The Transcendental Turn

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Robert Pippin

I
Typical metaphysical questions include the following. Is the universe composed of
dimensionless, windowless monads, or is it one infinite, eternal substance, or are there
many substances but in real relations with each other? Is there free will or are all events
determined? Is the mind a separate, immaterial substance? Is there an immortal soul,
a God? Do abstract objects, like sets and universals and possible worlds exist? And so
forth. These are not typical Hegelian questions and he does not show much interest in
them. As he frequently makes clear in compliments to Kant, Hegel does not want to be
enlisted in the tradition of rational dogmatism, or in any project that holds that we can
settle questions about 'the furniture of the universe' by appeal to the light of reason or
to tests of conceivability and inconceivability.

It turns out, though, that it can be quite misleading (I have discovered) to label Hegel
somewhat casually a 'non-metaphysical' thinker, as Klaus Hartmann long ago sug-
gested. For example, in my view Hegel held that agency was an achieved social sta-
tus, ascribed in differing ways with differing scope over time; that assumptions about
individuality behind methodological individualism in modern political philosophy
were incompletely thought out; that acting freely involved the establishment of a
determinate self-and-other relation; that explanations of the activities of some organic
beings in complex social conditions would be inadequate if restricted to the material,
or neuro-biological properties of such organisms. There is a perfectly good sense in
which all these sorts of claims could and should be called 'metaphysical'. Hegel is pur-
porting to tell us what agency is, what individuality is, what freedom is, and so forth,
and he thinks of his answers as distinctly philosophical, not empirical or natural sci-
etific. The key difference between these latter sorts of questions and the former sort
comes down to how one understands Hegel's claim that his 'metaphysics' is primarily a
Throughout his life Hegel characterized his own position by partly invoking and appropriating, and partly criticizing, what he took to be the Kantian understanding of the relation between understanding and sensibility, concept and intuition. All the passages clearly indicate that what Hegel is out to criticize is not the distinction itself, but the way Kant understands the nature of concept-intuition unity in knowledge claims. A 'mechanical' sort of application or indirect reflection, as he calls it, is what is being rejected in favor of what he calls an 'organic' understanding. But all the passages in Kant already have a dialectical and somewhat unstable form, as if already foreshadowing Hegelian logic. A distinctness and necessity intertwining (inseparability in any claim to knowledge) are emphasized. This Kantian position raises two huge problems. The first is the issue of the right way to state the implications of the twin claims for any analysis of empirical knowledge. This will take us directly into the issues of the various myths (of the given and of the mental) that what was originally the Kant–Hegel disagreement have raised in contemporary discussions. The other is the issue of idealism: whether the inseparability claim as Hegel understands it, in his major difference from Kant, idealizes or relativizes to us any philosophical claim about objects. I have said that the relevant passages in Hegel make clear that he is very much in agreement with Kant about the necessary cooperation of such elements in knowledge (thus accepting that there are such elements). But one should be careful. Interpreters who are interested in this line of thought have been portrayed several times as having Hegel 'collapse' the distinction between concept and intuition, and Michael Friedman has charged that the post-Kantian idealists 'rejected' outright Kant's distinction between concept and intuition, and that they embraced a wholly self-determining Vernunft operating without empirical constraint. (Friedman characterizes as 'traditional' what I would consider quite a bizarre thesis to attribute to anyone, that the 'idealist doctrine that the world to which our thought relates is a creature of our own conceptualization. This ascription to Hegel of such a doctrine of intellectual intuition is one familiar way in which commentators understand Hegel's 'metaphysics'.) But the passages are quite clear: Hegel never denied this distinctness claim, indeed he insisted on it (for example, in the passage before about an 'organic' and not 'mechanical' unity of such different epistemic dimensions of experience). What is true is that Hegel wished to stress more, make more out of, the organic unity or organic inseparability of such elements than Kant, where organic just means that it always has: that a severed hand is not any longer a hand, an intuited content considered separated from or in isolation from its role 'inside' the act of judging cannot be a contributory element to knowledge. This amounts to claiming that the 'blindness' of intuitions considered apart from conceptualization has different implications than Kant allowed, and changes what one can claim about a non-derived concept having an intuited content, being objectively valid.

