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# On Hegel's Claim that Self-Consciousness is 'Desire Itself'

**('Begierde überhaupt')**

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# I

One of Hegel's main concerns in the revolutionary book he wrote in Jena while only in his thirties, his Phenomenology of Spirit, is a familiar modern philosophical concern: the attempt to understand the various competencies involved in distinctly human sapience and agency, and, especially the complex inter-relations among all such competencies. So there are in the book accounts of sensory receptivity, perception, judgment, generalization, inference, self-consciousness, nomic necessity, justification, as well as of intention, purpose, practical reason, linguistic community and sociality in general. Hegel's account is unusual in that it is conducted via a procedure he invented, a "phenomenology," or a "science of the experience of consciousness."[1] This new procedure at the very minimum and somewhat crudely summarized involved imagining possible experiences restricted to one or some set of competencies, or in some specific relation, and then demonstrating by a series of essentially reductio ad absurdum arguments that such an imagined experience really could not be a possible or coherent experience, thus requiring some addition or alteration to the imagined picture, and so a new possibility to be entertained. Eventually such a testing of some model of experience became so detailed and rich that it amounted to an examination of the possibility and viability of a whole historical form of life, a historical experience.

So far, this should sound unusual but, aside from Hegel's highly idiosyncratic innovations in philosophical German, comprehensible and "trackable" in the text. But there is a point in the progression of topics where puzzlement can easily become complete bafflement. It occurs in the fourth chapter on "self-consciousness" when he suddenly says: "Self-consciousness is desire itself (Begierde überhaupt)." I want to try to understand the meaning and philosophical motivation for this claim.

Since the topics of self-consciousness, together with another to which it is deeply linked, freedom, are far and away the most important topics in what we call German Idealism, I propose to begin with the introduction of the idea of the centrality of self-consciousness in human sapience by Immanuel Kant.

## II

Kant held that what distinguishes an object in our experience from the mere subjective play of representations is rule-governed unity. His famous definition of an object is just "that in the concept of which a manifold is united." (B137) This means that consciousness itself must be understood as a discriminating, unifying activity, essentially as judging, and not as the passive recorder of sensory impressions. His main interest in the argument of the deduction was to show first that the rules in question cannot be wholly empirical rules, all derived from experience, that there must be rules for such rules that cannot be derived, or pure concepts of the understanding, and secondly that these non-derived rules have genuine objective validity, are not subjective impositions on an independently received manifold, that the a priori prescribed "synthetic unity of consciousness" "…is not merely a condition that I myself require in knowing an object, but is a condition under which any intuition must stand in order to become an object for me." (B138) Kant seems to realize that he gives the impression that for him consciousness is a two-step process; the reception of sensory data, and then the conceptualization of such data, but he works hard in the pursuit of the second desideratum to disabuse his readers of that impression.

Aside from some Kant scholars, there are not many philosophers who still believe that Kant proved in this argument that we possess synthetic a priori knowledge, although there is wide admiration for the power of Kant's arguments about, at least, causality and substance. But there remains a great deal of interest in his basic picture of the nature of conscious mindedness. For the central component of his account, judgment, is not a mental event that merely happens, as if causally triggered into its synthetic activity by sensory stimuli. Judging is an activity undertaken, sustained and resolved by a subject and that means that it is normatively structured (the rules of judgment are rules about what ought to be judged, how our experience ought to be organized, not rules describing how we do judge) and, to come to the point of contact with Hegel that is the subject of the following, judging and so consciousness must be inherently reflective or apperceptive. (I cannot be undertaking an activity, trying to get it right in making up my mind, without in some sense knowing I am undertaking it.) So all consciousness is inherently, though rarely explicitly, self-conscious. But what could be meant by "inherently," or "in some sense knowing I am undertaking it"? In what sense am I in a relation to myself in any conscious relation to an object, especially if, to adopt Sartrean language, it is "non-thetic," not a two place intentional relation?[2]

Hegel's own most famous discussion of these issues is found in the first four chapters of his 1807 Phenomenology of Spirit. The first three chapters of that book are grouped together under the heading "Consciousness" and the fourth chapter is called simply "Self-Consciousness." (That fourth chapter has only one sub-section, called "The Truth of Self-Certainty" and that will be the focus of the following discussion.[3]) Accordingly, especially given the extraordinarily sweeping claims Hegel makes about his indebtedness to the Kantian doctrine of apperception[4], one would expect that these sections have something to do with the Kantian points noted

above, and so with the issue of the self-conscious character of experience and the conditions for the possibility of experience so understood. But there has been a lot of understandable controversy about the relation between the first three chapters and the fourth. Since the fourth chapter discusses desire, life, a struggle to the death for recognition between opposed subjects, and a resulting Lord-Bondsman social structure, it has not been easy to see how the discussion of sense-certainty, perception and the understanding is being continued. Some very influential commentators, like Kojève, pay almost no attention in to the first three chapters. They write as if we should isolate the chapter on Self-Consciousness as a free-standing philosophical anthropology, a theory of the inherently violent and class-riven nature of human sociality. (There are never simply human beings in Kojève's account. They are only Masters and Slaves.) Others argue that in Chapter Four, Hegel simply changes the subject to the problem of sociality. We can see why it might be natural for him to change the subject at this point, but it is a different subject. (Having introduced the necessary role of self-consciousness in consciousness, Hegel understandably changes the topic to focused questions like: what is self-consciousness? What is a self? What is it to be a being for which things can be, to use Brandom's language, who offers his won version of the change-of-subject interpretation.) More recently, some commentators, like John McDowell and Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, have argued that there is actually neither a new beginning nor a shift in topics in Chapter Four. In McDowell's treatment (which I will concentrate on later) the problem remains just the one that emerged in the first three chapters: how to understand the right "equipoise" between independence and dependence in the relations between subjects and objects. What appear to be the orectic and social issues of Chapter Four are "figures" or analogies for what remains the problem of the mind's passive dependence on objects and active independence of them in our experience of the world, in just the sense sketched above in the summary of Kant (i.e. neither subjective imposition, nor merely passive receptive dependence). So for McDowell, by "desire" Hegel does not mean to introduce the topic of desire as a necessary element in the understanding of consciousness itself (as the text would seem to imply). Rather, says McDowell, " 'Desire überhaupt' functions as a figure for the general idea of negating otherness, by appropriating or consuming, incorporating into oneself what at first figures as merely other."[5] And "life," the next topic in the chapter, is said to exemplify the structure of der Begriff; let us say: the basic logical structure of all sense-making.[6] The struggle to the death for recognition is said to be an "allegory" and so forth. And McDowell asserts that Chapter Four does not yet introduce the issue of sociality at all, despite the famous phrase there about the new presence of an "I that is a We and a We that is an I."

