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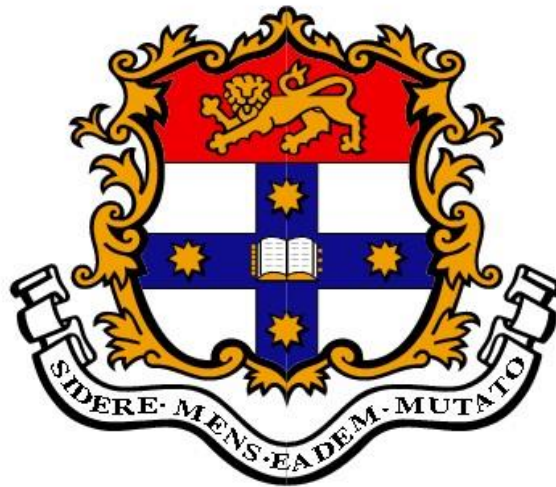
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# 'Us' and Determining Meaning

*Intentionality, Social Linguistic Practices, and Singularity*

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## Abstract

This thesis is primarily concerned with answering the two questions ‘who are we?’ and ‘how must we understand our relations to the world and each other, such that knowledge of ourselves and the world is understood as possible?’ As will be shown, these two questions and their answers are fundamentally linked. We are those creatures that satisfy certain conditions, conditions which include being able to have objectively correct intentional states and attitudes that are *of* or *about* ourselves and the world.

Section I begins with a clarification of what is meant by ‘we’. It is stipulated that we are to understand the ‘we’ as including all and only those creatures that are able to treat themselves and others as members of a group, any group. Thus our first question from above becomes ‘what does it take to count as an individual that is able to treat herself and others as members of a group, any group?’ It will be argued that to be one of us one must be able to have intentional states/attitudes and perform intentional performances that are of or about things, and that this means one must be a creature that takes part in social normative linguistic practices that determine meanings (the contents of intentional states/attitudes/performances) and confer them on to things. Our task then becomes one of accounting for such practices, and thereby also answering our second question from above. In section I.II we will consider Robert Brandom’s Inferentialism as a possible candidate for a system that can fulfil this task. It will be argued that this system ultimately founders, but that certain aspects of it, together with an adequate account of conceptual perceptual experiential contents, can fulfil this task. In section II we look to the work of John McDowell for an account of experiential contents. I will argue that his picture is inadequate, but that an adequate account can emerge if we offer a further account of the category of *singularity* and another of intentional states/attitudes that are of or about singular things and able to play a role in inferential reasoning; both of which, I contend, can be given by taking certain lessons from G. W. F. Hegel. The best way of understanding the relevant lessons from Hegel, however, is to see them as responses to the philosophy Immanuel Kant. Thus section III goes over certain central themes in Kant’s work, and in section IV we undertake a study of the key sections of Hegel’s system. In section V I bring everything together to explain our completed account of meaning determining practices, which also allows me to explain how we have answered the questions posed at the beginning of the thesis.

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## Introduction

In what follows we will focus on delivering answers to what I take to be some of the most important and fundamental questions that we have asked or can ask. Namely, 'who are we?' and, 'how must we understand our relations to the world and each other, such that knowledge of ourselves and the world is understood as possible?' Of course, certain readings of these questions would render a philosophy thesis an entirely inappropriate place to pursue their answers. For instance, certain readings of the question 'who are we?' would determine an anthropology thesis, or a biology thesis, or perhaps a psychology thesis to be the best place to pursue its answer. Similarly, certain readings of the question 'how must we understand our relations to the world and each other, such that knowledge of ourselves and the world is understood as possible?' might determine a neuroscience thesis, or a physics thesis, or perhaps even a psychoanalysis thesis the best place to pursue its answer. It is therefore incumbent on us to clarify the questions we mean to answer before we set off in pursuit of their answers.

Thus, section I begins with the task of determining what is meant by the 'we' in the question 'who are we?' It will be determined that 'we' are those individuals who can treat themselves and others as members of a group, a 'we', so to speak. This has important results with regard to how we may then answer the clarified question of who we are, or, more precisely, what it takes to be included in the 'we', which is a task that is carried through the rest of section I.I and subsections thereof, as well as beyond. In accord with arguments made by Robert Brandom, it will be contended that to be one of us is to have *understanding*, which is to say, to have the ability to treat something as meaningful in the sense of treating it either *as a reason* for something else or as *standing in need of reasons* itself. This also means that to be one of us one must be able to *reason*, i.e. one must have a grasp of *proprieties of inference*. Finally, it will be contended that to be one of us is to be able to have beliefs and perform actions – which is more exactly and more broadly rendered as having the ability to treat intentional states/attitudes/performances (that is, things that have both propositional and representational contents) *as such* – and that this ability requires being a *linguistic* creature. To be a linguistic creature, moreover, is to take part in social normative practices that determine meanings and confer them on to things.

This will carry us over into section I.II and subsections thereof, wherein the question 'how are meanings determined?' takes centre stage. For if to be one of us is to take part in meaning determining and conferring practices, then understanding who we are will necessarily require understanding how it is possible for us to take part in these practices and also how these practices can be understood as determining and conferring meanings. We will proceed, however, by looking into several ways in which we cannot make sense of the determinations of meanings so that we may set up our own positive views in contradistinction. Following arguments made by Brandom we will discover that we cannot understand how meanings are determined if we take the notion of *representation* as explanatorily, or logically, primary and try to build up to an understanding fully fledged meaning. Furthermore, taking certain lessons from the works of Wilfrid Sellars, we will discover that we cannot understand meanings as underwritten and determined by formal principles treated as fundamental; rather, we must understand meanings as determined by material principles that are implicit in our social practices. This will bring us to a study of Brandom's own Inferentialism, according to which inference is treated as the explanatorily, or logically, primary notion, and meaning is thoroughly determined by social normative (inferential) practices of attributing and acknowledging commitments and entitlements.

I will argue that broadly Brandomian social practices of attributing and acknowledging commitments and entitlements are indeed able to be understood as determining meanings and conferring them on to things, but only on the condition that neither inference nor representation, which will also mean neither inference nor meaning, is treated as logically prior to the other, i.e. that both are treated as equiprimordial. This is because the Brandomian social normative practices *presuppose* meaningfulness at their foundations, i.e. at the level of attributions and acknowledgements of commitments and entitlements. We can explain how meanings are determined and conferred by meaningful practices, but we cannot explain how meaning springs from meaninglessness. Finally, I will contend that the way to properly account for the Brandomian social normative practices, such that they can determine and confer meanings, is to offer an account of *perceptual experiential contents* and perceptual judgements such that empirical content can be introduced into the intentional states/attitudes involved in our Brandomian social deontic practices. For this makes it possible to account for intentional states/attitudes that are



about individuals, thus allowing for the attributions of commitments and entitlements to these individuals in the first place. Underlying all this therefore is the implicit question 'how must we understand our relations to the world and each other, such that knowledge of ourselves and the world is understood as possible?' For we are looking into the relations and practices that make intentional states/attitudes, things that can count as knowledge, possible.

This will take us into section II and subsections thereof, where we will look to the works of John McDowell in order to spell out several ways of accounting for perceptual experiential contents and perceptual judgements, which it may be thought offer a way understanding the introduction of empirical content into our Brandomian social normative practices. These will include the idea that the contents of perceptual experiences are *propositional*, as well as the idea that these contents are less-than-propositional *objects*. I will contend that the second of these ideas is correct, but only if it is spelt out correctly, which will mean treating the objects as properly *singular* and not merely as *particulars*, i.e. *instances of kinds*. McDowell, I will argue, is unable to accommodate this. Yet, as I will suggest, G. W. F. Hegel is able to show us a way of accommodating this. Furthermore, Hegel is also able to show us how to account for judgements that can both be about such singular objects and play a role in inferential reasoning, which means that such judgements can introduce empirical content into the intentional states/attitudes involved in our Brandomian social normative practices.

The best way of understanding the lessons delivered by Hegel, however, comes by way of looking at his critique of Immanuel Kant's critical theoretical philosophy, since Hegel's own system can be understood as developed in response to the Kantian system and the problems it carries with it. Thus in section III we embark on a study of Hegel's critique of Kant, and only once this has been completed do we then turn to a study of Hegel's account of singularity and judgement in section IV and subsections thereof. Finally, with an understanding of how empirical content may be introduced into the intentional states/attitudes involved in our Brandomian normative social practices, and therewith an understanding of how we may properly account for these practices, we return in section V to bring everything together and explain how these practices can properly be understood as determining meaning

and conferring it on to things, which allows us to complete our answers to the questions posed at the beginning of this introduction, and thus wrap-up our inquiry.

## I – Who are we?

### I.I.I - Who 'we' are

The focus of this section is on the following question: What is it that makes an individual one of 'us'? Of course without further clarification of this question any project founded upon the search for an answer to it would be highly questionable and fraught with difficulties from the outset. For what is meant by 'us' in this question? Who or what is included in the 'we'? As Robert Brandom has said, "'We' is said in many ways. We may be thee and me. We may be all that talks or all that moves, all that minds or all that matters."<sup>1</sup> Who 'we' are is not a matter wholly decided by blind nature. It depends to a very large extent on particular individuals being *taken* or *treated* as members of 'us'. We may be thee and me, but only so long as I, or thee, or I and thee together, take me and thee to be included in 'we'. Similarly, 'we' may be me and all the heavenly bodies, but only so long as I (or perhaps some intelligent heavenly body) take 'we' to include me and all the heavenly bodies. What's more, an individual must in every case fulfil at least one criterion to count as a member of any 'us' or 'we', even if this criterion is nothing more than, say, being an individual that is treated as one of 'us'. So, for instance, to count as one of 'us', where 'us' includes me and all the heavenly bodies, an individual must either be me or a heavenly body. Or, if 'we' includes me and any individual I treat as one of 'us' (perhaps simply by saying "she is one of us" of some individual), then to count as one of 'us' an individual must be me or an individual I treat as one of 'us'.

So who or what is included in the 'us' in the question with which this section began? I am not interested in defining an individual as one of 'us' by arbitrarily referring to something such as species, economic standing, nationality, sex, musical ability, etc. As has been mentioned, which individuals are included in 'us', in any case, depends to a large degree on which individuals are *treated* or *taken* as included in 'us'. More to the point, it depends on some individual taking herself and others (or perhaps

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<sup>1</sup> Robert B. Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 3.

just one other) to be members of some group, some 'us'.<sup>2</sup> It is by using this fact that, for our purposes here, I will define an individual as one of 'us'. An individual counts as one of 'us', I say, if and only if she is able to take or treat herself and others as members of a group, any group. This is, as will become clear in what follows, the same as saying that an individual counts as one of 'us' if she has, and is able to deploy, the concept *us* (or *we*) - that is, the concept of a group of individuals that includes herself and at least one other.<sup>3</sup> We are, as Brandom says, "the ones who say 'we'."<sup>4</sup>

This gives us a relatively uninteresting answer to the question what makes an individual one of 'us'. For it is by definition an individual's ability to treat herself and others as members of a group that makes her one of 'us'. But it also gives us a way of clarifying the question a little so it asks for a more interesting answer. Clarified it reads: "What is required for an individual to have the ability to treat herself and others as members of a group?" Or, in other words, "What is required for an individual to have, and be able to deploy the concept *us*?" Answering this question will take up the rest of this section. Before we move on, however, I should offer one more point of clarification.

It might be argued by, say, a proponent of nominalism about things such as groups that the project of this section, and with it the project of this thesis, founders at the outset. For it depends upon the assumptions that there are such things as groups (the very thing our proponent of nominalism denies in this case) and that individuals can take themselves and others to be members of such groups. This project does indeed depend on these assumptions. But this is not a problem, since these assumptions can be defended – though not in any brief manner that we may run through at this point. It will be a result spelled out at the end of section I.II.IV below that all individuals taking part in linguistic social

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<sup>2</sup> This is not to suggest that the group needs to be defined by some specific term, such as 'we', 'nous', 'wir', etc. It may not even be necessary that the group be defined by a term at all.

<sup>3</sup> It may be argued that having the concept *us* is not necessarily the same as having the concept of a group of individuals that includes oneself and at least one other. For example, it might be suggested that a man who points to a group of people and says, perhaps contemptuously, "they're all the individuals included in 'us', and I am not one of them", has the concept of *us*, but it is not the concept of a group of which he is a member. This suggestion may be right, though I would contend that the latter definition of the concept is derivative from and dependent on the former; in any case I need not argue the point. I can merely respond by saying that, as I am using it, the concept *us* is to be read as the concept of a group which included oneself and at least one other.

<sup>4</sup> Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 4. Of course, the actual ability to say 'we' is not necessarily of importance. This is why I captured the same idea by stating that what is important is the *taking* of oneself and others to be members of a group.

practices must presuppose and thus accept that there are such things as groups of individuals of which they themselves are members. And the nominalist cannot, without falling into devastating contradictions, deny that she is taking part in linguistic social practices.

### I.I.II – 'Us' and reliable differential responsive dispositions

So what is required for an individual to be able to treat herself and others as members of a group? By what means does she come to count as having the concept of *us*? To start us off, let us consider the thesis that what is required is merely having reliable differential responsive dispositions (RDRDs), which are activated when confronted by particular stimuli (say, for instance, representations of a particular group of individuals, one of whom is oneself). This is a good place to start, since it does not immediately rule out something counting as one of us on the basis that it is not, say, human.

According to this thesis it may be said, for example, that a particular woman counts as one of us because she is reliably disposed to exclaim "That's us" when standing in front of a mirror with a particular friend, or when looking at a photo of herself and this friend whilst in his company. To cover all cases in which individuals are said to be taking themselves and others to be members of a group RDRDs would of course have to get far more refined and complex in structure than this. But even allowing for this there is a potential problem for this thesis at the outset. It is not clear how such a thesis would deal with cases in which an individual deploys the concept *us* to include individuals that she has not been, and perhaps could not be, in the right sort of causal connection with such that they could act as stimuli for her RDRDs. Think, for example, of a case in which an individual used the concept *us* to include all the living beings more than five-million light-years from Earth, if there be any. Perhaps this RDRD thesis could be built up to account for such cases. But even if this is not possible, it need not necessarily be a problem for its application here. For our concern here is only with the ability to treat oneself and others as members of a group, not with the ability to treat oneself and others, others that one is not in a close causal connection with, or others that one is not able to perceive, as members of a group.

If the RDRD thesis can render an individual able, in any case whatsoever, to treat herself and others as members of a group, then this is enough.

There is a sense in which it feels clearly wrongheaded to suggest that what is required for an individual to count as one of us is merely having RDRDs that are activated when confronted with certain stimuli. For we may then have to start accepting that many things of which it would feel wrong to say that they can treat themselves and others as members of groups can in fact do just this. For example, consider a case in which a pigeon is trained such that it gains RDRDs to peck at photos of itself and a red ball. Would we want to say the pigeon is thereby treating itself and the ball as members of a group? If one feels in anyway inclined to respond with a 'yes' to this question, then consider the next example. We can imagine a novelty gift card with a speaker inside that, when opened, has a RDRD to emit a recording of someone saying "We belong together" activated. Do we want to say the card (or perhaps only the speaker) is treating itself and the person opening it as members of a group? That is has the concept *we*? But maybe we shouldn't take these questions to exhibit any great problems. Perhaps it is the complexity, number, interplay, etc., of an individual's RDRDs that makes her one of us.<sup>5</sup> A pigeon may be able to learn to reliably respond to a small number of stimuli by pecking, but it certainly couldn't learn to respond to the wide array of stimuli in the complex ways required to properly be said to have the ability to take itself and others to be members of a group. If one were to follow this track the task would remain to give at least some indication of what level of complexity, number, interplay, etc., there needs to be of an individual's RDRDs for that individual to qualify as one of us. And any apparent arbitrariness in deciding where to draw the line, even if it is a vague line, that an individual must cross to count as one of 'us' would need to be justified.

Regardless of the problems that may accompany this task (and there are many), there are several more pertinent reasons for rejecting the claim that merely having RDRDs is all that is required to be able to take oneself and others to be members of a group. I will run through three. They are essentially

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<sup>5</sup> Brandom considers the idea of complexity of RDRDs in relation to what it takes to be a concept user in general at, *Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 182-83.

modified versions of the reasons Brandom spells out for rejecting the Empiricist conception of concepts.<sup>6</sup>

### I.I.III – Understanding: a grasp of proprieties of inference

Firstly, take a situation in which individuals *A* and *B* are standing before a mirror and *A* responds to the image of herself and *B* by exclaiming “That’s us”. There is a specific sense in which *A*’s exclamation of “That’s us” must *mean* something to *A* if it is to count as exhibiting her taking herself and *B* to be members of the group ‘us’. By this I mean that in order to properly be said to be taking herself and *B* to be members of the group *A* must *understand* that her utterance “That’s us” is, in this case, incompatible with, say, “That is not me and *B*”, said by her. And she must understand, say, that “I am one of us”, in her mouth, follows from her utterance of “That’s us”. She must, that is, understand that other performances or attitudes, which would exhibit her as treating herself or *B* as included in what she was responding to with her “That’s us” exclamation, follow from this exclamation.<sup>7</sup> Hence, what is required to count as taking oneself and others to be members of a group is not merely the activation of a RDRD, but also *understanding*. Where, as Brandom would say, this means a grasp of or mastery over proprieties of inference.<sup>8</sup> This is what the pigeon is missing. Its pecking means nothing to it.

In order to ward off some possible objections, I should briefly say something to clarify what is meant, by me at least, by ‘understanding’, or ‘a grasp of or mastery over proprieties’. Some animals may exhibit particular complex behaviours that it would seem right to describe as involving the making inferences. An example of such complex behaviour may be a crow solving a puzzle that requires a

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<sup>6</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 183-95. It is no accident that Brandom’s reasons for rejecting the Empiricist conception of concepts can be modified and put to work here. After all, we are considering what it takes to have the concept *us*, and Brandom takes the Empiricist conception of concepts to be that the having of particular RDRDs is sufficient for having concepts.

<sup>7</sup> This sentence is added to make it clear that it is, of course, a simplification to say that she must know that “I am one of us”, in her mouth, follows from her utterance “us”; or that “That is not me and *B*” does not. It is not necessary that she know of any particular phrase, performance, attitude, etc., that it follows from, or does not follow from, this utterance. The point is only that she must know that her own being a member of the group, as well as *B*’s, however this may be expressed, follows.

<sup>8</sup> See Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, pp. 4-5. Also, *Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas*, pp. 183-84.

number of stages to be completed in a specific order to get at some food.<sup>9</sup> I have no problem with the suggestion that such behaviours involve the making of inferences. Indeed, describing it as such may be quite helpful in our coming to understand the crow's behaviour better. But I would claim that the crow does not have a grasp of proprieties of inference or understanding. For having this requires the ability to treat certain of one's states or attitudes *as* inferentially related and liable to assessments of correctness or appropriateness based on reasons - and having this ability, as we will come to see, requires being a linguistic creature. One could put this otherwise by saying that having a grasp of proprieties of inference, or understanding, requires being able to *represent to oneself* certain of one's states and attitudes *as* inferentially linked and *as* liable to assessments of correctness of appropriateness based on reasons – and this requires being linguistic. The reason this requires being linguistic will be made clear in what is to come.

#### I.I.IV - Reliability

Let us now look at the second reason for rejecting the claim that merely having RDRDs is all that is required to be able to take oneself and others to be members of a group. We will do so by examining the notion of *reliability* in play. Take individual *A* again. Let us stipulate that *A*'s ability to take herself and *B* to be members of a group they wholly comprise simply *is* her ability to reliably utter "Us-1"<sup>10</sup> in response to being presented with an image of herself and *B* together. Now, this highlights something that is most certainly right. Namely, that for *A* to be able to take herself and *B* to be members of the group they wholly comprise, she must be able to reliably perform whatever performance it is that is meant to exhibit her taking herself and *B* to be members of this group.

As it stands in this picture, *A*'s reliability is construed as an objective matter of fact. It may be translated as the proportion of cases in which *A*, over some given time, would be disposed to utter "Us-

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<sup>9</sup> "Are Crows the Ultimate Problem Solvers? - inside the Animal Mind: Episode 2," BBC, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVaITA7eBZE>. Significantly, it is not made clear in this video what sort of training the bird had to undergo in order to complete the puzzle.

<sup>10</sup> I use "us-1" here merely to make it clear that it labels the group *A* and *B* wholly comprise, rather than any other group.



1" correctly (i.e. in response to being presented with an image of herself and *B* together). Furthermore, in this picture *A*'s ability to take herself and *B* to be members of a group is entirely explained in terms that apply to a purely causal framework. Reference to nothing other than *A*'s RDRDs, and their placement in a causal nexus, is required.

In a slightly different context, Brandom notes a significant problem that affects this sort of approach to the notion of reliability.<sup>11</sup> We can state it briefly as follows. Only relative to some reference class of possible situations can the responsive dispositions of some individual determine the probability of a correct response being triggered. Yet, as Brandom says, "[n]o matter what its dispositions, any system will count as reliable relative to some reference classes and as unreliable relative to others."<sup>12</sup> And given that there is no objective matter of fact concerning which reference class is the correct one - the causal order privileges none over any other - there is thus no matter of fact concerning whether an individual's responsive dispositions are reliable. Brandom illustrates this point by looking to a version of an example Alvin Goldman presents while discussing the topic of perceptual knowledge.<sup>13</sup> We will do the same. Consider Henry. Henry was raised on farms and is a person we would intuitively take to be a reliable reporter of things such as tractors, silos, cows, and barns. Moreover, he has 20/20 eyesight and suffers from no affliction that might hinder his reporting abilities. Now, as Henry is driving through the country-side on a perfectly clear and sunny day he spots a barn. To his son, who is travelling with him, he reports his sighting by saying "That's a barn". Henry's report is correct. What he doesn't know, however, is that the district he is driving through is full of papier-mâché barn facsimiles. In fact, out of the one-hundred objects that appear to be barns in this district, ninety-nine are nothing more than mere façades. The façades, moreover, are so well made that Henry is utterly incapable of distinguishing them from real barns. He simply got lucky with his report to his son. But if he continued to respond to what appear to be barns within this district by saying "That's a barn", his responses would be incorrect ninety-nine times out of a hundred.

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<sup>11</sup> Brandom, *Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas*, pp. 185-87.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 186-87. See also, Alvin Goldman, "Discrimination and Perceptual Knowledge," *Journal of Philosophy* 73, no. November (1976): pp. 771-91, especially pp. 72-73.

So, relative to the reference class of this particular barn façade district, Henry's responsive dispositions do not count as reliable. Yet, if we change the relevant reference class to the entire country, where ninety-nine percent of objects that appear to be barns are in fact barns, Henry's responsive dispositions do indeed count as reliable. Unfortunately, Henry's position within the causal framework does not determine which reference class is the correct reference class. And this means his placement cannot determine whether Henry's responsive dispositions are reliable.

We can apply this example to our case directly by considering a situation in which *B* has doctored, unbeknownst to *A*, all the photos in her house that were of herself and *A* together, so that they are now of *A* and *B*'s twin sister. Even though we would normally say of *A* that she is a reliable reporter of images of herself and *B* together, the likeness in appearance between *B* and her twin is so strong that *A* is totally incapable of distinguishing *B* from her twin in photos. So, relative to the reference class of *B*'s house, *A*'s "Us-1" responses would be incorrect all of the time. In this case, the responsive dispositions relevant to her ability to take herself and *B* to be members of the group they wholly comprise would thus count as unreliable. She would, therefore, have to be said not to have this ability. We could widen and vary this example to range over every case that is meant to exhibit *A* taking herself and others (or, another) to be members of a group such that we would end up with the result that *A* does not count as one of us. If, however, we do not do this and we take the relevant reference class to be, say, all the houses *A* visits over her lifetime, in which there are many more photos that actually are of herself and *B* than photos of herself and *B*'s twin, then *A*'s "Us-1" responses will count as reliable. She would, therefore, be said to be able to take herself and *B* to be members of a group, and she would count as one of us. The problem, as in the case of Henry, is that *A*'s place in the causal framework does not determine which reference class is the correct one. Therefore, there can be no objective matter of fact whether *A*'s responsive dispositions are reliable, and thus whether she counts as one of us.

I.I.V - What is being responded to? Who or what is being treated as included in 'us'?

Finally, let us consider the third reason why we should reject the idea that having RDRDs is all that is required to be able to take oneself and others to be members of a group. Take a situation in which *A* is presented with a photograph of herself and *B* standing side by side. In response to being presented with this photograph *A* has a disposition to utter "Us" activated. Now, it is essential that we be able to locate the stimulus, or stimuli, of *A*'s response. For, doing so tells us exactly what things *A* is meant to be treating as members of a group. And clearly on any account of an individual's ability to take herself and others to be members of a group it must be possible to say what things are being taken by that individual to be members of a group.

Unfortunately, the fact that a causal chain can be drawn from *A*'s sensory receptors to the photograph (and possibly even further back) means anyone taking on this task faces a problem that is very familiar in the literature, a problem that creates serious issues for idea that all that is required to count as one of us is having RDRDs that are activated when confronted with particular stimuli. Donald Davidson gives us an example of the problem in his discussion of the meanings of observation sentences.

The location of a stimulus is, of course, notoriously ambiguous. We can place it almost anywhere in the causal chain that leads from far outside to various parts of the central nervous system. Quine offers us a choice between two of the possible locations: at the sensory receptors, or at the objects and events our observation sentences are typically about...But it makes a vast difference whether meaning and evidence are tied to the proximal or the distal stimulus. Mindful of a certain tradition, let us call the two resulting theories of meaning and evidence the *proximal theory* and the *distal theory*.<sup>14</sup>

It makes a vast difference where the stimulus is located because the proximal theory ultimately leads, as Davidson points out, to "truth relativised to individuals, and skepticism."<sup>15</sup> All that is being

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<sup>14</sup> Donald Davidson, "Meaning, Truth, and Evidence," in *Truth, Language, and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 54.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

responded to in the proximal theory are events taking place within the individual's nervous system, or at the outer limits of her sensory receptors. In this theory there is no guarantee that an individual's responses relate to anything in the external world. "Proximal theories, no matter how decked out, are Cartesian in spirit and consequence."<sup>16</sup> Applied to the case of *A* and the photograph, this would mean we could never be sure that *A* was actually responding to the photographic depiction of herself and *B* together. She could just as easily be responding to sensory firings triggered by, say, an hallucination. With the proximal theory, we lose our grip on the world.

