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GERMAN IDEALISM, ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY, AND REALISM

A Dissertation

Submitted to McAnulty Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

The degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Patrick J. Reider

December 2011

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Patrick J. Reider

2011

GERMAN IDEALISM, ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY, AND REALISM

By

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November 4, 2011

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ABSTRACT

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Patrick J. Reider

December 2011

Dissertation Supervised by Dr. Rockmore

“Can one know mind-independent reality?” There are two fundamental positions concerning this question: either 1) mind-independent existence causes us to know mind-independent existence, or 2) all knowledge is a construct of the human mind, and therefore mind-independent existence is unknowable. This question holds enormous significance as it establishes the source of truth as being either mind-*independent* or mind-dependent. It thereby sets the stage for the type of epistemic claims that can be properly defended.

Of all the myriad formulations of idealism, Analytic Philosophers have consistently singled out German Idealism to either reject or misappropriate for its own ends. The most significant and provocative occurrences of this trend can be found in the

writings of Moore, Russell, Strawson, Sellars, McDowell and Brandom. One objective of this text is to explicate the manner in which these Analytic Philosophers either reject or borrow from German Idealism.

A second objective of this text is to answer the following question: “what does it mean for Analytic Philosophy when its leading members, such as McDowell and Brandom, continue in the Sellarsian tradition of couching traditional Analytic concerns within the framework of German Idealism?” Will it be found, in the final pages of the Analytic tradition, that its original rejection of German Idealism was only a hiccup that restored the Anglo/American traditions back to 18th century German thought? More bluntly still, will we find that only in becoming idealists can Analytic Philosophers have a future?

My analysis of Analytic Philosophy’s relationship to German Idealism, as it concerns our ability to know mind-independent existence, culminates in two related claims. First, Kant and Hegel hold superior epistemic views to Moore, Russell, Strawson, Sellars, McDowell and Brandom, in that Kant and Hegel can demonstrate their objects of knowledge, while the above noted Analytic thinkers cannot. Second, Sellars, McDowell and Brandom have maneuvered themselves into a corner by borrowing (directly and indirectly) from Kant and Hegel: in order to make their core conceptual, linguistic, and epistemic claims internally consistent, they must proceed to a version of German Idealism and deny their respective versions of realism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to first thank Dr. Rockmore for all of his insights. All the best portions of this text took shape under his guidance, and all of its inadequacies would have been multiplied without his supervision. I also would like to recognize Dr. Swindal, the previous department Chair of Philosophy and acting Dean of McAnulty College of Liberal Arts, who swiftly addressed all my concerns as a graduate student. Additionally, he has provided me with numerous comments on my dissertation that will be invaluable as I continue working on it as a manuscript for future publication. Third, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Nuzzo, who currently is teaching at City University of New York, for her tremendous generosity in agreeing to work with me. Her keen understanding of Kant helped me to avoid several oversights that otherwise would have weakened my claims. Moreover, I understand that all my readers are exceptionally busy. I am grateful to all of them for donating their time, which as Seneca notes, is of the greatest value, for it is one's life. And finally, from a personal and financial side, I would like to thank my wife Jodie, who made it possible for me to finish my Graduate degrees. Again, my gratitude to all of you.

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Introduction

1. “Can one know mind-independent reality?” There are two fundamental positions concerning this question: either 1) mind-independent existence causes us to know mind-independent existence, or 2) all knowledge is a construct of the human mind, and therefore mind-independent existence is unknowable. This question holds enormous significance as it establishes the source of truth as being either mind-*independent* or mind-dependent. It thereby sets the stage for the type of epistemic claims that can be properly defended.

Nowhere in the history of philosophy does the opposition between mind-independent truth and mind-dependent truth come into more conflict than the fight Analytic Philosophy picked with idealism. This fight started at the conception of Analytic Philosophy, which proclaimed itself the champion of mind-independent truth and has continued ever since.

Analytic versions of realism are predicated upon knowledge of mind-independent existence. In this context, ‘mind-independent existence’ refers to the true nature of existing entities or states, which are distinguishable from how individuals may think, perceive, or feel about them. While there are many Analytic version of realism, they all claim to hold mind-independent existence as the *object* (or fulfillment) of their epistemic claims.

Conversely, Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* and Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* argue that one cannot be aware, perceive, or know how entities exist independent of the manner in which the human mind undergoes experience and conceives of existence. In short, they deny that one can knowingly extract the human element from what exists

independently of it. As a result, their epistemic claims are restricted to 1) empirical objects (as appearing phenomenon), 2) minds, 3) mental contents and 4) processes. For Kant and Hegel, these four classes exhaust the objects of knowledge.

Of all the myriad formulations of idealism, Analytic Philosophers have consistently singled out German Idealism to either reject or misappropriate for its own ends. The most significant and provocative occurrences of this trend can be found in the writings of Moore, Russell, Strawson, Sellars, McDowell and Brandom. One objective of this text is to explicate the manner in which these Analytic Philosophers either reject or borrow from German idealism.

A second object of this text is to answer the following question: “what does it mean for Analytic Philosophy when its leading members, such as McDowell and Brandom, continue in the Sellarsian tradition of couching traditional Analytic concerns within the framework of German Idealism?” Will it be found, in the final pages of the Analytic tradition, that its original rejection of German Idealism was only a hiccup that restored the Anglo/American traditions back to 18th century German thought? More bluntly still, will we find that only in becoming idealists can Analytic Philosophers have a future?

My analysis of Analytic Philosophy’s relationship to German idealism, as it concerns our ability to know mind-independent existence, culminates in two related claims. First, Kant and Hegel hold superior epistemic views to Moore, Russell, Strawson, Sellars, McDowell and Brandom, in that Kant and Hegel can demonstrate their objects of knowledge, while the above noted Analytic thinkers cannot. Second, Sellars, McDowell and Brandom have maneuvered themselves into a corner by borrowing

(directly and indirectly) from Kant and Hegel: in order to make their key epistemic claims internally consistent, they must proceed to a version of German Idealism and deny their respective versions of realism.

2. In order to answer the question, “can one know mind-independent reality?” a related and more specific question needs to be asked: “given what is discernible about our perceptual and conceptual processes, what features of existence can be known?” This text seeks to make explicit the manner in which Kant, Hegel, and Moore, (early and late) Russell, Strawson, Sellars, McDowell and Brandom attempt to answer these questions.

The unveiling of these views are gravely needed in Analytic Philosophy, as Analytical thinkers rarely offer a clear or prolonged account of how they believe knowledge of mind-independent existence is possible.¹ Typically, such knowledge is assumed, and epistemic projects begin with these assumptions being either ill-defined or left unstated. When Analytic thinkers do address the problem of knowing mind-independent existence, they often address it in a superficial manner, insofar as they seek to show how their contemporaries are wrong, while failing to offer a serious defense of their own views regarding our *access* to reality. When specific arguments are made concerning our supposed access to mind-independent existence, it is done so in piecemeal terms that make it difficult to grasp the author’s complete perceptual and cognitive model, which supports his/her belief that such knowledge is possible.

Analytic philosophers have created numerous versions of realism that are incompatible with one another; yet, they fail to ask, “given that realists still hold many

¹ This project is also needed in Continental Philosophy, though such a project’s length requires a separate treatment.

incompatible views, are their basic assumptions concerning one's ability to know mind-independent existence wrong?" Defenders of realism attempt to show that their pet formulations are superior, according to the standards of other contemporary realists. However, they rarely if ever seek to offer a focused defense of the standards that sustain their belief in knowledge of mind-independent existence.

Ever since Analytic Philosophy began with Moore and Russell (in the early 20th century), idealism has been presented as sloppy or misguided reasoning that covers up what is already believed to be known, i.e., mind-independent existence. I will show the opposite is true: 1) not only does Analytic Philosophy misunderstand the key epistemic claims of Kant and Hegel 2), Analytic Philosophy provides unsustainable claims concerning realism that have already been shown to be false for over two hundred years.

3. I will address the thinkers represented in this text by identifying which of the four views below they subscribe to, and how they respond to the related questions that naturally arise from holding it. 1) *If* perception gets *directly* at mind-independent reality as it actually exists, and this sort of knowledge is communicable, then what is the best manner to clearly and accurately reference existence? 2) *If* perception only yields partial knowledge, the following questions naturally arise. What does perception fail to inform us? To what extent can we hope to answer the previous question? What can one do to fill in the gaps between what one knows and what one does not know via perception? 3) *If* perception is not capable of partially or fully depicting mind-independent reality, *then* some other means needs to be employed in order to obtain knowledge. Philosophers, who hold this view, often turn to pure reason (free of empirical content) as a means for

determining truth. Under this epistemic model, one can then ask, how does one validate reason as a means to accurately depict existence? 4) For some thinkers, no method is sufficient for obtaining knowledge of mind-independent reality. When confronted with this position, one should ask, to what extent can this view be defended? The logical progression of these four alternatives crops up as soon as one holds a specific view on how perception works.

As we shall see, what differentiates the philosophers who hold valid epistemic views from those who do not, is that they can demonstrate *access* to what they claim to know. In this regard, we will see that a clear analysis of Analytic versions of realism are a bit like Hans Christian Andersen's story "The Emperor's New Clothes": the intelligent are believed to see the truth of our ability to know mind-independent existence, but when the arguments for these claims are clearly presented to the populous, one sees that they stand unadorned by demonstrable arguments.

4. Clearly stating the epistemic claims concerning our ability to know mind-independent existence and the related perceptual and cognitive processes that support these claims will be a great boon to any scholar or lay person who wants to know the following: 1) what are the limits of human knowledge, 2) when and where do we enter into ungrounded speculation, and 3) what kinds of things are knowable in a rigorous fashion becoming of the Western tradition of philosophy?

Chapter One

Early Analytic Philosophy, its Hyper-Realism, and its Rejection of Idealism

1.1. *Introduction to Chapter One and its Function in the Rest of the Text*

1. Analytic philosophers trace the origin of their tradition back to Moore's and Russell's scathing criticism of idealism. Moore and (early) Russell hold the view that our direct perceptual knowledge of mind-independent existence is so obvious, it requires little to no defense. The only philosophical challenge to their epistemic view was to find the right formulation or description of it.

Moore's and early Russell's zealous belief in their ability to know mind-independent existence prompted them to paint all version of idealism as amounting to little more than sloppy thinking. Moreover, they accuse idealism of concealing the fact that we directly see reality. These mischaracterizations of idealism held sufficient pejorative effects to last over a hundred years.

By starting with Analytic Philosophy's origins, I hope to drive its misleading biases into the light and show that 1) its perception of idealism is deeply flawed, and 2) it fails to offer an effective criticism or viable alternative to Kant's (see Chapter Two) and Hegel's (see Chapter Three, **Part One**) epistemic claims.

2. Moore's and (early) Russell's main criticism of idealism concerns their denial that the mind plays a role in achieving empirical knowledge. They claim that any approval of the belief that the mind plays a role in empirical knowledge leads to idealism.

In this regard, they are correct to note that the realization of the mind's contributions to empirical knowledge inevitably leads to, or in the very least supports, some version of idealism.

In explaining Moore's and early Russell's perceptual models and the extreme measures they take to reject the view that the mind contributes to empirical knowledge, it will become apparent that one cannot successfully deny that the mind plays an active role in generating empirical knowledge. This insight will prime the reader for Kant's and Hegel's claim that the mind contributes to all aspects of empirical awareness and knowledge.

3. In Sections 1.2 and 1.3, I show that Moore and early Russell claim that we can accurately know mind-independent existence and that they advance little to no arguments to show that this is the case.

In section 1.4, I show that Moore's and early Russell's epistemic views comprise a position I call 'hyper-realism'. The term 'hyper-realism' is intended to accentuate the fact that they only admit mind-independent existence to play a role in our achievement of knowledge. This version of realism warrants the term 'hyper,' as most versions of

realism accept that the mind plays some role in obtaining knowledge. Their version of realism absurdly denies the act of synthesis or judgment in perception. As we shall see, this mischaracterization of perception undermines their entire epistemic model.

In section 1.5, I explain why later Russell introduces modern science into his epistemic views. I explicate his appeal to science as a precursor to 'scientific realism,' which is extremely influential throughout Analytic Philosophy.

I begin section 1.6 by showing that later Russell's appeal to science is incompatible with his early commitments to hyper-realism. I end this section by showing that later Russell's epistemic claims are internally inconsistent and incapable of demonstrating our access to mind-independent reality. This failing of Russell's will be subsequently shown (throughout this text) to be a hereditary failing of Analytic Philosophy, insofar as it concerns realism predicated upon the knowledge of mind-independent existence. For example, I will show that not only the forefathers of Analytic Philosophy (i.e., Moore and Russell) but also Strawson, Sellars, McDowell and Brandom fail to demonstrate how knowledge of mind-independent existence is possible.

1.2. Moore's Views on Perception, His Rejection of Idealism, and His Poor Scholarship

1. As Tom Rockmore notes, Moore's attack on idealism "is astonishingly imprecise and difficult to evaluate or even state" (*Hegel, Idealism and Analytic Philosophy* 57). In order to avoid becoming bogged down in a dizzying array of misrepresentations, I will focus on what I take to be Moore's strongest and most pervasive disagreement with idealism: he argues that idealists are at fault for conflating the distinct identity of existing objects with the identity of consciousness and its contents. From this mistaken identity, Moore claims that idealists misrepresent the truth of both consciousness and the perceived object.

2. For the last hundred years, beginning most notably with Moore's influential article "Refutation of Idealism," all variations of idealism have been largely

misunderstood by the analytical community as a denial of externality.² This gross misunderstanding of idealism stemmed from Moore's poor scholarship, which ignores the sophistication and diversity of idealism. Moreover, this article's account of idealism is so broad, it fails to offer relevant criticism of the tradition of idealism, which is diverse and nuanced.

Moore begins "Refutation of Idealism" by making an assertion that was true for some British Idealists: "Modern Idealism, if it asserts any general conclusion about the universe at all, asserts that it is *spiritual*" (433). Unfortunately, he brazenly extends this claim to all idealists of his time.

Several pages latter, Moore follows his untrue generalization of later idealism with a more extravagant claim. He states that most philosophy and psychology can be reduced to one shared principle. Adding to this heap of dubious claims, Moore fervently asserts that this shared principle of philosophy and psychology is unmistakably false:

The only importance I can claim for the subject I shall investigate is that it seems to me to be a matter upon which not Idealists only, but all philosophers and psychologists also, have been in error, and from their erroneous view of which they have inferred [...] their most striking and interesting conclusions. If it has this importance, it will indeed follow that all the most striking results of philosophy—Sensationalism, Agnosticism and Idealism alike—have, for all that has hitherto been urged in their favor, no more foundation than the supposition that a chimera lives in the moon. (436)

Moore claims that this most "striking results of philosophy" and psychology stem from one unfounded claim: "*esse is percipi*" (i.e., to exist is to be perceived) (436). For Moore, this phrase designates the belief that perception creates existence.

In a rhetorical flourish, Moore condemns the view that *esse is percipi* as something akin to philosophical degeneracy: "unless new reasons hitherto can be found,

² The view that there is no external existence or that there are valid reason to doubt eternal existence is called 'material skepticism'. It is rarely supported by idealists. Berkeley is the most notable exception.

all the most important philosophical doctrines have as little claim to assent as the most superstitious beliefs of the lowest savages” (436). As I will show, Moore claims that *any* failure to understand the distinct nature of consciousness from what is perceived leads to the belief that *esse is percipi*.

Moore’s claims conflate a host of doctrines and philosophical insights into a singular and shared stance. From this monstrous mischaracterization, Moore wrongly believes he has found a shared principle imbedded within nearly all philosophy and psychology. Moreover, he further believes that this shared principle (i.e., *esse is percipi*) not only infects idealism, but that it is also responsible for the diversity of false claims found in “the most important philosophical doctrines” including British Empiricism (see section 1.2.6) (433).

The reader already familiar with philosophy may be wondering, even if it may sound a bit *ad hominem*, ‘How could a successful academic be so ignorant of his field, and secondly, how can overtly mistaken views become so influential?’ My answer to these questions pluck at the thematic cords of this project: a mistaken view of perception not only leads to a mistaken view of the truth; it can also lead to a misunderstanding of philosophical views.³ In the next several sections, I will show that only in light of Moore’s understanding of perception can one hope to understand why he so blatantly misrepresents the history of philosophy and why his arguments against idealism became popular.

³ As we shall see in Chapter Four, this is especially true of Kant and Hegel, in that their claims are undervalued and mischaracterized, because perception is not properly understood.

3. British idealists were greatly influenced by German idealists. Nonetheless, there are substantial differences between these two traditions. Surprisingly, Moore's writing does not take notice of these differences. One reason for this oversight is due to his preoccupation with their shared belief that the mind constitutes the *manner* in which the world appears to the observing subject. For Moore, this shared feature of British and German Idealism overshadowed any of their contrasting features. In fact, this preoccupation was present in his dissertation at Trinity College in Cambridge, England and subsequently spanned his entire career.⁴

Moore's lack of concern (and/or ignorance) for differences amongst idealists and their distinct traditions is exemplified in his article "Mr. McTaggart's 'Studies in Hegelian Cosmology.'" According to Moore, McTaggart, who was his friend and teacher at Trinity College, represents the best idealism has to offer:

Mr. McTaggart's reasoning is inferior to none in ability; his fundamental premises are not arbitrary; his conclusions are definite; and he leaves us in no doubt as to the precise nature of the evidence which he has to offer for them. I know of no philosophical work which combines these merits in an equal degree. (177)

The purpose of this praise is not mere flattery. In attempting to refute McTaggart as the pinnacle of idealism, Moore perceives himself as undermining all variations of idealism. Moore, acting as an amateur fighter, mistakenly believes that if he can defeat the champion, he proves that he can defeat any contender. More importantly, Moore offers no supported for his claim that McTaggart's work is the height of idealism. Nor does it seem plausible that any scholar could substantiate this subjective claim.

The majority of what Moore thought he knew about idealism came from his teacher McTaggart. Unfortunately, it does not appear that McTaggart provided his

⁴ See Hylton's book *Russell, Idealism and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy*.

students with a close reading of German Idealism. Instead, he espoused unusual and implausible views:

Ultimate reality, he held, is spiritual: it consists entirely of individual minds and their contents. He understood this in a way that excludes space, time and material objects from reality. What appears to us as being these things are really minds and parts of the contents of minds, but we ‘misperceive’ these entities in a systematic way, and this misperception is the source of the whole apparent universe. (J. B. Schneewind, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, McTaggart*)

In establishing his fight against McTaggart, Moore most likely believed he was addressing a common historical thread. Yet, in reality, he was addressing an idiosyncratic development of one thinker, who wrote in an era of unusually interpretations of German Idealism (i.e., British Idealism).

Since Moore’s article “Mr. McTaggart’s ‘Studies in Hegelian Cosmology’” was published two years prior to “Refutation of Idealism” and he appeals to McTaggart as the gold standard for idealism, I will begin by addressing this article on McTaggart. I will endeavor to show that Moore’s rejection of McTaggart’s view of perception aids in the clarification of Moore’s own view of perception. I will then show how this article’s arguments (especially as they relate to perception) are echoed in the “Refutation of Idealism.”

4. In “Mr. McTaggart’s “‘Studies in Hegelian Cosmology,’” Moore states, “McTaggart’s theory is, that when I know my friend, he is simultaneously both inside and outside my mind: this, he thinks, is the relation in which consciousness always stands to its object” (185).⁵ Moore is referring to McTaggart’s twofold metaphysical view: 1) what one perceives is actually in the mind of the perceiver, and 2) perceiving minds and their

⁵ Here, McTaggart’s stance is a loose interpretation of Hegel’s famous ‘master and slave dialectic.’ For the purposes of this work, I am not concerned with the accuracy of Moore’s account of McTaggart or Hegel.

contents are the only things that exist. From these two claims, McTaggart's develops a curious view. As a consequence of 1 and 2, he argues that the awareness of a person results in the peculiar fact that a person simultaneously exists *in* one's mind and *outside* of it.

Moore believes that McTaggart's understanding of consciousness is a misunderstanding of how logical categories function between subject/object relations. Moore claims that in order to maintain that one's friend exists simultaneously within and outside one's mind, and for this to be true for your friend as well (i.e., you simultaneously exists in and outside of his mind), one must hold contradictory views. According to Moore, McTaggart's vision of existence, which is composed of "conscious selves," entails the following: the mind contains a part of the outside world, and the outside world contains a part of the mind. This view creates the following problem: individuals that are known, are not fully themselves, but rather a strange beings which are both subject and object at the same time. Moore believes this kind of view is an ontological misrepresentation of existence.

He also sees McTaggart's view as problematic because it depicts knowledge as a kind of multiplier of existence. For instance, one's friend (the object), who is an individual, "becomes two" when one obtains knowledge of one's friend (185). In other words, Moore argues that under McTaggart's view of consciousness, with the advent of knowing the other, there is a creation of two beings: a being which exists in the mind and a being which is in the world. According to Moore, your friend is one being, not two. Therefore, claiming that your friend exists simultaneously in and external to you, mistakenly multiplies an individuated entity into two entities.

In *Identity*, Moore states that predicates (i.e., affirmations or assertions concerning a subject), even if they are individually true, can never be combined to form a new being: “We can never by any possibility get a number of predicates to combine in forming a new thing, of which, as a whole anything can be [accurately] predicated” (109).

Those familiar with the views of Hegel and McTaggart will readily note that Moore’s account is overly blunt. However, my concern is not with what is wrong about Moore’s characterization of various philosophers, but rather with what makes him so confident that he can casually dismiss their entire approach. The answer to this question is relatively straightforward: Moore presumes that designations, in order to be true, must abide by strict categorical distinctions that maintain the numerical unity of the designated object. In order to preserve this kind of distinction, Moore claims one must understand *consciousness as being completely divorced from observed objects*. The challenge to understanding Moore’s view lies in the confusing ways he argues for the above belief.⁶

The moral to Moore’s confusing exposition is a linguistic one: *if* meaning lies in referring to a *single* existing entity, designations referring to this entity cannot attribute to it attributes that artificially destroy the object’s *natural unity*. While this later view appears moderate and uncontroversial, Moore is actually making an extreme and controversial claim: *the only way one can keep the numerical identity of existing entities intact is to understand that consciousness, knowledge or ideas bear no relevant role in what we directly perceive to exist*. What makes this view extreme is that Moore denies any dualism between perceiving consciousness and the object that is perceived. In other words, Moore denies any ambiguity between consciousness, as one’s *awareness* of an

⁶ Operating under the belief that all true designations must maintain a strict distinction between consciousness and its perceived object, Moore claims that McTaggart’s view holds two impossible positions. See “**Appendix I: Moore’s Account of McTaggart’s Two Impossible Positions.**”

object, and the actual object independent of the manner in which one perceives it. He maintains that the acceptance of any ambiguity between the mental act of perception and our awareness of existence *necessarily* results in illogical views concerning identity.

As we will see in the next section, Moore's argument for this claim directly opposes Kant. We will also see, that unlike Kant and Hegel (see chapters 2 and 3), he merely assumes the key elements of his epistemic model are true.

5. How can (my friend) be an object of my consciousness unless he is also in my mind? According to Moore, the answer to this question is a simple one, “‘quite easily’; it being a fact that we can be conscious *both* of our own states and of what is outside of us [...]” (187). Moore claims that “the entire history of philosophy exhibits a uniform inability to distinguish between that of which I am conscious and my consciousness of it” (187).

Many philosophers, not just idealists, would be perplexed by Moore's above claim; is not “that of which I am conscious and my consciousness of it [i.e., the object]” the same thing? For Moore, the answer is emphatically no. On page 187, one can find an argument that I will formulate as follows:

P.1 I am a consciousness.

P.2 There are appearances.

P.3 There are thus two numerically distinct categories, i.e., consciousness and appearances.

P.4 It is an act of conflation to make these two distinct categories one identical category.

P.5 Thus when I (as consciousness) behold an appearance, the appearance is other than me.

C. Since appearances are not me, when I am aware of an appearance, I am simultaneously aware of something other than myself.

In this fashion, Moore strives to keep the identity of the conscious self completely distinct from the appearing object.

This line of argumentation is repeated, though less clearly, in “The Refutation of Idealism”: “When I say that the sensations of blue and of green both exist, I certainly mean that what is common to both and in virtue of which both are called sensations, exist in each case” (445). Moore argues that our experience of the color blue (*or any other experience*) can be characterized as containing a certain kind of sensation. But this should not be confused with the existence of the color itself. According to him, when one denies this distinction, one is left with two options. Either one ends up claiming that only the mind exists (i.e., that objects are the mind) or claiming that blue, as one individual thing, is actually the same thing as “blue together with [my] consciousness”. For him, both claims are false. The first is wrong because it is absurd. He understands the second position as false, because he believes that ‘blue’ and ‘consciousness’ are separate beings. Hence, to conjoin them into one entity is a formal and actual contradiction.

From a commonsense point of view, Moore appears to be making a prudent claim. However, there are two competing views that will be featured in this text, which argue reliance on our practical or commonsensical views is a mistake. The first view comes from science and the second comes from German Idealism.

Science argues that the world is not as it appears (see section 1.6). In addition to this claim (though made for very different reasons) the German idealist could argue that Moore conflates the notion of ego with that of consciousness. It is true that one’s personality or ego is nothing like empirical appearances; however, a person’s consciousness is not one’s personality or ego. ‘Consciousness’ is a much broader term that concerns

awareness. As a result, one can legitimately ask, can an appearing object be separated from one's awareness? Kant and Hegel argue no (see chapter 2, 3 and especially section 3.3). They claim that all appearances are a part of one's consciousness, as a necessary requirement for awareness (or to use Kant's term 'experience'). For example, Kant writes: "All intuitions are nothing for us and do not in the least concern us if they cannot be taken up into consciousness, whether they influence it directly or indirectly, and through this alone is cognition possible" (*Critique of Pure Reason* A 116). In "Experience and Empiricism," Moore condemns both Kant and empiricists for making this claim (see section 1.2.8).

For now, I will postpone further explication of opposing arguments to Moore's epistemic views. Instead, I will continue to show that Moore, and then Russell, merely deny that the mind plays a role in the acquisition of knowledge, i.e., they fail to advance arguments to support this claim.

6. As noted above, Moore holds the view that all idealists can be lumped together as one class of thinkers. He takes this stance because he believes they fail properly to distinguish between consciousness and the observed object. I have also noted that Moore believes the most important philosophical views have been infected by this failing. Even with this reminder, it seems surprising that Moore claims that the empiricists make the same mistake as the idealists. This seems surprising, because of all of the philosophical traditions, the empiricist's views appear the most amenable to Moore's.

Moore's denial of traditional British Empiricism is an important move in the history of Western thought, because British philosophy (of his time) was heavily

influenced by both idealism and empiricism. By arguing against both traditions, Moore creates a new intellectual space for philosophy to develop in Europe and North America. Though rarely noted, this dual denial arguably created the intellectual climate necessary for the birth of Analytic Philosophy.

In addition to the historical relevancy of Moore's denial of empiricism, there are two important reasons why one should review Moore's rejection empiricism. First, the reader will be better situated to see Moore's peculiar view of perception in play. Second, it shows why Moore believes his philosophy significantly differs from the Western philosophical tradition.

7. On the one hand, empiricists such as Locke, share with Moore the following belief: when one perceives an object, one is typically getting at the way the object exists. On the other hand, what Moore finds troubling about empiricism is that it is unclear as to what it means by the term 'experience'. In "Experience and Empiricism," Moore states: 'experience' "denotes a kind of cognition; and, like 'cognition' and 'knowledge' themselves, the word stand for a double fact" (82). Though many contemporary philosophers carefully separate the terms 'experience,' 'cognition,' and 'knowledge,' Moore believes these terms possess two uses, which are not kept distinct by most philosophers: "(a) a mental state, and (b) that of which this mental state is cognizant" (82). As already noted, this is also Moore's main criticism of idealism.

Additionally, Moore notes that the term 'experience' often concerns more than just an observed object or occurrence. It may also involve 'memory,' 'inference' and 'imagination':

[T]he very same existential truths which we experience may at another time be known to us by memory, or at the very time when we experience them another mind may have attained to a knowledge of them by inference or mere imagination. What is it which distinguishes our experience of them [i.e., direct observation of the object, 'inference' and 'imagination'] from that of knowing of them to which we give these names? (84)

It is here that Moore believes the empiricists have dropped the ball. They fail to clearly distinguish between the different kinds of experience that refer to or involve mental occurrences. Hence, the empiricists regard what the mind takes from direct experience (what Moore calls in this article 'existential truths') as an explanation for our *experiences* of perceptions, knowledge, ideas, or imaginings. In doing so, Moore believes they entangle the mental with what is purely non-mental, i.e., the existing object which is directly seen. Why Moore believes this to be the case will be the topic of the next several sections.

8. Moore notes empiricists often assert that one mental event may "cause" another mental event (87-88). Moore is referring to the manner in which British Empiricists attempt to account for all mental contents (including knowledge) as derived from sensory experience. In this fashion, British Empiricists tend to hold in common that one's previous 'experiences' of sensory content 1) account for the nature and shape of one's memories, 2) provide content for *inferences* about future perceptual states, 3) may be *combined* to form new ideas about the world and 4) can be generalized to form abstractions. The empiricists argue that these mental actives account for the various kinds of 'knowledge' mankind may derive from 'experience'.

Moore argues that *if* these (above) attempts to explain mental phenomena are true, they have the unintended consequence of making all knowledge impossible. To make

this point, Moore employs two related arguments. *First*, for Moore, if some *prior* mental occurrence ‘causes’ one’s current state of ‘knowing’, it cannot produce truth. Simply put, Moore believes ‘truth’ in its significant philosophical connotation refers to only mind-independent existence of *external* entities (as opposed to mental activity or both mind and external existence).

Second, Moore notes that if experience stems from some physical event, which causes a corresponding mental event, then the relation is *thought* to be true by the empiricists (88). Moore writes: “the word cognition [which for Moore denotes a mental event] itself is sometimes confined, as its etymology suggests, to awareness or consciousness of what is *true*, in which case it is equivalent to ‘knowledge’” (83). Moore finds this view problematic, because it makes knowledge *reducible* to and *necessarily based upon* mental activity (i.e., one’s awareness). Moore finds this troublesome, because he argues that *awareness* of what is true or awareness of what is *false* has no distinguishing characteristic (insofar as true or false content concerns awareness itself). By prioritizing ‘experience’ as something *reducible* to one’s *internal awareness*, Moore believes the empiricists reduce knowledge to an ‘awareness’ as a *mental* state. He opposes this view, because he claims that experiencing mind-independent *reality* does not involve mental states.

Moore offers little to no support for his above objections to empiricism. He merely asserts that knowledge is not possible unless one clearly distinguishes between the mental and non-mental. When a tradition fails to sufficiently achieve this distinction, Moore simply assumes it is false. More importantly, he fails to explain how it is possible for us to directly perceive mind-independent reality. He simply asserts that we do.

9. Moore claims that the above account of empiricism does not account for the unique position of empiricism: “this doctrine [...] fails to distinguish the empiricist from Kant and from post-Kantian non-empirical philosophers; since they too imply that we have no title to assert the truth of any proposition which is not implied in experience” (92). In the last portion of “Experience and Empiricism,” Moore seeks to account for where and how empiricists make a mistake that is germane to them alone.

Empiricists claim that *all* truth stems from experience. As a result, one cannot know that “all of these things have this character” (94) or that this is a necessity, because such claims would transcend experience. For instance, take the following assertion: *all* sufficiently heavy objects that are unsupported fall on bodies heavy enough to produce a gravity field. It is obvious that it would be impossible for one to ‘experience’ all possible or actual occurrences of this kind. Therefore, strictly speaking, an empiricist is committed to the view that one cannot ‘know’ that such a claim is true, because it transcends experience.

Moore notes that when an empiricist is overzealous in making the above claims, he ends up with contradictory beliefs concerning what is knowable. For example, the unwary empiricist may hold two contradictory claims: 1) ‘experience’ is the rule for *all* ‘truth,’ which is a claim concerning an entire ‘class’ (in this instance ‘truth’), and 2) one cannot *experience all* instances of a particular class, therefore one cannot know if statements concerning a class are true or false. If 2 is true, 1 is false. If 1 is true, 2 is false.

Not wanting to be caught in this contradiction, the clever empiricist attempts to avoid this problem by claiming that knowledge is “only *general* and *probable*, not *universal* and *necessary*” (94). This maneuver permits the empiricist to avoid both ‘truth’ claims concerning *all* instances of a class and any claim of necessity. Moore asserts that this view predominately accounts for the empirical tradition.

For Moore, the stance that all knowledge is “only *general* and *probable*, not *universal* and *necessary*” accounts for where and how empiricists make a mistake that is *germane* to their specific practice (94). He argues that when empiricists attempt to accept ‘only what conforms to experience,’ they fail to notice that what conforms to experience *for them* is not the kind of ‘experience,’ which yields truth. Rather, such an attempt “confuses this test [i.e., *accepting* only what *conforms* to *my* experience] with the test of actual experience,” i.e., one’s unmediated awareness of the *actual* object itself, which has *nothing* to do with one’s mental processes (94). Moore claims the following: when empiricists ‘accept’ (i.e., a mental act) what conforms to *their* ‘experiences’ (which is also a mental process), they base their notion of ‘truth’ on *their* mental processes. In this fashion, Moore claims that empiricists fail to distinguish between the *mental* and the real.

One the one hand, what makes empiricists similar to idealists (for Moore) is their failure properly to separate the *mental* from the *actual*. On the other hand, he claims that what makes empiricists different from idealists is the *manner* in which they fail to make this distinction.

10. The force and influence of Moore’s claims lies not in his arguments themselves or in his blunt use of logic, but rather in his underlying presumptions. Moore

perceives the world as populated by distinct objects. He believes that these objects are knowable in complete independence from the mind. In other words, the true existence of entities is *given* to our minds. That is, the existing thing we are conscious *of* can in *no* way be reduced to the activity of the mind.

What must be true about perception in order for Moore's views to be accurate?

[Moore's] form of commonsensism presupposes knowledge by direct perception, roughly what Russell later calls knowledge by acquaintance. In making a qualified return to such early commonsense thinkers as Reid, Moore implicitly denies any need for epistemology, more precisely for the justification of claims to know. (Hylton, *Hegel, Idealism and Analytic Philosophy* 54)

Like Reid, Moore believed we possess "direct, immediate knowledge of the existence of things" (Rockmore, *Analytic Philosophy and Idealism* 55).⁷ In short, the claim is that we directly know an existent when we come into contact with it. This occurs, because the mind does nothing, or so little, in receiving knowledge, that our passive awareness of the world is left unmediated (i.e., free of interference) or unmarred by the human mind. Moore's distinction between one's own consciousness and one's awareness of mind-independent reality rests on this aspect of commonsensism. As a consequence of his comment to this view, he insists the following: 1) there exists a clear line of demarcation between our *access* to existence and our awareness of our own consciousness, and 2) that one's awareness of existence does not *require* productive activity from the mind.

At least as early as Xenophanes (about 570 B.C.) and Democritus (about 460 B.C.) the Western tradition was concerned with the question whether the way the world exists and the way the world appears coincide. In fact, every era of western thought had thinkers who shared this concern. Moore simply ignores this longstanding tradition,

⁷ For more on Reid's relationship to Analytic Philosophy, see "**Appendix II: Reid, a Forerunner of Analytic Thinkers.**"

because he believes the distinction between the mind and observed objects is readily apparent. For Moore, it is only sloppy thinking, rather than true insight, which has led philosophers to believe otherwise. *If* this were true, it would make sense why Moore's view of perception dismisses all versions of skepticism, empiricism and idealism as a mere misunderstanding of the distinction between the mind-independent existence and consciousness (and/or the contents of consciousness).

11. Moore believed that *any* divergence from his views would produce a slippery slope, which would *inevitably* result in the error of skepticism. In Moore's writings, this position is presumed to be correct. In fact, his firm insistence on it seems more akin to an act of faith than philosophical discourse, which seeks justification or support for its claims.

Nevertheless, Reid's and Moore's views, like many before and after them, are based on an implicit belief that once explicitly stated, is not easy to counter. For instance, the claim that we should be skeptical about whether our perception accurately coincide with the world appears to be based on the assumption that perception *does not* appropriately relate to the world. This leads to a kind of question begging in which one starts with the assumption that there must be something faulty about our perceptual abilities. Such skeptical views often require one to *presume* not only how perception functions but also how the world exists. The problem then arises, how can the skeptic know how the world is, so that he can then show that another's claim concerning reality is wrong? The attempt to resolve this problem makes the skeptic inconsistent, because he/she argues that knowing reality is impossible.

The above version of skepticism harks back to the notorious view well noted in ancient philosophy, i.e., ‘it is true, that there is no such thing as truth.’ Such a view is contradictory; it must both assert something *true* about its skeptical claim, while at the same time denying the capacity for any truth. McDowell, borrowing from Davidson, clarifies this position in his essay “*Reference, Objectivity, and Knowledge*”:

We can invert the order in which skepticism insists we should proceed, and say—as common sense would, if it undertook to consider the skeptical scenarios at all—that our knowledge that those supposed possibilities do not obtain is sustained by the fact that we know a great deal about our environment, which would not be the case if we were not perceptually in touch with the world in just about the way we ordinarily suppose we are. (*The Engaged Intellect* 229)

Ironically, we may only be able to doubt our knowledge of existence, because we are so good at recognizing when we make wrong assertions about it.

The Status of what practical and empirical experiences indicated is at stake. Is it true that we can correct our mistaken views (as Strawson argues in section 2.12), because we have access to mind-independent content, or can we practically and empirically correct our claims without ever knowing metaphysical truths concerning the matters we are correcting? In Chapter Four, I will argue for the latter.

1.3. Russell’s Relationship to Moore

1. Russell was a senior classmate of Moore’s at Trinity College. Like Moore, he also studied under McTaggart. For a brief time, Russell considered himself an idealist. The beginning of *Logical Postivism* provides an excellent autobiographical account of Russell’s philosophical development. He writes:

At Cambridge I read Kant and Hegel, as well as Mr. Bradley's *Logic*, which influenced me profoundly. For some years I was a disciple of Mr. Bradley, but about 1898 I changed my views, largely as a result of my arguments with G. E. Moore. (*Logical Positivism* 32)

After his brief dalliance with idealism, Russell rejects it. According to him, this change of heart stemmed largely from Moore's influence.

While the later Moore and Russell hold substantial philosophical differences, they maintained striking similarities. Some of these similarities are central to both their philosophies. For instance, throughout Russell's career, he maintained that one can make clear distinctions between the contents of the mind and externality. Hylton notes this distinction:

Russell's views in *Leibniz* [i.e., *The Philosophy of Leibniz*] include many points of striking superficial agreement with the view of Moore [...] Russell insists that we must distinguish our mental states from non-mental objects, and, in particular, that we must distinguish states of knowledge or belief from the propositions which are the object of such states (e.g. see *Leibniz*, p. 187). He attacks Kant for failing to make this distinction [...] (*Russell, Idealism and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy* 153)

Due largely to this shared stance with Moore (which resonates throughout Russell's non-idealist period), Russell freely admitted that he and Moore shared the same core beliefs. In *The Principles of Mathematics*, he writes "on the fundamental question of philosophy, my position, in all its chief features, is derived from Mr. G. E. Moore" (viii).

Moore and Russell not only shared the same teachers and similar views on perception, they also (at one point in Russell's career) actively worked to undermine idealism in a similar fashion. For example, in "On the Nature of Truth" and "Mr. McTaggart's 'Studies in Hegelian Cosmology,'" Russell and Moore perceived idealists as creating fictional entities and multiplicities derived from the subject's awareness of

relationships amongst individual entities. They both renounce such views for making the absurd claim that the act of knowing transforms the existing object.⁸

Similar to Moore's article on McTaggart, Russell upheld Joachim's account as "the best recent statement" of idealism (On the Nature of Truth 28). Russell implied and Moore claimed that these respective idealists were the culmination of idealism. Moore and Russell mistakenly concluded from their experience of these two figures that they represented perceptual views common to all idealists. Consequently, Russell and Moore also shared the unscholarly tendency to characterize the whole tradition of idealism according to their readings of contemporary figures. Consequently, their portrayals of German idealists are often misleading or overtly false (this could also be said about much of their commentary concerning their predecessors).⁹

Their shared views on perception and their mutual rejection of idealism paved the way for analytic philosophy. However, Russell's philosophy was and is significantly more influential than Moore's. In particular, 'Analytic Philosophy' "was effectively established by Bertrand Russell in his various accounts of the birth of the 'new philosophy' around the turn of the twentieth century" (Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegel* 1). Steve Gerrard and Paul Redding note Russell's account as a 'creation myth'. The 'myth' is that Moore and Russell defeated idealism and created a new philosophy in its wake. In reality, the version of idealism Russell and Moore rebelled against was largely confined to (what were then) contemporary versions of

⁸ Compared to Moore, Russell was more influenced by his idealist teachers. He reports that he once held the above view, but later rejected it: "I could no longer believe that knowing makes any difference to what is known" (On the Nature of Truth 32).

⁹ For instance, Russell's "*A History of Western Philosophy*" is notoriously full of inaccurate accounts of philosophers.

idealism. Nonetheless, this so called ‘new philosophy’ was widely received as the vanquisher of all idealism.

Though this ‘new philosophy’ was popularized by Russell, Russell in “My Philosophical Development” acknowledged Moore as its progenitor¹⁰:

It was toward the end of 1898 that Moore and I rebelled against both Kant and Hegel. Moore led the way, but I followed closely in his footsteps. I think that the first published account of the new philosophy was Moore’s article in *Mind* on ‘*The Nature of Judgment*’. Although neither he nor I would now adhere to all the doctrines in the article, I, and I think he, would still agree with its negative part—i.e., with the doctrine that fact is in general independent of experience. (42)

2. Moore and Russell also shared the belief that the act of making a judgment and the object of a judgment are two completely different kinds of things (Hylton, *Russell, Idealism and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy* 109). The first is purely a mental act. The second is completely objective and independent of the mind. Russell, later used ‘proposition’ instead of Moore’s term ‘judgment’ (109):

[T]his can be seen as a special case (and the most important case) of the distinction between (mental) acts and their (objective, non-mental) objects. Moore and Russell seem to insist upon this distinction quite generally—in knowledge, belief, thought, perception, and even imagination. In the case of each of these mental acts or states, their view is that we are in contact with an object which is *not* mental. (110)

Due to these reasons, both Moore and Russell could maintain robust forms of direct realism, in which the “mind is completely passive, and in no way creative” (111).

Accordingly, they uphold that our perceptual knowledge of the world is ‘direct’ and ‘immediate’ (111).

Throughout his work, Moore is concerned with maintaining the inherent unity of an entity as a means to safeguard its real (as opposed to perceived) identity. In order to

¹⁰ I am indebted to Redding’s fine scholarship in *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegel*, where he identifies Russell’s use of ‘new philosophy’ in the following quote.

protect an entity's inherent unity, he carefully maintains a distinction between 'numerical' and 'conceptual' identity:

[W]e may assert of two things that they have the same predicate, and yet are different from one another. Thus it is true that my coat is black, and my waistcoat is black; and yet it is not true that my coat is the same as my waistcoat. (Moore, "Identity" 105)

Moore defends a common belief: two things may share the same quality such as a color (i.e. an instance of 'conceptual identity'), but this in no way implies they are the same object (i.e., an instance of 'numerical identity'). Concepts such colors can be accurately asserted to belong to more than one subject, but this in no way destroys the 'numerical identity' (i.e., its existence as an individuated being) of individual objects that share the same conceptual identity.¹¹

Moore's and Russell's ontology is counterintuitive. It claims that secondary qualities (e.g., colors and geometrical shapes) exist independently of embodied objects. For them, both embodied objects and universals exist, but not in the same way. Moore often refers to embodied objects as 'existing' things and universals such as colors, numbers and shapes as 'actual'. The precise difference between these *real* beings and what entitles them to be considered 'real' is obscure.

Nonetheless, *if* truth only comes from existing things, our realization of entities like colored objects or geometrical shapes must have some truth outside of our recognition of them. For example, if every specific object expressed unique colors and shapes, qualitatively distinct from any other object (i.e., if they shared no universal quality), then the appearance of shared qualities would be an act of *generalization*. In

¹¹ This account glosses over important historical developments, which question what it means for two things to share the same quality or property. Moore believes he answers these kinds of historical concerns, at least as they relate to Plato, Leibniz and idealism, in his work entitled "Identity."

other words, they would only *resemble* each other, rather than *share* the same quality. *Generalizations* are *mental events*, because ‘resemblances’ do not exist in the objects themselves but rather in our perceptions of them. Consequently, if such designations relied on mental processes, rather than on the existing object, their *truth* would be determined by mental activity. As seen above, Moore emphatically denies this kind of view in any of its myriad expressions (see sections 1.2.7 and 8).

Russell takes a similar stance: if what we say about an object is true and its truth is independent of our minds, a true proposition (i.e., what one is asserting) cannot be a product of the mind. Hylton correctly notes this in the following passage:

In the early stages of his reaction against idealism Russell opposes the view that sees propositions as in any sense formed by an act of the mind. The basic intuition behind this opposition can, I think, be expressed quite simply. The intuition is that what is true is true; it is true absolutely and objectively, and true regardless of any mental state or of the act of any mind—it would be true even if there were no minds at all. (Hylton, “Propositions, Functions and Analysis” 13)

In other words “[a] proposition, to put it another way, has to be something which we do not *make*; it has to be something objective in the most simple-minded sense, something *out there*” (14).

The above claims generate significant repercussions in Russell’s early

Metaphysics and, correlatively, semantics:

Very roughly, the point is that according to Russell’s early metaphysics everything—‘whatever may be an object of thought, or may occur in a true or false proposition, or can be counted as *one*’, as he says (*Principles*, section 47)—is a *term*, i.e., is independent and object-like. At bottom, we may say, he has only one ontological category, and it is that category which is most obviously exemplified by the subject of subject-predicate propositions. (15)

Russell believes all ‘actual’ entities are *like* objects in that they possess an independent existence. Similar to Moore, Russell believes that even predicates and/or universals are

‘actual’. Consequently, predicates in a proposition are viewed as subjects. Consider the following proposition: “this tree has round and green leaves”. Moore and Russell claim that the universals ‘tree’, ‘round’, ‘green’ and ‘leaves’ are all “terms” and that these universals are real entities existing independently of the specific tree indicated by the proposition.

Inversely, in Moore’s and Russell’s metaphysics, universals are also capable of accurately describing specific entities. In the above example, all four terms (i.e., the underlined words above), when combined, form a particular kind of truth about *one* actual tree. ‘Terms’ are thus combinable via a proposition to state facts about specific objects (e.g., a particular tree). In this way, ‘terms’ simultaneously function as both subjects and predicates.

This kind of metaphysical claim is a form of nominalism, which attempts to account for and justify the logical structure of subject-predicate statements, i.e., an object which has something stated about it. Specifically, it attempts to establish that the logical relations between subject-predicate statements accurately indicate entities that populate existence. For instance, a particular entity, which is *one* being, *may* have numerous true assertions made about it (which are propositions). For example, this is my *dog*, my *dog* is named Spot, my dog is brown, and my *dog* weighs 27 pounds. With the same object, one can make many true statements.

According to Moore and Russell, one can make many true statements concerning a particular object, because real entities are constituted by *universally shared properties*. For instance, my particular dog Spot shares the universal quality ‘brown’ with all brown things. The same can be said of him being a ‘dog’ or a ‘mammal’.

The rationale for upholding the claim that each ‘term’ in a proposition *is* an existent being is driven by Moore’s and Russell’s hyper-realism. I use the term ‘hyper-realism’ as way to designate their common view that all truth and all meaning hinge upon existing entities—entities which are free from all mental activity and still remain cognizable. For instance, *if* the ‘terms’ in a ‘proposition’ were *not* existing entities, *then* the meaning and truth of a proposition would ultimately stem from fictional entities. Since fictional beings are not real entities, they do not exist outside of the mind. Therefore, *if* the intelligibility of objects is based upon fictional beings, *then* the only way we could have access to objects would be our mind’s creation of fictional beings. In other words, propositions would be based on subjective creations of the mind, rather than on external and objective truths. Moore and Russell claim that if this were the case, it would undermine our ability to state anything true about an entity. They take this position, because they believe that ‘truth’ requires one to get at the way things exist independently of the manner one thinks about them.

Here, Russell’s disagreement with Frege (another major contributor to early analytic philosophy) is “instructive” (15). Frege takes a fairly standard position in modern realism. He argues that ‘concepts’ (or universals) are different from ‘objects’, e.g., concepts are mental and objects exist independent of the mind (15).

Russell, on the other hand, claims that ‘terms’ (i.e., the conceptual components that form or make up a proposition) are *like* embodied objects in that they possess an independent existence (15). Russell’s argument for the superiority of his view over Frege’s can be stated as follows: if only material entities are *real* (as Frege proposes), all designations of ‘true’ or ‘false’ would be a byproduct of linguistic practices (15). For

instance, according to Frege, when one states ‘the dog is brown,’ the concepts ‘brown’ and ‘dog’ are linguistic/mental constructs (rather than matters of fact). Since the correctness of my use of the proposition ‘the dog is brown’ concerns linguistic constructs, its ‘truth’ or ‘falseness’ is largely determined by the conventions of language instead of matters of fact.

Once again, we see that Russell’s notion of truth is a product of his hyper-realism. For instance, given Russell’s prior commitments concerning truth (i.e., that truth is not dependent on the mind in any relevant way), he must claim that things like ‘concepts’ exist and that neither their existence nor their truth depends on any mind thinking them. For these reasons, he cannot accept that concepts enable us to organize and make content determinate, without making them into real beings (i.e., non-mental entities).

3. Moore and Russell also have important differences. For example, the fight against idealism was a call to arms that held Moore in thrall for his entire career, while for Russell it was not. Instead of focusing on the problems of idealism, Russell spent much of his efforts in the attempt to secure the precision and accuracy of philosophy by appealing to mathematics.

Commenting on his seminal work *The Principles of Mathematics*, Russell states:

I think that no one who reads this book will dispute its main contention, namely, that from certain ideas and axioms of formal logic, by the help of the logical of relations, all pure mathematics can be deduced, without any new undefined idea or unproved propositions. The technical methods of mathematical logic, as developed in this book, seem to me very powerful, and capable of providing a new instrument for the discussion of problems that have hitherto remained subject to philosophic vagueness. (Logical Atomism 33)

In *The Principles of Mathematics*, Russell's "fundamental thesis" was "that mathematics and logic are identical" (V). His motivation to establish this claim was to confer to logic, and by extension philosophy, the rigor traditionally reserved for mathematics.

4. In closing, Russell's 1) rejection of idealism in any form, 2) his belief that perception immediately grasps actual objects, and 3) his insistence that many philosophical mistakes (and unanswered questions) are due to imprecise and ill-defined language, influentially established the core themes that would sustain Analytic Philosophy as a distinct tradition.

1.4. *Synthesis, Judgment and their Relationship to Perception*

1. There is one issue, above all others, which threatens Moore's and Russell's hyper-realism. Moreover, their philosophical entailments do not permit them to have any satisfactory answer to this threat: their philosophical views are incapable of providing a satisfactory account of synthesis.

What is synthesis and why is it a problem for Moore and Russell? The problem of synthesis concerns the problem of unity. For instance, Moore and Russell have no way to account for how propositional claims (i.e., assertions) about existing things obtain their unity. Simply put, when one makes a claim about anything at all, there are a number of different things one *could* have said. For example, why does one talk about a specific topic and not another? More importantly, why does one make one kind of claim about an object when one can just as easily make a different claim about the same object?

In this fashion, there seems to be a contingent (as opposed to necessary) aspect to what is observed. The mere fact that there are contingent factors at play in the act of observation is not problematic for Moore and Russell. However, if the mind plays an active (rather than passive) role in how we perceive and how we communicate what we perceive, then Moore's and early Russell's claims concerning perception are at risk.

Specifically, there is the problem of accounting for how the contents of a proposition are put together in a way that makes them true and significantly related. *If the manner* in which propositions are constituted requires organizational or relation structures *generated* by the mind via innate structures, the will, learning, habits or accidents (as opposed to directly seeing real relations or unites as a *passive* recipient), *then* their claims concerning direct perception are hopelessly shattered.

Let us start with a simple example: 'this dog is brown' is true if, and only if, it indicates a specific dog and it is in fact brown. But one could just as easily have stated that 'this dog is a mammal', 'this dog has fur', or 'this dog has yellow teeth'. Moore and Russell claim that the mind contributes *nothing* to what is observed about real entities.

However, it appears that any proposition about an existing thing is an assertion that could have been formulated differently. For example, several people walk into the same room via the same entryway. One person notes the carvings on a chair, another admires colorful book spines arranged on a shelf, and a third is impressed by the large size of the room. The first person's experience concerns the relations of shape and texture found in a particular carving. The relation of the texture and shape of the carving forms the whole or unity of his experience. The second person experiences bright colors and various contrasts amongst these bright colors, rather than the presence of books (even

though it is the books that are colored). For this individual, colors and their contrasting relations form the basis of his experience. The third person is ignorant of the furnishing in the room, but is intimately preoccupied with its scale. This individual experiences the spatial unity and scale of the room without its contents.

In this manner, at any given time, a particular mind is capable of making (or forming) a large number of observations concerning present objects. Therefore, one mind may *attend* to the world in a significantly different way from another mind that is exposed to similar environmental conditions. These differences can be accounted for by the different ways minds form relations amongst observable content. These relations in turn can form different kinds of unities. As already noted, Russell argues that natural unities are in the world and not created by the activities of the mind. According to Moore and Russell, once one deviates from the inherent expression of a natural unity, as found in real entities, one destroys what they are.

For the above reasons, human minds are *active* in selecting (or discriminating) what and how it perceives. Hence, the mind seems to possess *some* measure of volition (or function), which enables it to *modify* what and how it perceives, because it can actively unify some observable content, while ignoring others (i.e., what physiologists call ‘discrimination’). Here, the term ‘volition’ does not require a *reflective decision* or an active *choice*. It means that some aspects of how and what is seen cannot be accounted for by external forces or objects, but only the observing subject.

2. Wittgenstein succinctly expresses some ways in which one’s volitional perceptual outlook can change how and ultimately what, is being observed:

Suppose someone points to a vase and says “Look at the marvelous blue—the shape isn’t the point.”—Or: “look at the marvelous shape—the color doesn’t matter.” Without doubt you will do something *different* when you act upon these two invitations. But do you always do the *same* thing when you direct your attention to the colour? Imagine various different cases. To indicate a few:

“Is this blue the same as the blue over there? Do you see any difference?”—

You are mixing paint and you say “It’s hard to get the blue of this sky.”

“It’s turning fine, you can already see blue sky again.”

“Look what different effects these two blues have.”

“Do you see the blue book over there? Bring it here.”

“ This blue signal-light means. . . .”

“What’s this blue called?—Is it ‘indigo’?”

You sometimes attend to the colour by putting your hand up to keep the outline in view; or by not looking at the outline of the thing; sometimes by starting at the object and trying to remember where you saw that colour before. (*Philosophical Investigations*, sec. 33)

Wittgenstein shows what is implicit in our everyday experiences. It is likely that many philosophers fail to notice this occurrence because human beings often fail to notice what is most common in lived experience. In this case, the insight that *how* one looks at something affects the manner in which that individual perceives an object is often too commonplace to even notice.

Wittgenstein draws another important conclusion from the above examples: the way in which we look at the world is affected by the broader context of what we are doing at the time of our observations.

You attend to the shape, sometimes by tracing it, sometimes by screwing up your eyes so as not to see the colour clearly, and in many other ways. I want to say: This is the sort of thing that happens *while* one ‘directs one’s attention to this or that’. But it isn’t these things by themselves that make us say someone is attending to the shape, the colour, and so on. Just as a move in chess doesn’t consist simply in thoughts and feelings as one makes the move: but in the circumstances we call “playing a game of chess”, “solving a chess problem” and so on. (*Philosophical Investigations*, sec. 33)

Wittgenstein suggests that the manner we actively choose to look at the world stems spontaneously from the manner in which we are already engaged in it. That is, it depends

on the context. For instance, when we are playing a game, we rarely consider the rules. Instead, we just play. We ‘just play’ by being caught up in the activity we are engaged in as a continuous whole, as opposed to isolated interactions. The ebb and flow of activity brought about by the players, by the particular activities we have already brought about, by our environment and the constraints of our circumstances all play a role in how we chose to engage our world and ultimately how we perceive it. However, *if* Moore’s and Russell’s hyper-realism were true—in that we immediately see the world as it actually exists, with no assistance from our minds—*then* the perceptual accounts Wittgenstein offers would be impossible.

3. The reason why one makes a specific kind of an assertion about an object and not one of a different kind—or to put it another way, the reason why the contents of a proposition are unified in a specific way and not another—is that a person *judges* them to be that way. Simply put, *if* the content or the relation of what is being asserted, for instance ‘this dog is brown’, rather than ‘this dog is old’, is due to our *mind’s* making a ‘judgment’, *then* the *truth* of the matter is in *some* way constituted by the *activity of the mind*.

However, Moore and early Russell claim that all awareness of actual entities is passive due to our *direct* perception of objects. Above, I noted that Russell thinks that even concepts are ‘like objects’ (see section 1.3). If concepts are like objects, in that they can exist independently of the mind and they enjoy their own independent existence, they are objective. This would allow one to make true or false statements about concepts, just as one could make true and false statements about physical objects. However, many

philosophers see concepts as the way the mind *organizes* content found in the world. Concepts are thus, for some thinkers, just organizational and indexing tools that refer to certain kinds of entities or occurrences. For others, concepts are incorporated, added and/or overlaid so to speak upon what is sensed as a means to render sensory content meaningful. (This latter view of concepts is shared by Kant, Hegel and Sellars.)

As we shall see, this latter view of concepts is problematic for Russell and Moore. In making concepts ‘object-like’, Hylton correctly notes that Russell’s philosophy shows a serious limitation:

If everything is, so to speak, object-like, what *could* be the source of the unity of the propositions? Anything one might put forward as an answer would turn out to be just one more item in need of unification [e.g., since any concept would be just another independent entity, why should it belong to the specific statement or claim?]. Only something with quite a different status [than an object-like entity], Russell implied, could play the role of unifying the components into a proposition. But Russell’s metaphysics rules out the possibility of there being anything with this kind of different status. Russell’s anti-Kantianism forbids an appeal to what is in any sense an act of unification or synthesis; and his metaphysics forbids any other kind of answer. (*Propositions, Functions and Analysis* 14-15)

Several paragraphs later Hylton writes: “The fact that Russell has no coherent account of the unity of the proposition therefore seriously undermines his claim to have a refutation of the idealist view of relations” (17).

I noted above that Moore and Russell believe that idealists create fictional unities (see sections 1.3.1-2 and 1.4.3). As a result, Moore and Russell believe that the idealist’s view of the world is fictional; yet, both Moore’s and Russell’s views on perception cannot answer why some perceived unities are real and others are fictional.

Some ‘realists’ are content with the claim that we all attend to the same world, but depending on *how* we attend to it, some aspects of our view of reality can become

distorted, incomplete or inaccurate. However, Moore's and Russell's hyper-realism vehemently denies that such distortions are a problem, because they claim that a careful and disciplined individual can subtract all mental additives from their observations.

For Moore and Russell, distortions only occur for a careless individual who does not bother to distinguish between mental content and the reality of the world. For them, when one sees a boundary or shape delineating an object, such outlines demonstrate the natural unity of existing objects. Moreover, within these natural unities are individuated qualities and states that are distinct and directly given to the mind. For example, when one looks around a room, one sees discrete and particular truths, which are components of a larger world. That is, each individual observation delineates some aspect of reality.

As noted in section 1.4, Russell's ontology requires an immense number of different kinds of things and component elements that belong to them. As such, "there are often different elements which the mind does not distinguish" (Russell, *The Principles of Mathematics*, sec, 339). However, since every real concept, unity and relation are like objects that enjoy independent existence, not only from the mind, but also from other beings, our observations do not distort reality when we see only a portion of our larger environments. A loose analogy might help explain this point: even though a given brick wall may be made up of 10,000 bricks, when I see just 1 brick from this wall, this 1 brick is not any less real than the entire wall. It is this kind of atomic view of real and discrete beings that persuade Hylton to call Russell's and Moore's philosophy 'Platonic Atomism' (see '**Appendix III: Moore and Russell as 'Platonic Atomists'**').

Moore argues that we can simply tell the difference between fictions of the mind and realities found in the world. If one could simply and directly perceive natural unities

as something objectively true (i.e., independent of the mind), then *direct realism* (i.e., immediate access to the reality as it truly exists) would be a plausible view. However, as we proceed, an inspection of Kantian, Hegelian, and Sellarsian models of perception (specifically, how they account for judgment), can readily counter claims concerning direct realism.

Before I address this latter topic in chapters 2, 3 and 4, I will end this chapter with an account of why the later Russell rejects direct perceptual knowledge and accepts an indirect epistemic model based on science. This section will afford us the opportunity to see the manner in which Russell's scientific realism departs from hyper-realism, and the specific reasons why Russell chooses to make this move. In the second and fourth chapters, I inquire if science is equipped to validate metaphysical claims concerning objects, as they actually exist, independent of the observing subject.

1.5. *Russell and the Ascendance of Scientific Realism*

1. Moore's and Russell's greatest difference lay in Russell's rejection of commonsensism: "[t]hroughout his career, Russell is concerned to show that common sense, which is not a reliable epistemological source, should lead us toward science as the arbiter of knowledge" (Rockmore, *Hegel, Idealism and Analytic Philosophy* 49). The commonsense view of the world is problematic, because there are opposing views that claim to be 'commonsense' (54). This leads to the problem of how can one discern what counts as commonsense:

As Descartes already knew before commonsensism was discovered by Reid, commonsense theories have no way to adjudicate between different beliefs of

common senses. For this reason, Descartes feels called upon to introduce a method that will be reliable, as common sense is not, in discovering knowledge. (54)

For Russell, the best *method* for getting at proper knowledge claims is science. His appeal to science became highly influential throughout Analytic Philosophy.

2. *If* perception accurately gets at the way things are, why did Russell see the need for science? In *A History of Western Philosophy*, Russell writes:

G. E. Moore once accused idealists of holding that trains only have wheels while they are in stations, on the ground that passengers cannot see the wheels while they remain in the train. Common sense refuses to believe that the wheels suddenly spring into being whenever you look, but do not bother to exist when no one is inspecting them. When this point of view is scientific, it bases the inference to unperceived events on causal laws. (657)

In this passage, we have a rather simple and direct answer to the above question.

Science, through established laws, can inform us about things which are not directly observable. It was this aspect of Russell's philosophy that turned (most) subsequent Analytic thinkers on the road to some variation of scientific realism.

Though many do not know what it is called, 'scientific realism' is held by a large portion of contemporary people. Simply stated, scientific realism is the belief that science is the best method for obtaining knowledge. In particular, science is often seen (as in the case of Russell), as a means to justify what we cannot directly perceive. Even though science might be based on observations, it is often upheld that it can reveal the true states of entities, which are not observable. In this manner, 'scientific realism' may lead to 'metaphysical realism': the claim that one can obtain precise knowledge of mind-independent reality. For many philosophers, this kind of metaphysical knowledge requires one to go 'beyond' or 'behind' *prima facie* appearances. I will show in section

1.6 why scientific accounts inadvertently lead to the belief that the real world and the world of appearance do not coincide.

As we shall see, science leads to views that are incompatible with Moore and *early* Russell. Specifically, scientific realism will be shown to be incompatible with what I call hyper-realism. Ironically, this occurrence shows why scientific realism creates the conditions for Analytic thinkers (such as Sellars) to reevaluate German Idealism's contribution to the following: 1) an accurate perceptual model, and 2) consequently, accurate epistemic views (see Chapter Four).

1.6. *A Critique of 'Data,' 'Fact,' and 'Judgment' in Russell's Scientific View of Perception*

1. In order to make the astonishing claims of Kant and Hegel accessible and relevant, one needs to understand the format in which many contemporary realists frame their epistemic models. In seeing how this format fails, one will be better suited to see the manner in which Kant and Hegel succeed where contemporary realists fail.

Russell's description of data, fact and judgment in his later work *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits* is a good exemplar of how contemporary thinkers typically engage the epistemic problem of knowing mind-independent existence.¹² In this work, Russell 1) proposes a scientific view of perception, and 2) contrasts the manner in which the world appears to the observing subject from the claims made by physics.

¹² I will now refer to the text *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits as 'Human Knowledge'*.

2. In the next two sections, I will make a case for two claims. First, Russell's 1948 text *Human Knowledge* attempts to grapple with the problem of judgment in way that dramatically opposes his early realism. Second, in this text, Russell's scientific account of perception and his requirements for knowledge are incompatible, which results in an incoherent view of how science makes knowledge possible.

In *Human Knowledge*, Russell makes a distinction that is commonly accepted in philosophy. Unlike many philosophical claims, it is largely agreeable to the Western public. This is the case because it neatly fits into the life-world (i.e., world of daily experience) of most Western people:

Many appearances are deceptive. Things seen in a mirror may be thought to be "real." In certain circumstances, people see double. The rainbow seems to touch the ground at some point, but if you go there you do not find it. [...] But in all these cases the core of data is not illusory, but only the derived beliefs. My visual sensation when I look in a mirror or see double, are exactly what I think they are. Things at the foot of the rainbow do really look colored. In dreams I have all the experiences that I seem to have; it is only things outside my mind that are not as I believe them to be while I am dreaming. There are in fact no illusions of the senses, but only mistakes in interpreting sensational data as signs of things other than themselves. (167)

Here, Russell claims that 'sensational data' are never false. What are often wrong are our judgments concerning what we believe sensations indicate.