This interpretation has the very great virtue of preserving a connection with the first three chapters, but, I will argue, it is a forced interpretation, insensitive to the radicality of what Hegel actually proposes. I want to argue that Hegel means what he says when he says that self-consciousness is "desire überhaupt" and means that to be relevant to the question of the apperceptive nature of consciousness itself.[7]

Here stated all at once is the thesis I would like to attribute to Hegel. (That is, in Chapter Four. The entire book is a meditation on self-consciousness, on the becoming self-consciousness of Geist.) I think that Hegel's position is that we misunderstand all dimensions of self-consciousness, from apperceptive awareness, to simple, explicit reflection on myself, to practical self-knowledge of my own so-called "identity," by considering any form of it as in any way observational or inferential or immediate or any sort of two-place intentional relation. However we come to know anything about ourselves (or whatever it is we take for granted about ourselves in attending to the world), it is not by observing an object, nor by conceptualizing an inner intuition, nor by any immediate self-certainty. From the minimal sense of being aware of being determinately conscious at all (of judging), to complex avowals of who I am, of my own identity and deep commitments, Hegel, I want to say, treats self-consciousness as (i) a practical achievement of some sort. Such a relation must be understood as the result of an attempt, never, as it certainly seems to be, as an immediate presence of the self to itself, and it often requires some sort of striving, even struggle. It, in all its forms, is some mode of mindedness that we must achieve, and that must mean: can fail to achieve and once having achieved can lose. It is nothing like turning the mind's eye inward to inspect itself. It seems very hard to understand why anyone would think that my awareness, say, not just of the lecture I am giving, but whatever kind of awareness I have that I am in the process of giving a lecture should involve any such practical activity. It seems so effortless to be so self-aware; there is no felt desire or striving or struggle involved, and as a report of what seems to me to be the case, it even appears incorrigible. But Hegel wants to claim that as soon as we properly see the error of holding that the self in any self-awareness is immediately present to an inspecting mind, his own interpretation is just thereby implied. (If the self's relation to itself cannot be immediate or direct, the conclusion that it is some sort of to-be-achieved follows for him straightforwardly.)[8] And (ii) he sees such an attempt and achievement as necessarily involving a relation to other people, as inherently social. Why, though, should other people be involved in the intimacy and privacy that characterize my relation to myself?[9]

The central passage where the putative "practical turn" in the PhG takes place is this one.

But this opposition between its appearance and its truth has only the truth for its essence, namely, the unity of self-consciousness with itself. This unity must become essential to self-consciousness, which is to say, self-consciousness is desire itself. (¶167) ("Begierde überhaupt," which could also be translated as "desire in general," or "desire, generally." I am following here Terry Pinkard's translation.)

The passage presupposes a larger issue – the way Hegel has come to discuss the double nature of consciousness (consciousness of an object, a this-such, and the non-positional consciousness or implicit awareness of my taking it to be this-such)[10] and so the opposition, or, as he says, the "negativity" this introduces within consciousness, the fact that consciousness is not simply absorbed into ("identified with") its contents,

but "it is and is not" committed to what it thinks.[11] To understand this, we need the following passage from the Introduction.

However, consciousness is for itself its concept, and as a result it immediately goes beyond the restriction, and, since this restriction belongs to itself, it goes beyond itself too. (¶80)[12]

He is actually making two claims here. The first is the premise of his inference: that "consciousness is for itself its concept." If we understand this properly, we will understand why he feels entitled to the inference, the "and as a result," the claim that consciousness is immediately "beyond" any restriction it sets "for itself." He means to say that normative standards and proprieties at play in human consciousness are "consciousness's own," are followed by a subject, are not psychological laws of thought. This is his version of the Kantian principle that persons are subject to no law or norm other than ones they have subjected themselves to. (This is what is packed into the "for itself" here.) This does not mean either in Kant or in Hegel that there are episodes of self-subjection or explicit acts of allegiance or anything as ridiculous as all that; just that norms governing what we think and do can be said to govern thought and action only in so far as subjects accept such constraints and sustain allegiance; they follow the rules, are not governed by them. How the allegiance gets instituted and how it can lose its grip are matters Hegel is very interested in, but it has nothing to do with individuals deciding about allegiances at moments of time. Or, to invoke Kant again, knowers and doers are not explicable as beings subject to laws of nature (although as also ordinary objects, they are so subject), but by appeal to their representation of laws and self-subjection to them.

And he means this to apply in ordinary cases of perceptual knowledge too. If I want to know what color a tie is, I shouldn't decide in my tie shop's poor light, but take it outside. I do these things because I know what I ought to do in order to see properly; and "knowing how to see properly" is "consciousness being for itself its own concept." I know what would count as good perceptual reasons for an empirical claim. This is all not to mention that the concepts involved in organizing our visual field are also norms prescribing how the visual field ought to be organized and so they do not function like fixed physiological dispositions. Finally, since the principles involved guide my behavior or conclusions only in so far as they are accepted and followed, they can prove themselves inadequate, and lose their grip. This is what Hegel means in the conclusion of his inference by saying that consciousness "immediately goes beyond this restriction." It is always "beyond " any norm in the sense that it is not, let us say, stuck with such a restriction as a matter of psychological fact; consciousness is always in a position to alter norms for correct perception, inferring, law-making or right action. Perception of course involves physiological processes that are species-identical across centuries and cultures, but perceptual knowledge also involves norms for attentiveness, discrimination, unification, exclusion and conceptual organization that do not function like physiological laws. And so (as Hegel says, "as a result') we should be said to stand always by them and yet also "beyond them." (This can all still seem to introduce far too much normative variability into a process, perception, that seems all

much more a matter of physiological fact. But while Hegel certainly accepts that the physiological components of perception are distinguishable from the norm-following or interpretive elements, he also insists that they are inseparable in perception itself. As in Heidegger's phenomenology, there are not two stages to perception; as if a perception of a white rectangular solid which is then "interpreted as" a refrigerator. What we see is a refrigerator.)

The second dimension of this claim from ¶80 concerns how such consciousness is "beyond itself" in another way. Besides the claim that consciousness, as he says, "negates" what it is presented with, does not merely take in but determines what is the case, the claim is also that ordinary, everyday consciousness is always "going beyond itself," never wholly absorbed in what it is attending to, never simply or only in a perceptual state, but always resolving its own conceptual activity; and this in a way that means it can be said both to be self-affirming, issuing in judgments and imperatives, but also potentially "self-negating," aware that what it resolves to be the case might not be the case. It somehow "stands above" what it also affirms, to use an image that Hegel sometimes invokes. It adds to the interpretive problems to cite his canonical formulation of this point, but it might help us see how important it is for his whole position and why he is using language terms like "negativity" for consciousness itself. (Such terminology is the key explicans for his eventual claim that self-conscious consciousness is desire.) This is from the "Phenomenology" section of the last version of his Encyclopedia (The "Berlin Phenomenology" again).

> The I is now this subjectivity, this infinite relation to itself, but therein, namely in this subjectivity, lies its negative relation to itself, diremption, differentiation, judgment. The I judges, and this constitutes it as consciousness; it repels itself from itself; this is a logical determination. (BPhG, 2, my emphasis)

The large question to which Hegel thinks we have been brought to by his account of consciousness in the first three chapters is: just what is it for a being to be not just a recorder of the world's impact on one's sense, but to be for itself in its engagements with objects? What is it in general for a being to be for itself, for "itself to be at issue for it in its relation with what is not it"? (This is the problem that arose with the "Kantian" revelation in the Understanding chapter of the PhG that, in trying to get to the real nature of the essence of appearances, "understanding experiences only itself," which, he says, raises the problem: "the cognition of what consciousness knows in knowing itself requires a still more complex movement." (¶167, m.e.) ) This is the fundamental issue being explored in Chapter Four. That the basic structure of the Kantian account is preserved until this point is clear from:

> With that first moment, self-consciousness exists as consciousness, and the whole breadth of the sensuous world is preserved for it, but at the same time only as related to the second moment, the unity of self-consciousness with itself. (¶167)[13]

This passage and indeed all of ¶167 indicate that Hegel does have in mind a response to the problem of a self-conscious consciousness (of the whole breadth of the sensible world) developed in the first three chapters (what is the relation to itself inherent in any possible relation to objects?), and that he insists on a common sense acknowledgement that whatever account we give of a self-determining self-consciousness, it is not a wholly autonomous or independent self-relating; the "sensuous world" must be preserved.