The proximal theory, aside from this point, faces the difficulty of even *securing* that which is proximal as the stimulus in the first place. For there is nothing that immediately seems to point to one location on the causal chain as the actual location of the stimulus. There does not seem to be a reason to privilege what is proximal, over what is distal, as the stimulus. This problem of course carries over into the distal theory. But the distal theory, unlike the proximal theory, may seem to admit of a possible solution to the problem. This solution is an appeal to Davidson's method of *triangulation*. Triangulation occurs when we have two (or more) individuals who are in communication with each other, and who respond in similar ways in certain similar situations. For a given set of similar situations in which two individuals respond in similar ways, we can, Davidson contends, draw a line showing the causal chain relevant to each individual's response, and where the lines intersect is where the stimulus is located. The stimulus will be distal because it is not possible for two individuals to respond to something that is taking place within the skin of only one of the individuals. This is how Davidson describes triangulation:

The interpreter's verbal responses class together or identify the same objects and events that the speaker's verbal responses class together. If the interpreter also classes together the verbal responses of the speaker, he can correlate items from two of his own classes; verbal responses of the speaker he finds similar and distal objects and events that he finds similar. To the latter he has his own

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

verbal responses; these provide his translation or interpretation of the speaker's words. Thus the common cause becomes the common subject matter of speaker and interpreter.<sup>17</sup>

Think again of our example. We may take *A*'s "Us" response and draw a line tracing the causal chain from her sensory receptors to the image depicted in the photograph. If *B* also has a disposition to respond by uttering "Us" in such a situation, then we may draw a line tracing the causal chain from her sensory receptors to the image depicted in the photograph. Where the two causal chains intersect, i.e. at the image depicted in the photograph, is where the stimulus of the "Us" responses of *A* and *B* is located. Davidson would say the image depicted in the photograph is what is "salient" in this situation.<sup>18</sup>

But does triangulation really secure what is distal as the stimulus? Brandom gives us a reason to think not.<sup>19</sup> I will modify his argument to suit my purpose here. Why, as Brandom would say, should triangulation lead us to think *A* and *B* are responding to a distal stimulus when they each utter "Us", rather than a *disjunctive* one? Can we not just as easily say that an utterance of "Us" results either when *A* is hallucinating in some way, or when *B* is hallucinating in some way? One might think that we would be able to distinguish cases in which either *A* or *B* are responding to sensory firings set off by hallucinations from those in which they are responding to a distal stimulus, because in a case where, say, *A* responds to sensory firings set off by an hallucination by uttering "Us", *B* would find that none of her own "Us" responses correlate with this particular "Us" response of *A*'s. *A*'s "Us" responses would include in what they class together some object or event that *B*'s "Us" responses would not include in what they class together. But what is to stop us saying both *A* and *B* only ever respond by

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 61. See also, Donald Davidson, "Rational Animals," in *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 105.

<sup>18</sup> Davidson, "Meaning, Truth, and Evidence," p. 61. Two other philosophers that give good illustrations of Davidson's triangulation model, and show how it may be used to deal with philosophical issues not touched on here, are Chris Calvert-Minor and Nathaniel Goldberg. See Chris Calvert-Minor, "Commonsense Realism and Triangulation," *Philosophia* 37, no. 1 (2009). Also, Nathaniel Goldberg, "Tension within Triangulation," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 46, no. 3 (2008). It is interesting to note that Calvert-Minor points to Brandom's discussion of Davidson's model of triangulation, but does not mention or address the objections raised in that discussion. See Calvert-Minor, "Commonsense Realism and Triangulation," p. 69, n. 3.

<sup>19</sup> See Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, pp. 428-29. Also, *Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas*, p. 193.

saying “Us” to sensory firings triggered by hallucinations, and that their responses just happen to correlate with each other (though, perhaps only in *most* cases)? Or, perhaps, that *A* only ever has the type of hallucination that triggers her “Us” response in situations where the photograph is before her. That is, in situations where *B*’s “Us” responses would also be triggered. Davidson’s triangulation model gives us no reason why we can’t say this. The only reason why the triangulation model might seem to succeed in picking out distal things as the stimuli that cause responses is that it presupposes from the outset that individuals are not responding to, say, sensory firings set off by hallucinations, but are in fact responding to distal stimuli. The argument for the model begs the question. It cannot, therefore, secure a determinate event or object that is being responded *to*. It thus does not, as far as it relates to our concerns, make it possible to say what things are being taken as members of a group by an individual.

There is a further problem for the RDRD model of treating oneself and others as members of a group. It relates specifically to treating *oneself* as a member of some group. Thus far we have been considering the possibility of an individual, namely *A*, showing her ability to treat herself and others as members of a group by responding to an image of herself and another, namely *B*, together. But even if it could be guaranteed that *A* was in fact responding to the image, was able to do so reliably, and that this does in fact constitute an ability to treat particular individuals as members of a group, what would guarantee that she is thereby treating *herself* as a member of a group? Could she not just be said to be treating the two individuals in the image as members of a group, without treating herself as one of those individuals? What guarantees that she, so to speak, realises she is one of the individuals depicted? It appears we need to appeal to something over and above RDRDs in order to say of *A* that she is treating herself as a member of a group in such a case. The problem appears in a slightly different guise when we look at another example.

Imagine that *A* is secured in such a way that she cannot see any part of her own body (except perhaps the tip of her nose). She has, moreover, an RDRD to exclaim “Us” anytime *B* enters her field of vision in person. The problem for the RDRD account of what it takes to count as one of us is that it gives us no reason to say that *A*’s “Us” responses constitute her treating herself and *B* as members of

a group, as opposed to saying that these responses constitute nothing more than reliable indicators of *B* being present.

Thus, the idea that all that is required to count as one of us is having RDRDs that are activated when confronted by particular stimuli seems unworkable. But we of course do have RDRDs. And in a strong sense it is necessary that individuals have them if they are each to count as one of us. For they are necessary if one is to be located within the causal nexus of the world. Moreover, the RDRD thesis does highlight some important points. For instance, it brings out the importance of the notion of reliability when it comes to treating oneself and others as members of some particular group. If an individual is going to be said to be able to treat herself and others as members of some particular group then it must be that she is reliable in treating particular individuals as members of this group. *C* can hardly be said to be treating herself and all people two-metres tall or taller as members of a group when she utters “Us-two-metres-tall-or-taller-people”, if she often utters this and treats people one-metre tall as members of the group. It also highlights the fact that to be able to say of some individual that she is one of us, we must have an account that makes it possible to say what things she treats as members of a group; and specifically that she is able to treat *herself* as a member. So if merely having RDRDs is not *sufficient* for being one of us, what else is required? I contend that it is certain cognitive capacities, broadly conceived, that are required. Moreover, I claim that, for the most part, these cognitive capacities are the ones considered so important by Brandom in his own discussion of the “ones who say ‘we’.”

Let us begin fleshing out these claims by returning to the notion of understanding that we touched on earlier. This will lead us to discuss the capacities I am referring to. It will also lead us to mention language, which I take to play a central role in determining an individual as one of us, explicitly for the first time. It is the theme of language that will carry us over into the next section; and it is only after we have given this theme the consideration it deserves that we will be able to return to and make sense of the notions, from above, of reliability and of treating particular individuals (oneself included) as members of a group.

I.I.VI - Understanding: Revisited

It was concluded above that in order to count as one of us it is required that an individual have a certain type of *understanding*, a grasp of proprieties of inference. In order to be properly said to be taking oneself and others to be members of a group, one must *understand* that, say, "I am one of us", in one's own mouth, follows from one's application of the term 'us' to some group. We can put this differently by saying that to be one of us one must understand that one's application of the concept *one of us* to oneself follows from one's deployment of the concept *us*. Further, one must understand that the application of the concept *one of us* to the other(s) included in the group one has applied the concept *us* to also follows. To have such an understanding, a grasp of proprieties of inference, is to have the cognitive capacity to *reason*. Speaking generally, we may follow Brandom and say that to be one of us is to be placed, borrowing Wilfrid Sellars' famous phrase, in the "space of reasons",<sup>20</sup> where reasons for our performances and attitudes can be given and asked for, where we are subject to the normative force of rational *oughts*.<sup>21</sup> For instance, for *A* to be one of us is for her to be in the space where it is appropriate to ask her "why did you say 'that's us' just now?", and where she is able to respond along the lines of, say, "because this picture I'm holding shows you and me arm in arm, and you and I constitute us."

This capacity for reasoning is what the pigeon from section I.I.III above is missing. Of course the pigeon has certain capacities that differentiate it from other things with RDRDs, such as, say, a chunk of iron that rusts in response to humid atmospheric conditions. This may be crudely marked by saying with Brandom that the pigeon is different from the chunk of iron in that it is *sentient* – where this is taken to be "the capacity to be *aware* in the sense of being *awake*"<sup>22</sup>. It may even be said to exhibit this awareness in pecking at the photos. But still this pecking *means* nothing to it in the

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<sup>20</sup> Wilfrid Sellars, Richard Rorty, and Robert B. Brandom, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), § 36.

<sup>21</sup> Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*



significant sense required to be one of us. In Brandom's idiom, to be one of us is to be not merely *sentient* but *sapient*.<sup>23</sup>

But, one may ask, what of cases like that described above (section I.I.III) of the crow exhibiting complex problem solving behaviours that seem best described as involving the making of inferences? It may be felt that it would be quite appropriate to describe cases like this as involving the capacity for reasoning. If this is felt, that is fine. But we then need to draw some further distinctions to capture the essential point. Above it was stated that the behaviours of the crow could be described as involving the making of inferences, but the crow could not be described as having a grasp of proprieties of inference, because having this requires having the ability to treat, or represent to oneself certain of one's states as inferentially linked and as liable to assessments of correctness or appropriateness based on reasons, and this in turn requires being linguistic (I have yet to argue for this last claim). Because the crow, being non-linguistic, is incapable of representing certain of its own states or attitudes to itself in this way, we could say that it is also incapable of representing *to itself* its making of an inference from one of its states or attitudes to another, i.e. it is incapable of representing its reasoning processes *to itself*. We, on the other hand, can represent *to ourselves* our reasoning processes. Thus, the essential point can be otherwise captured by stating that to be one of us one must have the ability to *represent to oneself* one's reasoning processes, one's making of inferences. Or, if one prefers, the same point could perhaps be made by stating that to be one of us one must possess the capacity to reason or make inferences in an *articulated*, or *determinate* fashion. For ease of expression I will stick to claiming that to be one of us one must have the capacity for reason, or making inferences. But it ought to be remembered that, so long as the essential point is retained, the terminology can be altered if it seems too crude.

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<sup>23</sup> See, for example, *ibid.* As well as, *Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas*, p. 3.

### I.I.VII - Belief and Action

We can further add to what it is to be one of us by saying, again with Brandom, that insofar as the states and attitudes we adopt act as reasons and require reasons to be given they can count as *intentional beliefs*. Similarly, our performances can count as *intentional actions* insofar as it is appropriate to give and ask for reasons for them.<sup>24</sup> Our attitudes and performances, in counting as beliefs and actions, have contents that are articulated by the inferential relations they stand in with reasons; and it is by these contents that they can be assessed for correctness or appropriateness. Furthermore, since it is only propositions that can perform the roles of premise and conclusion in inferences, these contents must be propositional. Such content, as Brandom says, is “typically expressed by the use of a declarative sentence and is ascribed by the use of a ‘that’ clause appended to a specification of the contentful state or attitude”,<sup>25</sup> as in “the belief *that* the picture shows you and me, arm in arm.” There must, moreover, be another aspect to these contents. Intentional actions are directed *at* or *to* something. And intentional beliefs are *of* or *about* something. Hence, there must be an aspect to these contents that acts to represent objects or states of affairs. In Brandom’s terms, this is the aspect of “object-representing contentfulness”, which “is typically expressed implicitly by the use of a singular term as a grammatical direct or indirect object, and it is attributed explicitly by using terms such as ‘of’ or ‘about’”,<sup>26</sup> as in “A’s belief *about B*”, or “A’s belief *of B* that she is depicted in the photograph”. On the account we are developing we can now say that to be one of us is to have the cognitive capacities for intentional belief and action, states/attitudes and performances that have propositional and object-representing contents, and which may be assessed for correctness or appropriateness relative to these contents. (Of course, belief and action are not the only intentional states/attitudes and performances we have the capacities for. We may add that we have the capacities for judging, willing, wishing, desiring, etc. The terms ‘intentional states/attitudes’ and ‘intentional performances’ can be used generally to cover all of these.)

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<sup>24</sup> Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

It may be argued that in defining what is required to count as one of us it is a wrong move to appeal to the capacities for belief and action. For it may be thought that while the capacities for belief and action distinguish us from things such as chairs and stones, they do not distinguish us from creatures such as, say, cats, dogs, and perhaps even pigeons and crows. May not a cat or a dog, for instance, be said to believe there is food in the fridge, and perform the action of pawing at the fridge door so as to get someone to feed it? Similarly, may not a pigeon be said to have a belief that there is seed in your hand? And may not the crow be said to believe that it will get food by completing the puzzle? Yet, cats, dogs, and of course pigeons do not have the grasp of proprieties of inference that has previously been claimed to be required if an individual is to count as one of us.

In a certain sense it is unproblematic to talk of the intentional states/attitudes and performances of cats and other animals in this way, just as it is unproblematic to talk of the crow's behaviours as involving the making of inferences, i.e. processes of reasoning. We talk this way quite often. We do it in order to make sense of their behaviours so that we may respond in an appropriate manner. There is, however, a stronger sense in which talking in this way is problematic and can be rather misleading if we take it too far. Paralleling something Davidson argues, I claim that having beliefs requires having the concept *belief*; that is, it requires being able to *treat* certain attitudes one has *as* beliefs.<sup>27</sup> That is, being able to *represent* certain of one's attitudes/states *to oneself as beliefs*. Similarly, being able to act requires the concept *action*; that is, being able to *treat/represent to oneself* certain performances one performs *as* actions. Furthermore, this requires having language – something the cat, dog, pigeon, and crow are missing.<sup>28</sup> As Brandom says, “[t]he contents of the intentional states attributed to nonlinguistic creatures can be understood only in a way that involves the activities of the language users who attribute them, and not entirely in terms of the activities of those who exhibit them.”<sup>29</sup>

In offering support for these claims I will focus only on belief, leaving action to the side. However, it may be assumed that action would receive a parallel treatment. As I said above, an attitude

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<sup>27</sup> Davidson, "Rational Animals," p. 102.

<sup>28</sup> Davidson says “in order to have the concept of belief one must have language.” (Ibid.)

<sup>29</sup> Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 152.

can count as a belief insofar as it acts as a reason and requires reasons to be given for it that would show it to be correct or appropriate. Treating some attitude *as* a belief would thus mean treating it *as* an attitude that acts as a reason and requires reasons to be given for it. So why is it necessary to be able to treat some attitude as a belief in order to have beliefs? Consider *A* and the photograph once more. Let us say that the photograph does not actually depict *A* and *B* together, but rather depicts *A* and *C* (*B*'s twin, whom *A* cannot distinguish from *B*). Furthermore, let us say that upon seeing the photo whilst in *B*'s presence *A* forms a belief she expresses by saying "That's us." Suppose now that *B* says "No it's not." "What do you mean?", says *A*. "I haven't told you before, but that is actually a photo of you and my twin, *C*", admits *B*. *A* then forms a new belief, which she expresses when she says "Oh, then that's not us. Rather, that's me and *C*." This speech act indicates that *A*'s initial exclamation of "That's us" did indeed express a belief. It does this by highlighting the fact that the initial attitude *A* adopted, what counts as her initial belief, did count for her as requiring reasons for it to be correct. For when it was made apparent to her that reasons for this belief did not obtain (because the photo in fact depicted herself and *C*), *A* explicitly disavowed it and adopted a new, reasonable belief in its place.

In this example it is *A*'s treating her initial attitude as a belief – that is, as an attitude that is liable to assessments of correctness relative to reasons - that enables her to regard it as incorrect and therefore requiring disavowal and replacement by a new, correct belief. If she had not been able to treat her initial attitude as a belief, if she had not had the concept of *belief* to apply to it, then she could not have regarded it as incorrect. Her initial attitude, in this case, would have (at least from her perspective) been on par with the blinking of an eye, the exhalation of a breath, or the meow of a cat. It could not have performed the role of a belief because reasons could not have had any clout in relation to it.

It is, moreover, only *A*'s exhibiting herself as treating her attitude as a belief, which she does in this case with her second exclamation, which makes it possible for us, as observers, to properly say of it that it counts as a belief. If she did not do this, nothing in the way *A* behaves would make it appropriate for us to distinguish *A*'s initial exclamation as expressing a belief from a merely involuntary shout, expressing no belief whatsoever. Without an individual being able to treat her attitudes *as* attitudes that act as reasons and require reasons, we simply cannot properly say of that individual that

she *has* beliefs, because there is no possible way to distinguish any of her states/attitudes as beliefs as opposed to mere states. *We* might be able to give reasons for a state a cat adopts and thus speak of it *like* a belief. But this is not the same as the *cat* treating its state as a belief by giving reasons for it, or disavowing it in light of reasons that count against it. Nothing the cat does displays any one of its states as a belief that would be correct if certain reasons held - that is, as a belief with a particular content. It is only with reference to our own abilities to treat certain states/attitudes as playing the roles of, or requiring, reasons that any of the cat's states can become defined as "beliefs" in the first place.

### I.I.VIII - Language

Language may play an important role allowing us to say of other individuals that they have beliefs, but why should it be required to have beliefs at all, as I claimed above? Beliefs may find their expression in linguistic performances such as assertions, and assertions may make it possible to exhibit that one is treating one's attitude as a belief, but this alone does not seem to necessarily imply that an individual needs to have linguistic abilities in order to treat attitudes as beliefs, and thus have beliefs. It may be thought possible, for instance, to make sense of the notion of belief without appealing to language. It may even be thought that the best way to explain the contents of speech acts is to appeal to a previously intelligible notion of contentful beliefs. Such thoughts, as Brandom notes, seem tempting in light of the fact that there can be beliefs that are not expressed in speech acts.<sup>30</sup>

But ultimately these thoughts are untenable. For, firstly, as I have already pointed out, but will, following Brandom, argue for more forcefully in section I.II.III below, only those creatures that are linguistic can be said to be able to treat anything as a reason, or as in need of reasons, hence only they can be said to be able to have beliefs or perform actions, because only they can give reasons. The second reason why one must be linguistic to count as able to have beliefs, perform actions, etc., is intimated by the following lines from Davidson:

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 153. Such thoughts would underlie what Brandom calls "analogical linguistic theories". For an outline of such theories see *ibid.*, pp. 150-53.

Much of the point of the concept of belief is that it is the concept of a state of an organism which can be true or false, correct or incorrect...If I believe there is a coin in my pocket, I may be right or wrong; I'm right only if there is a coin in my pocket. If I am surprised to find there is no coin in my pocket, I come to believe that my former belief did not correspond with the state of my finances. I have the idea of an objective reality which is independent of my belief.<sup>31</sup>

In order to have beliefs one must have the concept of objectivity, an independent objective reality that beliefs are of or about and aim to get right. That is, one must grasp the contrast between one's own beliefs (more broadly, one's intentional states/attitudes) and the objective reality they aim at and to which they are answerable. How could one exhibit this grasp? Davidson suggests that:

Clearly linguistic communication suffices. To understand the speech of another, I must be able to think of the same things she does; I must share her world...Communication depends on each communicator having, and correctly thinking that the other has, the concept of a shared world, an intersubjective world. But the concept of an intersubjective world is the concept of an objective world, a world about which each communicator can have beliefs.<sup>32</sup>

Davidson thinks that an individual's ability to communicate linguistically *suffices* to show she has this concept. But he goes on to say that he does not know how to show that it is the *only* way to have a grasp of the contrast between belief and what is objectively the case; although he does not know how else one would arrive at the notion of objective correctness.<sup>33</sup> I think it is possible to show this. Below, and again following Brandom, I will argue that the concept of the objectivity to which beliefs aim, and thus also the concept of belief (more broadly, intentional state/attitude) can only be explained in the context of, and as determined by, the moves made within social practices that are specifically linguistic; and, further, it is only by taking part in these practices, and by thus having a hand in determining and

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<sup>31</sup> Davidson, "Rational Animals," p. 104.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

conferring meanings, that one can be said to have a grasp of the contrast between objectivity and beliefs (intentional states/attitudes), hence have the concepts *objective reality* and *belief (intentional state/attitude)*, and thus count as one of us, at all. Our route to these arguments must therefore include taking a closer look at intentional states/attitudes, asking how they come to be determined as having both propositional and object-representing contents, such that they can act as or stand in need of reasons and be of or about anything at all, and then showing that the social linguistic practices I speak of are both possible and sufficient to determine and confer meanings, and that they are the only things that can be reasonably regarded as able to do this. It is to this task we now turn.

## I.II - Semantics

In section I.I we found that for an individual to count as one of us she must have the capacity for treating certain attitudes, performances, states, etc. as intentional. Which is to say, she must have the capacity for treating these attitudes, performances, and states as having both propositional content and object-representing (or, in other words, representational) content. For, as we saw, this capacity is required for an individual to have the understanding necessary to count as one of us. But the question that now arises is one that takes us into the area of *semantics*. Namely, how do certain states/attitudes come to have determinate contents for those individuals who treat them as intentional states/attitudes? That is, how do these states/attitudes come to have the meanings they have for us? How is it, for instance, that an utterance comes to have determinate content such that it can be treated by us as the expression of a belief that is both about something and as able to play the roles of premise and conclusion in inferences?

Brandom's Inferentialism, I believe, offers an intriguing and insightful way of answering this question. And although I will contend that his model ultimately founders, much of it can and ought to be salvaged. It is my aim in this thesis to suggest a way of doing just this. But before I take the necessary step of explicating the central themes of Brandom's model, I want to look at the system which he sets up to contrast to, and motivate, his Inferentialism, along with his objections to it. This is the system Brandom has labelled "representationalism". Even though representationalism might be nothing more

than a “straw man” with no obvious real proponents, as John McDowell has argued, it is still worth looking at it here.<sup>34</sup> For Brandom’s objections to representationalism help us to understand what theoretical commitments underpin his own semantic theory, and, furthermore, since I will be holding on to much of the content of Brandom’s semantic theory in this thesis, they highlight several key theoretical commitments of this work also. Having at least a working understanding of representationalism with thus prove fruitful down the track.

### I.II.I - Representationalism

Brandom states that by representationalism, which he takes to be the “dominant tradition” initiated by Descartes,<sup>35</sup> he understands “a commitment to having the concept of representation play a fundamental explanatory or expressive role in semantic theory.”<sup>36</sup> To be a proponent of representationalism is “to envisage an explanatory strategy that starts with an understanding of representation and on that basis explains the practical proprieties that govern language use and rational action.”<sup>37</sup> Representationalism thus begins with the concept of representation and from there works up to proprieties of inference. In other words, correctness of inference is explained in terms of representational correctness.

This is of course all still rather vague. We do not have any example of a representational thesis or how one might be put to work. Brandom has not expended any great deal of energy on developing a detailed example, being more concerned with elaborating his own Inferentialism. He has, however, given two clear, but brief, sketches of possible representational theses that we can work with. The first, which he says is a “particularly unhelpful way of pursuing the representational semantic strategy”, is based on modelling representation on *designation*.<sup>38</sup> He has labelled this thesis “semantic

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<sup>34</sup> John Henry McDowell, *The Engaged Intellect: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 292.

<sup>35</sup> Robert B. Brandom, *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 46. Whether this is correct is not important here. McDowell, however, gives good reasons to think Brandom is wrong in making this claim. See McDowell, *The Engaged Intellect: Philosophical Essays*, Essay 17.

<sup>36</sup> Robert B. Brandom, *Perspectives on Pragmatism: Classical, Recent, and Contemporary* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 193.

<sup>37</sup> *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 69.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*



*nominalism*".<sup>39</sup> The thesis rests on two major assumptions. The first is the assumption that the relation between a name and its bearer, between a singular term and the object it refers to, or between a sign/signifier and what is signified, can be understood prior to any investigation of how such names, terms, or signs, are used in *saying* something (paradigmatically, as Brandom says, by making a claim).<sup>40</sup> The second assumption is "that the notion of representation as reference picked out in this way for the category of singular terms [or, names, signs, etc.] and predicates can be univocally and unproblematically extended to apply to the category of sentences."<sup>41</sup> In this way, true sentences are assumed to designate *facts*, with some states of affairs being merely possible facts designated by sentences that are false.<sup>42</sup>

The second representational thesis Brandom gives a sketch of is that which he labels "*semantic atomism*".<sup>43</sup> The idea behind this thesis is "that the semantic contents of at least some episodes, states, and expressions can be made sense of one by one, each independently of all the others."<sup>44</sup> Thus a state, episode, or expression may have the content it does independently of any inferential relations it may stand in to other contentful states, episodes, or expressions. Brandom says that neither this thesis nor the previous nominalist thesis need necessarily be taken up by the proponent of representationalism, but he does not give any clear indication of the other alternatives available. This does not matter for our purposes, for there is enough in these two sketches to allow us to spell out what he finds objectionable, and what we should find objectionable, with representationalism in general.

### I.II.II - Brandom's Objections to Representationalism

Just as Brandom has not expended a great deal of energy illustrating a detailed representational thesis, so he has not expended a great deal of energy developing a thorough critique of the representational

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<sup>39</sup> *Perspectives on Pragmatism: Classical, Recent, and Contemporary*, p. 204.