This organic unity claim is the first manifestation of the claim that the conceptual is unbounded, that conceptual content cannot be understood as supplied 'from without' by epistemologically distinct intuitions, or is the Hegelian version of the familiar attack by Wilfrid Sellars on 'the myth of the given'. But it calls immediately to mind an understandable hesitation about the direction already suggested. The first is the worry that the unboundedness claim amounts to a kind of 'intellectualism' that understanding consciousness itself as an activity and purport as a result must mean that such activity must be apperceptive judging. Since there are obviously many sorts of relatively unreflective engagements that clearly do not fit such a model, the suspicion is that such a position greatly exaggerates the 'intellectual' dimension of experience.

2 Friedman, 'Renausing the Philosophical Tradition', 404.
3 62-65.
But this notion of an unbounded conceptual articulation need not be committed to such an exaggeration. Consider the case of the practical domain. What gets attended to in practice as salient, of ethical significance, what goes unnoticed in a well-functioning egalitarian society (eye color, race, gender, etc.), what occurrence raises a question, demands attention, what does not, who is taken to be of relevance to the moral community (humans, animals, the severely disabled), who is not (plants), and so forth can all be imagined to be of great and ‘unreflective’ weight in our practical world, some so deeply unreflective that it is hard even to imagine ever ‘questioning’ them, and yet it is highly implausible that such historically and culturally quite variant elements could be said to have any immediate, direct presence in our experience, as if pressing on our attention in themselves, on their own, from the ‘outside’. A highly complex conceptual or normative interpretative framework is at work, without it being the case that such a being at work is a matter of explicit ‘reflective endorsement’, or the result of articulated moral evaluation.

III

This is all not, I take it, a revelation to anyone interested in Hegel; the opening argument of the Phenomenology famously starts us down that different, Hegelian path that will eventually lead to a much different understanding of the ‘subject-object’ relation than that typical in so-called ‘reflective’ philosophies like Kant’s. But going further into the contrasting Hegelian claims about idealism immediately encounters two forbidding sorts of formulations. The first are frequent claims about not a concept–intuition relation but about thought’s self-negation, and the second involve just as frequent formulations about the Concept giving itself its own content, the Concept being Absolute or in that term that McDowell has made well known, ‘unbounded’. To be fair to critics like Friedman, this can certainly sound like we are talking about concepts unbounded by intuitions, that Hegel has rejected the ‘universality thesis’ according to which human thought can give itself no content but only categorize content provided ‘from without’. What I would like to do in the following is to present a brief gloss on the first of the two issues (which, once placed in the context of the language developed by Kant’s successors, is not as mysterious as it sounds), and then spend the rest of the time trying to understand what a concept giving itself its own content means, which is somewhat mysterious if it does not mean collapsing the distinction between concept and intuition, and so proposing a metaphysics in which the basic structure of reality is conceptual, a kind of neo-Platonic monist realism. Such a position, in the terms introduced here would mean insisting on not just irrepressibility in cognition between concept and intuition but actual indistinguishability.

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1 See the account of the discursivity thesis in Henry E. Allison, Kant’s Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense, revised and enlarged edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

Here is a typical statement about negation from his Berlin Phenomenology, as challenging to an interpreter now as it must have sounded then to his first readers.

‘I’ is now this subjectivity, this infinite relation to itself, but therein, namely in this subjectivity, lies its negative relation to itself, determination, differentiation, judgment. ‘I’ judges, and this constitutes it as consciousness; it repeles itself from itself this is a logical determination.’

There are scores of other passages throughout various works where Hegel appeals to this notion of the subject of thought, the ‘I’ that thinks, as a negative self-relation, a self-determination, or original self-separating or self-repelling. And in a general sense this abstract formulation is not foreign; it is well known from Spinoza’s insistence that all determination is negation (omnis determinatio negatio est). Determinate relation to an object or content is an exclusion or negation of all that such a content is not, a restricting or fixing of content that excludes. The peculiarity of the Kantian and post-Kantian formulation is that Hegel is not just saying that intending a content excludes as well as determines (he says rather that judging is a self-negation) and that such a fixing and negation is a result; that consciousness just is that self-negating. Since it is such a self-negating, any determinate take on the world is also implicitly and potentially self-transcending. Since intentional consciousness is a resolving and fixing of attention, such an activity is not wholly or uniformly ‘positive’; it is also potentially self-negating in a broader sense, defeasible and reformulable, and this must make some difference to the character of the determinate attending itself.