But he then suddenly makes a much more controversial, pretty much unprepared for, and not a all recognizably Kantian, claim.

But this opposition between its appearance and its truth has only the truth for its essence, namely, the unity of self-consciousness with itself. This unity must become essential to self-consciousness, which is to say, self-consciousness is desire itself. (¶167)

Hegel is talking about an "opposition" between appearance and truth here because he has, in his own words, just summarized the issue of consciousness's "negative" relation to the world and itself this way.

Otherness thereby exists for it as a being, that is, as a distinguished moment, but, for it, it is also the unity of itself with this distinction as a second distinguished moment. (¶167)

That is, consciousness may be said to affirm a judgment, but since it has thereby negated any putative immediate certainty, since it is also always "beyond itself," its eventual "unity with itself," its satisfaction that what it takes the be the case is the case and can be integrated with everything else it takes to be case and has been judged by the relevant norm, requires the achievement of a "unity with itself," not any immediate certainty. (This is his echo of the Kantian point that the unity of apperception must be achieved; contents must be "brought" to the unity of apperception.)

But still, at this point, the gloss he gives on the claim that "self-consciousness is desire" is not much help. The gloss is, as if an appositive, "This [the unity of self consciousness with itself] "must become essential to self-consciousness, which is to say, etc." The first hint of a practical turn emerges just here when Hegel implies that we need to understand self-consciousness as a unity to be achieved, that there is some "opposition" between self-consciousness and itself, a kind of self-estrangement, which, he seems to be suggesting, we are moved to overcome. The unity of self-consciousness with itself "mu*ß* ihm wesentlich werden," must become essential to the experiencing subject, a practical turn of phrase that in effect almost unnoticed serves as the pivot around which the discussion turns suddenly practical. (As we shall see, it eventually does "become essential" as a result of a putative encounter with another and opposing self-conscious being. And it is clearly practical in the sense in which we might say to someone, "You're wasting chances for advancement; your career must become essential to you.")

In the next paragraph he brings these themes together in the following way.

Self-consciousness, which is utterly for itself and which immediately marks its object with the character of the negative, that is, which is initially

desire, will thus learn even more so from experience about this object's self-sufficiency. (¶168)

Since the self-conscious aspect of ordinary empirical consciousness is much more like a self-determination, or one could say a resolve or a committing oneself (what Fichte called a self-positing) than a simple self-observation or direct awareness, he begins again to discuss consciousness as a "negation" of the world's independence and otherness. We are overcoming the indeterminacy, opacity, foreignness, potential confusion and disconnectedness of what we are presented with by resolving what belongs together with what, tracking objects through changes and so forth.[14] Hegel then makes another unexpected move when suggests that we consider the most uncomplicated and straightforward experience of just this striving or orectic for-itself-ness, what he calls life.

By way of this reflective turn into itself, the object has become life. What self-consciousness distinguishes from itself as existing also has in it, insofar as it is posited as existing, not merely the modes of sense-certainty and perception. It is being which is reflected into itself, and the object of immediate desire is something living…(¶168)

This is the most basic experience[15] of what it is to be at issue for oneself as one engages the world. Objects are not merely external existents, "not merely the modes of sense-certainty and perception" (although they are also that) but now also, in order to move beyond the empty formality of "I am the I who is thinking these thoughts") they are considered as objects for the living subject, as threats to, means to, or indifferent to such life-sustaining. This brute or simple for-itself quality of living consciousness (which form of self-relation we share with animals) will not remain the focus of Hegel's interest for long, but, if it is becoming plausible that Hegel is indeed trying to extend the issue raised in the Consciousness section (and neither changing the subject, nor repeating the problem and desideratum in a figurative way) it already indicates what was just suggested: that he is moving quickly away from Kant's transcendental-formal account of the apperceptive nature of consciousness. The I is "for itself" in consciousness for Kant only in the sense that the I (whoever of whatever it is) must be able to accompany all my representations. The world is experienced as categorically ordered because I in some sense order it (I think it) and that activity is not merely triggered into operation by the sense contents of experience. It is undertaken, but I do so only in the broad formal sense of temporally unifying the contents of consciousness, bringing everything under the unity of a formally conceived apperceptive I. (Every content must be such that one continuous I can think it.) The "I" is just the unity effected. The subject's relation to objects is a self-relation only in this sense, and Hegel has introduced what seems like a different and at first arbitrary shift in topics to my sustaining my own life as the basic or first or most primary model of this self-relation, not merely sustaining the distinction between successions of representations and a representation of succession.

It is not arbitrary because Hegel has objected, and will continue to object throughout his career, to any view of the "I" in "I think" as such a formal indicator of the "the I or he or it" which thinks. In Hegel's contrasting view,

while we can make a general point about the necessity for unity in experience by abstracting from any determination of such a subject and go on to explore the conditions of such unity, we will not get very far in specifying such conditions without, let us say, more determination already in the notion of the subject of experience. This criticism is tied to what was by far the most widespread dissatisfaction with Kant's first Critique (which Hegel shared) and which remains today its greatest weakness: the arbitrariness of Kant's Table of Categories, the fact that he has no way of deducing from "the 'I think' must be able to accompany all my representations" what the I must think, what forms it must employ, in thinking its representations. The emptiness of Kant's "I" is directly linked to the ungroundedness and arbitrariness of his Table of Categories.[16]

However, understanding this charge would take us deep into Hegel's criticisms of Kantian formality. What we need now is a clearer sense of what Hegel is proposing, not so much what he is rejecting. Let me first complete a brief summary of the themes in Chapter Four (once we begin reading it this way) and then turn again to McDowell's objections to such a reading and to his alternative.

As we have seen, if a self-conscious consciousness, is to be understood as striving in some way then the most immediate embodiment of such a striving would be a self's attention to itself as a living being.[17] That is how it is immediately for itself in relation to other objects. Living beings, like animals, do not live in the way non-living beings (like rocks or telephones) merely exist; they must strive to stay alive. Life must be led, sustained and this gap between my present life and what I must do to sustain it in the future is what is meant by calling consciousness desire as lack or gap, and so a negation of objects as impediments. If consciousness and desire can be linked as closely as Hegel wants to (that is, identified) then consciousness is not an isolatable registering and responding capacity of the living being that is conscious. And if this all can be established then we will at this step have moved far away from considering a self-conscious consciousness as a kind of spectator of the passing show and moved closer to considering it as an engaged, practical being, whose practical satisfaction of desire is essential to understanding the way the world originally makes sense to it, is intelligible at all. (Obviously this claim has some deep similarities with the way Heidegger insists that Dasein's unique mode of being-in-the-world is Sorge, or care and with Heidegger's constant insistence that this has nothing to do with a subject projecting its pragmatic concerns onto a putatively neutral, directly apprehended content.)

At points Hegel tries to move away from very general and abstract points about living beings and desire and to specify the distinctive character of desire that counts as "self-consciousness," as was claimed in his identification. He wants, that is, to distinguish actions that are merely the natural expression of desire, and a corresponding form of self-consciousness that is a mere sentiment of self, from actions undertaken in order to satisfy a desire, the actions of a being that does not just embody its self-sentiment but can be said to act on such a self-conception. He wants to distinguish between natural or animal desire from human desire and so tries to

distinguish a cycle of desires and satisfactions that continually arise and subside in animals from beings for whom their desires can be objects of attention, issues at stake, reasons to be acted on or not. He then identifies a further condition for this distinction that is perhaps the most famous claim in the Phenomenology.