<sup>40</sup> *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 69. Also, *Perspectives on Pragmatism: Classical, Recent, and Contemporary*, p. 204.

<sup>41</sup> *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 69.

<sup>42</sup> *Perspectives on Pragmatism: Classical, Recent, and Contemporary*, p. 205.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

order of semantic explanation. It is possible, however, to extract some clear lines of objection from several places in Brandom's writings, as Michael Kremer shows in his essay "Representation or Inference".<sup>45</sup> I will largely follow Kremer's way of laying out Brandom's lines of objection in what follows.

Firstly, as Kremer notes, "Brandom is suspicious of representationalism as involving in some fashion the 'Myth of the Given'."<sup>46</sup> Explaining what the Myth is, why it is a problem, and why Brandom has the suspicion that representationalism involves it will take a little work. To begin with we may note that the "Myth of the Given" is a phrase used by Sellars to denote a set of particular foundationalist tenets put to work in some traditional epistemological theses that he wishes to rid from philosophy.<sup>47</sup> "Many things", says Sellars, "have been taken to be 'given': sense contents, material objects, universals, propositions, real connections, first principles, even givenness itself."<sup>48</sup> Here we will only be interested in one form that the given takes – a form of sensory given. But, one might ask, why is Brandom concerned with the Myth in the first place? Doesn't Sellars present the Myth as an issue in epistemology, and isn't Brandom, in criticising representationalism, concerned with issues in semantics? This is indeed the case, but Brandom focusses on the Myth because he believes "[t]he master idea animating Sellars's rejection of the sensory given is a *semantic* one, which then turns out to have (anti-foundationalist) *epistemological* consequences."<sup>49</sup>

Let us now see why Brandom takes representationalism to involve the Myth, and why he believes this is a problem.

I will start with a quotation taken from Sellars's *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*:

One of the forms taken by the Myth of the Given is the idea that there is, indeed *must be*, a structure of particular matter of fact such that (a) each fact

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<sup>45</sup> Michael Kremer, "Representation or Inference: Must We Choose? Should We?," in *Reading Brandom: On Making It Explicit*, ed. Bernhard Weiss and Jeremy Wanderer (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 227-46.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>47</sup> Sellars does not wish to suggest that the notion of a foundation should play *no* role in considerations of knowledge, but merely that *some* notions of a foundation should not do so. See Sellars, Rorty, and Brandom, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, p. 78.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>49</sup> Brandom, *Perspectives on Pragmatism: Classical, Recent, and Contemporary*, p. 203.

can not only be noninferentially known to be the case, but presupposes no other knowledge either of particular matter of fact, or of general truths; and (b) such that the noninferential knowledge of facts belonging to this structure constitutes the ultimate court of appeals for all factual claims – particular and general – about the world.<sup>50</sup>

Now, consider the statement “This is green”, which Sellars says has an “*observation-reporting*” role.<sup>51</sup> It might be thought that such a statement, as an observation report, expresses precisely the type of fact referred to in the above quotation. Indeed, Sellars thinks this is the picture “common to all traditional empiricisms.”<sup>52</sup> According to the form of the Myth we are considering here an observation report like “This is green” has, in Sellars’s terminology, a kind of authority. For it is from reports like this that credibility accrues to “all factual claims – particular and general – about the world.” But the credibility of the original observation report “This is green”, which lends it the authority it possesses, obviously cannot in this picture accrue to it from inferential relations with other credible statements. So whence its credibility? As a possible answer to this question Sellars considers the idea that “whereas *ordinary* empirical statements can be *correctly* made without being *true*, [for] observation reports...being correctly made is a sufficient as well as necessary condition of their truth [or, their credibility].”<sup>53</sup> He suggests that from this it has been inferred that the idea that correctly making the report “This is green” can simply be thought of as “following the rules for the use of ‘this,’ ‘is’ and ‘green.’”<sup>54</sup> Ultimately, he says, this commits one to the idea that the credibility, the authority, of observation reports like “This is green” is based on “nonverbal episodes of awareness – awareness *that* something is the case, e.g. *that this is green* – which nonverbal episodes have intrinsic authority.”<sup>55</sup> Hence, so long as one follows the rules for using verbal expressions, credibility accrues to all factual claims about the world from these sensory “episodes of awareness” – these “givens”.

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<sup>50</sup> Sellars, Rorty, and Brandom, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

We can see now how the Myth might be involved in a representational semantics. Firstly, observation reports like “This is green” are taken to have the semantic contents they do independently of any other contentful attitudes, states, expressions, etc. They have the content they do thanks only to the awareness of the facts they express. This is exactly the story Brandom outlined in his sketch of the representational thesis of *semantic atomism*. Secondly, correctness of inference (to other factual claims about the world) is explained in terms of representational correctness – correctness of using ‘this,’ ‘is’ and ‘green’ in representing the facts contained in the said episodes of awareness. There is a story like this underlying the atomism presented in the early works of Bertrand Russell. He argues that the meanings of terms and expressions, indeed all language, must ultimately accrue to them by our having *acquaintance* with things,<sup>56</sup> and “[w]e shall say we have *acquaintance* with anything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths.”<sup>57</sup> Usually what we have acquaintance with on Russell’s model takes the form of “sense-data.”<sup>58</sup>

So what exactly is the problem here? According to Brandom the answer to this question becomes clear when we note that the rules for correctly using, say, ‘green’ have to be codified by ostensive definitions, which “consist of defining the expression by exhibiting samples of the things it applies to (pointing to [green] objects).”<sup>59</sup> The reason they must be codified in this way is that, according to the form of the Myth we are concerned with, such rules could not be codified by further linguistic expressions. Circularity or infinite regress would otherwise ensue. But, as Brandom claims, to give an ostensive definition of something is merely to establish a regular practice, it is not to establish a practice governed by rules. Someone’s regularly pointing to certain objects of a given colour and saying “green” does not establish a rule to the effect that ‘green’ ought only to be used to refer to that given colour. All that is established is a practice whereby that person regularly points to those particular objects and says “green”. Furthermore, even if some rule were established by this method, it could still be asked why it would not be a rule to the effect that ‘green’ ought only to be used to refer to any one of the objects

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<sup>56</sup> “Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted.” (Bertrand Russell, *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 198.)

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>59</sup> Sellars, Rorty, and Brandom, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, p. 156.

hitherto pointed to, and nothing else. Episodes of awareness, therefore, seem to act as “the tortoise on which stands the elephant on which rests the edifice of empirical knowledge”, as Sellars states.<sup>60</sup>

A semantic theory, therefore, ought not to be founded upon any notion according to which meaning accrues to terms, states, expressions, etc., from pre-linguistic, pre-judgemental states of awareness or acquaintance with facts or objects, prior to their standing in relations with other terms, states, expressions, etc. This is the first important point to be highlighted by Brandom’s objections to representationalism that underpins his own semantic theory of Inferentialism, and which I also endorse. The second aspect of representationalism Brandom finds objectionable is its apparent inability to support the crucial distinction he draws between two senses of ‘represents’. To bring these two senses into relief we may consider the sentence “The present King of France is bald.” In one sense this sentence is clearly *about* something, it in some sense *represents* something. Namely, the “present King of France.” This reading of ‘about’ or ‘represents’ would be what John Searle has called the “intensional-with-an-s reading”, from which it does not follow that the object the statement is about exists.<sup>61</sup> But in another sense there is nothing that this sentence is about, there is nothing that the statement represents, since there is at present no King of France. For Searle this would be the “extensional” reading of ‘about’ or ‘represents’.<sup>62</sup> To distinguish between these two senses of ‘represents’ Brandom speaks of something having representational *success* when the thing it represents – whether it be an object or a state of affairs or whatever else - exists as it is represented. Something has representational *purport*, on the other hand, if it represents something in the sense that that thing may or may not exist. In this way something may be said to have representational success if it has representational purport *and* the thing it purports to represent exists as it is represented.<sup>63</sup>

To understand why these two senses of ‘represents’ need to be kept apart we need only consider the consequences of not keeping them apart, of forcing them together. One way in which this might be

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>61</sup> John R. Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 17.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. Searle would say that the statement “The present King of France is bald” is false because for it there is no “referred-to object.” Similarly he would say that the belief that the present King of France is bald is false because for it there is no “Intentional object.” See *ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> See Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 70.

done is by identifying 'represents' with '*successfully* represents' – or, as Brandom puts it, “shrink[ing] the scope of purported representing until it coincides with successful representing”.<sup>64</sup> The consequence of this move would be to make the notion of assessing intentional states for their correctness incoherent, since anything that counted as an intentional state would thereby also immediately count as correct. This clearly suggests a wrong move has been made. For it makes sense to have the belief that, or wonder if, the present King of France is bald, even though there is no present King of France. That is, it makes sense to have intentional states that are incorrect. As Brandom says, “a notion of representation so thin as to preclude assessments of correctness provides no basis for any recognizable concept of intentional content.”<sup>65</sup>

Another way in which the two senses of 'represents' may be forced together is by making a move in the opposite direction to that just considered. That is, by expanding the scope of successful representing to the point where it matches the scope of purported representing. In Brandom's terms this would be “Meinongianism – commitment to a vast realm of entities, most of which do not exist, including many that *could* not exist.”<sup>66</sup> The problem with this move is not, as Brandom says, that it leaves us committed to an extravagant ontology, but rather that it shirks an explanatory obligation. Instead of offering an explanation of the relation between incorrect and correct, or unsuccessful (but purported) and successful representing, it merely transforms the demand for such an explanation “into a demand for an account of the relation between the statuses of what is represented in the two cases: between mere subsistence and robust existence.”<sup>67</sup>

So why does representationalism fail to support the distinction between representational purport and representational success? Brandom thinks it so fails because it struggles to accommodate and explain the further notion of representational *uptake* – that is, *taking* or *treating* something *as* a representation. This notion is of central importance to any semantic theory because, as Brandom states,

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

“[t]he notion of representational *purport* implicitly involves a notion of representational *uptake* on the part of some consumer or target of the purporting.”<sup>68</sup>

According to Brandom’s telling of the history of philosophy the representationalist tradition has failed to offer an explanation of representational uptake because it has followed Descartes in privileging the inquiry into *knowledge*, thus representational *success*, over the inquiry into what it is to take or treat something as a representation. “For Descartes,” he says, “representational purport, being “as if of” something, is an intrinsic and characteristic property of *pensées* (that is, specifically mental acts).”<sup>69</sup> But what exactly it is for a mind to take or treat an idea – where ideas are for Descartes those things which represent “objects” and are the forms or modes of all thoughts<sup>70</sup> - *as* being “as if of” something, representing something, is not explained. Instead, says Brandom, “[r]epresentational purport...and its corresponding uptake by the mind...serve Descartes as unexplained explainers.”<sup>71</sup> The early Russell, with his principle of acquaintance, can be taken as an example of a modern figure that follows Descartes in this respect. On his model, our states of awareness *of* sense-data, by which we come to be acquainted with things, act as the unexplained explainers.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 73. As Brandom is aware (*Perspectives on Pragmatism: Classical, Recent, and Contemporary*, p. 109), ‘*pensées*’ is for Descartes a category that includes far more than its common translation into ‘thoughts’, or perhaps even into ‘mental acts’, may suggest to a modern reader of English. It includes, for instance, things as diverse as what we (modern English speakers) would call thoughts and feelings. This is clear from the following statement made by Descartes in the third meditation: “I am a thing that thinks: that is, a thing that doubts, affirms, denies, understands a few things, is ignorant of many things, is willing, and also which imagines and has sensory perceptions”. (René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies*, ed. John Cottingham., trans. John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 24.)

<sup>70</sup> In the third meditation Descartes says, “Some of my thoughts are as it were the images of things, and it is only in these cases that the term ‘idea’ is strictly appropriate – for example, when I think of a man, or a chimera, or the sky, or an angel, or God. Other thoughts have various additional forms: thus when I will, or am afraid, or affirm, or deny, there is always a particular thing which I take as the object of my thought, but my thought includes something more than the likeness of that thing. Some thoughts in this category are called volitions or emotions, while others are called judgements.” (*Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies*, pp. 25-26). It is important to note here that all thoughts for Descartes, even the latter more complex ones, include ideas, and thus represent “objects”; that is, they are ‘as if of things’ (*tanquam rem*). It is also important to note that by using the phrase “images of things” Descartes does not mean to suggest that ideas *resemble* objects, as a photographic image of me may resemble me. This is clear from Descartes’ inclusion of the idea of God in the above list, since for Descartes God is non-spatial and non-temporal and thus cannot be resembled by any image. For Descartes, an idea can *represent* and object without *resembling* it, as the algebraic equation  $x^2 + y^2 = 1$  represents a circle without resembling one. Cf., René Descartes, *Discourse on Method, and Related Writings*, trans. Desmond M. Clarke (London: Penguin Books, 1999), pp. 151-64. On this point see, Brandom, *Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>71</sup> *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 73. See also, *Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas*, p. 29.

But of course a mere historical failure on the part of certain philosophers to give an account of representational uptake does not by itself support the claim that representationalism in all its skins should struggle with the notion – particularly if there have been no real adherents to representationalism as McDowell suggests. So further justification for this claim needs to be provided if it is to be accepted. Brandom suggests, and I agree with him, that this task can be aided by looking back to Immanuel Kant – in particular to his picking up a thread left him by the post-Cartesian rationalists, Spinoza and Leibniz, who noted the important role played by the inferential relations between representations in determining those representations *as* representations.<sup>72</sup>

A judgement (*Urteil*) for Kant, the result of a spontaneous action of the understanding (*Verstand*) – otherwise labelled the “faculty for judging” (*Vermögen zu urteilen*)<sup>73</sup> – is “the mediate cognition of an object, hence a representation of a representation of it.”<sup>74</sup> (The mediate nature of a judgement results from the fact that it is a function of unity among concepts, which are also representations of objects,<sup>75</sup> and which, importantly, the understanding can make no use of other than “judging by means of them.”<sup>76</sup>) Accompanying all our representations, Kant tells us, is the further representation “**I think**” (*Ich denke*). This must be so, for without the accompaniment of the **I think**, a representation “would either be impossible or else at least would be nothing for me.”<sup>77</sup> But the **I think**,

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<sup>72</sup> Cf. G.W.F. von Leibniz and Nicholas Rescher, *G.W. Leibniz's Monadology: An Edition for Students*, trans. Nicholas Rescher (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991), § 56. “Now this interlinkage or accommodation of all created things to each other, and of each to all the others, brings it about that each simple substance [i.e. monad] has relations that express all the others, and is in consequence a perpetual living mirror of the universe.” Also, Benedictus de Spinoza, *Ethics*, ed. Edwin Curley, trans. Edwin Curley (London: Penguin, 1996), p. 35. “[T]he idea of each thing caused depends on the knowledge of the cause of which it is the effect.” Brandom praises Spinoza and Leibniz for each developing “an account of what it is for one thing to represent another, in terms of the inferential significance of the representing.” (Brandom, *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*, p. 46.) He criticises them, however, for running together causal and normative issues. For Brandom’s in-depth discussion of both of these figures see *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), Ch. 4 and Ch. 5.

<sup>73</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood., trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1998), A69/B94.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, A68/B93

<sup>75</sup> “[O]ne must, to be sure, think of every concept as a representation that is contained in an infinite set of different possible representations (as their common mark).” (*Ibid.*, B40.) According to Kant concepts also relate to their objects in a mediate way. “Since no representation pertains to the object immediately except intuition alone, a concept is thus never immediately related to an object, but is always related to some other representation of it (whether that be an intuition or itself already a concept).” (*Ibid.*, A68/B93.) I will not speak of Kant’s notion of intuitions here, but I will go over it in some detail in section III.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, B132.



in securing that representations are for me, is also, as Brandom would say, the mark of the subject responsible for the representations. Where the responsibility here lies in the fact that all representations accompanied by the **I think** (this is not to suggest one could have representations unaccompanied by the **I think**) must (where this is a normative 'must') be brought into a synthetic unity of apperception. Which is to say, one is obliged to unify all of one's representations in a single self-consciousness.<sup>78</sup> Whether a particular representation can successfully be brought into a synthetic unity of apperception will depend, moreover, on the inferential relations it stands in with one's other representations. (These inferential relations are in turn determined by concepts, thought of by Kant as rules specifying what is a reason for what.<sup>79</sup>) Kant's great insight here, as Brandom rightly stresses, is noting that representational uptake is to be explained by invoking the notion of inferential relations.<sup>80</sup> Treating something *as* a representation, as something that is to be brought into a synthetic unity of apperception, is only possible so long as it stands in inferential relations with other representations. For Kant, representations are by their nature things that are subject to assessments of correctness according to reasons, and treating something as a representation is treating it as such. Representations are therefore, to invoke Sellars' phrase again, placed in the space of reasons.

I follow Brandom here in thinking this to highlight an important point that ought to be kept in mind when laying out any semantic theory. The distinction between representational purport and representational success is, as we have seen, crucial, and it relies upon a notion of representational uptake, which cannot be accounted for without invoking inferential relations. But why can't the representationalist accommodate Kant's insight? After all, she has an account of the inferential relations representations are caught up in. She explains inferential correctness in terms of representational

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., B135-36. Also, "the synthetic unity of apperception is the highest point to which one must affix all use of the understanding". (Ibid., B134.)

<sup>79</sup> "If the understanding in general is explained as the faculty of rules, then the power of judgment is the faculty of **subsuming** under rules, i.e., of determining whether something stands under a given rule (*casus datae legis*) or not." (Ibid., A132/B171.) And, "[a] manifold that is contained in an intuition that I call mine is represented as belonging to the **necessary** unity of self-consciousness through the synthesis of the understanding, and this takes place by means of the category." (Ibid., B144.) For Kant categories are the pure concepts of the understanding, which must be found in any and every judgement.

<sup>80</sup> "The subtlety and sophistication of Kant's concept of representation is due in large part to the way in which it is integrated into his account of the inferential relations among judgments." (Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 92.)

correctness. Brandom, with help from an argument made by Sellars, presents a compelling reason for why the representationalist will stumble here. It is that the sort of inferences involved in representational uptake are *material*, not merely *formal*, and representationalism can only make room for formal inferences. As far as support for an approach to semantics that proceeds in the way of Brandom's Inferentialism goes, this point, as will become clear, is of the utmost importance. It therefore deserves a detailed explication.

Inferences that are formally valid are valid due to their form alone. For example:

[1] Earth is an ellipsoid and the glass is transparent. Therefore, Earth is an ellipsoid.

This inference is valid due to having the form:

[F1] A and B. Therefore, A.

Any inference with the form F1 would be valid.

Inferences that are materially good, on the other hand, are good due to the content or matter of the claims employed.<sup>81</sup> Consider Sellars' famous example:

[2] It is raining, therefore the streets will be wet.<sup>82</sup>

This inference has the form:

[F2] C, therefore D.

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<sup>81</sup> "[M]aterially good inferences – that is, inferences that are good because of the content of their *nonlogical* vocabulary." (*Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*, p. 85.)

<sup>82</sup> Wilfrid Sellars, "Inference and Meaning," *Mind* 62, no. 247 (1953): p. 313.

It is a good inference, but it is hard to see how it could be good solely in virtue of its form. For one cannot conclude D from C alone. Other materially good inferences would include:

[3] The piece of chalk is being released, therefore it will fall.

[4] The sky is azure, therefore it is blue.

[5] Substance X turns the litmus paper red, therefore it is an acid.

[6] The statement "It is raining" is representationally correct, therefore the statement "The streets will be wet" is representationally correct.

Imagine that one of the inferential relations involved in the representational uptake of the statement "The streets will be wet" is that between it and the further statement "It is raining". That is, in justifying the representational correctness of "The streets will be wet", the further statement "It is raining" may be appealed to. This justification will of course only work so long as the inference from "It is raining" to "The streets will be wet" is accepted as good or correct. Now, the representationalist will explain the correctness of this inference in terms of representational correctness. She will say something like the inference is correct because it reflects the fact that the structure of the world is such that when the statement "It is raining" is representationally correct so too is the statement "The streets will be wet". She would, in this sense, be appealing to the counterfactual robustness of the inference, the fact that it would still be correct even if there were no one around to make the inference or the statements. To accept this inference, according to the representationalist's line of explanation, is therefore ultimately to endorse the sort of inference that is often codified using a subjunctive conditional – something like "If the statement 'It is raining' were representationally correct, then the statement 'The streets will be wet' would be representationally correct." And if one has the ability to formulate such a subjunctive conditional in one's language, then one may even explicitly appeal to it in the attempt to justify the representational correctness of "The streets will be wet". But how exactly are we to think of this as working in the justificatory process?

In an early paper, titled *Language, Rules, and Behavior*, Sellars considers a case of epistemic justification alike in form to the one we are concerned with. A character named Jones makes the assertion, "It will rain shortly", and is asked to justify it by another character, Smith.<sup>83</sup> Jones proceeds to do so by making the further assertion, "Clouds of kind X cause rain, and there are clouds of kind X overhead."<sup>84</sup> Sellars argues that Jones' justification will only work if, firstly, Smith accepts the major law stating premise "Clouds of kind X cause rain" (or, to bring out the connection with our case above, we may state this using a subjunctive conditional as "If a cloud were of kind X, it would cause rain"); secondly, he accepts the minor premise "there are clouds of kind X overhead"; and thirdly, he "accepts the logical *musts* embodied in the arguments Jones offers".<sup>85</sup> As Paul Redding helpfully points out, the third condition means "he must accept something like the idea that if you believe  $p \supset q$  and  $p$ , then you *must* believe  $q$ ."<sup>86</sup> Thus it seems that an appeal to the sort of inference codified using a subjunctive conditional in a process of justification, like in the case above, functions ultimately as an appeal to an accepted or endorsed rule of inference. It is to appeal to the goodness of an inference. To appeal to a subjunctive conditional in the attempt to offer justification is simply, in this sense, to appeal to an expression that codifies a rule of inference. But how should we think of such endorsed rules of inference?

According to Sellars we must think of these rules of inference as *material* rules of inference. Why? Because the other option, i.e. regarding them as formal rules of inference, seems not to be viable. This option would require following what Sellars refers to as the "received dogma...that the inference which finds its expression in "It is raining, therefore the streets will be wet" is an enthymeme."<sup>87</sup> That is, they would treat the inferences expressed in 2-6 above as arguments with suppressed premises. This means re-formulating 2, for example, in the following way:

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<sup>83</sup> Sellars, Wilfrid, "Language, Rules and Behavior," in *Pure Pragmatics and Possible Worlds: The Early Essays of Wilfrid Sellars*, ed. Jeffrey Sicha (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1980), p. 135.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., pp. 135-36.

<sup>86</sup> Paul Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 68 n. 39.

<sup>87</sup> Sellars, "Inference and Meaning," p. 313.

[2i] It is raining. If it is raining, then the streets will be wet. Therefore, the streets will be wet.

2i then has the logically valid form:

[F2i] C. If C, then D. Therefore, D.

As Brandom says, this approach “trades primitive goodness of inference for the truth of conditionals.”<sup>88</sup>

Now, the formalist (i.e. one who argues that materially good inferences can be traded in for formally valid inferences) must argue that the subjunctive conditional involved in 2i (“If it is raining, then the streets will be wet”) gives expression to a formal logical rule of inference. But this is not obviously the case. Rather, it seems to be giving expression to a material rule of inference along the lines of “‘The streets are wet at time t’ may be inferred from ‘It is raining at time t’”. Can the formalist respond to this argument? Sellars considers a few possible ways in which she may do so. The first is to suggest that the content of our subjunctive conditional be expressed as:

A. “*Since every time it rains the streets are wet, if it were to rain the streets would be wet*”.<sup>89</sup>

The logical rule of inference underwriting this subjunctive conditional would then be, “If it were the case that “Every time it rains the streets are wet” implies “‘it is raining’ implies ‘the streets are wet’” (where this implication would be treated, on pain of re-introducing a material rule of inference, as a material implication given expression by “Every time it rains the streets are wet”), then it would be the case that “‘it is raining’ implies “‘the streets are wet’”. But this logical rule of inference does not license A. Rather, it licenses the following:

B. “*Since every time it rains the streets in point of fact are wet, it will rain  $\square$  the streets will be wet.*”<sup>90</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 98.

<sup>89</sup> Sellars, "Inference and Meaning," p. 324.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

As Sellars says, “the subjunctive mood has disappeared from the consequence of the clause, and with a merely material implication, we are no longer asserting that a wetting of the streets can be inferred from the occurrence of rain.”<sup>91</sup> This response will therefore not work for the formalist. The second option for the formalist that Sellars considers involves treating “Every time it rains the streets are wet” as an expression of an entailment, rather than of a material implication. Thus, the logical rule of inference underwriting the subjunctive conditional, A, would be “If it were the case that “Every time it rains the streets are wet” entails “it is raining” entails ‘the streets are wet’”, then it would be the case that “it is raining” entails “the streets are wet”. Hence, we have:

C. Since every time it rains the streets are wet, it is raining entails the streets are wet.

An entailment statement functions in the same way as a subjunctive conditional, and thus the formalist appears to have gotten what she was after. Yet, as Sellars points out, “[t]o say that rain entails wet streets is to convey exactly the same information as to say that a sentence asserting the existence of wet streets may be inferred from a sentence asserting the existence of rain.”<sup>92</sup> So again we have re-introduced a material rule of inference. The third, and final, formulation of our subjunctive conditional that Sellars considers is the following:

D. “If it were the case both that *everytime it rains, the streets are wet* and that *it is raining*, then *the streets would be wet*.”<sup>93</sup>

The logical principle that underwrites this formulation would be, as Sellars puts it, “From ‘(x) ( $\phi x$  implies  $\psi x$ ) and  $\phi a$ ’ can be inferred ‘ $\psi a$ ’.”<sup>94</sup> But, as Sellars is quick to point out, the formalist cannot go

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 325.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

for this formulation because it would mean “*all such subjunctive conditionals would be true!*...[And]...[s]urely some sentences of the form “If a were  $\varphi$ , a would be  $\psi$ ” are false”.<sup>95</sup>

Sellars' argument establishes that unless the formalist can find another approach, subjunctive conditionals are to be regarded as expressions of material rules of inference.<sup>96</sup> What is more, Sellars claims that “material rules of inference are essential to the language we speak, for we make constant use of subjunctive conditionals”.<sup>97</sup> This is not to say that we do or must make use of explicitly formulated subjunctive conditionals in our language, but rather “the *function* performed in natural languages by material subjunctive conditionals is indispensable.”<sup>98</sup> This is certainly the case if explaining representational uptake involves appeal to inferential relations. This is a result that does not sit well with representationalism. For, as Redding says, “if *material inferences* play a role in language that cannot be reduced to or derived from formal patterns of inference, then this suggests that concepts acquire not only their logical form but also their *content* from the role they play in inferences.”<sup>99</sup> Inferential correctness therefore cannot be explained in terms of representational correctness, because the representational correctness of something is going to depend on the material inferences it is involved in. To take us back to where we began, this means that representationalism in all its skins will struggle to explain representational *uptake*, and will therefore struggle to support the distinction between representational *purport* and representational *success*.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> This argument plays a central role in Brandom's *expressive* view of logic, according to which logic plays the role of making explicit the non-logical rules of inference that are implicit in practice. Such a view, Brandom argues, has its ancestor in Frege's early writings. “Before he makes the fateful step from seeing logic as an attempt to codify inferences to seeing it as the search for a special kind of truth (which Dummett bemoans, and to which we owe much of contemporary logic), Frege's aim is to introduce vocabulary that will let one say (explicitly) what otherwise one can only do (implicitly).” (Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 108.)