Descartes makes a similar claim in the *Third Meditation*:

[C]onsiderations of order appear to dictate that I now classify my thoughts into definite kinds, and ask which of them can properly be said to be the bearers of truth and falsity. (*The Philosophical writings of Descartes*, 25)

He first considers if ideas are 'the bearers of truth and falsity': "Now as far as ideas are concerned, provided they are considered solely in themselves and I do not refer them to anything else, they cannot strictly speaking be false [...]" (26). The same is true of sensations or perceptions. In this manner, perceptions or sensations by themselves are

neither true nor false. We encounter true or false thoughts 1) when we *relate* perceptions or sensations to something else and 2) when we try to *interpret* them. 1 and 2 are kinds of judgments. He writes: “Thus the only remaining thoughts where I must be on my guard against making a mistake are judgments” (25).

To Russell’s credit, he recognizes our capacity for *passive* (or unconscious) judgments, which Descartes fails to consider:

I knew a road, along which I used often to go in a car, which had a bend at a certain place, and a whitewashed wall straight ahead. At night it was very difficult not to see the wall as a road going straight on up a hill. The right interpretation as a house and the wrong interpretation as an uphill road were both, in a sense, inferences from the sensational datum, but they were not inferences in the logical sense, since they occurred without any conscious mental process. (167)

Russell calls the above kind of judgment an “animal inference”, because it does not involve a conscious choice or logical inference, but only a reaction.

As seen above, the later Russell, unlike the early Russell, accepts the possibility that perceived content can misrepresent reality. He also allows inference to play a genuine and significant role in the acquisition of knowledge. These latter views on perception permit the reentry of skeptical concerns—concerns, which he has sought to undermine for his entire career. Specifically, *if* perceived content can be misleading and *if* one must make inferences to obtain knowledge, *then* it is always possible to doubt *any* particular knowledge claim. His solution to the problem of skepticism is clearly stated:

If an individual is to know anything beyond his own experiences up to the present moment, his stock of uninferred knowledge must consist not only of matters of fact but also of general laws, or at least a law, allowing him to make inferences from matters of fact; and such law or laws must, unlike the principles of deductive logic, be synthetic, i.e., not proved true by their falsehood being self-contradictory. The only alternative to this hypothesis is complete skepticism as to all the inferences of science and common sense, including those which I have called animal inferences. (175)

Russell argues that there are two requirements that must be met in order to obtain knowledge. *First*, there must be some ‘uninferred knowledge’ as it relates to ‘facts’. For him, a ‘fact’ represents something true about an existing entity. ‘Uninferred knowledge’ would then be passive reception (or a ‘given’) of knowledge concerning an existing entity. *Second*, ‘uninferred knowledge’ must also encapsulate some kind of law or laws that allows one to make *meaningful* and *true* inferences.

It is worthwhile to note that Kant and Hegel, and to a lesser extent Sellars, all develop views of knowledge that radically reject these claims. Nor do their views require the denial of knowledge, as Russell claims must occur when one fails to achieve his above two requirements for knowledge. (I will address these alternatives in chapters 2, 3 and 4).

After making the above claims, Russell attempts to answer the following question: “Assuming physics to be broadly speaking true, can we know it to be true, and, if the answer is to be in the affirmative, does this involve knowledge of other truths besides those of physics” (195)? He attempts to answer this question by appealing to a scientific account of perception. Russell believes that if he can demonstrate a causal relation between external entities and perceptual experiences, he can also validate the laws of physics.

3. Before I comment on the role of physics in Russell’s above claim, I want to show how his ‘scientifically’ oriented view of perception leads to an indirect model of perception. Russell asserts the common view that the capacity to see is caused by light waves being reflected from the objects that populate the world. Reflected light waves

strike the eye, which in turn causes a bioelectrical reaction in the optic nerves. The brain then processes this information and the mind subsequently generates a visual experience. For the scientific view of perception, all acts of perception possess a causal chain that makes perception possible. This implies that starting from perceptual experience, one can infer the necessary kinds of physical causes, which produced a particular kind of perceptual experience. These physical causes are then linked to specific objects.

Russell claims that the causal chain that links the object/environment to the brain initiates the perceptual act; his basis for accepting the laws of physics stems from this claim:

If the percept is to be a source of knowledge of the object, it must be possible to infer the cause from the effect, or at least to infer some characteristics of the cause. In this backward inference from effect to cause, I shall for the present assume the laws of physics. (206)

Russell takes several dubious turns in his attempt to support his linking of causes to physics. Yet, these arguments are relatively unimportant, because even when we grant Russell his claim concerning causes, it destroys the first of his two requirements to avoid skepticism, i.e., a capacity to receive non-inferential knowledge. I will now show why this is the case.

4. Since Russell argues that physics is an accurate source of knowledge, he must also uphold that perception is incomplete and at times inaccurate. For instance, “[t]he sun of the physicist is not identical with the sun of my percepts, and the 93,000,000 miles that separate it from the moon are not identical with the spatial relation between the visual sun and the visual moon when I happen to see both at once” (202). For Russell, the difference between the way the physicist ‘sees’ the sun and the way one ‘sees’ it in

normal perception, is *not* problematic. He believes that these kinds of disparities are unproblematic, because physics is grounded or based in the everyday world of perception.

As noted above, as a result of accepting the scientific view of perception, perception itself becomes not only *indirect*, but also an *inaccurate* presentation of existence. Take for example Russell's following claim:

The distinction between "seeing the sun" as a mental event and the immediate object of my seeing, is now generally rejected as invalid, and in this view I concur. But many of those who take the view that I take on this point nevertheless inconsistently adhere to some form of naïve realism [i.e., one observes reality directly and fully as it exists independent of the human observer]. (205)

It is important to note that this view is a complete reversal of his early claims concerning perception (see section 1.3). He proceeds to write:

If my seeing of the sun is identical with the sun that I see, then the sun that I see is not the astronomer's sun. For exactly the same reason the tables and chairs that I see, if they are identical with my seeing of them, are not located where physics says they are but where my seeing is. You may say that my seeing, being mental, is not in space; if you do, I will not argue the point. (205)

Despite Russell's early convictions, he now accepts that observation is a mental event. In this way, Russell departs from Moore's influence: the actual object and the mental object of perception are no longer distinct in consciousness.

As already stated, what makes scientific knowledge possible for Russell, despite all observation being a kind of mental event, is the existence of a causal link between perception and the perceived world:

But I shall none the less insist that there is one, and only one, region of space-time with which my seeing is always causally bound up, and that is my brain at the time of the seeing. And exactly the same is true of all objects of sense perception. (205)

The way things appear can be completely inaccurate, because perceptions are merely caused by objects, which participate in the same time-space in which the brain functions.¹³ Here it is important to note that the originary *cause*, i.e., *external objects and environmental conditions*, are not the effect (i.e., *the perceptual object*). Even though this view of perception permits the possibility of significant inaccuracies, it also assures that perceptions are linked to the world in a significant way, i.e., they are the products of a process that *participate* in the same time-space as the real world (despite the fact that we do not directly perceive time and space).¹⁴

Russell's argument against skepticism in relation to his views on perception and physics, is problematic: *if* perception is indirect and inaccurate, how can one obtain 'uninferred knowledge' of 'fact', which is his first requirement to avoid skepticism? Russell's answer to this question involves his claim that some beliefs arise non-inferentially. If this were not the case, any claim would require another claim, which would lead either to a vicious circle or an infinite regress. He claims that these beliefs "are of the most importance for our theory of knowledge, since they are indispensable

¹³ As early as 1924, Russell already held similar views as found in *Human Knowledge*. For instance, in *Logical Atomism*, Russell describes the following as a likely model for existence and the brain's participation in it:

The world consists of a number, perhaps finite, perhaps infinite, of entities which have various relations to each other, and perhaps also various qualities. Each of these entities may be called an "event"; from the point of view of old-fashioned physics, an event occupies a short finite time and a small finite amount of space, but as we are not going to have an old-fashioned space and an old-fashioned time, this statement cannot be taken at its face value. Every event has to a certain number of others a relation which may be called "compresence"; from the point of view of physics, a collection of compresent events all occupy one small region in space-time. One example of a set of compresent events is what would be called the contents of one man's mind at one time—i.e. all his sensations, images, memories, thoughts, etc., which can coexist temporally. His visual field has, in one sense, spatial extension, but this must not be confused with the extension of physical space-time; every part of his visual field is compresent with every other part, and with the rest of "the contents of his mind" at that time, and a collection of compresent events occupies a minimal region in space-time. (48)

According to Russell, all existence operates as "compresent" events, not just the brain.

¹⁴ Sellars holds a similar view. See Chapter Four.

minimum of premises for our knowledge of matter of fact” (166). Russell calls the originary content from which inferential beliefs may spring ‘data’.

If perception is indirect and inaccurate, how can ‘data’ non-inferentially indicate matters of fact (i.e., objects of actual existence)? They cannot. Or more precisely, there can be no such things as ‘data,’ if data involve non-inferential knowledge of fact. This is necessarily the case if Russell account of perception is true. Perception, at its most basic level (given Russell’s account of it) can only act as a *sign* or *indicator* of what Russell calls ‘facts’. Due to his commitment to the scientific view of perception, ‘data’ can only be an ‘effect,’ which is not the cause of perception (i.e., the objects and events which prompt the perceptual act). In other words, Russell’s account of perception makes percepts into mental *models* or *signifiers* created by the mind, rather than matters of fact. These signifiers may subsequently be intentionally or unintentionally (e.g. an ‘animal judgment’) utilized to *infer* ‘facts’. In this way, Russell’s account of perception destroys the possibility that ‘data’ can operate as ‘uninferred knowledge’ of ‘fact’.

Perhaps one may seek to defend Russell in a manner that parallels Reid’s account of perception (see ‘**Appendix II: Reid, a Forerunner of Analytic Thinkers**’). For instance, Reid believed that sensations were indicators of the real properties of objects. According to Reid, sensations themselves, when signifying the primary qualities of an object, do not constitute primary qualities. The mind, prompted by the ‘signifiers’ of sensation, *immediately* observes the signified, i.e., the real object. However, *if* we are to accept a scientific model of perception, which Russell clearly defends, *then* an abrupt and *immediate transference* from sensation to the *recognition of the real* seems magical. For instance, science tells us that the brain must *process* sensation in order to make sense of

it. Hence, Reid's depicts our awareness of reality as transpiring independent of the intermediary links (i.e., the brain's processing of sensory data so it may be perceived) science uses to explain perception.

5. Let us now review what has already been established. What is the epistemic value of 'data' in a scientific view of perception? They may be 'uninferred,' but they are not a matter of 'fact'. Hence, according to Russell's own views concerning perception, one cannot obtain 'uninferred knowledge' of 'fact'. As noted above, 'uninferred knowledge' of 'fact,' according to Russell, is one of the two requirements necessary to avoid skepticism. Therefore, according to Russell's own beliefs, there is no way to avoid skepticism given his scientific commitments. In a short, his scientific view of perception is inconsistent with his requirements to avoid skepticism.

We have just seen a misconception that is widely held by Analytic Philosophers. That is, there is a tendency amongst many recent thinkers to hold two incompatible views. The *first* view claims that the scientific account of perception is correct, and this demonstrates an *indirect* linkage to real entities in the world. This view of perception is taken as the principle that grounds all science: from perception, one can work back to a causal chain ending in objects of the world. In short, nothing concerning mind-independent reality is directly given in perception. Therefore, all knowledge of mind-independent reality must be *inferred* from perceptual states. *Second*, if we are to trust scientific models of the world as accurate, and thus avoid skepticism, we must have some kind of *direct* knowledge of real entities. Simply put, if no knowledge were direct, then all our knowledge would be built upon inferences. Since humans make errors, all

inferential knowledge is open to criticism that may lead to skepticism. If there were no access to some basic content that directly reveals real entities, then there would be no means to verify the accuracy of scientific models, which are the outcomes of observation. Russell is responsible for this fruitless trend in Analytic Philosophy: 1) holding a robust belief in both versions of the above views, while 2) inconsistently proceeding to argue that knowledge of mind-independent reality is possible.

Only after Sellars' "Empiricism and Philosophy of the Mind," did Analytic thinkers begin to reject the given (see Chapter 3, **Part Two**). After this Sellarsian work, Analytic philosophers face a new epistemic challenge: how can one know mind-independent existence without the foundation of the given (i.e., uninferred knowledge)? I argue that Sellars, McDowell's and Brandom's attempts to answer this question fail (see Chapter 4).

Chapter Two

Kant's 'Empirical Realism,' His 'Refutation of Idealism,' and Strawson's 'Corrected View'

2.1. *Introduction to Chapter Two*

1. In Chapter One, we saw that Analytic Philosophy began as a blunt and ill-conceived rejection of idealism. In this chapter, I will carefully outline and defend Kant's epistemic view. The same will be done in Chapter Three with Hegel. In Chapter Four, I argue that Kant's and Hegel's epistemic views (though in different ways) are superior to Sellars', McDowell's and Brandom's versions of realism, because Kant and Hegel can demonstrate their objects of knowledge, while Sellars, McDowell and Brandom cannot.

2. Perhaps the most important claim in *Critique of Pure Reason* is that experience requires synthesis. Broadly speaking, synthesis refers to the mind's ability to organize, combine, transform and reproduce mental content (which includes 'sensory content') as a necessary precursor to experience.¹⁵

I argue that once synthesis is accepted as a necessary precondition for all forms of experience, the core epistemological conclusions of Kant's idealism are defensible. For instance, Kant argues that the mind rather than external existence is responsible for the manner in which things appear to the observing subject. From this view, he argues that there is no discernable correspondence between appearances and mind-independent

¹⁵ I follow Sellars' example in utilizing the term 'sensory content' to denote content that relates to the senses, without committing oneself to the false claim that we are aware of raw sensations. This will be an important topic in Chapter 3.

existence. These latter two claims result in the epistemic view that there is a mind-independent existence, but we cannot know anything else about it. Kant's term for the unknowable mind-independent entity is the 'thing-in-itself.'

3. Kant's claim that the thing-in-itself is something we can legitimately posit but not know is a central theme of the *Critique*.¹⁶ Kant understood that this claim encouraged frequent mischaracterizations of his philosophy. For instance, Kant's contemporaries often compared him to Descartes, who (to *some* of his readers) made it seem impossible to know if an outer reality existed, and Berkeley, who denied the existence of anything but God, minds, and ideas. To correct these mischaracterizations, Kant wrote the *Prolegomena* and the B edition "Refutation of Idealism." Prior to these two works, he took some preliminary steps to defend himself from the above mischaracterizations in "The fourth paralogism."

The general conclusions of these sections culminate in Kant's conception of 'empirical realism,' which comprises three claims: 1) certain conditions of thought imply outer existence, 2) 'objectively valid' claims can be made concerning empirical objects as appearances, and 3) it is impossible to obtain knowledge of mind-independent existence, other than that it must *exists*.

For over two hundred years commentators have undervalued 'empirical realism' for several reasons. First, Analytic Philosophy's anti-Kantian (and anti-idealism in general) propaganda has led scholars to think his arguments are clever and historically important but hopelessly flawed and unworthy of serious reflection. Second, the complexity of Kant's arguments leaves even Kantian specialists reeling as to the

¹⁶ I will now refer to the *Critique of Pure Reason* as the '*Critique*.'

implication of many of his claims. Third, traditional accounts of Kant's argument for empirical realism fail to notice that it requires Kant's implied origin of the self. I argue that once Kant's origin of the self is clarified, one can show that empirical realism is a defensible view.

Conversely, Strawson claims in *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* that, via the 'corrected view,' science *can* achieve knowledge of mind-independent existence. We thus have two opposing views. On the one hand, there is Kant's empirical realism, which implies that science does establish truths but that such truths are limited to the *appearing* world, i.e., *empirical truth* is *not* mind-independent truth. On the other hand, Strawson asserts that the 'corrected view' enables science to discern mind-independent truths.

I will end the chapter by showing how Strawson's scientific realism requires assumptions that he fails to demonstrate or even argue for. Moreover, in advocating scientific realism, Strawson believes that he has seriously undermined Kant's project. I will show that much more than Strawson's pro-science view is required to offer a relevant challenge to Kant. In fact, I argue that science is compatible with Kant's 'empirical realism'.

In Chapter Four, I will explain Sellars' more sophisticated version of the 'corrected view.' I will then assess whether Sellars' views support a Kantian, Hegelian, or a scientific conception of truth.

2.2. A Brief Introduction to Kant's Idealism

1. Early in the "Preface" (of the *Critique*), Kant writes:

Reason falls into [...] perplexity through no fault of its own. It begins with principles whose use is unavoidable in the course of experience and at the same time sufficiently warranted by it [i.e., experience] (A vii).

As reason employs principles to resolve one set of questions, reason creates the conditions that permit a new set of questions. Consequently, the “business” of reason “must always remain incomplete because [...] questions never cease” (vii). With each new set of questions, the concrete experience from which the initial question sprang becomes increasingly remote. In response, “reason sees itself necessitated to take refuge in principles that overstep all possible use in experience” (A vii). The more reason applies itself to issues that “overstep all possible use in experience” the more likely it is to thereby fall “into obscurity and contradictions, from which it can indeed surmise that it must somewhere be proceeding on the ground of hidden errors; but cannot discover them [...]”(A vii).

Kant calls the claims that arise from the application of reason to issues beyond “all bounds of experience” ‘metaphysics’ (A vii). According to Kant, who published his *Critique* in 1781, little to no progress had been made in resolving metaphysical questions. This is a significant claim when one recalls that Western philosophy began in earnest between 600 and 400 B.C.

2. Kant was particularly dismayed by the fact that many claims concerning the nature of existence are entirely hypothetical. In other words, metaphysicians tended to speculate about the way things are without being able to validate their initial assumptions. Frustrated by this observation and inspired by Hume, Kant asked the following kind of question: what if our minds (rather than existence) are responsible for the way the

empirical world appears to us? Kant's general approach to philosophy (in his critical period) can be interpreted as his attempt to answer this question.

Kant believed his approach was new to philosophy. As seen in his self-made comparison to Copernicus, not only did Kant think his approach was novel, he believed it was revolutionary:

[Let us see] whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that objects must conform to our cognition [...]. This would be just like the first thoughts of Copernicus, who, when he did not make good progress in the explanation of the celestial motions if he assumed that the entire celestial host revolves around the observer, tried to see if he might not have greater success if he made the observer revolve and left the stars at rest. (B xvi)

Kant believes his approach to philosophy is as radically different from preceding traditions as the Copernican revolution was from previous astronomical views.

Before Copernicus, astronomers were convinced that mankind enjoyed a fixed observational point around which the entire universe revolved. This belief resulted in the view that human observers had a privileged position from which to observe existence. For example, the astronomer, believing he could see the universe from its center outward, also believed he was afforded an ideal location to see most (if not all) of it. Furthermore, since man views the universe from a fixed location, all the complexities that concern a moving observer are irrelevant to astronomy.

The motivation for these views are quite understandable: the stargazer does not feel herself moving, but she does see the sun, moon and stars rise and fall in various positions throughout the changing seasons. Copernicus must have seemed ridiculous to

his peers, when he argued that the observer (on seemingly stable ground) moves, while celestial bodies do not.¹⁷

Just as Copernicus reversed the traditional astronomical perspective (with respect to celestial bodies), Kant turned the traditional problem of knowledge inside out. Kant radically breaks from traditional metaphysics by rejecting its starting points: 1) instead of attempting to describe, interpret or discern mind-independent reality (as a starting point), or 2) assuming that mankind enjoys some form of ideal access to reality, Kant begins by investigating the role the mind plays in generating experience. In short, he asks, how is the mind, rather than the world, responsible for how experience occurs for the observing subject? As we shall see, Kant's investigation results in the rejection of traditional and commonsense accounts of experience.

Kant's approach can be interpreted as a kind of instrumentalism, in that the mind plays an analogous role to that of an instrument. For example, if one does not understand how a microscope magnifies small objects, or if one does not understand how a telescope magnifies distant locations, then one's observations obtained from these instruments will lead to confusion rather than clarity. Similarly, if the mind is solely responsible for processing and constructing all of its experiences, as the lenses on microscopes and telescopes account for the images they produce, *then* one must understand the mind in order to understand experience. In other words, if we fail to understand how the mind creates experience, we will fail to understand what experience indicates.

¹⁷ Most astronomers now claim that all objects in space seem to be moving and most of them at different speeds, but that the appearances of such motions are relative to a particular frame of reference.

Due to this approach, Kant has been charged with psychologism, i.e., doing psychology and not philosophy. However, this charge is unwarranted. Kant is concerned with an *epistemological* position: knowledge is restricted by the processes through which the mind renders sensory input cognizable.

3. Kant's philosophy was influenced by Locke and Hume. Locke and Hume believe the mind rearranges sensory content to create new ideas. Kant radicalizes this insight by arguing that the mind must operate according to specific rules, principles and methods in order to generate experience. He called these functions of the mind *a priori*:

[I]s any such cognition independent of all experience and even of all impressions of the senses? One calls such **cognitions *a priori***, and distinguishes them from empirical ones, which have their sources *a posteriori*, namely in experience. (B 2)

For Kant, there must be certain ways the mind processes sensory information, and its way of processing this information must be prior to experience. Kant takes this position because he believes, unlike his British counterparts (i.e., Locke and Hume), that sensation alone cannot account for perception or human experience. (In section 2.3, I shall examine Kant's rationale for this claim.)

In perusing his *a priori* philosophy, Kant sought to develop a new kind of philosophical assessment, which he calls a "critique of pure reason" (A xii). By "pure reason," he means our rational capacities that are independent of experience. He describes his ambitious project in the following manner:

Yet by this I do not understand a critique of books and systems, but a critique of the faculty of reason in general, in respect of all cognitions after which reason might strive **independently of all experience**, and hence the decision about the possibility or impossibility of all metaphysics in general, and the determination of

its sources, as well as its extent and boundaries, all, however, from principles. (A xii)

He strove to identify the *a priori* principles that both enable experience and permit the human mind to transcend experience.¹⁸ Kant believed that if he could identify these principles, he could establish what the human mind could *justifiably* claim to know.

Singer characterizes Kant's radical epistemological conclusion as follows:

We know the world within the framework of space, time and substance; but space, time and substance are not objective realities that exist 'out there', independently of us. They are creations of our intuitions or reason without which we could not comprehend the world. What, then, one might naturally ask, is the world really like, independent of the framework within which we grasp it? This question, Kant says, can never be answered. Independent reality—Kant called it the world of the 'thing-in-itself'—is forever beyond our knowledge. (Singer, *Hegel* 3)

When one first learns why Kant's compares his philosophical approach to the 'Copernican revolution' and the epistemic conclusions he draws from this approach, one cannot help but believe that his view *must* lead to unrestrained skepticism, a denial of external existence and a blatant disregard for modern science. Yet, such assumptions are wrong. Despite the habitual misrepresentations of Kant's project, he believed his approach was a means to avoid these pitfalls. In the next several sections, I will show why this is the case.

¹⁸ Kant writes the following concerning his *a priori* approach to knowledge:

This is evidently the effect not of the thoughtlessness of our age, but its ripened **power of judgment**, which will no longer be put off with illusory knowledge, and which deems that reason should take on anew the most difficult of all its tasks, namely, that of self-knowledge, and to institute a court of justice, by which reason may secure its rightful claims while dismissing all its groundless pretensions, and this not by mere decrees but according to its own external and unchangeable laws; and this court is none other than the **critique of reason** itself.

Yet by this I do not understand a critique of books and systems, but a critique of the faculty of reason in general, in respect all the cognitions after which reason might strive **independently of all experience**, and hence the decision about the possibility or impossibility of a metaphysics in general, and the determination of its sources, as well as its extent and boundaries, all, however, from principles. (A xi-xii)

2.3. *Why Sensation Cannot Yield Experience*

1. It is commonly believed that we cannot help but see objects as they are, because objects (through their causal properties) make us see them as they truly exist. For example, the mug I am looking at is a certain size and color, when I hold it, the mug feels smooth and possesses a certain weight. It is believed that I have these experiences because this is the way the mug actually exists. I could not note otherwise (even if I tried). When asked by what means accurate knowledge of the mug originates, one is often told that sensation alone provides this knowledge.

Kant's competing theory argues that sensation is insufficient to produce our experience of an object. According to Kant, the mind must play an active role in generating experience. Kant summarizes these two opposing views in the following passage:

There are only two possible cases in which synthetic representation and its objects can come together, necessarily relate to each other, and, as it were, meet each other: Either if the object alone makes the representations possible, or if the representation alone makes the object possible. (B 125)

Kant seeks to provide a definitive resolution to the question, is the object or the human mind responsible for the manner in which we experience objects? As we shall see, Kant argues that while the mind does not cause the existence of outer objects, it is responsible for the manner in which we experience outer existence. As a result, Kant concludes that there are restrictions to what humans can justifiably claim to know. In next several sections, I will explicate and support both these Kantian claims.

2. In order to understand Kant's claims concerning the limitations of human knowledge, we must first consider the mental processes he claims are necessary for empirical experience. To gain appreciation for Kant's account of empirical experience, it shall prove useful to first consider some basic features of perception that cannot be accounted for by sensation.

Let us briefly consider a small sampling of what occurs in the perceptual act. I am looking at an apple. From moment to moment my eyes are shifting about the apple, but the apple does not move with my gaze. It appears anchored to one particular place. I blink or look away but the *presence* of the apple does not leave me. When I look at it, I can only see one side, but I do not 'perceive' it as having only one side (i.e., it appears to me to be three-dimensional). In these ways, our stable and three-dimensional experience of empirical objects seems to require something more than sensation.

Additionally, the apple possesses a variety of colorations, which are both displayed and transformed by the particular lighting available. Unless I *attend* to the apple with the rigorous training and determination of a classical painter, I do not notice these subtle colorations—the apple simply seems red in an unspecified manner. As a result, the kinds of colors we can experience are to some limited degree contingent upon our specific mode of attention (see section 1.4).

Similarly, the specific colorations of an object are typically ignored when they are related to each other in an immanent (i.e., an unreflective experience of being 'in the moment') visual field. For example, one *cannot* have an immanent visual experience of the entire facing side of an apple, while at the same time 'seeing' every available and individual color patch on the facing side of the apple. This is the case, because the

overall color experience of the apple differs from the experience of its individual color patches.

Furthermore, few but the artist realize that each color patch on the apple appears different, when it is presented independent of the colors occupying one's visual field, i.e., colors appear differently depending on what other colors are located in the same visual space and when they are presented in isolation from other colors. If our experience of color occurs purely from raw sensations, then adjacent colors would not effect our perception of color.

If sensation accounted for the appearance of an object, then how we attend to perceptual opportunities would be irrelevant to what we experience. Yet, what and how we see is greatly affected by our specific modes of attention. Hence, sensation alone is inadequate to explain our perceptual experience.

3. In most environments, we are constantly bombarded by sensory content. Let us concretely address the implication of this claim as exemplified by Husserl. I am currently sitting at my desk typing. I experience sensory content related to the way my clothes fit, the temperature of the air, the way different portions of my body make contact with the floor, chair and desk. There are sounds of air circulating in the room, sounds emanating from inside and outside the house I am occupying. At any given moment there are various visual stimuli relating to the computer screen, desk, room and myriad objects outside the window. There are even scents related to my coffee, my deodorant and the detergent used to clean the floors. All this shows that at any given moment, even

in the relative quiet and calm of my study, I am continuously affected by ‘sensory content’ of differing variety and intensity.¹⁹

In order to make sense of this multitude of sensory content, it seems reasonable to assert that the mind must arrange and form specific relations among its various contents. For instance, Kant argues that one’s senses do not have the power to coordinate the content they produce. For example, when I look at my coffee mug, I spontaneously associate the scent of coffee with my mug. How is such a thing possible? How should the various appearances of my mug relate to an odor which is qualitatively distinct and external to the activity of seeing? For Kant, the relating of seen content with that of an odor (or any kind of sensation) is an activity found in the mind. Here what is being *perceived* is a *relation* between visual content and scents. Such *relations* are *not* sensed. They are constructions of the mind. Similarly, Kant’s claim also results in the position that no one sensation of color possesses inherent qualities that link it to a different color. The same is true for all five senses.

Kant writes: “different perceptions by themselves are encountered dispersed and separate in the mind, a combination of them, which they cannot have in sense itself, is therefore necessary” (A 120). To argue otherwise would require one to believe that sensations have some sort of magnetic power by which they attract one another into appropriate relations, that humans have the power to sense relations, or that relations are somehow imbedded in sensations. Each of these claims is problematic. If sensations held some sort of power that attracted them into certain relations, then sensations would be pseudo objects that exerted force over one another. This kind of ontology would be

¹⁹ I will continue to use the natural term ‘sensory content’ to avoid implying that people have *access* to raw sensations. See Chapter 3.

difficult to support. If one claims that we have the power to ‘sense’ relations, one would have to radically redefine human experience by inferring a sixth sense which *senses* relations. The third option would require that within a particular sensation of a color, sight, sound, smell or taste is a relation to another color, sight, sound, smell or taste. Yet, to maintain this claim, one would have to further claim that sensation itself contains not only sensory content pertaining to the *proper object* of one of the five senses (i.e., what color is to sight, sound is to hearing etc.), but that it also contains some hidden relation that is neither seen, felt, heard, tasted or smelt. This claim requires one to maintain the contradictory view that we sense what is not sensed.²⁰

4. Objects are believed to be more than any one of our particular perceptivities or any particular feature we may note about them: “the manifold [i.e., multitude] of our representations, and that X which corresponds to them (the object),” is “something distinct from all of our representations [...]” (A 102). The mind somehow relates all the various perspectives, features, and kinds of sensory content, which permits the object to appear and behave as an object. That is, despite the ever changing flux of sensory content pouring into our minds, we nonetheless perceive stable objects, which transcend any one perceptual experience.

²⁰ Leibniz argues that entities and relations amongst entities can be understood by the intellect alone. This claim asserts that the mind, independent of sensory input, can make meaningful connections concerning empirical matters. Kant finds this view impossible, because it rewrites the very nature of human experience:

[F]or they would have us be able to cognize things, thus intuit them, even without senses, consequently they would have it that we have a faculty of cognition entirely distinct from the human not merely in degree but even in intuition and kind, and thus that we ought to be not humans but beings that we cannot even say are possible, let alone how they are constituted (B333-4)

I have been seeking the following kind of concession from those who still hold onto sensation as an adequate account of the perceptual act: an unorganized and non-unified conglomeration of individuated and diverse sensations, cannot constitute what is perceived as an object. If this concession is permitted, we can now turn to the following concern. If one wishes to obtain a comprehensive account of how empirical experience is possible, and if it is necessary to conclude that our perception of objects requires sensory content to be organized and unified, one then needs to discern the manner in which the organization and unification of sensory content form our experience of empirical objects.

2.4. Time, Space, and the Appearing World

1. An essential feature of our experience of objects is their spatial qualities and relations to other objects. In order to form spatial relations amongst one object or several, there must be some sense in which we temporally locate spatial relations as either being present, simultaneous or successive to one another:

[I]f I were always to lose the preceding representations (the first parts of the line, the preceding parts of time, or the successively represented units) from my thoughts and not reproduce them when I proceed to the following ones, then no whole representation and none of the previously mentioned thoughts, not even the purest and most fundamental representations of space and time, could ever arise.
(A 102)

Practical engagement in our environment requires that previous perceptions are relatable to immanent perceptual states (or relatable to future perceptual states). This ensures that when one notices a particular object (or aspect of it), these acts of noting can be appropriately related to the same object or to additional content in one's sensory field.

The above accounts of perception support the claim that perception requires synthesis. This means that the active processes of the mind, as opposed to unmodified sensory reception, are responsible for constructing one's experience. Phrased in negative terms, sensations, in and of themselves, cannot account for our experience of an object nor do they account for the experience of perception. For instance, if there were *only* sensory reception of particular and individual sensations, then each movement of my eye would cause a flood of sensations that would and could not be *related* to previous sensations.²¹ As a result, there would be no determinate objects of perception or any means of relating one perceptual moment to the next. In other words, the experience of a particular object, the relations of the parts of an object, the relations of objects and their parts to other objects and their parts are constituted by the synthesizing activities of the mind.

The conclusion that perception requires synthesis as the active processing and transformation of sensory content into complex relations permits two possibilities: 1) what is perceived is *partially* an arrangement or modification of sensory content and, as such, it is *in part* a *product* of the mind or 2) what is sensed is *completely arranged or modified* (in the perceptual act) by the mind and, as such, is *entirely* a *product* of the *mind*. Note, this latter claim does *not* presume that the mind is the original cause of empirical experience (i.e., there is no outer reality), nor does it claim that the external existence has no effect upon us. Instead, this claim means that the *manner* in which the

²¹ The prevailing opinions of traditional realism concerning time and space are so prevalent, it is necessary to create an intellectual space for a legitimate alternative. The most accessible way to do so is to provide a phenomenological account of perception. As we shall see, I do not claim that Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic is reducible to a phenomenological reduction. However, I do think a phenomenological reduction provides *indirect* support for Kant's claims: 1) a phenomenological view does not oppose Kant's transcendental views, and 2) it does oppose many of those who reject Kant's stance, such as Strawson, who claims (like most people) that we just see time and space.

mind undergoes experiences is accounted for solely by the machination of the human mind.

2. According to Kant, time and space are “forms,” which operate as the organizational medium through which sensory content is given determinate relations and orderings: “that which allows the manifold of appearance to be ordered in certain relations I call **form** of appearance” (A20). In other words, Kant distinguishes sensory content from its arrangement.²²

It may at first appear that visual sensations provide spatial relations as a part of sensation itself. Yet, this is not the case. Properly speaking, we do not sense space. What we visually sense are colors, light and dark. How then do we come to experience space? Kant argues that the experience of space is something the mind builds into sensory content. From this conclusion Kant draws two additional claims: one, we “intuit” (as opposed to sense) space as the “**form** of an appearance” (A20), and two, we can ‘intuit’ space because it is a product of the mind rather than a mind-independent existent.

As noted above, we typically do not see an object all at once (i.e., section 2.2.1); the colors, light and dark we do sense must be organized to form a coherent whole or shape. Kant claims that only after sensory content is appropriately formed into relational wholes can the appearance of space occur. Hence, Kant argues that spatial relations are not given in sensation, but are the product of the mental processes that arrange and

²² One should *not* confuse Kant’s view with ‘sense-datum’ theories, which claim that specific arrangements of sensations adequately account for empirical experiences.

transform sensory contents into coherent units. These coherent units abide by a structural format which Kant calls the ‘form of an appearance.’²³

Spatial experience requires the mind to produce moderately discrete appearances that can be related in consecutive relations to form complex unities. For example, a length of telephone cable (assuming it cannot be seen all at once) can only be seen as a ‘length’ if sensory content can be organized into consecutive relations, which form a continuous whole. This requires memory or retention as well as productive imagination (i.e., what transforms sensory content into appearances) as a means of connecting visual units.

In a footnote, Kant writes:

No psychologist has yet thought that the imagination is a necessary ingredient of perception itself. This is partly because [...] it has been believed that the senses do not merely afford us with impressions but also put them together, and produce images of objects, for without doubt something more than the receptivity for impression is required, namely a function of synthesis of them. (A 120).

For Kant, it is the ‘imagination’ that takes sensory content and forms them into an “image” (A 120). The process of forming an image via sensory content is one type of synthesis.

Reproductive imagination differs from productive imagination in that reproductive imagination is the act of organizing images already formed from sensory content (i.e., the productive imagination). In this fashion, reproductive imagination and memory account for our capacity to maintain relations even when we are not looking at

²³ Here, I am not concerned with the extent to which Kant’s arguments produce (or fail to produce) demonstrative proof. For the time being, I am only concerned with making his claims seem reasonable, as many of his commentators treat his claims on space as being bereft of any credibility.

them. For instance, once having seen the wall to my right, I do not need to look at it to know that it is there.

There are also less obvious examples of how reproductive imagination accounts for our common perceptual experiences. For example, when I look at a person's head, it is still a part of my overall perception that the person's head is attached to a body with legs, and that these legs are standing on a floor. This content is available to me even when I cannot see it. Memory and reproductive imagination thus play an important role in constituting a world we can successfully engage, because they allow for complex spatial relations by maintaining relations that are no longer in our perceptual field.

Space is therefore a way in which "we represent to ourselves objects as outside us, and all as in space. In space their shape, magnitude, and relation to one another is determined, or determinable" (B37). Modern psychology supports this claim; that is, there is a period in an infant's development in which it learns or acquires the ability to perceive distance and determinate spatial relations. However, unlike modern views of developmental psychology, Kant seemed to think that we are born with these perceptual abilities (as opposed to acquiring them).

3. Like space, time is not something that is seen, felt, heard, smelled or tasted; it is something we *recognize* within ourselves as various appearances (as constituted by our minds) come and go:

Time is [...] not an empirical concept that is somehow drawn from an experience. For simultaneity or succession would not themselves come into perception if the representation of time did not ground them *a priori*. Only under its [i.e., time] presupposition can one represent that several things exist at one and the same time (simultaneously) or in different times (successively). (B 46).

Our awareness of two or more objects simultaneously existing or of succession, as seen in the movements of the hands of a clock, requires our minds to place empirical appearances into temporal order. Yet, temporal ordering is not something found in sensation itself, but like space, it is how the mind arranges and relates to sensory content.

Kant's *technical* use of the terms 'time' and 'space' designate the primary conditions necessary for us to form any empirical experience. This transcendental claim can be distinguished from our everyday and scientific ideas, views, concepts, and thoughts on time and space. For instance, our everyday concept of time differs from sensation. Succession, unlike the *concept* of temporality, can be observed in a somewhat direct fashion, insofar as succession indicates apparent flux or change in one's sensory content. Temporality, on the other hand, is an abstract concept of what was, is or will be. It cannot be *seen*, it can only be *meant*. Hence, time is *extra-sensory content*, projected into *perceived* content. In this way, everyday and scientific concepts of time and space are *not* perceived in the sense one perceives a 'table' or a 'chair'. One's perceptual experience of space and time are conceptual overlays onto an empirical field, such as "the cloudy day was depressing." Similarly, people say the time flew by, or that the distance was great.

Kant believes that since 1) we have no sensation of space in itself or of time in itself, but rather we intuit them (i.e., spontaneously construct them in the processing of sensation, by relating and arranging sensory contents according to the "forms" of time and space), and 2) all empirical experience of sensory content is always situated within the framework of space and/or time, 3) he has identified a fundamental process through which the mind *coordinates* all its sensory content, and thus makes empirical experience

possible.²⁴ Because time and space are features of experience created by the human mind, it is unclear as to what relations, if any, they bear to mind-independent existence.

Our intuition of time also plays an important role in our experience of ourselves. This aspect of time, along with the *forms* of time and space, and the *concepts* of time and space, will be addressed throughout the rest of this chapter.

4. Kant argues that if the mind did not process sensory content according to *a priori* rules there would be a “swarm of appearances to fill up our souls without experience ever being able to arise from it” (A 111). There must therefore be a “law of reproduction” from which the images produced from sensory content are properly related: the “law of reproduction, however, presupposes that the appearance themselves are actually subject to such a rule, and that in the manifold of their representation an accompaniment or succession takes place according to certain rules” (A 100).

Kant provides the following examples of what would happen if the mind did not possess certain rules by which it prefigured the work of relating appearances:

If [a] cinnabar were now red, now black, now light, now heavy, if a human being were now changed into this animal shape, now into that one, if on the longest day the land were covered now with fruits, now with ice and snow, then my empirical imagination would never even get the opportunity to think of heavy cinnabar on the occasion of the representation of the color red; or if a certain word were

²⁴ Kant’s view of perception limits what has been traditionally conceived as an “object of sense” (Aristotle, *On Mind* 418a5). For instance, Aristotle states that two kinds of entities are observable “in themselves” (418a5). The first relates to “what is special to a single sense” (e.g., what sound is to hearing and what color is to sight) (418a5). The second relates to what is common to all the senses:

Common sensibles are movement, figure, rest, number, magnitude; they are not special to any one sense, but common to all. There are at any rate certain kinds of movement which are perceptible both by touch and by sight. (418a15)

Kant would argue that what Aristotle calls “common sensibles” are not entities given in sensation. Instead, Kant argues that such entities are created by the mind. As we shall see, all five of these so called “common sensibles” require non-sensible forms of time and space as a necessary precondition for our experience of them.

attributed now to this thing, now to that, or if one and the same thing were sometimes called this, sometimes that, without the governance of a certain rule to which the appearances are already subjected in themselves, then no empirical synthesis of representations could take place. (A 100-101).

Put another way, *if* the mind had to plan how to coordinate and arrange sensory content after it received sensory content, and *if* it had to find useful ways to make such arrangements work together after each and every sensory occurrence, then our world would be confusing and tiresome (if not impossible) to navigate.

Moreover, even if experience were still possible without a law of reproduction, there would be significant differences in how observers perceive, which would result in substantial disparities in how individuals relate to everyday objects. However, the mind does seem to coordinate its sensory experiences in a stable manner as it concerns the everyday world of appearances, and individuals seem to experience objects in very similar ways.

Typically, the common view is that we see the world in stable and coherent ways, because the world itself is composed of stable and coherent objects. Kant inverts this view by arguing that there must be specific forms, rules and principles by which the mind consciously and unconsciously arranges content so we can undergo experience:

From sensibility, all combination, whether we are conscious of it or not, whether it is a combination of the manifold of intuition or of several concepts, and in the first case either of sensible or of non-sensible intuition, is an action of the understanding, which we would designate with the general title **synthesis** in order to draw attention to the fact that we can represent nothing as combined in the object without having previously combined it ourselves, and that among all representations **combination** is the only one that is not given through objects but can be executed only by the subject itself, since it is an act of its self-activity. (B130).

Kant's claim is radical: that a specific color, odor, sound etc. may occur with a specific degree of intensity (e.g. a warm sensation compared to one of intense heat), which originates from the senses undergoing some kind of *modification* (i.e., change): "A perception that refers to the subject as a modification of its state is sensation" (A 320). However, this sensory content is meaningless in and of itself. The mind *must arrange, combine and transform all sensory content into an appearing object*. In short, sensation precedes perception (as opposed to coinciding with perception). Consequently, any asserted meaning attributed to sensory content, insofar as meaning is relatable to experience, stems from synthesizing activities of the mind.

5. Kant claims that we do not actually 'see' space. This occurs, because the mind spontaneously intuits (rather than passively senses) space by constructing a complex synthesis or arrangement of sensory content. It is important to note that sensory content, in so far as it concerns the modification of the senses prior to any synthesis, *is not an appearance, representation or experience*. According to Kant, the sensory manifold becomes an appearance, representation or experience only after the synthesis (i.e., organization) of sensory content. Hence, spatial appearances of objects (e.g., tables and chairs) are not directly seen, but constructed by the mind's ability to arrange sensory content in the 'form' of space.

We *experience* space, and spatial objects, but this does not mean we *directly sense* space or spatial objects that are external to ourselves. Instead, spatial appearances are readily accessible to the observer, because they are a product of one's own mind. In short, objects as appearances are accessible to us, because all appearances are the result

of the constructive processes of one's own mind (see section 3.5.4-6 for Rockmore's term 'constructivism').

Hence, spatial relations of objects appear the way that they do, because they are a product of mental processes. But this is not to say they would appear without the senses undergoing some kind of change. That is, spatial appearances are spontaneously generated by the mind *after* one's senses have undergone some form of modification.

6. As seen in Chapter 1, sections 1.2 and 3, Moore and early Russell require *natural* unities, as opposed to *mentally constructed* unities, for identifying real beings (or facts). In other words, in order to be able to claim that we perceive actual objects rather than fabrications built by the mind, Moore and early Russell insist that we directly see objects as they naturally occur. For instance, it would be incorrect to claim that a dog's tail is the dog. Hence, in order to understand what something is, one must not confuse the parts of a thing with the thing, or the part with the whole. Similarly, if one is to see an object as it actually exists, one cannot misconstrue what is *not properly a part* of an object as being a part of it. Yet, they failed to offer any account of how the mind is capable of perceiving natural unities. Nor do they make any attempt to demonstrate that the mind can in fact perceive natural unities—they simply assume that it does.

Even modern philosophers who are predisposed to scientific realism commonly ignore all but the initial phase of perception (i.e., outer objects affect one's sensory equipment) and then assume we perceive natural unities. This oversight leads to a woefully inadequate account of perception. For instance, even if light waves cause electrochemical stimulation in the optic nerve (i.e., a necessary precursor to perception

according to the scientific model), this in itself is insufficient to *cause* a visual *experience*—much less capture the natural unity of existing object. According to scientific models of perception the brain must process sensory content and arrange it in a manner that constitutes a coherent and stable presentation.²⁵ This view lends creditability to the stance that there is no *immediate* access to natural unities, which in turn implies we do not have direct access to mind-independent existence.

The problem we have arrived at is this: is it possible to *discern* natural unities through the synthesized fabrications of human perception? Or conversely, do the unities which form the objects of our everyday perceptions have counterparts in the real world? These questions must be resolved if one is to answer the following query: to what extent do perceptual objects relate or *fail* to relate to mind-independent existence?

7. As sketched above, Kant's claims have far reaching epistemological consequences. *First*, as discussed in this chapter and Chapter 1, if one does not directly perceive the world, and the mind must be active rather than passive to construct appearances as objects, relations, situations, environments etc., *then* it seems unlikely that one can demonstrate a *reliable* correspondence between what appears before the mind and what exists independent of the way we perceive. *Secondly*, if the mind cannot perceive natural unities or wholes, and that all unities are created by a synthesis according to rules in one's own mind, one can doubt if there is *any* knowable correspondence between what appears and existence.

²⁵ Kant refers to the mental (as opposed to the physical) aspect of this process as 'synthesis' and 'conditioning.'

As already noted, what an object is for most philosophers involves how it is unified into a whole. If the unified (or relational) whole of an objects is constructed by a person's perceptual states and mental activities, *then* the very nature and meaning of the *perceptual* object could be utterly and completely off the mark from the way things actually exist in the world. As a result, any correspondence would only be fortuitous or accidental (and thus unknowable).

Kant takes this latter view seriously:

Combination does not lie in the objects, however, and cannot as it were be borrowed from them through perception and by that means first taken up into the understanding, but is rather only an operation of the understanding, which is itself nothing further than the faculty of combining *a priori* and bringing the manifold of given representations under unity of apperception, which principle is the supreme one in the whole of human cognition. (B 134-5).

In this passage, he emphasizes the notion that the exterior world does not cause our senses to be coordinated in any specific way. That is, all unities, relations and wholes we perceive in the world, all perceptual objects and their relations to one another stem from the mind. He thinks this must be the case, because perceptions of any kind are literally constructed by the mind as a condition of there being objects for us. In other words, the mind must have some *a priori* manner to functionally and pragmatically connect and form unities and relations that account for our *experience* of the appearing world. Otherwise, the appearing world could never appear normal, expected or even expedient, since we would have no way to anticipate what we will find in experience (e.g., cause and effect). And without some general format for the mind to relate to sensory content, such as time and space, experience would have no uniformity and hence no consistency.

For Kant, what makes the world that we encounter knowable, stable and foreseeable is our mind's built-in way of processing and relating to sensory content.

These mental functions are a process of ‘conditioning.’ The study of how the mind is geared to handle sensory input prior to receiving any specific sensory input (i.e., our built-in mental processes that produce experience) is an important aspect of what Kant calls “transcendental philosophy” (A 12).

While human experience is subjective for Kant, in that the subject is responsible for how he/she experiences the world, there is another sense in which experience is *not* subjective. For Kant, there is a sense in which empirical experience is objective, in that he denies that each person is *trapped* in a *solipsistic world* (as some subjectivists worry), because humans share in common the same *a priori* means of making sensory content intelligible. In other words, according to Kant, how we perceive empirical objects is the same or very similar for all people. This latter claim also permits Kant (from a transcendental perspective) in the second and third *Critiques* to argue for shared moral and aesthetic orientations.

8. Up to this point, I have addressed only Kant’s view on how the human mind forms appearances. I have not yet established how we can think about, or attribute, meaning to what appears to us. Here we will touch upon a theme that will be present throughout all the following chapters: for Kant, appearances in themselves are uninformative, in that they do not have or possess meaning. Under this theory, the appearance of red does not immediately produce or create the notion of redness. Instead, Kant claims that in order to *recognize* that something is red, blue, square, round, shiny, wet or hot, one must associate a concept with an appearance:

A concept is a general (or universal) idea as opposed to a singular idea or intuition. As general it is an idea of what is common to many different objects [...]. (Paton, *Kant's Metaphysics of Experience*, Vol. I 192)

To be aware of anything at all, as being some *determinable kind of thing or quality*, requires an appearance to be brought under a *concept*.

The capacity for the mind to make such associations is called 'judgment':

The power of judgment is a power to subsume under rules, that is, to decide whether anything stands under a given rule or not. All concepts, according to Kant, serve as rules, and we can say that in subsumption we decide whether anything stands under a given concept or not [...] (Paton, Vol. II 24).

Recognition that something is a certain kind of thing requires the object to be brought under a concept. This mediation is often called 'discursive' knowledge. In other words, unlike Moore and early Russell, Kant claims that our knowledge of objects, relations, modalities, and quantities are not direct. More importantly, this view entails the claim that all awareness of qualities, states, kinds, etc., requires mediation of sensory content with conceptual content. Thus, Kant rules out immediate awareness. (As we will see in Chapter Two, **Part Two**, Sellars' greatest philosophical insight, i.e., physiological nominalism, was directly inspired by this Kantian conclusion.)

As we have seen so far, Kant is committed to both of the following claims: 1) in order for there to be any appearance or experience, the mind must be active in arranging and modifying sensory content, and 2) appearances have no *conceptual* content until they are subsumed under a concept.

It is important to note that Kant's use of the term 'representation' is contrasted with his use of the term 'appearance'. He states that "[t]he undetermined object of an empirical intuition is called **appearance**" (A 20). Conversely, a 'representation' is a *determined* appearance. This simply means that when one *thinks* or *recognizes* an

‘appearance’ as being some kind of quality, quantity, or state, he/she is making it determinate. This process of making an appearance determinate is achieved by an act of judgment, which subsumes an appearance under concepts.

9. Kant makes many important and nuanced distinctions concerning perception.

Yet, we have covered enough of his thought to outline broadly his model of perception:

Modification of the Senses generates → the Sensory Manifold (i.e., content from the five senses) → Sensory Manifold is ordered by the Forms of space and time: “I must take up, run through, reproduce, and hold together, or in one word synthesize, the manifold”: this creates an appearance (Paton, Vol. II, 421) → the appearance is judged (or subsumed) → under concepts (e.g., round, red, sour, cold, rough, etc.) → this produces the empirical object or experience

For Kant, only after an appearance has been brought under some concepts (i.e., an act of ‘cognition’) can one ‘think’ about an appearing object or content. As we shall see, Kant’s model of perception, insofar as it requires an observing subject to interject conceptual meaning into empirical experience, resonates with Hegel’s, Sellars’, Brandom’s, and McDowell’s views on perception/cognition.²⁶

²⁶ By holding two separate sources and roles for sensible and conceptual representations, Kant takes a middle ground for ‘objective validity’ that depends on both sensibility and understanding—a stance which his predecessors falsely polarized into one-sided stances concerning empirical cognition:

In a word, Leibniz **intellectualized** the appearances, just as Locke totally **sensitized** the concepts of understanding [...] i.e., he interpreted them as nothing but empirical or abstracted concepts of reflection. Instead of seeking two entirely different sources of representation in the understanding and the sensibility, which could judge about things with objective validity **only in connection**, each of these great men holds on only to one of them [...] (B 327).

Locke argued that from sensations alone (along with some associative powers of the mind) the origin of all conceptual meanings and ideas could be obtained. On the opposite pole, Leibniz ‘intellectualized’ the senses by comparing “objects of the sense with each other as things in general [(i.e., gave them conceptual role) and this occurred], merely in the understanding” (B327). As a result, Leibniz believed that the world conformed to our intellectual understanding. In doing so, he underplayed the value of sensory content forming the basis for insights that intellectual understanding can *not* preconceive or anticipate.

Kant avoids Leibniz’s ‘intellectualization’ of the senses by denying that sensory content *is* ‘generalized content.’ He also rejects Leibniz’s tendency to undervalue the senses as playing little to no role in the process of discovery. For Kant, sensation, while meaningless in itself, can create the possibility of new discoveries. Moreover, by providing a role for the mind in generating and associating sensory

10. The concern that there may be discrepancies between the way an object exists and the way it is perceived or thought about is often associated with the problem of correspondence. The problem of correspondence is best understood via a concrete example. For instance, I am looking at a fire. I perceive that the fire is hot; it produces smoke and burns wood. It would seem very strange to claim that *my* experience in-itself produces smoke and burns wood. This is the case, because the conventional assumption is that objects exist in an external mind-independent world, and my experience exists as a part of my mind. This view results in the conclusion that one's experiences are not the same as the things experienced, but they do correspond (i.e., relate) to them.

If one accepts this formulation of correspondence, there are three possible *responses*: 1) there is a *complete* correspondence between what one perceives and what exists, 2) there is a *limited* correspondence, and 3) there is *no* (or no knowable) correspondence.

It is worth noting that scientific realism rejects the first option and holds the second. Yet, in order to show that this is the case, one needs to address epistemic questions, i.e., philosophical rather than scientific questions.²⁷ For example, how can one show or prove that observation can create or play a role in the mind's generation of an exact match (or reasonable facsimile) of external reality?²⁸ Any attempt to provide such a demonstration cannot be established by science alone, as scientific methods are based

content with cognitive content, he avoids Locke's false claim that sensation alone creates or provides for conceptual content. (This latter topic, and support for it, will be addressed in Chapter Three.)

²⁷ According to the scientist, the world of everyday perception is incapable of disclosing the insights of the physical sciences. They argue that perception is incapable of grasping many of the objects found in physical science, e.g., atoms, elements, astronomical distances and chemical composition. In this manner, a scientific model of perception generates significant epistemic concerns about the veracity of human experience.

²⁸ In Chapter 4, I will review Sellars' gallant, yet flawed attempt to achieve this end.

essentially on observation. In other words, to assume that science gets at the way things are is merely to *assume* that some form of observations yields truth about existence.

Even if we accept that observation yields truth, demonstrating the *kinds* of truths observation produces and demonstrating the *limits* of such ‘truths’ is extremely difficult.

At this point, we can draw attention to an important distinction between philosophy and science. Science creates models, theories and analogies in order to represent what cannot be directly perceived. It does this in order to make further ‘discoveries.’ Here, ‘discovery’ simply means that one can *observe* a determinable kind of appearance under specifiable (observable or hypothetical) conditions. In so far as one is concerned with *observationally* verifying discoveries, one is participating in science. Whether or not these discoveries correctly represent existence as it exists *independently of the human mind* is a metaphysical question, i.e., a philosophical question.

The third *response* (to the above problem of correspondence) results in the view that knowledge of the world, independent of the mind, is impossible. I will seek to support this classical interpretation of Kant.²⁹ As a secondary issue addressed at the end of this chapter, I will also argue that, despite Strawson’s claims to the contrary, a scientific approach does *not* undermine Kant’s claims cornering the limits of human knowledge.

2.5. *Backhanded Arguments in Support of Kant’s Ideality of Time and Space*

²⁹ See Karl Ameriks’ “Recent work on Kant’s Theoretical Philosophy” and Guenter Zoeller “Review Essay: Main Developments in Recent Scholarship on the Critique of Pure Reason” for two excellent accounts of the many divergent interpretations of Kant.

1. In this section, I will backhandedly defend Kant's claim that time and space are the forms of time and space, i.e., I will not seek to directly support Kant's claims as true. Instead, I will seek to show why the realist *cannot* disprove Kant's claims. I will pursue this goal in several stages. 1) I argue that the realist's appeal to the practical efficacy of our experience of time and space cannot support metaphysical claims concerning time and space. 2) I clarify the peculiar strength of Kant's transcendental arguments, which establish the implausibility (if not impossibility) of a privileged vantage-point from which the realist can validate his account of time and space. 3) I argue that Kant's claim, that our species' understanding of space and time is contingent, is coherent and defensible. The results of 1, 2 and 3 show that the realist's conception of time and space is based on a pragmatic viewpoint that is both contingent and unverifiable. In order to clarify these claims, I provide an example that shows the following: the success of our spatial views, such as reliable predictions and new discoveries, *do not entail* that such success is predicated upon the *metaphysical accuracy* of our *conception* of space.

2. Realists tend to argue that time and space *cause* us to perceive them, and Kant argues we cannot help but perceive time and space because they are the necessary forms (i.e., the mental format) of empirical experience. Kant's claim is highly contested, because the existence of time and space are commonly asserted to be perceived whenever we perceive objects. Moreover, imagining a coherent world without engaging some aspect of a realist's conception of time and space seems implausible.

3. In the following excerpt, Kant claims that space and time are mental constructs:

It is also not necessary for us to limit the kind of intuition in space and time to the sensibility of human beings; it may well be that all finite thinking beings must necessarily agree with human beings in this regard (though we cannot decide this), yet even given such universal validity this kind of intuition would not cease to be sensibility, for the very reason that it is derived (*intuitus derivativus* [derivative intuition]), not original (*intuitus originarius* [original intuition]) [...] (B 72)

This complex passage can be unpacked in two stages. *First*, Kant claims that our intuition of objects in time and space are *derivative*. This means that our experience of time and space does not originate from outer objects or the senses. Instead, Kant argues that our perception of time and space is derived from the manner in which we process content that arises from our senses.³⁰

Second, Kant suggests that all *finite* minds may need to intuit objects in space and time. Kant is reminding his reader that consensus, even interspecies consensus, is not verification or justification that experience illuminates existence as it occurs independent of the observer.³¹

For Kant, our perception and understanding require a fixed *a priori* structure. The product (i.e., experience) of this structure need not accurately capture existence. As a result, Kant believed that space and time are *necessary* for *human* experience. However, the particular way in which humans experience time and space is *contingent*, i.e., if humans were constituted differently, empirical experience *could* be radically different.

³⁰ Conversely, Kant argues that God does not need to process sensory information and thus He does not perceive objects in time and space. For instance, God can directly perceive existence (i.e., He has intellectual intuition) without arranging or modifying sensory content, because He holds direct intellectual understanding of the object, He has no need for sensory content.

³¹ The interesting result of this observation is that possible communication with an alien species could neither confirm nor disprove our conception of outer existence.

3. Before one draws conclusions concerning the plausibility of Kant's accounts of time and space, one should first consider the peculiar advantages that transcendental claims provide. In order to showcase these advantages, I will draw from Stroud's article "Transcendental Arguments."³²

Stroud's article claims that 'transcendental arguments' function as a two pronged attack.³³ One prong is aimed at the skeptic who finds all knowledge based on experience doubtful: "Transcendental arguments are supposed to demonstrate the impossibility or illegitimacy of this skeptical challenge by proving that certain concepts are necessary for thought [...]" (242). The second prong is aimed at versions of realism that assert time and space are mind-independent existents and that this claim can be empirically verified.

The first prong of Kant's transcendental arguments is designed to show the skeptic that we cannot help but see the world according to the *forms* of time and space. If this is true, we need not worry (as the skeptic does) whether people share the same empirical experiences. This tactic is *not* intended to prove to the skeptic that shared empirical experiences accurately represent existence. Instead, it seeks to establish that we cannot help but experience time and space in the manner we do. In this regard, Kant is a proponent of the 'empirical real' as it pertains to *human* observation, while simultaneously denying the possibility of metaphysical knowledge.

The second prong relates to the first. If Kant can show that the mind is responsible for our experience of time and space, he can then establish that perceptual experience does nothing to *establish* the existence of time and space. To illustrate this

³² For an account of the two basic formats of Kant's transcendental arguments see appendix V *Kant's Transcendental Arguments*.

³³ Strawson coins the phrase 'transcendental arguments' in his 1959 article "*Individuals, An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*." Kant does not use this term in the *Critique*.

feature of transcendental arguments, Stroud contrasts arguments that arise from “within” a system of thought from those that arise from “without” (i.e., external to) a system of thought:

[Carnap], like Kant, distinguishes between two types of questions—ordinary empirical questions on the one hand, which are raised and answered “within” the framework of concepts, beliefs, and recognized procedures of confirmation, and, on the other hand, questions raised by the skeptic or metaphysician about this framework, raised, so to speak, “from outside.” To ask whether there are any objects more than ten billion miles from the earth is to ask an “internal” question to which there is an objectively right answer. It is a genuine “theoretical” issue which can be settled by discovering the truth of certain empirical statements. But to ask simply whether there are any objects at all is to ask an “external” question about the existence of the system of spatiotemporal material objects as a whole, and this is not a “theoretical” question with an objectively right answer at all. It is a “practical” question, a request for a *decision* as to whether or not we should think and talk in terms of material objects. Since there is no set of true propositions that would answer an “external” question, this issue cannot be settled by gathering evidence. (243)

Stroud’s point as it relates to Kant is thus: *if* time and space are irreducible and unavoidable components of our *pragmatic* life, *then* there can be no demonstrative proof of their existence. In other words, it is impossible for one to attain an ‘external’ vantage-point from which one could verify metaphysical views concerning time and space.

Stroud writes:

As long as we have a public objective world of material objects in space and time to rely on, particular questions about how we know that such-and-such is the case can eventually be settled. But that there is such a world of material objects at all is a matter of contingent fact, and the skeptic challenges us to show how we know it. According to him [i.e., Kant], any justification for our beliefs will have to come from within experience, and so no adequate justification can ever be given. (242)

According to Kant, observation is inadequate justification, because the mind, rather than objects, dictates how entities appear in empirical experience.

4. The skeptic finds the realist's perspective circular, because the realist establishes his conclusion via a method that presumes the conclusion. For example, the realist believes that time and space are real. His claim stems from his observations. Yet, when asked, 'how do you know observation demonstrates their existence?' he claims his observations prove their existence. In this fashion, Kant argues that, while the skeptic is wrong to worry whether we share similar experiences, he is right to note that observation cannot justify metaphysical claims.

According to Stroud, skeptical challenges simply bring into doubt the realist's views on time and space, whereas a "sound transcendental argument" invalidates them (243). In other words, the skeptic simply doubts the realist; Kant believes he can show how they go wrong.

A 'sound' or successful transcendental argument shows that the mind requires and imposes the forms of time and space. Since all experience is reducible to the *a priori* forms of time and space, these forms cannot be circumvented. Consequently, there can be no 'privileged position' from which one can look outside of human perception in order to evaluate its accuracy.

A sound transcendental argument sets up a scenario that is roughly analogous to the following. Suppose you have a friend who tells you accounts about a mysterious otherworld. You have no *access* to this otherworld, nor do you have access to anyone else's account of it. How could you *demonstrate* that your friend's accounts were accurate, partially accurate or completely false? The answer is that you can not. Similarly speaking, if one can establish specific ways in which all humans must experience existence, we are then stuck with a scenario like that of our above friend, i.e.,

all we can know is the story of our *human* perception and judgment. We can doubt or trust in the story of human perceptions all we like, but we lack an alternative perspective that permits us to establish its truth or falsity.

5. It may be argued that Kant's transcendental arguments concerning time and space are not sound (or successful). Yet, regardless of the status we give to these arguments, it is unclear how they could be disproven. For instance, the peculiar strength of Kant's transcendental argument is that, in order for the realist to disprove them, the realist must overcome notoriously difficult problems. 1) The realist must show how his conception of time and space is not a product of synthesis (i.e., a mental construct) but the product of mind-independent entities. 2) In order to accomplish 1, the realist will have to show that his version of time and space is not a contingent product of our perceptual faculties. 3) In order to make a case for the non-contingent truth of his claims, he will have to appeal to some 'external' (or privileged) position that does not already beg the question as to the veracity of observation. 4) And finally, any evidence that the realist marshals against Kant cannot rely on the consensus of the practical necessity of time and space. According to a Kantian, this consensus supports Kant's claim that we share the same transcendental structure.

Given the enormity of these hurdles, one can make a strong case for the impossibility of the realist being able to prove his claim to a Kantian. If this is true, all the realist can do is assert his claim, which invalidates its standing as a rigorous philosophical argument. It is likely that these challenges account for why realists rarely attempt to disprove Kant and simply reject his claims.

6. Our commonsense views on time and space are implicitly tied to conventional views of truth. For instance, many Western people are confident that if something reliably works, it must be true. In other words, it is popular to maintain the following: if your beliefs allow you to successfully accomplish certain tasks, they must be true. Conversely, if your beliefs were largely false, you would fail in the activities related to your beliefs. This kind of reasoning is extremely common when it comes to the ontological status of time and space, e.g., our views on time and space are pragmatically useful—they must be true.

Yet, the inversion of Stoud's/Carnap's insight shows that this view is wrong (see section 3): the rationale for holding *pragmatic* beliefs is not validation for *theoretical* beliefs. For example, theoretical beliefs can often seem impractical. Yet, the practicality or impracticality of a theoretical belief can neither support nor undermine it. For example, according to correspondence theories, in order for one's thoughts regarding an occurrence to be true, they must accurately account for the objects involved in the occurrence. Establishing that one accurately portrays an occurrence in one's thoughts has nothing to do with how convenient or inconvenient, or how necessary or unnecessary, one's thoughts may seem from a practical perspective. Therefore, no matter how impractical it may seem to argue that our conception/perception of time and space is *ideal* (rather than real) bears no significance to whether it is true or false.

7. In order to provide an example of why practical observations concerning time and space cannot establish metaphysical truth, I will offer an example.³⁴ Suppose that the first intelligent, self-aware robot has been constructed. It experiences the world as binary code (i.e., a series of 0's and 1's).³⁵ It can navigate space and manipulate objects in space more efficiently and precisely than any human could ever achieve. In brief, it is more successful (than humans) in interacting with what we commonly call the physical world.

Because this robot is intelligent, communicative and self-aware, a group of scientists can ask it the following question: "how is the world constituted?" The robot sincerely answers, "as 0's and 1's." This seems wrong to the investigators. They try to inform the robot why it is wrong. But the robot, in order to process their responses, must convert them into binary code. As a result, the robot is incapable of understanding what the researchers mean when they claim that it is wrong. Moreover, according to the robot's perspective, the researchers make unintelligible, impossible and self-contradictory claims.