With respect to our problem, what I think Hegel is struggling to make clear here is that for him denying a separability to intuition does not damn us to reside within our own conceptions, as if shut up inside a ‘world of our own conceiving’. When we are so attentive to this rather Fichteian point—that any conscious take on the way things are should be understood as potentially self-negating, not in any matter of fact restricted, restrained or negated ‘from the outside’—we see that no cognitive form of mindedness could ever be a matter of being merely ‘positively’ in a domestic state, or merely being in any mode at all, as if a judgment could be a thing cared.

To affirm is simultaneously to hold open the world that what one is affirming is not true, and holding this open in this way means that judging is always potentially self-transcending, aiming at the world as it is, not somehow confined as if as a matter of some fact within a worldview.

Arguments for relativism and sometimes for transcendental idealism often make this mistake, the mistake of thinking of thought or horizons of sense or modes of sense-making or conceptual schemes in this third-person way, as if something one can get trapped inside of unless something exogenous can ‘break’ through it. As it has been put in many contemporary contexts, one source of the confusion is the temptation to think in terms of conceptual schemes and a separable, otherwise neutral, non-conceptual content that is conceptualized by such a scheme. The temptation

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sustain it, and that failure is also not something that merely happens to me, as if a causal force is just extinguished. I either cancel or sustain a commitment to an end as I enact a deed, and once again (in the Introduction to the Philosophy of Right) Hegel describes this in the abstract language of self-negation or self-dissolution.) Hegel also sometimes uses the misleading language of 'identification' to say this: that we both identify with, or endorse, an assertive judgment or course of action, even while we have somehow held open its possible negation and so have not, in another sense, identified with it. For Hegel, this is on the way to saying that any determination (say empirical determination) of thought is a determination by thought, a self-determination or even potential self-negation, and this is why, for him, the inseparability of concept is so important to stress. But we need to back up a few steps to untangle this progression of claims.

IV

Now, it is possible to cite a list of passages where Kant says, in effect, that 'objects can appear to us without necessarily having to be related to functions of the understanding' (A89/B122; see also A90/B122; and B43). But the question of what Kant means when he claims it is possible to 'intuit an object' independently of concepts is not thereby settled. On the face of it, Kant only seems to be repeating that the intuitional aspects of any object perceived cannot be attributed to the results of the understanding's determinations: he is not saying that a cognitively significant pre-conceptual experience of an object is possible. (He often speaks of a synthesis of apprehension in intuition, and of reproduction in imagination, and at A120 insists that 'imagination is a necessary ingredient of perception itself.') It is thus somewhat misleading to raise the issue in the contemporary terms of non-conceptual content, as some recent commentators have done. Kant is not really talking about non-conceptual or any sort of intuitional content in the passages at issue, but rather only about the non-conceptual, formal aspects of any relation to an object. Precisely because of this restriction, there are no indications he takes such items to be cognitively significant when considered in isolation. And no conceptual holist need affirm that reference must be fixed wholly conceptually, where conceptually is understood roughly as descriptively. There is a demonstrative use of concepts too.

But if we want to retrace the Hegelian path from these reflections, we need another component not prominent in McDowell. Indeed, given interpretations like Friedman's, this aspect of Hegel's position is by far the most important to notice when considering the question of what the denial of a strict separability between concept and intuition actually means or amounts to. For even though Hegel has in effect given up the Kantian strategy for demonstrating the objective validity of the categories, he still maintains that the very possibility of objective purport requires a conceptual projection of possible experience, the normative authority of which cannot be tied to an empirical

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1. Cf. McDowell's discussion, especially in relation to the Friedman charge also discussed here, in 'Hegeler and Davidson on Understanding and Relativism', in Jeff Malpas, Ulrich Armbrust, and Jens Kasten (eds), Gadamer's Century: Essays in Honor of Hans-Georg Gadamer (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 173-93. Besides being right (in my view anyway) about the sort of Friedman, Gadamer, and Davidson insist, McDowell also broaches the question of what we need to say 'shareable' by a linguistic community in order for mutual intelligibility and integration to succeed and suggests the beginnings of what I would regard as a Hegelian case for the indispensability of a 'T-We' relation beyond the 'T-This' priority argued for by Brandon and, in effect, by Davidson on the priority of thinkers.