<sup>97</sup> Sellars, “Inference and Meaning,” p. 325.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 326.

<sup>99</sup> Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought*, pp. 72-73. Cf. Sellars, “Inference and Meaning,” p. 336. “[M]aterial transformation rules determine the descriptive meaning of the expressions of a language within the framework established by its logical transformation rules...In traditional language, the “content” of concepts as well as their logical “form” is determined by rules of the Understanding.”

<sup>100</sup> It is worth briefly noting something pointed out by Kremer (Kremer, “Representation or Inference: Must We Choose? Should We?,” pp. 233-34.) Namely, a representationalist may respond at this point by claiming that she only struggles with material inferences if she is limited to making use of something like Tarski's notions of truth and logical consequence. But if she is allowed to make use of, say, possible worlds semantics, then she may account for entailment relations that are not formally valid within her framework. She could, for example, account for the nonlogical entailment relation between “The sky is azure” and “The sky is blue” due to there being no possible world in which the former is true and the latter is false. As Kremer argues, however, it is unlikely the

This objection to representationalism highlights a further point that I think ought to be kept in mind when laying out any semantic theory. Unless one can find a way around the Sellars-Brandom attack on formalism – and I cannot see how one would achieve this - one should not found a semantic theory on purely formal logical principles or rules. More generally, however, the above discussion has shown that one should not take representation to be *the* primitive notion of any semantic theory; that is the notion from which all other notions, such as inference, are to be derived. Brandom attempts to avoid doing these things by instead grounding his semantic theory of Inferentialism in a pragmatic theory centred on the notion of material rules of inference implicit in practice. That is to say, he takes the notion of inference to be *the* primitive notion of his Inferentialism, and attempts to derive the notion of representation from it. Let us now look at his Inferentialism.

### I.II.III - Brandom's Normative Pragmatics and Semantic Inferentialism: The Outline

As Brandom says, “[i]nferring is a kind of doing.”<sup>101</sup> Thus, if material inferences are essential to meaning, semantics must look to pragmatics. That is, an answer to the question of how something comes to *mean* something, comes to have the content it does, will only be found by looking at what we *do* with it, by looking at our *practices*. Brandom interprets Kant's account of rationality as incorporating an

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representationalist will get much help from possible worlds semantics. To explain why, he briefly sketches the two prominent ways of pursuing possible worlds semantics, highlighting the commitments they involve, which do not sit with representationalism.

The first prominent way of pursuing possible worlds semantics is to go down a route like the “modal realist” one carved out by David Lewis (David K. Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986)), according to which possible worlds are just as real as the world we live in. On Lewis' model, however, only those inferences that count as formally valid according to some quantificational logic seem to be able to be recognised as good. This model therefore seems to be susceptible to the Sellars-Brandom attack on formalism. (See Kremer, “Representation or Inference: Must We Choose? Should We?,” p. 234.) The second prominent way of pursuing possible worlds semantics is to go down the “actualist” route taken by, for instance, Alvin Plantinga (Alvin Plantinga, “Actualism and Possible Worlds,” *Theoria* 42, no. 1-3 (1976). Also, Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). Robert Stalnaker may be regarded as going down this route as well. See Robert Stalnaker, *Mere Possibilities: Metaphysical Foundations of Modal Semantics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011). Such “actualists” take possible worlds to be abstract entities such as properties (*ibid.*, p. 8). The problem with this way of pursuing possible worlds semantics for the representationalist, as Kremer points out (Kremer, “Representation or Inference: Must We Choose? Should We?,” p. 234), is that it takes the modal notions of entailment and incompatibility to be fundamental, which the representationalist cannot do. Stalnaker, for instance, defines possible worlds as “maximal properties that a universe might have, or, equivalently, maximal propositions. Each such proposition is maximal in the sense that for every (actual) proposition, either it or its contradictory is *entailed* by it.” (Stalnaker, *Mere Possibilities: Metaphysical Foundations of Modal Semantics*, pp. 19-20. My emphasis.)

<sup>101</sup> Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 91.



early acknowledgement of something along these lines. “Kant’s core *pragmatist* commitment”, he says, “consists in his methodological strategy of understanding *what* one is...responsible for or committed to, the *contents* of one’s judgments and willings, in terms of the role they play in what acts with those contents to make one responsible for *doing*: [synthesizing one’s commitments in a unity of apperception].”<sup>102</sup> For Kant these contents are conceptual, and concepts which, as I pointed out earlier, the understanding can do nothing with other than judge by means of them, are determined according to the roles they play in guiding the process of synthesizing the unity of apperception.

The issue with Kant’s account of rationality, however, is that it is ultimately grounded on the self-legislation of formal principles, and this clearly is not going to sit well with the Sellars-Brandom attack on formal approaches to reasoning.<sup>103</sup> Although concepts for Kant are articulated according to the roles they play in guiding our doings, these roles are, for him, determined by formal principles prior to any of our doings. And as we have just seen, material rules of inference do not look as though they can be reduced to formal principles or rules. They also cannot be reduced to mere non-normative empirical regularities. Brandom intends to develop a model that holds onto the insights that underlie “Kant’s pragmatism”, but one which does not rest upon an attempt to reduce material rules of inference by either of these means. Beyond this, Brandom praises Kant for “claim[ing] that the fundamental unit of awareness or cognition, the minimal graspable, is the *judgment*.”<sup>104</sup> This is because a judgement necessarily has propositional content, and it is Brandom’s claim that only something with propositional content can have meaning for us; since it is only something with propositional content that can play the roles of premise and conclusion in inferences, and thus play a role in reasoning. For Brandom this means that something with propositional content has inferentially articulated content, which is for him the same as saying it has *conceptual* content. He therefore also praises Kant for thinking of concepts as articulated according to the roles they play in determining our inferential doings. But in developing his own model

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<sup>102</sup> Brandom, *Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Axiv.: “I have to do merely with reason itself and its pure thinking; to gain exhaustive acquaintance with them I need not seek far beyond myself, because it is in myself I encounter them, and common logic already also gives me an example of how such simple acts of reason may be fully and systematically enumerated”.

<sup>104</sup> Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 79.

Brandom sees himself as taking his departure from Kant in suggesting that we think of material rules of inference, the rules necessary to determine meaning, as resulting from a normativity that is *implicit* in certain practices, and which is instituted by individuals being taken or treated as subject to norms, as being committed to, entitled to, or prohibited from, doing certain things.<sup>105</sup>

There is a problem with Brandom's interpretation of Kant that should be briefly mentioned here. Brandom casts Kant as being an early proponent of the inferentialist line of semantics. This is not exactly correct. It is true, as Brandom says, that "[t]he subtlety and sophistication of Kant's concept of representation is due in large part to the way in which it is integrated into his account of the inferential relations among judgments."<sup>106</sup> Certainly Kant did think that one could get no purchase on the concept of representation without involving the further notion of inference. Yet, Kant did not take the notion of inference to be more explanatorily primitive than that of reference. Indeed, neither seems to be more primitive than the other in his work. So Kant should not really be cast as an early proponent of the inferentialist line of semantics. For similar reasons it is also wrong to cast Hegel as the one who "complete[d] the inversion of the traditional [representationalist] order of semantic explanation by beginning with a concept of experience as inferential activity and discussing the making of judgments and the development of concepts entirely in terms of the roles they play in that inferential activity."<sup>107</sup> Certainly Hegel does explain the development of concepts and the making of judgements by invoking the notion of inferential activity. However, he does not 'begin' with, or take as most primitive, the notion of inference, and then proceed to explain all other relevant semantic notions from there. As I will show in the final section of this thesis, it is Hegel's philosophy that provides us with the tools required to explain how the practices Brandom elaborates for his own pragmatics can determine the (conceptual) contents of intentional states, but only so long as we acknowledge that within the framework of Hegel's

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<sup>105</sup> There is a precursor to this idea in Sellars' *Language, Rules and Behavior*. He says, "the causal efficacy of the embodied core-generalizations of rules is ultimately grounded on the Law of Effect, that is to say, the role of rewards and punishments in shaping behavior." (Sellars, "Language, Rules and Behavior," p. 140 n. 3.) Note that "rewards" and "punishments" are normative terms. Rewards and punishments are handed out in accordance with whether someone has acted as she *ought* to have acted.

<sup>106</sup> Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 92.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

philosophy we can treat neither inference nor representation as *the* primitive notion in our semantic theory.<sup>108</sup> For now, however, let us return to Brandom.

So what sort of practices could underlie meaning in general? Brandom's answer, and my answer, is that only *linguistic* practices could do so. The reason for this answer is, as Brandom rightly points out, that something with conceptual content, hence something that has meaning, is *essentially* something that can stand in need of reasons, or stand as a reason for something else. And "assertings (performances that are overt undertakings of assertional commitments) are in the fundamental case what reasons are asked for, and what giving a reason always consist in."<sup>109</sup> Hence, without performances that have the significance of propositionally contentful assertions or claims, there could be no giving and asking for reasons, and thus no way of distinguishing anything done by someone as inferring, since this is something done for reasons. In such a scenario we could not, therefore, make sense of the material inferences that seem to be necessary for meaning. Fundamentally, then, it must be linguistic practices that determine the meaning of things.

Here we have the more forceful argument in support of the claim that in order to count as one of us one must be linguistic, which I promised back in section I.I.VIII. For in order to count as one of us, we found, one needs to be able to treat certain of one's states/attitudes/performances as things that can act as reasons and stand in need of reasons. The only way of an individual showing she is capable of this, thus making it possible to say of her that she is one of us, is for her to show that she is capable of appealing to reasons for justification – i.e. showing she is capable of giving reasons. To be one of us thus is to have the capacity to reason. And as giving reasons always consists in assertings, then to count as one of us one would need to be linguistic. We may now also say, since to be one of us is to be able to give reasons by means of making assertions, that to be one of us is to have specifically *discursive* rationality. To *treat* an intentional state/attitude/performance *as such* is to perform a discursive act.

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<sup>108</sup> Brandom acknowledges, at *ibid.*, p. 669 n. 90., that the representationalist and inferentialist orders of semantic explanation or not the only two available, but he does not consider any other options in detail.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

Brandom's Inferentialism is an attempt at a pragmatic theory that explains what one needs to be able to *do* in order to count as making an *assertion*, as *saying* something that could act as a reason or stand in need of reasons. In other words, it is an attempt to explain what one needs to be able to do in order to deploy a vocabulary. In *Between Saying and Doing*, Brandom calls this relation – between the practices-or-abilities required to deploy a vocabulary and the vocabulary itself – the “practice-vocabulary sufficiency” relation, or the “PV-sufficiency” relation for short.<sup>110</sup> As he is aware, however, answers to the question what one must do in order to count as saying or expressing something that a given vocabulary lets one say will be little more than trivial if they take a form similar to “the ability to use the word ‘book’ to mean *book*”, “the ability to use the symbol ‘+’ to express addition”, or “the ability to nod the head to express agreement”. How interesting an answer to the question what one must do to count as deploying a vocabulary is will depend on the vocabulary used to specify the relevant practices-or-abilities. For this reason Brandom says “besides PV-sufficiency, we should consider a second basic meaning-use relation: “vocabulary-practice sufficiency,” or just “VP-sufficiency,” is the relation that holds between a vocabulary and a set of practices-or-abilities when that vocabulary is sufficient to *specify* those practices-or-abilities.”<sup>111</sup> There are two other meaning-use relations that are helpful in understanding Brandom's Inferentialism.<sup>112</sup> The first is that which holds when one vocabulary V' is what Brandom calls a “*pragmatic metavocabulary*” for another vocabulary V.<sup>113</sup> It obtains when V' is VP-sufficient to specify the practices-or-abilities PV-sufficient to deploy V. The second is what Brandom calls the “PP-sufficiency” relation, and it obtains when “one set of practices-or-abilities... can

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<sup>110</sup> Brandom, *Between Saying and Doing: Towards an Analytic Pragmatism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 9.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>112</sup> Although Brandom discusses these meaning-use relations explicitly in this way only in *Between Saying and Doing*, and not in *Making It Explicit* or *Articulating Reasons* – the two places where he most thoroughly develops his Inferentialism – they still aid an understanding of his inferentialist model as I will be presenting it here. This claim accords perfectly well with Brandom's own explanation of how the material in *Between Saying and Doing* relates to the material in *Making It Explicit*, and thereby also *Articulating Reasons*. For in the Afterword of *Between Saying and Doing* Brandom states that while the “[m]eaning-use analysis [presented in *Between Saying and Doing*] does not depend at all on any of the principle theses of *Making It Explicit*: not its normative pragmatics, not its inferentialist semantics, not its account, in terms of those, of what is expressed by representational locutions”, nonetheless the account of the relation between *meaning* and *use* offered in *Between Saying and Doing* still has “its home proving-ground [in] the account of discursive practice and conceptual content presented in *Making It Explicit*.” (*Ibid.*, p. 234.)

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

be *elaborated* into another, by a set of algorithmic abilities that *implement* that practical elaboration.”<sup>114</sup> As an example of how such algorithmic elaboration is meant to work on Brandom’s model, we may take his example of elaborating an individual’s ability to differentially respond to a material inference from  $p$  to  $q$ , by endorsing or rejecting it, into a new ability to deploy the vocabulary of conditional locutions such as “if  $p$  then  $q$ ”. First we need to assume the individual has the ability to produce tokens of  $p$  and  $q$  by means of assertion. Given she has this ability, we also assume she has the ability to learn to produce assertions of “if  $p$  then  $q$ .” Next, we simply have her link up this new ability to her original ability to respond differentially to the material inference from  $p$  to  $q$ , such that she only asserts “if  $p$  then  $q$ ” in cases where she would endorse the inference. Her new abilities now allow for codification of the circumstances in which the application of the conditional would be appropriate. And by simply teaching her, further, to respond to the assertion of the conditional by endorsing the inference from  $p$  to  $q$  (something she can, by hypothesis, already do) – by, say, being disposed to endorse an assertion of “ $q$ ” if she is disposed to endorse an assertion of “ $p$ ” – she can also come to have the new ability to use the conditional in inferences. Thus, her set of old abilities has been elaborated into a new set by implementing the algebraic ability to substitute one response to some stimulus for another. She now has the ability to deploy a conditional vocabulary.<sup>115</sup> But in being able to endorse the material inference from  $p$  to  $q$ , she could already do everything required, in principle, to develop the further abilities needed to deploy a vocabulary of conditionals. Moreover, the ability to deploy a vocabulary now allows her to say *explicitly* what was previously only *implicit* in her treating material inferences as good or bad by endorsing them or rejecting them.

Since Brandom is concerned with answering the question of how anything at all comes to have meaning, he cannot simply specify the practices that are PV-sufficient for some particular vocabulary. Rather, he must specify the practices that are PV-*necessary* for *every* vocabulary. And according to him this means he must specify the practices that are PV-necessary for every, what he calls, *autonomous* vocabulary, where this means a vocabulary one could speak even if one could speak no other. For he

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

argues, “[a]ny vocabulary that is fragmentary (that is, not autonomous) pragmatically presupposes, in the PV-necessary sense, some set of autonomous discursive practices, which *are* PV-sufficient for deploying the autonomous vocabulary of which the vocabulary in question is a fragment.”<sup>116</sup> This of course places some restrictions on what sort of vocabulary Brandom may use to specify the practices PV-necessary for every autonomous vocabulary. For the vocabulary he chooses must itself be deployed by practices-or-abilities that are algebraically elaborated from some set of practices-or-abilities that are PV-necessary for every autonomous vocabulary, and it must make it possible to say *explicitly* what those very practices-or-abilities are. It must for this reason be what Brandom calls a “*universal LX-vocabulary*”, where a LX-relation “obtains when some practices-or-abilities PV-necessary for the deployment of one vocabulary can be algorithmically *elaborated* (the ‘L’ part) into a set that is PV-sufficient to deploy a vocabulary that is VP-sufficient *explicitly* to specify or codify the original set of practices (the ‘X’ part).”<sup>117</sup>

The LX-vocabulary that Brandom adopts for the purpose of elaborating his Inferentialism is one that specifies the autonomous discursive practices PV-necessary to deploy any autonomous vocabulary as those of *attributing* and *acknowledging commitments* and *entitlements* in a game of *social deontic scorekeeping*, modelled on the Sellarsian game of giving and asking for reasons, in which the fundamental move that can be made is that of asserting or claiming. Now, as I will explain further on, so long as these practices are treated as explanatorily, or logically, prior to any notion of meaningfulness, as is the case in Brandom’s Inferentialism, the semantic theory that puts them to use is bound to fail. If, on the other hand, these practices are not treated as explanatorily prior to any notion of meaning, then they can serve to explain how meaning is determined and conferred onto things. It is my task to show how this is possible. Let us look, then, at the details of Brandom’s normative pragmatics that are relevant for us here.

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

I.II.IV - Brandom's Normative Pragmatics

To treat something as an assertion or claim on Brandom's model "is to treat it as the undertaking or acknowledging of a certain kind of *commitment* – what will be called a 'doxastic', or 'assertional', commitment."<sup>118</sup> To assert something may therefore, on Brandom's model, be thought of as lending one's *authority* to the content of the assertional commitment – authorizing its use in reasoning.<sup>119</sup> For instance, in asserting "The sky is azure" I can, according to Brandom, be thought of as taking on the doxastic commitment to the sky's being azure and also authorizing the use of "The sky is azure" in a process of inferential reasoning that leads to the conclusion that the sky is blue. Having a doxastic commitment, moreover, is to be thought of as having a social, normative, or more exactly, *deontic status*. For doxastic commitments are, according to Brandom, instituted by linguistic practitioners treating each other *as* committed. Commitments are not, as Brandom says, "part of the natural furniture of the world."<sup>120</sup> Someone's making an assertion, considered merely as a natural occurrence, is just the issuing of sound, little different from the whistle of wind through the leaves, except perhaps in its timbre, pitch and loudness. It only counts as the undertaking of a commitment because it is treated as having the significance of conferring a social deontic status on that person by those who attribute or acknowledge it *as* a commitment. What is more, according to Brandom, undertaking a commitment results in having the sort of social status for which one's *entitlement* can essentially be brought into question by those who recognize and treat one as having undertaken the commitment.<sup>121</sup> A commitment is something that one is *responsible* for, it is something one can be required to *justify*. I may take on an assertional commitment by uttering "I can read minds", but as I would be unable to offer any reasons to support or justify this commitment I would not be entitled to it.

Something that is brought out by this is that not only are *commitment* and *entitlement* coordinate notions in Brandom's model, but so too are *deontic status* and *practical deontic attitude*. Someone's having a deontic status or her doing something that would alter her deontic status is ultimately to be

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<sup>118</sup> Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 142.

<sup>119</sup> Brandom, *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*, p. 165.

<sup>120</sup> Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 161.

<sup>121</sup> "Coordinate with the notion of *commitment* is that of *entitlement*. Doing what one is committed to do is appropriate in one sense, while doing what one is entitled to do is appropriate in another." (Ibid., p. 159.)

understood in terms of the practical deontic attitude by which she is treated as committed or entitled to a commitment. In the first instance, Brandom says, this attitude takes the form of *attribution*.<sup>122</sup> In this way, my undertaking of a particular commitment due to my asserting “The rose is red” is explained in terms of the attribution of that commitment to me. But this formulation needs some qualifying. For an individual may always be committed or entitled to more than what is *actually* attributed to that individual. The commitment to the rose’s being red may actually and overtly be attributed to me, while the commitment to the rose’s being coloured and a plant may not. Nonetheless, clearly if I am committed to the former, then I am also committed to the latter. For this reason, Brandom says, “[a] performance expresses the practical attitude or has the significance of an *undertaking* of a commitment in case it *entitles* others to attribute that commitment.”<sup>123</sup> Undertaking commitments is thus *not reduced to actual* attributions of commitments, but is understood in terms of *proprieties* of commitment attributions. Attributing is in this sense treated as more fundamental in the universal LX-vocabulary of Brandom’s Inferentialism than undertaking. All this is to say that linguistic practitioners, on Brandom’s model, are those who keep track of the deontic statuses of themselves and others by attributing commitments and entitlements. They are, as he says, “*deontic scorekeepers*.”<sup>124</sup>

It is important to note here also that *acknowledging* a commitment is *not* to be identified with undertaking a commitment on Brandom’s model. While I may overtly acknowledge a commitment by asserting “Poppy is a turtle”, I may not acknowledge that I have thereby also undertaken a commitment to Poppy’s being a reptile – perhaps because I am unaware that turtles are reptiles. The attitude of acknowledging a commitment is, says Brandom, “attributing it to oneself *as oneself*.”<sup>125</sup> The reason for this slightly awkward formulation, the reason it would not be exactly right to say acknowledging a commitment is simply attributing a commitment to oneself, thought of as being essentially no different from attributing a commitment to another, is that Brandom regards the content of an acknowledged doxastic commitment as what he calls “essentially indexical”.<sup>126</sup> In the case of acknowledging a

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 710 n. 92.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 552.



commitment this means that the content cannot be expressed in an assertion or claim without the use of the indexical "I" (or another term with the same significance, such as "Je" or "Ich"); where "[w]hat 'I' expresses is a potentially *motivating* acknowledgment of a commitment" - motivating in the sense that acknowledging the commitment may normatively require me to perform some kind of practical action or theoretical move.<sup>127</sup>

Following arguments made by Héctor-Neri Castañeda and John Perry,<sup>128</sup> Brandom contends that the term "I" can play an expressive role that can be played by no other locution. While I may always refer to myself using some other term or description, say "*t*", "there would always be some possible circumstances in which I could believe that *t* had a property...without thereby believing that *I* have that property...There will always be some of those situations in which I fail to realize that *I* am *t*. In those cases, I will fail to form intentions and to be motivated to act on the basis of beliefs about what *t* should do in the same way I would on the basis of beliefs about what *I* should do."<sup>129</sup> I could attribute to *t* the commitment to the claim "Poppy is a reptile" without thereby realizing that *I* am *t*, and so fail to be motivated to endorse that very claim, fail to form the intention to endorse that claim. For this reason, acknowledging a commitment cannot, according to Brandom, be thought of as being on a par with attributing a commitment to someone else. Undertaking commitments by acknowledging them, which on Brandom's model "is the basic way of *undertaking* them",<sup>130</sup> is something only *I* can do. Undertaking a commitment is therefore understood on this model as an *immediate* attribution of a commitment to myself *as* myself, rather than an attribution of a commitment to myself under some mediating description or referring term (where "I" is not a mediating referring term).

This may seem to suggest that Brandom is not entitled to his claim, quoted above, that "[a] performance expresses the practical attitude or has the significance of an *undertaking* of a commitment in case it *entitles* others to attribute that commitment." For how could anyone else express their

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> For Castañeda see, Héctor-Neri Castañeda, "He': A Study in the Logic of Self-Consciousness," *Ratio* 8, no. December (1966). Also, "Indicators and Quasi-Indicators," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (1967). For Perry see, John Perry, "The Problem of the Essential Indexical," *Noûs* 13, no. December (1979). Also, "Frege on Demonstratives," *Philosophical Review* 86, no. 4 (1977).

<sup>129</sup> Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 552.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p. 554.

attribution of a commitment to me but by using some mediating description or referring term? So how could they attribute to me a commitment that essentially indexical for me? If there is a problem here, then the centrepiece of Brandom's Inferentialism, the game of *social* deontic scorekeeping, cannot properly get underway.<sup>131</sup> However, Brandom devises an ingenious way of avoiding this problem.

The issue is how to allow for linguistic practitioners to attribute essentially indexical commitments, specifically ones that cannot be expressed without using "I".<sup>132</sup> On Brandom's model the ability to attribute such commitments is an ability that is *implicit* in practice, and his method of explaining such an ability so it may be understood is to deploy expressions that make it *explicit*. In this case, Brandom suggests, the expressions that do this take the form of "*ascriptions* of essentially indexical commitments."<sup>133</sup> Thus he says, "the problem becomes that of understanding how an ascriber can specify the content of an ascribed commitment, even though no tokening in the mouth of the ascriber could have just the same significance as a tokening of, say, 'I am threatened by a bear,' in the mouth of the one to whom the commitment it expresses is ascribed."<sup>134</sup> Brandom's solution to this problem involves picking up an idea put forward by Castañeda.<sup>135</sup> The idea is that the genuinely first-person belief held by an individual, say Michele, to keep with Brandom's example, expressed as "I am threatened by a bear" might be ascribed to her by other individuals using the expression "Michele believes that *she herself* is threatened by a bear." This formulation of the commitment ascribing expression is meant to get around the worry that using an expression such as "Michele believes that she is threatened by a bear" for the purpose of ascription may fail to ascribe the exact belief that Michele would express with "I am threatened by a bear", due to the fact that the former assertion could also express a belief that Michele would express with "Michele is threatened by a bear", or "The woman

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<sup>131</sup> I have not yet said why Brandom's deontic scorekeeping game is or has to be specifically *social*. I will do so below.