One is likely to instinctively assert that the robot is wrong to claim that the world is composed of a series of 0's and 1's. Yet, is our temporal and spatial way of perceiving existence correct? One possible response might go as follows. The researchers are in a position to understand the robot in a way that the robot cannot understand humans: the researchers understand the robot's transcendental *a priori* structure, i.e., in order for the robot to undergo experience, all input it receives from its camera, microphone and

³⁴ While my account overtly appeals to space, it should be remembered that the organizational medium of time is a necessary precursor for space and spatial relations. By challenging one's experience and conception of space, one *ipso facto* changes some aspect (or all aspects) of one's experience and conception of time.

³⁵ The likelihood of this scenario, whether it be artificial sentience or the manner in which artificial sentience can think, is not the issue at hand. I seek only to provide a simple and direct example of why empirical experience depends on the nature of one's own constitution, which in turn provides contingent results.

thermometer must be converted into 0's and 1's. The researchers feel confident that they know that the robot is wrong, because they know how the robot is *limited* to the binary code and therefore incapable of understanding their human perspective. Yet, just because the researchers are in a position to know the robot's transcendental limitations, does not mean the researchers lack transcendental limitations themselves.

8. Now imagine that a Kantian states to the researchers, "our knowledge of the robot's transcendental structure does not enable us to assess which structure—ours or its—is *metaphysically* correct."

The researchers cry out in frustration, believing the philosopher is absurd or functionally stupid. One researcher, seeking to end what he perceives as philosophical babble, exclaims, "We can verify if our perceptions are true via observation!" Unexpectedly, the robot chimes in, "so can I."

Both the robot and the researcher would think that the other party is wrong, and the Kantian thinks neither stance can be proven. How are we to decide who is right and who is wrong? *If* one can form a sound transcendental account of human experience that requires time and space, it is unlikely that one could ever justify an affirmative or negative response to these questions. That is, a demonstration of a sound transcendental argument (i.e., a demonstration that all experience is reducible to a certain structure that cannot be circumvented), results in the conclusion that there are no means by which one can argue from 'outside' of how we *necessarily* experience existence.

In providing this account, I do not presume to have made a positive claim other than there are limits to what we can justify via observation. The above story highlights

why the success of our spatial views (in making and forming reliable predictions, and forming new discoveries about the appearing world) *do not require metaphysical accuracy*. This scenario is not just a convenient fiction, but a real threat to the realist. It shows that our observations, like the robot's, could be contingent. As a result, it destroys the prevailing assumption of robust versions of realism, which argue that our conception of time and space is necessarily a product of causal forces that conveniently illuminate mind-independent existence.

2.6. The 'Thing-in-itself'

1. Kant believes the senses are passive, in that some external activates them (A 19-20/B 33-5/A 50-2/B 74-6). Yet, Kant also argues that mind is solely responsible for the way sensory content is processed, the way it forms and creates appearing objects, and the way it relates conceptual content to appearances. In other words, Kant maintains that the mind is responsible for how things appear and *not* what activates the senses. As a result, Kant concludes that we cannot obtain knowledge of what activates the senses.

What we can know is how the mind operates and how things appear to us:

[H]erein lies just the experiment providing a checkup on the truth of the result of that first assessment of our rational cognition *a priori*, namely that such cognition reaches appearance only, leaving the thing-in-itself as something actual for itself but unorganized by us. (Bxx)

Kant calls the non-mental entity that activates the sense, yet which we cannot know, the 'thing-in-itself.'

The claims that 1) the mind processes sensory content, 2) senses are passive, and 3) something external to the mind must activate the senses, establishes a 'dualism.'

Kant's version of dualism maintains the following division: 1) that which pertains to the mind (and can be known) and 2) that which does *not* pertain to the mind (and cannot be known).

Kant's above view habitually leads many of his readers to two separate misrepresentations of his claims: 1) if we cannot know the thing-in-itself, it is incoherent and/or incompatible for Kant to even mention it, i.e., saying anything about the thing-in-itself presupposes some kind of knowledge or awareness of it, and 2) "that by our admitting the ideality of space and of time the whole sensible world would be turned into a mere illusion" (*Prolegomena* 290). I will now address the first of these misrepresentations. In sections 2.8, 2.9 and 2.10.1, I will address Kant's response to this second mischaracterization, by explaining and supporting his arguments for outer existence.

2. There are a slew of criticisms aimed at Kant's notion of thing-in-itself. These critical remarks started with Kant's contemporaries and are found in some segment of every succeeding generation.³⁶ In light of the longstanding controversy surrounding Kant's notion of the thing-in-itself, it is necessary to address some of the more pervasive criticisms of it.

Strawson's *Bounds of Sense* did much to reinstate dismissive scorn towards Kant's claims:

Knowledge through perception of things existing independently of perception, as they are in themselves, is impossible. For the only perception which could yield us any knowledge at all of such things must be the outcome of our being affected by those things; and for this reason such knowledge can be knowledge only of

³⁶ In Chapter 3, I will explain some of the strengths of Hegel's criticisms of Kant's thing-in-itself.

those things as they appear—of the appearance of those things—and not of those things as they really are or are in themselves. The above is a fundamental unargued complex of the *Critique*. (250)

The fact that Strawson wrote a book length commentary on the *Critique* and failed to see any of Kant's arguments for the above claim demonstrates either a great apathy towards Kant's insights or the brittle rigidity of Strawson's realism.

Strawson fails to see Kant's arguments, as arguments, because he misunderstands Kant's account of synthesis:

What are we to make of Kant's theory of synthesis? One popular approach has been to simply reject it as "an essay in the imaginary subject of transcendental psychology" [Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense* 32], having no necessary connection to any of the *Critique of Pure Reason's* true epistemological objectives. (Guyer, "Kant on the apperception and *A Priori* Synthesis" 205)

Strawson claims that the "antecedent conditions" (presumably Strawson means 'a priori conditions') of synthesis, which account for perception and belief, are unnecessary for a "strictly analytical argument." He proceeds to claim that "experience" does not support Kant's claims. Strawson then summarily dismisses Kant's account of synthesis, which leads to our inability to know the exterior world, as an "*ad hominem* objection" (*The bounds of Sense* 32). (Strawson's motivation for claiming that this aspect of Kant's philosophy stems from personal feelings or personal attacks, i.e., *ad hominem*, is mystifying. Perhaps his intention was to claim that Kant's view was merely psychological.) He concludes by flippantly claiming that "the entire theory is best regarded as one of the aberrations into which Kant's explanatory model inevitably lead him" (32).

However, Kant never claimed that his entire account of synthesis was purely an 'analytical' endeavor. For instance, Kant clearly notes the need to explain how *a priori*

synthesis is possible (along with *a posteriori* synthesis). If it is Strawson's contention that *no* account of synthesis is required to account for what can be observed in perception, he needs to show why this is the case.

Once one takes seriously the need for synthesis in the perceptual act, some formulation of Kant's idealism is not far behind. Perhaps this is why it has been a consistent practice of analytic thinkers to simply deny, as opposed to argue against, Kant's perceptual accounts. Likewise, this may also explain why they often fail to offer competing accounts of synthesis.³⁷ As we will see in section 2.13, Strawson simply claims that we can directly perceive space and time, without offering a perceptual account that supports this claim (or demonstrates the false reasoning of Kant's arguments to the contrary).

Regardless if one agrees with Kant's account of human perception, it is wrong to claim that he fails to provide an argument for our inability to *know* the thing-in-itself (other than entities external to the mind exist), the non-empirical self, the existence of the soul, the existence of God, the origins of the universe, etc. Kant's attempt to show inherent limits to human perception, by demonstrating what he believes to be a true model of perception, *is the argument* Kant is putting forth. In other words, Kant's account of perception is not only an attempt to properly account for perception, this model also forms the foundation from which Kant argues that humans possess epistemological limits.

In Chapter 1, we saw that many of Moore's and the early Russell's epistemological claims failed to stand up to scrutiny, because they failed to provide a reasonable account or assurance that we perceive in the manner they presumed to be true.

³⁷ The most notable exception is Sellars.

They assumed that we possess direct access to the world, and this view of perception played a central role in their epistemological and metaphysical claims. Yet, since they made no attempt to validate their model of perception, their epistemic claims were largely based upon assumptions concerning perception. Even when later Russell made the attempt to clarify his view of perception, he failed to notice how (at least in *Human Knowledge*) his account of perception did not fulfill his own requirements for knowledge. Perhaps it is this prevalent dismissal of the significance of perception (as found in his analytic predecessors) that made Strawson blind to the fact that a complete perceptual model can support epistemic claims.

There seems to be something eminently correct in Kant's underlying approach: all claims to know existence or conversely all claims that we cannot know existence are suppositions in one form or another, *until* one can determine to what extent (if any) we have perceptual access to the world. There is thus a deep sense in which providing an accurate perceptual model is necessarily co-extensive with justifying any epistemological claim.³⁸ Granted, the method that Kant employed is an unconventional means to make an epistemic argument. Yet, arguments need not come in conventional forms.

3. Most of the popular criticisms of Kant's concept of the thing-in-itself argue that it is inconsistent. For instance, to say anything about the thing-in-itself seems to presume something about it. This would seem to suggest that nothing can be said about the thing-in-itself. Yet, Kant discusses the thing-in-itself numerous times in the *Critique*. Thus critics typically claim that Kant is 1) wrong in claiming that nothing can be known about

³⁸ This is even true for rationalism. For instance, rationalism claims that reason, rather than empirical experience, is the source of knowledge. In order to successfully maintain this view, one must show that perception is incapable of playing an epistemic role (e.g., Descartes' wax example).

the thing-in-itself (other than it exists), 2) he is mistaken in trying to say anything about it, or 3) the doctrine of the thing-in-itself is manifestly absurd.

Most criticisms concerning Kant's notion of the thing-in-itself are derivatives of the above arguments. These derivations can be stated in several different ways. For example, to state that nothing can be known about the thing-in-itself ironically seems to be a knowledge claim concerning something that is supposedly unknowable. Thus the claim is inconsistent. Similarly, thinking requires some kind of knowable content. If the thing-in-itself is truly unknowable, it is unthinkable. Hence, if we cannot think about the thing-in-itself, we should not be able to say anything about the thing-in-itself. Yet, we can and do speak about the thing-in-itself, thus it is not completely unknowable.

A related criticism concerns Kant's manner of referencing the thing-in-itself, which seems to imply that it is a singular object. However, if it is true that nothing can be known about it, how can he assert that it is a singular object? Finally, in some areas of the *Critique* and *Prolegomena*, Kant suggests that it is a cause and in other areas he suggests that it is similar to a cause (in that without the thing-in-itself we would have no sensory experience). Thus the question, "how can one attribute any role to the thing-in-itself if it is fundamentally unknowable?" acts as a spell of warding against all operative conceptions of the thing-in-itself.

4. Before we consider if any of these criticism are applicable to Kant's use and understanding of the thing-in-itself, we will need to penetrate a bit deeper into Kant's approach. Kant believes that a critical outlook on knowledge claims requires an understanding of cognition as a part of our perceptual experience:

Kant realizes that, like any other productive epistemology, his epistemology requires some substantive, non-analytic premises. These premises cannot be justified by any more basic premises, nor can they be justified as the sole logically possible premises. They can be justified only by careful, guided reflection on what is cognitively possible *for us*. This kind of reflection is closely allied with what Kant calls “transcendental reflection”. (Westphal, *Kant’s Transcendental Proof of Realism* 14)

Kant, by establishing what he believes is cognitively possible for us, believes that he has also established the boundary of what our cognitive capacities are. If we grant that this is Kant’s goal (regardless if he has achieved it or not) the coherency or incoherency of his view rests on the following two questions: 1) can one intelligibly and coherently stipulate what cannot be known, and 2) if something can be determined to be unknowable, in what manner can we intelligibly refer to it?

I will begin by comparing and contrasting Kant’s approach with a simple example. A scientist owns a deep sea camera. He drops it off the side of his boat and it sinks to the ocean floor. This camera can only take pictures of a seascape up to 30 yards. After 30 yards it provides no image. Can he intelligibly refer to what might be beyond the thirty yards displayed by his camera?

Let’s address the features of this example as they relate or fail to relate to Kant. *One*, anyone can speculate what is beyond a camera’s view just as one may speculate what is beyond human understanding. The interesting difference between these two kinds of speculations is that anything we think might be beyond our understanding, is in some limited manner *in* our understanding (that is, we are able to think about it in some fashion). There is thus a sense in which one can talk about what is outside of one’s field of vision and a certain sense in which one cannot speak about what is beyond one’s field of understanding.

Two, if Kant believes that there are things beyond our ability to know, it makes sense to claim that we can say whatever we want about them, but such talk is just supposition, i.e., we can never justify what we say about them. Much of Kant's text is geared to demonstrate this kind of claim. For instance, Kant argues that our cognitive and perceptual limitations make us incapable of determining whether God exists, whether we have souls, and whether objects are complex or simple. There is, however, no need to place such limitations on the oceanographer in our above example. It may be the case that he can discern a way to infer from the topography within the camera's scope the topography that immediately lies outside of it.

Three, similarly, Kant places severe limits on inferential moves from human experience to that which is independent of the human mind. For instance, Kant believes that there are entities that exist external to the mind, but they are beyond our ability to comprehend, not because they are too complex (although this may also be the case), but because *their* existence is just too *foreign* to the nature of *our* sensibility and cognition for us to ever perceive them as they truly exist. Moreover, *if* we perceive mind-independent objects correctly, we would never know or be able to prove it. In this latter fashion (and unlike our analogy of the oceanographer), Kant seems committed to the claim that we are incapable of inferring or verifying the mind-independent nature of entities that lie beyond our experience.

5. To state something *determinate* about an entity requires that one also asserts (in some way) a quality, quantity, attribute or state. In algebra there are quantities that are unknown. These unknown quantities are put into a relation with known quantities by

having a symbol stand in for the unknown quantity. Similarly, the thing-in-itself is *not* something that has a *determinate* quality, quantity, attribute or state. For Kant, though we cannot say anything determinate about the thing-in-itself, this does not mean, nor require one to accept, that it does not exist, or that we cannot refer to it.

How then can Kant say something *determinable* (rather than ‘*determinate*’) about the thing-in-itself, such as it is unknowable, and claim that he can know this claim to be true? Kant’s approach bears a *limited resemblance* to the scholastic application of ‘remotion’:

Now, in considering the divine substance, we should especially make use of the method of remotion. For, by its immensity, the divine substance surpasses every form that our intellect reaches. Thus we are unable to apprehend it by knowing what it is. Yet we are able to have some knowledge of it by knowing what it is not. (Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* 96)

The approach of knowing God via remotion requires one to “derive the distinction of God from other beings by means of negative differences” (97). For instance, Christian theology claims that we are finite and imperfect beings. As such, we cannot know the traits of being infinite or perfect as they actually occur in God. However, ‘remotion’ (as a method) makes the claim that we can know of God’s perfection and infinite nature in some *limited sense*. We can achieve this limited knowledge by understanding that God’s nature is not like our finite or imperfect natures. In stating that God is not like us, we gain some limited knowledge of Him by knowing what He is not.

Kant similarly claims that the thing-in-itself can be differentiated from what we can know, in that it *cannot be* empirical appearances. In this sense, we gain some limited knowledge of the thing-in-itself; we know what it is not. In *contrast* to remotion, Kant’s claim does not presume a positive state or status about the thing-in-itself (except that it

exists), whereas the scholastic application of remotion infers some *positive* features about God (i.e., His perfection, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, atemporal existence).

While Kant does not employ the medieval methodology of remotion, there is a similarity: Kant's thing-in-itself is only intelligible via the negation of well defined conditions for humans' undergoing experience or possessing knowledge. Only in the negation of these conditions can one reference the thing-in-itself. In this *negative* sense Kant references the thing-in-itself.

This view *does not require* Kant to be committed to the claim that there is no relation between things-in-themselves and our perceptions. In fact, Kant's transcendental idealism, as we shall see in his argument for outer existence, requires that the thing-in-itself plays some role in affecting our senses. However, he does maintain that we cannot know anything *determinate* about this relation. What we can *infer* about such a relation will necessarily invoke the *a priori* structure that makes thought possible. As already argued, this structure is responsible for the way humans perceive and think, not the way outer beings exist. Hence, any such inference is not *knowledge* of the thing-in-itself *qua* the thing-in-itself. (I will address how he conceives himself warranted to infer outer existence in sections 2.8, 2.9 and 2.10.)

Kant's *a priori* structure, in itself, is not a thing. Yet, it does allow things to appear to us. Kant believes that we can have limited means of *referencing* the thing-in-itself by recognizing that this *a priori* structure is incapable of determining anything other than the appearances it produces. In this way, *Kant is not claiming that all of existence is reducible to the mental, but only that our knowledge of existence is limited to the mental.*

Therefore, what Kant intends to reference by the term ‘thing-in-itself’ is not any positive claim about outer entities, but rather an epistemological conclusion: 1) we can presume anything we want about the thing-in-itself, but we can never *know* anything determinate about the thing-in-itself (except that there are things-in-themselves), 2) any claim we do make about the thing-in-itself is only knowable via the *negation* of what we can know—it cannot function as a *positive* knowledge claim (except that it exists), and 3) we can think of the *idea* of the thing-in-itself, but we cannot cognize or perceive an existent thing-in-itself *qua* a thing-in-itself (i.e., the actual manner in which the mind-independent entity exists). The thing-in-itself thus remains something *inferred* and *determinable* (as opposed to *determinate*).

6. In the “Antinomies” Kant argues that it is impossible for reason to establish if objects are fundamentally simple or complex. These two opposing stances are derived from the *a priori* structure that makes experience possible. However, there is no reason to believe that Kant was committed to *one* of these views as being true. Instead, his philosophy requires the possibility that there are other options inconceivable to us.

This implies that even our general concept of an object (especially if time and space are created by the mind) is unlikely to represent accurately any aspect of outer existence:

The sensible faculty of intuition is really only a receptivity for being affected in a certain way with representations, whose relation to one another is a pure intuition of space and time [...], which, insofar as they [i.e., intuitions] are connected and determined in these relations (in space and time) according to laws of the unity of experience, are called **objects**. The non-sensible cause of these representations is entirely unknown to us, and therefore we cannot intuit it as an object; for such an object would have to be represented neither in space nor time (as mere conditions

for sensible representation), without which conditions we cannot think any intuition. (A 494)

It is therefore a mistake (as some interpreters of Kant commit) to confuse our common conceptions of an ‘object’ with the thing-in-itself.

7. Scholars do not agree on the kind of ontology that stems from Kant’s conception of the thing-in-itself. Ameriks notes this controversy as follows:

Most recent discussion of Kant’s distinction between appearances and things in themselves fall into either one of two large groups. First, there are those who deny that the distinction is meant as a distinction between two different objects. These interpreters generally go on to defend some way of still understanding the designation of the spatio-temporal items of our knowledge as “mere appearances”. Secondly, there are those who believe Kant did mean his distinction to refer to different objects. Generally, these interpreters go on to argue that for this reason there are great philosophical weaknesses and inconsistencies in Kant’s *Critique*. (*Recent Work on Kant’s Theoretical Philosophy* 1)

Current scholarship is turning away from the view that Kant intended a ‘two-object’ claim, i.e., two distinct kinds of entities.³⁹ Ameriks writes: “Hardly any interpreters defend the doctrine of the old textbook version of the *Critique*, the doctrine of a real distinction between a set of spatio-temporal and dependent appearance and a set of ultimately real things in themselves that are unknowable by us” (“Recent Work on Kant’s Theoretical Philosophy”).⁴⁰

In the above sections, I have argued that Kant’s conception of the thing-in-itself incorporates facets of both epistemological limit, as something beyond our ability to

³⁹ “[T]he two-object view [...] holds appearances and things in themselves to be ontologically distinct” (Zoeller, “Main Developments in Recent Scholarship on the Critique of Pure Reason” 456).

⁴⁰ Instead, “a number of Kant scholars, most notably Henry Allison, have defended a two-aspect view according to which appearance and things in themselves are ontologically identical and differentiated only methodologically, i.e., in terms of different ways of considering things” (Ameriks 454).

justify, and the conclusion that there are existing things which are completely unintelligible to us. This reading lends itself to a two-object interpretation.

Nonetheless, Kant does make claims that are inconsistent with the above commitments. Kant does reference the thing-in-itself as if it were a cause and as if it were a single object. If we take such references at face value, they are inconsistent with the main conclusions Kant draws in the *Critique* and *Prolegomena*.

Moreover, Kant claims that there is an intelligible (i.e., non-sensible and non-appearing) character to the thing-in-itself. He claims that this character can be inferred from the empirical object (A 538-9/B 566-7).⁴¹ He even claims that from this intelligible character one can obtain a “general concept” (of the “intelligible character”) of the thing-in-itself (A 541/ B 569). It is unclear if Kant intends to suggest that the ‘intelligibility’ and ‘general concept’ of the thing-in-itself refers to *our idea* of it or *if* it refers to our capacity to think of it as it truly exists. This ambiguity occurs, because Kant does not offer an elaboration on these claims.

On the one hand, given his broader epistemic commitments it would seem likely that Kant only intended to indicate *our* conception of the thing-in-itself. For instance, any ‘general concept’ would be a product of the ‘understanding.’ Yet, Kant clearly states that concepts of the understanding are valid only when applied to empirical content. He explicitly argues that to extend such concepts to non-empirical content is to engage in the sophistry of dialectical reasoning. As a result, Kant cannot support or fill out the claim that we can have a veridical ‘general concept’ of the mind-independent object (i.e., the thing-in-itself), while remaining true to his main commitments in the *Critique*. It,

⁴¹ I am indebted to Tom Rockmore for indicating that “Kant explicitly claims we can think the thing-in-itself without contradiction at B 566” (via correspondence).

therefore, seems unfair and unnecessary to interpret Kant's text as maintaining such inconsistencies.

On the other hand, the above excerpts from the *Critique* are intended to offer a "[c]larification of the cosmological idea of a freedom in combination with universal necessity" (A 542/B 570). In short, this section of Kant's text strains to show how the causal determinacy of the natural world is compatible with human freedom. In striving to resolve this issue, Kant appears to overstep the limits of his transcendental structure (*if* he is concerned with something over and above phenomenon, i.e., his intentions are unclear). As already noted, asserting that there is causal determination in the external world requires one to employ the category of causality, which (according to Kant's account of the understanding) is valid only when applied to empirical experience. Thus, Kant becomes inconsistent as soon as he sees the problem of free will and determinacy as a problem he should and could address. In short, Kant should have rejected the problem as a false (or dialectical) problem of reason.

If we strictly adhere to Kant's claim that there is no access to external existence, as it exists in itself, the issue of determinacy is only a pseudo-problem. That is, determinacy only becomes a problem once we wrongly assume that we know the mind-independent world is causally determined according to our conception of determinacy. For instance, if we cannot know outer reality, there is no basis to suppose that outer existence is (wholly or partially) causally determined. Thus human freedom is not at risk, or if it is, we could never know it.

It is not clear if Kant 1) changed his mind on what is accessible to human understanding, 2) if he intended to show that freedom and determination is a non-issue

given the framework of his philosophy as I suggested above, or 3) if his anxiousness to resolve this problem made him focus on a position that is inconsistent with much of his text. It seems that a stronger case could be made for the second reading rather than the former or latter positions.⁴² Moreover, for the sake of establishing the strongest possible formulation of Kant's arguments, which will result in the greatest likelihood of demonstrating what is true or false about them, I will continue to promote interpretations that avoid apparent contradictions, i.e., the thing-in-itself is unknowable as it occurs independent of the human mind.

Kant's conception of the intelligible character of the thing-in-itself (as opposed to the sensible characteristics of representation) plays a key role in Sellars' arguments for scientific realism. This topic will be addressed in Chapter 4.

2.7. *The Thing-in-Itself, Correspondence, and Kant's Refutation of Idealism*

1. When Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* was published in 1781, its general reception, as well as the reviews of it, led Kant to the realization that he was widely misunderstood. In particular, Kant was dismayed that his reviewers interpreted his conclusions concerning the thing-in-itself as versions of the skepticism and idealism that he rejected, i.e., they claimed he denied outer existence. As a result, Kant felt the urge to clarify his position. In 1783, Kant wrote the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. In it, he sought to distance himself from thinkers such as Berkeley, Descartes, and Hume. Yet, this effort failed to resolve the misinterpretations he sought to correct. In 1787, Kant

⁴² This criticism does not harm Kant's account of freedom, because Kant's transcendental philosophy supports the following: we cannot know outer reality, as a result one has no basis to suppose that outer existence is (wholly or partially) casually determined, and thus human freedom is not at risk.

made a second attempt to clarify his views by revising key portions of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The two versions of Kant's *Critique* are commonly referred to as the 'A' and 'B' editions.

In the B edition of the *Critique*, Kant introduces a new section called the "Refutation of Idealism." This argument is the culmination of the *Critique of Pure Reason*'s most important epistemic claims. For instance, this section is one of the few places where Kant overtly argues that his model of perception proves external existence, while at the same time showing how his views differ from material realism, radical skepticism, and solipsism. Additionally, this section clarifies how the epistemological conclusions of the *Critique of Pure Reason* oppose the views of Berkeley and Descartes.

If Kant's "Refutation of Idealism" was intended to make his epistemic conclusions clear to his readers, Kant failed. There are several reasons why commentators have failed to understand this argument. They often fail to appeal to 1) the "Refutation's" obvious precursor in the "The fourth paralogism of the ideality (of outer relations)"⁴³ and 2) "Remark II" and "III" of the "The First Part of The Main Transcendental Problem" (as found in the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*). 3) There is also a general lack of insight into Kant's understanding of experience, and as a result 4) Kant's conception of the appearing self is misunderstood. I will show how these aspects of Kant's writings are essential to understanding the significance of Kant's epistemic claims.

⁴³ Kant adds the "(of outer relations)" in the B edition for clarification.

2. In “Remark II” of the “The First Part of The Main Transcendental Problem” (as found in the *Prolegomena*),⁴⁴ Kant loosely defines the generic term ‘idealism,’ which he will subsequently refer to as ‘genuine idealism’⁴⁵:

Idealism consists in the assertion that there are none but thinking beings; all other things which we believe are perceived in intuitions are nothing but representation in the thinking beings, to which no object external to them in fact corresponds.
(288-9)

Rorty explains correspondence as follows: “To know is to represent accurately what is outside the mind; so to understand the possibility and nature of knowledge is to understand the way in which the mind is able to construct such representations” (*Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* 3). Kant writes that “genuine idealism” doubts that the mind can accurately represent objects (*Prolegomena* 289). He believes it therefore inevitably falls into doubt as to whether there is an outer (i.e., non-subject based) reality. Kant thus concludes that ‘genuine idealism’ stems from an *observationally* based correspondence theory as described in the above excerpt. (Note, Kant does *not* conceive of *his* philosophy as ‘genuine idealism’)

3. An empirically based correspondence theory of truth appeals to observations as a means of justification. The material realist (i.e., one who holds that there is an outer existence) who accepts this correspondence theory defends his claims by making observations. Yet, the skeptic can always doubt the veracity of any one observational claim.⁴⁶ In this fashion, the real or imagined skeptic perpetually prompts the realist to

⁴⁴ I will refer to *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* as the ‘*Prolegomena*’.

⁴⁵ As we will see, Kant employs and qualifies the term ‘idealism’ in many different ways.

⁴⁶ As argued in section V, 4, the realist’s inability to demonstrate the privileged position, from which they form their observations, results in doubts concerning what realists can justifiably conclude from observation.

defend his/her claim with new observations. Consequently, these versions of material realism and skepticism are locked into a cycle of conflict with no foreseeable resolution.

According to Kant, what motivates the above versions of skepticism and material realism is the same thing that motivates genuine idealism, i.e., the presumption that truth is obtained by a correspondence between objects and appearances. For instance, *some* skeptics believe that this version of correspondence is necessary to produce truth; however, they do not believe that one can demonstrate this kind of correspondence. They thus hold a standard of truth that they do not think is obtainable. Consequently, they doubt all knowledge claims. As noted above, this kind of skeptic is prone to become a ‘genuine idealist’. On the other hand, most realists claim they can demonstrate a correspondence between appearance and existence.

Kant hopes to overcome the above versions of skepticism, genuine idealism and realism by disproving the possibility of what enables them, i.e., an observationally based correspondence theory of truth:

[...] I find that more, nay, *all the properties which constitute the intuition of a body belong merely to its appearance*. The existence of the thing that appears is thereby not destroyed as in genuine idealism, but it is only shown that we cannot possibly know it by the senses as it is in itself (289).⁴⁷

Generally speaking, Kant’s approach can be put in the following terms: 1) if one can show the *impossibility* of demonstrating correspondence between appearance and mind-independent existence (see section 2.8), 2) and demonstrate an *alternative* to the correspondence theory of truth for establishing the external world (see sections 2.9 and 2.10), 3) *then* the skeptic’s, genuine idealist’s and material realist’s arguments (as Kant describes them) against and for external reality are irrelevant.

⁴⁷ All quotes from the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* will be taken from Ellington’s 2001 translation published by Hackett.

4. At first glance, Kant's approach seems paradoxical: by destroying observationally based correspondence theories of truth, he believes he can ultimately demonstrate external existence to skeptics of all stripes, while showing up the material realists, by proving what they failed to establish (i.e., a proof for outer existence). As we shall see, the above is Kant's strategy in the "Refutation of Idealism" and "The fourth paralogism of the ideality."

For the time being, it is sufficient to note Kant's simplest expression of this view in the *Prolegomena*:

On the contrary, I say that things as objects of our sense existing outside us are given, but we know nothing of what they may be in themselves, knowing only their appearances, i.e., the representations which they cause in us by affecting our sense. Consequently, I grant by all means that there are bodies without us, that is, things which, though quite unknown to us as to what they are in themselves, we yet know by the representation which their influence on our sensibility procures us, and which we call bodies. This word merely means the appearance of the thing, which is unknown to us but is not therefore less real. Can this be termed idealism? It is the very contrary. (288-9)

It is important to note that in the above passage that Kant *qualifies* our awareness of 'bodies' as an 'appearance.' If one loses sight of this qualification, one will mistakenly interpret Kant as taking a materialist position.⁴⁸

As already shown, Kant argues that our experience of time and space is purely derived from the mind's ability to synthesize content from the manifold. He argues that time and space *cannot* be true representations of outer existence. He concludes from this that our experience of objects, which require the forms of time and space, *cannot* be accurate. However, I think his intent can be rephrased into a weaker claim, *or* at the very

⁴⁸ Kant's phrase "the appearance of the thing, which is unknown to us but is not therefore less real" (289) is suggestive of a 'two-aspect' claim, but as I have argued and will argue, Kant's epistemic stances do not permit this kind of claim.

least, his claim only permits the following: 1) given the way synthesis functions, there is no way to establish a correspondence with the external world, 2) since the way things appear is due to the mind and not external existence, it is unlikely that the mind can mirror reality, and 3) even if some aspect of our perceptions/conceptions did mirror reality, given 1, there is no way one could ever realize or support that this occurs.

In the next section, we will continue with Kant's strategy for overcoming the skeptic and the material realist.

2.8. Correspondence and 'Objective Validity' in "Remark III" of the "First Part of the Main Transcendental Problem"

1. In the *Meditations*, Descartes questions whether the appearing world stems from himself or from something outside of him. In "Remark III" of the "First Part of the Main Transcendental Problem" (as found in the *Prolegomena*), Kant responds to a version of Descartes' dilemma: how can I tell legitimate experience from that of dreaming or illusion? Kant begins his response to this question by establishing a non-representational and thus a non-correspondence theory of empirical truth⁴⁹:

[T]he difference between truth and dreaming is not ascertained by the nature of the representations which are referred to objects (for they are the same in both cases), but by their connection according to those rules which determine the coherence of the representations in the concept of an object, and by ascertaining whether they can subsist together in experience or not. (291)

For Kant, the difference between dreams and empirical experiences is that dreams do not (in thoroughgoing consistency) exhibit an *interrelation* of representations that conform to the *a priori* laws of empirical experience.

⁴⁹ I use the term 'empirical truth' to distinguish it from a metaphysical claim.

Kant's conception of empirical truth is unlike traditional correspondence theories in that its verification does not invoke simple observation. This is an attractive feature of Kant's philosophy as it circumvents many of the problems associated with various forms of realism and skepticism. For instance, consider the following skeptical concerns. Whether one is dreaming or in an waking state, one could ask, "is this box green?" and then look or seemingly look, as in the case of dreaming, in order to confirm the *appearance* of green. We can also imagine a similar scenario for the man trapped in the desert who sees a green oasis. If he asks himself, "Do I see green?" he can look and confirm that he does. In this manner, observation in and of itself is inconclusive as to whether one is undergoing a legitimate experience or not. A hardened skeptic will demand to know how the realist can tell legitimate appearances from illusory appearances. The only recourse for many forms of realism is simply to appeal to more appearances. However, Kant agrees with the skeptic that one cannot distinguish legitimate experience by appearance alone. According to Kant, only by appealing to the *a priori* rules that permit empirical experience can one demonstrate a legitimate experience from illusion.⁵⁰

Ensuring empirical experiences are *legitimate* is not a simple task, but it would involve simple rules. For instance, an effect must have a cause, embodied objects take up space, two objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time, and in the same way, etc. At first glance, these kinds of empirical rules seem like pseudoscientific or metaphysical claims. Yet, they are not. Kant simply means that *experience* itself has

⁵⁰ The soundness of Kant's argument hinges upon his demonstration of this *a priori* structure. If one does not grant him this achievement, then his following claims will be unwarranted. However, my objective is not to show the truth of Kant's claims, but only how his method works and why Kant believed his approach held considerable advantages over previous approaches.

certain regularities (as opposed to asserting something about the regularities of mind-independent existence). These regularities constitute what is considered legitimate empirical experience.

According to Kant, the above described regularities do not support any claim concerning the nature of outer objects, entities or occurrences. This is the case, because such regularities are formed by the mind and not outer objects. For Kant, our inability to note outer existence, as it actually exists, is an *advantage*. It is an advantage, because it silences skeptical concerns that stem from worries over the true correspondence between appearance and reality. For instance, this approach frees Kant from the insurmountable obstacle of proving to the skeptic that our *a priori* structure of experience represents reality, as it actually exists independent of the mind, for Kant argues that it does not.

2. Kant's strategy circumvents observationally based correspondence theories of truth, but does the approach provide a conclusion that holds epistemic value? It is this kind of hypothetical question that is at the forefront of Kant's concern, for his aim is to refute the skeptic in a meaningful way, i.e., show that knowledge is possible. If Kant has demonstrated an *a priori* structure that ensures *objectively valid appearances* (as opposed to objectivity concerning outer objects), Kant has paved the way for empirical knowledge. For example, the way I experience the empirical world (if Kant's account of *a priori* rules of experience are correct) is the way all humans experience the empirical world. Thus, if I can demonstrate that an appearance conforms to the *a priori* rules of empirical experience (which require it to form certain kinds of consistent relations to other appearances), I can, according to Kant, make an 'objectively valid' empirical claim.

Kant's empirical objectivity invokes the inter-subjectivity of the human species and opposes any claim for the objectivity of external existence. Thus *human* experience is subjective, but this subjectivity is a kind of subjectivity that collectively involves a whole species. It does not permit significant individual differences (except, I presume, for cases we perceive as illness, deformity or derangement).

In so far as one restricts (or conforms) one's judgments to the *a priori* rules of empirical experience, Kant believes one cannot be "led astray" or fall into "illusion" (as Descartes constantly fears in his *Meditations*):

In the same way, if I consider all the representations of the senses, together with their form, space and time, to be nothing but appearances, and space and time to be a mere form of the sensibility, which is not to be met with in objects out of it, and if I make use of these representations in reference to possible experience only, there is nothing in my regarding them as appearances that can lead me astray and cause illusion. (291)

Though this passage is reminiscent of Descartes, Kant's claim is transcendental and thus his own: "It is merely a question of the use of sensuous representation in the understanding, and not of their origin" (291).

Kant argues that empirical truth, insofar as it involves the human ability to make and share claims based on experience, does *not* lie in establishing the determinate attributes of the external cause of an appearance (as implicit in many correspondence theories). Instead, empirical truth is obtained in establishing whether an experience conforms to the conditions that enable empirical experience to unfold in the human mind. According to Kant, if an *experience* does not conform to these rules, then it is by default a dream, an illusion or some form of error.

By arguing that empirical truth is *not* established by correspondence between idea and object *or* appearance and object, but rather by the very conditions necessary for

actual experience, Kant believes he has undermined the potency of the skeptic and the solipsist. That is, Kant believes he has shown why worrying if everything could be an illusion or worrying that everything that I perceive only occurs in my head is unwarranted:

My doctrine of the ideality of space and of time, therefore, far from reducing the whole sensible world to mere illusion, is the only means of securing the application of the most important cognition (that which mathematics grounds *a priori*) to actual objects and of preventing it being regarded as mere illusion. (292)

By denying that time and space are actual representors of external objects, Kant can via his account of the *a priori* structure of empirical experience argue the following: all non-dreaming experience or all non-illusory experience presupposes complex relations found in (our generation of) time and space as conditions for empirical experiences. In this fashion, Kant seeks to invalidate Descartes' skeptical concerns that stem from worries over the origin of appearances and their representational accuracy, while opposing Berkeley's claim that outer objects can only exist *if* time and space exist independent of the human mind.

Kant believes that if we stick to his transcendental account, we can distinguish between illusion and objective empirical experiences. He also believes that by limiting ourselves to his transcendental account, we will refrain from fruitless epistemological endeavors and purely speculative metaphysics:

[T]hough these my principles make appearance of the representation of the senses, they are so far from turning the truth of experience into mere illusion that they are the only means of preventing the transcendental illusion, by which metaphysics has been deceived hitherto and misled into childish efforts of catching at bubbles, because appearances, which are mere representation, were taken for things in themselves.

Here originated the remarkable event of the antimony of reason, which I shall mention later on and which is canceled by the single observation that appearance, as long as it is employed in experience, produces truth, but the

moment it transgresses the bounds of experience, and consequently becomes transcendent, produces nothing but illusion. (292)

In review, we saw in this section and sections 2.4 and 2.5, that time and space play merely a transcendental role, and thereby a non-representational role. In this fashion, Kant attempted to circumvent the observationally based correspondence theories. In opposition to correspondence theories, he sought to show that empirically objective truth can be obtained by establishing an *a priori* structure, which enables all empirical experience.

2.9. Clarification of Relevant Kantian Terms and “Remark II” and “III” as an Abbreviated Counterpart to “The fourth paralogism”

1. As noted in the beginning of section 2.8, the *Prolegomena* was intended to clarify misrepresentations of Kant’s *Critique*. It was also noted, that one of the most important misconceptions Kant sought to overcome was the belief that his philosophy supported skeptical doubts concerning the *existence* of outer existence, which he calls ‘genuine idealism.’ As we saw above, “Remark II” and “III” provide a convenient summary of Kant’s strategy for defeating the skeptic and observationally based realism. However, the *Prolegomena* does not provide a thorough account of his specific reasons for rejecting ‘genuine idealism.’

In the “The fourth paralogism of the ideality” (as found in the *Critique*), Kant provides his longest and most focused attack on skeptical doubts concerning outer existence, which he calls ‘idealism’ (in this particular section of the *Critique*). Kant’s use

of the term ‘idealism’ in “The fourth paralogism of the ideality” is equivalent to his term ‘genuine idealism’ in the *Prolegomena*.

Kant opens “The fourth paralogism” by summarizing it:

That whose existence can be inferred only as a cause of given perception has only a **doubtful existence**:

Now all outer appearances are of this kind: their existence cannot be immediately perceived, but can be inferred only as the cause of given perceptions:

Thus the existence of all objects of outer sense is doubtful. This uncertainty I call the ideality of outer appearances, and the doctrine of this ideality is called **idealism**, in comparison with which the assertion of a possible certainty of objects of outer sense is called **dualism**. (A 366-7)

Kant argues *against* this version of ‘idealism’ by arguing for ‘dualism’.

In the first full paragraph that follows, Kant outlines how the above version of idealism invokes a “deceptive illusion” (A 369). It is sometimes overlooked that Kant wishes to oppose this argument, because he states his agreement with some of its premises.⁵¹ Despite these occasional marks of assent, Kant does not agree with the argument’s conclusion.

In order to highlight the various premises established in this paragraph, I have indicated all seven with ‘P1’ to ‘P7’. I have also inserted a ‘C’ to represent the conclusion made in this argument. It is worthwhile to note this argument in its entirety, because the “*criticism of the fourth paralogism*” is intended to disprove its conclusion. I have also noted where Kant comments on Descartes. I have included this comment because it plays an important role later in Kant’s text (see sections 2.9.5 and 2.10):

[P1] We can rightly assert that only what is in ourselves can be immediately perceived, and that my own existence alone could be the object of mere perception.

⁵¹ These instances of agreement can be noted by the term ‘rightly’ (as translated by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood).

[P2] Thus the existence of a real object outside me [...] is never given directly in perception,

[P3] but can only be added in thought to what is a modification of the inner sense as its external cause

[P4] and hence only it can be inferred

[Comment on the above premises] Thus Descartes also rightly limited all perception in the narrowest sense to the position "I (as a thinking being) am."

[P5] Thus I cannot really perceive external things, but only infer their existence from my inner perception, insofar as I regard this as the effect of which something external is proximate cause.

[P6] But now the inference from a given effect to its determinate cause is always uncertain, since the effect can have arisen from more than one cause.

[P7] Accordingly, in the relation of perception to its cause, it always remains doubtful whether this cause is internal or external,

[C] thus whether all so-called outer perceptions are not a mere play of our inner sense, or whether they are related to actual external objects as their cause [is uncertain]. (A367-8)

Premise 6 plays a crucial role in the above argument. It establishes a specific source of skeptical concerns that Kant is anxious to resolve. In premise 7, we see that the argument (as reminiscent of Descartes) expresses a worry that any act of perception (by itself) cannot resolve the following: is a particular observation 1) something caused by external existence, 2) a product of one's own mind, or 3) some degree of both?

Kant states how he believes the above version of skepticism leads to 'idealism' (in the sense that outer existence is doubtful):

By an Idealist, therefore, one must understand not someone who denies the existence of external object of sense, but rather someone who only does not admit that it is cognized through immediate perception and infers from this that we can never be fully certain of their reality from any possible experience. (A368-9)

What is at stake (at this point in the *Critique*) is the kind of view that can be legitimately established from the above concern. According to Kant, there are two general modes of thought that stem from this claim: 1) Kant believes that "transcendental idealism" can prove outer existences, while 2) "transcendental realism" reinforces the "deceptive illusion" that "existence of all objects of outer sense is doubtful" (A 367).

We must therefore distinguish between these two differing types of views:

I understand by **transcendental idealism** of all appearances the doctrine that they are all together to be regarded as mere representations and not as things in themselves, and accordingly space and time are only sensible forms of our intuition, but not determinations given for themselves or conditions of objects as things in themselves. (A 369)

Kant's above use of the term 'appearance' does not imply that 'appearances' *represent* something external to the self.⁵² As we saw earlier, the process of synthesis, which constitutes all appearances, occurs according to rules found in the mind; appearances are therefore incapable of representing outer entities (as they actually exist). This is the case, because outer reality does not constitute the way things appear. Rather, the mind alone (according to Kant) is responsible for the way things appear. His above use of the term 'representation' (which in this context means a determined appearance) thus makes it seem as if Kant is being inconsistent (as *if* he were implying some form of correspondence theory). However, this is not the case. Rather, it is Kant's ambiguous use of 'representation' that is misleading.

Kant believes that transcendental idealism can present a structure that accounts for the manner in which people think and experience. Kant believes that this structure can make the skeptic irrelevant 1) by showing that his concerns cannot be answered outside of this transcendental structure, 2) by arguing that this very same transcendental structure secures an 'objective validity' of empirical *experience* (in that it is true of all

⁵² In the above passage, Kant's use of the terms 'appearance' and 'representation' are misleading. Kant's use of the term 'representation' is contrasted with his use of the term 'appearance.' He states that "[t]he undetermined object of an empirical intuition is called **appearance**" (A20). Conversely, a 'representation' is a *determined* appearance; this simply means that when one *thinks* or *recognizes* an 'appearance' as being some kind of quality, quantity, or state, they are making it determined. This process of making an appearance determinate is achieved by an act of judgment, which subsumes an appearance under some particular concept.

human experience), and 3) (as we are about to see) by proving that there is an outer existence.⁵³

2. In opposition to Kant's 'transcendental idealism' is 'transcendental realism.'

He argues that transcendental realism leads to the 'deceptive illusion' that there is no external existence:

To this idealism [i.e., transcendental idealism] is opposed **transcendental realism**, which regards space and time as something given in itself (independent of our sensibility) [i.e., time and space are in the world as opposed to being products of our minds]. The transcendental realist therefore represents outer appearances (if their reality is conceded) as things in themselves, which would exist independently of us and our sensibility and thus would also be outside us according to pure concepts of the understating. (A 369)

A transcendental realist believes that space and time represent (as in a representational model of truth—*not* Kant's technical use of this term) the outer world. Accordingly, the way we perceive the world is *not* based upon the way the mind functions, but on the causation of exterior forces.

According to Kant, the transcendental realist falls into the deceptive illusion (i.e., that there is no outer existence), because he wrongly assumes that only accurate representations of existing objects can enable objectivity and awareness of external existence. Kant argues that this conception of truth is vulnerable to skeptics who challenge the validity or truth of any given observation (as noted in the above argument). Overcome by these skeptical challenges, the transcendental realist may conclude that the

⁵³ As already noted, Kant's version of objectivity is based on or presupposes our species inter-subjectivity, i.e., the notion that all humans must think and perceive in prescribed ways when confronted with specific kinds of sensory activation. He thus concludes that we share similar experiences, and hence there is an *empirically* objective realm (for human beings). However, Kant's use of the notion of objectivity should not be confused with the view of objectivity that requires a determinate metaphysical claim about existence.

skeptic is right. Kant calls a person who has arrived at this conclusion an “empirical idealist”:

It is really this transcendental realist who afterward plays the empirical idealist; and after he has falsely presupposed about objects of the senses that if they are to exist they must have their existence in themselves even apart from sense, he finds that from this point of view all our representations of sense are insufficient to make their reality certain. (A 369)

3. *Contrary* to the ‘empirical idealist’ (which is compatible with ‘transcendental realism’), Kant coins the term “empirical realist” (which is compatible with his ‘transcendental idealism’). For Kant, an empirical realist accepts that there is an outer existence and that there is a discernable objectivity to *empirical content* (as human experience). Empirical realism is an advance over ‘transcendental realism’ and ‘empirical idealism,’ as these two stances lead to solipsism or mentalism (i.e., all that exists are minds and mental content). Kant believes empirical realism, as the more desirable stance, can be achieved by rejecting representational views of truth:

He can concede the existence of matter without going beyond mere self-consciousness and assuming something more than the certainty of representation in me [i.e., representation is a product of mind not a correspondence to external objects], hence the *cogito, ergo sum*. For because he allows this matter and even its inner possibility to be valid only for appearance—which, separated from our sensibility, is nothing—matter for him is only a species of representations (intuition) [i.e., again representation created by the mind, not a correspondence to external existence], which are called external, not as if they relate to objects that are **external in themselves** but because they relate perception to space, where all things are external to one another, but that space itself is in us. (A370)

So far, Kant has not attempted to show how the empirical realist can know a mind-independent world. For the time being, he has only defined an alternative view.

4. Kant’s argument for external existence is tied to his conception of the empirical realist. In order to show how the empirical realist can know of the existence of an

external world, Kant once again falls back upon his transcendental orientation. Yet this time, his focus is not on perception itself, but on how perception relates to what we perceive as ourselves, i.e., empirical self.

We can see this transition away from *a priori* conditions for empirical experience to what Kant calls ‘inner intuition’ in the following manner:

[T]hus whether [i] all so-called outer perceptions are not a mere play of our inner sense, or whether [ii] they are related to actual external objects as their cause [is uncertain]. At least the existence of the latter is only inferred [i.e., ii], and thus runs the risk of all inferences [i.e., they could be wrong and are thus subject to doubt]; by contrast, [i.e., i] the object of inner sense (the appearing self and all appearing representations) is immediately perceived, and its existence suffers no doubt at all. (A368)

This passage appears to be an admission of material skepticism, but in actuality this is how Kant starts his argument for outer existence. Kant begins by establishing common ground between himself and the material skeptic: Kant and the material skeptic are in agreement that inner sense is “immediately perceived” and is not subject to doubt. Kant believes that he can take this claim as a starting point for proving outer existences, while the material skeptic, who follows in Descartes’ footsteps, wrongly asserts the denial of outer existence. He takes this view, because he believes the latter possesses an inaccurate model of the self.

This appeal to the appearing self is a crucial turning point in Kant’s argument. This argument also culminates in some radical conclusions. Due to its radical nature, its full impact is overlooked by a long list of commentators. Before moving onward, we will thus have to explicate Kant’s notion of the self, as it is expressed in “The fourth paralogism of the ideality” and “Refutation of Idealism.”

2.10. *Kant's Argument for Outer Existence and His Rejection of Descartes' Model of the Self*

1. In the *Meditations*, Descartes provides a top down explanation of the self, in that the self is seen as the origin of all mental acts. For instance, he treats the mental acts of believing or sensing as being the self in different states of activity. As a result, the cause of sensory experience could just as easily arise from the self as emotions or fantasies are believed to emanate from the self. Descartes' model of the self thus lacks a clear means to determine whether the self is or is not the cause and origin of sensory experience. This occurrence underscores why Descartes' epistemic claims required a demonstration of God's existence (not to infer he archived this goal), as the only available means to justify the claim that humanity's perceptual and rational capacities are appropriately related to existence.

The above view is mistakenly attributed to Kant. Kant's model of perception and his model of the self (*if they are true*) permit him a proof for outer existence that is much overlooked. Before we assess this argument, we will need first to examine how Kant's model of perception and his model of the self work together. Once we determine how these models enable one another, we will be prepared to see how Kant's argument for outer existence opposes Descartes' model of the self.

Unlike Descartes' model of perception, Kant provides a bottom up explanation of the mind and self, i.e., the least complex mental events make the most sophisticated mental events possible. Under Kant's model of perception, no empirical experience can arise without the activation of the senses. Upon the activation of the senses, the mind

becomes active by synthesizing sensory content into an appearance. The generation of appearances can be seen as an unconscious event in that the one's conscious self is not aware of or a participant in this mental process. Appearances are then subsumed under concepts by which they can be recognized and thought. The mind, while *active* in synthesis and judgment, is *passive* in its *reception* of a sensory manifold.

Kant is to some limited degree borrowing from the British empiricists who argue that all thought arises from experience; yet, in doing so, he modifies important features of the empiricist's view. For instance, Locke argued that thought occurs at the same time one undergoes sensory experience, and the thoughts that arise with sensation are the bases for more complex thoughts. In this fashion, Locke argues that experience is the bases for all our concepts and reason in general. Unlike Locke, Kant argues that first there is an organizational and logical structure that makes experience possible (i.e., an *a priori* structure). This *a priori* structure is *inert* until it is activated by the mind's reception of sensory content. Consequently, this *a priori* structure does not *initiate* experience; it only makes it *possible*. *Empirical* experience thus only occurs *after* the reception of sensory content has occurred.

In a famous passage Kant states: "Without sensibility no object would be given to us, and without understanding none would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind" (A 51). Understanding is the faculty that allows appearances to be determined and, as such, become recognizable and meaningful. Accordingly, thoughts are empty, that is, abstract and merely formal without sensory content. Likewise, sensory content is meaningless without concepts.

2. In order to understand how Kant believes we perceive ourselves, we must first digress into his conception of temporality. Kant argues that a temporal structure is a necessary precursor to appearances and conceptual determination:

The three *modi* of time are **persistence, succession, and simultaneity**. Hence three rules of all temporal relation of appearances, in accordance with which the existence of each can be determined with regard to the unity of all time, precede all experience and first make it possible. (B 219)

In short, temporal distinctions are logically prior to any other kind of determination, for in order to determine something as appearing as a quality, quantity, or state, some appearance must *appear as being persistent*. If there is no persistence, there could be no succession or simultaneity to any representation, because there would be no noticeable phenomenon that could seemingly pass away (and thus there could be no succession). However, persistence is the product of a recognition that is sustainable throughout a given period of temporal succession. Accordingly, succession and persistence seem to *require* one another. If this is true, then without succession and persistence, nothing would appear (i.e., they are necessary preconditions for noticeable content). Persistence and succession (given that they require one another) are therefore necessary preconditions for the experience of simultaneity, because there must be at least two persisting appearances for one to witness ‘simultaneity.’

Similarly, without intuition there can be no thought. In other words, even concepts require some form of persistence. Hence, all acts of determination and all acts of thought require some degree of temporal ordering of persistence, succession, and simultaneity. As a result, time is the primary and necessary precursor to *any* form of recognition or thought.

3. Kant argues that what we perceive as ourselves is an appearance. Kant's model of perception is therefore integrated into his model of the self. For instance, many of the structures that permit empirical experiences (such as time, synthesis and concepts) play an essential role in *producing the perceived self*. This claim holds remarkable epistemic repercussions for self-knowledge: just as appearances need not represent existence, the *appearing self* need not be one's *true self*. In other words, Kant claims that the perception of the self does not indicate one's true mode of existence. For similar reasons to those Kant provides for his position that our knowledge of outer existence is limited to how it appears to us, he argues that our knowledge of ourselves is limited to how one appears to oneself.

All that appears, appears for an observer. This observer is traditionally called the 'I' or the 'self.' The relating of all experience to a self constitutes a kind of unity. Kant calls this unity the 'unity of apperception'.

Some interpret Kant's unity of apperception as asserting the existence of an 'essential ego,' in that the self is central and *prior to all mental acts*. This *misinterpretation* is derived from false interpretations of the following kinds of Kantian claims:

The **I think** must **be able** to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me that could not be thought at all, which is as much as to say the representation would either be impossible or else at least would be nothing for me. (B 132)

It is important to note that in the above passage, Kant states that the "I think" can accompany all "representations." Here, Kant's technical distinction between 'appearances' and 'representations' is informative. As noted above, an appearance is undetermined, while a representation is a determined appearance. For Kant, appearance

becomes determined by an act of judgment, by which the appearances are subsumed under a concept. As already noted, in order for anything to be recognizable or an object of thought, it must become determinate. Hence, the act of making an appearance determinate is an act of recognition. Recognition implies an observer. It is thus a requirement that every representation, as a *determinate* appearance, must occur for an 'I'.

This claim, however, *does not* require that 'appearances' are *generated* by an 'I'. Appearances are, in some sense, prior to the 'I'. What generates *empirical* appearances for Kant is the synthesis of the sensory manifold in accordance with the forms of time and space. In this manner, one can make a distinction between the empirical 'I' (i.e., what *appears* to oneself, as *being* oneself) and what is now called the mind. Kant's use of the term 'empirical I' is restricted to a specific mental process that Kant calls the "unity of apperception." The empirical self can be studied by psychology and the unity of apperception cannot.⁵⁴ Kant's empirical 'I' is thus far more limited than our contemporary usage of the term 'mind,' which pertains to any mental event, whereas the empirical self does not. Hence, the synthetic process of the mind should not be confused with the perceived 'I'.

Though the above distinction is slight, it is a crucial one for recognizing the difference between Kant's model of the self and Descartes'. Descartes' model of the 'I' is responsible for all mental occurrences. As a result, the self is, in some sense, prior to all mental occurrences.⁵⁵

In contrast, I argue that *Kant's 'I' is largely a condition of the possibility of object formation*. There are two related reasons I make this claim.

⁵⁴ I am indebted to James Swindal for noting this crucial distinction between empirical psychology and Kant's Transcendental philosophy.

⁵⁵ Fichte and Schelling hold a similar view.

First, according to Kant, his transcendental idealism accounts for specific empirical appearances as they unfold in the forms of time and space. Kant's transcendental philosophy outlines an *a priori* structure by reflecting on the *mental acts* that enable experience. For example, the forms of time and space permit appearances to be synthesized (which is an activity of the mind) in such a way that they can be subsequently made determinate (i.e., into representations). The 'I' as an observing subject must first have appearances to note, before it can be an observer. In this manner, one can argue that without sensibility, an 'I' would never come into being. In order for there to be appearances *for* an observer, a great deal of mental activity is required.

Second, it is only after the *structure* of object formation is turned inward that the empirical 'I' arises. For instance, when the succession of representations occurs, the *a priori* structure which forms objects from outer intuition *can now form an object out of inner intuition*, i.e., the before, after and simultaneity of appearances are organized into a unified whole, which Kant calls the 'unity of apperception.' This unification of all appearances, as occurring for one observing subject, can only occur *after* there is a succession of *appearing* content. Hence, this *subsequent unification* of appearances is the *actualization* of the transcendental self (i.e., unity of apperception) and the *advent* of the empirical self. Simply put, the conditions for the transcendental self are prior to experience, but the empirical self is not.

For both these reasons, the empirical 'I' is derivative of object formation, i.e., without a succession of appearances (that can be subsequently determined), there can be no observing 'I,' especially one that is aware of its status as being an 'I'. Additionally, there needs to be many appearances that occur *before* an 'I' can unify these appearances

and *subsequently perceive* itself as being qualitatively distinct from what appears. To emphasize the secondary status of the self, as being derivative of the mental activity that permits object formation (as opposed to being logically prior and primary to object formation as found in Descartes' model), I call Kant's model of the empirical 'I' a '*collateral view of the self*'.

4. We can now address a crucial step that appears to be missing in Kant's argument: Kant's transition from the "testimony of mere self consciousness" to an inference of outer existence. For instance:

Thus our doctrine removes all reservation about assuming the existence of matter based on the testimony of our mere self-consciousness, and it declares this to be proved in the same way as the existence of myself as a thinking being. For I am indeed conscious to myself of my representations; thus these exist, and I myself who have these representations. But now external objects (bodies) are merely appearances, hence also nothing other than a species of my representations, whose objects are something only through these representations, but are nothing separated from them. [*Kant does not explain how the former results in the next claim.*] Thus external things exist as well as my self, and indeed both exist on the immediate testimony of my self-consciousness, only with this difference: the representation of my Self, as the thinking subject, is related merely to inner sense, but the representations that designate extended beings are also related to outer sense. I am no more necessitated to draw inferences in respect of the reality of external objects than I am in regard to the reality of the object of my inner sense (my thoughts), for in both cases they are nothing but representations, the immediate perception (consciousness) of which is at the same time a sufficient proof of their reality. (A 370-371)

Only in Kant's account of experience can one find the transition that makes this claim successful, i.e., "the existence of matter [i.e., mind-independent being] based on the testimony of our mere self-consciousness."

I will begin by listing the relevant claims that form the bases of this transition. *One*, Kant's transcendental idealism denies the possibility of correspondence theories

(see sections 2.7 and 2.8). This is a great advantage of Kant's philosophy as it circumvents the skeptical concerns that arise out of the attempt to link appearances with determinate truths about external reality. *Two*, all self-awareness is predicated on inner sense, but for Kant, inner sense is largely derived from content that originates from the activation of the senses (as argued in section 2.10.3). *Three*, as a result of *two*, the awareness of the self is *largely* a by-product of the inner sense of the succession, persistence and simultaneity of appearances presented as spatial objects (as argued in section 2.10.3). *Four*, the mind cannot produce an empirically valid object (i.e., something that conforms to the *a priori* structure of possible experience) until sensory activation occurs (as argued in section 2.6). *Five*, the mind cannot cause sensory activation. *Six*, it is not possible for the self to cause sensory activation, because the self is *indirectly* derived from the senses being activated (as argued in section 2.10.3). We have now paved the way for a logical conclusion overlooked by most Kantian scholarship: the self is dependent on the activation of the senses, i.e., without sensory modification there would be no appearances and without appearances there can be no formation of the 'I', i.e., there can be no unity of apperception

Armed with this radical view of the self, we can now explain why Kant believes that the empirical self, which as an (undeniable) appearance, is also something that *proves* outer existence:

- P.1 The self cannot recognize itself until there is a series of appearances for it to unify as seen in the 'unity of apperception'.
- P.2 Many of the appearances that occur for a subject are empirical.
- P.3 The senses are passive.
- P.4 Due to P.3, the self cannot cause sensory activation.
- P.5 There is a difference between 'empirically valid' appearances/representations and those that are imaginary, illusionary or delusionary. For instance, empirically

valid experiences conform to the *a priori* rules of empirical experience; imaginary, illusionary or delusionary appearances fail to consistently do so.
 P.6 The self is an *indirect* result of sensory activation as it requires appearances for it to unify.
 P.7. The self appears during empirically valid appearances.
P.8. It is undeniable that the self appears during empirically valid appearances.
 C. There is external reality.

Kant's notion of the 'I' is not a builder of the objects of the appearing world. Rather, it is the mind (for lack of a better term) that constitutes the manner in which one can *subsequently* experience the empirical world. In brief, it is the mind and *not* outer existence (or the 'I') that is responsible for the orderly structure and phenomenal experience of all empirical objects. This view permits an *empirically* objective world as expressed by the term 'empirical realism,' which *should not* be confused with metaphysical objectivity or truth. Yet, like the 'I,' the mind is incapable of causing sensory activation. Therefore, if the 'I' and one's mind are incapable of causing sensory modification, and if sensory activation is necessary for empirical experience and the formation of the "I," *then* something other than the mind and the 'I' is the "cause" of sensory activation. In short, there *is* an outer existence.

One of the best examples of Kant taking the above view can be found in a footnote in the B edition of the "Preface":

[...] I am conscious through inner **experience of my existence in time** (and consequently also of its determinability in time), and this is more than merely being conscious of my representation; yet it is identical with the **empirical consciousness of my existence**, which is only determinable through a relation to something that, while being bound up with my existence, **is outside me**. This consciousness of my existence in time is thus bound up identically with the consciousness of a relation to something outside me, and so it is experience and not fiction, sense and not imagination, that inseparably joins the outer with my inner sense; for outer sense is already in itself a relation of intuition to something actual outside me; and its reality, as distinct from imagination, rests only on the fact that it is inseparably bound up with inner experience itself, as the condition of its possibility, which happens here . (Bxl)

In light of all that has already been argued, I interpret this statement as follows: 1) My outer sense is “bound up with my existence,” because my outer sense is *only* caused by what “**is outside me**,” and 2) the consciousness of all representations of empirical objects are “inseparably bound up with inner experience itself” (i.e., the temporal arrangement of empirical content), *hence*, inner experience of time, when it is in response to the activation of the senses (i.e., empirical experience), is proof of outer existence.⁵⁶

5. The weak point in Kant’s argument is that it hinges upon the notion that the mind is *incapable* of activating the senses, which seems to beg the question of engagement with outer existence. However, Kant does not simply presume that this is the case. The majority of his *Critique* is designed to show that the way human experience unfolds requires certain structures that make experience itself possible. In his analysis and reflection upon human experience, he believes that sensory modification is something that must originate from outside us.

One way to support this claim is to recognize that the manner in which empirically verifiable appearances unfold is too consistent to be a dream. However, according to Kant, we need to restrain ourselves and not assume that this constancy indicates the nature of outer existence (see section 2.8). Kant’s more restrained position claims that empirical experience (in general) cannot be a subjective delusion (i.e., created purely by one’s own mind), as large groups of people share the same kinds of empirical experiences. More precisely, Kant seems to *suggest* that only a transcendental account of human experience can explain this occurrence. Therefore, some outer entity or entities

⁵⁶ Sellars reworks this Kantian claim in an attempt to establish his version of scientific realism. See Chapter 4.

must be responsible for our shared experience, even if it (or they) *is not responsible for the manner in which* it (or they) is experienced.

In conclusion, Kant has committed himself to the claim that there is an outer existence, though we cannot know how this outer realm actually exists. This is a necessary move for Kant, because his transcendental argument does not permit an observationally based correspondence theory of truth. In establishing that there is no (knowable) correspondence between the way objects appear and the reality of the external existence, Kant ironically shows that we can trust empirical appearances, which conform to *a priori* structure of empirical experience, as objectively valid. That is, we can now (i.e., after transcendental philosophy) trust in empirical experience, because we now know that we cannot help but perceive in the manner we do. Moreover, since it is impossible to demonstrate any correspondence between appearance and outer existence, the skepticism derived from the failures of such attempts is irrelevant. In the place of truth founded upon metaphysical claims concerning outer objects, Kant has argued that empirical experiences provide us with only an *appearing* world. Yet, at the same time, the appearing world is proof of outer existence; though outer existence is knowable only in the sense that inner experience is a response to an outer realm. The accumulated result of these views is what Kant means by ‘empirical realism.’⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Strawson, as well as many other commentators, claimed that Kant’s idealism is closer to Berkeley’s idealism than Kant would like to admit. Since this misconception is not only a contemporary one, but also one that Kant himself made efforts to reject, it is worth noting some of the major differences between these two thinkers. What makes Kant’s model of perception different from Berkeley’s is that the senses played little to no role in perception for Berkeley. For Kant, the senses play a crucial role in all *empirical* experiences. Secondly, exterior existence for Berkeley was other minds, God and the ideas of God. Kant argues that we cannot prove or disprove God’s existence. Moreover, Kant argues that it is the human mind that is responsible for the way things appear. Berkeley on the other hand claims that the way we experience the world is *determined* by God. Lastly, Kant’s philosophy firmly rests on a transcendental structure. Kant was the first to create this kind of philosophical method, and since Berkeley is Kant’s predecessor, there are substantial methodical differences as well.

2.11. *The “Refutation of Idealism” and Persistence*

1. The “Refutation of Idealism” is criticized for two main reasons. First, presumptions concerning a central and primary view of the self are so pervasive that most readers of Kant fail to realize the radical nature of his collateral view of the self. Because they fail to note this, they fail to note how Kant’s collateral self is integral to his argument that internal sense is largely derived from outer sense. As a result, they fail to note that Kant concludes outer sense is not derived from the self, for the self is partially derived from it. In this fashion, Kant’s refutation has been misunderstood.

The second reason that Kant’s refutation is heavily criticized is due to his confusing use of the term ‘persistence.’ To an unwary reader, Kant’s application of the term makes him sound like a classical metaphysician:

I am conscious of my existence as determined in time. All time-determination presupposes something **persistent** in perception. This persistent thing, however, cannot be something in me, since my own existence in time can first be determined only through this persistent thing. (B 275)

In order to make sense of this argument we must first determine what Kant means by the term ‘persistence.’