2. On the issue of integration, see the discussion in ch 1 and 4 of C. W. M. Moure's Points of View (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), esp. the statement of his Fundamental Principle p. 21.

3. This obviously commits Hegel to a very difficult task. Not every separational view, or conceptual array organized around points of salvation, mattering, concerns, and so forth are partial in this respect, integrable into a more comprehensive position, and Hegel needs to help us sort out what gets to be designated a 'Geist der Gegenstand' and what falls short. And contrary to Moure, Points of View, these partial points of view are not for Hegel integrable by simple addition.
by Stephen Engstrom, for explaining the proper sense of dependence; that we should think of thought’s dependence on receptivity the way we should think of a bird’s dependence on the air for flight. The air and its resistance enables such flying; and we thus should not think of this dependence as the air or wind buffeting the bird about one way or the other.)

First a bit of review and reformulation. Someone who is taken to deny that there are unique representations with non-conceptual content that play a cognitively significant role in experience (that is, not a merely causal role) is often taken to deny that such representations could be said to ‘provide’ the content for thought. (How could they if there aren’t such separable elements?) The natural inference is that such a denial must entail that thought must be said to ‘fill out’ such content on its own, to ‘give itself content’, what McDowell calls the ‘unboundedness of the conceptual’, which Hegel calls ‘the self-determination of the Concept’. One hears many spirited attacks on such a claim, most of them, I would suggest, based on a very uncharitable reading of the claim itself and all of them reminiscent of what is just as often claimed about the Hegelian insistence on the inseparability of concept and intuition. One hears, for example, that since animals consciously perceive, but without the ability of wielding concepts, standing behind judgments, etc., and since we resemble animals in our sensory embodiedness, we must also rely in similar ways on cognitively significant but not appreciated non-conceptual content. Or that the mere fact that the richness and detail of our sensory experience can exceed the power of our current conceptual arsenal to discriminate means that non-conceptual content must play a cognitively significant role in experience. Or that veridical illusion and the persistence of Müller-Lyer appearances demonstrates a recalibratingly non-conceptual, cognitively significant aspect of experience (or real ‘modularity’ in our mental lives). Or (incredibly) that someone committed to McDowell–Hegel holism would have to be committed to the claim that no increase in empirical knowledge, no addition to our conceptual arsenal, is ever possible because, putatively, the claim is that our current concepts wholly determine what is accessible in experience. Now of course, sometimes, when Hegel is discussing the Concept’s self-determination, he can seem to put matters in a way that opens him to such epistemologically dualist, empiricist objections. It is no surprise to see hands thrown up in frustration at this point. But the frustration is premature.

As we have seen, both Hegel’s claim about conceptual self-determination, and McDowell’s about unboundedness, have suggested to several readers that McDowell has slipped back, despite his avowals, into a ‘bricolage of concepts’ mode. The same is said of Hegel (again by Friedemann, and others). In both cases such charges are quite hasty, as if again inseparability is being confused with an indistinguishability claim. If one is careful about that distinction, then such Hegelian claims only first mean to

* Stephen Engstrom, ‘Understanding and Sensibility’, Inquiry, 49 (2006), 23. The Kant passage is from the First Critique, 38–9. (“The light blown, clearing the air in her free flight, and feeling its resistance, might imagine that its flight would be still easier in empty space.”)
insist that thought's relation to objects is not, as it were, 'secured' by receptivity, by the deliverances of sensibility, alone. The unboundedness claim is first cousin to the Davidsonian thesis that the only thing than can secure or support a belief is another belief, or that it is only because our uptake of the sensory world is already conceptually articulated that these deliverances can assume a justificatory role. (Indeed since the sensory world is an immediate sensory take on the world, the claim could just as easily be taken to be realist: reality itself is conceptual, offers up 'what could be taken to be the case'. And when Hegel speaks of reason finding itself in the world, of there being every-where in the world, 'the Logos', he can be taken merely to be reiterating the founding principle of Greek rationalism: that to be is to be intelligible; there is nothing in principle unintelligible. Or in the Tractarian language McDowell sometimes invokes, thought does not 'stop short' of the world; a way of thinking about an object (a Shm) is not an intermediary entity between us and the referents of thought; it is a way of see- ing the world.) There is still plenty of substantive content and empirical guidedness in experience on such a picture. The claim is only, again, that thought's relation to such objects cannot be secured or even intentionally planned down, by the deliverances of sensibility alone. The broadest way to restate the point is simply that the domain of the normative—in this case what ought to be claimed—is autonomous. (This is Hegel's chief 'metaphysical point', even though it is not a point in a substantialist metaphysics.) Principles constraining what we ought to believe, what we take to be possible, what we think we ought to do are wholly independent of claims about how the mind works or what people generally do or what the received world determines us to think. How appreciated this point in the deepest way and built his whole philosophy around it.