It is this one."Self-consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness." (¶175). He specifies this in an equally famous passage from ¶178. "Self-consciousness exists in and for itself because and by way of its existing in and for itself for an other; i.e., it exists only as recognized."

## III

Before addressing the "distinctly human desire" and sociality claims, let me pause here and return to the objections McDowell has made to this sort of reading and to his alternative interpretation. He says that in the crucial Begierde passage of ¶167, "There is no suggestion here of anything as specific as a mode of consciousness that has its objects in view only in so far as they can be seen as conducive or obstructive to its purposes,"[18] and he says that I take the notion of desire "too literally." My response is of course that there is no question of a more or less literal understanding; that by using the word desire, Hegel simply means to introduce the topic of desire as a continuation of his discussion of consciousness, and goes on in that register, discussing life as the object of desire, the conflict between desiring beings, and ultimately the impossibility of understanding a subject's relation to itself and the world apart from that subject's relation to other subjects.[19] McDowell's argument against this reading is for the most part comprised of an alternate reading that he suggests is more plausible.

It is true, as McDowell says, that there is a "structural" issue at stake. Hegel is continuing to try to show why the "negation" of the object's otherness cannot be simple annihilation (or "subjective imposition"), whether the object is external or internal. Such an other must be aufgehoben, preserved as well as negated. but McDowell interprets all of this as a mind-world or intra-psychic issue, where the latter issue remains self-consciousness's relation to itself, and especially to the deliverances of its own sensible faculties. This all correctly isolates what McDowell calls the structure at issue in the discussion but it unnecessarily formalizes and so thins out what Hegel is talking about, such that desire, life and negation get no purchase in McDowell's account except as exemplifications of structure. As far as I can see, on McDowell's reading Hegel is simply repeating with several figures, exemplifications and illustrations, and even "allegories," the desiderata we now know we need at the conclusion of the first three chapters. I don't see how his account shows us Hegel advancing his argument; it all seems the repetition of the same point, and the point remains a desideratum.

Even in his account of the intra-psychic issue McDowell is considering, Hegel has already set things so up so that self-consciousness cannot, let us say, find itself (or its "unity" with the deliverances of its sensibility) "inside itself." The self-relation in relation to an object that has emerged as a topic from the first three chapters is not a relation to an object of any kind, and so involves no grasp of anything. When Hegel had declared that in the understanding's relation of objects, the understanding discovers only itself, it would distort Hegel's understanding of what has been achieved to import the model of consciousness in any sense, whatever equipoise is suggested between subject and object in consciousness. According to Hegel, such a self-regard is always transparent and a projection "outward," and therein lies the essential negative or going-beyond itself moment in Hegel's account. In reporting what I think (even to myself), I am not reporting anything about me, but what I take to be true, and in being aware of what I desire, of a desirous me, I am not reporting an affective state but thereby avowing a

possible project of action in the world[20], and it is in the world that the natural cycle of desire or need and satisfaction will be, later in the account, interrupted in a way of decisive importance for the rest of the PhG.

I want to talk about such sociality in a moment, but to anticipate, McDowell complains that when Hegel makes his well-known claim in ¶175 that "self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness," he cannot mean to begin describing an encounter with another person because that would leave the original puzzlement still a puzzle. That problem was, in Hegelese, the otherness of the sensible world and how to overcome it (in the simple sense know it, but without turning it into an idea). All that seems bypassed, he thinks, if we treat "another self-consciousness" as a second person. "…hat has happened to 'the whole expanse of the sensible world'?"[21] McDowell asks. He therefore concludes that "another self-consciousness" in "self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness," must still be referring to a singular self-consciousness, now aware of itself as self-conscious.[22]

But Hegel has always been clear that he is interested throughout in a self-relation in relation to objects. That problem has not disappeared. It has been reformulated in terms of the objects of desire for a living, desiring self-conscious consciousness. And Hegel specifically alerts us that we should not think of the whole expanse of the sensible world, although still "there," in the same way as before.

What self-consciousness distinguishes from itself as existing also has in it, insofar as it is posited as existing, not merely the modes of sense-certainty and perception. It is being which is reflected into itself, and the object of immediate desire is something living…(¶168, m.e.)

And there is no reason to think that his early formulation will remain Hegel's last word. The problem of the status of the sensible world in consciousness's self-relation in relation to an object will recur again, formulated at a higher level, in the discussion of Observing Reason. In this chapter, having shown phenomenologically the necessity of an account of such a self-relation, Hegel is concentrating mainly on that. He has not forgotten the sensory world.

Finally and briefly, McDowell takes on the toughest passage for his reading ¶177, where Hegel says that in this chapter the "Begriff of spirit is already present for us," that a "self-consciousness exists for a self-consciousness" (I note that Hegel says ein Selbstbewusstsein exists for ein Selbstbewusstsein) and he signals the arrival on the phenomenological scene of an "I that is a we and a we that is an I." McDowell says two things here. One is that in this remark about spirit being present for us, Hegel makes clear that by "spirit" he merely means (at this point) an object that 'is just as much I as object," that we have left behind an objectifying notion of a self or subject. Another is that Hegel could be read as just previewing coming attractions, noting the full phenomenology of Geist's experience of itself will come later.[23]

It is true that Hegel stresses here that the self of self-consciousness is not an object, but first, Hegel in the full quotation says, "Because a self-

consciousness is the object [of a self-consciousness], "the object is just as much an I as it is an object."

In the context of the passage it does not seem possible to me to read this (¶177) as saying that self-consciousness has itself as an object of reflection, that no reference to another self-consciousness need be meant. (Note again the use of "ein Selbstbewusstsin," not just Selbstbewusstsein or "das Selbstbewusstsein.") That might be a possible reading if one frames the issue exclusively in terms of the preceding paragraph, ¶176. But a transition has already occurred in the text by this point. In ¶175 Hegel has already argued that the model of "mind and world," let us say, or "subject and object" in his terminology, obscures rather than helps reveal the nature of the self-consciousness essential to consciousness. On this model, desire is a manifestation of a natural process, and no true orectic intentionality has been achieved.

Self-consciousness is thus unable by way of its negative relation to the object to sublate it, and for that reason it once again to an even greater degree re-engenders the object as well as the desire. (¶175)

This claim serves as the premise of his inference to a radically new "object."

On account of the self-sufficiency of the object, it thus can only achieve satisfaction if this object itself effects the negation in it [the object]; and the object must in itself effect this negation of itself, for it is in itself the negative, and it must be for the other what it is. Since the object is the negation in itself and at the same time is therein self-sufficient, it is consciousness. (m.e.)

This seems clearly to say that this negation must be "reflected" back to self-consciousness in order to be successful or satisfying; that one's claim for example should not just produce submissive assent, but be acknowledged as authoritative. An object, or self-consciousness itself cannot accomplish this. Hence the famous conclusion: "Self-consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness.

Further, McDowell offers no explanation of why Hegel would gloss that claim ("the object is just as much an I as it is an object ") by saying that spirit, Geist, which certainly does mean some sort of communal conception of subjectivity, should be a gloss on that passage.[24] Such a communal Geist, moreover, is not just said to be something to be discussed later. It is "vorhanden," here now. How could he say that on McDowell's interpretation?

Actually, ¶177 is not the most difficult passage for McDowell's interpretation. That honor goes to ¶182.

