish roles of objects as *excluding* (‘one’) *exclusively different* properties and *including* (‘also’) *merely different* properties.

Now we can understand mere *collections* of objects (sets): extensions.

This happens at the *end* of the story, by *abstracting from* a full modal story.