With all that said though, if the conceptual is unbounded, the normative domain autonomous, what is the non-metaphorical meaning of the notion of the Concept's 'self-determination' or 'unboundedness'? But that question depends on another. So formulated, it is not a sort of unification of Kantian and Hegelian versions of the Concept of the Understanding. What is at issue is whether Kant's concept of the 'pure understanding' is autonomous in the way Hegel's concept of the 'pure understanding' is autonomous in itself. Is the Concept of the Understanding autonomous in the way Kant and Hegel think it is autonomous? Is it a new sort of unification?

VI

The most expansive summary of such claims is that the _forms of judgement_, the _forms of thought_, are the _forms of experience_, of objects and events. (Not that they correspond one to the other; that would be realism. One is the other, as in identity philosophy and Kant's Highest Principle of Synthetic Judgments.) At this extreme altitude one is reminded of similar controversial claims by Wittgenstein in the _Tractatus_, as at 5.6, 'the limits of my language mean the limits of my world', something Wittgenstein provocatively calls 'the truth in solipsism', and expands in 5.61 as 'We cannot think what we cannot think; so we cannot think what we cannot say either.' Although Wittgenstein appears to be talking only about what Kant would call general logic, the point at issue is a broad one and has been put in all sorts of uses. There are parallels in the distinct uses by Wittgenstein of 'my' and 'we' and Kant's 'subject of experience' and 'subjective' (and the 'I' in the 'I think' that must be able to accompany all 'my representations'). For both, these terms refer to nothing in the world, but express the limits of the world, set the limits of what could be a world. Any encounter with anything in the world would presuppose, could not 'discover', such a subject. The subject is not one more object in the world somehow containing all else.

For both as well, since this last point means that the basic statement of idealism involves no reference to an empirical psychological or actual social subject (as no species, as Bernard Williams notes, of any sort of 'Whorfian' claim about language and worldviews), or idealism is not invoked here as an explanation, the form of thought or the form of language does not explain 'why we experience the world as we do', the claim threatens to seem either a tautology or, at a deeper level, much more unusual; something, but not even a possible claim at all. The first danger is clear enough. The basic statement appears to say: that which we can understand and state, we can understand and state; that which we cannot, we cannot. (This danger is evident in interpretations of Kant as 'restricting' knowledge to our epistemic conditions. Any view like this which is not a tautology threatens to introduce a substantive or empirical subject and thus a substantive or material or psychological notion of 'limit'. That Kant can give this impression is what Hegel most of all is objecting to in his famous attack on the notion of 'limit' or finitude.)

The latter possibility, that the basic statement is not a claim at all, but still shows us something, appears to be the way Wittgenstein understands it. Putting it this way reflects a response to a deep problem in any statement of a non-metaphysical idealism. One statement of such a post-Kantian idealism asserts a dependence of sorts (what sort being the heart of the matter) between the form of that to which our representations answer and some aspect of our representing capacities, or, in a version that raises the tautology problem, a dependence between the form of objects-known and the form of our knowledge. Hegel's explanation of his own 'identity philosophy' statements and so prefers an idealism claim according to which the conceptual is unbounded and self-determining. But in either case, it is obvious that this dependence (or identity) cannot itself be one of the objects to which representations answer. If it were so formulated it would be false. But we need to be able to explain our purchase on something like the worldliness of the world, the possibility of a world of experience, in a way that does not make such a target for something our representations could answer to, could be a feature of the world. Just calling this dimension transcendental does not help much. Hence the understandable emphasis on 'showing'.