<sup>132</sup> Brandom is also concerned with attributions of essentially indexical commitments that cannot be expressed without using indexicals such as "*here*", "*there*", "*now*", "*it*", etc. I will not be discussing such commitments here, though Brandom's the way of dealing with them is essentially the same as his way of dealing with commitments expressed using "I". See Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, pp. 559-67.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 563.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> Héctor-Neri Castañeda, *The Phenomeno-Logic of the I: Essays on Self-Consciousness*, ed. James G. Hart and Tomis Kapitan. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

under the pine tree is threatened by a bear.” Castañeda suggests regimenting the ascription of first-person beliefs by using what he calls “quasi-indicators”.<sup>136</sup> Using the example above, “she\*” is to be introduced as a quasi-indicator that performs the expressive function of “she herself”. In this sense, “Michele believes that *she\** is threatened by a bear” ascribes to Michele the first-person, essentially indexical belief she could express by asserting “*I* am threatened by a bear.” Brandom does not, however, accept Castañeda’s explanation that quasi-indicators perform their expressive function simply by not being replaceable by their antecedents. Instead he supplements Castañeda’s idea by stating that “the indirect indexical constructions Castañeda regiments as ‘quasi-indicators’ can be understood as functioning in a straightforwardly anaphoric fashion.”<sup>137</sup> On Brandom’s model “she\*”, in the above example, is to be thought of as an anaphoric dependent that carries the information that its antecedent tokening is an indexical of the same kind that the individual doing the ascribing would express by using “*I*”.<sup>138</sup> In order to mark the anaphoric dependent nature of these locutions, while keeping the contribution made by Castañeda clear, Brandom gives them the label “quasi-indexicals”.<sup>139</sup>

But what does it mean, on Brandom’s model, for something to function in an anaphoric fashion? As Brandom puts it, “understanding one tokening as anaphorically dependent on another is attributing (or in one’s own case, acknowledging) a certain kind of commitment. In the language employed here, it is a commitment to the dependent tokening being a *recurrence* of the antecedent tokening.”<sup>140</sup> For a particular tokening to be a recurrence of another in this sense is for it to *inherit* what Brandom calls the “substitution-inferential commitments” of its antecedent, which help determine the deontic significance, the conceptual content, of the antecedent tokening. A substitution-inferential commitment is a commitment to the goodness of an inference that results in the replacement of one term or expression by another. I, for instance, endorse a substitution-inferential commitment regarding occurrences of the expression “I believe that I am threatened by a bear” being replaced by “I believe an animal capable of killing me is likely to attack me”; and my associating the contents I do with the assertion “I believe I

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>137</sup> Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 564.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 456.

am threatened by a bear” is partly determined by my undertaking this substitution-inferential commitment, for it underwrites many other proprieties of inference for me. It, for example, underwrites the propriety of the inference from “I believe I am threatened by a bear” to “I believe an animal capable of killing me is likely to attack me, so I ought to do what I can to get myself out of danger”, as well as that from “I believe I am threatened by a bear” to “I believe an animal capable of killing me is likely to attack me, so I ought to not make any sudden movements towards it.”<sup>141</sup> So A’s expression, which involves the use of a quasi-indexical and has the significance of ascribing a commitment to me, say “Tom believes he\* is threatened by a bear”, would, according to Brandom, inherit the substitution-inferential commitments of its anaphoric antecedent, expressed in this example by me as “I believe I am threatened by a bear.” And one of these substitution-inferential commitments would be that regarding the replacement of this expression by the expression I would put forward as “I believe an animal capable of killing me is likely to attack me”, which then underwrites many further proprieties of inference and plays a role in determining the conceptual content of the antecedent. It is clearly important for A’s expression to inherit these commitments. For if it did not, it could not have the significance of ascribing a commitment to me with *exactly* the same content of the commitment I would undertake by asserting “I believe I am threatened by a bear,” and Brandom’s model would face severe structural issues.

But there still remains a residual issue. A’s act of ascribing an essentially indexical commitment to me involves her taking on an assertional commitment *herself*. As Brandom says, “[a]scriptions are propositionally explicit attributions...In virtue of playing this expressive role, ascribings essentially involve two different deontic attitudes, to commitments with two different contents. Making an ascription involves doing two different things. Ascribing is *attributing* one commitment (to another), while *undertaking* (acknowledging) a different commitment (oneself).”<sup>142</sup> And a commitment one acknowledges is something that must be justifiable by means of the giving of reasons. But what reasons could be given to justify A’s assertion “Tom believes he\* is threatened by a bear”? Certainly an assertion

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<sup>141</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 373. At this point Brandom is discussing the substitution-inferential commitments in relation to singular terms, but the story for assertions with propositional content is the same, at least in the details that matter for us here.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 504.

in the form “A believes Tom is threatened by a bear”, or “I believe Tom is threatened by a bear” (in A’s mouth), would not do the trick. Someone else may very well believe that I believe something, but this does not mean I actually do believe it. Ultimately the only thing that could do the trick of justifying A’s assertion “Tom believes he\* is threatened by a bear”, the only thing that could act as a reason for it, is *my* assertion “I believe I am threatened by a bear”, or my disposition to avow this assertion or another with the same significance. This is justification by *deferral* to another - A’s assertion is justified by a deferral to my assertion.

Clearly justification by deferral plays a key role in Brandom’s model. The notion of acknowledging commitments, a doing that entitles others to attribute those commitments, could get no traction without it. But a question now arises concerning what one must be able to do in order to count as giving reasons by deferral. As we will soon see, on Brandom’s model anyone who can acknowledge and attribute commitments and entitlements can already defer to others for reasons. Which is to say, the primitives of his chosen universal LX-vocabulary are all that is needed to explain justification by deferral.

So how is this supposed to work? To begin with, let us note again that on Brandom’s model an attribution of a commitment may be made explicit by an ascription that gives expression to the content of the commitment in the form of a propositional claim that may be used in reasoning. Now, Brandom claims that content-specifying expressions can play two different roles – they can express *de dicto* ascriptions, or they can express *de re* ascriptions.<sup>143</sup> A *de dicto* ascription is an expression of a commitment that “according to the ascriber, the one to whom the commitment is ascribed would (or in a strong sense should) *acknowledge* as an expression of what that individual is committed to.”<sup>144</sup> Brandom recommends regimenting such ascriptions by using the marking them with the term ‘that’. This would be put to work in the ascription “Tom believes *that* Poppy is a turtle.” A *de re* ascription, on the other hand, is an expression of a commitment that “according to the *ascriber* of the commitment, but not necessarily according to the one to whom it is ascribed, is acknowledged as an expression of

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 506.

what the target of the ascription is committed to. (This is what the target should, according to the ascriber, acknowledge only in a much weaker sense of 'should'.) To regiment *de re* ascriptions, Brandom recommends marking them with the term 'of'. For instance, "Tom believes *of* the reptile named Poppy that it is a turtle."<sup>145</sup> The distinction between *de dicto* and *de re* ascriptions does not, in this sense, mirror a distinction between two different *kinds* of commitment-contents that may be attributed, but rather it mirrors a distinction between two different ways of *specifying* attributed commitment-contents.<sup>146</sup> (Also, the distinction between *de dicto* and *de re* ascriptions can, on Brandom's inferentialist model as he presents it in *Making It Explicit* and *Articulating Reasons*, be associated with the distinction between the *propositional* and *representational* aspects of intentional states. As he says, "[a]scriptions *de dicto* attribute belief in a *dictum* or saying, while ascriptions *de re* attribute belief about some *res* or thing."<sup>147</sup> I will be discussing Brandom's way of dealing with the representational aspect of intentional states in what follows. But I will be discussing the account he offers of this in *Between Saying and Doing*, which builds on the account offered in the two earlier works just mentioned.<sup>148</sup>)

Now, since attributing commitments involves undertaking commitments, the contents of assertions with the significance of ascriptions must necessarily be specifiable both *de dicto* and *de re* in style. Imagine William makes the claim "George Eliot wrote *Middlemarch*." I may then reasonably attribute a commitment to William by a *de dicto* ascription in the form of "William claims *that* George Eliot wrote *Middlemarch*." Beyond this, however, I may also attribute that very same commitment to William by a *de re* ascription in the form of "William claims *of* Mary Anne Evans that she wrote *Middlemarch*." That William may not endorse the claim "Mary Anne Evans wrote *Middlemarch*," due

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Brandom, *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*, p. 176. Brandom finds another proponent of this way of understanding the distinction between *de dicto* and *de re* ascriptions in Daniel Dennet. Cf. Daniel C. Dennett, "Beyond Belief," in *Thought and Object*, ed. Andrew Woodfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

<sup>147</sup> Brandom, *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*, p. 170.

<sup>148</sup> In *Between Saying and Doing*, Brandom, as I will show below, offers an account of representational content that relies on the relation between the notions of *normative incompatibility* and *modal (alethic) incompatibility*. As he says in the afterword to this work, the exposition of this relation presented therein "redeems a promissory note issued in those works [*Making It Explicit* and *Articulating Reasons*]." (*Between Saying and Doing: Towards an Analytic Pragmatism*, p. 235.)

to his not knowing that George Eliot was the nom de plume of Mary Anne Evans, does not matter here. His refusal to endorse this latter claim would not mean that I would fail, with my *de re* ascription, to attribute a commitment to William with the very same conceptual content as the commitment he would undertake by making his initial claim. It would not mean there has been a failure in understanding or communication between William and me. On the contrary. According to Brandom there has been successful communication. William has simply, from my perspective, failed to fully grasp the conceptual content of his initial claim. Nor should the perspectival explication of conceptual content worry us according to Brandom. For, as he claims, “[c]onceptual contents are *essentially perspectival*; they can be specified explicitly only from some point of view, against the background of some repertoire of discursive commitments, and how it is correct to specify them varies from one discursive point of view to another. Mutual understanding and communication depend on interlocutors’ being able to keep two sets of books, to move back and forth between the point of view of the speaker and the audience, while keeping straight on which doxastic, substitutional, and expressive commitments are undertaken and which are attributed by various parties.”<sup>149</sup> It is only because conceptual contents are perspectival that communication can take place at all, that interlocutors can attribute commitments to each other.

In order for linguistic practitioners, deontic scorekeepers, to keep these two sets of books - one on what commitments interlocutors attribute and the other on what commitments they actually undertake - it is necessary that they are not only able to keep track of how concepts *are* being applied in attributions, but also how they *ought* to be applied, how it would be *correct* to apply them. For Brandom this means that “every scorekeeping perspective incorporates a distinction between what is (objectively) true and what is merely (subjectively) held true.”<sup>150</sup> (As Brandom points out, so long as this claim can be justified it offers a way of understanding Davidson’s claim, which I endorsed in section I.I.VIII, that in order to have beliefs, one must grasp the distinction between belief and truth, or objectivity.<sup>151</sup>) But how are we to explain the “objectivity of conceptual norms – the dimension of correctness in the application of

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<sup>149</sup> *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 590.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 598.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 598-99.

conceptual contents assessed according to how the things they are applied to actually are rather than how they are *taken* to be”<sup>152</sup>

Clearly, given the Sellars-Brandom attack on formalism discussed above, the objectivity of conceptual norms is going to have to be explained in terms of our practices. One way of understanding these practices would be to think of them as intersubjective in what Brandom characterizes as the *I-we* sense. *I-we* construals of intersubjectivity, says Brandom, “fund a distinction between what particular individuals *treat* as or *take* to be a correct application of a concept, on the one hand, and what *is* a correct application, on the other, by contrasting individual takings with communal ones.”<sup>153</sup> But these construals, as Brandom points out, face two major problems. Firstly, they seem to attempt to reduce norms to non-normative regularities of what is done at a communal level. And as we have already seen (section I.II.II), such an attempt at reducing norms is not the right way to go. Secondly, even if the first problem can be avoided, *I-we* construals seem to forget that part of what it is to apply concepts in claiming, asserting, intending, etc., is to do something that can be assessed for its correctness – it is to do something that admits of the possibility of being incorrect, even if it is never actually assessed as such. Explaining the objectivity of norms in terms of communal applications of concepts means that the possibility of the community applying concepts incorrectly cannot be made sense of, and this means it cannot properly be thought of as applying concepts at all.<sup>154</sup> (This issue came up earlier, in section I.II.II, when we looked at the crucial distinction between representational *purport* and representational *success* of conceptually contentful intentional expressions, states, performances, etc.)

In contrast to the *I-we* construals of intersubjective practices Brandom suggests an *I-thou* construal, “which focuses on the relation between the commitments *undertaken* by a scorekeeper interpreting others and the commitments *attributed* by that scorekeeper to those others.”<sup>155</sup> Unlike on the *I-we* construal, on this construal there is no privileged perspective according to which whatever is treated as correct from that perspective *is* correct. As Brandom states, “according to the *I-thou* construal

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 599.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 593.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 594.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., p. 599.



of intersubjectivity, each perspective is at most *locally* privileged in that it incorporates a structural distinction between objectively correct applications of concepts and applications that are merely subjectively taken to be correct. But none of these perspectives is privileged in advance over any other.”<sup>156</sup> Such a construal, Brandom admits, may at first appear to be no great aid when it comes to explaining the objectivity of conceptual norms. For it may seem that all it offers is a possibly infinite regress of deontic scorekeepers attributing and assessing commitments, with the objective measure of correctness always out of reach. However, Brandom shows that this view arises from thinking about the objectivity of conceptual norms in the wrong way. It arises from thinking of the objectivity of conceptual norms as consisting “in a nonperspectival or cross-perspectival *content*” – that is, as consisting in some concrete cases of taking-as-correct by some authoritative figure or figures.<sup>157</sup> And either this thinking is untenable because it commits itself to formalism, or it fails to account for the objectivity of conceptual norms for the same reasons the *I-we* construal of intersubjective practises fails to account for the objectivity of conceptual norms. In opposition to this thinking then, Brandom suggests that the way we should think of the objectivity of conceptual norms is “as consisting in a kind of perspectival *form*”.<sup>158</sup> That is, we should think of the objectivity of conceptual norms as consisting in the contrast, shared by the perspectives of all deontic scorekeepers, between what is objectively correct (what one ought to commit oneself to) and what is merely taken to be correct. This is, after all, the only real viable option left. For objectivity of conceptual norms must be explained in terms of practices (to avoid formalism), these practices must be intersubjective in character (practices that are not intersubjective, i.e. practices that are private, would fail to generate that required contrast between what *is* taken to be correct and what *ought* to be taken as correct),<sup>159</sup> and the intersubjective character must not be construed as *I-we* (for reasons just spelt out). Construing these practices as *I-thou* is the only option left.

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 600.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> It may be thought that the required contrast could be generated out of practices by which one attributes commitments and entitlements to oneself at different times. Such practices, however, while they may be disguised, are *I-thou* in structure, with oneself-at-times-other-than-the-present playing the role of thou.

There are several important results of thinking about the objectivity of conceptual norms in this way, results that tie-up several loose ends that have thus far been left dangling. First, since objectivity of conceptual norms is founded on, or rather in, the *I-thou* social relations, and every deontic scorekeeper must grasp the contrast between what is objectively correct and what is merely taken to be correct, we can now understand why Brandom's deontic scorekeeping practices are specifically *social*. For, as Brandom states, "wherever propositional or other conceptual contents are attributed, there is some implicit appeal to an *I-thou* social practice in which one scorekeeper interprets the performance of another."<sup>160</sup> Second, since everyone taking part in linguistic social practices, by attributing and acknowledging commitments and entitlements, must make implicit appeals to *I-thou* social practices, one cannot coherently endorse nominalism about groups. Anyone who takes part in a linguistic practice must take herself to be a member of an *I-thou* structured group, a 'we', to the members of which it is appropriate to attribute commitments and entitlements. (This discharges the promise I made back in section I.II to offer an argument against nominalism about groups.) Third, given that all deontic scorekeepers must make this implicit appeal to an *I-thou* social practice in any attribution of a commitment, there is already in play, at the perspective of each practitioner attributing a commitment, everything needed to defer to another, or others, for justification. If one can attribute a commitment to another, then one can appeal to that commitment by deferral. Fourth, the objectivity of conceptual norms has been explained in terms of claim-making, which means that according to Brandom's model it can be explained by using the primitives of his chosen universal LX-vocabulary – *attributions* and *acknowledgements of commitments and entitlements* in a game of social deontic scorekeeping, in which the fundamental move is asserting or claiming. Finally, (and this discharges the promissory note I made at the end of section I.I.VIII) since the objectivity of conceptual norms can only be reasonably explained by appealing to *I-thou* structured social linguistic practices, and since the contrast between what merely *is* taken to be the case and what *ought* to be taken to be the case (what is objectively the case) only arises for those taking part in these practices by attributing and acknowledging commitments and entitlements, one necessarily needs to be linguistic to have a grasp of the contrast between beliefs (or, more broadly,

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<sup>160</sup> Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 590.

intentional states/attitudes) and objective reality, hence one needs to be linguistic to be properly said to have beliefs at all (to be able to treat intentional states/attitudes *as* intentional states/attitudes).

### I.II.V – The Problem with Treating Practices as Explanatorily Prior to Meaning

We now have a layout of Brandom's normative pragmatism of social deontic scorekeeping, or at least the aspects of it that are relevant for our purposes here. We do not yet, however, have an explanation of how semantics is meant to answer to this pragmatics - I have not yet said how Brandom intends his normative pragmatics to explain how meanings are determined. I will take up this task in a moment. But before I do I must come back to something I mentioned at the beginning of section I.II.IV. I claimed there that so long as a semantic theory treats the practices outlined in section I.II.IV as explanatorily, or logically, prior to any notion of meaningfulness it is bound to fail. Brandom does treat these notions as explanatorily prior to any notion of meaningfulness, for as I will show in a moment, he believes that the representational aspect of intentional states (their being *of* or *about* something), which as we know is a necessary aspect of meaning, can be explained in terms of these prior practices (the priority here is not necessarily temporal, but is rather, as I say, explanatory, or logical). His semantic theory is thus bound to fail. Let us now see why.<sup>161</sup>

A meaningful thing, as it has been described here and within Brandom's works, has propositional and representational content. Its content is *that* things are thus and so, or, what is the same, it is *of* things that they are thus and so. Now, given that Brandom wants to take his pragmatics as explanatorily prior to meaning, he cannot presuppose meaningfulness in the practices that make up his pragmatics. This means specifically that he cannot presuppose that the practitioners partaking in these practices are already making claims and assertions, since claims and assertions are by definition meaningful things. He knows this, this is why he attempts to elaborate a system of practices that are treated as explanatorily prior to vocabulary use, to assertion or claim making, but are also rich enough

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<sup>161</sup> McDowell puts forward a similar argument to the one I am about to present here at, McDowell, *The Engaged Intellect: Philosophical Essays*, pp. 294-97.

so that any individual taking part in these practices can thereby be understood as *already doing everything needed* to come to be counted as using a vocabulary, or making assertions or claims.<sup>162</sup> Now, to understand individuals as partaking in practices of acknowledging and attributing commitments and entitlements, one must clearly understand the moves they are making as already inferential. For to attribute and acknowledge (and remember that to acknowledge is to attribute to oneself *as oneself*) commitments and entitlements is *to do things for reasons*.<sup>163</sup> But, as we have already established, an individual cannot be understood as making inferences, doing things for reasons, unless she is understood as being linguistic, that is, as a creature that makes assertions and claims. In *Making It Explicit* Brandom himself claims in plain terms that “[i]nfering cannot be understood apart from asserting...[and that]...[t]o say this is to say that inferring should be understood as an aspect of an essentially *linguistic* practice.”<sup>164</sup> This has the result that practices of acknowledging and attributing commitments and entitlements cannot be treated as explanatorily prior to asserting or claiming, since the former, being inferential practices, presuppose the latter. More generally, the practices we have been describing presuppose a notion of meaningfulness. Brandom’s Inferentialism is thus bound to fail. But if we do not take either inference, i.e. inferential practices, or meaning as *the* primitive explanatory notion of a semantic theory, and accept that the social deontic practices outlined by Brandom presuppose meaning already in play, then, as I have suggested before, we can show how these practices can determine the very meanings they presuppose and confer them onto things. That is to say, these practices can be shown to be rich enough to determine the conceptual content of intentional states/attitudes/performances. We give up the ambition to explain how meaning springs from global meaninglessness, but this is no great loss. For the alternatives are not all that happy. Either one explains how meaning springs from nothing, and this seems conceptually impossible, or one explains how meaning springs from a world structured in some way but devoid of meanings, concepts, inferential practices, norms, etc., and for many reasons

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<sup>162</sup> This strategy, if it worked, would allow Brandom to hold onto the claim that the fundamental move that can be made in his game of social deontic scorekeeping is that of asserting or claiming, because the practices would be rich enough for the fundamental moves made to come to be understood as assertings or claimings.

<sup>163</sup> In *Making It Explicit* Brandom claims that “[t]he practices that institute the significance characteristic of assertional performances and the status characteristic of assertional commitments must be inferential practices.” (Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 158.)

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

already gone over, and for some further reasons to come in sections II and III, where we will look at issues to do with conceptual content and concept application in greater detail, this does not appear to be a viable option either.

This being said, let us now look at the way in which Brandom thinks the practices of his normative pragmatics can determine meanings. For I agree with him on much of what he says on this issue, except of course for the fact, to stress the point again, that I do not take the practices of his normative pragmatics to be explanatorily prior to any notion of meaning. I do not agree with him that the representational dimension of intentional states can be explained in terms of the prior notion inference.

### I.II.VI - Brandom's Inferentialist Semantics: Inferential Articulation

To begin with we need to remind ourselves that on Brandom's model the pragmatic significance of a performance is the change it makes to a practitioner's deontic status. And what pragmatic significance performances have for practitioners is determined by what else they commit or entitle the practitioners to, which is in turn determined by the "*inferential* articulation [of the performances] in virtue of which they count as semantically contentful."<sup>165</sup> Now, according to Brandom there are three kinds of inferential relations that determine meanings, all of which can be explained in terms of the normative pragmatic notions of *commitments* and *entitlements*. On this matter I am with Brandom, but it needs to be remembered I do not take the notions of *commitments* and *entitlements* to be explanatorily prior to any notion of meaningfulness, thus I do not regard the relations we are about to describe as being solely responsible for the determining of meanings. The first kind of inferential relation is what Brandom calls the "*committive* (that is, commitment-preserving) inference".<sup>166</sup> This is the kind of inferential relation that holds when one becomes committed to a claim simply by being committed to another. For instance, being committed to the claim "the ball is coloured all over" as a consequence of being committed to the

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>166</sup> Brandom, *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*, p. 194.

claim “the ball is green all over.” As Brandom claims, deductive, logically good inferences, as well as materially good inferences, exploit this kind of inferential relation.<sup>167</sup> The second kind of inferential relation explained in terms of commitments and entitlements is the “*permissive* (that is, entitlement-preserving) inference.”<sup>168</sup> This kind of relation holds when one is entitled to a commitment in virtue of being entitled to another. For instance, being entitled, though not committed, to the claim “this liquid will boil at 100 degrees Celsius” because one is entitled to the claim “this liquid is water”. The latter claim does not commit one to the former because it is compatible with the further claim that “this liquid is currently resting at 600 metres above sea level and will therefore boil at around 98 degrees Celsius.” This is, as Brandom states, the kind of inferential relation exploited by inductive inferences.<sup>169</sup> Finally, the third kind of inferential relation that determines meanings is that of “*incompatibility* entailments”.<sup>170</sup> This relation holds when having one commitment precludes entitlement to another. For instance, being committed to the claim “the ball is green all over” precludes commitment to the further claim “the ball is red all over”. This kind of inferential relation, as Brandom claims, is exploited by modal inferences – inferences that support counterfactual reasoning.<sup>171</sup>

This addresses the issue of the inferential relations between commitments and entitlements that help determine meanings. But it does not address all the issues to do with meaning. We still have to look at the representational dimension of meaningful things, their being *of* or *about* things. As Brandom notes, some representings, such as signposts thought of just as painted pieces of wood, or utterances thought of as mere emitted sounds, can be described without any mention of what they represent. But meaningful performances or things thought of *as* meaningful, such as the makings of assertions and claims, cannot. Meaningful things thought of *as* meaningful, such as assertions and claims, are by necessity of or about things.<sup>172</sup> At the most fundamental level they are of or about worldly, empirical, spatiotemporal, things. They may, of course, be about abstract things such as abstract concepts or

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<sup>167</sup> Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 168.

<sup>168</sup> Brandom, *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*, p. 194.

<sup>169</sup> Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, pp. 168-69.

<sup>170</sup> Brandom, *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*, p. 194.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> Brandom, *Between Saying and Doing: Towards an Analytic Pragmatism*, p. 177.

numbers, but this sort of aboutness, as will become clear in a moment, must be dependent on the former sort of aboutness. So, to quote Brandom, “[i]f the *world* is left out of the story, what justification could there be for saying that *meaning* has not been?”<sup>173</sup> The problem for Brandom is that the way he wants his inferentialist system to work means that the world *is* left out of the story – or, to be a little harsher, it would mean there is no story for him to tell.