In this way, this movement of self-consciousness in its relation to another self-consciousness has been represented as the activity of one self-consciousness, but this activity on the part of one self-consciousness has itself the twofold significance of being equally its own activity as well as the other 's activity, for the other is likewise self-sufficient… Each sees the other do the same as what he himself does; each himself does what he demands of the other and for that reason also does what he does only insofar as the other does the same. A one-sided activity would be useless because

what is supposed to happen can only be brought about by way of both of them bringing it about. (¶182)

I suppose it is possible to continue to claim that Hegel is still here talking about two aspects of a single self-consciousness, whether apperceptive and empirical I, or a subject discovering itself as not object but subject, and that language like "each sees the other do the same as what he himself does" remains "allegorical," but I think there is more textual and systematic evidence to support a non-allegorical reading than the evidence McDowell cites.

## IV

So the idea is that all determinate consciousness is positional,[25] is something like having a position on what is its intentional object, or is to be understood as a judging, and it can only be positional, have a position, if this involves taking a position actively, is apperceptive. But this latter self-knowledge as an activity is not positional. It is not because its apperceptive self-awareness is not of an object but rather is something like the avowing of a practical commitment of a sort, something like a projecting (if we stay with the project language) of oneself outward into the world and the future; all in the same sense that knowing what I am doing is not observational or introspective. If I have such knowledge, it is to be carrying on in the appropriate way. (So what its for me to be aware of my giving a lecture as I am giving it is for me to be continuously, now and into the future, following the rules of appropriateness for such an activity, something that certainly doesn't happen automatically, and can be disputed. This stretching along or projecting or commitment-sustaining from the present into all appropriate contexts and futures in what Hegel calls "desire" and its satisfaction.)[26] As we saw, Hegel's language for this is that the unity of self-consciousness "must become essential" for the subject, and he tells us that this means that "self-consciousness is desire itself." To some degree this means that no self-conscious consciousness can take up one "position" and no other. What it is to have one position is to be committed to the various inferences and exclusions and further commitments in the future in other situations that position or commitment would entail, many obviously not evident at the time of assertion, but which introduce the problem of self-unity and so the orectic dimension of carrying on in a way that realizes the commitments I have undertaken. So the line of thought in Hegel has gone from consciousness to activity to necessarily apperceptive to the problem of negation or consciousness being beyond itself (never conscious just by being absorbed in a state) to the gloss on the problem of the unity or such striving for unity as "self-consciousness is desire itself" to this activity as a living self-sustaining as well as an orectic striving to "get it right" to the issue we confront next: the distinctiveness of human self-conscious desire.

If this language of commitment, inference and practical projects sounds familiar in a contemporary context, I hasten to admit the relevance of Brandom's terminology and I hereby "project into the future" my desire and my commitment to take up his interpretation of this chapter. The Hegelian point that Brandom captures extremely well in his own terminology is that self-consciousness, how I take myself to be, is self-constituting; I am who I take myself to be and accordingly functionally vary as such self-constituted takings vary. I can turn out not to be whom I took myself to be but that erroneous self-conception is still an essential dimension of who I am. (I might be a fraud, for example, or self-deceived.)[27] So self-conscious beings do not have natures, they have histories. And that is indeed Hegel's deepest point here and stressed throughout many formulations. "Geist," he says, "is a product of itself."

What I want to say is that Brandom, because he favors his own account (not Hegel's) of the relation between a causal perceptual interchange with

the world and the role of sociality in the constitution of veridical claims (his RDRD - score-keeping account)[28], reintroduces the two-step story Kant and Hegel were trying to avoid and so isolates the social nature of self-consciousness in a way that is the mirror opposite of McDowell's account. Where McDowell's interpretation made Chapter Four look like a repetition, Brandom's comes close to a "new topic" interpretation of Chapter Four. While McDowell is certainly not trying to deny that sociality and social dependence will play crucial roles in Hegel's account later, he denies that such themes are relevant here, and so tries to preserve a common sense picture in which successful perception does not involve such social dependence, Brandom too distinctly isolates the sociality of self-consciousness.[29] I think this is because McDowell is generally suspicious of attributing any role to sociality in the conditions of perceptual knowledge. His position is more Kantian and concentrates only on the Hegelian account of the way conceptual activity shapes perceptual knowledge and intentional action. Brandom concentrates on the issue of self-consciousness and sociality because he has his own quasi Sellarsean theory of perceptual content. What I am trying to argue is that neither gets right the relation between Chapter Four and the first three chapters.)

Brandom presents in his own terminology an account of the movement of Hegel's argument in the text that illuminates a lot of what is going on in these tenebrous pages. The question is something like: what would we have to add to the picture of an object's differential responsiveness to its environment (something that iron can do in responding to humid environments by rusting and to others by not rusting), from differential responses that are intentional, that are not simply caused responses to the world, but which can be said to involve taking the world to be a certain way. This is the proto-intentionality typical of animals who, when hungry (and so desirous), can practically classify, take, the objects in their environment as food (desire-satisfying). But differentially responding to food and distinguishing it from non-food, does not satisfy hunger just ipso facto. (As would be the case if we were still at the level of the iron.) The animal must do something to satisfy its hunger and must do what is appropriate, sometimes involving several steps and even cooperation with other animals. It must get and eat such food. Another way of saying that the animal does not just respond to food items in its environment but takes things to be food is that there is now possible for the animal an appearance-reality distinction. It can take things to be food that are not and can learn from its mistakes. Or it only responds and acts to eat such food when it is hungry, when in a proto-intentional way, it takes the food as to-be-eaten now.[30]

And thus far, I think this tracks very well what Hegel is up to. Having conceded (as any sane person would)[31] a basic tenet of empiricism – no sensory interchange with the world, no possible knowledge about the world - he goes on to argue that such a perceptual interchange alone cannot amount to a world we could experience. We must understand how things are taken to be what they are by subjects, and that means understanding the kind of beings for whom things can appear, and so be taken (apperceptively) to be such and such, or not. And I think Brandom is quite right that this at least

means understanding the difference between mere differential responsiveness, and an orectic, discriminatory consciousness, a practical classification (or "taking"), which is the most basic, minimal way of understanding how things can be for a subject, and not just response-triggers,

The next step is the crucial one. Now what do we have to add to this picture to get not proto-intentionality but real intentionality, not just something like a sentiment of one's life in play as one seeks to satisfy desire, but genuine self-consciousness? What is it for a self to be for itself? One way to look at this is: in line with what has been said, both in this Brandom section and before, we need to know what is necessary to introduce a distinction between what I take myself to be and what I am, and we must do this without suggesting that one misapprehends an object. Rather, what is involved in so taking oneself is to attribute a certain determinate authoritative status to oneself, and that has to be provisional.[32] It could be in some psychological sense "sincere" but inconsistent with what someone attributing to himself such an authority would have to say and do, and this latter must eventually mean, by the lights of the relevant others. In Brandom's summation of the point, he says,

…what is required to be able to take something to be a self is to be able to attribute attitudes that have distinctively normative significances: to move from a world of desires to a world of commitments, authority and responsibility.[33]

But, as Brandom argues, to move from that world is necessarily to introduce both a social dimension into Hegel's account and the appropriate orectic attitude "after" such a move . Attributing a normative significance to myself or acknowledging someone's entitlement to claim authority cannot be expressions of sentiment or preference; these are claims that are supposed to hold for everyone.[34] (The radical Hegelian claim, which need not be an issue here, is that all having such authority amounts to is being acknowledged –under the right conditions and in the right way – to have such authority.)[35] And the relevant orectic attitude for such a self-taking must be a desire for recognition by others.

How this all works is then spelled out by Brandom in ways quite close to his own account of the role of score-keeping as that constituent of this required normativity essential to possible intentionality as well as self-consciousness.