In the “First Analogy” of experience, which precedes Kant’s “Refutation of Idealism,” Kant explains his conception of persistence. The experience of persistence requires the experience of time. As noted in section 2.10.2, pure change or flux does not permit the experience of time. Time requires noticeable difference. For Kant, noticeable difference (in time) requires the recognition of succession and simultaneity. Succession creates the possibility of a before and after. Simultaneity permits the recognition of

existence in the present or entities collectively occupying the present. Recognition of succession and simultaneity require some form of constancy, for as already noted, pure change or flux does not allow for intelligible determinations: “Persistence is accordingly a necessary condition under which alone appearances, as things or objects, are determinable in a possible experience” (A 189).

However, ‘persistence’ (if it is to be a consistent view in light of Kant’s *a priori*/*non*-observationally based correspondence commitments) is not some metaphysical claim about the nature of outer existence, but a deduction based upon the structure that enables human experience:

I find that at all times not merely the philosopher but even the common understanding has presupposed this persistence as a substratum of all change in the appearances, and has always accepted it as indubitable, only the philosopher expresses himself somewhat more determinately [...]. But I nowhere find even the attempt at a proof of this so obviously synthetic proposition, indeed it only rarely stands, as it deserves to, at the head of the pure and completely *a priori* laws of nature. (A 184)

Since Kant believes persistence is “at the head of the pure and completely *a priori* laws of nature,” he cannot believe persistence represents outer existence, in-itself, as it actual exists. For Kant, an *a priori* structure of human experience does not represent external reality but only establishes how the mind undergoes experience:

[B]ecause it concerns a synthetic *a priori* proposition, and it was never considered that such propositions are valid only in relation to possible experience [meaning previous thinkers failed to understand that the conception of persistence is only valid in relation to possible experience], hence that they [i.e., synthetic *a priori* propositions] can be proved only through a deduction of the possibility of the latter [i.e., experience], it is no wonder that it has, to be sure, grounded all experience (for one feels the need for it in empirical cognition), but has never been proved [with the one exception that Kant believes himself capable of proving this *a priori* law of nature] (B 228).

If the above is not sufficient proof for my case, one need only to return to Kant's "Preface," to be reminded how ardently Kant believes that applying the concepts of experience to metaphysical claims results in unverifiable claims.

2. We can now turn to Kant's "Refutation of Idealism." By realizing how Kant's argument in the "Refutation of Idealism" pulls from other commitments made in the text, we are able to discern a coherent argument. The following is copied directly from sections B 275-6 of the *Critique*. I am, however, responsible for the paragraph's format and the content found within the brackets:

[P1] I am conscious of my existence as determined in time.

[P2] All time-determination presupposes something **persistent** in perception.

[P3] This persistent thing, however, cannot be something in me, since my own existence in time can first be determined only through this persistent thing. [*First note*, persistence is not a determinate claim about an outer object, but a claim concerning the necessary *precondition* for inner experience. *Second note*, "my own existence in time can first be determined only through this persistent thing" implies Kant's collateral view of the empirical self, as stated in the above section, i.e., the passive reception of sensory content is a necessary precursor to the empirically valid experience of persistence, which is also a necessary precursor to the experience of myself 2.7]

[P4] Thus the perception of this persistent **thing** is possible only through a thing outside me and not through the mere **representation** of a thing outside me.

[*Third note*, "this persistent thing," is an appearance. It can only occur as a response to the activation of the senses, which cannot be caused by the self.]

[C] Consequently, the determination of my existence in time is possible only by means of the existence of actual things that I perceive outside myself. [*Fourth note*, the "actual things outside myself" are *inferred* and not directly seen or even indirectly known (see section 2.6 and 2.7). All that can be known (outside of how the mind operates) is the empirical object. For Kant the empirical object 1) is objectively valid, 2) knowledge of it stems from sensory activation, which 3) does not arise from the self, and finally, 4) is only determinable as an appearance, i.e., it bears no relevancy to metaphysical claims or inferences concerning outer existence.]

This argument requires a great deal of content to be already proven. The soundness of this argument thus depends, as all arguments do, on whether Kant has established his premises to be true.

Kant assumes that his argument is going to be taken from the transcendental perspective, which he believes he has already shown to be true. We can now see why Kant begins his book by emphasizing the need to understand his arguments in the context of the entirety of his text (B xlv). Hence, the great deal of talk about Kant's "missing step in the 'Refutation of Idealism'" (which is quotable from several different authors, e.g., Allison, Guyer and O'Connor) is simply the *mistaken interpretation* that Kant's "Refutation of Idealism" is intended to be an argument that is independent of his broader transcendental commitments.

3. It is interesting to note that Kant's view of the self not only distinguishes him from his predecessors, it also distinguishes him from his most famous successors. For example, Fichte and Schelling believed they could contribute to the spirit of Kant's *Critiques* by demonstrating how the self constitutes its own categories. In their attempts to achieve this goal, they created a model of the self that is necessarily prior to any mental act. As a result, the origin of empirical experiences is unclear, i.e., their views lent support to the belief that the self alone could produce empirical experience. This in turn encouraged skeptical concerns that one cannot demonstrate outer existence. Fichte's *The Science of Knowledge* and Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* (like Descartes' *Mediations*) have been heavily criticized for maintaining views that are

incapable of discerning external existence. It seems likely that Kant would have leveled similar criticisms.

4. In closing, I will list a few misinterpretations of Kant's "Refutation of Idealism" in order to establish the manner in which I see myself departing from existing scholarship. In the *Bounds of Sense*, Strawson seems to think Kant's "Refutation of Idealism" is a kind of pseudo-philosophical gibberish. Allison, in *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* and Guyer in *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* seem to think Kant's argument is missing a step, which prompts them to generate their own versions as to what this missing step might be.⁵⁸ Jonathan Vogel, in "The Problem of Self-Knowledge in Kant's 'Refutation of Idealism': Two Recent Views" writes:

If the self can be directly known to persist through change the Refutation fails, yet Kant seems not to address such a possibility. The apparent omission has recently drawn the attention of scholars, including Henry Allison and Paul Guyer. (875)

However, as I have argued, Kant does not fail to recognize this possibility, rather his model of the self does not permit such a possibility. O'Connor's article "A missing Step in Kant's Refutation of Idealism" fails to recognize how Kant's model of inner perception is, in part, dependent on outer perception. He, thus, concluded on false grounds that Kant's refutation fails. Westphal's book *Kant's Transcendental Proof of Realism* fails to offer an accurate account of the "Refutation of Idealism" as he claims that it "does not rely on Kant's arguments for Transcendental Idealism" (270). Yet, as I have shown, Kant's "Refutation" requires conclusions established in Kant's transcendental idealism. Paton in *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience-Vol. II* seems to have

⁵⁸ Guyer takes a similar stance 4 years earlier in his article "Kant's Intentions in the Refutation of Idealism," *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 92, No. 3 1983.

many of the right pieces to make Kant's argument work, but fails to put them together in a way that makes Kant's argument worthy of deep consideration. All these interpretations fail, because they do not understand the radical origins of Kant's conception of the empirical self, and how this notion plays an essential role in his "Refutation."

2.12. Strawson's Scientific Realism is His Anti-Kantianism

1. Approximately 63 years after Moore's article "The Refutation of Idealism," Strawson wrote *The Bounds of Sense, An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. On the back cover of the 1995 reprinting of Strawson's 1966 classic, one can find the following excerpt:

[Strawson's] aim is to detach a central core of truth in the Kantian philosophy from a setting which is always dubious and often worse, and to reinstate it in a way which makes its significance for the modern reader evident.

This commentator's remark states a common misconception Analytic Philosophy holds towards Kant, while demonstrating Strawson's culpability in its development. This misconception maintained that Kant had admirable insight into the observing subject, but wrongly claimed that the thing-in-itself cannot be known. Strawson made a case for this view by appealing to overly simplified accounts of science. This approach contributed to the following belief: by aligning Analytic Philosophy with science, Analytic thinkers could readily dispute Kant, and by extension, all successors of German idealism.

2. In presuming that science gets at existence, independent of the human mind, Strawson's work implies that Kant's epistemological claims cannot be compatible with modern science. This implication can be stated as follows: modern science gets at the way things are in-themselves, while Kant denies that knowledge of things-in-themselves is possible; *therefore*, Kant's philosophy must be incompatible with modern science. However, this assumption about Kant is correct, only *if* science *does* in fact get at the way things are in-themselves. I will argue that Strawson fails to provide any support (much less a demonstration) that science can achieve this objective.

Strawson states: "The aim is not solely to exhibit incoherence as such, but to observe, if we can, by what distortions and perversion it arises" (249). Strawson argues that he can show an "incoherence" in Kant's denial that we can have knowledge of external existence. (Strawson fails to show any such incoherence, nor is it clear what he had in mind when he made this claim.) I argue that Strawson fails to show any "incoherence" in Kant's epistemic views. Moreover, I argue that all Strawson achieves in attempting to show "incoherence" in Kant's work is a science based alternative, which he simply *presumes* to be true. Lastly, although Strawson's alternative is counter to Kant's, Strawson's alternative fails to offer any rationale capable of challenging Kant's epistemic claims.

3. In his chapter entitled "The Thing-In-Itself and Appearances in Outer Sense," Strawson denies Kant's claim that one cannot know the world as it actually exists, because perception does not permit one access to the world as it actually exists. Strawson writes the following concerning Kant's perceptual skepticism:

The above is a fundamental and unargued complex premise of the *Critique*. To it is added the premise that all our “outer” perceptions are caused by things which exist independently of our perceptions and which affect us to produce those perceptions. From this conjunction of premises there follows the conclusion that outer perceptions yield no knowledge of the things which cause them as those things really are, but only of the appearance of those things. (250)

As noted in section 2.6.3, Kant argues for the thing-in-itself by reflecting upon the structure and scope of human experience. Strawson simply dismisses this aspect of Kant’s *Critique* by stating it is “unargued”.

In the above passage, Strawson notes the bare components of his interpretation of Kant’s view: 1) perception does not yield accurate portrayals of outer objects, and 2) that outer objects cause one to undergo an experience⁵⁹, but as noted in 1), experience *does not* disclose the object as it *actually* exists.

Strawson proceeds to ask what constitutes the “conditions” for making the above twofold claim concerning perception:

What, then, we must ask, are the general conditions of significant application of the contrast, or option, between appearance and reality, and are they satisfied in Kant’s application of the contrast to the case of outer perception? (250)

Strawson is questioning the veracity of the claim that one can distinguish between external existence and inner experience, while maintaining that one does not possess *access* to outer existence as it truly is. Additionally, he is questioning if Kant’s own claims about perception and reality permit such a two-headed claim.

Strawson introduces his conception of the “corrected view” as the impetus for Kant’s contrast between how things appear to us and the way they actually exist:

Two concepts which seem inseparable from any significant application of this contrast are the concept of identity of reference and what might be called the concept of the corrected view. When it is said that a thing appears to be thus-and-

⁵⁹ In section VI. 4-5, I argued that Kant does not commit to any determinate claim concerning the thing-in-itself, even though he sometimes refers to it as a singular object or the cause of sensory modification.

so, but really is not, it seems to be implied that there are two different standpoints from which it would be natural to make different and incompatible judgments about the same thing, and that the judgment naturally made from one of these standpoints would be, in some sense, a *correction* of the judgment naturally made from the other. The standpoints, it seems, must have something in common, so that there is some way, neutral as between them, of securing identity of reference to the thing which is judged. (249-50)

Strawson believes that observational opportunities or an informed observer permit one to correct the views of a poorly placed observer or one who is mistaken. In this fashion, the awareness that our views may be wrong is ironically grounded on the very fact that one already knows how to correct one's perceptual orientations (see section 1.2.11).

Strawson claims that we have the capacity to be aware of our false perceptions because we are aware of our capacity to correct our perceptual mistakes. So unlike Moore and early Russell, Strawson prudently permits the possibility that any particular instance of perception may misinform the observer. However, like Moore and Russell, he does believe that when we refer to an object, regardless of the proper or improper ways we may think about it. Strawson argues that there is something in "common" with both the mistaken and correct perceptions of an entity. For Strawson, this account indicates that we do collectively refer to some aspect of the *same* object, even when our views differ.

Similarly to Moore and Russell, Strawson is also concerned with maintaining the true identity of the object. He attempts to demonstrate this capacity to discover outer objects as they truly exist by establishing that there is a significant connection to existence via perception. But unlike Moore and early Russell, Strawson believes the identity of the object is *secured* by our capacity to *actively correct* our perceptual views. For Strawson, this aspect of the corrected view implies a fixed point of reference. Moore

and early Russell, on the other hand, believe that what we observe is given to us, as it actually exists. In this fashion, Strawson's view is an advance over Moore's and early Russell's, because it does not assume that perception illuminates reality. Rather, it secures for itself stronger epistemological footing by taking a weaker position: the possibility of accurately discerning existence via observational insights, without presuming that one's perceptual experiences directly disclose existence.

4. In opposition to Kant, Strawson asserts that temporal and spatial designations typically secure "identity of reference":

The corrective view may be that of an unusually well-placed or well-informed observer *vis-à-vis* that of the generality; it may be that of a normal observer *vis-à-vis* someone suffering from special defects or limitations; it may be that which would result from the removal of some distorting factor in the environment; and so on. In many of the commonplace cases that come readily to mind, the condition of securing identity of reference is satisfied in ways that turn on what might loosely be called the spatio-temporal location of the object judged. (251)

Strawson believes that our capacity to successfully designate empirical objects hinges upon the framework of temporal and spatial locations (251). His above claim implies that because spatiotemporal designations are often all that one needs to indicate an object, objects must actually exist in time and space.

This commonsense view fails to offer any real challenge to Kant. According to him, time and space are the *a priori* forms of all outer intuitions. Hence, spatiotemporal designations do secure empirical (as in appearances) identity of reference, but such determinations are made possible by the subjective conditions of human beings. In other words, for Kant, spatiotemporal designations may secure the empirical identity of the

object (as an appearance), but they do not secure the metaphysical identity or location (if there is such a thing) of the object.

Strawson continues by stating that there are “commonplace” applications of the ‘corrected view’ that do not need comment (250). He also writes that there is “a familiar philosophical application” of the ‘corrected view’ which is “relevant” [i.e., worth noting] (250). Strawson proceeds by making a claim that is widely accepted by Analytic thinkers since late Russell⁶⁰:

[This relevancy] turns, precisely on the fact that our sensible experience is the causal outcome of our being affected by the objects we say we perceive. It seems both intelligible and true to say that the appearances which things present to us are causally dependent upon the character both of the things themselves and of our physiological make-up, that they are the joint effect of both. [...] Though there is no logical compulsion to take such a step, the evident fact is that many philosophers (e.g. Locke and Russell) have felt a strong compulsion of some kind to take it. Objects *as they really are* are credited with the properties ascribed to them in the physical and physiological theories in terms of which the explanation of the causal mechanisms of perception is given; whereas those other features which we normally ascribe to them on the strength of our perceptions are eliminated from the description of objects as they really are. Their apparent possession of these properties is explained as simply the effect of a causal process which can be fully described without mentioning such properties, viz. the action of physical things upon our sensory and nervous equipment. Were the equipment different, the apparent properties of things would be different: but things would not differ in their real constitutions. (251-52)

Strawson claims that the manner in which we perceive is due to our biological origins.

Since our biological origins could be different than they currently are, the manner in which we perceive (as a species) is contingent. Strawson, however, believes that we can overcome these biological contingencies by appealing to the causal connection between an external object, its effect on our physiology, and the resulting mental effect.

Even if we grant Strawson his above claim concerning the causal relations between outer objects and inner experience, he makes several other unsupported claims.

⁶⁰ See Russell’s “A Defense of Representationalism.”

For instance, Strawson believes causal connections discerned from perceptual experience can illuminate external existence, because according to him, such a view is *not* a perceptual appearance. Here, Strawson believes he has circumvented Kant because science does not require appearances to represent reality (e.g., science itself indicates that perceptual appearances are not apt descriptors of external existence). According to Strawson, the only model that needs to be an apt descriptor of the external world is a scientific one, and such a model is not perceptual, even though its origins lie in observation:

In this operation the general condition for a significant application of the contrast between appearance and reality is satisfied. The standpoint of the corrected view is successfully indicated without prejudice to securing identity of reference. Things, as they really are, are not removed from the spatio-temporal framework of reference. They are simply things as science speaks of them rather than as we perceive them. The corrected view is the view of science; it is a different view, but it is a view of the same things as our ordinary uncorrected view is a view of.

Only there is one thing to be added: namely that, in one sense, it is not a *view* at all. That is to say, one element present in ordinary application of the contrast between appearance and reality to physical objects is sacrificed in this philosophical application of it. In ordinary application, the standpoint of the corrected view is often such that from that standpoint things actually (sensibly) *appear* as they are. In this philosophical application, on the other hand, the standpoint of the corrected view is not one from which things *appear* as they are; it is merely one from which things are spoken of, or thought of, in an abstract style in which they could not sensibly appear at all. (252)

In this conclusion to his argument, Strawson draws a distinction between the ‘ordinary’ and ‘philosophical’ applications of the corrected view. I will now argue that there is a third option, which Strawson does not consider. Moreover, I will argue that this third option is one that his above view is incapable of addressing.

4. Strawson claims that a scientific perspective, based on the *corrected view*, can accurately discern existence, and as such, science counters Kant's conception of the unknowability of the thing-in-itself. I argue that there are four distinct problems with this claim.

First, Strawson does not circumvent Kant by claiming his corrected view of science is not a view at all but an "abstract style" (252). This is the case because Kant believes that the way we think and conceptualize the world is based on the *a priori* structure that enables empirical experience. Even though Strawson purports to have a non-perceptual inlet to reality via science, he has not shown how this avoids Kant's concern that we cannot think about outer reality as it exists independent of the human subject. In short, Strawson's claim has not provided any bases for rejecting Kant's epistemic claims or for considering Strawson's views superior to Kant's views. Strawson merely provides an alternate to Kant's view. In doing so, Strawson fails to show any "incoherence" in Kant's claims concerning the unknowable thing-it-itself (249).

Secondly, in response to Strawson's claim that the "abstract style" of science gets at reality, I simply ask, by what *means* does one determine that a scientific model or a hypothesis gets at the 'thing-in-itself'? If this getting at the way things actually are, as they exist in themselves, is based on an observational science, then its validation is derived from the appearing world. Strawson believes we can abstract from these observations a view that is not perceptually orientated. Yet, claiming that a scientific perspective is not a perceptual view does nothing to argue against the skeptic. First, the

skeptic will ask, “if I cannot trust my perception, how can I trust an abstraction based on a perception?”⁶¹

Similarly, any abstraction of science, if it is to become credible, will require observational confirmation. However, this form of creditability is denied by the skeptic, because the skeptic doubts that observation can be trusted. For example, scientific abstraction is dependent on observation in both its formation and its confirmation; hence, science fails to avoid the skeptical concern that observation cannot be trusted. The epistemic strength of this position (left undeveloped), is no better than the contractor who hopes to avoid the cost of foundations and roofs by only making second floors.

My point is not to argue that there are no possible responses to these problems (whether they are successful or not is another matter). Rather, I only wish to illuminate that Strawson does not even acknowledge these concerns. Additionally, his handling of the subject does not provide any clues as to how they can be resolved.

Thirdly, why should we be skeptical of science? Given certain strict observational guidelines, science establishes that similar kinds of appearances reoccur. The pragmatic power of its predictive ability is undeniable. Yet, this view does nothing to refute Kant. For instance, Kant’s views in the *Critique* indicate that he is committed to the claim that science establishes empirical truth (which means it establishes knowledge about the *appearing* world, rather than the thing-in-itself). Hence, Strawson’s mistake runs deeper than his failure to understand that his views do not properly engage Kant:

⁶¹ Kant outlines this skeptical concern as follows:

That whose existence can be inferred only as a cause of given perceptions has only a **doubtful existence**:

Now all outer appearances are of this kind: their existence cannot be immediately perceived, but can be inferred only as the cause of given perceptions:

Thus the existence of all objects of outer sense is doubtful. (A 366-367)

Strawson is duped by an uncritical view, that is, he has mistaken the *practical* for what is metaphysically true.

Fourth, Strawson claims that one can distinguish between an “ordinary” and a “philosophical” use of the “corrected view” (252), but is such a view truly philosophical or is it just scientific? The *rationaly determined* world of science and the everyday world of experience provide different accounts of existence. Yet, are these the only two viable options for consideration? Has not German idealism, particularly as expressed by Kant, offered a new challenge to this dichotomy? For instance, given that there is a difference between the ordinary view and the scientific view, is it illogical or even improbable that there is also a difference between what science purports (in its theories, models and analogies) and outer existence?

Paton makes a similar point:

The natural tendency of the human mind is realistic, and to common sense our ordinary world of tables and chairs and houses and trees is the real world. The world of tables and chairs is, however, very different from the world as known to physics. The development of physics forces on our minds the contrast between appearance and reality, between the world as it seems to common sense and the world as it is to the scientific observer. This in turn gives rise to further reflections. If what is obviously real to common sense becomes mere appearance to the deeper insight of the scientist, may there not be a still deeper insight to which the real as known by the scientist is merely the appearance of a reality beyond? (*Kant's Metaphysic of Experience—Vol. I 68*)

Analytic philosophers tend to simply presume a false dichotomy (though this trend is radically going out of style), i.e., either science *or* the common sense view of the world is correct. Since science provides more useful and more predicable insights than our everyday perceptions, they conclude that science is correct. Yet, as noted above, this conclusion is drawn from a false dichotomy.

Science itself informs us that the way the world appears and the way it is diverge. It therefore must construct some means to permit us to think about what is ultimately unobservable. It does this by creating models, theories and analogies, which are sometimes called the scientist's 'tool set'. To enhance the pragmatic value of these tools, science regularly undergoes major overhauls of its models, theorems and analogies. In short, it constantly develops and changes its claims, all so we may think about and make assertions about what is *not directly observable*. Just as we may contrast the appearing world to that of a scientific model, is it not also legitimate, *nigh* even a philosophical imperative to ask the following: can models, theories and analogies (especially ones that constantly change, as seen in science), inferred from observation, indicate existence as it actually occurs independent of the contingent ways we think of it? Is there not the possibility that just as the appearing world and the scientific theory differ, the scientific worldview and the actual world do not coincide? If these are legitimate concerns, then the scientific realist, in order to demonstrate the veracity of his/her claims, must find ways to resolve these deeply complex issues.

Science's advocates commonly respond as follows: if scientific models and analogies did not coincide with external existence, this tool set would not play out so well in practice. Here again, we have simply conflated a correspondence model of truth for a pragmatic one, i.e., what is *pragmatically* effective *does not* entail or indicate *metaphysical* knowledge of mind-independent existence. Strawson's failure to realize this conflation demonstrates the uncritical and presumptive nature of his position.

In order to show that Strawson's view is correct, one must be able to resolve several questions. One, can models, theories and analogies represent, as mental

constructs, non-mental entities? Two, if so, how? Three, how does one know that these mental constructs get at the way things are independent of the human mind without *presuming* that practical results validate the metaphysical views surrounding the practice? Four, how do we establish the *degree* to which scientific models and conceptualizations get at outer reality? By failing to resolve or even acknowledge these very complex concerns, Strawson has only demonstrated a presumptive alternative to Kant. He has not even presented an argument against him.

It is ironic that Strawson accuses Kant (in his chapter “The Thing-In-Itself and Appearances in Outer Sense”) of maintaining an ‘unargued’ epistemic view on the thing-in-itself, because Strawson rejects Kant’s claim without marshaling a single argument against it. What we do get from Strawson is a mixed bag of alternatives that fail to directly counter Kant’s claims.

5. In Chapter Three, I will return to these questions (i.e., can we know the external world as actually exists independent of human thought and is science a viable means to do so). I will address these questions as they arise in Hegel and Sellars, who offer differing responses to these questions. After introducing both thinkers, I will demonstrate that they share similar views concerning perception and cognition—views that deeply challenge Kant’s transcendental idealism. By addressing what they hold in common, we will be better prepared in Chapter Four to assess whose conclusions concerning knowledge of external existence are more consistent and sustainable.

Chapter Three

Hegel and Sellars: Knowledge, Mediation, and the ‘Given’

Part One: 3.1. *Introduction to Chapter Three*

1. Hegel wrote the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the first installment in a series of lengthy works.⁶² For this reason, some scholars feel that it is a mistake to draw conclusions from the *Phenomenology* in isolation from the rest of his texts. Nonetheless, most scholars agree that the *Phenomenology* forms an important link to Hegel’s later works:

We know that Hegel wrote the preface to the *Phenomenology* after he had finished the book, when he was able to take stock of his “voyage of discovery.” It was meant primarily to establish the connection between the *Phenomenology*, which, by itself, appears as the “first part of science,” and the *Wissenschaft der Logik* [*The Science of Logic*], which, from a different perspective, constitutes the first moment of an encyclopedia. We can understand that in a text linking the *Phenomenology* and the logic, Hegel should be particularly concerned to give a general idea of his entire system. (Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit* 3)

Given that the *Phenomenology* is intended to introduce the reader to a larger system of thought, it should contain elements that do not require subsequent texts to make them comprehensible.

In the first part of this chapter (i.e., **Part One**), I argue that these self-contained elements concern knowledge.⁶³ In making a case for this claim, I show that Hegel’s conception of knowledge entails some of his most difficult terms, e.g., ‘dialectic,’ ‘spirit,’

⁶² I will subsequently refer to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as ‘*Phenomenology*.’

⁶³ Though this general interpretation of Hegel is not unique, it is controversial. For instance, Pippen maintains that the *Phenomenology* does not concern epistemology in the *Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (see section 3.4).

‘absolute’ and ‘science’.⁶⁴ In explicating these terms, I show that the primary goal of the *Phenomenology* is twofold: it seeks to establish knowledge of consciousness and to redefine what it means to know.

I will conclude **Part One**, by showing that Pippin misinterprets epistemology and thereby fails to recognize the pervasive epistemic concerns in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*. This misrepresentation of Hegel stems from a fallacious tendency of contemporary thinkers to perceive epistemic concerns in contemporary terms. As a result, the Copernican revolution in German Idealism is overlooked as an epistemic view, which enables (rather than denies) the possibility of knowledge. In short, I argue that he fails to recognize Hegel’s epistemological view, which Rockmore calls ‘constructivism’.

‘Constructivism’ is an important epistemic alternative to representationism and correspondence theories. In Chapter Four, I argue that Kant’s and Hegel’s epistemic superiority over Analytic versions of realism lies in their constructivism.

2. Wilfred Sellars is widely considered one of the most important Analytic thinkers. His seminal work “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” is famous for its rejection of immediate non-inferential knowing called the ‘given’. It is commonly believed that he is the first philosopher to refute successfully all versions of the given. His arguments on this issue have profoundly changed the current discourse of Analytic Philosophy.

In the second part of this chapter (i.e., **Part Two**), I show that Hegel, rather than Sellars, was the first to refute effectively all versions of the given. In making this case, I

⁶⁴ I address the term ‘dialectic’ in this section and the term ‘Spirit’ in section 3.3. Hegel’s use of the terms ‘Absolute’ and ‘Science’ will be explained in section 3.4.

illustrate that Hegel anticipated many of Sellars' most important epistemic views. For instance, like Sellars, Hegel 1) inverts traditional empiricism, 2) links cognitive abilities to learned behavior, 3) argues that historical and interpersonal developments affect one's ability to form and assess knowledge claims, 4) maintains that all content of epistemic value is discursive, 5) argues for 'conceptual holism,' and 6) rejects the rationalist's claim that we start out with complete access to our own ideas and thoughts. In clarifying these aspects of Hegel's work, I will demonstrate Sellars' accusation that Hegel falls prey to some *unnamed* version of the myth of the given is false, i.e., Sellars fails to inform the reader as to what aspect of the myth of the given he perceives Hegel committing.

3. I begin Chapter Four by showing that Sellars' realism requires and argues for key Kantian claims. I then ask, in light of Sellars' epistemic overlap with Kant and Hegel, is his realism tenable? For instance, does Sellars' transplantation of Kant and Hegel into the Analytical tradition require him to limit his epistemic views to those set by German Idealism?

In their own ways, Brandom and McDowell have continued Sellars' trend. Are all of these thinkers, at the pain of being inconsistent, now required to reject their versions of realism? If so, is Analytic Philosophy, which was forged in the flames of anti-idealism, becoming what it opposed? In other words, despite its origins and intentions, will the epistemic conclusions of Analytic Philosophy blossom into a form of idealism? I argue that, in order to make its leading epistemic claims internally consistent, it must proceed to the path of German Idealism, which rejects the possibility of obtaining mind-independent knowledge.

3.2. Hegel's Dialectic as a Non-Presumptive Approach to Philosophy

1. Philosophers typically begin a text with a core set of principles, which are generally accepted as true. From these principles, they derive specific claims. This approach presumes via convention, authority or cultural bias that certain principles are true. Wary of this common practice, Hegel writes: “For whatever might appropriately be said about philosophy in a preface—say a historical *statement* of the main drift and the point of view, the general content and results, a string of random assertions and assurances about truth—none of this can be accepted as the way in which to expound philosophical truth” (1; 1).

Hegel seeks to avoid presuppositions in philosophy in three ways. I will address them individually and then show how he unites them into one approach. The first way has two parts. It begins with the investigator obtaining firsthand experience of a given process by *actively* working through it. After this initial step, the investigator assesses whether the resulting conclusions are consistent with the method and beliefs that produced them.

As in Descartes' *Meditations*, Hegel does not want his reader merely to pay attention to the logical development of an argument. He also wants the reader to reflect on one's experience of engaging the process, method or reasons bound to a claim. He takes this approach to be the “resolve” (i.e., focused effort) of his method: “not to give oneself over to the thoughts of others, upon mere authority, but to examine everything for

oneself and follow only one's own convictions, or better still, to produce everything oneself, and accept only one's deed as what is true" (50; 78).

The second way concerns Hegel's belief that reason *desires* unity, which manifests as a desire for a coherent whole. When something is deemed inconsistent, its coherency becomes undone. This in turn stimulates a natural drive to reclaim coherency. For instance, if a claim produced by a particular *praxis* can be shown, according to its own principles, to be inconsistent, reason will reject the *praxis* (or its conclusion) and look for an alternative.⁶⁵ Due to practical demands, reason seeks alternatives that are already accessible to the individual. There is thus a natural response to take salvageable elements of the incoherent *praxis* in which one was engaged and synthesize from it a new and coherent whole. Hegel believes this is a presuppositionless means to evaluate and correct a claim, because it 1) works within the limits of what is already presented in a particular mode of thought, and 2) is a natural tendency of the human intellect.

The third way merges a hermeneutical style with the *phenomenal* experience of undergoing a given set of practices.⁶⁶ Hermeneutics works within the confines of a particular practice, method, system, structure, or text. By working within a system, Hermeneutics limits the contamination of outside beliefs or practices. Phenomenology seeks to make *explicit* what is implicit in human experience. Hegel combines these two approaches by limiting himself to the reasons that produce a particular claim and then evaluating if the claim matches experience. For instance, when evaluating the empiricist's theory of perception, he begins by stating the experience that produces a

⁶⁵ I use the term '*praxis*' as a convenient stand-in for any of the following: practice, method, system or approach.

⁶⁶ For a provocative account of the role of hermeneutics in Hegel, see Paul Redding's *Hegel's Hermeneutics*.

belief in it. This hermeneutical approach facilitates the first way, i.e., to gain first hand experience of a particular view, while looking for inconsistencies in it. He then examines if the *phenomenon* of perception matches the empiricist's theory of perception.

Hegel unites the above methods into a specific philosophical approach: 1) work within the limitations of a particular theory, 2) hold the theory accountable to its own rules and expectations, 3) develop possible solutions to inconsistencies by synthesizing new content from what is already present in the *praxis*, and 4) ensure that one's descriptions and conclusions found in 1, 2 and 3 coincide with an accurate phenomenological account. These steps comprise the most important features of Hegel's 'dialectical' method, in that they are the driving force behind the active synthesis of opposing positions, which seeks to eliminate the inaccuracies underling their opposition. This process is prominent throughout the *Phenomenology*.

Hegel's dialectic can foster firsthand insight into why a position fails without *begging the question* as to a better approach, the correct answer or what counts as evidence. This provides the dialectic a presuppositionless means to assess and develop knowledge claims.

3.3. Hegel's Term 'Spirit' as Found in the "Preface"

1. I will now show that Hegel's use of the term 'Spirit' in the "Preface" invokes a unique conception of knowledge.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Hegel's use of the term '*Geist*,' which is often translated as 'spirit,' has many subtle applications.

2. The *Phenomenology*'s demanding account of 'consciousness' and the 'self' becomes more accessible when it is related to Kant's account of these terms in the *Critique*. I will therefore begin with a short analysis of Kant's conception of consciousness and the self as a convenient inroad to Hegel's views on these topics.

Kant describes consciousness in the following terms:

[C]onsciousness in itself is not even a representation distinguishing a particular object, but rather a form of representation in general, insofar as it is to be called a cognition; for of it alone can I say that through it I think anything. (A 346)

He warns that one should not assume the term '*consciousnesses*' represents a determinate object. By 'consciousness,' he means to designate the 'form' by which all representations occur. Here, the term 'form' implies a necessary format, devoid of specific content.

Kant points out that we cannot undergo experience, unless we can relate intuited content to ourselves as a unified being. Kant considers this a necessary format in which consciousness must occur:

All intuitions are nothing for us and do not in the least concern us if they cannot be taken up into consciousness, whether they influence it directly or indirectly, and through this alone is cognition possible. We are conscious *a priori* of the thoroughgoing identity of ourselves with regard to all representations that can ever belong to our cognition, as a necessary condition of the possibility of all representations (since the latter represent something in me only insofar as they belong with all the others to one consciousness, hence they must at least be capable of being connected in it). (A 116)

Our only *access* to the empirical 'I' is through our *awareness* of the unity found in consciousness (e.g., a person experiences one consciousness rather than several).⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Multi-personality disorder from a Kantian perspective would be the expression of several personalities in one consciousness.

Kant calls consciousness's ability to unify and connect content the 'unity of apperception'. The 'unity of apperception' permits the awareness of one's own thoughts: "all **my** representations in any given intuition must stand under the condition under which alone I ascribe them the identical self as **my** representations, and thus can grasp them together, as synthetically combined in an apperception, through the general expression **I think**" (B138). The unity of apperception also accounts for our conception of an 'I' or the 'self' as an individuated being: "The **transcendental unity** of apperception is that unity through which all of the manifold given in an intuition is united in a concept of the object" [that is called the self or I] (B139).

Kant argues that we should not confuse the idea of the self we obtain from our awareness of the unity of apperception as knowledge of a non-empirical object that permits the appearing self to exist.⁶⁹ Conversely, rationalists interpret consciousness as an indication of the existence of a non-empirical object that permits the subject to exist, i.e., a soul. They moreover believe they can deduce its determinate qualities. For instance, they assert that the 'soul' is an 'immaterial,' 'incorruptible' and 'immortal' substance responsible for one's personality.

Kant attacks this rationalist tradition for illegitimately claiming that reason can infer the determinate qualities or nature of the non-empirical 'I':

[A]part from this logical significance of the I, we have no acquaintance with the subject in itself that grounds this I as a Substratum, just as it grounds all thoughts [i.e., we cannot know anything about it as a substratum but we *can* infer that it

⁶⁹ For clarity's sake, I provided each of Kant's clauses (from the following expert) with its own line and number:

[1 The 'I,' is] a simple representation,
[2] nothing manifold is given [in it, i.e., multiple contents are not present in it];
[3] it [i.e., 'I'] can only be given in intuition [i.e., it cannot be sensed],
[4 the intuition...] is distinct from it [i.e., the 'I' as a representation],
[5] and thought through **combination** in a consciousness [i.e., the 'I' can only be thought via consciousness]. (B 135)

grounds all of our thoughts]. Meanwhile, one can quite well allow the proposition **The soul is substance** to be valid, if only one admits that this concept of ours leads no further, that it cannot teach us any of the usual conclusions of the rationalist doctrine of the soul, such as, e.g., the everlasting duration of the soul through all alterations, even the humans being's death, thus that it signifies a substance only in the idea but not in reality. (A 350)

As noted in Chapter Two, Kant argues that the mind is responsible for how things appear (to ourselves) and the kinds of thoughts we can form. From these two views, he concludes that one cannot infer, from appearance or thoughts, the true state of mind-independent entities. Knowledge of external existence is thus irreducibly limited to the manner in which entities appear to observing subjects. Likewise, he argues that the existing 'substratum' of the empirical self (or the soul), which is *independent* of the *self* we can observe/experience, is unknowable.

In order to appreciate the manner in which Hegel borrows from Kant's above remarks concerning consciousness, we need briefly to digress to Aristotle's account of monism: "those who make the underlying substance one generate all other things by it's [i.e., the substance] modifications" (*Metaphysics* 985 b10). In other words, if *one* substance permits all entities to exist, the diversity of existence must stem from how this one substance can be modified.

Hegel takes elements of Aristotle's *description* (i.e., he does not accept the claim itself) of monism and merges it with aspects of Kant's conception of the self or 'I'. For Hegel, the term 'Substance' (as it involves the self) denotes that all mental content, whether it is an empirical appearance, idea, feeling or belief, *subsists* only because there is a self (i.e., consciousness). The self is *one* entity, which through some internal

modification, permits all the entities found in experience to appear (to the self).⁷⁰ As a result, consciousness can be interpreted as a kind of ‘substance’ in which all *distinctions* and *experiences* occur.

Like Kant, Hegel avoids making his account of consciousness into a *metaphysical* claim. Instead, his account concerns the irreducible primacy of one and the same consciousness occurring in every experience (for an individual).⁷¹ This latter view resembles Kant’s *formal* account of the ‘unity of apperception’. Here, I contrast the terms ‘formal’ and ‘metaphysical’ in the following sense: ‘formal’ refers to a *general* characterization of how something is thought or experienced, while ‘metaphysical’ refers to the nature or qualities of mind-independent entities and states of affairs.

3. The *appearance* of a stable and enduring world cannot occur without *consciousness*. This *does not* mean that a stable and enduring existence cannot occur without consciousness. At first glance this claim seems trivial, but this impression is mistaken. Take for instance the following claim: in order for a subject to acknowledge any appearance, thought, idea, belief, etc., the mind must first produce it. If one fails to acknowledge the above insight concerning consciousness, *then* one will *mistakenly* deny that the *phenomena* of empirical *experiences* are mental events (e.g., Moore’s and early Russell’s accounts of perceptual knowledge, see Chapter 1).⁷²

Hegel takes the above position in the following passage:

⁷⁰ A simple and defensible way to support this claim is through a comparison between a rock and a person. For example, a rock does not have an experience of a world, entities, or occurrences, while a person does. This is presumably the case because a rock does not have a consciousness, while a person does.

⁷¹ In Hegel’s chapter “Sense-Certainty,” he argues that empirical experience fails to indicate something that is not the self. Though his argument is decidedly *un-Kantian*, we will see in Hegel’s chapter “Sense-Certainty” that, as with Kant, Hegel’s conclusion does not deny an exterior world, nor does it affirm knowledge of a mind-independent existence.

⁷² See section 3.4 for Hegel’s defense of this claim.

Thus what seems to happen outside of it [i.e., the conscious self], to be an activity directed against it, is really its own doing [i.e., the subject], and Substance shows itself to be essentially Subject. When it has shown this completely, Spirit has made its existence identical with its essence; it has itself for its object just as it is, and the abstract element of immediacy, and of the separation of knowing and truth, is overcome. (21; 37)

The *recognition* of the self as the ‘substance’ of experience is what Hegel means by ‘Spirit’ (in this passage). *If* the self is all acts of awareness, *then* all experience is (in some fashion) an experience of the self. Hegel’s term “Spirit” additionally designates the recognition of this occurrence.

4. According to Hegel, all conscious content, whether it is a religious feeling, a mathematical equation or an empirical experience, requires the self. Accordingly, the *self* is always a component of knowledge:

Thus what seems to happen outside of it, to be an activity directed against it, is really its own doing, and Substance shows itself to be essentially Subject. When it has shown this completely, Spirit has made its existence identical with its essence; it has itself for its object just as it is [...]. (21; 37)

Spirit occurs as the recognition of itself as the ‘substance’ of all content of experiences. Thus a ‘phenomenology of spirit’ describes the experience of oneself becoming aware of *oneself*. This is not a superficial mode of knowing one’s own hopes and dreams. Nor is Hegel’s goal some form of cognitive therapy where one strives for self reflective awareness. Instead, Hegel seeks something more fundamental: knowledge of oneself as that which *constructs* all that is experienced (see section 3.5). If Hegel’s view of consciousness is correct, the entirety of one’s knowledge can be interpreted as a kind of

self-knowledge.⁷³ (For more on this topic, see **Appendix: VIII. Hegel's Term 'Spirit' and How it Distinguishes Him from Previous Thinkers**)

3.4. Hegel's "Introduction": How 'Spirit,' 'Absolute,' and 'Science' Relate to Hegel's Conception of Knowledge

1. Hegel's Introduction to the *Phenomenology* offers an account of his general philosophical approach, a statement of his aim, and a radical revision of traditional knowledge. He develops these conclusions in three consecutive themes: 1) in sections 73-76, he offers a general account of what needs to be avoided in order for "science" to appear, 2) in sections 77-80, he argues that the "despair" of doubt permits "science" to "appear," and 3) in sections 81-89, he offers an account of his approach to knowledge.

2. Hegel begins the "Introduction" by responding to a view of cognition loosely inspired by Kant:

It is a natural assumption that in philosophy, before we start to deal with its proper subject-matter, viz. the actual cognition of what truly is, one must first of all come to an understanding about cognition, which is regarded either as the instrument to get hold of the Absolute, or as the medium through which one discovers it. (46; 73)

According to Hegel, characterizing cognition as an "instrument" or "medium" results in skeptical concerns: "For, if cognition is the instrument for getting hold of absolute being, it is obvious that the use of an instrument on a thing certainly does not let it be what it is for itself, but rather sets out to reshape and alter it" (46; 73).

⁷³ One important difference between Kant's and Hegel's approaches to knowledge is that Kant believes he could demonstrate a formal structure that made experience possible, while Hegel strives to discern consciousness in what has been mistaken as otherness (i.e., mind-independent existence).

Hegel additionally addresses the problem of cognition from a non-Kantian view:

If, on the other hand, [one claims that] cognition is not an instrument of our activity, but a more or less passive medium through which the light of truth reaches us, then again we do not receive the truth as it is in itself, but only as it exists through and in this medium. (46; 73)

Even if the subject is passive in its recognition of existence, the *subject* is still the ‘medium’ by which experience transpires.⁷⁴

Hegel concludes that “[e]ither way (i.e., cognition as an instrument or as a medium) we employ a means which immediately brings about the opposite of its own end” (46; 73). In other words, the ‘end’ of both ‘means’ is to arrive at something other than cognition; yet, they inevitably result in cognitive content. Because both means are incapable of demonstrating that cognition can grasp mind-independent content, Hegel claims that “what is really absurd is that we should make use of a means at all” (46; 73).

Kant believes that, even though we cannot *know* the specific or general nature of mind-independent entities, he must postulate that they *exist*.⁷⁵ Hegel alternatively argues that we should collapse the distinction between the mind and mind-independent existence:

[These views take] for granted certain ideas about cognition as an *instrument* and as a *medium*, and assumes that there is a *difference between ourselves and this cognition*. Above all, it presupposes that the Absolute stands on one side and cognition on the other, independent and separated from it, and yet is something real [...]. (47; 74)

Hegel rejects the premise that cognition and the absolute must be “independent and separate” (47; 74).⁷⁶ He argues that we should simply avoid preconceived notions

⁷⁴ As we shall see, Hegel argues that cognition is not a “passive medium” but an active process.

⁷⁵ See Chapter 2, on Kant’s “Refutation of Idealism” and his collateral view of the self.

⁷⁶ Hegel employs the terms ‘*das Absolute*,’ which is translated as ‘the Absolute,’ in a variety of ways and in a variety of contexts. Take for instance the following passage:

The True is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development. Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a *result*, that only in

concerning cognition and what it can grasp, because they are philosophically unproductive.

3. While Hegel makes the reader wait a few more pages before Hegel defines ‘Science,’ we can see in section 76 that it concerns knowledge. In this section, Hegel outlines what must be avoided in order for ‘Science’ to appear:

Instead of troubling ourselves with such useless ideas and locutions about cognition as ‘an instrument for getting hold of the Absolute’, or as a medium through which we view the truth’ [...]: instead of putting up with excuses which create the incapacity of Science by assuming relationships of this kind [...]; instead of bothering to refute all these ideas, we could reject them out of hand [...] (48; 76)

The ‘ideas’ that Hegel urges his reader to ‘reject out of hand’ are those associated with dualism, because they are “adventitious,” “arbitrary” and deceptive. These terms deserves such qualifiers, because they start as assumptions.

Hegel conversely believes that in order to legitimately use such terms, they must be grounded in our knowledge of human consciousness. For instance, how to provide insight into what terms like “absolute,” “cognition,” “objective,” and “subjective” mean is the “main problem,” because the presuppositions embedded in these distinctions will make one mischaracterize them: “For to give the impression that their meaning is generally well known, or that their Notion [i.e., *Begriff*] is comprehended, looks more

the *end* is it what it truly is; and that precisely in this consists its nature, viz. to be actual, subject, the spontaneous becoming of itself. (11)

In this short excerpt, Hegel’s use of ‘absolute’ holds several connotations. First, we see a collapsing of the traditional dichotomy between the determinate thing and the self. The absolute in some sense is relevant to the collapsing of this distinction. Second, the term ‘absolute’ relates to Hegel’s conception of the self. Third, he suggests that the absolute is a “result,” insofar as it relates to the *entirety* of all determinations the self can make. Fourth, Hegel claims that the self does not immediately or properly recognize itself. As a result, Hegel argues that the absolute cannot be recognized until the self is able to recognize its own development as it spontaneously creates or manifests itself. Fifth, there is a sense in which the self, insofar as it relates to the whole of its being, also represents some kind of truth. Therefore the absolute permits some kind of truth. (In section IV, we will see that Hegel’s “Introduction” is intended to explain how these perspectives form the central project of the *Phenomenology*.)

like an attempt to avoid the main problem, which is precisely to provide this Notion” (48; 76). In turn, these mischaracterizations, or perhaps more acutely biases, inevitably yield false conclusions concerning the mind and its production of knowledge.

A few lines later, Hegel indicates a need for an analysis of “how knowledge makes its appearance”:

[Science] would be appealing to an inferior form of its being, to the way it appears [in an uncritical and unreflective way], rather than to what it is in and for itself. It is for this reason that an explanation of how knowledge makes its appearance will here be undertaken. (49; 76)

Hegel must provide an analysis of ‘how knowledge makes its appearance,’ because terms like ‘cognition,’ ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ are inseparable from our conceptions of what it means to know. Instead of defining these terms according to some preconceived theory, Hegel argues that the manner in which our consciousness expresses itself (during knowledge claims) should inform our characterizations of knowledge.

We will see (in **Part Two** of this chapter) that Hegel begins his ‘explanation of how knowledge makes its appearance’ with an analysis of ‘sense-certainty,’ (i.e., the belief that sensation produces immediate acts of knowing). Even though (as Hegel will show) human consciousness is incapable of performing this act, it is widely believed to be true. Consequently, those who believe in sense-certainty hold an inaccurate account of knowledge, how it is obtained and the manner in which consciousness operates.

‘Sense-certainty’ is an example of what he means by the false ‘*appearance*’ of knowledge, “rather than to what it is in and for itself” (49; 76).

4. As we saw above, Hegel argues that skeptical concerns regarding cognition’s ability to grasp the absolute are unnecessary and unproductive. In sections 77-80, he

argues that the “despair” of doubt, though unproductive in itself, prepares the individual for “Science”:

The skepticism that is directed against the whole range of phenomenal consciousness [...] renders the Spirit for the first time competent to examine what truth is. For it brings about a state of despair about all the so-called natural ideas, thoughts, and opinions, regardless of whether they are called one’s own or someone else’s, ideas with which consciousness that sets about the creations [of truth] *straight away* is still filled and hampered, so that it is [...] incapable of carrying out what it wants to undertake. (50; 78)

Skeptical “despair” permits one to doubt conventional notions of what reality, truth, and knowledge mean (50; 78). He believes these traditional notions need to be doubted in order to develop a new approach called ‘Science’. While Hegel has not yet described what ‘Science’ means, he has informed us that it can only ‘appear’ once we see the myriad difficulties in traditional accounts of knowledge and truth.

5. In the first section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel 1) rejects traditional epistemic views and goals concerning our capacity to know mind-independent existence, 2) informs us that he wishes to observe how knowledge appears to us, 3) outlines his dialectical method, 4) collapses dualism, and 5) argues that experience of what one naturally takes to be other than the self is inevitably experience of the self. In all these provocative views, Hegel merely hints at his objective.

Hegel makes his reader wait over 80 paragraphs before he clearly defines his goal:

But the *goal* is as necessarily fixed for knowledge as the serial possession; it is the point where knowledge no longer needs to go beyond itself, where knowledge finds itself, where Notion corresponds to object and object to Notion. (51; 81)

His “goal” is to know consciousness and the manner in which it progresses through a series of decisive developments. This project does not require knowledge to “go beyond itself,” because it requires one to investigate what is truly *accessible*, i.e., consciousness.

Hegel writes: “The series of configurations which consciousness goes through along this road is, in reality, the detailed history of *education* of consciousness itself to the standpoint of Science” (50; 81). Knowledge of consciousness’s different “configurations” and the experiences consciousness produces from these configurations is what Hegel calls “Science”: “The spirit that, so developed, knows itself as Spirit, is *Science*; Science is its actuality and the realm which it builds for itself in its own element” (14; 25). Science ‘builds for itself, in its own element’ by remaining within consciousness. In short, it does not strive to exceed consciousness as seen in the above dualistic accounts of correspondence (see sections 3.4.2-3).

Science ‘reduces’ what one believes he/she perceives, such as the illusion of mind independent content, to what is actually being expressed—consciousness at work:

Science sets forth this formative process in all its detail and necessity, exposing the mature configuration of everything which has already been reduced to a moment and property of Spirit. The goal is Spirit’s insight into what knowing is. (17; 29)

“Spirit’s insight into what knowing is,” is the reflective understanding that consciousness shapes itself into experience, while realizing that all experience is experience of consciousness.

Hegel does *not* claim that only consciousness exists. Rather, his position is that all awareness, all variations of awareness, and all *content* found in awareness can never be anything other than what is given in consciousness. Anytime we think or perceive

something as not existing in consciousness, the idea or experience itself is nonetheless an aspect of consciousness. This is a core thesis of the *Phenomenology*.

There is a sense in which Hegel's readers are apt to trivialize this claim. In the "Refutation of Idealism," Moore provides a common response to this aspect of idealism. He claims that, while it is true that all of one's perceptions are a part of one's own consciousness, it is *not* true that one fails to *recognize* that objects are independent of one's own mind. Nor does the above admission indicate that one is prone to confuse the external object with one's own mind. Moore believes that these remarks are sufficient to dismiss all versions of idealism. The popularity of this oversimplified response highlights the origin of much of the confusion that surrounds German Idealism.

When properly formulated, Hegel's idealism is not overcome by Moore's claims. For instance, one may *believe* that there is something other than one's own mind (and this is apparently true). One also *perceives* content that is nothing like one's own persona (i.e., personality/psychological identity). Yet, these commitments do not yield a demonstration that one is *aware* of something *distinct* from one's own mind. For example, 1) the *recognition* of physical objects, 2) the specific ways in which they *appear*, 3) the specific ways they are *believed* to exist, and 4) the fact that these appearances and *conceived* realities bear no *resemblance* to our personal personas are not indications of mind-independent content, because all the before mentioned occurrences are mental. In short, there is a tendency to conflate the *conclusions* we draw from empirical experience (e.g., mind-independent physical existence) with the mental act of

perceiving (see section 3.11). As a result, the *mind's production* of an empirical object is mistaken for a mind-independent object.⁷⁷

As argued in Chapter 2, *if* there is no *active* mind to construct appearances, there is *no* appearing object. Furthermore, consciousness as an individual's awareness is the 'substance' (in a figurative sense) in which all appearances, distinctions and recognitions subsist. Therefore, any *perceived* object or content is irreducible to consciousness:

Thus what seems to happen outside of it [i.e., consciousness], to be an activity directed against it [i.e., something external happening to it], is really its own doing. Substance shows itself to be essentially Subject. When it has shown this completely, Spirit has made its existence identical with its essence; it has itself for its object just as it is, and the abstract element of immediacy, and of the separation of knowing the truth, is overcome. (21; 37)⁷⁸

The epistemic upshot of this position is its ability to overcome the problems of traditional corresponded theories, which hold mind and world as separate and distinct. It achieves this end by showing that the appearing world is the mind at work. Thus knowledge can be obtained, because the "Notion corresponds to object and object to Notion" (51; 81).⁷⁹ Hegel begins his defense of these claims in "Sense-Certainty," by showing that one cannot extract consciousnesses from the act of observation (see **Part Two**).

6. In sections 81 to 89, Hegel provides an account of his approach for achieving knowledge and the need for a "criterion" to carry it out:

If this exposition is viewed as a way of relating *Science to phenomenal* knowledge, and as an investigation and *examination of the reality of cognition*, it

⁷⁷ In this regard, Moore was correct to argue that accepting perception as a mental event leads to idealism (in at least its Germanized version), but wrong to assume that this view is false.

⁷⁸ I have inserted the first set of brackets and their contents.

⁷⁹ I have argued that Moore, Russell and Strawson are incapable of archiving this requirement of knowledge. In Chapter Four, I will show that Sellars, McDowell and Brandom also fail to meet this requirement.

would seem that it cannot take place without some presupposition which can serve as its underlying *criterion*. (52, 81)

His approach centers on employing his method ‘Science’ to ‘phenomenal knowledge’.

Here, the term ‘phenomenal knowledge’ designates knowledge as it appears to consciousness. This kind of knowledge can be contrasted with more traditional forms of knowledge, which purport to know mind-independent content.

The point of addressing knowledge as a *phenomenon* is to underscore that knowledge appears for consciousness as a type of mental experience. Hegel’s phenomenology differs from most modern versions, which seek to depict experience in all of its nuances, yet oddly remain silent on the experience of knowledge.⁸⁰

In seeking what our experiences of knowledge have in common, Hegel hopes to establish a non-biased criterion of what it means to *know*. He cannot avoid criteria in his investigation, because in order to recognize that he has obtained knowledge of consciousness, he must establish some criterion for recognizing its achievement. In short, we require a criterion to know when we *know*.

7. Hegel begins his meta-analysis of knowledge by explaining how knowledge involves human consciousness:

Now, if we inquire into the truth of knowledge, it seems that we are asking what knowledge is *in itself*. Yet in this inquiry knowledge is *our* object, something that exists *for us* [...]. What we asserted to be its essence would be not so much its truth but rather just our knowledge of it. The essence or criterion would lie within ourselves, and that which was to be compared with it and about which a decision would be reached through this comparison would not necessarily have to recognize the validity of such a standard [i.e., the difference between what we

⁸⁰ Moreover, “Hegelian phenomenology depends directly on experience. It differs in this way from Husserlian phenomenology, which is not historical, but a-historical” (Rockmore, “Hegel and Epistemological Constructivism” 188).

think is our knowledge and what the knowledge actual is in-itself is an important concern]. (53; 83)

Whatever can be presumed to be known, the criterion of such knowledge must be in consciousness, for it is the conscious self that makes or creates knowledge.⁸¹ Since knowledge is something created by consciousness, knowledge is subject to the criterion that consciousness creates for it.⁸² On this particular issue, Hegel is deeply influenced by the Kantian tradition.

The ability to show that the existence of an entity corresponds to one's beliefs about it is a common feature of knowledge. Hegel applies this consistent feature of knowing to his inquiry on consciousness: how can we know if our knowledge of *knowledge* is correct? This question implies the following: does our *perceived* knowledge of *knowledge* correctly represent its occurrence in consciousness?

Hegel responds to the above concerns as follows:

But the dissociation, or semblance of dissociation and presupposition, is overcome by the nature of the object we are investigating. Consciousness provides its own criterion from within itself, so that the investigation becomes a comparison of consciousness with itself; for the distinction made above falls within it. (53; 84)

He will compare what is believed to be true about knowledge to the phenomenon of consciousness. In this way, he hopes to verify claims concerning the manner in which knowledge occurs in consciousness, without prejudging what knowledge actually is. This tactic overcomes the problem of correspondence as both objects, i.e., our idea of knowledge and the manner in which knowledge phenomenally unfolds in consciousness, are *accessible* to observing consciousness, and thus one can compare and contrast them.

⁸¹ Note how Moore and early Russell's hyper-realism argue for the opposite view: only mind-independent content can count as knowledge or truth (see Chapter One).

⁸² See Rockmore's account of 'constructivism' in section 3.5.

As noted in section 3.4.2, Hegel rejects dualism. He argues that the very effort to cognize what is mind-independent results in the opposite of its goal, i.e., one observes mind-*dependent* rather mind-*independent* content. Unlike knowledge claims based on dualistic models of mind and matter, knowledge of consciousness can arrive at a conception that is neither identical to its object (i.e., consciousness):

In consciousness one thing exists *for* another, i.e., consciousness regularly contains the determinateness of the moment of knowledge; at the same time, this other is to consciousness not merely *for it*, but is also outside of this relationship, or exists *in itself*: the moment of truth. Thus in what consciousness affirms from within itself as *being-in-itself* or the *True* we have the standard which consciousness itself sets up by which to measure what it knows. (53; 84)⁸³

This passage can be broken down into two related themes. First, unlike mental phenomena that can be changed or misrepresented by the attempt to describe them (e.g., strong or mixed emotions) and phenomena that do not occur for some subjects (e.g., the experience of color to those born blind), claims to *know* are inherently open to reason and self-reflection. Therefore, knowledge of how *knowledge* unfolds in consciousness is one of the more secure phenomenological contents available to philosophical scrutiny.

Second, this passage clarifies Hegel's conception of both truth and knowledge: knowledge requires that its object corresponds to whatever is believed about it. Since Hegel believes that all acts of consciousness and all of its contents are the self, Hegel concludes that even that which appears as other than consciousness is *consciousness*. If

⁸³ The following three quotes emphasize the above point:

[1] But the essential point to bear in mind throughout the whole investigation is that these two moments, 'Notion' and 'object', 'being-for-another' and 'Being-in-itself', both fall *within* that knowledge which we are investigating. (53; 83)

[2] Consequently, we do not need to import criteria, or to make use of our own bright ideas and thoughts during the course of the inquiry; it is precisely when we leave these aside that we succeed in completing the matter in hand as it is *in and for itself*. (53; 83)

[3] The object, it is true, seems only to be for consciousness in the way that consciousness knows it; it seems that consciousness cannot, as it were, get behind the object as it exists for consciousness so as to examine what the object is *in itself*, and hence, too, cannot test its own knowledge by that standard. (54; 85)

the above is true, then the only thing that can be known (i.e., the object is *shown* to correspond to that which is believed about it) is consciousness, its contents and its processes.

If knowledge is limited to mental content that can be *shown* to correspond to our beliefs concerning it, *then* truth is also limited to consciousness. For instance, when one asserts, believes, imagines, perceives, etc., that something is *true* about mind-independent existences (which are all mental acts or states), one upholds some aspect of consciousness to be what it is not. As a result, assertions concerning mind-independent existence are inherently false. (How this view concerns empirical research will be addressed in Chapter 4)

8. Hegel's phenomenological account of knowledge depicts it as a process:

Since consciousness thus finds that its knowledge does not correspond to its object, the object itself does not stand the test; in other words, the criterion for testing is altered when that for which it was to have been the criterion fail to pass the test; and the testing is not only a testing of what we know, but also a testing of the criterion of what knowing is. (54-5; 85)

When a claim to know is tested by comparing what is thought to be known with what can be observed, and the two do not correspond, one's perception of what he thought he knew changes. As a result, one must reformulate the *criterion for knowing* the object that was previously thought to be known. When one changes the criterion for obtaining knowledge, what it means to know changes as well.⁸⁴

Hegel writes:

In pressing forward to its true existence consciousness will arrive at a point which it gets rid of its semblance of being burdened with something alien, with what is

⁸⁴ These epistemic insights would not be realized by analytic philosophy until Wittgenstein, and they were not popularized (in this tradition) until Sellars and (more recently) Brandom.

only for it, and some sort of ‘other’, at a point where appearance becomes identical with essences, so that its exposition will coincide at just this point with the authentic Science of Spirit. And finally, when consciousness itself grasps this its own essence, it will signify the nature of absolute knowledge itself. (56-7; 89)

When consciousness recognizes the inadequacies of its views, it will come to a new conclusion. These developmental phases of consciousness are expressed in societies and in historical developments.⁸⁵ Hegel believes knowledge of such patterns and developments, as they account for all the divergent possibilities of consciousness (i.e., societal, religious, aesthetic, cultural and historical awareness) is “absolute knowing” (56; 87).

For Hegel, ‘Absolute knowing’ requires knowledge of the “entire series of the patterns of consciousness” that are “guided” by a “necessary sequence” (57; 87).⁸⁶ I will not defend or further investigate this significant feature of Hegel’s text.⁸⁷ Instead, I will continue to address the means by which Hegel believes he can achieve knowledge of consciousness and knowledge of *Knowledge* via ‘Science’. This approach can be carried out independently of the former assertion (i.e., that one can come to know, in a determinate manner, a necessary and unavoidable sequence to all developing consciousnesses), as the former assertion requires Hegel to demonstrate the latter.⁸⁸

9. We can now summarize the claims made in the “Preface” and “Introduction”:

⁸⁵ Hegel writes:

(S)ince what first appeared as the object sinks for consciousness to the level of its way of knowing it, and since the in-itself becomes a *being-for-consciousness* of the in-itself, the latter is now the new object. Here within a new pattern of consciousness comes on the scene as well, for which the essence is something different from what it was at the preceding stage. It is this fact that guides the entire series of the patterns of consciousness in their necessary sequence. (56; 87)

⁸⁶ See “**Appendix VI. Hegel’s Term ‘Absolute.’**”

⁸⁷ An account of Hegel’s conception of historical necessity would derail us from our current objective: what is Hegel’s view on knowledge?

⁸⁸ Given the constraints that Hegel places upon ‘Science,’ I have grave reservations that Hegel can display (in a robust sense) a “necessary sequence,” which guides consciousness. However, this topic exceeds the scope of this work.

- 1) Appearances can only occur for and through a consciousness. As a result, the act of cognition and the perceived object (as a determination of cognition) are consciousness (see section 3.4.2).
- 2) Due to 1, Hegel is committed to the claim that the subject is a 'Substance'. In other words, the self is what permits all acts of observation and recognition: "In general, [...] substance is in itself or implicit Subject, all content is its own [i.e., consciousness's] reflection into itself" (33; 54).
- 3) The recognition of the self in what was previously conceived as mind-independent existence is an important aspect of Hegel's philosophy. Hegel calls this kind of self-recognition 'Spirit'.
- 4) The entirety of all possible expressions of consciousness forms or entails an 'absolute'.
- 5) Knowledge of this absolute (i.e., 4) can be achieved by a dialectical method, which helps one to avoid preconceptions pertaining to knowledge and truth. In short, it permits the 'Science' of 'Spirit' in its entirety, i.e., it permits one to know consciousness as it truly expresses itself, in all of its myriad expressions.
- 6) Hegel believes his dialectical method can help illuminate what is correct and false in the developing phases of human consciousness. He also believes it is necessary for consciousness to understand the inadequacies of its own views in order to progress in its knowledge of itself.
- 7) The goal of the *Phenomenology* is to describe and explain a long series of developments through which "the path of natural consciousness [...] press[es] forward to true knowledge" (49; 77).
- 8) 'Science' is the fullest and most rigorous form of knowledge. It requires that which is believed about an object and the manner in which the object exists, to coincide.
- 9) Only knowledge of consciousness can meet the requirements of 'Science.' The result of these commitments is a radical revision of what it means to know and how knowledge is obtained.

3.5. *Why Hegel's Phenomenology Invokes Epistemology*

1. One can find numerous and opposing interpretations of every subject on which Hegel wrote. His views on knowledge are no exception.

Pippin asserts that a valid epistemological investigation requires a disclosing of an "autonomous standpoint from which a purely epistemological critique could operate" ("You Can't Get There from Here" 61). He reads the *Phenomenology* as arguing that there is no "autonomous standpoint' for the observing subject: "what is true for

consciousness' is not 'something other than itself,' that what we appeal to, what makes knowledge-claims true or false, is internal too, not other than consciousness itself" (62). Due to this Hegelian stance and Pippin's above view concerning epistemology, Pippin concludes that Hegel is *not* concerned with epistemology (61).⁸⁹

Like Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Pippin holds the view that, after Kant, philosophers began to realize that one cannot obtain mind-independent truths. Accordingly, Pippin and Rorty believe that humanity lacks the capacity to make valid claims that correspond with external existence. From these conclusions, they imply that epistemology is fruitless.

This latter conclusion of Pippin's and Rorty's demonstrates an extremely confused notion of epistemology. Knowledge claims do *not* require one to make assertions concerning mind-independent reality. Pippin and Rorty falsely imply that, if one is not making assertions concerning mind-independent existence, one is *not* engaged in epistemology.