Brandom’s greatest problem, and the reason why he can’t escape his unhappy commitment to his social deontic practices being explanatorily prior to any notion of meaningfulness, is that he wants to explain the representational dimension of meaningful things by appealing to an explanatorily, or logically, prior notion of inference, i.e. the inferential moves made in his social deontic practices. The problem is that the very foundations of his practices, attributions of a commitments or entitlements to individuals, which are things that can be made explicit in assertions or claims, are also by definition of or about things – specifically spatiotemporal things. They are the taking up of intentional stances that are of or about the individuals to which commitments or entitlements are being attributed. Hence, in order to claim that one can properly account for the Brandomian social deontic practices of attributing and acknowledging commitments and entitlements, one must treat inference and representation, social deontic practices and meaning, as explanatorily or logically equiprimordial. Only if one can account for representations - specifically and at the most fundamental level, representations of spatiotemporal things, individuals and their meaningful doings - at the same level as inference can one really accommodate Brandomian social deontic practices of attributing and acknowledging commitments and entitlements at all. This is why the sort of aboutness involved in a meaningful thing’s being about some abstract thing must be dependent on the sort of aboutness involved in a meaningful thing’s being about some spatiotemporal thing. If one does not account for the latter sort of aboutness, then one cannot account for the practices that help determine meanings, hence one can account for meanings and thus no aboutness at all. It is my aim in this thesis to show how one can treat representation, or more broadly, meaning, and inference as explanatorily equiprimordial, such that the Brandomian social deontic practices can then explain how meanings (conceptual contents) are determined and conferred on to

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

things. For now though, I want to look more closely at how Brandom attempts to account for the empirical representational dimension of meaningful things so that we may complete our critique of his Inferentialism.

### I.II.VII - Brandom's Inferentialist Semantics: Representational Content

So how does Brandom suggest we introduce the world into the story? The answer to this question, insofar as it is relevant for our purposes here, has two parts. The first focuses on Brandom's account of our perceptual interactions with the world, which result in the taking on of new commitments. The second part focuses on his explanation of the representational relation of intentional states/attitudes to singular objects or states of affairs. As to the first part of the answer, Brandom's account of perceptually acquired commitments relies on accepting, for the most part, what he calls Sellars' 'two-ply' account of perception.<sup>174</sup> The first ply of this account is the activation of RDRDs.<sup>175</sup> One must classify worldly stimuli by responding to them in some reliable way. But, of course simply classifying stimuli by having RDRDs activated is not enough to count as undertaking commitments. After all, non-linguistic chunks of iron can classify certain atmospheric conditions by rusting. Thus the second ply – in order to count as undertaking commitments by means of perception, according to Brandom, the activation of one's RDRDs must result in the application of concepts (paradigmatically, in the making of a claim). Such a conceptually articulated response must be able to play the roles of premise and conclusion in inferences – it must be able to act as a reason and stand in need of reasons. Thus, Brandom thinks of the application of concepts in perception as *non-inferentially elicited*, but of the commitments one thereby undertakes as *inferentially articulated*.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Cf. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality*, Ch. 12. It is questionable whether Sellars did in fact hold the account of perception that Brandom attributes to him. I do not have the space to discuss this further here, but for more on this point, see John Henry McDowell, "Brandom on Observation," in *Reading Brandom: On Making It Explicit*, ed. Bernhard Weiss and Jeremy Wanderer (New York: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>175</sup> For my explanation and discussion of RDRDs, see section I.II.II.

<sup>176</sup> Brandom, *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*, pp. 47-49.



Of course for some response to a stimulus to count, on Brandom's model, as the application of concepts, the undertaking of a conceptually articulated commitment, it must be treated as something for which justification, the giving of reasons, would be appropriate. I said above that Brandom accepts what he calls Sellars' "two-ply" account of perception 'for the most part'. The reason I did not say Brandom accepts this account *in toto* is that he thinks Sellars goes too far in his account of perceptual judgements, requiring not only "that the claim of the reliable observer... be *justified*, [but that] the observer must be able to *justify* it inferentially."<sup>177</sup> Brandom thinks such a requirement would result in understanding perceptual applications of concepts as being inferentially elicited.<sup>178</sup> For this reason, he suggests that instead of requiring that the perceiver have reasons for her perceptual intentional state herself, it only be required that some other deontic scorekeeper have them.<sup>179</sup> As Brandom point out, however, the undertaking of conceptually articulated commitments (Brandom speaks specifically of beliefs) by subjects who do not have reasons for these commitments could not be a global phenomenon. For if no subject had reasons to justify her own intentional states, no subject could have the notion of reliability, which in turn means no subject could use another's reliability as a reason to justify an intentional state. Thus no subject could be taken as undertaking commitments by means of having her RDRDs activated.<sup>180</sup> This is an important point, and I will return to it in a moment.

Now to the second part of the answer to the question of how Brandom introduces the world into the story. We should begin by noting that according to Brandom "[s]elves correspond to coresponsibility classes or bundles of deontic states and attitudes", and that when one undertakes a commitment, one becomes obliged to bring it into a unity with all the other commitments one has.<sup>181</sup> "A single subject just is what *ought* not to have incompatible commitments (at the same time)."<sup>182</sup> According to Brandom this means that in undertaking a commitment one becomes obliged to go about drawing conclusions from committive and permissive inferences involving the newly undertaken commitment, whilst

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<sup>177</sup> Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 217.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 217-21.

<sup>179</sup> Brandom, *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*, pp. 102-06.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 106-10.

<sup>181</sup> Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 559.

<sup>182</sup> Brandom, *Between Saying and Doing: Towards an Analytic Pragmatism*, p. 192.

relinquishing or modifying any commitments that are found to be incompatible. (This is Brandom's way of picking up on Kant's idea of synthesizing a unity of apperception.) This is not to say that one can actually complete this project. On the theoretical side of things, having incompatible commitments may be unavoidable for a finite being. And on the practical side, one may at times be committed to act in ways that are beyond one's abilities – e.g. being committed to being in two places at the one time.

The important thing is what one does when one embarks upon the project of unifying one's commitments. According to Brandom, "[i]n drawing inferences and 'repelling' incompatibilities, one is taking oneself to stand in representational relations to objects that one is talking *about*... [T]he judgment that *A* is a dog is not incompatible with the judgment that *B* is a fox. It *is* incompatible with the judgment that *A* is a fox. Taking a dog-judgment to be incompatible with a fox-judgment *is* taking them to refer to or represent an object, the *one* object to which incompatible properties are being attributed by the two claims."<sup>183</sup> The reason he thinks he can say this is that a single object simply *is* what cannot possibly have incompatible properties at the same time.<sup>184</sup> So, in engaging in the process of unifying one's commitments according to their inferential articulations, thinks Brandom, one is already doing everything needed to take oneself to be representing objects in the world, hence making oneself answerable to these objects for the correctness of one's intentional states/attitudes.

It is important to see how the two aspects of our answer to the question of how Brandom suggests we introduce the world into the story interact. By itself the unifying of one's commitments is not enough to necessarily guarantee that one has an intentional state about some spatiotemporal empirical object *A*, though in certain cases it would be enough to guarantee that one has an intentional state about some general abstract concept *A*. But the fact that some of the commitments concerned are acquired perceptually is meant to guarantee that *A* is an empirical, worldly, spatiotemporal, object.

Now, what should be seen quite clearly for the first time is how Brandom thinks he can take the notion of inference to be explanatorily prior to that of representation. He thinks that taking oneself to

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<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192. 'Incompatibility' has a different sense here to when it was used above to talk about 'incompatible' commitments. Here it is to be taken as referring to objective modal (alethic) incompatibility. Above it is to be taken as referring to normative incompatibility. See *ibid.*, pp. 190-91.

represent the world can be explained purely in terms of the prior notion of making inferential moves according to one's commitments. This, as we already know from what has been said above, means that his Inferentialism founders. He cannot get his pragmatics up and running to function as the explanatory ground for his semantics, because his pragmatics requires a notion of representational content already in play.

Looking closer at Brandom's failed account of perceptual intentional states, however, suggests a new line of inquiry into how we might properly account for the Brandomian social deontic practices such that they can determine meanings and confer them on to things. Brandom treats the two plies in his account of perception as representing "two in-principle separable [independent] component abilities." But as Robert Pippin has pointed out, problems arise when one tries to connect the two plies.<sup>185</sup> For the first ply concerns responses that are simply causally elicited, or wrung, from individuals; whereas, the second ply concerns normative claims that must be *granted* by other concept users, that are not elicited. This, as Pippin says, gives the result that my causally elicited responses, when considered as nothing more than causally elicited responses, seem to "be normatively inert with respect to what I end up committed to."<sup>186</sup> All that really matters is that others treat me as having a commitment, my responses hardly seem to play a significant role. But, to go back to a point I flagged above, this cannot be the case globally, as Brandom realizes. There must be some individuals for whom some of their own responses are normatively efficacious, or meaningful. Commitments and entitlements could not otherwise be attributed to anyone. But this just means that the concept of someone's being a reliable responder (something, as Pippin says, "that must be established for there to be any relation between these two 'plys'," and we may add, for there to even be the notions of the two plies) is itself a result of the social normative practices of those individuals for whom their own responses are already meaningful.<sup>187</sup> (Again, meanings and social deontic practices need to be treated as equiprimordial.)

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<sup>185</sup> Robert B. Pippin, "Brandom's Hegel," *European Journal of Philosophy* 13, no. 3 (2005): p. 389. Pippin's article, as the title suggests, is focussed on Brandom's account of Hegel, and the issue of the two-ply account of perception is brought up in the context of a criticism of Brandom's attempt to explain Hegel's distinction between the notions of 'immediacy' and 'mediation'. Pippin's article presents compelling reasons for thinking that Brandom does not accurately capture many aspects of Hegel's thought.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

Brandom's repeated claims to the effect that it is "norms the way down", and that "[t]he distinction between normative and nonnormative vocabulary, claims, and facts is itself drawn in normative terms", seem to be further concessions to this point. However, as has been made clear, the structure of his Inferentialism means he cannot properly accommodate this point.<sup>188</sup>

Now, what this suggests, is that if we are to properly account for the Brandomian social deontic practices such that they can explain the how meanings are determined and conferred on to things (which is what I aim to do), then what we need is to explain how at the fundamental level our perceptual, i.e. sensuous, responses to spatiotemporal objects can be normatively efficacious *for us* as the perceivers. Given this means accounting for meaning at the fundamental level of perception, which cannot be logically subsequent to attributing commitments and entitlements (since such attributions, at their most basic, require perception of that to which the attributions are being made), and thus not accounting for it in terms of some more primitive notion of, say, inference, it of course means treating inference and representation (or, more broadly, meaning) as equiprimordial. It is appropriate, then, that the task of the next section should be to begin this explanation, though it will not be completed until the end of section III. To end this section, however, let me say one last thing in order to address a possible objection to our project that has already been raised by Brandom.

The scenario I am going to outline will be one in which individuals make perceptual judgements that they themselves regard as meaningful and justified. It will be a scenario in which these individuals must be able to justify or offer reasons for their perceptual judgements. Brandom has claimed that such a requirement, which he regards Sellars as endorsing, will mean that individuals will have to arrive at their perceptual judgements inferentially. Clearly this would be a problem if it were true. Perceptual judgements must, on pain of vicious circularity or infinite regress, come about noninferentially. But there is no problem, for Brandom's claim is false. As McDowell has made quite clear, there is no reason to think that requiring that an observer have reasons for her perceptual judgements should be a threat to her perceptual judgements being noninferentially brought about. If challenged over my entitlement to

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<sup>188</sup> Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, p. 625. For further claims to this effect see the index entry under "norms, all the way down" at *ibid.*, p. 732.

the perceptual judgement that something is green, I can respond “This is a good light for telling what colour something is,” or even, “I can see that it is green,” or both.<sup>189</sup> There is no issue here concerning how the perceptual judgement was brought about, for as McDowell says, “one does not offer what one says about the light [and the same goes for the seeing] as a premise in an inferential grounding for what one claims to know about the colour of the thing.”<sup>190</sup> This said, let us now ask how perceptual responses may be normatively efficacious, or meaningful, *for us* as the perceivers.

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<sup>189</sup> McDowell, "Brandom on Observation," p. 137.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

## II - McDowell and Normatively Efficacious Perceptual Experiences

It is my contention, taking into account the caveats discussed in the sections above, that the Brandomian I-thou structured social, deontic, linguistic, practices of attributing and acknowledging commitments and entitlements can serve the purpose of explaining the determinations of conceptual contents of intentional states, and the conferral of meanings onto things. One of these caveats concerns the important point that, as I have argued, one cannot, as Brandom attempts to, help oneself to these practices in the construction of a theory of meaning without giving an adequate account of how an individual's perceptual, i.e. sensuous, responses to objects in the world (i.e. spatiotemporal objects) can be normatively efficacious *for that very individual*. Since it is empirical, spatiotemporal objects that are of central importance here, this is the same as saying that one cannot help oneself to these practices in the construction of a theory of meaning unless one can also offer an adequate account of how *the world*,<sup>191</sup> which we causally, sensuously, interact with, can be normatively efficacious *for us*. In what follows I am going to consider a couple of related attempts to offer this required account. I will do so by looking to the positive aspects of John McDowell's works, where he argues that an adequate account of the sort we are after can be developed by taking seriously the notion of contentful perceptual 'experience'.

### II.I – McDowell and Experience: Two Traps to Avoid

In the same year that Brandom published *Making It Explicit* (1994), McDowell published his highly celebrated work, *Mind and World*, which had been adapted from his 1991 John Locke Lectures.<sup>192</sup> By and large this work can still be taken to represent McDowell's views on the issues we are to discuss here. But it will be necessary as we move along to note a few significant changes he has made to his views in more recent years.

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<sup>191</sup> Since we do not ever interact with the world as a whole it would be more exact to write here '*objects of the world*'. For ease of expression, though, and since McDowell chooses to use 'the world', I will stick to using 'the world'. It should be kept in mind, however, that the more exact phrase can be substituted in for the less exact 'the world' at any time.

<sup>192</sup> John Henry McDowell, John Henry McDowell, *Mind and World: With a New Introduction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

Like Brandom, McDowell regards our beliefs, judgements, knowings, etc., i.e. our intentional states/attitudes treated *as* intentional states/attitudes, to be conceptually contentful. Moreover, he takes the “topography of the conceptual sphere...[to be]...constituted by rational relations.”<sup>193</sup> This means that he, like Brandom, endorses the Sellarsian idea that our intentional states/attitudes are located in the logical space of reasons. But McDowell’s project, at least those aspects of it that are relevant for us here, is strikingly different from Brandom’s, as is made clear by the following remarks taken from the introduction to *Mind and World*.

[S]ince our cognitive predicament is that we confront the world by way of sensible intuition (to put it in Kantian terms), our reflection on the very idea of thought’s directedness at how things are must begin with answerability to the empirical world. And now, how can we understand the idea that our thinking is answerable to the empirical world, if not by way of the idea that our thinking is answerable to experience?<sup>194</sup>

In contradistinction to Brandom, who is quite happy to leave contentful perceptual experience, or our answerability to it *as* perceivers, out of the fundamental notions his theory – he even goes so far as to write “[e]xperience’ is not one of my words”<sup>195</sup> – McDowell sets himself the specific task of explaining how (perceptual) experience, treated as a fundamental notion, can possibly be something that our thinking is answerable to. On the face of it, he admits, there may seem to be a tension involved in the idea of thought’s being answerable to experience. Thoughts, (which can be regarded, here, as standing for the broader notion of intentional states/attitudes treated as such) are located for McDowell in the “*sui generis*” logical space of reasons, and are thus normatively answerable to reasons.<sup>196</sup> But an impression from the world is considered to be something that takes place within a different, non-normative, logical space; namely, “the logical space within which natural scientific description situates

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., p. xii.

<sup>195</sup> Brandom, *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*, p. 205 n. 7.

<sup>196</sup> McDowell, *Mind and World: With a New Introduction*, p. xix.

things.”<sup>197</sup> The task then, as McDowell sees it, is answering the question, “How is empirical content possible?”<sup>198</sup> That is, how is empirical content of perceptual experience possible, such that thought can be answerable to it, i.e. to the empirical world? Put otherwise, McDowell’s task is explaining how “[t]he idea of an impression can be both the idea of a natural happening and an idea that belongs in the logical space of reasons.”<sup>199</sup>

Setting himself this task means from the outset that McDowell is already intent on avoiding one philosophical trap that my arguments above would suggest Brandom does not manage to avoid. This is the trap of depicting exercises of conceptual capacities in thinking, believing, etc., as “moves in a self-contained game”, unconstrained by the empirical world.<sup>200</sup> McDowell calls the exercise of conceptual capacities, or the self-critical making-up of one’s mind regarding what one thinks, believes, etc., *spontaneity*.<sup>201</sup> Hence the trap can also be described as depicting spontaneity as “a frictionless spinning in a void”, with no external constraint, no answerability to the world.<sup>202</sup> McDowell’s attempt to answer the question of how empirical content is possible is precisely the attempt to explain how external constraint on spontaneity is possible. But McDowell is also intent on avoiding a second trap. This second trap is that of endorsing a version of the Myth of the Given. We have already seen how Brandom understands his version Myth (section I.II.II), but McDowell spells his own version out somewhat differently. Here is one description McDowell has given of his version:

Givenness in the sense of the Myth would be an availability for cognition to subjects whose getting what is supposedly Given to them does not draw on capacities required for the sort of cognition in question...Having something Given to one would be being given something for knowledge without needing

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid. Elsewhere McDowell spells out the difference between these two logical spaces as follows: “I think the best way to understand this contrast of logical spaces is in terms of a distinction between two ways of finding things intelligible: on the one hand, placing things in a context of rational considerations for and against them (the sort of thing we do when, for instance, we make sense of behaviour as rational agency), and, on the other hand, finding things intelligible in the ways in which the natural sciences do, for instance by subsuming them under lawlike generalizations.” (*The Engaged Intellect: Philosophical Essays*, pp. 246-47.)

<sup>198</sup> McDowell, *Mind and World: With a New Introduction*, p. xxi.

<sup>199</sup> McDowell, *The Engaged Intellect: Philosophical Essays*, p. 247.

<sup>200</sup> McDowell, *Mind and World: With a New Introduction*, p. 5.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 9 and p. 49.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., p. 11. One clear way of falling into this trap would be to endorse a very strong type of coherentism.



to have capacities that would be necessary for one to be able to get to know it.<sup>203</sup>

And one way of falling into this trap would be to endorse the following idea:

The idea is that when we have exhausted all the available moves within the space of concepts, all the available moves from one conceptually organized item to another, there is still one more step we can take: namely, pointing to something that is simply received in experience. It can only be pointing, because *ex hypothesi* this last move in a justification comes after we have exhausted the possibilities of tracing grounds from one conceptually organized, and so articulable, item to another.

The reason this idea of the Given represents a trap to be avoided is that it is simply an incoherent idea. Something that is not conceptually structured, and therefore not placed within the space of reasons, cannot act as a reason. As McDowell says, "the idea of the Given offers exculpations where we wanted justifications."<sup>204</sup> So, how to avoid both the trap of depicting acts of spontaneity as unconstrained by the world, and the trap of endorsing the Myth of the Given, and still explain how empirical content is possible?

McDowell's contention is that this can be done by depicting perceptual experiencing, receptivity in operation, as the activation of the very same conceptual capacities that are employed by a subject when she makes-up her mind regarding what she thinks, believes, etc.

Experiences are indeed receptivity in operation; so they can satisfy the need for an external control on our freedom in empirical thinking. But conceptual capacities, capacities that belong to spontaneity, are already at work in experiences themselves, not just in judgements based on them; so experiences

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<sup>203</sup> John Henry McDowell, "Avoiding the Myth of the Given," in *John McDowell: Experience, Norm, and Nature*, ed. Jakob Lindgaard (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2008), p. 1.

<sup>204</sup> McDowell, *Mind and World: With a New Introduction*, p. 8.

can intelligibly stand in rational relations to our exercises of the freedom that is implicit in the idea of spontaneity.<sup>205</sup>

There is a fine point here that needs stressing. McDowell is not claiming that perceptual experiencing is an exercise of spontaneity, the free making-up of one's mind; this would be to fall into the first trap discussed above – namely, depicting spontaneity as “a frictionless spinning in a void”. Rather, he means to claim that in receptivity the very same conceptual capacities that are exercised in spontaneity are *passively* drawn on. “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 mind.”<sup>206</sup> Rather, as he says, in perceptual experience “a subject is passively saddled with conceptual contents.”<sup>207</sup> What this means is that McDowell can claim that perceptual experience can act as a “constraint [that] comes from outside *thinking*, but not outside from what is *thinkable*.”<sup>208</sup> There is, for McDowell, nothing that is outside the conceptual. The conceptual sphere, as the title of the second lecture in *Mind and World* makes clear, is unbounded.<sup>209</sup>

There is another aspect to McDowell's thesis that ought to be highlighted here. One might complain that McDowell's appeal to conceptually contentful perceptual experiences is nothing other than an appeal to some internal, subjective, intermediary between subjects and the world they are supposed to come to know things about by means of perception.<sup>210</sup> As McDowell states, this is “the hopeless idea that we can start with what is *in here* (here we need a gesture of pointing with both hands into one's head), and entitle ourselves, on the basis of that, to beliefs about what is *out there* (here we need a gesture at the world about us).”<sup>211</sup> McDowell is quite right to respond to this complaint by

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>206</sup> McDowell, *The Engaged Intellect: Philosophical Essays*, p. 251.

<sup>207</sup> McDowell, *Mind and World: With a New Introduction*, p. 31.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>210</sup> A version of this complaint has been made by Brandom at, Robert B. Brandom, "Perception and Rational Constraint: McDowell's "Mind and World", " *Philosophical Issues* 7 (1996): p. 257. McDowell's response to this complaint of Brandom's can be found at, McDowell, *The Engaged Intellect: Philosophical Essays*, pp. 254-56. McDowell discusses essentially the same complaint at, "Perceptual Experience: Both Relational and Contentful," *European Journal of Philosophy* 21, no. 1 (2013): p. 146.

<sup>211</sup> McDowell, *The Engaged Intellect: Philosophical Essays*, pp. 254-55.

protesting that his appeal to experience implies no such appeal to such an intermediary. There is nothing in his thesis that prevents him from claiming that perceptual experiences can make available to a subject how the world itself is. That is, there is nothing to prevent McDowell from claiming that in an experience where all goes well and one is not misled, one takes in how the world is.

But how *exactly* are we to think the conceptual content of perceptual experiences? What structure does it have? What form does it take? In a paper titled "Perceptual Experience: Both Relational and Contentful", McDowell discusses two ways in which the idea that perceptual experience has content can be broadly spelled out, and in what follows I will focus attention solely on these two versions of the idea and not attempt to come up with other possibilities. The reason for this is that these two versions capture, I contend, the most intuitive ways to cash out the idea of perceptual experiential content, but in addition to this I will be arguing that one particular rendering of the second of the two versions is correct. So, now, what are these two ways of spelling out the idea?

### II.II.I – The Possible Structures of Perceptual Experiential Content

The first, and perhaps most familiar way to think of perceptual experiential content, is to construe it as *propositional*. On this version of the idea, the content of a perceptual experience is regarded as having the content, say, *that such and such is the case*. One can thus think of an experience as, so to speak, making a *claim*.<sup>212</sup> As McDowell writes, on this construal, "it [i.e. experience] makes...knowledge available by making present to the subject a *state of affairs*".<sup>213</sup> One can know that such and such is the case because the content of one's experience is that such and such is the case. To use McDowell's example, one can know that there is something red and rectangular in front of one because the content of one's perceptual experience can be *that there is something red and rectangular in front of one*.<sup>214</sup> On

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<sup>212</sup> McDowell suggests ("Perceptual Experience: Both Relational and Contentful," p. 144) that this particular way of cashing out the idea can be found at Sellars, Rorty, and Brandom, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, § 16. This is in contradistinction the way Brandom suggests this section be read in order to fit with his two-ply telling of Sellars' account of perception.

<sup>213</sup> McDowell, "Perceptual Experience: Both Relational and Contentful," p. 145.

<sup>214</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 144-45.

this version of the idea, the content of a judgement one makes can be the very same content of a perceptual experience one has.

The second way of spelling out the idea is to regard experiential content as “less than propositional”.<sup>215</sup> On this version of the idea, the content of an experience is not some state of affairs, it is not *that such and such is the case*, but rather it is an *object*. The relation of judgements, beliefs, knowledge, etc., to an experience is again not hard to think. As McDowell writes, “[o]n this version of the idea...an experience that enables someone to know there is something red and rectangular in front of her, again in the most straightforward way,...[does so by presenting her with]...an *object*: something presented in the experience as red and rectangular and in front of her.”<sup>216</sup>

It is important to note here, as McDowell states, that on either version of the idea of perceptual experiential content just mentioned, the formulations of conceptual content given “can only be partial. Even if one has nothing else in view but a red rectangular surface, there will be more specificity in the content of one’s experience than is captured by “red” and “rectangular” and “in front of me”.”<sup>217</sup>

Over the course of his career McDowell has endorsed both versions of the idea. In *Mind and World* and related papers,<sup>218</sup> for instance, he has maintained that the content of an experience can be “*that things are thus and so*”,<sup>219</sup> which fits with the propositional version of the idea. More recently, however, specifically in a paper titled “Avoiding the Myth of the Given”,<sup>220</sup> he has disendorsed the propositional version of the idea and begun developing an account of the latter, object, version of the idea. In this thesis, as I mentioned above, I will be defending a particular formulation of the object version of the idea, and if McDowell is heading in this direction then I say this is all the better for him.

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid. McDowell here suggests that a version of spelling out the idea of perceptual experiential content that is similar to this way can be found, again, in Sellars’ writings; this time at, Wilfrid Sellars, “Some Reflections on Perceptual Consciousness,” in *Kant’s Transcendental Metaphysics*, ed. Jeffrey Sicha (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview, 2002). On this Sellarsian version, however, as McDowell states, the contents of experiences are treated not as objects, but as “related to the content of claims as noun phrases that apply to things claims are about are related to sentences uttered in making those claims.” (McDowell, “Perceptual Experience: Both Relational and Contentful,” p. 145.)

<sup>217</sup> McDowell, “Perceptual Experience: Both Relational and Contentful,” p. 145.

<sup>218</sup> See, e.g., *The Engaged Intellect: Philosophical Essays*, p. 252.

<sup>219</sup> McDowell, *Mind and World: With a New Introduction*, p. 9.