So specific recognition involves acknowledging another as having some authority concerning how things are (what things are Ks). When I do that, I treat you as one of us, in a primitive normative sense of 'us' – those of us subject to he same norms, the same authority – that is instituted by just such attitudes." (p. 142)

There are various aspects of Brandom's account that do not match Hegel's in Chapter Four, and they are related. His account is of course a reconstruction[36], but for one thing, he leaves out an element that on the surface seems quite important to Hegel's sense of the case he is making. I mean his appeal to the experience of opposed self-consciousnesses. This concerns what Brandom has elsewhere called disparagingly the "martial"

rhetoric of Chapter Four, especially the talk of a struggle to the death, which, as we have seen, Brandom wants to treat as a metonymy for genuine commitment, but which Hegel seems to treat as a key element in the story itself, not an exemplification of a larger story (about the nature of commitment). The second concerns the way Hegel treats the relation between natural desire, its expression and the accompanying self-sentiment and, on the other hand, genuine self-consciousness, taking oneself as a taker, a being for whom things can be. Hegel does not just articulate the conceptual difference between these, as Brandom does, and argue that the added element to the picture, normativity, has to be there in order to distinguish animal desire from self-conscious takings. Consistent with Hegel's narrative and developmental approach throughout there is an experiential claim about the experience of a natural desirer when confronted with a kind of object which is not simply to be negated, as Hegel understands the term, but which, remarkably, negates back. Hegel seems to want to explain the difference between proto-intentional animal desire and the sort of "desire" that is self-consciousness - that is, one who takes the world to be such and such, and takes himself to be a taker, thereby aware of the defeasibility of the normative claim - all in experiential and developmental terms, not just by making explicit the conceptual conditions for such a differentiation but by appeal to this experiential and developmental argument. (I don't mean actual historical experience, but an argument form like Hobbes's, where a picture of everyone trying to maximize their own safety and well-being is shown unavoidably to result in everyone being maximally insecure and worse off. This suggestion about the state of nature experience functions as an argument for the rationality of exiting the state of nature, which of course no one was ever in and no one ever exited. The same argument form is in play in Hegel)

So the key question is how does Hegel get from his picture of animal desire (one who can take the world to be a certain way) to an orectic self-consciousness, one who also takes himself to be a taker and so understands that his "takings" are normative phenomena, and what justifies Hegel's contention that a necessary condition of the possibility of this latter phenomenon is striving to recognize and be recognized by other subjects? What Brandom essentially does is pose this question as a structural one, by applying what he had called the tri-partite structure of erotic awareness (TSEA) not just to ordinary objects which one takes for-oneself to be a certain way (e.g. food), but to ask about how it applies with regard to another being for whom things also are. What is the TSEA for another TSEA as the object of awareness? When the object one takes to be in some such a way for oneself is another awareness taking things to be for-itself – especially including that first taker, when one is aware of being taken in a way by another taker – what are the relevant elements necessary to account for such an incipient social situation?

I think that what Hegel wants to say at this point, when he wants to explain why it is that we cannot treat as satisfactory a monadically conceived self-conscious orectic consciousness, a desiring being who can practically classify but who is a aware of being a practical classifier and so

has a normative sense of properly and improperly classifying, but imagined in no relation to another such self-conscious classifier or imagined to be indifferent to another's takings, is simply that on the simple empirical premise that there are other such subjects around in a finite world, those other subjects will not and from their point of view cannot allow such pure self-relatedness. The sketch we have so far of a self-conscious theoretical and practical intentionality simply insures not only that there will be contention, but that on the premises we have to work with so far, it has to be a profound contention that can, initially or minimally conceived, only be resolved by the death of one, or the complete subjection of one to the other. That this is so will play a large role in Hegel's account of the sociality on which we are said by him to depend.

Here are some examples of passages where Hegel makes such claims. The important remarks occur after ¶175. There Hegel contrasts the satisfaction of animal desire, whose subject, following Brandom, takes things a certain way, but then simply negates these objects, or satisfies its desire. Such a subject may be resisted in a sense by one's desired object fighting back, if we are talking about predator and prey, but such resistance is just not a challenge, more like an obstacle. (No challenge to the correctness of the classifications or the entitlement to make it has been made.) With this sort of negation of one's object, another desire arises. That is,

Desire and the certainty of itself achieved in its satisfaction are conditioned by the object, for the certainty exists by way of the act of sublating of this other. For this act of sublating even to be, there must be this other. (¶175)

In this situation one cannot be said to be the subject of one's desires but subject to one's desires. One's putative independence as the subject of one's thoughts and deeds is actually a form of dependence and so one's takings cannot yet be counted as normative takings.

That is,

Self-consciousness is thus unable by way of its negative relation to the object to sublate it, and for that reason it once again to an even greater degree re-engenders the object as well as the desire.

This all changes however, when, among the objects of self-consciousness's orectic attitudes there is an object which is not an object, another subject, which, as such a subject, cannot simply be "negated" (only destroyed as an object), but if it is to satisfy the desire of the first subject, "must in itself effect this negation of itself." (He puts it less abstractly in ¶182, "For that reason, it can do nothing on its own about that object if that object does not do in itself what the first self-consciousness does in it.")

At this point we must remember back all the way to ¶80, and the fact that a self-conscious consciousness is always "beyond itself" and that the problem this engenders, the unity of self-consciousness with itself, "must become essential" to self-consciousness. One form of such satisfaction is simple desire satisfaction; unity with self is produced by eliminating the gap or need within the self, the desire. But another sort of satisfaction altogether is at issue when one's claims or takings, as such are confronted by another

who denies them, who has his own claims, or when one's deeds, inevitably affecting what others would otherwise be able to do, are rejected, not merely obstructed, by a being whose deeds conflict with one own.[37] The achievement of such a unity is not then possible alone. As Hegel will go on to show, one will not have responded to such challenges as the challenges they are (a resolution of unity of such disparity will not have become "essential to it") by simply annihilating the other, and so one will not have satisfied oneself, achieved the unity (self-satisfaction) spoken of so frequently. (One would still be in the position of an animal desirer, subject to one's desires.) The presence of another "taker who takes himself to be a taker" and so who is a potential challenge, not an obstacle, establishes that the normative problem, whether one's takes on the world are as they ought to be, is essential to this self-reconciliation, and that means that this confrontation of affirmation and negation cannot be resolved on, let us say, the animal level. That is, "Self-consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness." Or, "Only thereby does self-consciousness in fact exist, for it is only therein that the unity of itself in its otherness comes to be for it." (¶177)

But in Hegel's account, there is no non-question-begging criterion, or method, or procedure or standard by which such a contention can be resolved. One whatever might count as the giving and asking for reasons might be counted by the other as the arbitrary expression of the other's desire for success, as a mere ploy or strategy.[38] So, Hegel reasons, the primitive expression of normative commitment, the only available realization (Verwirklichung) of the claim as a claim, is a risk of life itself.

…the exhibition of itself as the pure abstraction of self-consciousness consists in showing itself to be the pure negation of its objective mode, that is, in showing that it is fettered to no determinate existence, that it is not at all bound to the universal individuality of existence, that it is not shackled to life. ¶187)

Hegel makes such a claim not because of any anthropological claim about the centrality of honor in human life but because, in assembling the central, minimal elements of sociality, the genuinely human sociality among self-conscious beings that can provide the satisfaction he has claimed arises as a problem with the realization that consciousness is always "beyond itself," we must begin without begging any questions. So he proposes we think of the problem as a struggle within such narrow parameters and we get this famous picture.