But thus opens a potential disanalogy between Kant and Wittgenstein. How wide a disanalogy and what the relevance is for Hegel are challenging questions. For Wittgenstein, coming to understand what, say, 'comprehending the meaning of a term' amounts to for us, is not an empirical report on how we go on, not an element of a socio-linguistics. It is simply coming to understand what comprehending the meaning
of a term or a rule could be. (The Kantian parallel would be all that being an object of our experience could be.) Even though Wittgenstein later seems to entertain the possibility of being minded other than we are, his point seems to be to show ultimately that there couldn’t (intelligibly) be beings minded other than us. If we insist: “But the impossibility of entertaining such other-mindedness holds only by our lights, for us,” then we have not understood what was just explained: that there is no we or I in the world ‘for’ which things are; that the point of introducing the notion of ‘true’ forms of thought is to help us see that there could be nothing else but ‘ours,’ if forms of thought. The truth in solipsism, in a famous Wittgensteinian twist reminiscent of Hegel’s style, is the truth of realism; the ‘we’ in Jonathan Lear’s phrase, is a ‘disappearing we.’ Kant’s idealism is a robust empirical realism; imagining an intuitive, not a discursive intelligence does not render our forms of thought ‘limits’ beyond which there is something in principle knowable, but not knowable by us. The world created by the divine intellect in thinking it is the same world as the world we know, even if God knows it in more dimensions and in a different way. (The main difference: he knows it all at once as it were; our knowledge is partial and infinitely additive.) So, in the commonsense way the issue is sometimes put: if the question is, ‘How could we possibly imagine that there can be no gap between “all-that-is-knowable” and “our capacity for knowledge”?’ the answer is not a demonstration or a deduction that there could not be such a gap, nor is it to misunderstand the question as if it were about empirical capacities. (It is a ridiculous game, of no philosophical interest, to speculate about the possibility that the human brain may never be able to understand, say, the nature of consciousness.) The right response is to focus on the confusion implicit in the suggestion that there is some real referent of the ‘ours’ in ‘our capacity for knowledge.’ If it is a capacity for knowledge, it is not merely ‘ours.’ Or, in Rorty’s apt phrase, the skeptical worry about what might be the world in itself, considered independently of any way we might know it, is a ‘world-well-lost.’ But here the disanalogy (with Kant and ultimately with Hegel) begins. Wittgenstein clearly does not want the limits of language to be the sort of limit which has another side, a limit like a fence or a barrier. Yet a phrase like ‘the limits of my language’ does imply a restriction of some sort. That is why the Wittgenstein version of the basic claim is not a tautology, even if not a claim in the normal sense (not, perhaps it would be clearer to say, an explanation of the forms of things by appeal to the forms of thought; this is the same sense in which the claim that mindlessness requires a ‘spontaneity’ is not pointing to a non-causal power in order to offer explanations of mental activities).

There is a point at which nonsense begins, something we could not make sense of but can recognize as nonsensical. This restriction, however, suggests no unknowable world, is only available from the inside, as Williams puts it by ‘finding our way around inside our own view, feeling our way out to the points at which we begin to lose our hold on it (or it, its hold on us) and things begin to be hopelessly strange to us.’


has become justly famous: the ‘bound of sense’ (a phrase Strawson most definitely did not think of as a version of idealism, a limit claim—that it isn’t and needn’t be is his whole point).

Kant does not seem to think of things this way and does seem to use the notion of a limit as a barrier with another side, for which he was famously taken to task by Hegel. (One has to struggle the limit, stand on both sides, to understand it as a limit in this sense. In which case it is not a limit in that sense.) Given all of this sympathy by Hegel with these sorts of critiques of limit notions, does this mean that we should understand Hegel’s ‘idealism’ to be as little a substantive claim as Wittgenstein’s, a way of showing the disappearance of the relevance of any ‘we’?