<sup>220</sup> McDowell, “Avoiding the Myth of the Given.”

Yet, as I will explain below, there are correct and incorrect ways to formulate this version of the idea, and McDowell does not yet have the resources to accommodate the correct formulation. Moreover, even if one does formulate this object version of the idea correctly, there still remains the task of explaining how this empirical content of perceptual experiences can be introduced into the intentional states that are involved in our discursive practices. Without fulfilling this task – and I intend to do just this – one's account of empirical content is left wanting. For the time being though, let us ask what is the problem with endorsing the propositional version of the idea?

### II.II.II – Problems with Treating Perceptual Experiential Content as Propositional

In “Avoiding the Myth of the Given” McDowell himself spells out well the problems with the idea that the content of a perceptual experience is propositional, and they are problems which make the idea not worthy of endorsement. But already in the writings of McDowell's friend, Gareth Evans, who tragically died in 1980 at the age of 34, the basis for these problems was being given an early elaboration. In his posthumously published book, *The Varieties of Reference*, which was edited by McDowell, Evans argues that the idea of the content of a perceptual experience (or, what is the same for him, an internal informational state brought about by perception) being the same as the content of a judgement, i.e. propositional, is simply untenable because the content of an experience is always infinitely richer than what is expressible by a judgement. For Evans, a judgement can be brought about by a perceptual experience, but the specification that such a judgement brings always results in some degree of loss of the experiential content that the judgement is purportedly about. Unfortunately Evans is led to construe the contents of perceptual experiences as *non-conceptual*, which means that on his picture perceptual experiences are ultimately normatively inert.<sup>221</sup> But, nonetheless, he is on to something when he writes that no account of experiential content in terms of the conceptual contents of judgements will work “unless those concepts are assumed to be endlessly fine-grained: and does this make sense? Do we really

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<sup>221</sup> For Evans' elaboration of the distinction between conceptual and non-conceptual see, Gareth Evans, *The Varieties of Reference*, ed. John Henry McDowell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), Chapters 5.2, 6.3, and 7.4.

understand the proposal that we have as many colour concepts as there are shades of colour that we can sensibly discriminate?"<sup>222</sup>

Oddly enough what Evans is on to in this quotation is best brought out by McDowell in "Avoiding the Myth of the Given" – oddly, because in section 5 of Lecture III in *Mind and World* McDowell spends quite some time trying to show that the questions Evans poses in the above quotation do not elicit the responses he clearly thought they ought to.<sup>223</sup> In "Avoiding the Myth of the Given" McDowell begins his discussion of the problems with the idea that experiential content is propositional by explaining that judging is to be regarded as a "*discursive* activity", an internal analogue to asserting (which is exactly how we have been regarding judging, or, more broadly, the adoption of an intentional state/attitude that involves treating it *as* an intentional state), because to assert something is to make it explicit, and judging is to make something explicit to oneself.<sup>224</sup> But, he continues, the content of a discursive act, made explicit as it is, is articulated, whereas the content of a perceptual experience, what McDowell using Kantian terminology refers to as "intuitional" content, is not so articulated.<sup>225</sup> "Part of the point is that there are typically aspects of the content of an intuition that the subject has no means of making discursively explicit... To make such... aspect[s] of the content of an intuition into the content associated with a capacity that is discursive in the primary sense, one would need to carve it out, as it were, from the categorially unified but as yet unarticulated content of the intuition by determining it to be the meaning of a linguistic expression, which one thereby sets up as a means for making that content explicit."<sup>226</sup> As an example of the sort of linguistic expression McDowell has in mind he gives "having that shade of colour", but we may also take as examples, "having that shape", "having that scent", where these expressions involve a demonstrative picking out of something.<sup>227</sup> As McDowell also states, since we have in view here not only assertions but also judgements there may be a need to include not only the carving out of an aspect of an intuition by determining it to be the meaning of a linguistic expression,

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>223</sup> See, McDowell, *Mind and World: With a New Introduction*, pp. 56-60.

<sup>224</sup> McDowell, "Avoiding the Myth of the Given," p. 6.

<sup>225</sup> "'Intuition' is the standard English translation of Kant's '*Anschauung*'... An *Anschauung* is a having in view. (As is usual in philosophy, Kant treats visual experiences as exemplary.)" (Ibid., p. 4.)

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

but also the carving out by “determining it to be the content associated with a capacity to make predications in judgements.”<sup>228</sup> Now, all this seems to me to spell out what it was that Evans was on to when he claimed that we cannot think of the content of an experience to be the same as the conceptual content of a judgement unless those concepts are assumed to be infinitely fine-grained. The problem with Evans’ account of the issue is that he construed the relevant distinction as that between *conceptual* and *non-conceptual* rather than that between *articulated* and *unarticulated*.

There is a further, related, problem that McDowell locates for the idea that the content of a perceptual experience is propositional. It is that in a discursive act one brings together, unifies, certain significances, meaningful expressions, or what have you; whereas this is not what occurs in receiving an intuition, i.e. the content of a perceptual experience. As McDowell makes clear, this is not to suggest that in discursive activity one brings together “self-standing building-blocks, separately thinkable elements in the contents of claims or judgments...[For]...[o]ne can think the significance of, say, a predicative expression only in the context of a thought in which that content occurs predicatively.”<sup>229</sup> Nonetheless what one does in order to make a judgement about some aspect of an intuition, i.e. content of an experience, is ‘carve out’ that aspect from the unity of the intuition that one is saddled with in having the experience, such that one can then bring it together with another significance, or other significances, and obtain a judgement. As McDowell states, “[i]ntuiting does not do this carving out for one.”<sup>230</sup> So the content of a perceptual experience is not discursive, i.e. not propositional.

### II.II.III – Problematic Ways to Construe Perceptual Experiential Content as an Object

What now of the second version of the idea that perceptual experiences have conceptual content, i.e. the version according to which the content of a perceptual experience is an *object*? Firstly, we must note that the notion of an object is the notion of a formally unified thing, which speaks directly to the point made in the previous paragraph that the intuitional content of an experience is received as unified. The

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

question we must ask now is, how exactly are we to cash out this notion of object further? That is, if the conceptual contents of perceptual experiences are objects, exactly what conceptual capacities are drawn on in receiving experiential contents? In "Avoiding the Myth of the Given" McDowell identifies what he considers to be one quite problematic answer to this question. He spells out the supposed problematic answer while at the same time construing the contents of perceptual experiences as discursive, i.e. propositional, but we can spell it out whilst treating experiential content as non-discursive, non-propositional, without any difficulty. The answer runs as follows: the conceptual capacities drawn on in perceptual experience are all those that are exploited in all the knowledge judgements that the experience allows the experiencing subject to make non-inferentially. McDowell suggests that the reason this answer is problematic can be brought out by means of a thought experiment.<sup>231</sup> He has us imagine a scenario in which conditions are good, he has a bird in sight, and this experience enables him to make the non-inferential knowledge judgement that the bird is a cardinal. He does not infer the bird is a cardinal by comparing it with photographs or sketches in a field guide. Rather, he knows this non-inferentially because if conditions are good, and they are assumed to be, he can recognise, immediately, a cardinal in his visual field.<sup>232</sup> Now, on the answer given above to the question of what conceptual capacities are drawn on perceptual experience, we would have to assume that the conceptual capacities drawn on in the perceptual experience involved in this example include those McDowell exploits when he makes the knowledge judgement "I see a cardinal in front of me", i.e. the experience would have to present an object to McDowell that is a cardinal and that is in front of him. Another way to put this would perhaps be to say that the perceptual experience presents an object specified by the concepts *cardinal*, *in front of me*, etc.

The problem with this answer is meant to be clear when we consider how things are for different people under the same perceptual circumstances. For instance, we can imagine that a subject is in exactly the same perceptual circumstances that McDowell is in when he sees what he knows to be a cardinal, but is not equipped with the concept of a cardinal, or at least cannot recognise one immediately. As

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<sup>231</sup> McDowell states that it is Charles Travis who has forced him to consider cases like the following.

<sup>232</sup> McDowell, "Avoiding the Myth of the Given," p. 3.



McDowell says, “[i]t is true that in an obvious sense things looks different to me and her. To me what I see looks like (looks to be) a cardinal, and to her it does not.”<sup>233</sup> But we are also meant to come to the conclusion that there is a sense in which both subjects’ experiences have the same content. McDowell expresses this by writing, “[h]er experience might be just like mine in how it makes the bird visually present to her.”<sup>234</sup> Going part of the way to remedy what he sees as the problem here McDowell proffers the following: “my experience makes the bird visually present to me, and my recognitional capacity enables me to bring what I see figures in that content.”<sup>235</sup>

Filling out the details of his remedy slightly, McDowell states that while we ought to not conceive of some concepts, like *cardinal*, as being drawn on in the having of a perceptual experience – though they may of course be drawn on at the level of one’s recognitional capacities - we also ought not to think that experiences are devoid of conceptual content. He writes that in deciding which concepts ought to be regarded as drawn on in the having of an experience “[a] natural stopping point, for visual experiences, would be proper sensibles of sight and common sensibles accessible to sight. We should conceive experience as drawing on conceptual capacities associated with concepts of proper and common sensibles.”<sup>236</sup> Expanding further on this he suggests that

[t]he common sensibles accessible to sight are modes of space occupancy: shape, size, position, movement or its absence. In an intuition unified by a form capturable by ‘animal’, we might recognize content, under the head of modes of occupancy, that could not figure in intuitions of inanimate objects. We might think of common sensibles accessible to sight as including, for instance, postures such as perching and modes of locomotion such as hopping or flying.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

Of course, McDowell would admit that the content of an experience is always more fine-grained than is able to be captured by the linguistic expressions associated with what might be considered common sensibles like 'round', 'red', 'flying', etc. Speaking to this point he would presumably, as he does in *Mind and World*, suggest that "one can give linguistic expression to a concept that is exactly as fine-grained as the experience, by uttering a phrase like "that shade", in which the demonstrative exploits the presence of the sample."<sup>238</sup> Presumably, then, with regard to the bird sighting example given above, the concepts involved in the having of the visual experience would be something like those given linguistic expression by phrases such as "that shape", "that flying" or "that perching", etc. This is to say that the concepts involved in the experience are *demonstrative concepts* or *object-dependent concepts*.

Now, the 'problem' that McDowell locates is not where our attention should be focussed. McDowell completely misses the real problem that is the cause of the uneasiness he is made to feel when faced with thought experiments like the one laid out above concerning the bird sighting. For this reason, his 'remedy', as I have called it, acts like a coat of paint over spreading rot. The issue is not whether the concepts *that flying*, *that shape*, *etc.*, or even the concept *cardinal* are drawn on in the perceptual experience. The issue is not whether we ought to stop at "common sensibles" or, so to speak, higher order concepts. What is at issue, rather, is the independence of worldly objects from our contingent concepts. Perceptual experience must reveal to us objects that are conceived of as independent from our contingent conceptualisations of them. (Of course, understanding how to balance this with the seemingly contradictory idea that experiential content is thoroughly conceptual, which I fully endorse, is another complex matter in its own right. For the way I suggest this is possible requires us to rethink what we mean by 'concept'. And this we will do by looking to Hegel in section IV.II. What McDowell understands as a concept, as we will see, is something like what Hegel understands as an 'abstract universal', and such an understanding is incomplete. I will discuss all of this in greater detail in what is to come.) It is a contingent matter that I have the concept *flying* – I may never have come

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<sup>238</sup> McDowell, *Mind and World: With a New Introduction*, p. 57. We can be sure that what is given linguistic expression by locutions such as "that shade" are truly concepts, McDowell adds, if the "associated capacit[ies] can persist into the future [beyond the experience itself], if only for a short time, and that, having persisted, [they] can be used also in thoughts about what is by then the past, if only the recent past." (Ibid.)

across the flying mode of locomotion. So it does not help to say that my experience reveals to me a flying object, rather than a cardinal. McDowell wants to claim that experience reveals the way the world is, but surely the way the world is cannot depend on my subjective, contingent, concepts. To suggest it does would pretty quickly land one in a pit of inescapable and radical skepticism. And it does not at all help to simply move away from concepts that may only be had by a few to “common” concepts that we (who exactly?) all must be supposed to have, or even concepts supposed to be necessary to experience the world *as we do*. For, if experience reveals the way the world is, then this idea still makes the way the world is fundamentally dependent on the contingent fact of our (again, who exactly?) existence as the concept mongering creatures we are. If the world is anything, it is surely independent of us. And if we are to have any knowledge of worldly objects, then surely included in this knowledge must be that our knowledge judgements are about objects independent of the contingency of our existence and our concepts. Grasping this makes the fact that many philosophers are inclined to endorse the idea that the contents of perceptual experiences are non-conceptual quite understandable, even if idea cannot be made to work. These non-conceptualists, it may be said, push too far one way, and McDowell pushes too far the other way.

It could perhaps be argued here that McDowell’s assertion that the concepts involved in perceptual experience are demonstrative, or object-dependent concepts allows him a way of responding to the objection I have just raised. For it may be claimed the object-dependent nature of these concepts means that their determinations depend on the way the world is, rather than things being the other way around, i.e. rather than the way the world is depending on the determinations of our concepts. I suspect this claim will run into problems of circularity, for it seems as though in explaining the process of concept determination one would need to make reference to experiences of objects already conceptualised by the very concepts that are said to be determined by their dependence on those very objects. But let us assume this worry can be dealt with and instead ask what form the content of perceptual experience has to take in order for it to present a subject with an object that is independent of the contingency of her existence and her concepts. We shall answer this question by first noting certain forms the experiential content *cannot* take.

It cannot take the form expressible by a Russellian definite description or an analogue thereof. If an object is independent of our contingent concepts, then it is independent of any description in which these concepts figure. Moreover, whether anything in fact fits a Russellian definite description, thus whether the description picks anything out, is meant to depend on the way the world is, so stating that the content of experience takes the form expressible by a Russellian definite description, or an analogue thereof, is not even to offer a real attempt to answer the question we have posed. When dealing with a Russellian definite description, or an analogues thereof, one must ask what form experiential content must take for a subject to be presented with an object that fits the description, or the analogue thereof – and one certainly cannot answer that it must take a form expressible by a Russellian definite description or an analogue thereof, for then one sets off on an infinite regress and simply leaves objects out of the picture entirely.

The experiential content also cannot take the form of what Rudolf Carnap called an “*individual concept*”.<sup>239</sup> For the determinations of these so-called individual concepts are highly contingent upon us and our language.<sup>240</sup> Nor can the experiential content take the form of something that functions as or like a Quinean singular term. A Quinean singular term “purports to name one and only one object”, but what it purports to name is a matter that is, again, contingent on us and our language.<sup>241</sup> Moreover, for a similar reason to that just discussed in relation Russellian definite descriptions, to suggest that the content of experience takes the form of something that functions as or like a Quinean singular term is not to offer a real answer to our question at all. For when dealing with a Quinean singular term it is appropriate to ask what form experiential content must take so that it can present to an individual an object that is the object named by the singular term – and one cannot answer by asserting that the content must take the form of something that functions as or like a Quinean singular term, for, again, this would be to set off on an infinite regress and to leave the object out of the picture. Finally, and for reasons almost identical to those just presented, the experiential content cannot take the form of a Kripkean rigid

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<sup>239</sup> Rudolf Carnap, *Meaning and Necessity: A Study in Semantics and Modal Logic* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 41.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, §9.

<sup>241</sup> W. V. O. Quine, *Methods of Logic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), §34.

designator.<sup>242</sup> For when dealing with a Kripkean rigid designator it is appropriate to ask what form experiential content must take to present an object that can be fixed as the referent of the rigid designator – and, again, one cannot answer that the content must take the form of a rigid designator, as this sets up an infinite regress and leaves the object out of the picture.

What this all points to is the fact that if perceptual experience is to both present a subject with an object, and present it in such a way that is independent of the contingency of her existence and her concepts, then its content cannot be such that it presents the object in a *mediated* way – e.g. mediated by a description, an individual concept, a singular term, a rigid designator, etc., etc. The form the content must take, then, is the form of the *unmediated*, or *immediate*, object itself. Furthermore, as this object is not to be mediated by anything, it must also be presented as *singular*. For a singular thing is a thing that is unified and independent of other things in itself. Anything presented as mediated, on the other hand, is an instance, value, referent, etc., of something else, and is thus not presented as independent but rather as dependent on its togetherness with something else.

Now, McDowell simply does not have the resources to accommodate such singular contents; or at least he has not written anything yet that would suggest he can accommodate them. For to accommodate such singular contents he would have to give up the idea that the contents of perceptual experiences are only those expressible by “*this-such*” phrases (e.g. “this colour”, “this odour”, etc.), or analogues thereof. Since, to maintain that the contents of experiences are only those expressible by *this-such* phrases – and McDowell has not written anything to suggest that he no longer maintains this, he has only changed his mind about what he thinks can take the position of the *such* in the *this-such* phrases – is to maintain that the contents of experiences are mediated objects, objects that are only ever instances of kinds (the *suches* of the *this-such* phrases) and are thus mediated by said kinds. I would contend that McDowell, by his own lights, must give up the idea that the contents of perceptual experiences are only those expressible by *this-such* phrases, and instead endorse the idea that these contents are singular, for he needs such singular contents to fix the reference of the demonstratives of his demonstrative, or object

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<sup>242</sup> For Kripke’s discussion of rigid designators see, Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1981), Preface.

dependent, *this-such* concepts. Without making this move, objects are really left out of his picture, and his thesis is incoherent because there is nothing to fix the demonstratives of the *this-such* contents.<sup>243</sup>

#### II.II.IV – Perceptual Experiential Contents as Singular Objects and the Problem of the Syllogism

There is an important distinction that has arisen in our discussion that needs to be elaborated on somewhat. It is the distinction between a singular, or individual, and a this-such, i.e. an instance of a kind. This distinction can otherwise be expressed as being that between a singular and a particular, where a particular is, properly speaking, *part* of a membership of a kind. It is common in modern philosophy for this important distinction to be overlooked, and for singular and particular to be conflated. But for Kant and Hegel, both of whom will be major players in the rest of this thesis, the distinction played a central role. And, indeed, already in the works of Aristotle, from which both Kant and Hegel picked up a great deal, the distinction is present and effective. For instance, in *Posterior Analytics* Aristotle states that “one necessarily perceives an individual...and it is impossible to perceive what is universal and holds in every case; for that is not an individual...So, since demonstrations are universal, and it is not possible to perceive these, it is evident that it is not possible to understand through perception either”.<sup>244</sup> As Paul Redding points out, “[l]ogically this exclusion of singulars from reasoning [which is what Aristotle means by demonstration] was reflected by the fact that Aristotle had distinguished the *particular* judgements that were found in syllogistic patterns from properly *singular* judgements that had no proper place in syllogisms.”<sup>245</sup> Thus Aristotle says, in *Prior Analytics*, “[i]t is necessary that

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<sup>243</sup> Richard Heck (Richard Heck, "Nonconceptual Content and the "Space of Reasons", " *Philosophical Review* 109, no. 4 (2000)) and Robert Hanna, (Robert Hanna, *Kant, Science, and Human Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 108-09) both argue that McDowell does not, but needs to, include something in the contents of experiences that can fix the demonstratives of the *this-such* concepts. Unfortunately both make the mistake of assuming this something must be non-conceptual. For reasons already discussed, this is an unworkable assumption. But it is also unnecessary. As I will show below in my discussion of Hegel's system, one can hold onto the idea that the contents of experience are immediate singular objects, whilst maintaining that such contents are thoroughly conceptual.

<sup>244</sup> Aristotle, "Posterior Analytics," in *Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume 1: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), Bk. 1, Ch. 31, 87b 28-36.

<sup>245</sup> Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought*, p. 89. For Aristotle's classification of judgements see, Aristotle, "De Interpretatione," in *The Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume 1: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), Ch. 7. For his discussions

every demonstration and every deduction should prove either that something belongs or that it does not, and this either *universally* or *in part*", conspicuously leaving out any suggestion that a deduction or demonstration may prove anything singularly.<sup>246</sup>

What this suggests, then, is that if we want to maintain that the contents of perceptual experiences are singulars – which we do – and that perceptual experiences can be normatively, inferentially efficacious *for the experiencing subject* – which we do – then we need to explain how intentional states/attitudes can be of or about singular objects (such that they can serve as to introduce empirical content into our discursive practices) and also play a role in inferential reasoning.

As Redding has noted, "the problem of the exclusion of singularity from syllogistic reasoning had been bypassed by scholastic logicians by simply treating singular terms *as* universals, and, so, singular judgements as universal judgements"; for instance, both universal judgement and singular judgements can be treated as *exceptionless*.<sup>247</sup> As Redding also notes, this practice of treating singular judgements as universal judgements was effectively followed by both Leibniz in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and by Quine more recently in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>248</sup> This practice cannot, however, be followed here. For if we treat the judgements that are meant to be of or about the singulars that are the contents of perceptual experiences as judgements about universals, then the contents of experiences are not in fact treated as immediate singulars, but rather as objects mediated by universals. And, for reasons just discussed, treating the contents of perceptual experiences this way will not work. We thus need to offer some other explanation of how intentional states can be of or about singular objects (such that they can serve as to introduce empirical content into our discursive practices) and also play a role in inferential reasoning. This is the task to which we now must turn.

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of syllogisms see, "Prior Analytics," in *The Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume 1: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). Also, "Posterior Analytics."

<sup>246</sup> Aristotle, "Prior Analytics," Bk. 1, Ch. 23, 40b 23-25. (My emphasis).

<sup>247</sup> Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought*, p. 90.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

### III - Kant and Singular Contents

If we are to have intentional states that are answerable to the world, we must have an account of perceptual experience as able to rationally constrain our intentional states. Such an account, as was shown in section II.II.II, cannot construe the contents of experiences as propositional. Nor, as was shown in section II.II.III, can any content of experience be merely an instance of a kind, e.g. a this-such. Rather, the contents of experiences must be singular, but in such a way that they admit of universal classification, which enables them to play a role in inferential reasoning and thus rationally constrain our inferentially articulated intentional states. This means, I suggest, that such contents must be singular and also particular.

Kant had well understood the need of having a notion of experience (*Erfahrung*) that in some way included singular contents, and for this reason he had claimed that what is encountered in experience is a “manifold of intuitions”. As we briefly noted back in section I.II.III, Kant’s account of rationality does not sit well with the Brandom-Sellars attack on formal approaches to reasoning, as it ultimately depends on formal principles determined prior to any of our doings. For this reason, Kant’s philosophy by itself will not suggest to us the right way of accounting for experiences as providing rational constraint on our intentional states. However, I will argue that Hegel, who also charged Kant with adhering to a formalism, does offers us a way of accounting for this, and in such a way that we can still hold on to the idea that Brandomian social deontic practices of attributing and acknowledging entitlements and commitments determine meanings and confer them on to things. Yet, one of the best ways of getting a grip on those aspects of Hegel’s thought that are relevant for us here is to look at some of the details of his critique of Kant. For those aspects can be seen, as I will show, as arising out of the results of this critique of Kant, and as being developed in response to what he found troubling in Kant’s philosophy. It is not my purpose here, however, to undertake a comprehensive study either of Kant’s philosophical system as a whole, or of all the various arguments that make up Hegel’s complete critique of this system. My only purpose is to go over those particular aspects of Hegel’s critique, and the related aspects of Kant’s system, that will be helpful in elaborating the insights I want to draw from Hegel related to intentional states/attitudes being *of* or *about* properly singular objects. As a result I will leave



a lot of terrain untrodden, including, for instance, Kant's practical philosophy. Let us begin, then, by rehearsing the parts of Kant's philosophy that will be relevant for us.

### III.I – Kant: Intuitions, Concepts, and Judgements

Central to the philosophical system Kant develops during his Critical period, which properly begins in 1781 with the publication of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (the first *Critique*), is the depiction of human cognition as dependent on the cooperation of two separate faculties.<sup>249</sup>

Our cognition arises from two fundamental sources in the mind, the first of which is the reception of representations (the receptivity of impressions), the second the faculty for cognizing an object by means of these representations (spontaneity of concepts); through the former an object is **given** to us, through the latter it is **thought** in relation to that representation (as a mere determination of the mind).<sup>250</sup>

By the former faculty we are granted “sensibility” to receive representations by means of being in some way affected by objects.<sup>251</sup> A representation [*Vorstellung*] we receive through our sensibility is what Kant calls an “intuition [*Anschauung*]”, which is “singular [*einzel*]” and relates “immediately” to the individual object of which it is a representation.<sup>252</sup> Moreover, intuitions may be either “empirical” if they are received by our senses being affected by the “actual presence” of the objects they represent (as would be the case with my visual perception of my copy of the *Critique of Pure Reason*), or “pure” if they are received without the presence of the objects they represent to our senses (as would be the case with my representation of a square).<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., A50/B74.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., A19/B33.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., A320/B377. See also, A19/B33.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., A50/B74.

The latter faculty, the faculty of the “spontaneity of concepts”, is what Kant calls the “understanding [*Verstand*]”.<sup>254</sup> Concepts, unlike intuitions, are, as I mentioned already back in section I.II.II, general representations, which only ever relate in a “mediate” way to objects, “by means of a mark, which can be common to several things.”<sup>255</sup> They are “predicates of possible judgments” that must ultimately relate back to subjects, to singular intuitions.<sup>256</sup> A concept can be either “**empirical** or a **pure concept**”<sup>257</sup> – the former rely on the latter and come to be determined through experiences in some way, but exactly how this occurs is not made clear by Kant. Pure concepts are what Kant calls “categories”. They are “**forms of thought**”<sup>258</sup> common to all humans (in fact, all rational beings) and “they are not derived from nature”.<sup>259</sup> A category “has its origin solely in the understanding”.<sup>260</sup>

According to Kant our human constitution is such that “**understanding** and **sensibility** can determine an object **only in combination**. If we separate them, then we have intuitions without concepts or concepts without intuitions, but in either case we have representations that we cannot relate to any determinate object.”<sup>261</sup> This is to say, in Kant’s terminology, that our human understanding is “discursive”, and we may only come to know objects, nature, through being given intuitions through sensibility, and these intuitions being subsumed under concepts.<sup>262</sup> This allows us to understand how Kant can be viewed as sensitive to the issue regarding singularity and inference that, as we saw in section II.II.IV, was already highlighted in the writings of Aristotle. For Kant, theoretical judgements about nature involve concepts (general representations) predicated of other concepts, and so they are not really singular and may play a role in syllogistic inferences. But, they are meant to ultimately relate back to

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid., A51/B75.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., A320/B377.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., A69/B94.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., A320/B377.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., B150.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., B163.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., A320/B377.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., A258/B314.