The relation of both self-consciousnesses is thus determined in such a way that it is through a life and death struggle that each proves his worth to himself, and that both prove their worth to each other. (…daß sie sich selbst und einander durch den Kampf auf Leben und Tod bewähren.) (¶187)[39]

Throughout the rest of the chapter, Hegel shows the practical incoherence of any attempted resolution of such conflict by the establishment of mere power, or coerced recognition. It is clear that what is necessary for such a conciliation, for beings conceived as Hegel now has, is some resort to practical reason and so ultimately some shared view of a universal norm.[40] And it is true that Hegel has a "pragmatic" or a

"historicized" or "dialogical"[41] view of what counts as the appeal to reasons. He understands practical reason as a kind of interchange of attempts at justification among persons each of whose actions affects what others would otherwise be able to do, and all this for a community at a time. But his account of what this consists in requires , in effect, the rest of the book, the developmental and experiential procedure characteristic of a "phenomenology."

## V

"Self-Consciousness is desire itself." I have argued that Hegel means by this that the apperceptive element in all thought and action is not self-regarding but "self-positing," or something like, in both McDowell's and Brandom's terms, taking responsibility, claiming authority for, what one thinks and does. In Hegel's account there is a transition between a primitive, still naturally explicable version of such a taking and it is shown to become the full-fledged version only in the presence and especially challenge of another such self-conscious being. This is the beginning of a socially mediated conception of intentionality as such, but at this early stage in his account, we are not entitled to assume any prior agreement about the rules of reason in resolving the struggle for recognition , for acknowledgement of the authority of one's claims, that must inevitably arise under the premises of Hegel's account thus far. The emergence of such common commitments must also be shown, as everything in the Phenomenology, developmentally and experientially, and this will eventually involve nothing less than a philosophically inflected narrative of Western modernity. That is, the question for Hegel is not so much the logical structure of commitment and eventually the mutual recognition of commitments, but to understand what is involved in the making of commitments; under what conditions would it plausible to see such common commitments arising, and so forth. He does not just want to explain what it is to have a commitment by a metonymical image (being willing to sacrifice natural attachments), but to ask how anyone could come to see themselves as bound to such a commitment, bound especially to such a degree. This approach might seem to some like a blurring of the lines between philosophy and approaches like sociology, history, social psychology and anthropology. I don't think it does, but that is a separate question. I have tried here mainly to offer an interpretation of Hegel's unusual claim about desire, and to defend that against two philosophically rich and challenging contrary interpretations.

# Notes

1 It is also unusual because Hegel seemed to want to draw very closely together, perhaps even identify, the competencies necessarily involved in both sapience and agency.

2 If it were, then there would obviously be a regress problem. By parity of whatever reasoning established that the self must be able to observe itself as an object, one would have to also argue that the observing self must also be observable, and so on. The post-Kantian philosopher who first made a great deal out of this point was Fichte, and the modern commentator who has done the most to work out the philosophical implications of the point has been Dieter Henrich, starting with "Fichtes ursprüngliche Einsicht, " ref.

3 This is quite a typical Hegelian title, and can be misleading. By "The Truth of Self-Certainty" (Die Wahrheit der Gewißheit seiner selbst), Hegel does not mean, as he seems to, the truth about the self's certainty of itself. He actually means, as we shall see, that the truth of self-certainty is not a matter of self-certainty at all. This relation between subjective certainty and its realization in truth is a basic structure of the PhG. Its most basic form is something like: the truth of the inner is the outer.

4 "It is one of the profoundest and truest insights to be found in the Critique of Pure Reason that the unity which constitutes the unity of the Begriff is recognized as the original synthetic unity of apperception, as the unity of the I think, or of self-consciousness." (WL, II, 221; SL, 584)

5 John McDowell, "The Apperceptive I and the Emprical Self: Towards a Heterodox Reading of 'Lordship and Bondage' in Hegel's Phenomenology," in Hegel: New Directions, ed. Katerina Deligiorgi (Chesham: Acumen, 2007), p. 38.

6 Especially the relation between universal and particular.

7 Brandom, to whose account of Hegel I am deeply indebted, also thinks of the PhG as an allegory; in his case an allegory of various dimensions of the issue of conceptual content. In this chapter, for example, he thinks of Hegel's treatment of the struggle to the death as a "metonymy" for the issue of commitment (of "really" being commited). But it is only that, one of many exemplifications of what it means in fact to have the commitment that one avows. Being willing to lose one's job, for example, could be another exemplification. Here and throughout, I want to resist such allegorical or figurative interpretations in both Brandom's and McDowell's accounts.

8 So self-consciousness, while not "thetic," intentional or positional, is not sort of or vaguely positional, caught at the corner of our eye, or glimpsed on the horizon. It is not intentional at all.

9 Put in its most colloquial and sharpest form: what could possibly be the relevance of a "struggle to the death for recognition" to the problem of formulating properly the relation between receptivity and activity in the perception of a table?

10

"As self-consciousness, consciousness henceforth has a doubled object: The first, the immediate object, the object of sense-certainty and perception, which, however, is marked for it with the character of the negative; the second, namely, itself, which is the true essence and which at the outset is on hand merely in opposition to the first." (¶167)

11 His formulation later in the Berlin Phenomenology is especially clear:

"There can be no consciousness without self-consciousness. I know something, and that about which I know something I have in the certainty of myself [das wovon ich weiss habe ich in der Gewissheit meiner selbst} otherwise I would know nothing of it; the object is my object, it is other and at the same time mine, and in this latter respect I am self-relating." (G.W.F. Hegel: The Berlin Phenomenology, transl. M. Petry (Dordrecht:Riedel, 1981), (hereafter, BPhG, 55)

12 He also introduces here a claim that will recur much more prominently in this account of the difference between animal and human desire.

However, to knowledge, the goal is as necessarily fixed as the series of the progression. The goal lies at that point where knowledge no longer has the need to go beyond itself, that is, where knowledge works itself out, and where the concept corresponds to the object and the object to the concept. Progress towards this goal is thus also unrelenting, and

satisfaction [n.b. the introduction of **Befriedigung**] is not to be found at any prior station on the way. What is limited to a natural life is not on its own capable of going beyond its immediate existence. However, it is driven out of itself by something other than itself, and this being torn out of itself is its death. (¶80)

13 Cf. again the invaluable Berlin Phenomenology: "In consciousness I am also self-conscious, but only also, since the object has a side in itself which is not mine." (BPhG, 56)

14 Cf.

The 'I' is as it where the crucible and fire which consumes the loose plurality of sense and reduces it to unity…The tendency of all man's endeavors is to understand the world, to appropriate and subdue it to himself; and to this end the positive reality of the world must be as it were crushed and pounded, in other words, idealized. (EL, 118; EnL, 69)

15 That is, the one that presupposes the least.

16 Hegel's formulation of this point is given in ¶197 in his own inimitable style.

To think does not mean to think as an abstract I, but as an I which at the same time signifies being-in-itself, that is, it has the meaning of being an object in its own eyes, or of conducting itself vis-à-vis the objective essence in such a way that its meaning is that of the being-for-itself of that consciousness for which it is. §197

17 It may help establish the plausibility of this reading by noting how much this practical conception of normativity and intentionality was in the air at the time. I have already indicated how indebted this chapter is to Fichte. Ludwig Siep has clearly established how much Hegel borrowed from Fichte for the later sections on recognition and his practical philosophy in general. See his Anerkennung als Prinzip der praktischen Philosophie (Alber: Freiburg/Munich 1979) and in many of the important essays in Praktische Philosophie im Deutschen Idealismus (Surhkamp: Frankfurt a.M., 1992). But consider also these formulations by Fichte.