It is when we face the issue of the determinateness of what are claimed to be candidates for the enabling forms of thought, and the unavailability of the Kantian separable forms of intuition, that a new form of ‘transcendence,’ one might call it, emerges, the ‘power of the negative’ that forms the heart and soul of the Phenomenology (the ‘pathway of doubt and despair’). That is, to take the quickest route to the issue in Hegel, if a condition for possible objective purport is some sort of projection of possibility, conditions which cannot be accounted for empirically or deduced by pure reason from the possibility of thought at all, normative constraints on what could be conceptual content at all, then we must also have some way of taking into account that the normative authority of such principles not only cannot be established once and for all by a deduction, but that this authority also can break down (internally) and has broken down historically. And we must be able to do this without objectifying, psychologizing, or sociologizing such collective subjectivity. That is, the breakdown involves an experience of partiality and incompleteness, not anything like alternate conceptual schemes and so alternate worlds. Given the inseparability claim, the reassurance we can be said to require given this possibility and this fact cannot at all be the very general and vague reassurance that objects, considered independently of such conditions, can be said to fit or match what we require. But this does not mean that there is no problem to resolve, not least according to many passages in the Phenomenology’s Introduction. In what

8 See the linguistic formulation by Moore, Points of View, 119: ‘At a more general level, we cannot represent limits to what we can represent. Nor if we cannot represent anything beyond these limits, than we cannot represent our not being able to represent anything beyond those limits.’ I don’t think Moore gets the relation between these claims and the Kantian idealism tradition in proper focus, because he (admittedly) passes over the important transcendental-transcendental distinction in Kant. See Points of View, 112 n. 3. (By the late 1970s, though, the distinction is a deep hold on his own enterprise in the last third of his book, where he distinguishes between a reflective level of analysis wherein his own basic assumption does not hold, and absolute representations as impossible, and a ‘transcendental’ level wherein the assumption does hold and absolute representations are possible. The connection with Kant and Hegel is over the claim that the former sort of knowledge is unacceptable. There is no greater opponent of inductability in the history of philosophy than Hegel.)

9 There is still a lot to say here. If Wittgenstein is taken sensus strictus, he is talking about general logic in many of these passages, and pointing to the limits of what is logically expressible is not pointing to a real limit, but more seems to be at stake especially in Philosophical Investigations. Cf. Williams comments on how Wittgenstein’s position is naturally driven to some sort of statement of transcendental idealism which must be false by its own lights (‘Wittgenstein and Idealism,’ 16).
we might call 'normal' experience, within what Hegel names a 'shape of spirit', there are norms which cannot be questioned because they are the basis for the possibility of any questioning, norms which both Hegel and Wittgenstein say we are 'certain' of. That consciousness is direct and immediately presented with determinate objects which it can pick out and refer to indexically is not a theory or claim. It is more like a picture of what experience might be, what the mind–world relation is. As noted, this is not a claim about the mind–world relation, as if about another object in the world. That such a form of thought is the form of objects in such a context must function as a platitude. And Hegel 'examines' its sufficiency, he says, by 'watching', looking on, as an experience so shaped could be imagined trying to say what it knows. It cannot, and another picture is introduced.

One is tempted to say that this is a Hegelian response to a 'skepticism' problem and various schemes. Hegel was tempted to say it that way, and occasionally succumbed to such a temptation. But that is a misleading formulation of the issue, suggesting as it inevitably does a perspective 'outside' ordinary empirical and ethical claims, from which the very possibility of such claims can be established. But the *Phenomenology* remains phenomenological throughout, and this means that Hegel treats the way 'consciousness suffers violence at its own hands' as part of what it is to have experience at all (and that means to have a world at all), to be responsive to failures of practices of justification and legitimation, described as if from the inside, to stay with that image.

To be sure, in the Consciousness–Self–Consciousness–Reason chapters, Hegel is presenting an idealized picture of the education of consciousness about its own possibility, and so the self–negation is idealized, but the point towards which such education leads is a final corollary of sorts to the inseparability of mind and world that was the key point in Hegel's appropriation of Kant's deduction. This inseparability does not mean that transcendental logic, established by philosophical method, simply subjectively constitutes what the form of objects could be. The Hegelian direction, with respect to his infamous 'identity' claim, goes the other way. Inseparability for Hegel means that a logic interwoven in a form of life, a form of actual, historical life, cannot be rightly understood in abstraction from, separate from, the 'life' it regulates, and these forms or norms fail or break down in time, in some way lose their grip within such a form of life as a whole, such that all philosophy can be is 'its own time comprehended in thought.'