Pippin's and Rorty's confusion is a symptom of the prevailing misunderstanding of epistemology. For instance, epistemology is often limited to empirical investigations, essentialism, empirically based *correspondence* theories of truth, foundationalism, and analytic philosophy. According to this narrow *misapplication of the term*, Hegel is not concerned with 'epistemology'. *However*, broadly speaking, epistemology has always

⁸⁹ Pippin argues that it is a mistake to interpret Kantian themes in the *Phenomenology* as evidence that Hegel's project is epistemological:

The fact that Hegel has inherited and affirms much of the Kantian account of the appreciative nature of experience, the Kantian critique of empiricism, the general problem of "unconditioned conditions," and that he seems to adopt the goals of critical philosophy itself (e.g., "what is knowing") all should not lead one to think that the project of the *Phenomenology* is epistemological. ("You Can't Get There from Here" 61)

been concerned with 1) what knowledge is, and 2) how it is legitimately obtained.⁹⁰ This *correct* sense of the term is deeply ingrained in all aspects of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. Those who fail to realize that Hegel holds important epistemic views either misunderstand Hegel's project or misrepresent epistemology.

2. Pippin and Rorty believe that earnest epistemological investigations require a positive resolution to the correspondence problem. In its broadest formulation, the problem of correspondence asks, "how can I know if my thoughts, beliefs, models, etc., accurately correspond to mind-independent existence?" This question typically springs from some form of 'dualism,' which claims that the mind and external existence are constituted in different ways. Dualism thus presents an added problem to obtaining knowledge: in order to obtain knowledge, the mind must find some means of accurately representing something that is unlike itself. For instance, one's thoughts, ideas, or perceptions of a dumbbell are not weighted or difficult to pick up, whereas the dumbbell itself presumably has these qualities.

Since Pippin and Rorty believe there is no available solution to the problem of correspondence, they conclude that epistemology is an unproductive endeavor. As a consequence of this narrow view of epistemology, they fail to recognize that German Idealism presents an *epistemic* alternative to the problem of correspondence. I will conclude **Part One** with an explanation of this alternative as it is presented in Rockmore's article "Hegel and Epistemological Constructivism."

⁹⁰ The word 'epistemology' is a relatively recent term, but its meaning and field of study are not. For instance, concerns over what it means to know or inquires into how one can obtain knowledge, is something that has been an intimate part of the Western tradition for over 2,500 years.

3. Rockmore frames the problem of correspondence in terms of

‘Representationalism’:

[Representationalism] is based on three presuppositions. First, there is a way the mind-independent world is. Second, to know is to know it as it is beyond mere appearances. [Third], [t]his suggests a basic distinction between reality and appearance. (183-4)

Kant can be seen as a representationalist, in that he (in his critical period) argues the mind represents external existence (184). As noted in Chapter Two, Kant seeks to overcome the problem of correspondence by showing that, outside of being able to acknowledge the existence of mind-independent reality, one cannot know anything about it. As a result, Kant claims that, while our representations are meaningful to us, we cannot know how our representations corresponds to mind-independent reality.

It is unclear to what extent Kant accepted representationalism. On the one hand, he seems to accept a stronger version of representationalism than he can support:

Kant’s famous letter to Herz from the beginning of the critical period (21 February 1772) depicts the problem of knowledge as requiring an analysis of the relation of representation to the object. This suggests Kant is committed to representationalism. Yet representationalism in all its many forms simply fails since it cannot be shown that we can reliably claim to know a mind-independent external object. (184)

Similarly, as noted in sections 2.6-7, Kant refers to the thing-in-itself (in the first *Critique*) as a ‘singular’ entity and a ‘cause’ of sensations. He also suggests that our representations of objects represent singular mind-independent entities.

On the other hand, Kant inconsistently argues that our representations cannot represent mind-independent existence in a knowable fashion. Accordingly, we cannot know if our idea of ‘cause’ accurately represents the manner in which external entities are

believed to cause sensations or if our representations of objects refer to ‘singular’ entities.⁹¹

Regardless of Kant’s intended view towards representationalism, he nonetheless developed an alternative to it, which Rockmore calls ‘constructivism’:

According to Kant, such modern scientists as Galileo understood that reason knows only what it itself constructs. Science does not discover but rather constructs nature [*Critique* B xii]. More generally, for Kant, as for such earlier constructivists as Hobbes and Vico, we do not uncover, discover or reveal the cognitive object, which we rather construct, produce or make. (184)

A common response to this view is the claim that it reduces all empirical experiences into a morass of fantasy and make-believe. In order to respond to this reaction, I will briefly reintroduce Kant’s notions of ‘empirical realism’ and ‘empirical validity,’ and then close by commenting on how Hegel both continues and diverges from these aspects of Kant’s philosophy.

4. Kant’s constructivist view of ‘empirical realism’ is not an argument against an objective empirical world but rather an explanation of why he considers the empirical world ‘objective’ (a more accurate term would require a modification of what we now call ‘inter-subjective’). Under Kant’s model of empirical realism, our wishes and personalities cannot change what is empirically verifiable, because the way the appearing world appears is due to unconscious and uncontrollable responses to sensory input. For instance, we saw in Chapter Two that sensations alone cannot produce an experience of space, time, or unity. Therefore, no appearing object, much less an appearing world, can

⁹¹ In sections 2.6-7, I argued that there are ways to avoid these inconsistencies, while remaining true to Kant’s philosophical system. Yet, it remains unclear whether Kant 1) accidentally offers inconsistent accounts, but holds a consistent theory, 2) deliberately writes in an imprecise way (in regard to his overall theory) for the sake of simplifying his incredibly complex and nuanced claims, or 3) simultaneously holds irreconcilable views.

be produced by sensations alone. The appearance of objects and the world stem from the mind's inborn (or unconscious) way of processing the sensory manifold into meaningful relations and unities. In this fashion, the mind, and not mind-independent reality, constructs an appearing world.

Kant argues that humans are born with the same *a priori* structure. Consequently, the manner in which the mind processes sensory input into temporal and spatial relations and interprets (i.e., judges) these spatiotemporal unities and relations into cognizable content is the same (or nearly identical) for all people. The empirical world thus appears similar to all people.

This ability to experience and think of the world in a shared manner is called “*sensus communis*”:

[A] faculty of judging that in its reflection takes account (*a priori*) of everyone else's way of representing in thought, in order **as it were** to hold its judgment up to human reason as a whole and thereby avoid the illusion which, from subjective private conditions that could easily be held to be objective, would have a detrimental influence on judgment (*Critique of Judgment* 5: 293)

In this manner, ‘objectively valid’ experiences are obtainable, not because mind-independent existence causes experience to unfold in standard ways, but rather because our minds ensure that we construct appearances in a consistent and useful fashion.

Similarly, the facts of physical sciences can be interpreted as the *irreducible* ways in which humans undergo experience when given well defined parameters to make determinations concerning experience. These ‘facts’ are true and knowable because the human mind is responsible for them (in the sense of how they appear before the mind's eye).

According to a Kantian view, science projects our human ways of processing and associating sensory input into rules and laws that are necessary for the mind to produce coherent and reliable experiences. As stated above, sensory input alone is incapable of producing the experience of objects much less appearances. Hence, the appearing world is quite literally a manifestation of the human mind. The regularity or “nature” of existence, as it appears to human beings, is therefore an expression of our very own minds: “Thus we ourselves bring into the appearance that order and regularity in them that we call **nature**, and moreover we would not be able to find it there if we, or the nature of our mind, had not originally put it there” (A 125).

Moreover, as already noted, the mind cannot directly interpret sensory input as empirical objects, because sensory input alone cannot provide the experience of space, time and unities. Nor can sensory input present objects that are pregnant with meaning, i.e., perceptions which are conceptual in nature. *If* these claims are true, then it is also true that the mind can know only an empirical world, because the manner in which the mind structures sensory content is precisely what makes it intelligible. Since the above view plays a crucial role in legitimizing constructivism, I have devoted **Part Two** to this topic.

In Chapter Four, we will review claims as to why it is believed that the external world *indirectly* informs us about its true nature. After one sees why these Analytic alternatives fail, one can appreciate the epistemic payoff of constructivism and why it is defensible.

5. Unlike Kant, Hegel argues that the manner in which we undergo experience, the ways in which we claim to know a world, and ultimately what is accessible to us, are acquired through personal and social development. Consequently, what a person experiences largely depends on his/her development as an individual and social participant. This view makes Hegel a historical thinker:

Fichte, who reformulates the subject as a finite human being, prepares the way for rethinking knowledge as intrinsically historical. In German idealism, this change finally occurs in Hegel who, reaching backwards to writers like Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Herder, rethinks the problem of knowledge in a further reading of the Copernican turn on a fully historical basis. (186).

This arguably accounts for the most significant difference between Kant and Hegel: Kant is an *ahistorical* thinker, while Hegel is a *historical* thinker.

Hegel rejects Kant's transcendental *a priori* account of human knowledge for a historical account of human knowledge. In doing so, he breaks from several popular formulations of knowledge:

We do not evaluate [according to Hegel] claims to know absolutely, abstractly, theoretically or a priori. We evaluate them practically, by comparing them to what is given as objects of consciousness experience. Consciousness is equipped with its own criterion of knowledge, which consist in comparing what it expects, or the theory, and the object experienced, both of which are located in consciousness. Knowledge does not arise through comparing a mental entity to an object outside the subject, since both the theory and that to which it refers are within consciousness. (186).

Hegel seeks to account for the manner in which the mind undergoes experience and forms knowledge claims. By turning the investigation away from what is *conceived* as external existence and arguing that the search for mind-independent existence is fruitless (insofar as he is concerned with philosophical truths and not practical payoffs), Hegel claims that only what appears to consciousness is knowable (see section 3.4.2-6).

6. Knowledge of human consciousness is Hegel's goal, and the *method* by which he seeks his goal involves the "Dialectic" and "Science." The 'Dialectic' makes 'Science' possible by providing a method of investigating human consciousness, while avoiding presuppositions, which falsify the manner in which consciousness manifests itself. This is a key component to Hegel's epistemic stance, because he seeks to show the manner in which we can accurately know consciousness.

It is precisely because consciousness is accessible to us that we do not need to project our private and subjective theories onto it. Rather we need only to carefully attend to it: "we do not need to import criteria, or to make use of our own bright ideas and thoughts during the course of the inquiry; it is precisely when we leave these aside that we succeed in contemplating the matter in hand as it is *in and for itself*" (*Phenomenology* 54; 84). In this manner, when Hegel describes the distinct forms consciousness may take and how these various forms of consciousness affect our experiences (as the fruition of his goal), he is making a knowledge claim concerning consciousness itself.

Hegel also seeks to *justify* his knowledge claims. For instance, since consciousness *qua* consciousness is something accessible to humans, we can *verify* claims concerning consciousness as being accurate or inaccurate. Hegel thereby believes (like Kant, but for very different reasons) he can avoid traditional problems associated with correspondence and achieve knowledge where others have failed. In other words, by remaining in a realm where the objects of knowledge are phenomenal, he can therefore legitimately compare them with what is *believed* to be known: "Science is its actuality and the realm which it [i.e., consciousness] builds for itself in its own element" (14; 25).

Rockmore writes:

Hegel is often supposed to ignore experience. G. E. Moore famously claims that idealism consists in denying the existence of the external world. [...] Hegel, who is a non-standard empiricist, does not run away from, but rather takes experience very seriously. It is the criterion of knowledge, which emerges from experience. For Hegel, knowledge arises from a process of trial and error theory, which can be usefully compared to more recent discussions in Popper, Kuhn, Quine, and others. (187).⁹²

In **Part Two** of this chapter, we will see that Hegel does not deny the veracity of experience but rather the conclusions we derive from experience, which are then conflated with experience itself. He refers to this common occurrence as the ‘thing and deception’.

In review, I have sought to resolve the following question ‘does Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* express an epistemological position?’ Rockmore argues that Hegel holds an epistemic stance in common with Kant, which he calls ‘epistemological constructivism.’ Conversely, Pippin argues that we should not permit Kantian themes in Hegel’s writing to mislead us into believing that Hegel’s *Phenomenology* concerns epistemology (“You Can’t Get There from Here” 61). Via an analysis of the *Phenomenology*’s “Preface” and “Introduction,” I argued that constructivism is an apt characterization of Hegel’s epistemic stance. I also argued that Pippin’s understanding of epistemology is too restrictive. As a consequence, Pippin misrepresents the meaning of the term along with Hegel’s relation to it.

⁹² See section 4.8 for Brandom’s account of Hegel’s ‘truth process’.

Part Two: 3.6. A Transition into the Linguistic Turn

1. Scholars “identify two major ‘turns’ in the philosophy of the 18th century, one ‘epistemological’ and the other ‘linguistic’” (Morton, *Herder and the Poetics of Thought* 29). Under the widening influence of Kant’s *Critiques*, late 18th century thinkers addressed epistemological concerns by investigating the observing subject. Kant believed that the mind, rather than external existence, explains the manner in which existence *appears* to the subject. Kant and his followers perceived this view as an advance over traditional metaphysics, which investigated natural objects and spiritual entities (e.g., souls, angels and God), while often ignoring the subject.

In contrast, the linguistic turn was established by thinkers such as Herder and later Schleiermacher and Humboldt, who became interested in the effects of language and history on our world view. This development set the stage for “modern linguistic philosophers to reanalyze the quest for knowledge as questions [concerning] [...] language” (130). This latter approach parallels Kant’s tendency to reanalyze “questions of Being as questions of knowledge,” in that philosophers of language sought to resolve longstanding epistemic problems by analyzing language (130). For instance, Moore and Russell believed that many of the inaccuracies in metaphysics are rooted in the imprecision of natural languages.

While this distinction is true, it is also misleading. This account deemphasizes the fact that Kant’s *Critiques* were more than a rejection of traditional metaphysics for a subject centered epistemology. Much of their revolutionary force lies in his treatment of cognition.

Kant tends to use the term ‘cognition’ [*Erkenntnis*] in two distinct ways. For now, I only wish to address one of these ways: the act whereby the mind *creates* a relationship between *ideas* (or concepts) and sensory content. For instance, it is one thing to experience the appearance of a fire engine or stop sign; it is entirely another kind of experience to *perceive* such appearances as being ‘red’. Accordingly, some animals can see specific shades of ‘red,’ but this does not mean they can *judge*, notice or assert that appearances relate to the *idea* of ‘redness’. One can thus distinguish between sensory content and the ideas, concepts and reasons that one relates to sensory content.

Kant’s greatest contribution to philosophy was his insistence that one should first understand the manner in which the mind relates ideas/meaning to sensory content, prior to making epistemic claims. According to him, by understanding this aspect of the observing subject, we discover the limits of human knowledge.

While Herder and Schleiermacher became interested in the effects of language and history on our understanding of the world, they were still influenced by Kant’s specific approach to cognition. Moreover, with the advent of Hegel and recent thinkers such as Sellars, Brandom and McDowell, the concerns germane to both turns became mutually entailing. Therefore, despite the existence of two ‘turns’ in German thought, they share much in common.

2. As the linguistic turn continues into the twenty-first century, the specific problems of language continue to meld into issues concerning cognitive abilities and one’s capacity to reason. McDowell characterizes this development as follows:

Sellars describes the logical space of reasons as the space “of justifying and being able to justify what one says” [“Empiricism and Philosophy of Mind” §36)]. We

can see this as a distinctly twentieth-century elaboration of a Kantian conception: the conception of a capacity to exercise, paradigmatically in judgment, a freedom that is essentially a matter of responsiveness to reasons. The twentieth-century element is the idea that this capacity comes with being initiated into language. (“Lecture I: Sellars on Perceptual experience” 434)

In the above expert, McDowell references the Kantian belief that the human mind spontaneously or freely judges. In other words, no exterior force is responsible for our judgments. Additionally, human beings are capable of reasoning (rather than reacting). They are thus capable of knowing/foreseeing the consequences, as well as the obligations, that stem from their judgments. This capacity endows us with the ability to be epistemically responsible for what and how we communicate. Sellars is the first Analytic thinker to clearly make and defend these views in Kantian terms. Though unlike Kant, he emphasizes our epistemic capacities as originating in language.

Additionally, the topics in the above account of the two turns in German thought are present throughout Sellars’ work. In particular, Sellars’ “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” implies the following triadic view: 1) in order to develop a correct epistemic model 2) one must not only discern a correct model of cognition, 3) one must also understand how language and historical developments affect cognition.

3.7. The Comparisons Being Made and the Epistemic Problems that Arise from Them

1. The first philosopher to employ properly the above triadic view is *not* Sellars, but rather Hegel. In this regard, he is the forerunner of the *current* analytic trend. Given that the analytic tradition (prior to Sellars) has been openly hostile to all forms of

idealism, it is ironic that Hegel is the pioneer to arguably the most important issues concerning contemporary analytic thought.

Analytic thought holds its strongest parallels to Hegel through Wilfred Sellars. I will attempt to demonstrate this claim by showing the manner in which Hegel and Sellars provide strikingly similar answers to parts 2 and 3 (of above triadic view). However, they clearly take opposing stances concerning how they answer part 1 (of the above triadic view). Specifically, the epistemological claims they infer from the way cognition operates are irreconcilable.

As argued in **Part One**, Hegel develops a variation of Kantian ‘constructivism’. In its broadest expression, Hegel’s claim is that only what transpires for consciousness, both from the subjective and inter-subjective realm (i.e., *shared* content of human experience), are viable candidates for knowledge. Sellars, on the other hand, extrapolates from his view of cognition a variation of naturalism called scientific realism. Scientific realism argues that knowledge of mind-independent existence is possible, and this kind of knowledge is most properly obtained through scientific theory and practice.

As noted by Rockmore, “one way to understand” this difference between Hegel and Sellars “is to say that Hegel is committed to empirical realism and Sellars is committed to metaphysical realism” (via correspondence). Hegel maintains that what we perceive and the manner in which we perceive accounts for the real. On the other hand, Sellars believes that some greater reality lies beyond our perceptual states and we can obtain knowledge of it.

2. Sellars begins “Empiricism and Philosophy of Mind” by recognizing Hegel as the historical forerunner to one aspect of his argument against the given (i.e., ‘immediacy’). However, in his second paragraph, he writes “[the given] has, indeed, been so pervasive that few, if any, philosophers have been altogether free of it [...], I would argue, not even Hegel, that great foe of “immediacy” (14). Sellars believes that he *alone* has argued against the “entire framework of givenness” (14). In opposition to this view, I argue that all of Sellars’ arguments against the given have parallels in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*. Consequently, Hegel is the first to dismantle the “entire framework of givenness” (14).

If Hegel and Sellars prove that there are no givens from which basic truths can be established, do their findings result in subjectivism (i.e., every insight is subjective and divorced from any underlying truth or objectivity)? In order to show that knowledge *is* possible, a model of cognition needs to be developed that accounts for our capacity to make observations without reducing such observations to one of two extremes: 1) complete subjectivism (which denies the possibility of knowledge) or 2) the myth of the given (which is shown to be false by Hegel and Sellars).

Both Hegel and Sellars attempt to resolve this epistemic challenge by 1) arguing against the given, 2) radically revising empiricism, 3) arguing for conceptual holism, and 4) analyzing linguistic, social and historical influences on our capacity to make observations. In Chapter 4, I argue that Hegel’s response to this challenge is more successful than Sellars’.

3.8. *Locke's Historical Influence, the Meaning of the Given, and its Epistemological Implication*

1. While Hegel and Sellars attack several formulations of the 'given,' they are primarily concerned with the following version: sensation or sensory content can operate as *non-inferential* knowledge. They argue against this view by showing that the *recognition* of sensory content requires the mediation of universals (for Hegel) or concepts (for Sellars).

Perhaps one of the strongest supporters of non-inferential knowledge is John Locke. Though Locke wrote in the 17th century, his beliefs concerning perception were and remain influential among philosophers. The views he supports are also imbedded in the linguistic practices of the Western world.

In order to establish the viability of their views, Hegel and Sellars must disprove claims resembling Locke's. For example, *if* Locke's assertions concerning non-inferential knowledge are true, Hegel's and Sellars' views (even though they differ) on 1) the phenomenology of perception, 2) the role of social forces on perception, and 3) knowledge, are false. For these reasons, Hegel and Sellars have much at stake in their fight against the given. I will therefore review Locke's account of perception in order to establish the kind of claims Hegel and Sellars' need to disprove.

2. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke claims that the most basic form of knowledge occurs 'immediately' in acts of sensing. The *meaning* of a sensation is metaphorically referred to as 'given,' because its recipient plays no part in

the formation of its *conception*. For him, one is affected by sensations as a completely *conjunctive* affair. For instance, *if* one undergoes a *particular sensation* of red, there *occurs* with it (i.e., an ‘and’ function in formal logic) the *idea* of red (Sellars, “Empiricism and Philosophy of the Mind” 60). He asserts that humanity, as the *passive* recipient of givenness, is privy to sensory content and *non-inferential meaning*. This is what Locke means when he writes that the mind is “wholly passive in reception of all of its simple ideas” (Locke 108).

Locke asserts that sensation immediately provides non-inferential states of knowing. Sellars characterizes Locke’s claim as follows:

Notice that, given these stipulations, it is logically necessary that if a sense content be *sensed*, it be *sensed as being of a certain character*, and that if it be *sensed as being of a certain character*, the *fact that it is of this character* be *non-inferentially known*. (17)

Locke is *not* merely claiming that sensations provide experience of specific sights, smells, tastes, sounds or feels. Moore radically claims that we are immediately aware of sensations as they can be *qualified* by ideas. For instance, he claims that along with the sensation of a particular red square, one will immediately acknowledge the general qualities of *redness* and *squareness*. The terms ‘red’ and ‘square’ do not indicate a particular color or shape. They indicate *abstractions* that are applicable to any square or shade of red.

According to Locke, sensed qualities (such as general designations) are *immediately self-evident*. Or to put it another way, the bearer of sensation possesses *certainty* of perceived qualities without performing a judgment. *If* sensations cause *recognition* of generalized content such as qualities, quantity and states, *then*

observations are free from *misrepresentation*. As a result, the epistemic need for justifying one's characterization of empirical experience is eliminated.

3. Locke's theory of language stems directly from his theory of perception. His notion of language assumes that words represent either simple or complex ideas. *Simple ideas* occur with a particular sensation. According to Locke, when one looks at something red, one immediately has the idea of red. Simple ideas are *reducible* to their sensory beginnings by *inverting* the operation that converts them into 'abstractions' (Locke 108).

Complex ideas are conglomerations of simple ideas. Locke claims that they can be separated into the *simple ideas* that comprise them. In turn, these simple ideas are *reducible* to the sensory particulars that caused them. Sellars characterizes Locke's 'reductionisms' in the following terms: epistemic facts (for instance, this object is red) are claimed to be "analyzed [...] without remainder—even 'in principle'—into non-epistemic facts" (i.e., sensory particulars) (19).

Locke's reductionism *conflates epistemic facts* (such as general qualitative designations), with non-epistemic facts (such as sensory particulars). In other words, Locke fails to distinguish between the following:

(a) It is *particulars* which are sensed. Sensing is not knowing. The existence of sense-data does not *logically* imply the existence of knowledge.

(b) Sensing is a form of knowing. It is *facts* rather than *particulars* which are sensed. (16)

According to Sellars, this conflation occurs in *sense-datum* theories, which assert empirical facts are reducible to sensory *particulars*:

Now it might seem that when confronted by this choice, [of “a” or “b”] the sense-datum theorist seeks to have his cake and eat it. For he characteristically insists *both* that sensing is a knowing *and* that it is particulars which are sensed. (17)

The above two excerpts lay the preliminary groundwork for the following argument: determinables (i.e., general designations) are not reducible, *without remainder*, to particular sensations. *Hegel and Sellars argue that determinables are something over and above what can occur in raw sensation* (see sections 3.9 and 3.10).

There are those who still believe (e.g., hard-line Husserlians or disciples of Foucault) that ‘pure description’ avoids assertions or judgments. The belief in unmediated observation keeps this fallacy alive. As we are about to see, Hegel and Sellars show that pure description is impossible.

3.9. Hegel’s “Sense-Certainty” as a Rejection of the Given

1. Hegelian scholars, in particular those who are primarily concerned with his social, political, religious and aesthetic insights, tend to read Hegel as follows. Hegel’s dialectical approach permits him to identify the various forms consciousness may take, while demonstrating the inconsistencies of traditional beliefs. This approach provides him the opportunity to display a logical progression and taxonomy (i.e., determinable kinds) to consciousness.

When they bring this attitude to the *Phenomenology*, they tend to deny that Hegel formulates positive claims concerning perception and cognition. It is commonly upheld that points made in the beginning of the *Phenomenology*, which concern perception and cognition, are merely steppingstones to subsequent points further down the dialectical

path. These steppingstones are seen as important, not because they make substantial claims concerning perception and cognition, but rather for where they lead reader.

I believe this reading is wrong. Hegel's *Phenomenology* is not merely a dialectical progression of inconsistent views, or an odyssey of disclosing untrue claims that lead to some fundamental insight at the end of the text. What is absent in these readings, is that the *Phenomenology* often denies claims based upon phenomenological insights. For example, if his rejection of a particular view is based on a phenomenological account (and *not* the inconsistencies of a particular claim), he is only justified to do so *when* he believes his phenomenological account is *true*. It is therefore important to distinguish when Hegel is merely working through the logical implications of a position and when he is making an assertion concerning the nature of experience. As we shall see, this latter Hegelian approach results in important claims concerning perception and cognition.

2. In "Sense-Certainty," Hegel outlines what must be the case *if* sensory contents are given: "The knowledge or knowing which is at the start or is immediately our object cannot be anything else but immediate knowledge itself, a knowledge of the immediate or what simply *is*" (Hegel 58; 90). In order for sensory knowledge to be given, its reception must *not* be mediated (i.e., it must be immediate). Any mediation, like a tarnished lens, could contaminate the presentation of one's sensations. Mediation thus results in the need for one to validate his or her sensory experiences.

Hegel states that in order for immediacy to occur, one "must alter nothing in the object as it presents itself. In *apprehending* it, we must refrain from trying to

comprehend it” (58; 90). It seems likely that Sellars has the above Hegelian passages in mind when he makes the following statement:

I presume that no philosopher who has attacked the philosophical idea of givenness, or to use the Hegelian term, immediacy, has intended to deny that there is a difference between *inferring* that something is the case and, for example, *seeing* it to be the case. (“Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” 13)

Sellars’ term ‘givenness’ and Hegel’s term ‘immediacy’ emphasize different aspects of the same belief. Sellars term the ‘given’ refers to the belief that facts, ideas or truths are passively received in sensation, i.e., metaphorically they are said to be ‘given’. Hegel refers to the same claim as ‘immediacy,’ to underscore that (according to this belief) the mind contributes nothing to its reception of what is given in sensation. In this regard, ‘immediacy’ means that no mental activity is *intermediary* between sensation and the information that it presumably provides. The next several sections will show how this distinction is central to both Hegel’s and Sellars’ rejection of the given, their views on empirical observation and their understanding of cognition.

3. Hegel makes a fundamental ontological distinction concerning empirical claims: an “I” is needed to observe a “this” (*Phenomenology* 59; 92). Simply put, without the observing subject there is no observation. This division is inherent to all empirical claims.

Hegel notes that one only becomes certain of an object, if one *believes* that it exists. While this might seem like an obvious insight, it clarifies what is often overlooked: *certainty* requires *belief* and belief is a state of the *subject* not an object.

Thus one's *experience* of observational certainty requires the *subject* to assert that there is something *certain* about observational content. This *certainty mediates* sensory content.

As we shall see, Hegel is preparing the reader for his primary thesis, which was outlined in the "Preface" and the "Introduction": the self constructs or is responsible for all objects of awareness. (This of course will not be Sellars' thesis.)

4. Hegel envisions the sense-certainty apologist responding that if there were no 'this' (i.e., the object) there would be no observational certainty. Hegel replies that when one posits the subject and object as separate entities a cyclical mediation occurs: "...each at the same time is *mediated*: I have certainty *through* something else, viz. a thing; and similarly, it is in sense-certainty *through* something else, viz. through the 'I'"

(*Phenomenology* 59; 92). In both sides of this mediation, he is careful to insert the 'I'. For instance, even if the object exists, only the 'I' can be certain of it. The relevancy of this claim lies in the fact that certainty is not created by the 'thing' but rather the subject.

The sense-certainty apologist may see this move as a philosophical sleight of hand. i.e., Hegel's proposed mediation can be seen as a ruse to sidestep the intended position of sense-certainty. Hegel therefore reiterates and clarifies the underling assertion of sense-certainty:

[T]he object *is*: it is what is true, or it is the essence. It is, regardless of whether it is known or not; and remains, even [if] it is not known, whereas there is no knowledge if the object is not there. (59; 93)

He follows this formulation of sense-certainty with an account of how he will *test* its veracity:

The question must therefore be considered whether in sense-certainty itself the object is in fact the kind of essence that sense-certainty proclaims it to be; whether

this notion of it as the essence corresponds to the way it is present in sense-certainty. To this end, we have not to reflect on it and ponder what it might be in truth, but only to consider the way in which it is present in sense-certainty. (59; 94)

He will provide a phenomenological investigation in order to see if one's experience conforms to what is *asserted* about sense-certainty.

5. There appears to be no better support for the assertion that the existence of an object is *given* in observation, than physically or verbally gesturing to an object. For this reason, Hegel considers the 'ostensive act' (i.e., the act of pointing something out) whereby one specifies a referent (i.e., *designatum*: the referenced object) with "now" and "here" locutions (63; 106). These terms are believed to function in two primary ways: 1) they designate a particular temporal and spatial locality in which the given thing makes itself known, or 2) it is a means to circumvent the universal nature of terms in order to indicate a singular instance.

"Here" and "now" locutions are problematically poor indicators of particulars. Take for example the statement "now is night" (60; 95). In order for one to retain the *meaning* of 'now is night' during the daytime, one must access one's memories. Similarly, the statement "here is the moon" is meant to have the same meaning even when one inevitably looks away from it. As a consequence, ostensive references require one to *compensate* for temporal and spatial changes that could *contaminate* what one *intends* to indicate (60; 95). This claim can be separated into three topics.

First, Hegel infers that ostensive definitions are necessarily dependent on a prior understanding and conceptualization of temporality. For instance, time is a concept that differs from succession. Succession, unlike temporality, can be observed in a somewhat

direct fashion, insofar as succession indicates apparent changes in sensory content. Temporality, on the other hand, is an abstract concept of what was, is or will be. It cannot be *seen*, it can only be *meant*. Hence, time is *extra-sensory content*, projected into the ostensive referent, which maintains its truth value in the face of observed succession.

Second, a similar argument could be made about space. For example, “No, not that house, but this house over here.” Spatial designations require the observer to maintain fixed spatial relations, while ignoring irrelevant spatial relations. Maintaining fixed spatial relations and ignoring irrelevant spatial relations are actions performed by the subject. Hence, spatial relations cannot be the result of the immediate or passive reception of sensory knowledge.

Third, the *intended* meaning of an ostensive reference cannot occur without the *realization* of what “this” or “that” locutions *mean*. These terms are empty sets. In other words, they can reference any intended object, of any present moment. Yet, as soon as they are *filled* with an *intended* object, their passive indifference becomes an *active* place holder: “A simple thing of this kind which *is* through negation, which is neither This or That, a *not-This*, and is with equal indifference This as well as That ...” (Hegel 60; 96). This seemingly confused statement underscores the implicit *logic* and *intentional* component to ostensive definitions. I will now consecutively explicate these components.

First, ostensive definitions require the *capacity* for one to *negate* (i.e., a logical function) what is posited in the actual statement. For instance, the statement that ‘now is night,’ if it is to remain meaningful, must be taken up (by the *subject*) in a way that allows it to remain true even when it becomes daytime. That is, in order to salvage what

one *believes* it represents, one must negate what one *observes*, i.e., *succession*. If the above is true, then there is no immediacy in ostensive acts, because they are mediated by the logical function of negation.

Second, the above insight highlights the role of the observer as a *mediator* of the *intended* meaning of the referent: “[t]he force of its truth thus lies in the ‘I’, in the immediacy of my *seeing*, *hearing*, and so on; the vanishing of the single Now and Here that we mean is prevented by the fact that *I* hold them fast” (Hegel 61; 101). For Hegel, sense-certainty’s *claims* are *meanings*, and insofar as they are *intended meanings*, they are not passively sensed. The *formation* and *realization* of ostensive references are therefore formed by the observing subject via an intentional act.

In review, 1) ostensive definitions start out as meanings (as opposed to the *designation* of sensations), and 2) in order to salvage the intended meaning of an ostensive definition, one must close the empty sets of “here” and “now” as the *negation* of all other *here* and *nows*. 3) 1 and 2 require the *conceptual* application of temporal and spatial relations. As such, ostensive definitions fail to perform their presumed task as indicators of concrete and objectively given particulars. This is the case because ostensive definitions are only reference-able and understandable via the mediation of conceptual processes.

6. Hegel distinguishes between the literal meaning language communicates and the content one *intends* to convey through it:

It is as a universal too that we *utter* what the sensuous [content] is. What we say is: “This”, i.e. the *universal* This; or, ‘it is’, i.e. *Being in general*. Of course, we do not *envisage* the universal This or Being in general, but we *utter* the universal;

in other words, we do not strictly say what in this sense-certainty we *mean* to say. But language, as we see, is more truthful; in it, we ourselves directly refute what we *mean* to say, and since the universal is the true [content] of sense-certainty and language expresses this true [content] alone, it is just not possible for us ever to say, or express in word, a sensuous being that we *mean*. (60; 97)

Since we can never directly communicate sensory particulars, we can only state qualities, which are universal. Language is more ‘truthful’ than its users, because language only conveys universals, while its users *intend* particular sensory content.

Hegel’s insight explains why general designations are indistinct. Sellars draws a similar conclusion. For instance, he states that “it is much” easier to understand that the statement “‘Jones sees that the tree is green’ ascribes a propositional claim to Jones’ experiences,” than it is to understand “how such a statement describes Jones’ experiences” (39). For instance, “x can look red to S, without it being true of some specific shade of red that x looks to S to be of that shade, and the fact that S can believe that Cleopatra’s Needle is tall, without it being true of some determinate number of feet that S believes it to be that number of feet tall” (Sellars, 43).

7. DeVries and Triplett state “the empiricist always thinks of knowledge as growing from the particular to the general” (31). Borrowing from Kant, both Hegel and Sellars reverse this tradition by maintaining that knowledge can only occur by applying the general or universal to the particular. While all three figures hold subtle differences concerning this process, they all make the claim that ‘categories’ of some kind (whether they are universals or generals) are *logically prior* to the *realization* that empirical content possess ‘qualities.’ Hence, the *ability to form* knowledge claims, such as the ‘snow is white,’ *does not* find its *origination* in the *particular* (i.e., the appearing snow).

Instead, the *general* or *universal* is *epistemologically prior* to the particular. In this respect, Platonic influences are deeply imbedded in the philosophies of all three thinkers.

8. The so called “force” of sensory “truth” relies upon pre-established practices of referencing and *inferring* the intentional *meanings* of spatial and temporal terms (Hegel 61; 101):

I, *this* ‘I’, see the tree and assert that ‘Here’ is a tree; but another ‘I’ sees the house and maintains that ‘Here’ is not a tree but a house instead. Both truths have the same authentication, viz. [the perceived] immediacy of seeing, and the certainty and assurance that both have about their knowing; but the one truth vanishes in the other. (61; 101)

One’s empirical experiences are different from other individuals’. Therefore, what one points out or indicates is *not* immediately accessible to another individual. If one is to understand what another is indicating, one must *identify* with that person by *imagining* the standpoint of the observer’s report. This requires one to *infer* what another is pointing out or indicating by using *oneself* as the *template* for what it *means* and *what it is like* for another individual to be an empirical observer.

Wittgenstein makes a similar point in *Philosophical Investigations*. For instance, both Hegel and Wittgenstein accept that the various qualities of an object can be quite diverse depending on how one draws attention to it. One aspect of an object or (environment) may be ignored as another is seized upon (i.e., discrimination). For example, I once said to my friend, “look at that house,” I was captivated by its stone work, but my friend only noticed its brilliant red trim. As Wittgenstein points out, even more serious forms of misunderstanding may occur between one’s intended meaning and the one communicated. For example, imagine someone pointing and then stating an

unfamiliar name to the listener: “He might equally well take the name of a person, of which I give an ostensive definition, as that of a colour, of a race, or even of a point of the compass” (28; 13e). If objects appeared in standard ways before one had acquired notions of what they are, ostensive references would be quite effective; yet, as argued above, this is not the case.

Ostensive acts do not permit an immediate connection with one’s environment. Nor are ostensive acts thrust upon the observing subject by external forces. Instead, the *communicable content* of ostensive acts is restricted to what one can *infer* from the molding of oneself as an observer. For instance, when one proclaims ‘here is a tree,’ the proclamation is intelligible in light of what it is like for oneself to proclaim ‘here is a tree.’ If people lacked this kind of self-reference, it is unclear how empirical proclamations could hold meaning for those who heard them.

9. Hegel started with an analysis of why it is commonly believed that the existent object causes us to notice it. He then showed that the existent that permits recognition is the observing subject: “When we compare the relation in which knowing and the object first came on the scene, with the relation in which they now stand in this result, they are reversed” (61; 100). In other words, knowing *does not* directly stem from the object being observed as believed by the empiricist. Instead, the possibility of *perceiving* an entity as a certain kind of thing, originates in our knowledge/concepts *prior to* observation: “certainty is now to be found in the opposite element, viz. in the knowing, which previously was [perceived as] the unessential element” (61; 100). Proponents of

sense-certainty believe that knowing is the “unessential element” of perceiving, because they wrongly assume one needs only sensations to possess observational knowledge.

Since ‘knowing’ is an activity found in subjects (rather than objects) and objects cannot produce knowledge or certainty, the illusion of sense-certainty can now be understood for what it is—an act performed by the observer (61; 101). Hence, sense-certainty is a mediated occurrence. In section 3.11, we will see that this Hegelian claim plays a key role in Sellars “Empiricism and the Philosophy of the Mind.”

10. Hegel foresees the proponent of sense-certainty insisting that one can refrain from subject heavy accounts of perceiving. For instance, while the subject’s role can be accepted as necessary, one can argue that it can be severely limited:

I am a pure [act of] intuiting; I, for my part, stick to the fact that the Now is day, or that there is a tree; also I do not compare Here and Now themselves with one another, but stick firmly to *one* immediate relation: the Now is day. (63; 104)

Via this approach, the proponent of sense-certainty hopes to establish the individual object, which is said to be *given* in the ‘here’ and ‘now’. Hegel argues that this account of sense-certainty is incompatible with actual experience:

(1) I point out the ‘Now’, and it is asserted to be the truth. I point it out, however, as something that *has been*, or as something that has been superseded; I set aside the first truth. (2) I now assert as the second truth that it *has been*, that it is superseded. (3) But what has been, *is not*; I set aside the second truth, its *having been*, its supersession, and thereby negate the negation of the ‘Now’, and thus return to the first assertion, that the ‘Now’ *is*. The ‘Now’, and pointing out the ‘Now’, are thus so constituted that neither the one nor the other is something immediate and simple, but a movement which contains various moments. (63-4; 107)

With this phenomenological account, Hegel establishes that the truth of ostensive statements requires transitions and combinations of one’s *awareness* of temporal

experiences. For instance, each new succession of the present brings about a past that no longer exists. The observing subject must therefore *reassert* their intentional awareness on the present. Intentionality is the guidance of one's awareness by the volitional act (i.e., not caused by external forces) of an agent (i.e., a being capable of making a choice). Sustained awareness of an entity in the empirical 'now' is thus something constantly renewed by the observing subject.

Kant similarly maintains that "the manifold of appearances is always successively generated in the mind" (A 190). Yet, "[w]ithout consciousness that what we think is the very same as what we thought a moment before, all reproduction in the series of representations would be in vain. [...] For it is this one consciousness that unifies the manifold that has been successively intuited, and then also reproduced, into one representation" (A 103). For example, "the apprehension of the manifold in the appearance of a house that stands before me is successive" (A 190). Nonetheless, we experience *one* house rather than a series of houses.

The above account is not something one immediately recognizes about their own consciousness. It requires a cautious attitude of reflection to realize that immanent experience unfolds as something *shifting*⁹³ and as a result, intentional consciousness must constantly reinsert itself. This is necessary if the observing subject is to maintain the perception of a fixed entity:

⁹³ Hegel calls one's engagement in the dialectical process a 'movement,' and a position or content found in this process a 'moment'. This language is more than just colorful description. It denotes and captures the living and *developmental* existence of consciousness. Hegel believes he has not only developed a way to *signify* something about consciousness, he has also discerned an appropriate way to *exemplify* consciousness itself.

As noted in Chapter 1 and 2, it is one thing to reference an entity, but in order to claim knowledge of an entity, one must also be able to accurately account for it. In philosophy since Plato, and throughout most commonsense accounts of knowledge, if one cannot provide an accurate account of what one claims to know, it is deemed unlikely that one possesses knowledge. Hegel's claim to know consciousness therefore requires him to provide an accurate account of consciousness.

The Here that is *meant* would be the point; but it *is not*: on the contrary, when it is pointed out as something that *is*, the pointing-out shows itself to be not an immediate knowing [of the pointing out], but a movement from the Here that is *meant* through many Heres into the universal Here which is a simple plurality of Heres, just as the day is a simple plurality of Nows. (64; 108)

Though Hegel's account of time is a far cry from Kant's, they both hold that the experience of persistence requires temporal synthesis.

11. Hegel argues that an object is a collection of perspectives: "I point it out as a 'Here', which is a Here of other Heres, or is in its own self a 'simple togetherness of many Heres'; i.e., it is a universal" (*PS*, 110, 66). Hence, the objects of sense-certainty cannot be mind independent, because they are concatenations or conglomerations of perceived instances. In other words, the mind synthesizes sensory content into units that can be perceived as objects.

Husserl's notion of "adumbration" of sensations and Hegel's "simple togetherness of many Heres" bear important similarities. An excerpt from Husserl's *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology* will help clarify why the intended object is a universal and not specific sensory content:

The color of the seen physical thing is, of essential necessity, not a really inherent moment of the consciousness of color; it appears, but while it is appearing the appearance can and *must*, in the case of legitimatizing experience, be continually changing. *The same* color appears "in" continuous multiplicities of color *adumbrations*. Something similar is true of every sensuous quality and also of every spatial shape... That is a necessary situation, and obviously it obtains universally (87).

Husserl's use of "legimatizing experience" makes explicit what is implicit in our every day observations. He notes that an object's appearance is in succession or flux as light qualities change and the angle of observation change. Yet, one can and does obtain a

singular conception from this multiplicity, i.e., the notion of one individual object. This is what Hegel cryptically means when he states that the “object must express its nature” and it does this “by showing itself to be the *thing with many properties*” (*Phenomenology* 67; 112). In this manner, Hegel’s “*thing with many properties*” (67; 111) is comparable to Husserl’s “legitimizing experience” (*Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology* 87) in that the multiplicity of appearances are what constitute one’s notion of having perceived an object.

Many perspectives of one object are *adumbrations* (i.e., reappearances of the same appearing object). According to Hegel, adumbration occurs when the universal is recognized during the perceptual act: “This abstract universal medium, which can be called simply ‘thinghood’ or ‘pure essence’, is nothing else than what Here and Now have proved themselves to be, viz. a *simple togetherness of a plurality*” (68; 113).

12. Upon hearing Hegel’s rejection of ‘immediate’ observational knowing, one can imagine the following reply: I will force the experience of immediacy upon you, and thus overcome your intellectualizing of ostensive reports. For instance, one may invoke a series of ostensive ejaculations: ‘look...this piece of paper...right here...look at it! Hegel demonstrates why this tactic is hopeless:

They certainly mean, then, *this* bit of paper here which is quite different from the bit mentioned above; but they say ‘actual *things*’, ‘*external* or *sensuous objects*’, ‘*absolutely singular entities*’ [*Wesen*] and so on; i.e. they say of them only what is *universal*. Consequently, what is called the unutterable is nothing else than the untrue, the irrational, what is merely meant [but not actually expressed].

If nothing more is said of something than that it is an ‘actual thing’, an ‘external object’, its description is only the most abstract of generalities and in fact expresses its sameness with everything rather than its distinctiveness. [...] But if I want to help out language—which has the divine nature of directly reversing the meaning of what is said, of making it into something else, and thus

not letting what is meant *get into words* at all—by *pointing out* this bit of paper, experience teaches me what the truth of sense-certainty in fact is: I point it out as a ‘here’, which is a Here of other Heres, or is in its own self a ‘simple togetherness of many Heres’; i.e. it is a universal. (66; 110).

Hegel points out that there is a distinct difference between sensory experience and what one *thinks* sensory experiences indicates, e.g., the concepts of “‘actual *things*’, ‘*external* or *sensuous objects*’, ‘*absolutely singular entities*’ [*Wesen*] and so on” (66; 110). As Hegel correctly points out, such concepts are *universal*, and as such, are not simply sensory. Thus there is a difference between what is *asserted* about sense-certainty and the manner in which consciousness functions.

Sensory content is *conceived* as the individual object. As a result, the meanings one derives from object formation cannot occur in raw sensations. Meaning only arises when one projects (i.e. mediates) conceptual claims into sensory content.

13. Sellars offers a more sophisticated account of the given:

There are those who will say that although I have spoken of exploring blind alleys, it is really I who am blind. For, they will say, if that which we wish to characterize intrinsically is an *experience*, then there *can* be no puzzle about knowing *what kind* of experience it is, though there may be a problem about how this knowledge is to be communicated to others (56-7; 26).

Sellars continues:

Actually there are various forms taken by the myth of the given in this connection, depending on other philosophical commitment. [B]ut they all have in common the idea that the awareness of certain *sorts*—and by “sort” I have in mind [...] determinate sense repeatables—is a primordial, non-problematic feature of ‘immediate experience.’ In the context of conceptualism [...] this idea took the form of treating sensations as though they were absolutely specific, and infinitely complicated, *thoughts*. (59; 26).

In order to understand why Hegel’s and Sellars’ reject this common feature of the given, we need to first understand their account of perception (see section 3.10).

3.10. Hegel's and Sellars' Rejection of the Given via Their Views on Perception

1. In "Perception," Hegel distinguished between the results of perception (i.e., the experience of an object, occurrence or state) from the activity of experiencing sensory content (e.g. the particular colors present, in a particular rose, as one actively looks at it).⁹⁴ One can thus provide two basic kinds of phenomenological accounts as they relate to perception: 1) the phenomena of sensory content and 2) the experiences that arise from the results of perception (i.e., perceived objects and occurrences). Hegel begins with the former and ends with the latter.

In "Sense-Certainty," Hegel argued that whenever we intend to communicate or think about sensory content, it becomes transformed into universal qualities. He reiterates this point in "Perception":

[T]he sense element is still present, but not in the way it was supposed to be in [the position of] immediate certainty: not as the singular item that is 'meant', but as a universal the sense element is still present, but not in the way it was supposed to be in [the position] of immediate certainty: not as the singular item that is 'meant', but as a universal, or what as that which will be defined as a *property*. (68; 113).

In perception, sensory content is converted into universal properties. For instance, I can insist that I see a red square and that I am certain that this is what I see. Yet, 'red' and 'square' are concepts and not sensory particulars. Consciousness imperceptibly slides away from sensory content to conceptual content whenever it seeks to recognize, communicate or characterize.

⁹⁴ Like Sellars, I use the term 'sensory content' to refer to the sensuous *content* found *in* experience. The advantage of this term is that avoids the problems associated with referencing *raw* sensations or 'feels'.

Because perception converts sensory content into universals, it also enables consciousness to differentiate amongst properties:

The wealth of sense-knowledge belongs to perception, not to immediate certainty, for which it was only the source of instances; for only perception contains negation, that is, difference or manifoldness, within its own essence. (67; 112).

The *recognition* of different properties requires the *act* of ‘negation.’ Negation permits the conceptual separation of individual properties that inhere in one object.

The logical function of ‘negation’ plays a crucial role in converting *sensory content* into individuated properties:

To wit, if the many determinate properties were strictly indifferent to one another, if they were simply and solely self-related, they would not be determinate; for they are only determinate in so far as they *differentiate* themselves from one another, and *relate* themselves to *others* as to their opposites. (69; 114).

The designation of a quality becomes meaningful when one is able to distinguish it from differing qualities. For instance, the quality ‘red’ is meaningless unless one is able to contrast or distinguish it from other color designations. The logical function of negation makes a property *determinate* by *excluding* it from all other determinations. Hegel calls this act ‘determinate negation’.

Negation (in perception) requires that one already possess a significant array of possible designations that are mutually relatable and exclusionary. For instance, an object can be both red and square. Yet, we cannot *perceive* an object as being square and round, at the same time and in the same manner. The subject must be in possession of many concepts, as well as the manner in which they exclude or entail one another, as a precondition for the recognition of qualities.

We can now summarize Hegel’s initial insight into perception as follows. First, succession must be unified: “This abstract medium, which can be called simply

‘thinghood’ or ‘pure essence’, is nothing else than what Here and Now have proved themselves to be, viz. a *simple togetherness of a plurality*” (68-113). The object appears as an object, when its properties are seen as ‘one’ entity. However, objects display many properties. Hence, properties can only be distinguished via the concept of ‘One’ (i.e., unity) and the logical function of negation: “Only when it [i.e., property] belongs to a One is it a property, and only in relation to others is it [i.e., property] determinate” (71; 117).

2. Sellars explicitly maintains what is implicit in Hegel’s above account of perception, i.e., the meaning of determinate qualities entails the negation of other designations:

And while this does not imply that one must have concepts before one has them, it does imply that one can have the concept of green only by having a whole battery of concepts of which it is one element. It implies that while the process of acquiring the concept green may—indeed does—involve a long history of acquiring *piecemeal* habits of response to various objects in various circumstances, there is an important sense in which one has *no* concept pertaining to the logical properties of physical objects in Space and Time unless one has them all [...] (45)

Sellars’s conception of space and time differs from Hegel’s. However, we should not project these differences into this passage. In this passage, Sellars terms ‘Space’ and ‘Time’ performs a similar function as Hegel’s terms ‘Here’ and ‘Now.’

Kant, Hegel and Sellars accept that meaning does not emerge from logically independent content (e.g. logical atomism), but rather from a robust system of interrelated categories that mutually exclude or entail one another. In *Knowledge, Mind,*

and the Given, deVries and Triplett dub this model of meaning ‘conceptual holism’ (20, 29-30).⁹⁵

Sellars imagines the logical atomists (who maintain that there is no meaning more fundamental than “physical objects in Space and Time”) responding to his account of meaning: “Until you have disposed, therefore, of the idea that there is a more fundamental logical space than that of physical objects in Space and Time, or shown that it too is fraught with coherence [i.e., interrelations to other content], your incipient *Meditations Hegeliennes* are premature” (45).

Why does Sellars refer to “*Meditations Hegeliennes*” instead of ‘*Meditations Kantiennes*,’ when he clearly favors Kant? Kant is not a holist, whereas Hegel determinate negation requires holism. Sellars’ is clearly influenced by this aspect of Hegel’s thought and likely wished to acknowledge it.

Moreover, Sellars likely had the following in mind: Kant claims that the ‘forms’ of time and space ground all experience of objects as well as our understanding of geometry. Perhaps Sellars believed Kant placed too much emphasis on the ‘forms’ of time and space, and as a result, he downplayed their participation in the unified framework of interrelated categories that permit determinate negation. In this regard, Hegel and Sellars suggest that time and space function discursively (i.e., participating in concepts) in perceptual experience.

What does Sellars gain via his chosen association with Hegel rather than Kant? Sellars appears to be implying that the primary grounds of *experience* are not the forms of time and space but a much larger logical array of conceptual processes that functionally relate as a whole. One could point out that Kant is also committed to a

⁹⁵ As we will see, in Chapter 4, conceptual holism is a central feature of Brandom’s thought.

similar position; yet, in this instance, the concern is one of degree. Rightly or wrongly, Sellars appears to believe that Hegel holds that the scope of consciousness encompasses a greater unity than Kant accepted.

This reading of Hegel can be supported with an excerpt from Hegel's *Third Part of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline*⁹⁶:

The main aim of a philosophy of mind can only be to re-introduce unity of idea and principle into the theory of mind, and so re-interpret the lesson of those Aristotelian books [i.e., *On Soul*].

Even our own sense of the mind's living unity naturally protests against any attempt to break it [i.e., the mind] up into different faculties, forces, or, what comes to the same thing, activities, conceived as independent of each other. (*Philosophy of Mind* 4)

This view accounts for Hegel's rejection of Kantian-like projects that seek to only assign determinate structural components to the mind.

Hegel argues that the attempt to separate the mind into distinct components and processes inevitably commits the fallacy of treating such designations as if they were existent entities:

Any aspect which can be distinguished in mental action is stereotyped as an independent entity, and the mind thus made a skeleton-like mechanical collection. It makes absolutely no difference if we substitute the expression 'activities' for power and faculties. Isolate the activities and you similarly make the mind a mere aggregate, and treat their essential correlation as an external incident. (63)

Sellars' reads this type of framework into Kant's *Critiques*. For instance, Sellars writes:

"the ontological aspects of Kant's idealism concern in large part the ontology [i.e., existent kinds] of mental states ("Kant's Transcendental Idealism" 1)

⁹⁶ I will subsequently refer to the "*Third Part of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline*" as the '*Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*'.

3. As we proceed with Hegel's account of perception, the claim that Hegel is a conceptual holist (see section 3.11.2) can be strengthened:

Being, however, is a universal in virtue of its having mediation or the negative within it; when it *expresses this in its immediacy it is a differentiated, determinate* property. As a result *many* such properties strictly speaking only through the addition of a further determination—are related [only] to themselves; they are indifferent to one another, each is on its own and free from the others. (68; 113)

Properties are distinguished by negation. As a result, the subject must already know some properties which she is excluding.

In order for an object to *appear* as an object, its properties must be properly unified into one object:

[For example] [t]his salt is a simple Here, and at the same time manifold; it is white and *also* tart, *also* cubical in shape, of a specific gravity, etc. [...] The whiteness does not affect the cubical shape, and neither affects the tart taste, etc.; on the contrary, since each is itself a simple relating of self to self it leaves the others alone, and is connected with them only by the indifferent Also. This Also is thus the pure universal itself, the 'thinghood', which holds them together in this way. (*Phenomenology* 69; 113)

The act of 'negation' along with the logical function of an 'also' permits various *known* designations to be excluded and related to one particular entity. For example, I see an ellipse, *not* any other shape, 'Also' its surface shines in the sense that it is *not* dull, and 'Also' it is green as *opposed* to other colors. (Here, I specifically contrasted one quality with another, yet in practice, such contrasts are implied.) These combined determinate negations form the perception of a green shiny disk, which Hegel calls the "second moment," i.e., the posited object (69; 115).

Hegel's model of perception can be summarized as follows:

Succession of 'Heres' and 'Nows' → 'Here' and 'Now' brought under the universal medium of 'thinghood' → various properties are made determinate via 'Negation' (a determination) or "the *One* excludes opposite properties" (69; 115)

→ various determinate negations are combined by the logical function of an ‘Also’ → the multiplicity of properties is unified into oneness = Perceived Thing

Hegel’s model requires two conceptual abilities and three ontological *classifications*⁹⁷: 1) the logic of “negation” and “also,” and 2) the ontology of the “I” which sees the “this,” (i.e., ‘thing with many qualities’), which is ultimately “one.” This model excludes the possibility of non-inferential/immediate knowledge given in sensation.

4. Does Hegel’s model of perception commit him to the mistake he warns against in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, i.e., does he describe “the mind [as a] mere aggregate, and treat their essential correlation as an external incident” (see section 3.11.2) (63)? Ayer’s linguistic insight can ironically help us answer this question.⁹⁸ In order to arrive at this answer, we must first digress into his criticism of metaphysics:

It happens to be the case that we cannot, in our [English] language, refer to the sensible properties of a thing without introducing a word or phrase which appears to stand for the thing itself as opposed to anything which may be said about it. And as a result of this, those who are infected by the primitive superstition that to every name a single real entity must correspond assume that it is necessary to distinguish logically between the thing itself and any, or all, of its sensible properties. (*Language, Truth and Logic* 474)

Ayer argues that metaphysicians mistakenly postulate “real non-existent entities” (475). For example, some metaphysicians claim that *roundness*, *redness*, *goodness*, *excellence*, etc. are qualities that *subsist* independent of substance. Ayer argues this occurs, because “the postulation of real non-existent entities results from the superstition [...] that, to every word or phrase that can be the grammatical subject of a sentence, there must somewhere be a real entity corresponding” (475).

⁹⁷ Note, the operative word is ‘classification’ and not an *assertion* concerning existents. It will also require a limited understanding of the concepts determinate negation excludes.

⁹⁸ I state this is ‘ironic,’ because Ayer believed that only what could be empirically verified was ‘significant’. According to Ayer, anything that was not ‘significant’ is literally ‘nonsense’.

Though Ayer is concerned with the manner in which metaphysicians postulate real though insubstantial entities, his insight into language can help one avoid misreading Hegel. Hegel's discourse on perception requires him to discern many of its features. However, when describing these features, it is a mistake to assume they are separate and distinct from consciousness. In other words, one may wrongly assume that Hegel is developing a two-tiered account of consciousness: 1) a phenomenological account and 2) an account of 'real non-existent' processes, which are distinct from an individual's consciousness. To make this point clear, let us draw an example from biology and the living human being. For instance, one can distinguish between the living human and the general biological processes that permit life. One may as a result mistakenly believe that processes like respiration and reproduction exist independently of living bodies. Similarly, Hegel's account of perceptual processes should not be mistaken for something distinct from consciousness.

Ayer writes "in talking of 'its' appearances we [seem] to distinguish the thing from the appearances, but that is simply an accident of linguistic usage" (474). In regards to consciousness, Hegel is committed to a similar claim; we should not assume the features of consciousness, its process and their functions are separable or different from consciousness.

5. In stating that perception requires certain logical distinctions like 'also' and 'negation,' one may wrongly assume that Hegel's perceptual model requires verbal imagery (i.e., *imagining* spoken words). However, the logic that grounds the perceptual

act is implicit. It is only upon careful reflection or theoretical investigation that these logical distinctions become overtly expressible.

Hegel carefully distinguishes between degrees of cognitive activity. This recurring theme of the *Phenomenology* is given explicit treatment in Hegel's *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*:

The 'concrete' nature of the mind involves for the observer the peculiar difficulty that the several grades and special types which develop its intelligible unity in detail are not left standing as so many separate existences confronting its more advanced aspects [...] The species and grades of mental evolution [...] lose their separate existence and become factors, states and features in the higher grades of its development. As a consequence of this, a lower and more abstract aspect of mind betrays the presence in it, even to experience, of a higher grade. Under the guise of sensation, e. g., we may find the very highest mental life as its modification or its embodiments. (*Philosophy of Mind* 5)

Hegel argues that sensation, as the lowest form of consciousness, can be infused with the most developed forms of mental life. He for instance cites the "moral and religious principles" some individuals claim to *sense* in their empirical experiences (5).

Critics may argue that it is Hegel who is taking one form of consciousness (i.e., sensory consciousness) and improperly projecting concepts into it. As a consequence, one can claim that Hegel fails properly to recognize what actually occurs in perception. Though Hegel has already dealt with similar concerns in his chapter "Sense-Certainty" (see section 3.9), it is important to clarify this objection from within the current context.

Hegel shows that perceptual *experience* is not sensation, since perceptual experience requires logical relations and conceptual designations. As a result, Hegel turns the tables on those who urge he is misrepresenting sensory experience. He does this by showing that it is they (as observing subjects) who claim that there is knowing or certainty in sensation. In doing so, Hegel rightly points out that it is his opponents, who

are projecting a more advanced form of consciousness into sensory consciousness, i.e., they are projecting cognitive and logical roles onto sensory content.

This ‘mature’ Hegelian insight can be found in the *Phenomenology*: “As this pure relating of itself to itself, it remains merely *sensuous being* in general, (71; 117).⁹⁹ Hegel is suggesting that one can relate to ‘Heres’ and ‘Nows’ in such way as to attend to sensory *content*. However, bereft of the logical role of negating, which permits the designations of particular qualities (i.e., concepts), one cannot ‘perceive’ an object: “since it no longer possesses the character of negativity; being only ‘my’ *meaning* [*ein Meinen*], i.e., it has ceased altogether to perceive and has withdrawn into itself” (71; 117).

In order for consciousness to characterize mental content, to communicate what it is like or assert what it signifies, it must make its contents determinable. It does this by applying negation which establishes determinate qualities via universal designations. Only after consciousness begins this process does it possess something that is communicable, assertable or knowable.

Consciousness achieves communicable or knowable content at the cost of losing its sensory component: “But sensuous being and *my* meaning themselves pass over into perception: I am thrown back to the beginning and drawn once again into the same cycle which suppressed itself in each moment and as a whole” (71; 117). In other words, the self cannot remain in sensuous being (i.e., as a form of consciousness) when it attempts to mean or know anything.

⁹⁹ This passage should not be mistaken for an admission of the immediacy of sensory content. For even “*sensuous being* in general” (71; 117) is still a mediated experience, because it is the ‘I’ that combines and relates these various contents in one experience (i.e., what Kant calls apperception). While Hegel is not arguing for a Kantian account of synthesis, there is some overlap between Kant’s synthesis and Hegel’s application of mediation.

6. Sellars rejects the claim that ‘*looks*’ statements or ‘*seeing* it to be the case’ is *logically prior* to observational *claims*. As we shall see, Sellars’ rejection of this claim resembles Hegel’s denial that perception is *unmediated*. For instance, Sellars argues that the ability to make a statement, such as “this looks red,” is dependent on a prior *conception* of what red is or means as an *observational claim*:

The point I wish to stress at this time [...] is that the concept of *looking red*, the ability to recognize something *looks red*, presupposes the concept of *being red*, and that the latter concept involves the ability to tell what colors objects have by looking at them, which in turn, involves knowing in what circumstances to place an object if one wishes to ascertain its color by looking at it. (43)

As we saw in Hegel’s “Introduction,” he also establishes a remarkably similar model for knowledge claims. Though Hegel’s model extends to far more than observational statements, it also functionally includes them. He states: “If we designate *knowledge* as the Notion [*Begriff*, i.e., concept], but the essence or the *True* as what exists, or the object, then the examination consists in seeing whether the Notion corresponds with the object” (84; 53).

Sellars makes an equivalent claim:

x is red $\cdot \equiv \cdot$ x would *look* red to standard observers in standard conditions
(*Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* 36).

What Sellars considers ‘standard conditions’ are a part of what Hegel calls “criterion.” For example, testing if the “notion corresponds with the object” (84; 53) requires one to conduct the test according to what are deemed to be appropriate circumstances. For instance, Hegel’s example of asserting that all existing cows are black, because that is the way they may appear at night, intentionally underscores the misapplication of what it

means to report ‘all the cows are black’. Sellars has these conventions in mind when he employs the term ‘observational conditions.’

Both Hegel and Sellars propose that *knowing* that something is the case must correspond with the *conditions* appropriate for determining the kind of observational knowledge one claims to possess. Accordingly, the perceptions of one observer can be conveyed to another, because they share a criterion for properly formed predications. However, as both Hegel and Sellars note, shared perceptual content *is not sensory* content but logical and conceptual content. Additionally, they both agree that interrelated concepts are a precondition for making determinations, i.e., the position called ‘conceptual holism’ (see sections 3.3 and 3.4).

The act of *recognition* is the ‘moment of truth’ (Hegel) or an inference (Sellars) from which one posits that something is or has some state. However, the moment one gives an *appearance* an independent “status” as found in the right side of Sellars’ above equation, *it necessarily exceeds sensory content*. Instead, it becomes the *conception* of such sensory contents *as possessing a qualitative status* (“Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” 36):

[If the above is true] then it follows, as a matter of simple logic, that one couldn’t have observational knowledge of *any* fact unless one knew many *other* things as well. [...] the point is specifically that observational knowledge of a particular fact, e.g., that this is green, presupposes that one knows general facts of the form *X is a reliable symptom of Y*. And to admit this requires an abandonment of the traditional empiricist’s idea that observational knowledge “stand on its own feet.” (75-76)

Sellars maintains that a *complex network of logical relations*, which *functionally* forms a *criterion* for classification, is necessary to form determinations. In short, Sellars is rehashing Hegel’s determinate negation, which permits determinations via a system of

designations that are mutually inclusive and exclusive. Here Sellars conception of a ‘reliable symptom’ functions the same as Hegel’s conception of a ‘criterion’ that permits knowledge claims. Hence, Sellars’ conclusions are prefigured by Hegel’s method of testing knowledge claims via a ‘criterion’ and his model of determinate negation.

7. We already noted that the presumed ‘certainty’ that is said to arise out of sensation is a hidden or subtle positing that the object already exists: “[b]ut the distinction between the in-itself [a mind independent particular] and knowledge is already present in the very fact that consciousness knows an object [...]” (*Phenomenology* 54; 85).

Similarly Sellars states:

[...] *we now recognize that instead of coming to have a concept of something because we have noticed that sort of thing, to have the ability to notice a sort of thing is already to have the concept of that sort of thing* (“Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” 87).

Hegel and Sellars argue that we can make determinations, because we already possess knowledge of the kinds of things we can reference in our speech.

There is a persistent misconception in Analytic and Continental thought: refraining from *asserting* that an entity possesses a particular status, and holding that it *only appears* to have such a status, enables one to avoid inferences. *If* one could avoid making an inference, one could also avoid the problem of mediation. Hence, one could secure ironclad descriptions of phenomenal experiences.

Sellars shows that the ability to make a statement such as ‘this looks red’ is logically dependent on a *prior conception* of what red *is* or means, as an *observational claim*. This process requires an inferential move.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, no ‘pure’ description

¹⁰⁰ Sellars’ conclusion on this issue has been a central concern in Brandom’s scholarship for over a decade.

(i.e., description without judgment) is possible. Hence, descriptions like assertion can be false. Likewise, descriptions, like assertions, require justification *if* they are to be upheld as knowledge. Hegel also takes this position, for ‘look’ statements claim that one is privy to determinate and unmediated (i.e., they are directly known) appearances. As already noted, Hegel rejects these views. Moreover, due to this conclusion, Hegel recognizes that one can make mistakes in any account of personal experience, even at the level of phenomenology (see section 3.13).¹⁰¹

8. Hegel’s and Sellars’ models of cognition not only deconstruct the immediacy of given contents, they also dissolve the myth of given standardizations. Instead of fixed observable objects creating a normative basis for designations, one’s *conceptions* affect the content of one’s observations. They believe concepts affect the *way* observations are made and understood (*Phenomenology* 54; 85).¹⁰² Accordingly, when the *intended* object fails to properly relate to one’s knowledge, one is presented with criteria for a new kind of observation and a new *conception* of an object.