For example, in the "The Second Introduction" to the 1796/1799 Wissenschaftslehre (nova methodo), translated as Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy, Fichte writes, "The idealist observes that experience in its entirety is nothing but an acting on the part of a rational being." And in the 1797 Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre, he goes very far.

...the concept of being is by no means considered to be a primary and original concept, but is treated purely as a derivative one, indeed as a concept derived through its opposition to activity, and hence as a merely negative concept. For the idealist, nothing is positive but freedom; and for him, being is nothing but a negation of freedom.

Roughly the same point again, this time from the Sittenlehre or System of Ethics

I find myself as effecting [wirkend] in the world of sense. From this all consciousness begins [hebt… an]. Without this consciousness of my efficacy, there is no self-consciousness. Without the latter, there is no consciousness of something else that is supposed to be different from myself.

Or finally in his Naturrecht (Natural Right),

…the practical faculty is the innermost root of the I; everything else is placed upon and attached to this faculty… all other attempts to deduce the I in self-consciousness have been unsuccessful.

18 McDowell, op.cit., p. 38.

19 This way of talking about self-consciousness as itself a matter of desire is not a hapax legomenon in the Jena PhG. Very late, in the BPhG, he puts the point this way.

As this self-certainty with regard to the object, abstract self-consciousness therefore constitutes the drive to posit what it is implicitly; ie. To give content and objectivity to the abstract knowledge of itself, and, conversely, to free itself from its sensuousness, to sublate the given objectivity, and to posit the identity of this objectivity with itself. (BPhG, 59. m.e.)

20 Only "possible" because I can obviously have desires I would not think of trying to satisfy.

21 McDowell, op.cit., p.41.

22 So to state the disagreement as clearly as I can, when Hegel says in ¶177, glossing his claim that "A self-consciousness exists for a self-consciousness", that "only thereby does self-consciousness in fact exist, for it is only therein that the unity of itself in its otherness

comes to be for it," McDowell takes this to mean that only by understanding the subject-object relation in terms of, let us say, the logic of self-consciousness in its dependence and independence, will we understand "the unity of itself in its otherness" that we have been looking for since Chapter One. I am claiming that Hegel is claiming that the relation between subject and sensible object always generates a "dissatisfaction" that can only be resolved in the relation between a subject and other such subjects.

23 McDowell, op.cit., p.42.

24 McDowell cites paragraphs ¶17 and ¶790 where Hegel does talk about substance and subject, object and subject at the same time, but neither can be offered as evidence of an alternate or early definition of Geist. I think that Hegel means just what he means when he says here: an I that is a we and an we that is an I.

25 Terry Pinkard, in Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), calls this "assuming a position in 'social space'" (p. 47) and goes on to say that "a 'move' in 'social space' is an inference licensed by that space." (Ibid.) I think this is basically right, and Pinkard's account in his Section One of Chapter Three ("Self-Consciousness and the Desire for Recognition") gives a clear but somewhat high-altitude picture of the course of the opening of Chapter Four. I am trying here to slow down a bit and to understand the details of the pages. The account I am presenting is also different from the one I provided in " 'You Can't Get There From here: Transition Problems in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit," in The Cambridge Companion to Hegel, ed. Fr. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

26 Even in activities like imagining, I am observing the normative requirements of imagining. I do not, as a consequence of the pleasure of imagining myself on the Costa Brava, leap into Lake Michigan. It would be a bit misleading to put it this way, but one way of summing this up: to say that self-consciousness is desire is to say that one unavoidably wants to be whomever one takes oneself to be, one seeks satisfaction that what one claims is as one claims, and one strives actually to realize the intention one avows. None of these desiderata, Hegel eventually wants to show, can be realized alone.

27 Robert Brandom, "The Structure of Desire and Recognition: Self-Consciousness and Self-Constitution," Philosophy and Social Criticism, 33 (2007), (hereafter SDR) p. 128.

28 I won't try to give an account of this theory. See, inter alia, Brandom's "The Centrality of Sellars' Two-Ply Account of Observation," in Tales of the Mighty Dead (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), and pp. 388-90 of my "Brandom's Hegel," European Journal of Philosophy 13:3 (2005).

29 Cf. for example his gloss on "Self-Consciousness is Desire itself." He signals that he wants the discussion to be about the relation between self-consciousness and erotic awareness as such. "…at least in the sense that the most primitive form of self-awareness is to be understood as a development of the basic structure of erotic awareness." (SDR, p.139)

30 "A desire is more than a disposition to act in certain ways, since the activities one is disposed to respond to objects with may or may not satisfy the desire, depending on the character of these objects." SDR, p. 133.

31 Unless you are one of philosophy's great geniuses, like Leibniz.

32 This is what we discussed earlier here in the phenomenological (in the Husserlian sense) language of "positional" consciousness.

33 SDR, p. 135.

34 In Brandom's formulation: "For one to have that significance for oneself – not just being in oneself something things can be something for, but being that for oneself as well – that significance must be something things can be or have for one." (SDR, p.139)

35 This issues in a familiar "recognitional paradox." This statement of the radical claim, it might easily be argued, is incoherent. It can't be that one has the authority by being recognized to have it, because the recognizer recognizes on the basis of some reason to grant that authority. That reason cannot be "you merit recognition because I recognize you" without obvious circularity. If there must be such an internal ground for meriting recognition then clearly someone can have an authority that is not recognized. The problem is an old one. In a sense it goes back to Aristotle's claim that honor cannot be the highest human good because one is honored for something higher than being honored; one is

honored for what one did to deserve honor. It is also obviously related to the Euthyphro discussion of piety. In this regard, cf. the useful discussion of "misrecognition" in Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Leitinen, "Analyzing Recognition," in Recognition and Power, ed. Bert van den Brink and David Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 53-56.

36 In the language of Tales of the Mighty Dead, he is more interested in a de re interpretation than a de dicto one. That is, he wants to know not what the historical Hegel is commited to, but, given what that historical Hegel was committed to, what would he have to be committed to in another, perhaps more perspicuous, more contemporary vocabulary.

37 Brandom's account and his account of Hegel tend to leap over this stage in the assemblage of what is necessary for a satisfying sociality: who gets to decide, and how, whether any authority claimed is one actually entitled. I have argued elsewhere that his talk of social negotiation over such issues is (as Brandom himself suspects) too irenic; assumes too much that Hegel wants to put in play as dialectically complex and problematic. See the discussion in "Brandom's Hegel."

38 Here the reappearance in modern philosophy of a problem as old as the Sophists: the difficulty of distinguishing between putative appeals to reason and rhetorical strategies for maintaining positions of power, a problem that would intensify in Nietzsche and reach its culmination of sorts in Foucault. Hegel of course argues that this distinction can be made, but not by an appeal to an eternal/substantive standard or to any formal criteria.

39 This language of "proof," "tests," and so forth is absolutely central to what Hegel means by the "realization" of a concept or norm, and plays the central role in what Hegel means by the opposition between subjective certainty and truth throughout the book, and in his important argument in Chapter Five where he denies the "inner intention causing external bodily movements" picture of action in favor of what he calls an "inner-outer speculative identity." For a much longer account of this, see my Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

40 Cf. Pinkard's concise summary of the problem, op.cit., p. 57.

41 I mean the link between dialogic activity and rationality assigned to Plato in Gadamer's book Plato's Dialogical Ethics. Trans. Robert Wallace (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

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