According to Hegel and Sellars, recognition (i.e., cognitive awareness) of empirical content stems neither from sensory content alone *nor* concepts alone, but rather from a confluence of both. On this particular issue, both thinkers are still Kantian:

¹⁰¹ This insight alone, discredits the majority of Husserl’s vast writings, which he proclaims are pure descriptions, and thus do not require justification. In particular, see his “*Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology*.”

¹⁰² Hegel writes:

If the comparison shows that these two moments do not correspond to one another, it would seem that consciousness must alter its knowledge to make it conform to the object. But, in fact, in the alteration of the knowledge, the object itself alters for it too, for the knowledge that was present was essentially a knowledge of the object: as the knowledge changes, so too does the object, for it essentially belonged to this knowledge. (*Phenomenology* 54; 85)

“[i]ntuitions (i.e., appearance) and concepts therefore constitute the elements of all our cognition, so that neither concepts without intuition (i.e., an appearance) corresponding to them in some way nor intuitions without concepts can yield a cognition” (*Critique*, B 74).¹⁰³

Locke’s empiricism on the other hand upholds that one’s sensations *determine* and generate the ideas one associates with sensory content. For instance, he claims that sensing something red would create the idea of redness. Hegel and Sellars radically revise this form of empiricism (i.e., sensory content provide immediate ideas about the sensory world) by maintaining that concepts are the outgrowth of *acquired criteria* for making observations. Properly speaking, one cannot make an observation without concepts. Sellars believes that we acquire observational criteria unconsciously via our habituation into language. As we shall see, he believes this process affords us with concepts (see section 3.10.10).

For the British empiricists, the origins of new ideas are accounted for by the mind’s capacity to combine the simple ideas obtained in sensation. Hegel and Sellars oppose this stance by showing that new concepts are formed by either implicitly or explicitly revising and/or appealing to previous utilizations of observational criteria (i.e., a historical process). While such newly acquired observations may grow out of overt theorizing, Sellars notes that it typically arises out of our *habituation* into linguistic practices. That is, the observing subject is habituated by both grammatical rules of predication and the accepted *use* of nouns, verbs and adjectives.

¹⁰³ “[Consciousness’] aim is to realize its concept or to be reason actual, along with which the content is realized as rational. This activity is cognition” (*Philosophy of mind* 64). Presumably this is true of empirical content as well.

Sellars does *not* claim that a conceptual framework requires *overt* self-reflective determinations. Instead, he argues that observations may be *retrospectively judged* as being properly or improperly formed. Hence, the very requirements or the “criterion” of knowing itself may change. This too is a Hegelian theme (54-55; 85).

Both thinkers are in agreement that any criterion for observation presupposes two different kinds of conceptions: 1) concepts of the kinds of things that may be observed, and 2) a conception of a proper *method* (Sellars) or ‘criterion’ (Hegel) for employing determinations. These *mediations* are necessary for forming all *meaningful* predicated statements or thoughts that possess epistemic value.¹⁰⁴ Hegel and Sellars accept that sensory content plays an important role in making observations, while at the same time demonstrating that the traditional empirical view is false (i.e., sensory content functions as non-inferential knowledge *given* in sensation).

9. Sellars’ contribution to the above themes lie in his insights into language and its affect on cognition:

Sellars applies the above insight to any kind of *meaningful* awareness: If, however, the association is not mediated by the awareness of facts either of the forms of *x resembles y*, or of the form *x is \emptyset* , then we have a view of the general type which I will call *psychological nominalism*, according to which all awareness of *sorts, resemblances, facts*, etc., in short, all awareness of abstract entities—indeed, all awareness even of particulars—is a linguistic affair. (*Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* 63)

As implied above, the capacity to undergo a phenomenological occurrence is not the same as being able to *regard* appearing phenomena as *meaningful*. Thus we have a distinction between one’s access to content, such as the ability to have access to sensory

¹⁰⁴ This process *does not* require ‘verbal imagery’. It requires logical content and the formal meaning of language.

content, and one's capacity to *employ* content in a manner that permits it to play an *epistemic role*. Properly speaking, the *ability* to know is not the ability to undergo a non-cognitive experience (as presumed by the British empiricists). Rather, the capacity to *employ* and *evaluate* knowledge claims concerning observable content (i.e., regardless of whether it is called 'internal' or 'external' content) stems from a capacity that Kant calls 'judgment' (*Urteil*). In this instance, a judgment starts with the potential use of concepts, which are then related to observable content.

For Sellars, judgments can only be formed after one becomes an accomplished language user. For example, one's acquired capacity to utilize and recognize color designations, such as 'white,' produces the possibility for the *realization* that 'the snow is white'. In other words, without the conceptual framework of colors and the appropriate linguistic practices (which permit one to apply them), the 'idea' of 'white,' will not occur in the presence of white objects. Nor will one (as Sellars claims) recognize (in a rational sense) the *difference* among sensory contents, which are typically *understood* as colored.

10. For Sellars, observational *knowledge* requires *observational criteria* (i.e., the criteria that indicate the appropriate conditions to make observational determinations). For instance, the *notion* of green and *observational conditions* appropriate for distinguishing colors necessarily refer to one another in the following manner: 1) the *conclusion* and conception that something is or looks green rests upon the assessment of the *observational criteria* utilized to detect instances of green, 2) conversely, *observational criteria* for observing green phenomena cannot be formed until one develops a notion of green phenomena (45). This does not mean, for example, that one

cannot notice a coconut before one knows what coconuts are. Rather, one cannot *perceive* a coconut *as being* a coconut, unless one 1) already has a *conception* of what it is to be a *coconut* (e.g., a *drupaceous fruit*, *spherical*, *brown*, etc.) and 2) is in possession of criteria for making this recognition.

Recognizing that an observational statement *indicates* knowledge, requires that one can 1) acknowledge that the reporter is capable of sufficiently applying *observational criteria* to its respective phenomena and that 2) the reporter's observational statements reliably indicate this capacity¹⁰⁵:

For if the authority of the report "this is green" lies in the fact that the existence of green items appropriately related to the perceiver can be inferred from the occurrence of such reports, it follows that only a person who is able to draw this inference, and therefore who has not only the concept *green*, but also the concept of uttering "This is green"—indeed, the concept of certain conditions of perception, those which would correctly be called 'standard conditions'—could be in a position to token "this is green" in recognition of its authority (75).

Sellars' qualifications on authoritative reports reveal why cases in which one remains *ignorant of established criteria*, though consistent with them, *cannot* represent knowledge. For instance, "thermometer view" where one "parrots" a consistently correct response without reasons or understanding appears *prima facie* not to be a knowledge claim. His account explains why this *prima facie* response is true.

Sellars' argument disproves the claim that perceptual knowledge is *given* by showing that the requirements of knowledge are beyond the threshold of what can be properly considered a passive ability: if *observational knowledge* requires 1) the possession of concepts, 2) the utilization of criteria, and 3) the ability to assess and correct observations *as reasons* for denying or affirming observations, *then* observational knowledge *cannot* be a passive product of *sensory occurrences*. It must be much more.

¹⁰⁵ This is also a theme central to Brandom's work.

For these reasons, Sellars argues that all *awareness* of *sorts*, *resemblances* and *facts* require *cognitive* abilities.

11. Sellars argues that awareness of sorts, resemblances and facts pertain to the realm of *reasons*. As already noted (see 3.10.9), awareness of sorts, resemblances and facts are cognitive acts. This is the case because the awareness of sorts, resemblances and facts require the possession, employment and assessment of criteria under which it is appropriate to make designations. If one does not possess the criteria for the conditions under which designations can be correctly formed, one will not possess the awareness of sorts, resemblances and facts. Employing and assessing criteria for recognizing appropriate or inappropriate usage of designations (observational or otherwise) are acts of *reasoning*. If one lacks these abilities, then no recognition of epistemic value can take place.

The above abilities provide an explicit division between *propositional knowledge* (or *fact perception*)—where one thinks *that* something is the case—and *object perception*, where one *reacts* to what is being sensed. The term ‘object perception’ is typically employed when one wishes to denote that one’s behaviors *lack* 1) reasons for their enactment, 2) the awareness of *how* one is or should respond, and 3) the *acknowledgment* of qualitative status. In this manner, Sellars draws a *technical partition* between what is considered cognitive and what is not.

12. Hegel ends his chapter on perception by offering an account of the ‘deceptive illusion of perception’. According to Hegel, this illusion occurs for a reason similar to

that of why the illusion of sense-certainty occurs: there is the *presumption* that what is thought about an object and what is perceived are two different kinds of entities (i.e., one is mental; the other is a mind-independent object).¹⁰⁶ Hegel believes this kind of dualism is the result of the “sophistry of perception” (77; 130). According to Hegel, when consciousness succumbs to this ‘illusion’ “it convicts itself of untruth” (79; 131).

At the end of “Perception,” Hegel offers an account of how this ‘illusion’ can be overcome. In “Thinking” from *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, Hegel provides an abbreviated account of this argument. I will appeal to this latter argument (as opposed to its longer formulation the *Phenomenology*) for the sake of brevity. In addressing this abbreviated account, my intent is not to focus on Hegel’s argument. Instead, I want to highlight some themes that resonate with the above 3 sections on Sellars (see 3.10.9-11).

Hegel, like Sellars, claims that the recognition of categorical states is a learned ability:

[U]nderstanding with its formal identity, working up the representations, that have been memorized, into species, genera, laws, forces, &c., in short into categories—thus indicating that the raw material does not get the truth of its being save in these thought-forms [i.e., categories] (*Philosophy of Mind* 89)

If the ‘categories’ have to be “memorized,” then they are learned. This view is compatible with Sellars ‘*psychological nominalism*’.

Secondly, if the ‘truth’ of what is being represented is not possible until it is given categorical status, then “the raw material” which is worked up into “representations” holds no epistemic value without the application of the categories (89). The application of the categories (or thought-forms) to the raw material of sensory content is a judgment:

¹⁰⁶ Moore’s arguments in favor of this kind of dualism will later characterize much of his career. It also accounts for why he is opposed to Hegelian idealism.

As intrinsically infinite negativity, thought is essentially an act of partition,—*judgment*, which however does not break up the content again into the old antithesis of universality and being, but distinguishes on the lines supplied by the interconnexions peculiar to the concept. (89)

Simply put, the act of determinate negation is a judgment. Judgment makes things determinate by distinguishing concepts which properly and improperly relate to what is being judged. This view is compatible with what has been dubbed as Sellars' 'conceptual holism'.

Categories or thought-forms and the capacity to make judgments that conform to them permit reason:

[t]hought supersedes [sublimates] the formal distinctions and institutes at the same time an identity of the differences [i.e., the perceived thing as a result of determinate negation],—thus being formal *reason* or inferential understanding. (89)

According to Hegel, the recognition that something has specific features requires an act of reason. As seen above, Sellars makes a similar claim.

Hegel and Sellars believe that recognition requires judgment. The occurrence of this judgment can be retrospectively recognized by inferential logic¹⁰⁷:

(α) understanding out of its generalities (the categories) *explains* the individual [...]: (β) in the judgment it explains the individual to be an universal (species, genus). In these forms the *content* appears as given [i.e., its categorical content appears to be given in perception]: (γ) but in inference (syllogism) it [i.e., a judgment] characterizes a content from itself, by superseding [i.e., sublimates] that form-difference. With the perception of the necessity [i.e., it must be this way] the last immediacy still attaching to formal thought it has vanished (90).

Though this passage is designed to show how consciousness can recognize itself in what appears to be alien to itself (i.e., Spirit), his argument forms conclusions that coincide with Sellars. These relevant features of Hegel's argument can be stated as follows:

¹⁰⁷ We will see in Chapter 4, that the use of inferential reasoning to recognize one's own judgment and others' is a central theme in Brandom's work.

- 1) A judgment places content under a universal.
- 2) It only *appears as if* this categorical content is given in the content itself (i.e., the mind independent entity).
- 2) The appearing content is replaced by categorical meaning when one forms a judgment about it.
- 3) The judged content appears to be necessary, i.e., it appears as if it cannot be otherwise.
- 4) However, the appearance of necessity is an illusion created by the logical relations of the judgment.
- C) There is no immediate logical or categorical meaning given in appearing content.

Like Sellars, Hegel rejects the claim that mind-independent objects provide non-inferential knowledge of determinable states of being. The above argument needs to be true in order for Hegel to draw his primary conclusion: the appearing otherness (i.e., the mind-independent) of perceptual content is an illusion.¹⁰⁸ *If Hegel cannot justifiably draw this conclusion, then his claims concerning Spirit, which rejection dualism are put in jeopardy. Sellars on the other hand, accepts the dualism of mental content and physical existence.*

3.11. *Two Accounts of Consciousness Without Self-Recognition: "Lordship and Bondage" and "The Logic of Private Episodes"*

1. Hegel's and Sellars' arguments against the given can be divided into two groups. As we have already seen, the first group argues that knowledge is not passively received in observation (see sections 3.5 to 3.11). The second opposes the rationalists' strain of the given.

¹⁰⁸ Similar argument's can be drawn from the section 117-131 of the *Phenomenology*. I chose to draw from *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences* rather than the *Phenomenology*, because the former text expresses the points I want to emphasize in a convenient format.

The rationalists, as well as Kant, Hegel and Sellars believe that a logical space (i.e., the ability to employ logic or more generally reason) is necessary for the act of recognition. Unlike Hegel and Sellars, the rationalists believe that the space of reasons is not learned but somehow given to us, i.e., we are either 1) born with a logical space of reasoning that becomes perfected as we enter into adulthood or 2) that it spontaneously erupts at a certain stage of a person's physical maturation. As shown in section 3.11.9-12, Hegel and Sellars believe the logical space of reasons is *learned*, rather than inborn or spontaneously produced.

The rationalist strain of the given additionally includes the following claims: 1) a distinct recognition of internal states is logically *prior* to one's awareness of empirical states, 2) mankind is born with or spontaneously obtains the ability to determinately recognize one's own mental states, and 3) nothing is more clear or certain than one's own mental states. I will now address why Hegel and Sellars reject these views.

2. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel begins with sense-certainty, because it is believed to be the most basic form of consciousness. According to Hegel, the *apparent* experience of immediacy is the least self-aware manner in which consciousness perceives itself to undergo observation. In order for Hegel's position to be true, it must also be true that consciousness does not start out *knowing* the manner in which it actually exists. Moreover, this view also requires that the self appraisals of consciousness can be wrong. According to Hegel's *Phenomenology*, consciousness offers false accounts of itself in nearly all of its possible manifestations.

In “Lordship and Bondage,” Hegel radicalizes the claim that consciousness *does not* start out with an accurate understanding of itself. In this section, he argues that the *recognition* of oneself as an individuated and conscious being is learned.

Hegel claims that only by using oneself as a mirror for the other, does one begin to *recognize* the other as well as oneself: “Each sees the *other* do the same as it does; each does itself what it demands of the other, and therefore also does what it does only in so far as the other does the same” (112; 182). Hegel argues that the modeling of the other as oneself—combined with the mirroring of the other’s behaviors—establishes a ‘middle term’ by which one comes to know what it is like to be the other as well as oneself:

Each is for the other the middle term, through which each mediates itself with itself and unites itself; and each is for itself, and for the other, immediate being on its own account, which at the same time is such only through this mediation. They *recognize* themselves as *mutually recognizing* one another. (112; 184)

There are two challenges to the above interpretation of this passage: 1) it can be argued that these passages concern mutual recognition and not the attainment of self recognition and 2) *if* in order to recognize the self, one must first acknowledge the self mirroring the other, *then* one already possesses self-recognition.

The first challenge: the *Phenomenology* operates under the premise that consciousness comes to realize itself in stages. Each stage is in some sense logically prior and preparatory for the next stage of self-recognition.¹⁰⁹ Immediately after “Lordship and Bondage,” in “Stoicism, Skepticism, and the Unhappy Consciousness,” Hegel provides an account of consciousness coming to know itself as a thinking being:

We are now in the presence of self-consciousness in a new shape, a consciousness which, as infinitude of consciousness or as its own pure movement, is aware of itself as essentially being, a being which *thinks* or is a free self-consciousness.

¹⁰⁹ This is in part what Hegel means when he claims that there is a *necessary* progression to the development of consciousness.

For *to think* does not mean to be an abstract ‘I’, but an ‘I’ which has at the same time the significance of *intrinsic* being, of having itself for object, or of relating itself to objective being in such a way that its significance is the *being-for-self* of the consciousness for which it is [an object]. For in *thinking*, the object does not present itself in picture-thoughts [empirical representations] but in Notions, i.e., in a distinct being-in-itself or intrinsic being, consciousness being immediately aware that this is not anything distinct from itself. (120; 197)

It is one thing to have thoughts concerning an object, but something else entirely to have thoughts about one’s own thoughts. For Hegel, the awareness of ourselves requires us to move beyond picture-thinking (i.e., generating relationships among sensory contents) to understanding that we are responsible for our thoughts. The first and most limited stage of taking responsibility for our thoughts begins when we *contrast* our thoughts as something *distinct* from what appears in perception.

In recognizing our thoughts as our own, we come to see ourselves in a way that was not previously available. This is the case, because even after consciousness learns to reflect upon appearing objects, it does not necessarily possess the ability to reflect upon itself. In other words, one can fail to realize that “[i]n thinking, I *am free*, because I am not in an *other*, but remaining simply and solely in communion with myself, and the object, which is for me the *essential* being, is in undivided unity my being-for-myself; and my activity in conceptual thinking is a movement within myself” (120; 197).

Consciousness learns to separate its thoughts/perceptions about an object from the posited object. As a result, consciousness is provided the opportunity to see its perceptions for what they are, i.e., itself. One’s consciousness has now become sophisticated enough to possess and remain in a conceptual field of self-reflective awareness.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Spirit begins when one realizes that the posited object is irreducibly a *mental* object, and thus a part of consciousness.

The post-Cartesian view typically asserts an intimate and immediate awareness of one's own subjective states, from which one can projection or infer that others possess subjective experiences. Hegel rejects this conventional view. For him, the progression of consciousness starts with outer awareness, then to awareness of others and oneself as conscious beings. Only after one has moved through both these developmental stages can consciousness obtain an intimate awareness of its subjective states. Therefore, even *if* Hegel is only accounting for a mutual recognition in "Lordship and Bondage," mutual recognition plays an important role in the progressive development of one's ability to recognize one's own consciousness.

The second challenge: claiming that we become aware of ourselves by modeling the other with a model of ourselves appears to be a case of putting the cart before the horse. However, some occurrences happen co-extensively. For instance, as I pull my body over the ledge, I may also need to breathe deeply. Neither pulling my body nor breathing deeply entails the other. However, they can facilitate one another. This mutual facilitation can transpire when they occur in unison. Similarly, the recognition of oneself, by recognizing others (via a model of oneself) is a two edged sword. This effect would occur in degrees, until a gestalt that satisfies the demands of both forms of recognition (i.e., the self and the other) occurs.

4. In "Lordship and Bondage," Hegel maintains a view that is directly opposed to conventional wisdom: he argues that we *learn* how to recognize (i.e., cognitive awareness) ourselves and of others. In this fashion, *Hegel is not merely anti-British empiricist, he is also anti-rationalist.* Rationalists assume that our consciousness starts

out as a fully articulated inner world and that nothing is more clear or distinct than one's own mind. As Sellars states in "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," this rationalist view is merely another strain of the 'myth of the given.'

In Sellars' section "The Logic of Private Episodes: Thoughts," he argues against the rationalist's presumption, which assumes that so called 'inner' and 'outer' episodes are *innately* recognized as being qualitatively different. Moreover, the rationalist often claims that one's *conceptual awareness* of inner episodes is logically prior to overt observation. Sellars wrongly believes that his rejection of these versions of the myth of the given are novel.

As we saw in section 3.11.3, Hegel rejects these rationalist claims. Moreover, in "Lordship and Bondage," Hegel argues that the self is not fully realized until three experiences unfold and solidify into a more sophisticated consciousness: 1) only after one begins to realize oneself by mirroring another person's behaviors, 2) only after one takes up projects in the appearing world and therefore recognizes what one may accomplish, and 3) only after one's desires are subsumed by the demands of another individual, does one's implicit existence become *explicit*. These occurrences enable one to perceive oneself as distinct and distinguishable from other individuals.

For Hegel, a robust recognition of oneself and others is not easily achieved. For instance, Hegel does not believe that consciousness comes to realize itself all at once. According to Hegel, even after one begins to perceive oneself, one does not fully understand his/her own consciousness. It is only through the intellectual effort of overcoming the inconsistencies and inadequacies of its previous views that consciousness can come closer to realizing itself as it actually exists.

Recognition of the self, as consciousness, in all of its subtlety and complexity is something that develops by degrees. These degrees of self-awareness are obtained by a progressive understanding of the breadth of consciousness' subjective experience, experience of its individuality, experience of its participation in social practices and shared social idealizations.

Hegel's lengthy account of how consciousness can achieve a complete understanding of itself spans the entire breadth of the *Phenomenology*. At the end of nearly 600 pages (i.e., the size of Oxford's edition), Hegel believes he has only provided a cursory account.

5. Sellars provides a compatible account—in that a Hegelian could absorb Sellars' claims without contradicting Hegel's conclusions—of how a robust self-reflected consciousness is won. At first this is hard to see, as Sellars couches his account in terms of a language user's development.

In the last two sections of "Empiricism and Philosophy of Mind," Sellars takes the framework of his attack against the given, and turns it against the rationalist presumption that 'inner' and 'outer' episodes are *innately* recognizable. His argument has the following form: *if* recognition is dependent on the use of observational criteria under which one can apply designations, *then* the recognition of one's own mental states, *as* possessing *determinate qualities*, will require the acquisition of criteria for forming determinations about mental states.

Sellars argues that only language users possess the capacity to make, use and infer propositional content pertaining to *mental states*. Sellars argues for the plausibility of

this account by creating a hypothetical story, which he calls a ‘myth’. In his account, he attempts to demonstrate how an observational language can become transformed into mental vernacular.

Sellars’ myth begins with a group of people who are habituated into an observational language. In this initial stage, these people possess a “behavioral language” in which they can describe themselves and others according to *overt behavior*. However, they lack a *theoretical vocabulary of behavioral psychology* (102). This deficiency in their language makes them incapable of referring to or even *recognizing* thoughts, dreams, internal images and non-overt displays of pain.

Sellars’ stipulation *is not* intended to imply that, in the above stage of development, one cannot undergo episodes that can be characterized as “theoretical vocabulary of behavioral psychology,” i.e., animals and non-cognitive humans do undergo sensory experiences of green, mental images and unexpressed sensations of pain. Rather, he claims that one cannot become *aware* of them *as* mental phenomena, until one has obtained a level of *theoretical sophistication*, which will be described in the second stage of his myth. The people in the first stage have the capacity to make theoretical judgments based upon, though not restricted to, simple observable criteria. In particular, they have the capacity to make use of analogous supposition.

The second stage of Sellars’ myth begins when Jones notices that people behave *as if* they are engaged in overt speech, even when they refrain from overt speech. He may, for instance, observe someone performing a complicated task that could only be learned with verbal instruction. When this person learns how to perform this activity, Jones *concludes* that he would initially talk himself through the steps of his performance.

He speculates that the manner in which this man ‘talks’ to himself is similar to what is now called ‘thinking out loud’. Jones infers that the person who learned this complex task will, in time, no longer need to recite the steps necessary to perform the task.

Sellars’ myth portrays Jones as being perplexed when one acts as *if* they were engaged in overt verbal behavior (102). To come to terms with this kind of phenomenon, Jones makes a theoretical leap that has not up to his date graced mankind. He concludes that man must have something *like speech*—insofar as it is *modeled* after speech—occurring inside of him. These speech-like episodes prompt him to act as if he were overtly speaking. He recognizes the *possibility* that these *inner episodes* called “thoughts” initiate something *parallel* to speech performances and the behaviors associated with them (103).

Hegel acknowledges this unique aspect of language in the following terms:

[W]e see language as the existence of Spirit. Language is self-consciousness existing *for others* [...] (395; 652).

Hegel strives to show how consciousness can come to know itself in all its guises (i.e., Spirit). Language for Hegel is the externalization (in the *form* of inter-subjectivity) of the subjective experience of consciousness, i.e., the ‘inner’ life of consciousness.

6. Sellars’ ‘myth’ is not meant to be taken as a factual account of some period in human history. He intended it as a rough approximation of what all humans experience in some stage of their childhood:

I have used a myth to kill a myth—the Myth of the Given. But is my myth really a myth? Or does the reader not recognize himself in the middle of his journey from the grunts and groans of the cave to the subtle and polydimensional discourse of the drawing room, the laboratory, and the study, the language of Henry and William James, of Einstein and of the philosophers who, in their

efforts to break out of discourse to an *arché* beyond discourse, have provided the most curious dimension of all. (117; 63).

Though Sellars maintains a linguistic focus (which Hegel does not), he like Hegel argues for a historical development of consciousness that progressively reaches more sophisticated levels of self-awareness.

7. Sellars provides the following characterization of how rationality is formed:

To construe the concepts of meaning, truth, and knowledge as metalinguistic concepts pertaining to linguistic behavior (and dispositions to behave) involves construing the latter as governed by *ought-to-be's* which are actualized as uniformities by the training that transits language from generation to generation. Thus, if logical and (more broadly) epistemic categories express general features of the *ought-to-be's* (and corresponding uniformities) which are necessary to the functioning of language as a cognitive instrument, epistemology, in this context, becomes the theory of this functioning—in short *transcendental linguistics*. (“Some Remarks on Kant’s Theory of experience” 646)

Sellars is celebrated for discovering how linguistic acquisition is necessary for rationality. Yet, this claim is partially prefigured in Hegel. For instance, if reason is developed by learning *ought-to-be's*, then the social dimension of cooperatively interacting with others is the primary foundation from which we learn to become rational beings. Simply put, the mirroring of behaviors as found in the child parroting speech acts presupposes a larger social structure of learning what behaviors one ‘ought’ to mirror.

Sellars’ claim that Jones can realize that another is performing something akin to a mental speech act, rides squarely on the fact that Jones has begun to match his own behaviors and experiences to the individuals he encounters. In short, Sellars ends up making a claim that largely parallels Hegel’s: self-recognition and mutual recognitions begin when overt behaviors are seen as a reflection of one’s inner experience.

Moreover, while Sellars' insights may appear to be solely linguistic, they result in Hegelian conclusions: 1) consciousness does *not* start out with a clearly articulated inner world; 2) nor does it start out with the recognition of oneself and others as thinking beings. 3) 1 and 2 are progressively developed and learned. Finally 4), *if* we learn how to realize and describe our internal states, and if we can wrongly characterize our own experiences (in a parallel fashion to one providing an inaccurate account of empirical experience), then phenomenological accounts can be wrong.

The epistemic importance of the above conclusions is far reaching. It argues for a non-traditional view of human rationality and self-recognition as learned and developmental. As a result, it radically undermines foundational epistemic claims that one innately and immediately recognizes his/her internal states. While these conclusions do not require skepticism towards self-knowledge, they do require the pursuit of self-knowledge, of oneself as an individual and as a conscious being, to become more rigorous and cautious than traditionally deemed necessary.

Chapter Four

Why Sellars, McDowell and Brandom Cannot Validate Humanity's Access to Objects of Knowledge, While Kant, and Hegel Can

4.1. Introduction to Chapter Four

1. In this chapter, I explain and critique Sellars', McDowell's and Brandom's claims that knowledge of mind-independent existence is possible.¹¹¹ In each case, I will show that their versions of realism are bankrupt, because they fail to demonstrate *sufficient* perceptual and conceptual access to mind-independent existence.

What distinguishes Sellars, McDowell and Brandom from many of their predecessors, is an honest attempt to show what kinds of access we possess and how this access permits us to know mind-independent existence. As we shall see, their attempts to demonstrate the nature of our access to mind-independent existence ironically hinge upon revisions and wholesale borrowings of German Idealism, which argues such knowledge is unobtainable.

I argue that Sellars', McDowell's and Brandom's epistemic models can demonstrate our access only to the following: empirical objects (as opposed to the thing-in-itself), minds, their contents and their processes. Epistemic claims limited to these contents are clearly a variant of German Idealism. As we shall see, each has compelling insights into these four types of knowable content. As a result, they have contributions to

¹¹¹ Please note that there will be considerable space devoted to each thinker's version of realism and that my explanation of them *should not* be construed as my own view or my condoning of them. I offer an overview of the entire thrust of their epistemic views before I am critical of them.

make to German idealism. However, I will show that they have little to offer realism predicated on knowledge of mind-independent existence.

I conclude this text by arguing that Kant's and Hegel's epistemic views are superior to Analytic versions of realism, as they can demonstrate *access* to their objects of knowledge whereas Analytic versions of realism cannot.

2. There are several ways in which Sellars' philosophy was influenced by German Idealism. First, unlike Moore, Russell and Strawson, Sellars' believes Kant's philosophy is still epistemically relevant.¹¹² Second, unlike previous Analytic thinkers, Sellars believes he can develop and make a case for scientific realism largely within the constraints of the first *Critique*. Third, as seen in Chapter Three, Sellars' rejection of the 'given' bears remarkable similarities to Hegel's rejection of traditional empiricism.

For the above reasons, Sellars' philosophy is a halfway-house where Analytic Philosophy and Continental Philosophy meet. In this meeting, we see for the first time an admirable attempt to plumb the depths of German Idealism from the linguistic and scientific orientations of Analytic Philosophy—a place where scientific realism and idealism collide.

¹¹² Sellars begins *Science and Metaphysics* with the following statement:

Philosophy without the history of philosophy, if not empty or blind, is at least dumb. Thus, if I build my discussion of contemporary issues on a foundation of Kant exegesis and commentary it is because, as I see it, there are enough close parallels between the problems confronting him and the steps he took to solve them [...] and the current situation and its demands [...] In their most general aspect both his problems and our perplexities spring from the attempt to take both man and science seriously (1)

While Kant is not noted for extended inquiry of natural science, both Sellars and Kant see man as a rational being faced with practical concerns and natural science as a rational project concerned with understanding the empirical world. Both these concerns are unified in philosophy: "Now the legislation of human reason (philosophy) has two objects, nature and freedom, and thus contains the natural law as well as moral law, initially in two separate systems but ultimately in a single philosophical system" (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A840/B868).

With the congregation of such diverse traditions, which until Sellars had largely sat in utter opposition, I ask, “can Sellars’ linguistic insights and plundering of German Idealism achieve his goal (i.e., a vindication of scientific realism)? Or does he show, despite his contrary intentions, that the epistemic limits of German Idealism cannot be denied”? Moreover, what does it mean for Analytic Philosophy when leading members such as McDowell and Brandom continue in the Sellarsian tradition of couching traditional Analytic concerns within the framework of German Idealism? Will it be found, in the final pages of the Analytic tradition, that its original rejection of German Idealism was only a hiccup that restores the Anglo/American traditions back to 18th century German thought? More bluntly still, will we find that only in becoming idealists can Analytic Philosophers have a future?

I argue that that Sellars, McDowell and Brandom have maneuvered themselves into a corner: in order to make their leading epistemic claims internally consistent, they must proceed to a version of German Idealism that rejects the possibility of mind-independent knowledge.

4.2. Sellars, Kant, and Sensation

1. *Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes*¹¹³ makes numerous Kantian commitments. The following commitments are central to Sellars’ epistemic model. One, neither sensibility (in itself) nor conceptuality (in itself) are capable of providing knowledge of the thing-in-itself. Two, without a pre-existing conceptual

¹¹³ I will now refer to *Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes* as ‘*Science and Metaphysic*’.

framework, no knowledge of empirical content is possible. Three, we are *not* directly aware of sensations. Four, in order to recognize empirical content, as facts or states of affairs, a judgment is required. Five, in order to relate concepts to sensory content, via a judgment, the mind must first synthesize sensory content into coherent units of time and space.

The above insights play an important role in Kant's claim that the thing-in-itself is unknowable. Although Sellars shares the above views with Kant, he believes knowledge of the thing-in-itself is possible.

2. According to Sellars, understanding the role of sensation in perception is of the "greatest importance to philosophy of the mind and science" (17):

But is it genuinely necessary to interpose non-conceptual representations *as states of consciousness* between the 'physical' impact of the sensory stimulus and the conceptual representations (guarded or daring) which find verbal expression, actually or potentially, in perceptual statements? Can we not interpret the receptivity involved in terms of 'purely physical' states, and attribute to these the role of guiding conceptualizations? Why should we suppose that receptivity culminates in a state which is neither 'purely physical' *nor* conceptual? Yet to do just this, I shall argue, is of the greatest importance for the philosophy of the mind and, in particular, for an understanding of how the framework of physical science is to be integrated with the framework of common sense. (16-17)

By reevaluating the role sensory content plays in a Kantian framework, Sellars believes he can show that knowledge of the thing-in-itself is possible. While this goal is clearly anti-Kantian, Sellars believes he can achieve it by borrowing heavily from the Kantian tradition. (See appendix **VIII**. *Sellars' Revamping of Kantian Intuitions*.)

Sellars' answer to the epistemic problem of knowing the external world partially lies in his belief that sensations play a *guiding role* (even though we are not directly aware of them) in our conceptual determinations of empirical content. Here, Sellars takes

a familiar analytic turn: the object as the cause of sensory modification also functions as the limiting feature to the kinds of sensory modification that will occur in the presence of the object. This claim is based on the belief that when one is in the presence of a physical object, the object can only excite the senses according to the properties found in the object itself (and as it relates to its immediate environment). Since objects are finite entities, they are capable only of exciting the senses in a limited fashion. As a result, so long as the object remains an entity of a particular type, it consistently and limitedly modifies the senses in a particular fashion.

According to Sellars, the limiting factor of our sensory receptivity is a key element that permits one to establish the truth or falsity of empirical claims.¹¹⁴ For instance, he claims that empirical knowledge and scientific knowledge is “based on, though not constituted by, the impact of independent reality” (9). Even though we fail to receive directly factual information from sensation (e.g., Sellars’ rejection of the myth of the given), this claim is intended to show that empirical and scientific representations are significantly connected to and are responsive to mind-independent existence.

3. In Chapter Two, I criticized Strawson’s *The Bounds of Sense* for not providing an account of how the ‘corrected view’ can lead to scientific truth (see section 2.12). He simply asserts that science can grasp reality because science is not a ‘view’ at all. With this casual assertion, Strawson believed he circumvented all relevant Kantian concerns that resist scientific realism. However, scientific discoveries are based on observation.

¹¹⁴ Some formulation of the above position is consistent throughout much of analytic thought. For instance, Strawson assumes a similar view in *The Bounds of Sense* (see Chapter 2, section **XII**).

Strawson failed to show how an observationally based method yields truths that are not perceptual. Moreover, he failed to explain in what way science represents reality.

Sellars, unlike Strawson and most of his predecessors, not only acknowledges the challenge of responding to the above concerns, he attempts to resolve them. Take for instance the following question, if mental representations of objects are not identical to objects, in what way do they represent it? According to Sellars, part of the answer lies in the analogous ways scientific representations resembles existence. Discerning what he means by this claim will be the goal of the next several sections

Sellars describes science as helping us to achieve analogous representations of existence in the following terms:

The thesis I wish to defend, but not ascribe to Kant, though is very much a 'phenomenalism' in the Kantian (rather than Berkeleyian) sense, is that although the world we conceptually represent in experience exists, only in actual and obtainable representings of it, we can say, from a transcendental point of view, not only that existence-in-itself accounts for this obtainability by virtue of having a certain analogy with the world we represent but also that in principle *we*, rather than God alone, can provide the cash. For, as I see it, the use of analogy in theoretical science, unlike theology, generates new determinate concepts. It does not merely indirectly specify certain unknown attributes by an 'analogy of proportion'. One might put this by saying that the conceptual structures of theoretical science give us new ways of schematizing categories. (49)

He claims that part of our capacity to analogously represent existence stems from science's ability to reshape and reorganize (i.e., schematize) the concepts we apply to phenomena. This can occur in two ways. The first way refers to the concepts themselves. For example, the sun appears 'small' but science informs us that it is 'large'. Science can provide us with new schemas that are better suited (than our non-scientific schemas) to represent existence. Take for instance atoms, molecules and the manner in which they are believed to constitute objects. Supposedly, these related concepts do a

better job depicting and explaining the material world than the more primitive concepts of earth, water, fire and air.

The second way concerns Sellars' technical application of the term 'analogy'. Consider the relationship a stick figure bears to a particular man. Any truth that one can glean from a stick figure representing a man lies in our ability to understand the differences, i.e., the 'proportional relation,' between the representation and the actual person. Sellars believes that science can help us establish the proportional differences between our representations and reality by developing new and better schematization of our concepts. The understanding of the proportional difference between an existing object and a representation of it can be considered a type of 'analogy'.

The above technical jargon is indicating something quite common in our daily routines. Imagine for a moment a child who already has a basic command of a limited vocabulary and its appropriate use.¹¹⁵ The parent might introduce a picture of a ball, which resembles a circle, and utter the word 'ball'. The child may at first think of and represent existing balls in its environment as circles. Yet, as the child develops a more accurate means to refer, think and represent the balls in its environment, he may develop or learn the more sophisticated concept called 'sphere'. In short, he realizes the analogous relation of a circle to that of a ball is inadequate. This in turn prompts him to seek a more accurate concept/representation of balls. Science presumably functions in a similar fashion, by ever seeking more adequate ways to represent and predict the

¹¹⁵ Sellars as a conceptual holist does not believe that our ability to learn concepts stems from one pointing at objects and then naming them (see Chapter 3, **Part Two**). He believes that many interrelated habits and ideas must be acquired as a functional whole before appearances or concepts can hold epistemic meaning for a subject. However, once the sufficient linguistic groundwork has been laid, this is a legitimate means to acquire new concepts.

empirical world. However, compared with our everyday addendums to our insufficient views, scientific methods yield incredibly more sophisticated results.

4.3. *The Role of Sensation and Science in “Picturing”*

1. Before one can understand the unusual role Sellars attributes to science in obtaining knowledge of external existence, one must first understand the kind of representation he claims is capable of accurately representing mind-independent objects. In order to understand his claim concerning the kind of representation, which permits us to accurately represent mind-independent existence, we must first address his view on ‘Instrumentalism’:

The instrumentalist, from our point of view, is one who holds that theoretical statements of *all* kinds, including singular statements, are *essentially* instruments for generating statements *in the observation framework*. Thus, if he went along with our distinctions, he would hold that (ampliative) theoretical statements are simply more sophisticated instruments which along with molecular, quantified and law-like statements in the observation framework are means of constructing *observation framework* pictures of objects and events. Picturing, to put it bluntly, would be the inalienable prerogative of the perceptual level of our current conceptual structure. (144)

I will separately address Sellars’ conception of instrumentalism and the “inalienable prerogative of the perceptual level.” I will then show how these topics relate to his claim that mind-independent knowledge is possible.

Instrumentalism grew out of logical positivism (i.e., the belief that all existents are material objects persisting in determinable points in times and space). They are concerned with the problem of transcribing one’s observation of objects, which exist in discrete spatiotemporal localities, into theories, models, and analogies. They argue that

statements, theories, models and analogies are *general* and thus no longer pertain to or accurately account for the individual and discrete nature of material objects and occurrences: “As such the theoretical statements are not candidates for truth or reference, and theories [thus] have no ontological import. This view of theories is grounded in a positive distinction between observational statements and theoretical statements, and the according of privileged epistemic status to the former” (C. F. Delaney, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* “Instrumentalism” 438).

Instrumentalists claim that the observation of discrete objects has ‘privileged epistemic status,’ because objects can be observed and general theories cannot. As Hume points out, one cannot observe all instances of a particular kind. One may for example observe many individual dogs, but no one person can observe all instances of dogs. Claims concerning the *general concept* ‘dog’ are therefore not something one can empirically point to. Therefore, instrumentalists argue that general claims are incapable of being true or false, because they do not reference something that exists or has existed. Conversely, observations concerning particular objects can be referenced, and hence, they are capable of being true or false.

Sellars borrows from this tradition by asserting that real objects are discrete material objects. As a consequence, he is also concerned that any concept, theory or model will be general and thus not account for the discrete nature of material objects which are individuals. In response to this concern, Sellars takes a quasi-instrumentalist stance: consistencies obtained in observation, along with the *general theories* of science, which can inferentially ‘amplify’ what is observable, permit one to ‘picture’ the *specifics* of mind-independent existence. This ‘picture’ is capable of conforming to the

“inalienable prerogative of the perceptual level,” because it represents specific states of affairs that can be empirically verified (144). As we shall see, Sellars claims that ‘picturing,’ under the appropriate conditions, can accurately represent existence.

2. In order to come to terms with this above claim, we need to uncover why Sellars believes picturing can permit *analogous* insights into mind-independent existence. First, it is important to take ‘picturing’ as more than just imagining a perceptual image. For instance, actively imagining objects from a particular perspective would be similar to perception itself. Sellars denies that perception (in itself) yields knowledge of the thing-in-itself, because he agrees with science that the world is not as it appears. What then are we to make of his ambiguous use of the term ‘picturing’?

In *Science and Metaphysics*, Sellars fails to spell out what he means by ‘picturing’. However, its connotation is charged with the following implication: when we ‘picture’ what something might be like, we can use relevant sensory content and apply such content in a way that is compatible with scientific theories, which are applicable to the entity we are picturing. If this is the case, ‘picturing’ stems neither from sensory nor conceptual content alone, but some fusion of both.

As already noted, Strawson argued that the scientific view is not a view at all, but offered no explanation of how an observational science transcends observation. Sellars believes that the limiting factor of sensation, along with the guiding principles of science, can form a discreet ‘picture’ of the thing-in-itself. This discreet picture is not the kind of ‘view’ obtained in empirical experience.

Sellars does not offer an explicit account of what he means by ‘picturing’ in *Science and Metaphysics*. We therefore need to look elsewhere for a further explanation of it. The most relevant account of the mental process involved in the act of picturing can be found in his article “Kant’s Transcendental Idealism.”

3. The title “Kant’s Transcendental Idealism” is misleading, because transcendental idealism is not the focus of Sellars’ article. Instead, this article centers on a specific interpretation of Kant, which argues that he employs a concept now called, ‘perceptual takings’. As we shall see, ‘perceptual takings’ plays a key role in Sellars’ conception of ‘picturing’.

Perceptual takings refer to the mental process whereby one obtains a ‘subject’ (i.e., the object of perception) in the perceptual act. For instance, in order to *form* the judgment that the ‘cat is on the mat,’ one must first recognize the *appearances* of ‘cat’ and ‘mat’ as *subjects*. The more sophisticated conceptual *realization* that ‘the cat is on the mat’ is logically dependent on the *recognition* of the subjects ‘cat’ and ‘mat’. Similarly, if one is to recognize that ‘the cat is *brown*’ or ‘the mat is *black*,’ one must first recognize the subjects ‘cat’ and ‘mat,’ in order to attribute specific content or qualities to them.

Sellars interprets Kant as writing on perceptual takings in the following manner:

It will be useful to connect Kant’s concept of the ‘intuition of a manifold’ with that strand of contemporary perception theory which operates with the fairly traditional concept of intentionality. A familiar notion is that of perceptual takings. Perceptual takings are, so to speak, thinkings which are evoked in our minds by our environment or, in the limiting cases, by abnormal states of our nervous system. Perceptual takings are usually thought to have propositional form. [...] We should think of perceptual takings as providing *subjects* for

propositional thought, rather than already having full-fledged propositional form.
(6)

According to Sellars, Kant's 'intuition of a manifold' of appearing content is an essential part of the process by which one obtains a 'subject' in the perceptual act.

Specifically, Sellars claims the following: Kant's account of the *a priori* structure or logic (i.e., 'transcendental logic'), which enables an 'intuition of a manifold' to pick out a subject, can be interpreted as "*rules for generating perceptual takings*" (11). By 'rules,' Sellars means what is required for counting a mental act as belonging to a particular kind of activity. In this context, one can *follow* the 'rules' without *knowing* or *choosing* to do so. For example, one can make a grammatically correct statement without being aware of grammatical rules.

In acknowledging Kant as having discovered the 'rules' for 'perceptual takings,' Sellars has the following kind of passage in mind:

The first thing that must be given to us *a priori* for the condition of all objects is the *manifold* of pure intuition [of space and time]; the **synthesis** of this manifold by the means of the imagination is the second thing, but it still does not yield cognition. The concepts that give this pure synthesis **unity**, and that consist solely in the representation of this necessary synthetic unity, are the third thing necessary for cognition of an object that comes before us, and they depend on the understanding. (A 79)

The manner in which the mind unconsciously coordinates the "*rules for generating perceptual takings*" is three fold (*Science and Metaphysics* 11). 1) Before any cognition of an object can occur, there are sensory intuitions that are conditioned by the forms of space and time. 2) All the various sensory intuitions must then be synthesized by the imagination: "the synthesis alone is that which properly collects the elements for cognition and unifies them into a certain content" (A 78). 3) The synthesis of sensory

intuitions (i.e., appearances) can then be subsumed under a concept which produces the *recognizable* subject in the act of perception (e.g., a tree, a dog, a cube, etc.).

Kant credits the mind with being entirely responsible for its own ability to produce perceptual subjects (i.e., objects of awareness). In short, the mind alone is responsible for the appearance and recognition of perceptual objects: “Only the spontaneity of our thought requires that this manifold first be gone through, taken up, and combined in a certain way in order for a cognition to be made out of it” (A 77). For Kant, ‘spontaneity’ is closely associated with human freedom, in that the way we respond to the manifold, has no cause outside of the human mind itself. (This claim does not deny that we are influenced by external entities, but only that the manner in which we respond to them is due either to our human constitution or the manner in which we spontaneously and/or freely judge and reason.) This view plays a crucial role in why Kant denies that we can know mind-independent existence: what appears and how it appears is a creation of the human mind with no external cause being responsible for its specific presentation *as it appears to the subject*.

While Sellars agrees with Kant that the manner in which the mind responds to the manifold has no external cause, he does not thereby believe (as Kant does) that we cannot learn how to interpret empirical content in a manner that yields knowledge of mind-independent existence.

4. Prior to making his primary claim concerning perceptual takings, Sellars provides the following preparatory remarks:

Now if we take seriously the three-dimensionality of space, it strikes us that to represent a triangle in space is always to represent it *from a point of view*. Thus, what we represent is

 this equilateral triangle facing me straight on

or

 this equilateral triangle at such and such an angle to my (metaphorical)
 line of sight

Now it is by no means an original idea on my part that intuitive representings of figures in three-dimensional space are essentially point-of-viewish. But its importance has been underestimated. For it means that we must distinguish between the figures—which are not point-of-viewish—and the *total* content of the representing of the figure, which *total* content *is* point-of-viewish, thus

 equilateral triangle facing me straight on

Let me repeat. Equilateral triangles are not point of viewish, but they are, so to speak, intuited in perspective. The representing has content which specifies a point of view. (*Science and Metaphysics* 11-12)

The point of this passage is to demonstrate a distinction between figures, which in themselves *are not* ‘point-of-viewish,’ and our representations of them which are ‘point-of-viewish’. As we are about to see, this distinction plays an important role in Sellars’ account of perceptual takings and picturing.

5. Kant maintains that “the manifold of appearances is always successively generated in the mind” (A 190). What makes perceptual takings a special kind of representation is that they represent *one* subject, despite the fact that we are always experiencing a succession of appearances:

[T]he apprehension of the manifold in the appearance of the house that stands before me is successive. Now the question is whether the manifold of this house itself is also successive, which certainly no one will concede (A 190).

While one may have many particular perspectival (i.e., from a particular point of view) experiences of a given house, the house itself (as the human subject *conceives* it), is not perspectival (i.e., it does not exist as a particular point of view as seen in a photograph).

Sellars' above distinction between figures (section 4.4.3) which are *not* perspectival and our representations of them, which are perspectival, is designed to clarify the above Kantian passage. The *non*-perspectival representation of the house is an instance of what Sellars calls a 'perceptual taking'.

Perceptual takings are of particular importance to Sellars for the following reason: *if* there is some way we can grasp mind-independent objects, and *if* mind-independent objects possess discrete spatial boundaries, our *knowledge* of mind-independent existence would have to overcome the particular perspectives (or vantage points) from which all empirical experiences occur. In brief, mind-independent entities are not the facing side of the object we are looking at. Similarly, mind-independent objects are not foreshortened as perceptions and drawings render them. Presumably, mind-independent objects have many sides. Given these ontological commitments concerning mind-independent objects, any particular perspective cannot be the mind-independent object. *Vantage-points* are the products of the observing subject and should therefore not be confused with the mind-independent object.

According to Sellars, perceptual takings make it possible to 'picture' mind-independent existence, because they permit us to possess a non-perspectival representation. Given Sellars' views on physical existence and 'Instrumentalism' i.e., the view that nothing general can be true or false (see section 4.3.1), only a specific (as

opposed to general) non-perspectival representation can ‘picture’ mind-independent reality as it truly exists.

4.4. Sellars’ View on Sensation and Its Role in Inner Sense: Sellars’ Rejection of Kant’s Claim that Time and Space are Ideal.

1. Sellars’ model of the perceptual process can be stated thus:

1) impacts on our sensory equipment → 2) produce a sensory manifold → 3) the sensory manifold is synthesized into relations of time and space → 4) 3 produces a manifold of sensory intuitions (at this stage, sensory content has yet to be formed into unified appearances) → 5) the manifold of sensory intuitions is synthesized into manifold of ‘appearances’ → 6) appearances are related to concepts → 7) subjects (i.e., objects of perception) are recognized and perceptual takings occur

His perceptual model is clearly derived from Kant’s. Though, as we shall see in the “Appendix: Inner Sense” (from *Science and Metaphysics*), Sellars rejects Kant’s claim that time and space are ideal, i.e., a mental construct with no corollary in the mind-independent existence.

2. Sellars’ “Appendix: Inner Sense” seeks to revise the role of sensation in the act of ‘association’. Though Sellars does not reference this Kantian term, we shall see that Sellars nonetheless addresses the same topic.

Kant defines ‘association’ as the capacity to correlate appearing empirical content into practical and meaningful relationships:

It is, however, clear that even this apprehension of the manifold alone would bring forth no image and no connection of the impressions were there not a subjective ground for calling back a perception, from which the mind has passed on to another [...] [I]f representations reproduced one another without distinction,

just as they fell together, there would in turn be no determinate connection but merely unruly heaps of them, and no cognition at all would arise, their reproduction must have a rule in accordance with which a representations enters into combination in the imagination with one representation rather than with any others. This subjective and **empirical** ground of reproduction in accordance with rules is called the **association** of representations. (A 121)

For Kant, the rules of association are purely derived from the mind, and as such, there is no assurance that our method of unconsciously and consciously associating appearing content is faithful to mind-independent existence. As we shall see, Sellars claims sensation guides (what Kant calls) ‘the *rules* of association’ in a manner that permits knowledge of mind-independent existence. This claim forms the backbone of his realism.

3. At times T1, T2 and T3 three numerically distinct perceptual processes occurred. How can numerically distinct perceptual processes become meaningfully ‘associated’ to one another? Additionally, how does the ‘unity of apperception’ (see section 3.3.2) function in regards to the continuity of successive perceptual takings? These two questions concern how the ‘rules of association’ operate.

Sellars’ response to the above questions invokes a distinction between sensory content, representations of sensory content, concepts and memories. For example: 1) a *conceptual* representation can follow one’s present experience of sensory content, 2) a *conceptual* representation can follow a representation of *sensory* content, 3) a *memory* of a sensory content can follow *sensory content*, 4) a *conceptual representation* can follow another *conceptual representation*, 5) a *memory* of one kind of sensory occurrence may

follow a *memory* of another type (230).¹¹⁶ In this fashion, one could create a large list of possible combinations of mental occurrences and their temporal associations or placement relative to one another.

The point of these distinctions is to show that our inner experience forms temporal relations between sensory occurrences, conceptual representation, sensory representation, memory, and any combination thereof. As we shall see, Sellars argues that by distinguishing between our representations and observing the *role* of sensation in perceptions (as one cannot directly observe sensations), one can establish the manner in which our inner sense (i.e., our sense of time) relates to mind-independent temporal occurrences.

Sellars claims that successive perceptual processes create a manifold of representations, which can involve any number of the above distinctions. He believes that this representational manifold is re-represented and incorporated into succeeding perceptual processes:

There seems, at least, to be no absurdity in the idea that features of sensory representations by virtue of which they guide the understanding in its conceptual representation of temporal relations between perceived events is not *directly* the temporal relations of the impressions but rather counterpart relations within a *co-existent* structure of sensory representations. (231)

According to Sellars, concept formation is ‘guided’ by current sensory content and by representations of *previous* appearing content (i.e., a ‘*co-existent* structure of sensory representations’).

Sellars ‘*co-existent* structure of sensory representations’ can be expressed as follows:

¹¹⁶ Sellars only provides four examples, but his intent is to show that any combination of mental processes, including sensory receptivity, can affect one’s stream of consciousness.

Sensory Manifold at T1 permits a sensory representation → conceptual representation at T3 is *informed* by sensory representation from time T2

I outline a barebones model for the sake of clarity. Sellars' model is more complex, as it entails multiple layers of sensory and conceptual representations and memories of representations, all effecting and influencing one's current awareness of empirical states. The opposite of the above model would presumably be possible as well: a conceptual representation of a *pervious* sensory occurrence can modify *current* sensory representations.

This occurrence may also be retroactive, i.e., one's current sensory representation and/or conceptual representation could lead to revisions of one's memories of previous representations. Psychologists sometimes refer to this phenomenon as 'memory corruption' when it is responsible for false or misleading memories. Obviously, these layering processes can become quite complex and highly interconnected.

The relevant feature of this Sellarsian model is not its complexity, but rather what Kant calls 'association' can have retroactive and proactive influences on our sensory and conceptual representations. This occurrence can lead to our *experience* of the temporal displacement:

[One] might then go on to argue that the concept of such a counterpart reconstructs that puzzling feature of experience which is called the specious present, which, as traditionally conveyed, is an incoherent combination of literal simultaneity and literal successiveness. (232).

In short, there is an ambiguity in experience between what is being sensed at a particular moment and prior representations, which are related to presently observed content. This 'co-existent structure of sensory representations' may account for the simultaneous experience of the present and succession.

3. According to Sellars, the above model of perception permits a stronger correlation with mind-independent existence than Kant realized. This claim stems from Sellars' assertions concerning sensory intuition. First, Sellars asserts that sensations are caused by the impact of physical existence on one's sensory equipment. Kant's account of the passivity of senses *implies* this Sellarsian account; yet, Kant is careful to remain non-committed to the metaphysical assumptions imbedded within it. Secondly, since the occurrence of sensations requires such impacts, and since our perceptions are subsequent responses to such stimuli, the successive progression of sensory contents indicates a temporal *ordering* imposed by external existence. As a result of the above two views, Sellars claims that there is a *temporal* correspondence between sensory content and the mind-independent world. This position outlines why Sellars believes Kant is wrong to argue that time is purely a mental construct.

Sellars believes that temporal sequences also indicate that spatial relations *are* not mental fabrications. He makes a case for this claim with the following example:

Consider, for example, the perception of the raising of a hand. Obviously we must distinguish, to begin with, the perception of a sequence from a *mere sequence of perception*. (232)¹¹⁷

Sellars believes that spatial relations can be accounted for by the mind's active linking of successive content. For instance, at T1, the clock's hand is at 1 o'clock. At time T2, the clock's hand is at 2 o'clock, and so on. According to Sellars, the disparity between the hand at 1 o'clock and the succeeding appearance of it at 2 o'clock accounts for not only motion but spatial relations as well. He claims that as our eyes rove over our visual environments, successive sensory content allows for the formation of spatial relations.

¹¹⁷ I added the italics.

Sellars is implying the following kind of argument:

- 1) The succession of perceived content is *caused* by the succession of physical impacts upon one's sensory equipment.
 - 2) The perception of succession is thus causally linked to mind-independent occurrences of succession. (The same would presumably be true for the experience of simultaneity.)
 - 3) A person's temporal recognition is possible due to the *non-conceptual* occurrence of sensory modification, which is caused by mind-independent entities successively impacting our sensory equipment.
 - 4) *Perceived* motion and spatial relations, which are *conceptual*, are based on non-conceptual features that can only be caused by (barring abnormal neurological conditions) the successive impact of physical entities on one's sensory equipment.
- C) Thus the *realization* of temporal and spatial relations and motion are all made possible by successive physical impacts on one's sensory equipment.¹¹⁸

The form of this argument begs the question as to the relation between the phenomena of succession and its indication of mind-independent spatial relations. In other words, Sellars assumes that the succession of sensory impacts, which the mind transforms into representations of space, is similar to the space of mind-independent reality. He has not shown this to be the case; he has only offered an account of our experience of space. He simply assumes our experience of space is similar to mind-independent space. While we can be critical of this move, let us first obtain an understanding of the entire thrust of his epistemic argument.

¹¹⁸ For instance Sellars writes:

If Kant had clearly drawn the relevant distinctions, the way would have been open for him to argue that the fact that [...temporal] characteristics are characteristics of *representings* (i.e., content as recognized in consciousness) doesn't require that the intuitive *representings* [...are] *representings of representings* [i.e., representations of representations]. For in the case of Space, in spite of the fact that [it is a result of a mental process], which are the counterpart of spatial characteristics, are also characteristics of *representings*, the corresponding intuitive *representings* are *representings of non-representings*, i.e., spatial structures. (235).

4. We have now covered all the essential components of Sellars' epistemic view. Before I show how they fit together as one cohesive whole, we need to review what he believes his account of perception and science permit:

Kant's account implies indeed that certain counterparts of our intuitive representation, namely God's intellectual intuition, are literally true; but these literal truths can only be indirectly and abstractly represented by finite minds, and there is an impassible gulf between our *Erkenntnisse* and Divine Truth. If, however as I shall propose [...] we replace the static concept of Divine Truth with Peircean conception of truth as the 'ideal outcome of scientific inquiry', the gulf between appearances and things-in-themselves, though a genuine one, can in principle be bridged. (50).

In the above passage, Sellars refers to two distinct philosophical traditions. Each needs to be discussed in order to determine Sellars' claim. First, the scholastic conception of 'Divine Truth' stems from the theological commitment that God is not an embodied being. Since God is not embodied, He cannot have senses. As a consequence, God does not perceive the world from any vantage-point. Christian theologians assert that God directly intuits existence and that there is no difference between his intellectual understanding and that of reality. Sellars claims that when our capacity to picture is guided by sensory receptivity and aided by science, one can obtain accurate knowledge of mind-independent existence. Moreover, the implication is that such knowledge (like God's) is non-perspectival.

Second, Sellars' reference to "Peircean conception of truth as the 'ideal outcome of scientific inquiry'" is a guarded stance about science. This claim does not presume that science is currently equipped with the ability to accurately represent mind-independent existence. Instead, Peirce *infers* that, with each new advancement in science, science gets closer to answering the questions we want to know: "[...] though in no possible state of knowledge can any number be great enough to express the relation

between the amount of what rests unknown to the amount of the known, yet it is unphilosophical to suppose that, with regard to any given question (which has any clear meaning), investigation would not bring forth a solution of it, if it were carried far enough” (“How to Make our Ideas Clear” 39).

5. Although Sellars refers to “Chapter V” as the place where he will offer a complete account of his epistemic view, “Chapter V” fails to do so. For instance, “Chapter V” requires a demonstration of how he believes perceptions of spatiotemporal objects are connected with external existence. He cursorily attempts such a demonstration in his “Appendix: Inner Sense.” However, he fails to indicate explicitly the particular manner in which this section supports his epistemic claims concerning our ability ‘in principle’ to know mind-independent existence. Moreover, his major point in “Chapter V,” which concerns picturing, offers little to no justification (much less a clear explanation of what he means by it) for the claim that mental representations can be analogous to mind-independent existence. As such, *Science and Metaphysics* fails to offer a complete account of the manner in which he believes knowledge of the thing-in-itself is possible.

In particular, Sellars fails to show 1) how all the parts of his epistemic model fit together or 2) the most appropriate order in which to present them. Moreover, 3) the supporting arguments, for his epistemic model, have numerous components that are difficult to track over the course of his text. For these reasons, it will prove helpful to summarize the essential features of Sellars’ epistemic model and the conclusion *he* draws from them as a series of formal claims:

- 1) Every perceptual process is initiated by sensations, which are caused by physical impacts on one's sensory equipment.
 - 2) One does not directly experience sensation.
 - 3) Sensations can only be inferred.
 - 4) The resulting appearances that stem from sensation are not accurate representations of mind-independent existence.
 - 5) The physical impacts on one's senses act as a 'limiting' factor for what can be observed.
 - 6) Sensations indicate an indirect causal link to external existence as they can only occur via physical entities impacting one's sensory equipment.¹¹⁹
 - 7) Time determinations are linked to the successive occurrences of the mind-independent world, because time determinations stem from the mind-independent world successively impacting one's sensory equipment.
 - 8) When one's eyes or hand rove over their sensible environment, successive sensations provide the *basis* for spatial relations to be perceived.
 - 9) Since motion is developed from a succession of appearances and these appearances are derived from successive sensory stimuli, the experience of motion, as based on the successive impacts on our sensory equipment, indicates a causal link to mind-independent existence.
 - 10) The experience of temporal/spatial objects are rendered (as representations) according to the limitations thrust upon the mind by the causal link between sensation and the impact on one's sensory equipment.
 - 11) The existing objects are discrete and numerically distinct spatial/temporal objects.
 - 12) When observed content is 'pictured' as a non-perspectival representation (i.e., a perceptual taking), and when this non-perspectival representation is aided by science, it is possible for one's 'perceptual taking' to be *analogous* to the thing-in-itself.
 - 13) As science develops, it will be able to perfect its guidance of one's *picturing*.
 - 14) The disparity between our analogous picturing and the way things truly are can be overcome when science is sufficiently developed to guide our picturing of external entities.
- C) 1-14 account for how one can obtain a close, if not identical representation of the thing-in-itself. This representation is not perspectival. In these regards, this representation is similar to God's non-sensory intuition of reality.

4.5. Can Sellars Overcome Hegel's Dialectic?

1. Sellars believes his above claims disprove Hegel's dialectical view, in the *Phenomenology*, that it is impossible to obtain mind-independent knowledge:

¹¹⁹ This claim functions as a materialist reinterpretation of Kant's "Refutation of Idealism."

Indeed, it is only if Kant distinguishes the radically non-conceptual character of sense from the conceptual character of the synthesis of apprehension in intuition [...] and, accordingly, *receptivity* of sense from the *guides* of intuition that he can avoid the dialectic which leads from Hegel's *Phenomenology* to nineteenth-century idealism. (16)

In other words, the Kantian tradition can overcome Hegel's claim that only human consciousness and its varied contents are knowable, when the Kantian tradition properly comes to understand the role of receptivity. According to Sellars, after an accurate account of receptivity is provided, he can show that knowledge of the thing-in-itself is possible.

Can Sellars' epistemic model overcome Hegel's dialectic, i.e., can Sellars' epistemic model show that mind-independent knowledge is possible? I argue that Sellars' attempt to do so fails on several fronts: 1) Sellars' epistemic model assumes an ontology of discreet physical objects, rather than demonstrating their existence, 2) his epistemic appeal to science far exceeds what science can demonstrate, and 3) his perceptual views cannot establish the necessary *access* to permit or even fully explain what he calls the 'analogous' nature of the correspondence between our representations and mind-independent entities.

2. Sellars' belief that the thing-in-itself is knowable hinges on the belief that the thing-in-itself is discrete and individual. By 'discrete' and 'individual,' I mean what many realists claim: objects are distinguishable from other objects, not only by the limits of their physical boundaries, but by metaphysical differences as well. These metaphysical differences might involve something as simple as numerical difference. For example, while two bars of pure gold can be (in theory) nearly identical, they are

numerically distinct. Yet, representational realism typically involves more sophisticated ontological commitments. For instance, due to inherent difference amongst entities, there are sensible qualities that permit one conceptually and imaginatively to represent differences in their qualitative being. These assumptions are imbedded in all forms of representational realism that require sensory contact with outer existence.

Like Moore, Sellars takes his initial presuppositions (or more accurately his prejudices) that existing objects are discrete/individual and then constructs a model of perception that conforms to his presuppositions. For instance, how does Sellars arrive at the claim that discrete and individual objects cause our senses to be impacted by physical entities? He merely presumes this ontology.

Not all realists agree with Sellars' ontology. For instance, later Russell argues for an 'event ontology,' i.e., objects are comprised of microscopic entities that are in constant motion. In fact, event ontologies rarely include 'objects' in the strict sense of the term. If this view is correct, (as modern physics argues) can the mind accurately picture objects as the events they are? The level of complexity at play makes this task seem impossible. Even competing realists' models call into doubt Sellars' claim as to our ability to picture and thus know mind-independent existence.

Nor should we assume, as Sellars does, that one scientific model will one day replace all of its competitors as the final outcome of science (as Peirce suggests). The resolution of practical problems or the predictions one wishes to make concerning one phenomenon may require several different models/theories (e.g., predicting weather). Moreover, as we learn to make ever increasingly nuanced observation of a particular kind of phenomenon, new models/theories may be required to answer previously undreamt

questions. This facet of science brings into doubt its capacity to construct a model of physical existence that will supplant all others for all time. Accordingly, even if picturing could be analogous to existence, we would never be assured that our current scientific models are sufficient to properly guide our picturing, because our current scientific models may at some future date be replaced by radically different models.

Moreover, given the limitations of our access to existence (i.e., it is restricted to appearing phenomena) and social influences (e.g., economic, religious, political, etc.) on scientific research, it is unlikely that we could recognize when we happen upon the best possible model/theory. Nor is it clear how the human intellect is capable of making such a distinction, because the success of a scientific model is limited to how well it solves a specific set of well defined questions. The speculative claim that X is the *best possible* model is not demonstrable in science, because all that one can validate via science is that X is the best *available* (i.e., at a future date a better one may come along) model/theory for resolving this set of practical problems or predicting certain kinds of phenomena.

I hope it is clear that what is at stake is not our practical views or science, but our human condition: are human beings constituted in such a fashion that one can *demonstrate* his/her knowledge of mind-independent entities?

3. Sellars' causal account of perceptual experience is thin. It offers only an account of how sensory succession *may* relate to a mind-independent temporality. Yet, he presumes that a weak relation of successive sensations and their phenomenal appearances—as a result of the mind's synthesizing of sensory content—is *sufficient* to *discern* a causal change of events that is anchored in the thing-in-itself. This tie in turn is

presumed to permit inferential content from which the thing-in-itself can be accurately ‘pictured’.

Even *if* one concedes to Sellars the existence of causal relations limiting perceptual states, the *theoretical* world of causal relations need not be cut and dry, it could be a sticky place that ultimately leads to quagmires. Take the following causal relations:

1. One cause, one effect
2. One cause, multiple effects
3. Multiple causes are necessary to create one effect
4. One cause or several causes can have multiple effects that are numerically greater or lesser than the number of causes

According to the current guidelines of science, the mind-independent world can contain complex combinations of the above causal relations. Therefore, any combination of the above causal relations may affect phenomena. For instance, the object’s existence, along with all the features of its immediate environment, is theorized as being responsible for a chain of localized causal reactions. These reactions may include any number of the above causal combinations. At some point, this causal chain affects one’s senses. In turn, a new set of casual combinations may occur in the brain. These causal combinations manifest, in some manner yet to be shown, phenomena, i.e., we do not know how the brain gives rise to mental experience.

From mental experience, we are said to traverse all the mystifying interconnections from phenomena, to the brain, and then to mind-independent existence. This supposed causal chain of events, which can hold unforeseen relations to other causal chains, is upheld as a *sure path* to the thing-in-itself. From this assumed *sure path* we are then said to be able to reconstruct exactly how the thing-in-itself exists.

The above approach assumes that the things we do not know about causal reactions do not matter, i.e., at some moment, we will just miraculously know that all we are ignorant of is irrelevant to the issues of knowledge we are concerned with. Moreover, it assumes that the causal relations that *contingently* appear to the human mind are true rather than a side-effect of the mind. For example, scientists claim that colors are the product of the manner in which the brain responds to bandwidths of energy called light. On the one hand, bandwidths of energy called 'light' are claimed to exist external to the human mind. Colors on the other hand are said to exist only for observing subjects. It also presumes that the only causal relations required for an accurate account of mind-independent existence are the ones that appear to us.

There is also hubris in the assumption that all causal combinations necessary to know (any particular) mind-independent entity are navigable by the human mind. For instance, it is assumed that the relevant causal relations are not 1) too complex for the human intellect, or 2) so alien to our perceptual and conceptual structures that they are incomprehensible.

More importantly, our *perceptions* of causes are not *indicators* of the manner in which mind-independent entities exist. As Hume points out, causes are observed instances of one type of appearance always following another. After these appearances occur, the scientist creates a model to account for what he cannot observe (i.e., what is behind the two appearances). The *only* indication that his model is a useful scientific tool is its ability to predict or discover new observable outcomes. A theoretical chain of perceptual causes thus fails to penetrate the veil of mind-independent content, and remains telling only of the phenomenal world.

All realists (who claim to possess metaphysically accurate depictions of mind-independent existence) can do is *presume* that the world is not different than that which the human intellect can infer, conceive and picture. Their so called support for the claim that existence is limited to what the human mind can conceive is that predictive and practical models pan out in the world of experience.

Of course things may exist as they appear, but how can we demonstrate this to be the case when we are restricted to appearances, theories, inferences, laws and models? In other words, as argued in Chapter 2, appearances, theories, inferences, laws and models can only be supported empirically. In short, some appearances *seem* to support some of our models and theories concerning existence. Yet, as soon as we seek *justification* that appearances enable reliable inferences that permit us to construct accurate representations (of mind-independent reality), we arrive at a dead end with no further means of investigation. In other words, science can fall back only on appearances to support the models that promote accurate predictions or efficient resolutions to practical problems. Though predictive and practical models can be supported by observation, their metaphysical accuracy cannot, because we have no means of comparing our representations of existence to that which is independent of their appearance to human beings.

4. Sellars' strategy for establishing how knowledge of mind-independent objects is possible employs the well worn belief that there is a link between phenomena and the entities that cause them. Let us now dredge up a classical argument against knowledge

claims derived from causal inferences and then see if Sellars' perceptual model can overcome it.

In response to traditional causal accounts, Stace succinctly captures a shared Humean-Kantian thesis:

But is it not clear that such a concept of causation, however interpreted, is invalid? The only reason we have for believing in the law of causation is that we *observe* certain regularities or sequences. We observe that, in certain conditions, *A* is always followed by *B*. We call *A* a cause, *B* the effect. And the sequence *A-B* becomes a causal law. It follows that all *observed* causal sequences are between sensed objects in the familiar world of perception, and that all known causal laws apply solely to the world of sense and not to anything beyond or behind it. And this in turn means that we have not got, and never could have, one jot of evidence for believing that the law of causation can be applied *outside* the realm of perception, or that the realm can have any causes (such as the supposed physical objects) which are not themselves perceived. ("Science and the Phenomenal World: A Defense of Phenomenalism" 97)

Sellars' epistemic model needs some way to overcome this skeptical juggernaut, i.e., in order for his view to be true, the above view must be false.

Even *if* we grant that there is a causal chain that links phenomena to mind-independent entities, the problem still remains: how do we infer from such a chain what existence is like independent of how the mind pictures it? According to Sellars, science and our sensory intuitions can permit us to slowly (given sufficient scientific research) refine a 'picture' of the thing-in-itself. Yet, how do we know such picturing is accurate? Shall we observe if it is? Here is the rub, as Stace properly points out: all that science can do, is indicate what will *appear* to the observing subject, based upon predictive models and theories. If the latter is the case, then the inferred picturing is merely an *assumption* as to what mind-independent existence is like. This is what Hume, Kant and Stace mean when they argue that, from the *appearances* of cause and effect, we cannot demonstrate truths concerning unobservable existence.

Stace suggests that the mere process of trying to explain the true nature of mind independent existence results in “metaphysical monsters”:

It is not irrelevant to our topic to consider *why* human beings invent these metaphorical monsters of forces and bumps in space-time. The reason is that they have never emancipated themselves from the absurd idea that science “explains” things. They are not content to have laws which merely told them *that* the planets will, as a matter of fact, move in such and such ways. They wanted to know “why” the planets move in those ways. So Newton relied, “Forces.” “Oh,” said humanity, “that explains it. We understand forces. We feel them every time someone pushes or pulls us.” Thus the movements were supposed to be “explained” by [familiar entities] because [they are] analogous to the muscular sensation which human beings feel. The humps and hills were introduced for exactly the same reason. They seem so familiar. If there is a bump in the billiard table, the rolling billiard ball is diverted from a straight to a curved course. Just the same with the planets. “Oh, I see!” says humanity, “that’s quite simple. That *explains* everything.” (98)

Sellars’ pseudo-metaphysical monster is his claim that picturing can be ‘analogous’ to the thing-in-itself.

How can there exist a knowable analogy between the mind and the mind-independent content, when there is no discernable standard by which one can measure the difference between the two? For instance, Sellars is the first to admit that an empirical appearance of a cube, the concept of a cube, and the mind-independent object that elicits these responses are ontologically distinct. As a result, how are we to understand the analogy between mental images/concepts and the non-mental thing-in-itself, if we do not already know what the thing-in-itself is like?

An analogy is only meaningful when one understands the similarities between the two objects of comparison stated in the analogy. Picturing is the first part of the analogy, and the thing-in-itself is what one’s picturing is being compared to. Without already knowing what the thing-in-itself is like, the analogy fails to convey meaning. Hence, to know that one’s picturing is analogous to the thing-in-itself, one must already know in

what manner one's mental constructs are analogous to the thing-in-itself. This leaves us with a result that opposes Sellars epistemic model:

- P1. Sellars' method for knowing the thing-in-itself is 'picturing'.
- P2. The relationship between picturing and the thing-in-itself is claimed to be analogous.
- P3. The *analogous* relationship between picturing and the thing-in-itself is claimed to permit knowledge of the thing-in-itself.
- P4. Analogies are only meaningful if one already knows something about the two entities being compared.
- P5. Hence, one can only know the thing-in-itself via picturing when one already knows something about the thing-in-itself.
- P6. Knowing the thing-in-itself requires some means other than picturing.
- P7. Sellars offers no means other than picturing for knowing the thing-in-itself.
- C. Sellars does not have a workable epistemic model that permits knowledge of the thing-in-itself.

There is no way to understand the analogous relation of picturing to the thing-in-itself unless we already know something about what the thing-in-itself is like. Yet, Sellars claimed he could show that picturing guided by science was *sufficient* to obtain knowledge of the thing-in-itself. Therefore, Sellars' epistemic model fails.

5. A Sellarsian may respond to the previous criticism (i.e., section 4.5.4) with the following kind of counterexample. Jones calls the U.S. from New Guinea. He states he is eating vegetable X. His U.S. friend asks what vegetable X is like. Jones responds that it is like a potato. Many would argue that Jones' friend now has some knowledge concerning vegetable X.

The problem with comparing the above kind of example to Sellars' epistemic model can be stated as follows: one cannot glean knowledge of the thing-in-itself via the first object of comparison (in an analogy). For instance, from the designation 'vegetable,' one can analytically unpack many facts about X: it is a food item, a plant,

and an entity that conforms to the temporal and spatial limitations of empirical objects that fall under such headings. According to Sellars, the thing-in-itself is not something we already know. It is something we must infer from scientific and observational content. We thus return to a fundamental problem. If we do not already know what the thing-in-itself is like, we cannot assume that our familiar empirical concepts and images are applicable. Nor will we know what aspects of the familiar we should project onto the thing-in-itself.

Sellars claims that science and the limiting factors of sensation allow us to infer what the thing-in-itself is like. Yet, in what manner can science and sensation permit one to picture the thing-in-itself? His conception of picturing being ‘analogous’ and therefore bearing a ‘proportional relation’ (see section 4.2.3) to the thing-in-itself requires some answer to the previous question. Yet, this answer cannot be spelled out. He merely assumes that spatial relations formed from successive impacts permit us to picture according to the “inalienable prerogative of the perceptual level” the true nature of an object when guided by scientific discovery (144). He assumes that the manner in which the mind maps or pictures spatial relations is analogous to mind-independent existence. For instance, even if the succession of empirical experience has a corollary to mind-independent reality contacting our senses, the resulting experience of time or the resulting experience of space need not resemble the way mind-independent reality exists. In other words, our experiences of the world need to produce functional representations to account for their predictive and practical efficacy; yet, such successes need not be predicated upon metaphysical accuracy. Hence, the ‘inalienable prerogative of the perceptual level’ is assumed rather than demonstrated, or even worse, the subtle

philosophical conception of metaphysical accuracy is conflated with a bricklayer's need for practical efficacy.

Even when we grant Sellars the claim that there is a causal chain linking the act of perception and the thing-in-itself, this concession does nothing to establish our capacity to 'picture' as he conceives of it. This is the case, because appearances and 'picturing' are the sole property of minds. It is therefore unclear as to what, if any, *resembling* feature they may share. In other words, analogies and resembling(s) are mental occurrences. Therefore, it is not clear if mind-independent objects appear, resemble or are analogous to anything, much less the contingent ways the human mind conceives reality.

Lastly, once one accepts (as Sellars does) that the mind synthesizes sensory inputs according to its *own* rules (even if its constructs are limited by sensory input), we lose all assurances that the empirical format of our experience is an accurate representation of mind-independent existence. In other words, if the mind rather than existence is responsible for how the mind constructs phenomena and concepts, then any theory concerning how one can accurately depict existence is ultimately unverifiable. This is the case, because, if we are responsible for the manner in which all phenomena appear, we are then restricted to a human perspective, i.e., we cannot get outside of our human perspective in order to verify that mankind is equipped to accurately portray outer existence. Hence, the 'inalienable prerogative of the perceptual level' loses its sense of being an 'inalienable prerogative', i.e., a reliable inlet to mind-independent content.

6. The concept of metaphysical accuracy is of particular importance to Sellars' epistemic model. If his epistemic model is to produce an intellectual and visual image that is similar to God's intellectual intuition of the thing-in-itself, Sellars' model must be accurate.

I have been advocating the following claim: Sellars' theory wrongly assumes that the predictive efficacies of scientific models and theories work, because models or theories provide content that can be inferentially used to discern what mind-independent entities are like. Similarly, statistical models are seen as useful for making predictions based on probabilities, but few would claim that mathematics resembles mind-independent reality. Likewise, successful scientific models that are practical or permit predictable outcomes do not *require* metaphysical accuracy. Since scientific successes do not require metaphysical accuracy, science is not a reliable tool to disclose mind-independent existence.

Why should our picturing resemble mind-independent reality? Sellars' response largely hinges upon the limiting factor of causal relations responsible for sensory excitation. Limiting factors of causal chains via sensation *may* account for our practical means of navigating the perceived world, but such a link does not provide the kind of information that can support the veracity of a metaphysical model. This occurs, because limiting factors establish only what can be observed and what is functionally achievable. Such information fails to inform the subject as to what lies behind appearances.

7. Sellars slides between the following three commitments:

1) Peirce is correct to claim that as science proceeds it will get closer to *the* truth.

- 2) The more that scientific models can predict empirical outcomes, the more likely one can extract from them metaphysical truths concerning mind-independent entities.
- 3) 'Picturing' that is informed by empirical experience and the best available science can be 'analogous' to the thing-in-itself.

The problem with 1 and 2 is that there is no way to determine how much further science needs to go until it arrives at the truth or if one's metaphysical inferences born from scientific models are like the thing-in-itself. The scientific realist claims that his metaphysical models are true (or close to being true) at the cost of begging the question as to what is an accurate metaphysical account. This occurs, because the only way one can tell 1) how close science is to the truth, 2) if one's metaphysical inferences are correct, or 3) if one's picturing is correct, is to already know the answer. We are thus left with a similar result as found in section 4.5.4, i.e., in order to obtain preliminary knowledge of the thing-in-itself, one must employ some means other than science or picturing.

8. *What if a Sellarsian realist claims that the mind and reality share a similar bond, that they are not exclusive?*¹²⁰ If this is the case, then the problem of picturing being analogous to mind-independent content would seem to evaporate. But what is this claim, other than a blind man trying to grasp colors he cannot see? This approach is naught but the well worn tactic of projecting what is familiar onto the otherness of existence in an attempt to 'understand' it. In short, this approach projects the human psyche onto what is fundamentally claimed (by the realist) not to be the human psyche. Projecting mental constructs onto what is asserted to be non-mental can never yield its goal—the excision of the self from knowledge. For such projection merely makes the

¹²⁰ McDowell makes a similar claim. See sections 7.6-7.

whole world into a kind of personification, where the mind is blindly held as not being itself.

In all versions of representational realism, the theater of the mind plays out like a Greek drama, in which the son marries his mother and kills his father, for he knows not that they are of the same blood. In these cases, one inexorably falls into Hegel's dialectic: all attempts to separate ourselves from what we conceive as not being ourselves only leaves us with ourselves. This occurrence highlights the all pervasive nature of the human perspective and the reason Hegel so willingly drops the unproductive burden of dualism.

9. Let us now review the failings of Sellars' epistemic account. 1) Sellars' appeal to Peirce's conception of science eventually progressing to a point where it is similar, if not identical, to the truth is problematic, because there is no way to determine how far or close science is to its last development. Moreover, it is unclear if science will ever reach a stage where it will no longer develop or offer opposing theories and models. Nor is it clear *if* science does reach a stage where it can no longer develop, whether this demonstrates absolute truth or merely the irreducible manner in which the human mind must perceive existence given strict guidelines. 2) Similarly, how do we know if our 'picturing' accurately represents mind-independent existence? The only way one can attempt to answer 1 and 2 is to beg the question as to what counts as accurate metaphysical models. 3) Sellars claims that the causal limitations that restrict our sensory experiences, along with knowledge of these causal chains, 'inform' our metaphysical models. Knowledge of appearing causal chains or the limiting factors of sensation *may*

account for the success of predictive or practical models. Yet, the success of these models need not be predicated upon their metaphysical accuracy. 4) Since i) scientific theories can be validated only by the appearing world and ii) the success of scientific models do not require metaphysical accuracy, we can never *know* if science is showing us what mind-independent reality is like.

10. Sellars writes that by recognizing the non-conceptual guidance of our sensory intuitions we can “avoid the dialectic which leads from Hegel’s *Phenomenology* to nineteenth-century idealism,” i.e., all that is knowable is the human mind (16). Yet, even if we grant that sensation informs our conceptual understanding, Sellars has *not* shown why Kant’s main epistemic concern is invalid or avoidable, i.e., the way the world appears, whether it be empirical appearances, scientific modeling, or some fusion of both, are irreducible appearances constituted by the mind’s rules and processes (as opposed to external existence). As a result, Kant argues that there is no way for one to get outside the human perspective in order to verify its accuracy.

Since Sellars cannot show (but only assumes he does) the nature of the correspondence between mind-independent entities and our representations of them, Hegel’s assertion that we should drop dualism (due to it being philosophically unproductive), and replace it with a dialectical investigation of human consciousness, stands uncontested by Sellars’ epistemic claims.

In brief, Sellars’ epistemic model is incapable of overcoming ‘constructivism’ (for an account of constructivism see section 3.5). For instance, Fichte elucidates the opposing stances of what he calls ‘idealism’ and ‘dogmatism’ in the following manner:

“[t]he object appears either as having first been created by the presentation of the intellect [i.e., constructivism], or as existing without the aid of the intellect [i.e., dogmatism]” (*The Science of Knowledge*, 9). Despite his intentions, Sellars strengthens the above idealist/constructivist claim rather than his peculiar brand of scientific realism. Simply put, once one 1) reverses the traditional flow of empiricism (i.e., particular to universal), and 2) shows that all appearing content is arranged and formatted by mental processes (i.e. synthesis), one’s capacity to demonstrate the correspondence between an existing particular and the universal is doomed.

I base the above claim on the following view, which I take to be essentially Kantian with a Sellarsian twist: it is impossible to demonstrate how an appearance, whose only determinate expression necessarily stems from *psychological nominalism* (“according to which *all* awareness of *sorts, resemblances, facts*, etc., in short, all awareness of abstract entities—indeed, all awareness even of particulars—is a linguistic affair”), permits glimpses of the actual cause of that appearance in its naked existence (“Empiricism and Philosophy of the Mind” 63). If this is the case, then by default, the only *defensible* candidates for knowledge claims are those that stem from some version of constructivism (i.e., “[t]he object appears [...] as having first been created by the presentation of the intellect”) (Fichte 9). Despite his best efforts to disprove it, Sellars’ work strengthens the aspect of Hegel’s dialectic which he seeks to deny, i.e., only human consciousness and its contents can be known in a rigorous philosophical manner, which Hegel calls ‘Science’.

12. In Chapter Three, I claimed that in order to show that knowledge *is* possible, a model of cognition needs to be developed that avoids two extremes: 1) complete subjectivism (which denies the possibility of knowledge) or 2) the myth of the given (which is shown to be false by Hegel and Sellars). I also claimed I would show that Hegel's approach to this epistemic challenge is superior to Sellars.

We can now see that Hegel's epistemic position is superior to Sellars' insofar as it avoids knowledge claims that require *access* to reality that cannot be shown but only assumed. The same can be said of Moore, Russell and Strawson, and as we shall soon see, it is also the case with McDowell and Brandom.

Nor can it be claimed that Hegel secures access for his objects of knowledge at the cost of falling into the myth of the given or complete subjectivity. For instance, as shown in **Part Two** of Chapter Three, Hegel rejects all versions of the given, despite Sellars implying he does not. Moreover, Hegel avoids complete subjectivism. For example, Hegel argues that our ability to know an empirical world is 1) limited by our empirical cognitions, 2) what can be coherently upheld about them, and 3) what can be rejected due to inconsistencies. Since 1, 2, and 3 apply to all rational people, empirical objects and occurrences are cognizable according to standards that exceed an individual's subjectivity. See Section 4.7, for Brandom's account of the manner in which Hegel avoids subjectivism.

4.6. *An Account of McDowell's Epistemic Revision of the Kantian-Hegelian-Sellarsian Tradition*

1. *Mind and world* is a largely a “record of the John Locke Lectures that [...] [McDowell] delivered in Oxford in Trinity Term, 1991” (vii). This book is arguably the best overview of McDowell’s key epistemic positions. The enduring popularity of this text has also greatly influenced current trends in Analytic Philosophy.

In *Mind and World*, McDowell summarizes his epistemic view as follows:

The talk of impingements on our senses is not an invitation to suppose that the whole dynamic system, the medium with which we think, is held in place by extra-conceptual links to something outside it. That is just to stress again that we must not picture an outer boundary around the sphere of the conceptual, with a reality outside the boundary impinging inward on the system, [...]. My point is to insist that we can effect this deletion of the outer boundary without falling into idealism, without slighting the independence of reality. (34)

The most notable feature of this passage is his rejection of Kant’s claim that there is a ‘supersensible reality’ that is inaccessible to our conceptual understanding. In short, he denies the epistemic claim that experience diverges and is disconnected from mind-independent existence.

McDowell’s ‘deletion of the outer boundary’ can be seen as a rejection of a specific formulation of dualism, which implies there is an ontological incompatibility between the substantial being of mind and world.¹²¹ This formulation of dualism can lead to the concern that knowledge of external existence is impossible.¹²² For example, *if* external existence is composed of physical substances and the mind is composed of a non-physical substance, *if* the mind cannot itself become something *non-mental* in order to mirror physical existence, *then* ideas may be incapable of mirroring mind-independent

¹²¹ For a related discussion on this topic, see McDowell’s “Naturalism in the Philosophy of the Mind” from “*The Engaged Intellect*.”

¹²² For a more on how McDowell responds to this topic, see his article “Naturalism in the Philosophy of Mind” from “*The Engaged Intellect*.”

existence. Like Hegel, but for different reasons, McDowell believes this formulation of dualism is unproductive and misleading.

As a consequence of McDowell's claim that there is no 'outer boundary' to what is knowable, he believes that there is no 'gap' between what we can know and what exists:

[T]here is no ontological gap between the sort of thing one can mean, or generally the sort of thing one can think, and the sort of thing that can be the case. When one thinks truly, what one thinks *is* the case. [...] Of course thought can be distanced from the world by being false, but there is no distance from the world implicit in the very idea of thought. (27)

While our thoughts concerning the world can at times be false, he also claims that there are times when there is no separation between our thoughts and existence.

2. Some may perceive the claim that there is no 'boundary' or 'ontological gap' separating the conceptual from external reality as an idealist claim. For instance, in making these claims, McDowell's worries his critics may argue that he undervalues the independent nature of external reality, while overemphasizing the mind's relationship to reality. With these imagined critics in mind, McDowell seeks to differentiate his position from what might be mistaken for a version of Berkeleyian idealism:

That things are thus and so is the conceptual content of an experience, but if the subject of the experience is not misled, that very same thing, *that things are thus and so*, is also a perceptible fact, an aspect of the perceptible world.

Now it can seem that this refusal to locate perceptible reality outside the conceptual sphere must be a sort of idealism, in that sense in which to call a position "idealism" is to protest that it does not genuinely acknowledge how reality is independent of our thinking. If that were right, my affirmation of reality's independence would be disingenuous, mere lip-service. (26)

He outlines several reasons that, when combined, oppose the charge of idealism suggested above. One, his position requires a mind-independent reality. Two, this reality

must autonomously affect one's sensory equipment and thereby affect our conceptual understanding. Three, "[t]he fact that experience is passive, a matter of receptivity in operation, should assure us that we have all the external constraint we can reasonably want. The constraint comes from outside *thinking*, but not from outside what is *thinkable*" (28).

McDowell additionally fears his claim that there is no ontological gap between mind and world may appear as a form of anthropocentrism: "anthropocentrism, a baseless confidence that the world is completely within the reach of our powers of thinking" (40). He denies that his epistemic claims sanction such "arrogance" for the following reasons (40): 1) our views can be mistaken, 2) our views need to be tested, and 3) our current concepts may be insufficient to grasp some specific feature of reality.¹²³

3. McDowell's agrees with Kant's and Sellars' views that there is no conceptual content given in raw sensation (see the myth of the given Chapter 3, **Part Two**). However, McDowell is critical of their claims that concepts are completely inert during the initial reception of sensory content, i.e., concepts play no role in how sensory content is received.¹²⁴

¹²³ McDowell writes:

But the accusation of arrogance would not stick against the position I am recommending. In my first lecture (§ 5) I said that the faculty of spontaneity carries with it a standing obligation to reflect on the credential of the putatively rational linkages that, at any time, one takes to govern the active business of adjusting one's world-view in response to experience. Ensuring that our empirical concepts and conceptions pass muster is an ongoing and arduous work for the understating. It requires patience and something like humility. There is no guarantee that the world is completely within the reach of a system of concepts and conceptions as it stands at some particular moment in its historical development. Exactly not; that is why the obligation to reflect is perpetual. (40)

¹²⁴ McDowell characterizes Sellars' notion of sensation as "idle wheels" ("Sellars on Perception" 16).

Unlike Kant and Sellars, McDowell claims that the discursivity (i.e., application of concepts via judgments) of experience permeates even the passive reception of sensation:

[...] I claim that we can coherently credit experiences with rational relations to judgments and belief, but only if we take it that spontaneity is already implicated in receptivity; that is, only if we take it that experiences have conceptual content. (162)

Though the reception of empirical inputs is passive, their reception unfolds in an established conceptual structure. Moreover, the sensory inputs that are passively placed into a conceptual framework can be subsequently modified by active conceptual determinations. It is in this manner, he claims that empirical receptivity is responsive to the yoke of concepts and the rational restructuring of them.

In ‘crediting experiences with rational relations to judgments,’ McDowell wishes to avoid the problem of solipsism (i.e., all I can know are *my* own thoughts):

At least with “outer experience”, conceptual content is already borne by impressions that independent reality makes on one’s senses. This allows us to acknowledge an external constraint on the freedom of spontaneity without falling into incoherence. So we can exorcise the specter of frictionless spinning, which deprives us of anything recognizable as empirical content. (67)

The ‘specter of frictionless spinning’ refers to the concern that all experience is just ‘inner experience’ i.e., empirical inputs make no difference to what or how we experience. McDowell claims that empirical constraints ‘exorcise’ this specter by establishing limits to the conceptual framework in which we as agents can make use of empirical content.

4. The manner in which we organize or place empirical content into a ‘general framework’ of concepts is what makes experience possible. One aspect of human

freedom concerns the manner in which we carry out this process. For instance, this process is not causally determined by external forces but rather it is “spontaneously” determined by the observing subject (67). In other words, we are fully responsible for our own thoughts.

The third chapter of *Mind and World* is devoted to showing that the spontaneity (or human freedom), which is a part of every experience (due to experience requiring judgments), does not detach the intellect from reality. Instead, McDowell claims that our thoughts arise from our interaction with nature, and as a consequence, our thoughts are not independent of it. In this regard, McDowell perceives Hegel as an epistemic ally:

It is central to Absolute Idealism to reject the idea that the conceptual realm has an outer boundary, and we have arrived at a point from which we could start to domesticate the rhetoric of that philosophy. Consider, for instance, this remark of Hegel’s: “In thinking, *I am free* because I am not in an *other*.” The point is the same as the point of the remark of Wittgenstein’s that I spent some time discussing [...] “We and our meaning—do not stop anywhere short of the fact.” (44)

McDowell, like Hegel, 1) rejects the epistemic dualism of a sensible world and an unknowable supersensible reality, and 2) asserts that we are free, even *in* the act of empirical experience. For McDowell, this latter assertion means that while the mind-independent world may be causally determined, human beings are not causally determined when they experience the causal world of mind-independent beings. Moreover, he reads Hegel as claiming that our ‘meaning’ can penetrate all the way to the mind-independent existence. Conversely, I argued in Chapter 3, **Part One**, that Hegel is only concerned with obtaining knowledge of human consciousness.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Note, Both McDowell and I are referring to Hegel’s epistemic stance in the *Phenomenology*.

4.7. A Critique of McDowell's Epistemic Revision of the Kantian-Hegelian-Sellarsian Tradition

1. In *Mind and World* (reviewed above) and "Experiencing the World" (which I review in sections 4.7.4-6), McDowell seeks to show that his version of realism is true and that its underlying claims do not limit him to some version of idealism. I argue that on both accounts he fails.

2. Before proceeding to McDowell's more detailed explanation of his perceptual model as found in "Experiencing the World," I want to point out some of the ways in which *Mind and World* fails to justify its main epistemic claims. In this regard, the reader will be better suited to evaluate if "Experiencing the World" can succeed where *Mind and World* falls short.

The fatal weakness of McDowell's epistemic model lies in his assumption that there is no 'ontological gap' between mind and world. How does he know this? Well, he claims that the constraints established by the autonomous world impacting our senses "assure[s] us that we have all the external constraints we can reasonably want" (28). Yet, if one wishes justification for this extravagant claim, one can and should want more.

First, in order to make my point concerning justification clear, let us briefly compare McDowell's epistemic view to that of empirical realism. McDowell is convinced that as a result of our reasoning being shaped by empirical constraints, our thoughts can grasp external reality. This claim exceeds the modest empirical realist, who asserts that our knowledge of existence is restricted to the manner in which the human

mind perceives/cognizes/pictures existence. Instead, McDowell's claim asserts that we accurately know reality as it truly exists.

Even if we grant McDowell his perceptual claims, we can still ask, do they demonstrate why we can obtain accurate knowledge of reality? For instance, if I note that the knife is sharp, and one can empirically observe that said object conforms to the characterization of 'sharp knife,' it does not follow that my idea of 'knife' or 'sharp' depicts existence independent of observing subjects. Instead, it proves that my *beliefs* concerning a sharp knife can be confirmed in *observation*. Here the epistemically restrained claim of empirical truth is demonstrable. However, the metaphysical status of the knife is not demonstrable, until one can show that our *access* to mind-independent existence permits such a demonstration.

An empirical realist only needs to show that empirical claims can be true at an empirical level, because this is all he claims to know. This can be demonstrated. As a result, the empirical realist can demonstrate that he/she can obtain knowledge concerning a certain class of objects, i.e., empirical objects.

The burden of proof is therefore on McDowell and not Kant's restrained epistemic vision, because McDowell's claim that there is no ontological gap between mind and world requires proof. He must therefore show how empirical constraints, which directly affect our thinking, are sufficient to ensure there is no ontological gap. If he cannot demonstrate this aspect of his claim, his realism falls apart.

Second, McDowell claims that our empirical concepts and reasoning are connected to and limited by mind-independent existence. This claim is central to McDowell's epistemic view:

The object of experience is understood as integrated into a wider reality, in a way that mirrors how the relevant concepts are integrated into the repertoire of spontaneity at large. Even in the case of color experience, this integration allows us to understand an experience as awareness of something independent of the experience itself: something that is held in place by linkage into a wider reality, so that we can make sense of the thought that it would be so even if it were not being experienced to be so.

[...] We cannot make a world, of which such experiences [of secondary qualities] might intelligibly be glimpses, entirely out of the distinctive topics of judgments that are only minimally removed from the passivity of experience, as judgments attributing secondary quality are. We have to understand the experienceable world as a subject matter for active thinking, rationally constrained by what experience reveals. (32-3)

Even if we concede these claims, we are left with our original objection: how do such constraints ensure metaphysical accuracy? Or in other terms, how do these constraints *ensure* that we can overcome the problems associated with representational theories of truth?

McDowell's response to these questions can be characterized as follows. He claims we are partly responsible for the world's empirical structure, because we organize it according to our concepts: "how can the empirical world be genuinely independent of us, if we are partly responsible for its fundamental structure" (42)? In other words, he claims that the external world stimulates our senses and thereby limits what is empirically verifiable and observable. Likewise, he claims that our rationality is an outgrowth of our deployment of concepts and that our empirical concepts are constrained by available empirical content. Consequently, our thoughts can be directly connected with existence.

At most, the above claims can support the view that humans developed an ability to intellectually interact with existence via empirical constraints. This ability ensures a greater functionality in our actions. Yet, even allowing for the assumptions underlying this claim, we can readily recognize that one's experiencing, modeling or thinking about

objects (even when empirical constraints are in play), does not guarantee metaphysical accuracy. At best, it ensures intelligibility, which provides useful results.

In order for our thoughts to be metaphysically accurate—in that they accurately depict mind-independent existence—there can be no significant difference between the ways the mind is able to think about reality and the actual states of reality, i.e., there can be no ontological gap.

While McDowell makes convincing arguments on why our mental processes are related to the world, they are insufficient to demonstrate metaphysical accuracy or that there is no ontological gap between mind and world. For instance, as Kant points out, the intelligibility of our mode of thinking is not necessary. Even slight changes in the way humans process, link and conceive empirical content could lead to irreconcilable differences in how the world is pictured and experienced. Nor can we *assume* that the human mode of experience (i.e., the peculiar way the human mind constructs/presents appearing phenomena) is the only viable means of experience (see section 2.5). It may be the case, as Kant suggests, that the human mind constructs experience in a manner that is contingent (i.e., not necessary), and as a result, the world may be different than we envision/experience it.

McDowell's account of experience ignores the possibility that there may be other coherent ways for non-human intelligences to experience a world that radically differs from our own. The mere possibility of an alternative non-human means of experience underscores the fact that we have no assurance that there is no ontological gap between appearances/rationality and the manner in which reality exists (see section 2.5). Until he can show that our mode of perception is not contingent, but necessary, the

correspondence problem is a persistent epistemic thorn he must be able to pluck. This is especially true, if he wishes to vindicate his epistemic model.

Third, what about our thinking permits there to be no ‘ontological gap’ between existence and the mind? Is it that appearances resemble reality? Is it that we can replicate/model/picture reality? Are our thoughts analogous to reality? Do thoughts grasp the form of reality? Is it some amalgamation of all these methods? By setting thought on one side of the equation and empirical inputs, derived from outer existence, on the opposite side, McDowell opens the door for all the problems associated with correspondence theories. As such, his appeal to Hegel is misguided, because as soon as he begins to speak about the epistemic problem of knowing reality in the above terms, he invokes dualistic logic. Consequently, we cannot be sure, given that thoughts are one kind of thing, and external entities are another kind of thing, that no ontological gap exists.

McDowell is right to argue that we should not *assume* that there *must* be irreconcilable differences between mind and world. However, granting him this claim does not entitle him to the opposite view, i.e., there is no ontological gap between mind and world. In order to hold the latter, he must prove it to be the case. Here, we return to a fundamental question of this text, is the human condition such that we can demonstrate (not just believe) that our knowledge of mind-independent existence is an accurate depiction of it? If we cannot show this to be the case, then one has strong philosophical grounds to side with Hegel, i.e., a dualist approach to philosophy is unproductive and the cause of much philosophical deception.

Fourth, like Sellars, McDowell accepts psychological nominalism and rejects the given (see **Part Two** of Chapter Three). These commitments ensure that sensory contents alone cannot inform us as to what external reality is like. He therefore attempts to show that thoughts are informed by our contact with mind-independent existence, and that all sensory content is already taken up in a discursive manner. Like Sellars' 'picturing,' he fails clearly to define or show in what manner this approach illuminates reality. Nor does he provide us with any support for the claim that it accurately does so and is therefore far more than a practical means of interacting with the world.

Compounding this failure is McDowell's assumption that there is no ontological gap. His support for this claim is that rationality and concepts are responses to the mind independent world. He provides little to no additional support to show how this kind of access (i.e., empirical constraints, which lead to rational constraints) accurately depict reality. As a result, he never demonstrates that rationality and conceptuality are constrained *in a fashion that yields no ontological gap*. Not only does he breeze past this crucial component of his epistemic theory, he appears to overlook the fact that without such a demonstration, his theory is merely an unsupported assumption.

For the above reasons, we will have to investigate a later publication in which he revisits *Mind and World*. In "Experiencing the World" (from *The Engaged Intellect*), one can find a detailed account of his position concerning our *access* to existence.

2. Above, I argued that McDowell, in *Mind and World*, fails to provide a sufficient support for his epistemic view, i.e., that we can know mind-independent reality as it truly exists. The only account he offers is that our concepts and experiences are

limited and connected to reality. Yet, this claim, even if it is true, does not yield proof that there is no ‘ontological gap’. In order to prove his point, McDowell must answer the question: what about our thinking permits there to be no ‘ontological gap’ between existence and the mind?

I disagree with McDowell’s response to the above question (as expressed in “Experiencing the World”): 1) I argue that his response is insufficient to justify his epistemic views concerning our ability to know reality, and 2) I deny that his perceptual model permits him the ability to respond to the above question without being caught up in the logic of dualism, which inexorably leads to ontological differences between thoughts and outer existence.

3. McDowell writes that “Experiencing the World” was originally “written as a lecture to introduce the conception of experience I recommend in *Mind and World*” (243). He also writes that the purpose of his article is not merely concerned with the possibility of empirical knowledge, but more importantly seeks to show “we are not beset by difficulty about the capacity of our mental activity to be about reality” (243). The ‘difficulty’ he has in mind can be expressed as a form of “transcendental anxiety,” which concerns “the very possibility of [one’s] thought[s] being directed at the objective world” (243).

The source of the ‘transcendental anxiety’ that McDowell wishes to alleviate can be traced back to Sellars’ “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind.” We must therefore return to this text in order to understand the concern McDowell claims to resolve in “Experiencing the World.”

4. As shown in section 3.8, Locke claims that in the act of sensing, one passively receives facts (i.e., learns something true about existence). This claim was meant, in part, to explain why and how we know reality.

Sellars compares the above type of view to the ‘naturalistic fallacy.’ This term refers to the belief that ethical and normative claims are reducible to purely natural states or a description of them. He claims that it is a mistake to believe that facts are *completely* reducible to sensations or manifested in appearances. Sellars draws this comparison as follows:

Now the idea that epistemic facts can be analyzed without remainder—even ‘in principle’—into non-epistemic facts, whether phenomenal or behavioral, public or private, with no matter how lavish a sprinkling of subjunctives and hypotheticals is, I believe, a radical mistake—a mistake of a piece with the so-called ‘naturalistic fallacy’ in ethics.” (“Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” 19

As we saw in section 3.10, Sellars’ argues that the recognition of facts requires that one has learned a language i.e., psychological nominalism.¹²⁶ Psychological nominalism claims that language provides us with the means to reason about what appears. It is this ability, which enables us to intelligibly recognize empirical content.

The ‘logical space of reasons’ is an outgrowth of our linguistic ability to give and understand reasons for asserting a specific determination. Providing reasons for holding that a certain kind of observation is correctly made is “the sort of thing we do when, for instance, we make sense of behavior as rational agency” (“Experiencing the World” 247).

In other words, our ability to take note and recognize empirical content can be seen as

¹²⁶ Sellars defines ‘psychological nominalism’ in the following terms:

If, however, the association is not mediated by the awareness of facts either of the forms of *x resembles y*, or of the form *x is ϕ* , then we have a view of the general type which I will call *psychological nominalism*, according to which all awareness of *sorts, resemblances, facts*, etc., in short, all awareness of abstract entities—indeed, all awareness even of particulars—is a linguistic affair. (“Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” 63)

part and parcel of our capacity to judge: “judging is making up one’s mind about how things are, as forming an intention is making up one’s mind about what to do” (252).

Moreover, Sellars argues that this capacity to judge, which permits the recognition of facts, properties or states of affairs, requires a great deal of ‘know how’:

[O]bservational knowledge requires a lot of “know how.” For the point is specifically that observational knowledge of any particular fact, e.g. that this is green, presupposes that one knows general facts of the form *X is a reliable symptom of Y*. And to admit this requires an abandonment of the traditional empiricist idea that observational knowledge “stands on its own feet.” (75-6)

Since language requires ‘know how’ and norms (or conventions), it can be asked if these features of language play a distorting role in how one’s views ‘hook on to reality’.

After Sellars, the question how do one’s thoughts ‘hook on to reality’ was more apt to be replaced with, how does “language hook on to reality”? (“Experiencing a World” 244)

The question of how do thoughts ‘hook on to reality’ is still in play, but thoughts and reasoning are now seen a byproduct of having learned a language. In this fashion, concerns regarding the possibility of language playing a distorting role developed into an epistemic anxiety over whether language inhibits us from knowing reality as it actually exists.

5. Quine’s ‘tribunal of experience’ maintains that there are three requirements for obtaining knowledge:

The idea is that we can make sense of [1] intellectual activity’s being correct or incorrect in light of [2] how things are in the world [3] only if we can see it as, at least in part, answerable to impressions the world makes on us, as possessors of sensibility (244).

From a Sellarsian perspective, one can question if impressions can yield facts (or information of epistemic value) about the world, because we can only make sense of

sensory impressions via the artifice of language. Moreover, since language is a human creation, it can be interpreted as unnatural.¹²⁷ If this is the case, the tribunal of experience may be viewed as unobtainable, because one may see language as something unnatural, which forces us to improperly interpret impressions. In “Experiencing the World,” McDowell *seeks to end* this version of ‘transcendental anxiety’.

McDowell believes he can provide an account that fulfills the requirements of the ‘tribunal of experience,’ and dispel the apparent tension between reality and the logical space of reasons:

The idea of an impression can be both the idea of a kind of natural happening and an idea that belongs in the logical space of reasons. [...] Impressions can fit in the logical space of reasons because impressions can be actualizations of conceptual capacities. [...] Given that the space of reasons is special in the way Sellars urges, ideas of phenomena that are manifestations of a second nature acquired in accruing command of a language do not, as such, fit in the logical space of natural scientific understanding [i.e., ‘law like generalizations’]. But there is no reason why that should rule out seeing those phenomena as manifestations of nature, since the nature in question can be a second nature. (247)

The appeal to ‘second nature’ is an attempt to show that the logical space of reasons occurs in humans—who are creatures of the natural order—as a natural outcome of learning a language. The logical space of reasons is therefore not necessarily something distinct or foreign to the natural order as previously suggested: “Remembering that nature can be second nature, we can immunize ourselves against the idea that the naturalness implied by the idea of sensory receptivity would have to stand in tension with the placement in the space of reasons implied by the talk of conceptual capacities” (249).

In order to show that the logical space of reasons is not foreign to the natural realm, McDowell needs to show that impressions inform us about reality. Yet, in doing

¹²⁷ This view is inspired by Kant’s claim that the *a priori* structure that makes experience possible does not accurately depict outer existence. Here, this notion of an *a priori* structure is replaced with a linguistic one.

so, he needs to avoid the ‘naturalistic fallacy,’ which claims that facts are given in appearances or sensations, i.e., the myth of the given. He must therefore meet the requirements of the tribunal of experience, by showing that reason and concepts participate in the natural order, while at the same time avoiding the myth of the given.¹²⁸

He proposes just such a tight rope act in the following excerpt:

What we need, and have, is the idea of a case of receptivity in operation that, even while being that, is an actualization, together, of conceptual capacities whose active exercise, with the same togetherness, would be the making of a judgment. (249)

Simply put, he believes the answerer to the current dilemma requires that impressions start from sensory receptivity, but that receptivity occurs in a manner that permits the *activations* of concepts during the act of receptivity. In other words, without actively making a judgment, one receives sensory content as already placed in a conceptual articulated structure.

McDowell argues the our reception of sensory content can ‘actualize’ our conceptual capacities, without exercising the kind of spontaneity associated with making an active choice:

Conceptual capacities are capacities of spontaneity, but in one obvious sense there is no spontaneity in perceiving. It is not up to one how things, for instance, look to one. How things look to one does not come within the scope of one’s responsibility to make up one’s own mind. But this is consistent with understanding experience as actualizing capacities that belong to spontaneity, in the sense that to understand what capacities they are we have to focus on their

¹²⁸ For instance, McDowell writes:

In an experience of the relevant kind, if things go well, some case of how things are impresses itself on a perceiving subject thanks to her possession of some suitable sensibility. Experience is receptivity in operation. To invoke the Kantian idea of receptivity like this is simply to begin elaborating the idea of an impression, in a way that is guided by the etymology of the word “impression”. Any concept whose explication begins on these lines would have to be a concept of a kind of state or occurrence in nature. And this brings out sharply the apparent difficulty in conceiving impressions as constituting a tribunal while respecting Sellars’ point about the special character of the logical space of reasons (249).

being exercisable in judgment. It is just that that is not the kind of actualization that is involved in experience. (251-2)

This view of perception is compelling. However, I am not concerned with supporting or denying this view. Instead, I seek to provide an answer to the following question: *is this view sufficient to meet the requirements of the tribunal of experience as McDowell conceives of it, and more generally, does it demonstrate the kind of access necessary to support the claim we can accurately know reality?* I argue it does not.

6. I find McDowell's following conclusion unjustified:

I introduced impressions, in the relevant sense, as occurrences in which how things are impresses itself on a perceiving subject. The resources I have introduced enable us to give this wording full force. We can see the relevant case of *how things are* as encapsulated into the circumstance of being impressed in the way the subject is. Without these resources, we could conceive the subject's being impressed only as something on the lines of receiving a dent in the mind's wax tablet. (252).

Here, he proposes that his perceptual model allows for impressions to reveal facts as opposed to dents, which only indicate that something occurred to cause it. I argue that his account of perception does not show that "at their best impressions constitute an availability, to a judging subject, of fact themselves," (255) but only dents that the human mind constructs into an appearing world of practical and predictable observations.

Let us take stock of the bare bones of McDowell's perceptual model:

- 1) The mind passively receives sensory input
- 2) Some of this sensory input is passively placed into a conceptual structure
- 3) The reception of sensory input can thus occur at a conceptual level that does not require the spontaneity associated with human freedom
- 4) The triggering of concepts during sensory reception is limited and constrained by the kind of sensory input provided in sensory reception
- 5) Passively received input that has been placed in a conceptual structure can be subsequently used to inform our active judgments (i.e., a reflective choice made by an agent).

- 6) The conceptual capacities actualized in sensory receptivity are the natural outcome of our learning a language. As such, they are not separate from the natural order.

I will begin by addressing the last claim (i.e., 6). As noted in *Mind and World*, McDowell is correct in arguing that we should not assume that mental occurrences are incompatible with the natural world. Yet, this insight does not grant the opposing claim that there is no relevant gap between the mental and real.

Even if the logical space of reasons is not separate from the natural order, this does not prove that the logical space of reasons is sufficient to accurately depict reality. For example, according to McDowell's model of perception, real events cause sensory receptivity to occur, which in turn generates experience. However, experience and real events are not identical. They are at the very least numerically distinct. Since they are numerically distinct, one can legitimately ask—without falling into ridiculous forms of skepticism which denies any shared empirical world—what is the difference between experience and reality and how closely do they resemble, mirror or match one another?

Similarly, McDowell is careful to use the term 'experience' rather than representation. Yet, his perceptual model cannot avoid the existence of representations. For instance, if experience and the world are numerically distinct, and if experience concerns reality, it must in some way represent reality. Hence, experience is some form of representation of reality, which is believed to resemble, mirror or match it.

McDowell seeks to avoid the problem of correspondence by rehabilitating the traditional 'internal'/'external' distinction that Descartes made popular:

If experiencing, as a mental occurrence, is in itself "in here", then, even supposing we can make sense of describing an episode of experiencing in terms of an environmental state of affairs, as having that state of affairs borne in on one, this

mode of description cannot get at what the episode is in itself. We seem to be back with the idea of a dent in the mind's tablet. (255)

Having a 'state of affairs borne in on one' does not necessitate that reality is rendered in its true form. In short, it is no assurance that what is borne in on us is more than a 'dent,' which we can convert into practical and predictive insights concerning the empirical world. In short, McDowell has not proven or justified his claim that empirical content reveals mind-independent existence. In this fashion, we can do away with the 'in here' and 'out there' talk and still be legitimately concerned with the problem of correspondence.

We must therefore turn to the first five assertions of McDowell's perceptual model (as listed above) to see if they are capable of ensuring or permitting accurate knowledge of mind-independent existence.

7. McDowell is committed to the Sellarsian claim that one must learn a language in order to place empirical content into the 'logical space of reasons'. Though the logical space of reasons is a human construct, it occurs alongside sensory reception and is informed by sensory reception. Reason, itself, is therefore claimed to be a response to reality, rather than some alien entity overlaid onto it. This is a legitimate position, but does it prove that we can know reality as it exists? Or put another way, how does this formulation permit something more than Kantian and Sellarsian accounts, which claim conceptual capacities occur *after* sensory receptivity?

Conceptual capacities that are actualized during sensory receptivity need not be metaphysically accurate, even though empirical constraints and rational practices may ensure that they are practically and/or predictably coherent (e.g., if I jump from this

ledge, I will fall rather than float away). Once again, we are offered by Analytic Philosophy an account of perception that permits empirical realism, but fails to offer proof of its chief claim, i.e., it ‘hooks on to reality’ as it actually exists.

As already indicated, sensation alone is uninformative, it cannot convey time, space or unity—all of which are necessary for empirical experience. The mind must therefore be responsible for the manner in which it generates the experience of time, space and unity. In this manner, the mind is equipped to format sensory content into intelligible relations. Kant and Sellars argue that intelligibility is brought about by the mind correlating, via judgments, sensory content with concepts.

McDowell differs from Kant and Sellars in that he claims that the mind links concepts and sensory content at the level of sensory receptivity. Yet, this assertion does nothing to prove that reality is ‘borne in on one’ in a manner that accurately reveals reality. For instance, McDowell has not shown that concepts, even when limited by empirical constraints, can do anything more than represent or predict something observable. Hence, even if conceptual capacities are actualized during sensory receptivity, he has not shown that the world yields intelligible facts. Thus the requirements of the tribunal of experience remain unfulfilled: “[1] intellectual activity’s being correct or incorrect [cannot be demonstrated] in light of [2] how things are in the world” 3) due to their being “answerable to impressions the world makes on us, as possessors of sensibility” (244).

The limitations of empirical content make many forms of inference, prediction and practical reasoning possible, as they concern empirical matters. This can be proven. Yet, none of these occurrences are a demonstration of metaphysical accuracy. McDowell

provides us with no means to know if the conceptual capacities that are actualized in sensory receptivity properly represent reality.

In conclusion, McDowell fails to establish a correlation between mind and world beyond appearances, which are produced by the mind's ability to process, synthesize and reproduce sensory content into meaningful relations. These mental occurrences need not be something unnatural, but even if they are a part of the natural order, we have no assurance that they can accurately represent reality. For instance, just as the sunflower does not need to accurately represent the sun in order to turn to it, the human mind does not need to represent accurately reality in order to appropriately respond to it.

8. McDowell often refers to idealism as something one 'worries' about or that the problem of correspondence is an 'unclear' 'anxiety'. His propensity to characterize these concerns in psychological terms rather than epistemic ones indicates that he does not think they are significant philosophical concerns. For instance, he sees the value of his above arguments as performing the following service:

Thus what would be revealed as a transcendental anxiety, if it came into clear focus, can, though an intelligible unclarity attaching to a merely incipient form of it, underlie the concern with, so to speak, mere skepticism that shapes much modern philosophy. (244)

I find McDowell's characterization of 'transcendental anxiety' troublesome, because the question at hand is something that stabs at the heart of the Western philosophical tradition: can one demonstrate that their claims concerning mind-independent existence are accurate? This question is not a form of skepticism that fears, because we cannot clearly define knowledge, one must accept that nothing can or will ever be known. Nor is it a phobia that since appearances can be misleading there can be

no empirical truth. Rather, it is the realization that *if* a positive answer to the above question cannot be justified, the whole edifice of representational realism, in all its varied forms, along with its rarefied intellectualism concerning mind-independent existence, is purely supposition. If it is purely supposition, then one should reject it as serious philosophical discourse.

For the above reasons, I find what McDowell believes to be psychological and what he thinks is philosophical, is not only wrong, but inverted. For instance, the realist's indignant reaction to those who earnestly ask, 'can we prove that we accurately represent existence?' is psychological rather than philosophical.

Lastly, if representationalism is unproductive, because it is incapable of overcoming the problem of correspondence, so much the worse for it, and so much the better for Hegel's non-dualistic approach (see section 4.10).

9. What then does McDowell's epistemic model achieve if not knowledge of outer reality as it truly exists? McDowell's claims, even when one concedes that one is 'informed' by the 'constraints' (or 'friction') of external reality via empirical content, cannot support the view that we can accurately know mind-independent reality. What he can demonstrate, and thus know, in a rigorous manner becoming of the Western philosophical tradition, are empirical objects, mental contents and mental processes. He cannot demonstrate that any metaphysical model of mind-independent existence is accurate. Of course, the mind *may* (in some sense) grasp reality as it is, but this is a 'may' that he has yet to demonstrate. His epistemic view thus functions up to this point: though my mind responds to reality constituted by an outer existence, it cannot know

reality independent of the way it appears. An epistemic position that is restricted to this range of content is clearly a form of Kant's idealism called 'empirical realism'.

Like Sellars, McDowell does much to peel back the hidden layers of the inner workings of the mind. The only thing that mars their brilliance is their pesky Analytic tendency to insist upon a form of realism they cannot demonstrate. And like Sellars, this occurs because McDowell cannot demonstrate the qualitative/degree of *access* required to justify our capacity to form accurate experiences/representations of mind-independent existence, i.e., empirical constraints and concepts/reasoning that are limited by these constraints are insufficient for this task. Hence, McDowell's realism serves only to detract from his ingenious critique of Kant's, Davidson's, Evans', Dummet's and Peacock's views on perception and agency as found in *Mind and World*.

4.8. *An Account of Brandom's Epistemic Revision of the Kantian-Hegelian-Sellarsian Tradition*

1. Brandom notes that when judgments are materially incompatible (e.g. this shape is both round and square), we are "obliged [...] to do something, to revise those commitments so as to remove the incoherence" ("Knowing and Representing: Reading (between the lines of) Hegel's *Introduction*" 14). This practice polices our commitments as to what counts as permissible conceptual characterizations of empirical content, as well as the entailments of these conceptual characterizations. For instance, if I assert that an item is copper, "I subject myself to the normative assessment as to the correctness of my commitments (for instance, about the temperature at which a particular coin would

melt) according to standards of correctness that are administered by metallurgical experts” (*Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas* 79). Likewise, I am also committing myself (as Brandom notes) to the ‘material inferences’ or entailments that stem from the concept ‘copper,’ e.g., that it is not an insulator but rather a conductor of electricity.

Brandom believes that the norms by which we discern material incompatibility are sufficient to delineate a form of objectivity. This ‘objectivity’ is discernable insofar as claims are not answerable to an individual’s subjectivity, but are answerable to how observations can be properly characterized given a normative framework shared by a group. This limited objectivity is the result of our obligation to respond to the material incompatibility of our empirical claims and the ability of others to hold us to these standards.

2. Brandom’s conception of ‘norms’ is an expansion of Sellars’ ‘observational conditions,’ i.e., the conditions under which it is deemed appropriate to make certain kinds of empirical statements. These conditions are typically implicit and usually learned via habituation and thus unconsciously acquired. For instance, a child does not need to be *reflectively* aware that colors are indistinct at night, in order to refrain from committing himself to a claim that objects will appear the same in the daytime. Similarly, norms are typically unspoken and often unexamined guidelines that form the basis of what is considered appropriate or inappropriate when forming judgments or engaging in reason.

Norms play a role not only in how we apply concepts but also in deciding what counts as proper or improper inferences concerning the analytic meaning and principles

hidden within the concepts we use. Likewise, norms play a role in how one assesses which concepts are relatable and mutually exclusive. For example, does X concern science, religion, both or neither? One's cultural norms will likely play a considerable role in how one chooses to respond to such a question.

Much of how an intellectual history develops depends on the norms at play, which in turn account for what is considered as material incompatibility. In short, the norms at play establish what counts as proper characterization of observable content, and those that significantly deviate from these norms are held as epistemically invalid until one can show that current norms need to be changed. In Brandom's terms, the perceived need to change our norms for knowledge claims or forming determinations occurs when instances of incompatibility are recognized. This insight is what Hegel (in part) means when he writes that, when an observation does not coincide with what is believed to be known a new criterion for knowing occurs.¹²⁹

Brandom perceives the historical development of a claim as participating in Hegel's dialectic in the following manner: 1) a claim is made, 2) an observation is found to be incompatible with the claim, 3) aspects of the original claim are integrated into the new observation, which in turn 4) establishes a new claim and a new criterion.

Brandom interprets Hegel's account of criteria and the dialectical/historical developments as resulting in the following view:

[T]he idea that they are appearances *of* some reality that was always already there, objectively (in the sense of being independent of the attitudes that are its appearances)—arise and is secured *for* consciousness itself is though the

¹²⁹ Hegel writes:

Since consciousness thus finds that its knowledge does not correspond to its object, the object itself does not stand the test; in other words, the criterion for testing is altered when that for which it was to have been the criterion fails to pass the test; and the testing is not only a testing of what we know, but also a testing of the criterion of what knowing is (*Phenomenology* 54-5; 85).

experience of *error* [...] Prior error is acknowledged *internally* in each rational integration by engaging in the activity of repairing incompatible commitments (as prior ignorance is acknowledged by embracing a new consequence). (100-1)

According to this account, our knowledge of reality should not be viewed as a collection of empirical experiences or a specific modeling of them. Instead, knowledge of reality is obtained as a progressive development of noting errors (especially materially incompatible claims) and then developing new criteria for avoiding the inconsistencies that arise from the current criteria.

Brandom perceives this version of the dialectical development as a ‘truth-process’:

[T]he truth-process whose structure is that of the experience of error is the process by which conceptual contents develop and are determined. [...] [For instance,] [i]f my initial concept of an acid obliges me to apply it to any liquid that tastes sour, and applying it commits me to that liquid turning Litmus paper red, I might respond to a sour liquid that turn Litmus paper blue (and the incompatibility of those two color-commitments) not by rejecting either the perceptual judgment of sourness or the perceptual judgment of blue, but by revising the norms articulating my concept. I might, for instance, take it that only *clear* liquids that taste sour are acids, or that cloudy acids don’t turn Litmus paper red. It is because and insofar as they inherit the results of many such experiences of error that the normatively articulated conceptual contents subjects acknowledge and deploy track the objective modal conceptual articulation of the world as well as they do. That is why the experience of error is a truth-process. (“Knowing and Representing: Reading (between the lines of) Hegel’s *Introduction*” 18)

This account is intended to explain the “the fact that in each experience of error something positive is learned” (16)

3. Brandom perceives the ‘truth-process’ as a means to counter the fallibilist:

The fallibilist metainduction is the inference that starts with the observation that every belief we have had or judgment we have made has eventually turned out to be false, at least in detail, and concludes that every belief or judgment we ever will or even could have will similarly eventually be found wanting—if we but subject it to sufficient critical detail. (16)

Brandom perceives the ‘truth-process’ as overcoming the fallibilists, because the ‘truth-process’ does not require any one claim to be true in order to indicate something true about existence. In other words, he perceives the truth process as a kind of coherency model of truth where the entire working model progressively moves closer to the truth.

By appealing to a coherent body of beliefs that historically improve, one can accept that many aspects of this body of beliefs are false, while still claiming that it nonetheless advances towards the truth. In fact, such a belief could even permit some aspect of each of its views to be wrong, so long as the entire system, in recognizing its mistakes epistemically advance:

This process of weighing the credentials of competing commitments to determine which should be retained and which altered so as to remove local material incompatibilities *is* the process by which we find out (more about) how things really are. (17)

This is a long and arduous path that need not be completed or terminated by a final set of claims, i.e., it is an ongoing process.

Brandom writes: “There is hard, concrete work involved in the retrospective semantic enterprise of recollectively turning a *past* into a *history* of this sort, just as there is in the prospective epistemic enterprise of integrating new commitments by extracting consequences and repairing incompatibilities” (*Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas* 101). This approach is both ‘semantic’ and ‘epistemic’ (see his footnote on page 101). It is semantic in the sense that it requires us to formulate better measures for appropriately applying terms. It is epistemic, in that as our terms and their application improve, our ability to recognize materially incompatible statements improves as well. Repairing

inconsistencies and correcting materially incompatible claims indicate positive epistemic gains.

Brandom's truth-process does not 'find out (more about) how things really are' by models, representations or mental replicas. It does so by creating a structure of materially compatible and incompatible concepts that make our thinking more nuanced, determinate and precise. He believes that this is one of Hegel's goals in the *Phenomenology*.

Brandom proceeds with this questionable reading of Hegel (see my critical account on this reading in section 4.9.4) and affixes to it the following Spinozian claim:

The determinateness of a thought or state of affairs (predicate or property) is a matter of its modally robust *exclusion* of other thoughts or states of affairs, those it is materially incompatible with.

This conception allows Hegel to endorse another central Spinozist doctrine: "the order and connection of things is the same as the order and connection of ideas." For this notion of determinateness applies equally to things and thoughts, represented [i.e., the entities being represented] and representing [i.e., the representations themselves]. No gulf of intelligibility is excavated between appearance and reality. Determinate thoughts and determinate states of affairs are, as determinate, both conceptually contentful, and hence in principle intelligible. ("Knowing and Representing: Reading (between the lines of) Hegel's *Introduction*" 13)

There is 'no gulf' between what is thought and what exists, because the 'order of things' and the 'order of concepts' both possess inherent material incompatibilities and are thus both intelligible according to how they logically relate to a modally robust system of concepts (i.e., a system of concepts that is materially compatible and incompatible).

As the historical process plays out, our modally robust system of concepts becomes 'fine tuned,' which in turn permits us to make better determinations. As a consequence, we are more apt to recognize material incompatibility. Brandom perceives this process as establishing a system of concepts that informs us about reality. He calls this view 'modal realism'.

In Brandom's following reading of Hegel's dialectical view of history, he presents a view he seems to endorse in *Tales of the Mighty Dead, Reason in Philosophy:*

Animating Ideas and in a recent lecture series "Knowing and Representing." Moreover, one can find antecedents to this view in *Making it Explicit*, and in particular, *Articulating Reasons*:

A successful recollective reconstruction of the tradition shows how previously endorsed constellations of commitments were unmasked, by internal instabilities, as appearance, representing how things really are only incompletely and partially incorrectly, but also how each such discovery contributed to filling in or correcting the picture they present of how it really is with what they were all along representing, by more closely approximating the actual consequential and incompatibility relations of the concepts and making more correct applications of them. So they were not *mere* appearances, in that they did genuinely reveal something of how things really are. Exhibiting a sequence of precedential concept applications-by-integration as *expressively progressive*—as the gradual, cumulative making explicit of reality as revealed by one's current commitments, recollectively made visible as having all along been implicit—shows the prior, defective commitments endorsed, and conceptual contents deployed, as nonetheless genuinely appearances representing, however inadequately, how things really are. (*Animating Ideas* 101)

Brandom's central epistemic claim is that our determinations, which revolve around what is permissible via compatibility and impermissible via incompatibility, form a foothold onto our relationship with 'how things really are'. As our determinations improve via the 'truth process,' which roots out incompatibility and thus indicates something is wrong with our claim, we climb ever higher to better and more accurate accounts of reality; not just as it appears to us—but as it actually exists independent of the observer.

4.9. A Critique of Brandom's Epistemic Revision of the Kantian-Hegelian-Sellarsian Tradition

1. By referring to ‘how things really are,’ Brandom breaks from the Hegelian dialectic and reintroduces the concept of dualism. On one side, we have ‘how things really are’ and on the other side is a modally robust system, which permits one to make true statements about existence. This dualism throws us back for a third time (i.e., as we saw with Sellars and McDowell) into the Kantian maw: how do we know that our system of concepts permits accurate determinations concerning existence?

2. Kant claims that we must be on guard when we reason, because reason continuously consents to what cannot be demonstrated. The Brandomian might argue that the empirical underpinning to material incompatibility is a reliable method of restraining reason. This argument returns us to McDowell’s claim that empirical constraints limit our thoughts in such a way they permit knowledge of external reality. As noted above, I argue that the constraints placed upon empirical experience may account for practical or predictive models, but the success of such models need not be predicated upon their metaphysical accuracy, and as such, their success offers no proof of metaphysical accuracy.

A Brandomian might therefore prefer the following claim: our modally robust system of concepts enables human reason to successfully respond to observable content, because a rational system of concepts hooks up with the very structure of existence. This leads us to the specific feature I want to pin on Brandom’s approach to knowledge—a type of pseudo-rationalism. Instead of pictures, resemblances and replicas, we have reason—couched and constrained by the limitations of psychological nominalism,

observational conditions, norms and the implied logic of a modally robust system of concepts—accounting for our ability to know existence.¹³⁰

3. Just as Kant argues that our representations do not represent mind-independent existence, he also argues that we should not assume that our reasoning is capable of doing so. In this fashion, the arguments Kant launches at the rationalists are applicable to Brandom, despite Brandom's pseudo-rationalism being historical (rationalists tend to be ahistorical) and severely diluted by the limits of observable content.

Reason, for Kant, can never adequately discern any truth other than what is empirically available: “**knowledge** can encounter no object anywhere except that of experience, and if one transgresses its boundary, then the synthesis that attempts cognitions which are new and independent of experience has no substratum of intuition on which it could be exercised” (A471/B499). In this claim is the seed of my criticism of Brandom's view: Brandom's material incompatibility functions at the empirical and practical level, but it is a sham *if* it is intended to provide truths concerning ‘how things really are’. This occurs, because neither the *appearance* of incompatible content or the ‘conceptually contentful’ reasoning can be verified other than in observation.

Take Brandom's following characterization concerning objects and material incompatibility: “It is *impossible* for an object simultaneously to exhibit materially incompatible properties (or for two incompatible states of affairs to obtain), while it is only *inappropriate* for a subject simultaneously to endorse materially incompatible commitments” (14). Notice the phrasing that it is impossible for an ‘object’ to ‘exhibit’

¹³⁰ McDowell claims that Brandom's epistemic view leaves out the efficacy of “experience” for a nearly one-sided emphasis on social norms as the primary force that shapes determination (e.g., see chapter 4 of *Making it Explicit*) (*Self-determining Subjectivity and External Constraint* 105).

material incompatibility.¹³¹ What an object exhibits, unless one forsakes the myth of the given, is nothing. What we can notice, according to the formulation of Brandom's model of perception, is something else entirely: sensory content plays a limiting role in what we can claim to observe, but our capacities to form recognitions/perceptions are derived from a modally robust system of concepts. Similarly, our norms influence us on what counts as a proper or improper application of concepts and reasoning about the empirical world. Therefore, under Brandom's model of perception, one cannot justify the claim that objects do not exhibit material incompatibility. What one can legitimately claim (according to his perceptual model) is that our conceptual structure, constituted as it is, is incapable of recognizing the 'exhibition' of material incompatibility in the same entity.

Material incompatibility is adequate for supporting empirical realism—an appearing world that is true for humans (i.e., individuals share the same kinds of empirical experiences, when observing the same kinds of phenomena)—but it is insufficient to support metaphysical claims (i.e., we cannot know 'how things really are').

4. Let us now readdress the criticisms raised in the above section (i.e., 3.4.9) by applying them to Brandom's misappropriation of Spinoza. Brandom misreads Hegel when he claims that Hegel endorses a "central Spinozist doctrine": "the order and connection of things is the same as the order and connection of ideas" (13). While it is not clear if Brandom endorses this claim, his reading of this view into the *Phenomenology* helps neither Hegel nor himself. First, to claim that existence itself is ordered in a specific way and that concepts are ordered in the very same way, is a dualistic assumption concerning the constitution of minds and mind-independent reality,

¹³¹ It is unclear if Brandom meant this as a metaphysical claim or an empirical claim.

unless one is making a metaphysical claim concerning monism (as Spinoza does). This implied dualism or metaphysical claim concerning monism does nothing to promote Hegel's epistemic project, which seeks knowledge of Spirit—a non-dualist and non-metaphysical project he calls 'Science' (see **Part One** of Chapter 3). This is the case, because Hegel argues that only a non-dualistic and non-metaphysical approach can achieve the standard of Science. Moreover, it fails to offer Brandom (*if* he endorses the claim) support for knowing 'how things really are,' for as I will argue, it can only be assumed, not demonstrated.

The above Spinozist claim is an attempt to condition what Kant calls the unconditioned. In other words, we cannot know something until we limit it. Knowledge requires limitation, in that it requires content to be made determinate by structuring and formatting it into concepts. This requires judgments that determine what would otherwise be unintelligible.

The unconditioned is unformatted to the human method of structuring empirical content. For instance, it is presumably a non-logical, non-conceptual, non-sensory entity. Yet, to *know* is to make something conditioned, via synthesis, logic, inference and/or concepts (as Brandom accepts). Once content is conditioned by these mental processes, it becomes recognizable.

What if one argues that existence is miraculously constituted, such that it coincides with the end result of perceptual processes in such a manner that perception/thought/inference yields metaphysical truth (i.e., a kind of parallelism)? I am not ascribing this view to Brandom, as it is unclear if he is committed to such a view or not. I bluntly state this view, in order to show that Brandom's philosophy does not

permit this kind of realism, which some readers may (and perhaps even Brandom himself) wish to wring from it.

In order to respond to the above question, let us return to Kant. Kant argues that what is represented is distinct from our representation of it: “the unconditioned must not be present in things insofar as we are acquainted with them (insofar as they are given to us), but rather in things insofar as we are not acquainted with them, as things in themselves” (B XX). Unless one rejects that the given is a myth, then as Kant notes above, the “unconditioned must not be present” in our perceptions of objects. For instance, if sensation yields no inherent intelligibility, then the attempt to *observe* if existence matches our thoughts leads to a dichotomy: either existence is as it seems, because existence causes things to appear as they truly are, or existence appears as it does, because the mind is responsible for how existence appears to itself. If one denies the given, no amount of observation can yield a definitive demonstration that things are (independent of observers) as they seem.

As I have already indicated, all observation can support is whether a model is practical or successful at making empirical predictions. These kinds of models are insufficient to support metaphysical claims. Yet, according to the Analytic traditions we have discussed in this text, there are no means other than observation to verify our knowledge of mind-independent entities.

Since Brandom is a staunch supporter of the given being a myth, his adherents cannot know if objects, *in their unconditioned states*, are structured in a parallel fashion to what *we recognize as* a modally robust system of material compatibility and incompatibility.

5. Kant writes:

For what necessarily drives us to go beyond the boundaries of experience and all appearances is the unconditioned, which reason necessarily and with every right demands in things in themselves for everything that is conditioned, thereby demanding the series of conditions as something completed. (B XX)

Reason necessarily demands that we ‘go beyond the boundaries of experience and appearances’ for two main reasons. First, the unconditioned is unintelligible and inaccessible to perception. Secondly, the mind cannot help but interpret its perceptual constructs as something independent of itself. We as a natural result cannot help but think about how things are beyond the way they appear. For instance, the mind never ‘sees’ the unconditioned, because the process of perception begins with sensory inputs, which are not the unconditioned reality of mind-independent existence. Therefore, at the first stage of the perceptual process one obtains something completely mental and mind-dependent, i.e., sensation. Secondly, the human mind constructs knowledge, by creating the conditions necessary for recognition, i.e., it formats sensory content into a structure that is intelligible according to the mind’s internal workings. The resulting intelligible contents of perceptions are completely conditioned by the mind and are therefore not the unconditioned. Thus when we think and reason about the unconditioned, we automatically transcend the bounds of all possible experience.

Sellars’ argument that the given is a myth and all recognition requires psychological nominalism shows that Kant’s above argument is correct: 1) nothing conceptual/rational is given when our senses are activated, and 2) our ability to have

empirical knowledge is a result of active and passive syntheses conditioning empirical content.

A Brandomian cannot claim that in perception we acknowledge the unconditioned. Nor can he claim that reason permits an inferential move to the unconditioned without committing to a form of rationalism that has no means of verification. In brief, if one claims that reason (rather than appearances) shows us how things really are, one cannot appeal to appearances to verify his/her claims; hence, nothing is left to validate reason. In Brandom's case, he tries to have his cake and eat it too. For instance, he claims that reason tells us how things truly are, and our reasoning can be empirically verified in *small* historical steps.

As noted in Chapter 2, sensation alone does not form recognizable appearances. Instead, the mind must collect or synthesize sensory content into workable units of what we recognize as time and space. Even modern science claims that the mind must organize sensation in order for the observing subject to perceive content that is spatial or temporal. Brandom's complex layering of conceptual and social influences over our sensory synthesis only serves to remove us one step further from 'the way things really are'. This occurs because, unlike Kant's model of perception, Brandom's perceptual model requires conceptual influences that are historical/social. As a result, Brandom's model adds additional layers of contingency to how any given human, at any given time, can experience existence. In other words, Kant was concerned only with the manner in which *all* humans undergo experience. Conversely, Brandom's model ensures that there are numerous variations in how individuals experience. In this regard, he multiplies the

problem of contingency, i.e., how do I determine that a particular view is not a subjective variation of experience, but rather an accurate account of mind-independent existence?

If sensation is blind to reality, as Kant's, Hegel's and Sellars' rejection of the given shows, and if *pure* (i.e., non-empirical) concepts/reasons are blind to reality, as Kant argues, *then* fusing them together as a quasi-empiricism-rationalism is no assurance that, as a unit, they will see. Yet, Brandom seems to suggest that reasoning guided by appearances grasps supersensible reality.¹³² In short, Brandom fails to tell us why two blind eyes can see when one blind eye cannot.

4.10. Concluding Remarks: Why We Should Consider German Idealism the Epistemic Victor

1. Even when Analytic thinkers remain unconvinced by Kant's argument that the mind is not equipped to know the thing-in-itself, he still wins on the epistemic front. In the Western tradition of philosophy, the winning epistemic stance is not the one that appeals to our wishes to know, but fails to be validated. It is not the one that proves to be the most practical. Nor is it the one that appears to be most likely. The victor is always the one who can *demonstrate* his position. Kant can demonstrate access to the classes of objects he deems knowable, i.e., empirical objects, minds, mental contents and processes. Conversely, Analytic versions of realism cannot demonstrate humanity's ability to know mind-independent entities.

¹³² Brandom's epistemic views on the above topics are not explicit and are implied. I thus strove to show the results of his claims, instead of arguing that I have accounted for his overt claims concerning existence.

The epistemic claims of Moore, Russell, Strawson, Sellars, McDowell and Brandom require unverifiable assumptions concerning our *access* to reality. Even though Sellars', McDowell's and Brandom's epistemic models are (largely) coherent, they are still unsubstantiated, as they concern knowledge of mind-independent existence. Hence, none of the views we discussed can demonstrate how it is possible to know mind-independent reality.

McDowell's and Brandom's amalgamation of Kantian, Hegelian and Sellarsian perspectives permit 'constraints' for reason and empirical experiences. However, they cannot within this framework validate their use of empirical experiences to transcend the epistemic limits of Kant's empirical realism. Moreover, their acceptance of psychological nominalism supports, rather than denies, constructivism, i.e., what we know and what makes knowledge possible, is what the mind produces for itself.

I urge the reader to remember that I am making a philosophical claim, and not a rejection of external existence, practical views or the models, theorems, and laws that permit science to excel in the empirical realm. In relation to this non-philosophical realm, Kant's claims seem more appropriate than Hegel's, in that it keeps us intellectually honest (i.e., we avoid claiming that we know more than we do) as we engage in dualism, which is a natural consequence of practical and scientific projects.

Kant's epistemic claim that we cannot know mind-independent existence is thus gladiator supreme in the arena of Western philosophy *as it entails dualism*, until one can demonstrate (rather than assume) that we know mind-independent entities. Pending this occurrence, Kant is right to restrict knowledge to the empirical object, the mind, its processes and its contents. When exorcized of their need to support untenable versions of

realism, Sellars, McDowell and Brandom have much to offer these categories of knowledge. In short, they have a great deal to offer idealism and little to offer ‘realism’ that is predicated on knowledge of mind-independent reality.

The alternative to Kant is to simply drop the unproductive construct of dualism. In this regard, Hegel provides the stronger epistemic view by avoiding the philosophical dead weight of the thing-in-itself, as he single mindedly seeks what is most demonstrable: knowledge of Spirit as a true Science, which is a non-dualistic and non-metaphysical approach to philosophy (see Chapter 3, **Part One**).¹³³

An additional strength of Hegel’s epistemic view is his demonstration that the human mind, its contents, and its inter-subjective states are entangled in historical processes. As I noted in Chapter 3, Kant’s views are based on an ahistorical interpretation of the human mind. Hegel’s epistemic views are thus superior to Kant’s, in that they are non-dualistic and account for historical processes in human thought.

For all the above reasons, it would be a grave misreading of this text to interpret my criticism of the above formulations of realism as a mere skepticism or an advocacy of anti-realism in order to invalidate realism. Rather, I have been arguing for constructivism, as the only epistemic game in town that can demonstrate what it claims to produce—knowledge. In short, it is the only epistemic view that can show how its objects of knowledge are *accessible* for a verifiable, and thus justifiable, rendering of them.

¹³³ Non-metaphysical in the sense that it does not attempt to know the nature of mind-independent reality.

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Appendices

Appendices for Chapter One

Appendix I: Moore's Account of McTaggart's Two Impossible Positions

1. For instance, operating under the belief that all true designations must maintain a strict distinction between consciousness and its perceived object, he claims that McTaggart's view holds two impossible positions. *Impossible position one*: if knowledge of a being is *in* oneself, and one *knows* this being to exist *outside* oneself, the result (for Moore) would have the same illogical formulation as: "'2' means '2+1'" (186). What he intended by this comparison is that the meaning of something as being truly outside oneself, as a distinct entity, is combined (under McTaggart's view) with thinking consciousness, which for Moore are two distinct things. As such, he views McTaggart as wrongly concluding that only by combining two distinct entities (i.e., consciousness of an object and the object itself), which Moore represents by the number '2,' does one arrive at the identity of the observed (external) object, which Moore represents by the number '1'. This creates a synthesis of composite ideas that strain the meaning of the individual entity. Just as one would be demonstrating a misunderstanding of addition if one stated that "'2' means '2+1,'" Moore believes he is demonstrating McTaggart's misunderstanding of existence. Moore sees himself as underscoring what he believes is McTaggart's inability to recognize the ontological distinctiveness of perceiving consciousness and the external object it perceives.

Moore argues for *the second impossibility* of McTaggart's claim as follows (i.e., what I perceive is both within and outside my mind). Moore claims that such a view could also result in the stance that "my knowledge of him [i.e., one's friend], as outside me, together with my knowledge of him, as inside me" would have the same illogical form as "'2' means '2+2'" (186). In other words, for Moore the above statement has the following form: my thinking of my friend *combined* with my *knowing* that my friend exists outside of me can be represented by the number '2'. Moreover, myself *combined* with the existence of the other can also be represented by the number '2'. Moore thinks these examples show how McTaggart is taking two distinct sets of pairings (i.e., '2 + 2') and claiming they mean and *are* the same thing (i.e., '2').

Appendix II: Reid, a Forerunner of Analytic Thinkers

1. Up to this point in the text, I have sought to explain Moore's and Russell's core philosophical beliefs. I have also sought to explain the overt similarities and differences between these beliefs. Lastly, I sought to clarify the aspects of their thoughts that had the greatest influence on analytic philosophy.

2. I will now briefly return to Thomas Reid, in order to 1) make a case for Reid as a significant forerunner of analytic thinkers and 2) to draw an important perceptual and

metaphysical difference between Reid and that of Moore and Russell. 3) These developments will help establish why Wilfred Sellars' 1956 text, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," is truly revolutionary in analytic thought (but not for Hegelians, see Chapter 3, **Part Two**).

James Walker, the editor of an 1850 version of Reid's 1764 book *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, writes in its preface:

The psychology generally taught in England and this country [i.e., USA] for the last fifty years has been that of the Scotch school, of which Dr. Reid is the acknowledged head. The influence of the same doctrines is also apparent in the improved state of philosophy in several Continental nations, and particularly in France. [...] The name of Reid, therefore, historically considered, is second to none among British psychologists and metaphysicians, with perhaps the single exception of Locke. (x)

Those familiar with philosophy today rarely read or refer to Reid. Hence, Reid's contributions to philosophy have not remained in the forefront of contemporary scholarship. Nonetheless, at one time, especially for the early development of Moore and Russell, Reid's name and work would have been readily accessible. In fact, Moore, for a considerable period of his career, adhered to Reid's notion of 'commonsensism' where Russell did not.¹³⁴

Conversely, a portion of Reid's thought that apparently had greater influence on Russell than on Moore was Reid's view on language¹³⁵:

There is no greater obstacle to the advancement of knowledge than the *ambiguity of words*. It is the main reason why in most branches of science we find sects and parties, and disputes that are carried on down the centuries without being settled.

Sophistry [...] has been more effectively excluded from mathematics and natural philosophy than any other sciences. In mathematics it had no place from the beginning, because mathematicians had the wisdom to define their terms precisely and to lay down as axioms the first principles on which their reasoning was based. (4)

Like many philosophers before and after, Reid holds that math possesses an efficacy and certainty that other sciences lack. He claims that this is the case because mathematics 1) precisely defines its terms and 2) provides proof for each principle from which it operates. As such, mathematics is an ideal exemplar of what philosophy should attain. Both of Reid's claims drive the entire logic and tenor of Russell's text *The Principles of Mathematics*.

¹³⁴ "Note: Moore held different views at different times. He was at various times a direct realist, similar to Reid, and at various times a Sense-Datum Theorist, where Sense-Datum Theory conflicts with Reid" (Rockmore, via correspondence).

¹³⁵ The following excerpts have been slightly modified by Dr. Jonathan Bennet. He has carefully updated eighteenth century terms and phrases in order to make Reid's text more accessible to modern readers.

2. Reid divided all of human knowledge into two spheres:

Human Knowledge falls into two parts, one relating to bodies (material things), the other relating to mind (intellectual things).

The whole system of bodies in the universe, of which we know only a very small part, can be called ‘the material world’; the whole system of minds, from the infinite creator right down to the lowliest creatures endowed with thought, can be called ‘the intellectual world’. [...] every art, every science, and every human thought is engaged with one or the other of them or with things pertaining to them—the boldest flights of imagination can’t take us outside of them. (1)

Reid’s conception of the mental and the objectively real *motivated* much of Moore’s and Russell’s thought. While Reid’s metaphysics differs from Moore’s and Russell’s, all three strictly adhered to the claim that *mental content can be completely severed from the objectively true*. (They however held opposing stances on what they considered objectively true.) This belief is what allowed all three thinkers to maintain robust versions of realism. Moreover, Moore’s and Russell’s acceptance of this claim lead to their radical denial of all versions of idealism. Lastly, this claim plays a major role in what Russell considered the ‘new philosophy’ (see section 1.3.1).

However, Reid takes a perceptual and metaphysical stance that is significantly different from the stances of Moore and Russell. Reid, like Descartes, believes that “secondary qualities” such as color, sound, taste, smell, heat and cold are not representative of actual objects, but are rather representative of mental activity (104). On the other hand, Reid claims that “primary qualities” such as extension, divisibility, shape, motion, solidity, hardness, softness and fluidity are “signified” by sensation (104). I will now respectively explain these two claims.

In order to understand the first portion of Reid’s above claim, one must understand his conception of what he calls “relative notions”: “a relative notion of a thing is strictly speaking not a notion of the thing at all, but only of some relation which it bears to something else” (105). For instance, a rose gives off a particular kind of odor, but it would be wrong to claim that the rose *is* its odor. Accordingly, the smell of a rose is something one relates to the rose, because it is unclear how its odor captures the actuality of the rose. At best, the odor of the rose can simply alert one to its presence. One may claim that the rose is the cause of the odor and that the odor is as such a significant property of the rose. However, noting that roses cause an odor does not account for the rose, because a *cause* and its effect can be different kinds of things.

Reid makes the above distinction between secondary qualities and actual beings in the following contrast between the ‘vulgar’ and the ‘philosopher’:

The vulgar say: ‘Fire is hot, snow is cold, sugar is sweet; and to deny this is a gross absurdity that contradicts the testimony of our senses.’ The philosopher says: ‘Heat and cold and sweetness are nothing but sensations in our minds; and it is absurd to think of these sensations as being in the fire, the snow, or the sugar’. (107)

Reid is siding with the view of the ‘philosopher’ (who probably represents Berkeley). Minds can undergo all kinds of sensations. Objects may even cause us to have specific kinds of sensations. However, according to Reid, one should never confuse the mental activity of sensing with the *actual object that produces the sensation*.

To illustrate the point that secondary qualities are produced by bodies, but are nonetheless not the same thing as the bodies that produce them, Reid utilizes the following example;

[Secondary qualities] were so obscure that they [early man] didn’t know where to locate them. They used this comparison: as fire is produced by the collision of flint with steel without being in either of them, so also the secondary qualities are produced by the impact of bodies on our senses without being in either of them. (108)

Following this train of thought, Reid asks the reader to determine if sensations do indicate objects as they actually exist. He invites the reader to press a hand against a hard object: “[p]roperly attending to this sensation will satisfy you that it is no more like hardness in a body than the sensation of sound is like vibration in a bell” (109).

Some may be confused by Reid’s objection that the secondary effects that bodies produce do not account for the object. Western civilization has been influenced by a claim that has been present as least as early as Aristotle: to know a thing’s cause is to know the thing (i.e., to understand the effect). To counter this conception, Reid uses the familiar conceptions of ‘gravity’ to explain why he reduces all ‘causes’ to a kind of a ‘relative notion’. Reid states:

Thus ‘gravity’ signifies the tendency of bodies to move toward the earth, and sometimes signifies the cause of that tendency. When it means the tendency, I have a direct and distinct notion of gravity—I see it and feel it and know perfectly what it is. (105)

Now carefully note what he has to say about ‘gravity’ as it relates to something hypothetical:

But this tendency must have a cause. We call this cause ‘gravity’ too, and people have thought and theorized about what it is. Now, when we think and reason about this cause, what *notion* of it do we have? Obviously, we think of it as an *unknown cause of a known effect*. This is a relative notion, and it is bound to be obscure because it gives us no conception of what the thing is but only of what relation it has to something else [...]. (105)

Causes for Reid, as well as for Hume (a contemporary of Reid), are merely due to the way the mind associates appearances. For example, let us suppose that whenever one observes an **A**, **B** always follows. Reid and Hume argue that a ‘cause’ is merely the mind *associating A* with **B**, until **A** is taken to be the ‘cause’ of **B**. In this example, the actual link between **A** and **B** has not been established. All that has been shown is that **B**

appearances always follow that of an **A** appearance. Hence, stating that **A** is the ‘cause’ of **B** is no more informative than merely stating that **A**’s precede the *appearance* of **B**’s.

Unlike the ambiguity of ‘gravity’ as a *cause*, Reid claims that “it is clear that our primary qualities [are] not of this relative kind. We know what the primary qualities are, not merely how they relate to something else” (105). Here, Reid reduces knowledge to what can be known as discrete attributes that can be directly attributed to objects without ambiguity. Moreover, what is attributed to the object has to properly belong to it, *if* it is to be true of that object.

Conversely, a ‘relative notion’ is something that 1) only *relates* to some actual being, but whatever is being related to the actual being is *not* the object itself and 2) the manner in which the notion relates to the actual being is often unclear. In contrast, Reid asserts that primary qualities *do not* ‘relate’. Instead they are *actual* aspects of a real object.

3. I will now address the second portion of Reid’s above claim, i.e., sensations ‘*signify*’ but *do not produce* primary qualities. For Reid, primary qualities are indicated by sensation:

But having a clear and distinct conception of primary qualities, we can think of them without recalling their sensations. When a primary quality is perceived, the sensation immediately leads our thought to the quality signified by it, and is itself forgotten. We have no reason afterward to reflect on it, and so we come to be as little acquainted with it as if we had never had felt it. Nature intended the sensations belonging to primary qualities only as signs; and when they have severed that purpose they vanish (107-8).

In other words, the mind grasps the primary qualities of an object passively; the mind does *not construct* our experiences of primary qualities. Sensation is needed for one to become *aware* of primary qualities; however, Reid claims that our awareness of primary qualities are not constituted by our sensations *nor* can we even become reflectively aware of the initial sensations that operate as ‘signs’. Finally, these ‘signs’ (as “raw” sensations) ‘immediately’ take our minds to the object itself. A close analogy is that of familiar words (Hamlyn, *Epistemology, The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 28). We do not normally notice the sound of the word, but we readily understand its meaning (28). While Moore and Russell would reject Reid’s claim that only primary qualities are mind-independent, Moore and Russell agree that a sensation merely ‘signifies’ the known object—it neither creates nor constitutes it.

In the above fashion, Reid made a distinction, which became very important for contemporary Analytic Philosophers¹³⁶: 1) sensation, 2) perception and 3) the real object are distinctly different kinds of things. The first two are occurrences that only transpire for minds. Sensations are not something fully experienced by a mind. Instead, the effect

¹³⁶ Both Kant and Sellars maintain these distinctions as well. However, Sellars emphatically denies direct knowledge. Kant not only denies direct knowledge, he also denies possibility of obtaining knowledge of the object, which is independent of the mind. The idea that sensations can ‘signify’ anything meaningful is rejected by Sellars.

of what is caused by sensation, i.e., perception, is fully experienced by the mind. The third, unlike the first two, is the object of true knowledge.

4. In summary, Moore and Russell held several important beliefs in common with Reid. 1) Philosophical language should be precise. 2) There is a distinct and objective difference between one's awareness of mind-independent objects and mental states. 3) The mind can directly access objects, i.e., it in no way produces or contributes to one's awareness of mind-independent reality. However, Moore and Russell, unlike Reid, believed secondary qualities and relations between objects are real.

Appendix III: Moore and Russell as 'Platonic Atomists'

1. Hylton uses the term 'Platonic Atomism' to signify the type of philosophy Moore and the early Russell had mutually developed:

One of the ways in which I phrased the Platonic Atomism doctrine of the independence of propositions was as an insistence upon the distinction between (mental) acts and their (objective, non-mental) objects. Moore and Russell seem to insist upon this distinction quite generally—in knowledge, belief, thought, perception, and even imagination. In the case of each of these mental *acts* or *states*, their view is that we are in contact with an object which is *not* mental. And the object with which we are in contact is, in all such cases, unaffected by the fact that we are in contact with it. (*Russell, Idealism and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy* 110)

In order to maintain that we directly observe non-mental entities, Plato, Moore and early Russell reject the claim that sensation produces knowledge of existence (for Plato, see *Timaeus*, sec. 51-2). This is important, because if they accepted sensation as an intermediary step to obtain knowledge, all perceptual knowledge would be *indirect*. This would lead to several problems. First, since objects are not sensations, one can doubt if sensations accurately represent objects. Secondly, as Reid and Moore argue, sensations are the product of the human mind rather than existing objects. As a result, if sensations are the product of the mind, and if we can only know about the world via sensations, one can doubt if it is possible to observe or know anything which is not a mental event.

How can the mind perceive reality if sensations are not involved in observation? Curiously, Moore and early Russell were not concerned with justifying or explaining how the mind grasps existing entities: "nothing needs to be said, or can be said, about *how* we know, we just do know; hence my stress on the relation being 'direct' and 'immediate'" (111). This is a very problematic view, for without 'sensory content,' there is no perceived object.¹³⁷

Moore and Russell charge idealism as being reducible to mysticism; yet, their claims concerning the direct apprehension of reality seem magical. For instance, if

¹³⁷ I use Sellars' technical term 'sensory content' to denote the following: the specific content that sensations contribute to perception, without suggesting that we are aware of sensations or 'raw feels' in a preconceptual field of awareness.

Moore and Russell are correct in asserting that sensation is not a necessary component of observations, and since, they do not regard any alternative conduit to reality as necessary for observing existence, the *source* of one's capacity to perceive reality appears supernatural.

2. Plato, Moore and Russell maintain that 1) sensible objects appear to be in states of constant change and 2) change itself presents a problem to knowledge claims. Aristotle states the following with Plato in mind:

The supporters for the ideal theory [such as Plato] were led to it because they were persuaded of the truth of Heraclitean doctrine that all sensible things are ever passing away, so if knowledge or thought is to have an object, there must be some other and permanent entities, apart from those which are sensible; for there can be no knowledge of things which are in a state of flux. (*Metaphysics* 1078 b14-17)

If objects do not share similar qualities, or if all aspects of an object are constantly changing (i.e., in flux), it would be impossible to state something true about the object. This is the case because language can only communicate general qualities, and never particular states. However, *if* objects do possess universal states or qualities and these states or qualities are stable, *then* language (which must employ universals in a consistent manner) can be an apt indicator of existing things.

Russell develops his own version of the above stratagem described by Aristotle.

What is normally called change is [...] understood as one thing ceasing to exist and a different, but perhaps very similar, thing beginning to exist [...]. To cease to exist is, in turn, given an atemporal reading: it is simply to be (timelessly) related to one stretch of time and not so related to subsequent stretches. All of this serves to emphasize that Russell's ontology is an atemporal ontology of Being, in which space, time and existence have no distinguished ontological status: 'though a term may cease to exist, it cannot cease to be; it is still an entity, which can be counted as *one*, and concerning which some positions are true and other[s] false' (*Principles*, 443). (*Russell, Idealism and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy* 173-4)

As noted in the previous **V**, Moore and Russell believe both concepts and material objects are real, but they exist in different ways. For instance, 'red' can exist in more than one place at a given time. If one destroys a stop sign, he/she does not destroy the color red with it. In this sense, abstract qualities or relations cannot cease to be for Moore and Russell.

Similarly, even if one destroys a stop sign at time T2, it is still true that it existed at time T1. According to Russell's and Moore's metaphysics, even though the stop sign no longer 'exists' after time T1, it still has 'being' in the sense that it will always be true that it existed at time T1. They do not believe this to be true because a mind is thinking about some object that once had existence. Objects which are destroyed still seem to

have 'being,' because the truth of when they existed has no dependency on the mind that observers or thinks about its existence.

While this latter claim seems feeble, Moore's and Russell's hyper-realism requires that the truth of a claim must be *sustained* by actual "being(s)" rather than mental signifiers or place holders. For instance, if a physical being were destroyed, and it no longer possessed being or actuality, one's *awareness* of a previously existing object would *stem* from a mental fiction (i.e., a construct, fiction, imagining, etc.). While many realists would be fine with this outcome, Moore's and Russell's philosophical positions require them to reject any account where knowledge of reality (past or present) hinges upon mental constructs.

Russell's claim permits him to view embodied beings as having a definite position in a timeline. Both Moore and Russell believe that by relating the time of an object (or occurrence) to a specific location in a timeline, one establishes something that will always be true and is therefore 'timeless'. For example, an observer sees an object at T1, which exhibits quality X. While one may accept that at any time after or before T1, it will not exhibit quality X (i.e., material flux), one can still maintain that at T1, it had quality X. Claims of this kind will be true no matter when they are uttered.

For Russell, "space, time and existence have no distinguished ontological status" (175). All things that are, simply exist for Russell. He maintains this claim by denying change in both embodied and non-embodied beings.

3. Russell's account of change as it relates to embodied beings is unusual. Traditionally, change requires a substance, i.e., something which changes. For example, from the same lump of clay, I can make a sphere or a cube. The clay remains the same *substance*, but the way it is arranged has changed. According to some metaphysicians, these changes are called 'accidents'. 'Accidents' account for anything that an object may do or that may happen to it, which does not change what it is. Similarly, these same metaphysicians would call the clay itself 'essential,' because it is *what* remains the *same* as I mold it into a sphere or a cube. Russell claims that such qualifications are "useless distinctions" (*The Principles of Mathematics* sec, 443).

Russell makes the above claim, because he believes that all qualities such as *round* and *cube* are real entities and not just 'accidental' forms of some particular substance. Moreover, he believes that when objects are modified, they are still the same entity. For instance, when a lump of clay is molded into a cube, the clay itself has not stopped being clay, and as such, the clay *qua* clay has not changed. If the clay changes in the sense that it is no longer clay, then it stops being clay, and therefore, it ceases to exist.

Hence, the word 'change' can refer to several different possibilities. *One*, it may still be the same object (as in the case of the clay being manipulated into different shapes). In this instance, different kinds of qualities, states, etc., are *related* to the object for a particular duration; strictly speaking, these qualities, states, etc., are not the object itself. *Two*, an object may simply cease exist. *Third*, if the latter is the case, as one object ceases to exist, another object may come into being: "What is normally called change is [...] understood as one thing ceasing to exist and a different, but perhaps very similar, thing beginning to exist" (Hylton, *Russell, Idealism and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy* 173).

Hylton states that “there is nothing absurd in supposing that a thing may exist and then simply cease to exist, or, reversing the process, simply come into existence” (173). While this view might not be inherently absurd, given Russell’s account of matter in *The Principles of Mathematics*, it is very unusual.

Typically, objects are thought to be made up of parts. These parts form a unity. This unity of parts is considered an object. Russell does not hold this view of objects: “If, therefore, it is maintained that things are unities, we must reply that no things exist” (sec, 439). Russell *does* believe things (or objects) exist, but they are not unities formed by an aggregate of parts. (Russell will revise his view on this issue several times throughout his career.)

All complexity is conceptual in the sense that it is due to a whole capable of logical analysis [such as an object], but is real in the sense that it has no dependence upon the mind, but only upon the nature of the object. Where the mind can distinguish elements, there must *be* different elements to distinguish [...] (sec, 439)

Russell *does not* believe that these above noted “elements” are parts which “constitute” the whole, but rather the whole has some natural *unit* independent of its parts (sec, 439). Even though Russell states that this is “difficult to believe,” he nonetheless claims it is true (sec, 439).

Moore and Russell require *natural* unities, as opposed to *mentally constructed* unities, for identifying real beings (or facts). In other words, in order to be able to claim that we perceive actual objects rather than fabrications built by the mind, Moore and early Russell insist that we directly see objects as they naturally occur. For instance, it would be incorrect to claim that a dog’s tail is the dog. Hence, in order to understand what something is, one must not confuse the parts of a thing with the thing, or the part with the whole. Similarly, if one is to see an object as it actually exists, one cannot confuse what is *not properly a part* of an object as being a part of it. Yet, they failed to offer any account of how the mind is capable of perceiving natural unities. Nor do they make any attempt to demonstrate that the mind can in fact perceive natural unities—they simply assume that it does. Their rationale for this claim seems to stem from their commitment to hyper-realism—they simply assume every real object is not a composite being, in order to support their epistemic view that real things are readily assessable to the mind.

The consequence of Russell’s view on natural unity is startling. Unlike many ancient and modern views of change, where an object goes through many intermediary steps by which it becomes something else, Russell’s view of change is instantaneous. As a result, his view of change invokes a universe of instantaneous creation and annihilation. For example:

- 1) *If* X1 exists at time T1
- 2) and the apparent change of X1 at time T2 is *not* X1, but another entity X2,
- 3) and *if* there is *no* intermediary change transpiring between time T1 and time T2,

C) *then* X2 instantaneously came into being, while X1 instantaneously goes out of existence.

By which means, cause or force do beings come and go out of existence? Under the popular atomistic view of change, transformations occur by moving, removing or adding to the existing parts of an object. Russell on the other hand argues that this view is mistaken, because there is no underlying unity of parts, which undergoes change. There are only natural unities, which are not a product of their parts. According to this view, when something is added to or taken away from a natural unity, what it was, is utterly destroyed. Moreover, at the moment of the destruction of the old object, a new object is simultaneously created.

One can find a parallel to this kind of metaphysics in mathematics. When 1 is subtracted from 5, it does not make sense to claim that 5 is a substance that is modified into a new state. Instead, when 1 is subtracted from 5, it ceases to be 5. At the moment it stops being 5, it has become 4. In this manner, one can form the following analogy: just as when one adds to or subtracts from a number, the original number being added to or subtracted from becomes an entirely different number, *when* one adds to or subtracts from a natural unity, it becomes an entirely new kind of being. This metaphysical claim entails a myriad of qualitatively different kinds of existing things (if not infinite).

In review, Russell denies traditional views on change in order to avoid the problem of “flux”. Yet, Russell’s metaphysical account of change requires one to accept 1) the very strange view that objects instantaneously come into and out of existence, 2) that the apparent continuity of many embodied beings is actually a succession of similar entities and *not* the same object, and 3) that objects are not constituted by their parts.

4. Early Russell maintained that our everyday interactions with the world result in direct contact with what can be called naked existence. However, the concept of change is a crucial part of our everyday experiences. In this fashion, the implied tenor of his early realism makes his denial of change seem otherworldly:

It has been supposed that a thing could, in some way, be different and yet the same: that though predicates define a thing, yet it may have different predicates at different times. [...] Change in this metaphysical sense, I do not at all admit. The so-called predicates of a term are mostly derived from relations to other terms: change is due, ultimately, to the fact that many terms have relations to some parts of time which they do not have to others. But every term is eternal, timeless and immutable; the relations it may have to parts of time are equally immutable. (*The Principles of Mathematics*, 443).¹³⁸

It is ironic that Russell’s account of perception and his denial of change appears mystical, because he believed supernatural accounts had no place in any rational discipline, much less philosophy. Moreover, Russell (a self-avowed atheist) would have emphatically denied that his accounts required or implied anything supernatural.

¹³⁸ As we will see in section **VII**, later Russell will deny direct perception and accept change as an event ontology.

Plato also believes that in order for an account to be considered knowledge, it must avoid apparent change. One of the clearest examples of this Platonic stance is stated in the *Republic*:

When the mind's eye is fixed on objects illumined by truth and reality, it understands and knows them, and its possession of intelligence is evident; but when it is fixed on the twilight world of change and decay, it can only form opinions. (508d)

Plato and early Russell are thus both committed to the idea that direct knowledge does not require sensation and that direct knowledge must circumvent the problem of change. However, their motivation for these claims differ greatly. Plato wants to overcome the problem of Heraclitus' concept of flux and "Russell, two thousand years later, tries to solve the difficulties raise by Zeno's paradoxes," which find motion and change problematic (Rockmore, via correspondence).

3. Before I proceed further, I need to quickly introduce some relevant features concerning Plato's notion of the forms. According to Plato, "one kind of being is the form which is always the same, uncreated and indestructible [...] and of which the contemplation is granted to intelligence only [i.e., it can not be perceived by the senses]" (Plato, *Timaeus* 51e-52a). For Plato, embodied objects have a specific and knowable existence due to the "forms":

What every pious act has in common with every other is that it bears a certain relationship—called 'participation'—to one and the same thing, the Form of Piety. In this sense, what makes a pious act pious and a pair of equal sticks equal are the Forms Piety and Equality. When we call sticks equal or acts pious, we are implicitly appealing to a standard of equality or piety, just as someone appeals to a standard when she says that a painted portrait of someone is a man. Of course, the pigment on the canvas is not a man; rather, it is properly called man because it bears a certain relationship to a very different sort of object. In precisely this way, Plato claims that the Forms are what many of our words refer to, even though they are radically different sorts of objects from the ones revealed to the senses. (Richard Kraut, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*: "Plato")

Crudely stated, forms are the original templates from which all other beings are fashioned. The forms account for the universal qualities found in all embodied objects. However, the forms themselves have no embodiment. Moreover, unlike sensible objects, they do not appear to change.

Since the forms are uncreated and account for the existence of embodied beings, Plato establishes a hierarchy of existence. For example, Plato claims in *Book X* of the *Republic* that there are three levels of actuality. In the lowest level of existence are appearances. They only possess a partial existence. Physical things have more existence than appearances, but they do not possess complete existence either. Appearances and objects do not enjoy full existence because they are debased copies of the original forms.

For Plato, the highest and third expressions of reality are the unchanging forms from which the lesser expressions of reality obtain their existence.

Plato's motivation for this stance stems from the nature of appearances and particular physical objects: both apparently change in time, while abstract qualities such as 'red' or 'round' do not appear to change. As a consequence, Plato concluded that abstract qualities must somehow have more reality, because they never go out of existence as seen in appearances and particular objects.

Contrary to the Platonic hierarchy of existence, Moore and Russell do not prioritize universals over particular embodiments; they both have actual and complete existence. Moore and Russell take this stance for several reasons. First, as seen above in section V, 1, they believe that once an object is related to a particular time and place, a timeless truth is established. Consequently, if this method of referring to embodied beings provides 'timeless' truths, and timeless truths are the hallmark of a complete existence, then there is reason to believe that embodied beings do possess full existence. Additionally, early Russell denies outright the reality of change (as seen above in section V, 1).¹³⁹ Conversely, Plato claims that change is a defining feature of appearances and embodied beings. Lastly, unlike Plato, Moore and Russell do not contend that universals of any sort existed prior to embodied beings, or that embodied beings are caused by anything resembling the forms.

It is clear that Hylton does not intend to infer that Moore's and Russell's philosophy asserts the existence of Plato's forms. Hence we have the term 'atomism' in 'Platonic Atomism'. In this context, 'atomism' represents Moore's and Russell's belief that knowledge is about specific things that populate existence (i.e., all that which has mind-independent existence). And like atoms, knowledge for Moore and Russell relates to a great myriad of existing things, all of which are just as real as the next:

[In the] fundamental entities of Russell's ontology, there is no distinction between universal and particular. Thus a single term may exist in many different places and times: a red coffee-cup and a red book each, at a given moment, represents a number of points of space at which the one term *red* exists (see *Principles*, 440). This view is combined with the Moorean doctrine that what we might think of as the predicates of a thing in fact constitute it. There is no entity *in which* color exists; its existence is as independent as anything else. There is no substance in which attributes inhere (see, again, *Principles*, 440). (173).

Even though Plato, Moore and Russell believe in the existence of non-embodied beings, their views on existence are drastically different. This is the case, because their understanding of the status and function of non-embodied beings (i.e., universal qualities or states) differ greatly.

¹³⁹ However, this claim loses its force *when* one accepts Plato's 'argument from opposites' as true (see sections 476-480 of the *Republic*). According to Plato, the logical roles of qualitative designations permit opposing designations at any given time. Hence, even when one fixes the time one observes X, one cannot offer a lasting or non-contradicting qualitative designation, as any qualitative designation of *particular* appearances or acts *permit* opposing designations, at any given time (not just before and after X is observed). This occurrence renders such designations as inconclusive, as they permit many opposing claims.

4. In order to fight off the idealism of their time, Moore and early Russell committed themselves to direct perception of the real, to the timelessness of truth, and to an ontology that comprises embodied and non-embodied beings. This aggregate of claims resonates with aspects of ancient idealism. It is ironic and perhaps a bit self-defeating that Moore's and Russell's attempt to defeat idealism required them to pull stratagems from the origins of idealism.

Moore's and Russell's motivation for commandeering ancient idealist's stratagems stemmed from their attempt to establish a hyper-realist view. They wanted to show that we can directly observe existence and that the way we talk about existence, *if* properly expressed, can be eternally true. Hence, existence is completely knowable. Additionally, they wanted to show that humanity can distinguish mental content from reality, and that our ability to do so is thoroughly grounded on real entities (e.g., concepts or terms) and not mental constructs.

If we abstract from the specific ways Moore and Russell argue for their claims, it is clear that they capture a popular view of existence: the world is knowable; what is known about the world is *not* mental content, and the way we see the world is actually the way the world exists. However, to maintain this view, they create theories that are just as uncommon as the idealism they seek to undermine. This created a double standard: even though Moore and Russell's views are seen as outdated, they are generally seen as philosophers who defend and investigate a commonsense view of the world, while all idealists are seen as holding strange, even mystical views that fly in the face of commonsense.

In actuality, both Platonic Atomism (or the 'New Philosophy' as Russell called it) and idealism (generally speaking) fly in the face of commonsense. This is the case because Platonic Atomism and idealism engage metaphysical questions, which concern the nature of reality; however, rigorous debate concerning competing views of reality has no parallel in the world of lived-experience. It is only the self-deluded philosopher who thinks he can describe and defend a particular view on reality without invoking beliefs that are alienated from the world of experience.

5. While Hylton is right to note Platonic undertones in Moore's and Russell's metaphysics, his characterization is also misleading. By referring to their metaphysical stance as "Platonic Atomism", Hylton implies they are opposed to thinkers who are opposed to Platonism. A prime example can be seen in Aristotle's metaphysics. Aristotle vigorously rejects Platonism; however, some of the same quotes that imply Platonic undertones in Moore's and Russell's work also have a place in Aristotelian thought.

We saw above that Moore and Russell believe we have knowledge of the way things are in themselves, and that this knowledge is 'timeless'. Aristotle makes this claim as well:

Actual knowledge is identical with its object: in the individual, potential knowledge is in time prior to actual knowledge [i.e., thing we are not currently thinking about or have yet to learn], but absolutely it is not prior even in time. [Actual knowledge, unlike potential knowledge...] does not sometimes think and

sometimes not think. When separated it [i.e., knowledge] is alone just what it is, and this alone is immortal and eternal [...] (*On the Soul*, 430a20-25).

However, the status of what is “immortal and eternal” in knowledge claims holds subtle differences for Aristotle and Russell. For instance, Russell claims that universals can exist independently of matter in a way that Aristotle would not allow. Likewise, Plato’s account of ‘forms’ opposes Russell’s account of universals.

Additionally, Moore and Russell claim that every proposition (i.e., an assertion) is either true or false. Simply put, they believed what one thinks or observes about an object *must* be either right or wrong. (In their hyper-realism, there is no room for partial truths.) Aristotle makes a similar claim: “Assertion is the saying of something concerning something, as too is denial, and is in every case either true or false” (430b27-8).

This shared view is based on the notion that what one says about an object requires the statements to relate to the underlying unity of an object. For instance, Aristotle states that “unity has many senses (as many as ‘is’ has), but the proper one is that of actuality” (*On the Soul*, 412b8-9). Moore and Russell also accept that any proper unity is an actuality (a theme echoed throughout much of *The Principles of Mathematics*).¹⁴⁰ Plato does not accept that a statement must either be true or false. For instance, he often refers to the term ‘opinion’ as that which lies between existence and non-existence (See Plato’s *Republic*, 478-9).

Unlike Plato, Moore and Russell claimed that there are many different kinds of natural units: some are universals, others are embodied objects, and they all possess complete existence. In this fashion, distinct and individual entities exist for Moore and Russell in a way that a Platonist would deny.

What is important to remember about Moore’s (and to a greater extent) Russell’s philosophies is that they are attempts to avoid all idealism, skepticism and solipsism. They sought to avoid these perceived pitfalls by pursuing a metaphysics and a language that would establish a perfect correlation between assertions and real entities.¹⁴¹ In order to achieve this goal, Russell, more so than Moore, borrow piecemeal from any thinker or tradition that he thinks would further these aims. In short, Platonic doctrines play no special role in Moore’s and Russell’s views.

¹⁴⁰ This claim played a central role in Moore’s and Russell’s arguments against ‘organic unities’. The notion of organic unities was developed (and popular) among the British idealists (such as Bradley, Green and Joachim), who read *Hegel* as developing this claim. This complex idea centered on the claim that *only* the *entirety* of an entity could properly account for its actual existence. This claim took two parallel directions. *First*, since everything is a part of everything else (as many of the British idealists claim), only knowledge of *everything* could account for a true unity. (This assertion is a debased view of Hegel’s conception of absolute knowing.) As such, to speak of any one thing, independent of its relation to other entities, was in some sense an inadequate account of what actually existed. *Secondly*, to speak of a part of a thing, or an attribute of a thing, without a detailed account of the whole in which it partakes, is to talk about only partial existence. In other words, it meant that one was offering an account of something that does not fully exist, and accordingly the account was not fit to be called ‘knowledge’.

¹⁴¹ A short and incomplete list of Russell’s influences could include Plato, Aristotle, Leibniz, Reid, Moore, Frege and Wittgenstein. A complete list would not only contain the names of additional philosophers, it would also contain the names of many scientists and scientific theories.

Appendix for Chapter Two

IV. Kant's Transcendental Arguments

1. In all three Critiques, Kant's primary approach is 'transcendental.' As noted above, he is concerned with what the mind must be able to do, prior to experience, in order to account for how we undergo experience. As we saw above, experience for Kant requires the capacity for the mind to associate concepts with sensory content according to an *a priori* structure (i.e., something prior to experience):

I call all cognition **transcendental** that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our mode of cognition of objects insofar as this is to be possible *a priori*. A **system** of such concepts would be called transcendental philosophy. (B25)

In short, Kant's transcendental philosophy is based upon the beliefs that 1) mind is active in constructing the object of experience and knowledge, 2) there are necessary actions that *must* be performed in order to render experience possible, 3) the capacity to perform these activities is *a priori* (i.e., they are in some sense prior to experience) and 4) these *a priori* conditions for experience are discernable upon careful reflection on human experience.

Kant employs his transcendental arguments in two distinct ways.¹⁴² *First*, by outlining a transcendental structure that enables human experience and then arguing that it is impossible for human experience to unfold other than as described, Kant obtains support for his transcendental account. This strategy requires Kant to locate "*a priori* the pure thinking [i.e., thought free from the content of experience] [...], and it is already a sufficient deduction of them and justification of their objective validity if we can prove that by means of them alone an object can be thought" (A 97). By applying this method, he believes he can establish something fundamentally true about the structure of human experience.

Kant's *second* method starts with the conclusion drawn from the first method, i.e., he starts with a structure that enables human experience, which he believes he has already shown *must* be the case for actual or possible experience. Taking this structure, he then attempts to show that it is possible for a non-human intelligence to perceive or experience in a way that diverges from human experience.

If this latter approach can be demonstrated, one also demonstrates the following *possibility*: human perception and experience is contingent. If it is possible that the manner in which humans experience and perceive is contingent, then our capacity to accurately perceive and experience external existence (even if all of humanity should agree) is brought into doubt. Kant's second approach is less used than the first.

Kant's primary manner of employing this latter argument is to compare the human mind to (what is believed to be true about) the mind of God:

¹⁴² Strawson employs the phrase 'transcendental arguments' in his 1959 article "*Individuals, An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*." Kant does not use this term in the *Critique*.

For if I wanted to think an understanding that itself intuited (as, say, a divine understanding, which would not represent given objects, but through whose representation the objects would themselves at the same time be given, or produced), then the categories would have no significance at all with regard to such a cognition. (B145)

According to Kant, the categories are the basic concepts that provide “unity” to our experiences (A 111). Unity of this synthesis “in accordance with empirical concepts would be entirely contingent, and, were they not grounded on a transcendental ground of unity, it would be possible for a swarm of appearances to fill up our soul without experience ever being able to arise from it” (A 111). In other words, the categories are the primary means by which appearances are transformed into specific kinds of unities. This preconscious transformation of appearing content permits humans to subsequently think about appearing content in consistent and useful ways.

Kant suggests that God, unlike humans, can directly intuit objects. This means that God does not need to synthesize sensory content. Nor does He require appearances to be placed under a conceptual framework so they may become meaningful.¹⁴³ In this fashion, Kant creates a contrast: there is a way we perceive, which according to Kant is necessarily true for us human beings, but this human way of seeing is not necessarily the way *all* intelligence must perceive. This contrast functions as support for the following possibility: there is an underlying contingency to the way we perceive *as* human beings (though insofar as it is a *human* way of seeing, it cannot be otherwise *for* humans).

In many ways, Kant’s transcendental arguments establish a *negative* epistemology. For instance, *if* one can demonstrate necessary preconditions that make empirical experience possible, and *if* this structure possesses inherent limits that demonstrate its *inability* to access external reality, *then* one can make the case that there are strict limits to what can be justified. Kant believes he can demonstrate this version of negative epistemology. In particular, he believes he can show that metaphysical claims (i.e., claims which exceed experience) are *not* justifiable. For Kant, justifiable content is restricted to claims that concern human experience, because we only have access to human experience.

In this limited sense, Kant has not entirely rejected the correspondence theory of truth (though he does reject an *observationally* based correspondence theory of truth, see section VII). He believes that in order to justify a claim one’s account must be shown to correspond with its intended object. However, since we have no access to external reality independent of human awareness, we only can have access to what *appears* in or as human experience. Thus all justifiable knowledge claims are restricted to the human mind, its activities and the manner we undergo experience. I shall argue in Chapter Three, this epistemic view (neutered of Kant’s transcendental accounts) forms the basis of Hegel’s approach to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

¹⁴³ Here, one’s belief or non-belief in God is irrelevant. Kant is only attempting to establish that it is possible and logically consistent to suppose that intelligence is not restricted to the form of human intelligence.

Appendices for Chapter Three

V. Hegel Term Absolute

1. From the above determinations of Hegel's text, we can draw some parallels with Kant's application of the term 'absolute'. Before Kant addresses how the notion of the absolute concerns *transcendental* philosophy (which Hegel rejects), he provides two accounts of how the term can be used. These two *definitions* (when they are *not related to Kant's application of transcendental philosophy*) are instructive for our understanding of Hegel's use of the term. Kant writes:

The word **absolute** is now more often used merely to indicate that something is valid of a thing considered **in itself** and thus **internally**. In this meaning, "absolutely possible" would signify what is possible in itself (internally), which is in fact the **least** one can say of an object. On the contrary, however, it is also sometimes used to indicate something is valid in every relation (unlimitedly) (e.g., absolute dominion); and in this meaning **absolutely possible** would signify what is **possible** in all respects **in every relation**, which is the most that I can say about the possibility of a thing. (*Critique of Pure Reason*, B 381)

Hegel attempts to disclose the absolute possibility of 'Spirit'. The term 'Absolute Spirit' invokes Kant's *latter definition* of the term 'absolute'. For instance, the latter definition of 'absolute' represents every possible relation of an entity, and therefore contains the internal relations of an entity as well. Hegel ambitiously seeks to disclose 'unlimitedly' (i.e., in every possible relation) the various expressions human consciousness. For Hegel, "what is **possible** in all respects **in every relation**" (B 381) of Spirit, is 'Absolute knowing'.

It is obvious that Hegel cannot account for every thought that may occur nor is Hegel foolish enough to try. Moreover, accounting for an individual thought is a concern for psychology. Nonetheless, his accounts cannot be too general, as this would limit relevant distinctions and lead to formalism (see Hegel's rejection of formalism in section 3.3.5).

VI. Hegel's Incomprehensible Outline of His Project in the "Preface" Made Comprehensible

10. Only after working through the entire "Preface" and "Introduction" does the following outline (made in the "Preface") of his projects make sense:

With this, the Phenomenology of Spirit is concluded. What Spirit prepares for itself in it, is the element of knowing. In this element the moments of Spirit now spread themselves out in that *form of simplicity* which know its object as it own self, but remain in the simple oneness of knowing; they are the True in the form of the True, and their difference is only the difference of content. Their movement, which organizes itself in this element into a whole, is *Logic* or *speculative philosophy*. (21-2; 37)

In this extremely dense passage, Hegel outlines important features of his project. These features can be unpacked in 5 parts.

1) 'Phenomenology of Spirit' refers to an account of the *experience* of spirit. 2) The phenomenology of spirit is concluded when one understands the full gambit of consciousness' possible formulations and expressions. When this is achieved, the self can be understood in its entirety.

3) An understanding of the entirety of the self, is also an understanding of its unity. In other words, understanding the entirety of an entity entails that one understands that all of its parts and attributes form a whole (e.g., the 'form of simplicity').

4) In achieving 1 to 3, Spirit 'prepares for itself in itself' the 'element of knowing'. This element of knowing occurs when the self no longer alienates itself from its own existence. In other words, it no longer asserts that the appearance of otherness is something foreign to itself. Once the self ceases to reject the appearance of otherness as not being the self, it has 'prepared' itself for knowing itself, e.g., all that appears is the self, in that it is consciousness.

Moore, Russell and some British Idealists interpreted this view as a metaphysical claim concerning the nature of all existence. However, Hegel's claim is not a metaphysical claim concerning existence. Instead, it is a subtle insight into the nature of experience itself—full stop, i.e., nothing else.

5) The 'True in the form of the True' requires that what is thought to be the case, is actually the case. In short, when properly undertaken, the phenomenology of spirit can display spirit in its actuality. Since truth and the developments of the self are mental objects, they only differ according to their features (or content). Accordingly, they are components of the same 'Substance' (i.e., the self).

VII. Hegel's Term 'Spirit' and How it Distinguishes Him from Previous Thinkers

1. Hegel's account of 'Spirit' differentiates him from his predecessors' in two distinct manners.

Much of the modern era was motivated by a perceived need to overcome what Kant calls 'material skepticism' (i.e., one who doubts external or non-mental existence). For instance, Descartes worried whether the self is independent and different from what appears for it, and Kant thought the "scandal of philosophy" was that it could not prove (until he came on the scene) the "existence of things outside us" (*Critique* B xl).

Hegel distinguishes himself from thinkers like Descartes and Kant by refusing to address this type of concern as it is unnecessary and avoidable. First, as opposed to attempting to establish the mind's relation to mind-independent existence—an approach traceable all the way back to the pre-Socratic philosophers—Hegel seeks to discover all the ways in which the mind is hidden from itself. Second, Hegel's formulation of the self makes it impossible for humans to be aware of mind-independent content. He argues that

all that appears to oneself is a product of the mind (see section 3.5).¹⁴⁴ Third, Hegel argues that the attempt to obtain mind-independent knowledge is a cognitive impossibility (see section 3.4.2). In these respects, Hegel's subject centered philosophy significantly breaks from the skeptical concerns that motivate much of the Western tradition, which worried that if one could not establish the relation of the mind to external reality, one could not achieve knowledge.¹⁴⁵

Although Hegel shares a subject oriented approach with Kant, Fichte and Schelling, he rejects their rigidly formal accounts. As I will show, this accounts for the second manner in which Hegel deviates from his predecessors. I will first explain Hegel's criticism of Fichte's and Schelling's approaches and then show how this criticism concerns Kant.

Fichte and Schelling believe that the totality of the self constitutes a unity (which is one use of the term 'absolute'). Their overemphasis on the point that entities are identical to themselves (e.g., $A = A$) leads Hegel to interpret their claims in the following terms: since the entirety of the self is identical to itself, all aspects of the self are identical.¹⁴⁶

Hegel borrows the belief that all experience is in some sense an experience of oneself from Fichte and Schelling. Yet, Fichte and Schelling take this claim one step further than Hegel, by combining it with the previous assertion concerning identity. For example, *if all aspects of the self are identical to itself, and all that one perceives is oneself, then everything is ultimately identical.* This is the logical outcome of claiming that 1) the self is identical to itself and 2) all perceived content is the self.¹⁴⁷

While some may see this cursory account of Fichte and Schelling as unfair, Hegel apparently does not. He criticizes their views as "monochromatic formalism" (9, 15), i.e., their views inaccurately predetermine, via a formalized structure, a gray slate of uniformity to all existence:

Dealing with something from the perspective of the Absolute consists merely in declaring that, Although one has been speaking of it just now as something definite, yet in the Absolute, the $A=A$, there is nothing of the kind [i.e., no determinate/finite being], for all is one. To put this single insight, that in the Absolute everything is the same, against the full body of articulated cognition,

¹⁴⁴ Unlike Kant, Hegel deliberately omits the role sensory reception plays in perception. Hegel wanted to distance himself from this aspect of Kantianism, because it insinuates that sensory receptivity implies mind-independent existence.

¹⁴⁵ Berkeley is the most glaring exception. He denied the existence of matter and argued that God's ideas are responsible for the manner in which we experience the empirical world. German Idealism, as embodied by Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, holds that the subject, rather than God, is responsible for how one perceives.

¹⁴⁶ For instance, Schelling writes:

For the supreme formal principle, $A = A$, is indeed only possible through the *act* expressed in the proposition *self = self*—through the act of thinking that becomes an object to itself and is identical with itself. Thus, so far from the *self = self* falling under the principle of identity, it is rather the latter that is conditioned from the former. For did not *self = self*, then nor could $A = A$, since the equivalence posited in the latter proposition expresses, after all, no more than an equivalence between the judging subject and that in which A is posited as *object*, that is, an equivalence between the self as subject and as object. (30-1)

¹⁴⁷ This view was influential in British Idealism and is often conflated with Hegel's philosophy.

which at least seeks and demands such fulfillment, to palm off its Absolute as the night in which, as the saying goes, all cows are black—this is cognition naïvely reduced to vacuity. The Formalism which recent philosophy denounces and despises, only to see it reappear in its midst, will not vanish from Science, however much of its inadequacy may be recognized and felt, till the cognizing of absolute actuality has become entirely clear as to its own nature. (9)

(I will address the term ‘Science’ in section 3.4.) Hegel is concerned that an overly formalized account of consciousness will collapse observed content into conformity with its rules. This rigid formalism accounts for the vacuous conception Schelling holds concerning our awareness of the absolute (i.e., the totality of existence). It is merely an uninformative claim that limits what can be differentiated—just as at night, when all cows inevitably appear black. In using this extreme example, Hegel stresses to his readers that the indiscriminate use of abstraction and excessive formalism do not permit an accurate account of lived phenomena. This is why Hegel claims that the *whole* of human consciousness is discerned in its ‘development,’ rather than the formal logic of its unity: “the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development” (11, 20).

Within Hegel’s criticism of Fichte and Schelling lies an *implicit* criticism of Kant. Kant believed that, *if* he could show that his *a priori* accounts offered an adequate account of how all experience and knowledge are possible, he would demonstrate that his *a priori* accounts are true. In his excitement to prove that all experience and all knowledge conforms to a formal *a priori* structure, Kant can be seen as mischaracterizing experience in order to make it conform to his *a priori* accounts. In this manner, one can argue that he prejudices rather than examines experience. Conversely, Hegel seeks to permit the phenomenon of experience to inform him about consciousness, as opposed to relying on overly formal accounts, as his predecessors had done.

In summary, from a Hegelian perspective, one can launch the following criticisms: 1) Fichte’s and Schelling’s overemphasis of the formal component of identity leads them to mischaracterize the subtle complexity of consciousness, and 2) Kant misrepresents consciousness by rigidly applying an overly formalized account of the preconditions necessary for experience. In both cases, an excessive emphasis on a particular type of formal account leads to misinterpretations of the phenomena of consciousness.

Formal accounts, by their very nature, structure the content under investigation prior to experience. As a result, formalized structures restrict our capacity to see the complete tapestry of human experience, because it presumes (rather than observes) the shape of human experience. This concern echoes Hegel’s earlier concern: one should not assume prior to investigation what is truth. In this regard, Kant, Fichte and Schelling appear to *prejudge*, and thus *misjudge*, the true state of consciousness.

Due to Hegel’s belief that a true account of consciousness requires us to observe how it unfolds in experience (as opposed to formal accounts of it), Hegel discovers that the consciousness is knowable in a way his predecessors do not. For instance, he

observes a developmental progression to human consciousness (see sections 3.4.5 and 3.4.9).¹⁴⁸

Appendix for Chapter Four

VIII. Sellars' Revamping of Kantian Intuitions

1. Sellars notes that Kant identifies two basic sources of representation—one stems from sensory content and the other stems from conceptual content¹⁴⁹:

‘Our knowledge,’ he [i.e., Kant]* tells us (A50; B74), ‘springs from two fundamental sources of the mind; the first is the capacity of receiving representations (receptivity for impression), the second is the power of knowing an object through these representations (spontaneity [in the production of] concepts. Intuitions and concepts constitute, therefore, elements of all our knowledge...’ In spite of this radical difference in role[s],* both sensibility and understanding are construed as, in a broad and ill-defined sense, faculties of representation. (2)¹⁵⁰

Sellars is tempted to “think that Kant’s distinction between the representations of the understanding and the representations of sensibility” can be construed “as a clear-cut advancement on the notorious tendency of his [i.e., Kant’s] predecessors on both sides of the Channel to run these together” (2). However, Sellars states that “an examination of the use to which Kant puts his distinction soon makes it evident that, while there is *something* to this interpretation, there is little which is ‘clear cut’ about the way in which the distinction is drawn” (2).

Sellars argues that Kant fails to properly distinguish between ‘intuitions’ that involve the understanding and ‘intuitions’ that represent the sensory manifold. Here, intuitions of the sensory manifold designates the *unsynthesized* (i.e., unified) content passively received from our senses. This unified content is an ‘appearance’: “The undetermined object of an empirical intuition is called appearance” (A 20). When the appearance is linked to concepts of the understanding (via a different kind of ‘intuition’), it becomes a ‘representation’. In other words, when ‘appearances’ become *recognized* as being a certain kind of thing or having certain qualities, it becomes a ‘representation’.

¹⁴⁸Due to Hegel’s belief that a true account of consciousness requires us to observe how it unfolds in experience (as opposed to formal accounts of it), Hegel discerns that the consciousness is knowable in a way his predecessors do not. For instance, he argues that there is a developmental progression to human consciousness. If there are developmental stages to how we grow and learn as conscious beings, and if these developmental stages are shared by all humans, then we can know something about consciousness as a developmental processes. This developmental process would *not* designate the empirical self, which concerns psychology and anthropology. Because these insights do not relate to the fields of psychology or anthropology (which Kant considers non-philosophical fields of study), one could make the case that Hegel discerns something philosophically fundamental about the nature of consciousness (see section 3.4).

¹⁴⁹ I will not address the accuracy of Sellars interpretation of Kant. I seek only to evaluate the epistemic conclusions he draws from it.

¹⁵⁰ All brackets and their contents followed by an asterisk are my additions to the text.

While Kant does inconstantly refer to uncategorized sensations as representations, he clearly makes a distinction between the terms ‘appearances’ and ‘representations’ in section A 20. For sake of convenience, I will maintain this distinction.

Kant writes:

This **synthesis** of the manifold of sensible intuition, which is possible and necessary *a priori*, can be called **figurative** (*synthesis speciosa*), as distinct from that which would be thought in the mere category in regard to the manifold of an intuition in general, and which is called combination of the understanding (*synthesis intellectualis*) [...] (B 151).

Sellars sees himself as improving Kant’s project by clarifying the above distinction between intuitions that engage the sensory manifold from intuitions that are subsequently brought into relation to concepts¹⁵¹:

[...] this suggests that Kant’s use of the term ‘intuition’, in connection to human knowledge, blurs the distinction between a special sub-class of conceptual representations of individuals [...] and a radically different kind of representation of an individual which belongs to sheer receptivity and is in no sense conceptual (7).

Sellars credits Kant for recognizing, in a murky fashion, that “perception involves a flow of conceptual representations guided by manifolds of ‘sheer receptivity’” (McDowell, “The Logical Form of an Intuition” 452). Yet, he criticizes Kant for failing to recognize the epistemic importance of this position.¹⁵²

Sellars writes:

I have been arguing that of the items Kant calls ‘intuitions’, those which are representations of a manifold *as a manifold* constitute a special class of representations of the understanding. [...] Their ‘receptivity’ is a matter of the understanding having to cope with a manifold of representations characterized by ‘receptivity’ in a more radical sense, as providing the ‘brute fact’ or constraining element of perceptual experience.

[This] manifold has the interesting feature that its existence is postulated on general epistemological or, as Kant would say, transcendental grounds, after reflection on the concept of human knowledge as based on, though not constituted by, the impact of independent reality. (9)¹⁵³

He claims that sensations indicate a transcendental structure at play for the following reasons: 1) sensation functions as a ‘constraining element,’ which in turn contributes to

¹⁵¹ Sellars references the above Kantian passage in page 8 of *Science and Metaphysics*.

¹⁵² McDowell argues that Sellars misrepresents Kant’s understanding of intuition and sensibility. See “The Logical Form of an Intuition,” published in the 1998 Sep. edition of *The Journal of Philosophy*.

¹⁵³ Sellars apparently has something akin to the following Kantian passage in mind:

I call all cognition transcendental that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our mode of cognition of objects insofar as this is to be possible *a priori*. A **system** of such concepts would be called **transcendental philosophy**. (A11/B25)

empirical knowledge, and 2) the recognition of 1) is *inferred* via “reflections on the concept of human knowledge” (2). Lastly, 3) though he claims that sensation contributes to our empirical knowledge, sensation *itself* cannot constitute knowledge (See Chapter Three, **Part Two**)¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Sellars’ transcendental grounds is historically developed, while Kant’s is *ahistorical*.