<sup>262</sup> This is the point Kant is getting at in his oft-quoted statement, “Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind. It is thus just as necessary to make the mind’s concepts sensible (i.e., to add an object to them in intuition) as it is to make its intuitions understandable (i.e., to bring them under concepts).” (Ibid., A51/B75.)

the singular sensible intuitions, which importantly relate *immediately* to objects, and which are subsumed under the concepts involved in the judgements.

Now, for Kant the only intuitions we can have are those that are subject to our subjective *a priori* “pure forms of all sensible intuition” – space and time.<sup>263</sup> An intuition that is subject to these forms is what Kant calls an “appearance [*Erscheinung*].”<sup>264</sup> The reason space and time must be understood as *subjective* forms of intuition, Kant argues, has to do with the roles they play in his all-important notion of synthetic *a priori* judgements.<sup>265</sup> One such judgement would be the following: two concentric circles with differing circumference lengths will not meet at any point. The proposition involved in this judgement is universally and necessarily true, but it is not so due to analyticity, so Kant would argue. For it cannot be derived from the concepts of *circle*, *concentric*, and *two* alone. Hence, it must be synthetic, and for this reason our derivation of it must involve an appeal to an intuition. (Kant regards all the judgements that form the principles of mathematics, physics, and geometry as being like this.<sup>266</sup> It is worth keeping in mind also that he is working within the confines of Newtonian physics and Euclidean geometry.) But, Kant would argue, even though the judgement must hold good for all objects cognized by means of empirical intuitions, any intuition appealed to in the derivation of the proposition it involves *cannot* be empirical. For if we did appeal to empirical intuitions, we could not end up with a judgement that is *universally* and *necessarily* true. At most we could end up with the judgement, “All hitherto seen concentric circles with differing circumference lengths have not met at any point.” So,

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid., A39/B56.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., A20/B34.

<sup>265</sup> In the introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant states that “we will understand by *a priori* cognitions not those that occur independently of this or that experience, but rather those that occur *absolutely* independently of all experience. Opposed to them are empirical cognitions, or those that are possible only *a posteriori*, i.e. through experience.” (Ibid., B3.) And concerning synthetic judgements he says: “In all judgments in which the relation of a subject to the predicate is thought (if I consider only affirmative judgments, since the application to negative ones is easy) this relation is possible in two different ways. Either the predicate *B* belongs to the subject *A* as something that is (covertly) contained in this concept *A*; or *B* lies entirely outside the concept *A*, though to be sure it stands in connection with it. In the first case I call the judgment **analytic**, in the second **synthetic**.” (Ibid., A6-7/B10.)

<sup>266</sup> See, *ibid.*, B14-17, and A47-48/B65. It is true that Kant admits that “a few principles that the geometers presuppose are actually analytic and rest on the principle of contradiction”, but significantly he follows this by stating that “they [i.e. the analytic principles presupposed by the geometers] also only serve, as identical propositions, for the chain of method and not as principles [*Principien*]”. (Ibid., B16-17.) The admission thus need be of no concern for us here.

according to Kant, any intuition appealed to would have to be a “pure *a priori* intuition”.<sup>267</sup> But since such an intuition must be subject to the form of space – we are, after all, dealing with geometry in the above example – and the form of time,<sup>268</sup> these forms themselves, so Kant argues, must not come from empirical experience. Thus he states,

It is therefore indubitably certain and not merely possible or even probable that space and time, as necessary conditions of all (outer and inner) experience, are merely *subjective* conditions of all our intuition, in relation to which therefore all objects are mere appearances and not things given for themselves in this way.<sup>269</sup>

The final part of this quotation concerning “things given for themselves” brings us to the next point that we need to consider if we are to get a handle on Hegel’s critique of Kant. A thing given for itself would be, for Kant, a *thing-in-itself* (*Ding an sich*), which he has us think under the concept *noumenon* – a concept which is, according to him, necessary for us.<sup>270</sup> But what exactly is the concept, and why is it necessary? To answer these questions it is best to consider some preliminary points.

I said a moment ago that the notion of synthetic *a priori* judgements was all-important for Kant. I also pointed out that he regards all the judgements that form the principles of physics, mathematics, and geometry as being of this type. This latter point gives us the reason why the notion of synthetic *a priori* judgements is so important for Kant – he thinks that for science to have a secure footing, so that by it we may gain knowledge of empirical nature, of objects, it must be shown that (necessary and universally true) synthetic *a priori* judgements are possible. The charge he laid down against the philosophical systems that came before him was precisely that they had failed to offer a

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid., A48/B65.

<sup>268</sup> On the surface less clear why such an intuition must be subject to the form of time. According to Kant, the reason why it must is that time is the form of all inner sense, and “all representations, whether or not they have outer things as their object, nevertheless as determinations of the mind themselves belong to the inner sense”. (Ibid., A34/B51.)

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., A48-49/B66. My emphasis.

<sup>270</sup> In what follows I will be claiming that when Kant enjoins us to use the concept *noumenon*, he intends for us to use it only in a negative way. Yet it may be thought that if we are to think of a thing ‘given’ for itself then we must use the concept *noumenon* in a positive sense (Kant draws the distinction between the negative and positive senses of *noumenon* at ibid., B307-09.) This is, however, incorrect. Though to explain why it is incorrect a bit more needs to be said of the concept *noumenon* in general. Thus I will put off the explanation until n. 279 below.

way to account for the possibility of these cognitions. The reason for this being that in the development of these systems it had “been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the object.”<sup>271</sup> This assumption had, thought Kant, led to an overestimation of our cognitive abilities. Specifically, it had led to the assumption that we may cognize objects that are independent of our human, subjective, conditions of experience. Where to “cognize” an object means to prove that it is an object of possible experience (inner or outer).<sup>272</sup> This overestimation, he argued, had in turn led to irresolvable contradictions, or antinomies, that made metaphysics and synthetic *a priori* judgements seemingly impossible.<sup>273</sup>

Thus, in the prefaces to the two editions of the first *Critique*, Kant sets himself the task of rescuing metaphysics by solving these antinomies, which should, according to him, allow for synthetic *a priori* judgements to be shown to be possible. His way of going about fulfilling this task starts with the rejection of the assumption that “our cognition must conform to the object”, and instead “try[ing] whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition, which would agree better with the requested possibility of an *a priori* cognition of them, which is to establish something about the objects before they are given to us.”<sup>274</sup> This is Kant’s famous Copernican revolution - to have nature conform to our subjective conditions of experience – and it requires recognizing the discursive nature of our understanding; that is, recognizing that we can only cognize what is (sensibly) received, and that what is (sensibly) received must conform to our subjective conditions.

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<sup>271</sup> Ibid., Bxvi.

<sup>272</sup> “To **cognize** an object, it is required that I be able to prove its possibility (whether by the testimony of experience from its actuality or *a priori* through reason)”. (Ibid., Bxxvi.) It is important to understand that when Kant writes in this passage that an object’s possibility may be proven “*a priori* through reason” he is not claiming that we can prove the possibility of an object *as* an object that is independent of our human, subjective, conditions of experience. Rather, he is claiming that we can prove, by *a priori* means, the possibility of an object *as* an object that accords with our human, subjective, conditions of experience (hence, *as* an object of possible experience).

<sup>273</sup> Kant calls these contradictions the “antinomies of pure reason”. See, *ibid.*, A405/B432-A460/B488. He presents a further antinomy, the antinomy of teleological judgement (which judgement will play a role in the discussion that follows), at Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), §70.

<sup>274</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxvi.

For Kant, only those objects determined by the combination of concepts and intuitions can be objects of possible experience for us. But whereas the forms of intuition – space and time – are, as Kant says, “grounded on sensibility”, the categories (forms of thought) are not, and they can “therefore seem to allow an application extended beyond all objects of the senses.”<sup>275</sup> With the categories alone we can *think* things, where thinking is different from *cognizing*, in that “I can **think** whatever I like, as long as I do not contradict myself, i.e. as long as my concept is a possible thought, even if I cannot give any assurance whether or not there is a corresponding object within the sum total of all possibilities.”<sup>276</sup> (Cognizing can, in this sense, be regarded as a restricted form of thinking.) This means, according to Kant, that given our discursive understanding we are able to think things-in-themselves as *noumena*.

[I]f we call certain objects, as appearances, beings of sense (*phenomena*), because we distinguish the way in which we intuit them from their constitution in itself, then it already follows from our concept that to these we as it were oppose, as objects thought merely through the understanding, either other objects conceived in accordance with the latter constitution, even though we do not intuit it in them, or else other possible things, which are not objects of our senses at all, and call these beings of understanding (*noumena*)<sup>277</sup>

The concept of a noumenon is what we arrive at when “we abstract from the manner of our intuition”, and it is necessary for us.<sup>278</sup> Moreover, we must, according to Kant, properly recognize this concept in order to recognize the limits of our cognition, of what is knowable by us, so that we may avoid the antinomies that have previously made metaphysics and synthetic *a priori* judgements seem impossible. “The concept of a noumenon is”, says Kant, “merely a **boundary concept**”, it simply “limit[s] the pretension of sensibility, and [is] therefore only of negative use.”<sup>279</sup> But in putting the concept to use in

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid., B305.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., Bxxvi.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., B306.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., B307.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., A255/B310-11. Above I claimed that a ‘thing given for itself’ would be, for Kant, a thing-in-itself, to be thought under the concept *noumenon*; which concept I have now claimed we can only use in a negative way. Yet, as I mentioned at n. 270 above, some may – incorrectly, as I claimed – think that since a thing given for itself is

this negative way, and thus clearly restricting our theoretical cognitions to the world of appearances, Kant believes it is possible to show that knowledge of the world is possible.

### III.II.I – Hegel: Kant’s Subjectivism and Finitude

Hegel was well aware of the importance Kant placed on restricting our cognition to appearances<sup>280</sup> - indeed, it was due to this restriction that in his early Jena essay, titled *Faith and Knowledge*, he labelled Kant’s philosophy a philosophy of *finitude*.<sup>281</sup> Kant, he says in that essay, restricted “Reason to the form of finitude, [an injunction] never to forget the absoluteness of the subject in every rational cognition”.<sup>282</sup> This is simply to say that Kant enjoined us to acknowledge that in every case our cognitions are limited to objects that conform to our subjective conditions. For Hegel, this means that Kant’s philosophy is a “subjectivism”,<sup>283</sup> because in limiting our theoretical cognitions in such a way he “raised the standpoint of the subject...to the first and highest place”.<sup>284</sup> Furthermore, Hegel was aware that, according to Kant, thinking things-in-themselves beyond the realm of our possible experience was necessary. As he put it in the same essay, for Kant, “the Absolute...is beyond Reason...[t]he eternal remain[s] in a realm beyond, a beyond too vacuous for cognition.”<sup>285</sup> The necessity of thinking such a beyond, in Kant’s philosophy, comes in here, according to Hegel, from the fact that the subjective standpoint is

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specifically *given*, it must therefore be thought by using the concept *noumenon* in a positive sense. I now owe an explanation of why this thought is incorrect.

At *ibid.*, B307. Kant states that a noumenon in the positive sense would be “an **object [Object] of a non-sensible intuition**”, that is, an object of an intuition (hence the idea that *givenness* implies it) that does not conform to our subjective forms of sensible intuition (i.e. space and time), and is thus not an appearance. As such, however, it “lies absolutely outside our faculty of cognition”, since, as we already know, “the use of the categories [for cognition] can by no means reach beyond the boundaries of the objects of experience [i.e. objects of possible experience, objects that conform to the forms of space and time]”. (*Ibid.*, B308.) But this means that we cannot even understand the possibility of a noumenon in the positive sense. Which is to say, there is really no use at all to which we can put the concept *noumenon* taken in the positive sense. We can only put the concept *noumenon* taken in the negative sense to work, and then only so as to function as a limiting concept. Thus Kant writes, “that which we call noumenon must be understood to be such *only* in a **negative** sense.” (*Ibid.*, B309. My emphasis.)

<sup>280</sup> See, for example, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, ed. Klaus Brinkmann and Daniel O. Dahlstrom, trans. Klaus Brinkmann and Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), §45 Addition.

<sup>281</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel: Faith and Knowledge: An English Translation of G. W. F. Hegel's Glauben Und Wissen*, ed. Walter Cerf and H. S. Harris, trans. Walter Cerf and H. S. Harris (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1977).

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

determined, for Kant, by means of its being set against what lies beyond its limits.<sup>286</sup> But Hegel did not agree with Kant that his subjectivist philosophy showed knowledge of the empirical world to be possible. Rather, he thought it resulted in skepticism. Kant's philosophy, says Hegel, has "[t]he fundamental principle...[of] the absoluteness of finitude and, resulting from it, the absolute antithesis of finitude and infinity, reality and ideality, the sensuous and the supersensuous, and the beyondness of what is truly real and absolute."<sup>287</sup>

It is claims like this that may leave one with the impression that Hegel simply failed to understand Kant. It can easily seem, for instance, that Hegel missed the reason why Kant developed a philosophy of "subjectivism", and that he is endorsing what may be called the "deflationary" understanding of Kant's notion of appearances.<sup>288</sup> According to such an understanding, appearances, that is supposedly "real" spatiotemporal objects, are identified with things-in-themselves. Our theoretical cognitions, on the other hand, since we have no immediate access to this realm of the "real", are of subjectively conditioned representations, and for this reason must forever remain in question as to their objective validity. Clearly such an understanding of the subjective perspective and the notion of appearances would lead directly into the territory of skepticism, but it cannot be the understanding that Kant intended his readers to come away with. Indeed, Kant attributed such a picture of appearances to the philosophical system he labelled "**transcendental realism**", which he opposed, on exactly the issue of the distinction of appearances and things-in-themselves, to his own "**transcendental idealism**".<sup>289</sup> According to Kant, what his philosophy of transcendental idealism shows is that it is *because* we cognize

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<sup>286</sup> Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Erster Teil: Die Objektive Logik, Erster Band: Die Lehre Vom Sein (1832)*, ed. Friedrich Hogemann and Walter Jaeschke, vol. 21, *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1985), p. 47; *The Science of Logic*, ed. George di Giovanni, trans. George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 40-41. Also, Hegel says (*Wissenschaft Der Logik, Erster Teil: Die Objektive Logik, Erster Band: Die Lehre Vom Sein (1832)*, 21, p. 104; *The Science of Logic*, p. 90) "[something's] *determination*...[is] the *limit* of the something which...is the immanent determination of the something itself, and the something thus is *finite*. And (*Wissenschaft Der Logik, Erster Teil: Die Objektive Logik, Erster Band: Die Lehre Vom Sein (1832)*, 21, p. 114; *The Science of Logic*, p. 99), "Something has its existence [i.e. determinate being] *outside* its limit (or, as representation would also have it, *inside* it)".

<sup>287</sup> Hegel, *Hegel: Faith and Knowledge: An English Translation of G. W. F. Hegel's Glauben Und Wissen*, p. 62. In this passage, and the essay more generally, Hegel accuses Fichte, Jacobi, and Locke of developing philosophies of finitude. For further discussion of how Hegel sees these thinkers as linking up on the issue of finitude, see Sally Sedgwick, *Hegel's Critique of Kant: From Dichotomy to Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Ch. 3.3.

<sup>288</sup> Cf. Sedgwick, *Hegel's Critique of Kant: From Dichotomy to Identity*, p. 73.

<sup>289</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A369.



by means of subjectively conditioned appearances, which are distinct from things-in-themselves, that we cognize empirically *real* objects at all.<sup>290</sup>

But it is not so easy to portray Hegel as misunderstanding Kant in this way. To begin with, there is sufficient textual evidence to prove that Hegel did not have a deflationary understanding of Kant's notion of appearances. In his *Encyclopaedia Logic*, for example, he almost echoes Kant on the matter of thought arriving at the concept of the thing-in-itself.

The *thing-in-itself*...expresses the object insofar as one *abstracts* from everything that it is for consciousness, i.e. from all determinations of sensation [*Gefühlsbestimmungen*] as well as from all determinate thoughts of it...[T]his *caput mortuum* is itself merely *the product* of thought, more specifically [the product] of thought that has progressed to pure abstraction<sup>291</sup>

There is no sense here in which the things-in-themselves are understood as “real” spatiotemporal objects. For to think of something as a spatiotemporal object is to think it under the determinations of space and time and thus have a determinate thought of it. Further, in *Faith and Knowledge* Hegel states that “[o]bjectivity and stability [in Kant’s system] derive solely from the categories; [and] the realm of things-in-themselves is without categories”.<sup>292</sup> This directly rules out a deflationary understanding of Kant’s notion of appearances, since such an understanding would require the attribution of objectivity to things-in-themselves.

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<sup>290</sup> The point about the cognition of empirically “real” objects by means of appearances is made clear by noting that for Kant appearances are subject to the forms of intuition – space and time – which have “**empirical reality** . . . , i.e., objective validity in regard to all objects that may ever be given to our senses.” (Ibid., A235/B252. Here Kant is discussing time in particular. For the same point made about space, see *ibid.*, A28/B44.) For more on the topic of Kant’s treatment of transcendental realism, as opposed to transcendental idealism, see, Henry E. Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense, Revised and Enlarged Edition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 21-34.

<sup>291</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §44.

<sup>292</sup> Hegel, *Hegel: Faith and Knowledge: An English Translation of G. W. F. Hegel’s Glauben Und Wissen*, p. 77.

III.II.II – Hegel: Kant and the Idea of Reason

So what is really behind Hegel's charging Kant with presenting a philosophy that results in skepticism? I will answer this question by explicating an argument presented by Hegel in its clearest and most detailed form in the essay *Faith and Knowledge*, but which he continues to endorse, at least insofar as its major points are concerned, even in his much later works. Let us begin with a passage from the essay.

Kantian philosophy expresses the authentic Idea of Reason in the formula, "How are synthetic judgements a priori possible?"... This problem expresses nothing else but the Idea that... these heterogeneous elements, the subject which is the particular and in the form of being, and the predicate which is the universal and in the form of thought, are at the same time absolutely identical.<sup>293</sup>

Clearly this needs some unpacking. What can Hegel mean when he claims that the problem of the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgements expresses the Idea of the identity of being (i.e. particular) and thought (i.e. universal)? Recall the significance of synthetic *a priori* judgements for Kant. Showing the possibility of such judgements was, he thought, tantamount to showing the possibility of science – that is, the possibility of our cognitions leading to knowledge of empirical nature. This amounts to showing that our thoughts are adequate to nature – that the concepts of our understanding are adequate to the empirical world of appearances. This is what Hegel is getting at with the identity claim. For thought to be adequate to nature, the concepts (universals) of our thought and the appearances (particulars) of nature (or "being", as Hegel says) that we judge must be identical, where this simply means our cognitions of nature can reveal to us, due to their objective validity, how empirical nature *actually is*.<sup>294</sup> The identity of being and thought would in this sense simply mean that they, so to speak,

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>294</sup> This reading of Hegel's identity claim is opposed to the one put forward in the *Cambridge Companion to Hegel* by Paul Guyer. Guyer argues that "it is the most-basic claim of Kant's theory of knowledge that intuitions give us access to the appearances of things, not to those things as they are in themselves; so long as judgments connect concepts to intuitions, whether directly or indirectly, it is difficult to see how they could be thought to express an identity between thought and being... Hegel's interpretation of the relation between being and thought reflects his own assumptions, not Kant's." (Paul Guyer, "Thought and Being: Hegel's Critique of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. Frederick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 181.) This is an uncharitable reading of Hegel, and one which does not find justification in his

'match up'. (This reading is perhaps supported by the fact that Hegel speaks of "absolute" identity, and Kant claims to keep the term "absolute" to "indicate that something is valid in every relation (unlimitedly)". This thought, however, will have to remain undeveloped here.)<sup>295</sup>

Now, why does Hegel say the problem of synthetic *a priori* judgements expresses the "authentic Idea of Reason"? To answer this question we should first note that for Kant "Reason (*Vernunft*) is the faculty that provides the principles of cognition *a priori*".<sup>296</sup> That is, reason is the faculty that governs, by prescribing regulative principles, how the understanding is to work. Furthermore, Kant tells us that it is by means of "Ideas" (or "concepts of reason") that reason prescribes principles and governs the understanding;<sup>297</sup> where Ideas are "concept[s] made up of notions [i.e. pure concepts of the understanding, or categories], which [go] beyond the possibility of experience".<sup>298</sup> The "authentic Idea of Reason" that Hegel refers to is what Kant calls "the transcendental concept of reason [which] is none other than that of the **totality of conditions** [i.e. the **unconditioned**] to a given conditioned thing."<sup>299</sup> According to Kant, any object of experience, or possible experience [hence, any cognized, or cognizable, thing] must stand "under the principle of **thoroughgoing determination**; according to which, among **all possible** predicates of **things**, insofar as they are compared with their opposites, one must apply to it."<sup>300</sup> This principle means, according to Kant, that it must be assumed that every thing not only stands in relation to some particular pair of contradictory concepts, one of which must apply to it as a predicate (e.g. *mortal* and *not mortal*), and thus determine it in some way, but also that all things relate to "**the whole of possibility**, of the sum total of all predicates of things in general."<sup>301</sup> The reason all objects of possible experience must stand under this principle, according to Kant's philosophy, is that if it is to be argued that through our cognitions we can come to attain knowledge of the empirical world *as it really is*, then nothing of the empirical world must be presumed to be un-cognizable. Hence, all empirical

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writings. It makes the false assumption that Hegel identified "being" with Kant's things-in-themselves, and it fails to note the role synthetic *a priori* judgements played for Kant in showing knowledge of empirical nature, the 'matching-up of thought and being', to be possible.

<sup>295</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A324/B381.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, A11/B24.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, A321/B378.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, A320/B377.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, A322/B379.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, A571-72/B599-600.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, A572/B600.

things must be presumed to be thoroughly determinable by means of the concepts of the understanding. Now, this “sum total of all predicates of things in general” would represent the “totality of conditions” to any conditioned thing, or, as Kant otherwise puts it, “an All of reality (*omnitude realitatis*).”<sup>302</sup> Due to this, in order for reason to prescribe the principle of “thoroughgoing determination” to the understanding, as a principle that governs its use, reason must have the Idea of a “totality of conditions”, “an All of reality”, or a systematic unity of the whole of empirical nature.

Stress needs to be placed on the fact that, for Kant, this is strictly an *Idea* of reason – a concept that cannot be applied to any object it would be possible to experience - we should not stray into thinking that through it we can know an objectively existing thing that is this “All of reality.” As Kant clearly states, “as to the existence of a being of such preeminent excellence it [the Idea] leaves us in complete ignorance.”<sup>303</sup> By means of the Idea, reason only “relates itself...to the use of the understanding...in order to prescribe the direction toward a certain unity of which the understanding has no concept, proceeding to understand all the actions of the understanding in respect of every object into an **absolute whole**.”<sup>304</sup> This point can be put slightly differently by saying the Idea (as with any Idea of reason) has a purely *regulative*, as opposed to *constitutive*, status. It does not help to constitute any actual object of cognition, but merely regulates the use of the understanding in all theoretical cognitions.

Now, why should Hegel claim this Idea is expressed by the problem of synthetic *a priori* judgements? I contend he does so precisely because if such judgements were not possible, empirical nature could not be said to admit of the systematic unity that, for Kant, our cognitions must aim at. If synthetic *a priori* judgements were not possible, then reason could not, by means of the Idea of an “All of reality”, govern the use of the understanding by prescribing the principle of “thoroughgoing determination”.

This brings us to the next set of passages from *Faith and Knowledge* that we need to consider.

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<sup>302</sup> Ibid., A575-76/B603-04.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., A579/B607.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., A326-27/B383.

In his reflection upon [organic nature] in the “Critique of Teleological Judgment,” Kant expresses the Idea of Reason...in the Idea of an intuitive intellect, for which possibility and actuality are one.<sup>305</sup>

And,

[Kant] himself thinks an intuitive intellect and is led to it as an absolutely necessary Idea.<sup>306</sup>

These passages relate directly to Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (the third *Critique*), particularly §76-77, and so to unpack them we will need to look there. We may get there, however, by way of a further statement Kant makes in the first *Critique* concerning the Idea of an absolute whole of nature. Through this Idea, he says, “reason bids us consider every connection in the world according to principles of a systematic unity, hence **as if** they had arisen from one single all-encompassing being, as supreme and all-sufficient cause.”<sup>307</sup> Such a cause would be “a supreme intelligence that is [the world’s] author through wise intentions.”<sup>308</sup> This “supreme intelligence” becomes, in the third *Critique*, the “intuitive (archetypal) understanding”,<sup>309</sup> the “intuitive intellect” that Hegel is referring to in the above passage.

So what is this “intuitive intellect”? The easiest way to answer this question is to contrast the intuitive intellect with our own human, discursive intellect, as Kant does in §76-77 of the third *Critique*. Picking up on his picture of the discursive understanding from the first *Critique*, Kant tells us that we have “two entirely heterogeneous elements” required for the exercising of our cognitive faculties; namely, “understanding for concepts and sensible intuition for objects corresponding to them”.<sup>310</sup> What we do when we cognize objects of experience is subsume a given empirical intuition, as a **particular**, under a **universal** concept of the understanding in a judgement.<sup>311</sup> We, those of us with discursive

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<sup>305</sup> Hegel, *Hegel: Faith and Knowledge: An English Translation of G. W. F. Hegel's Glauben Und Wissen*, p. 88.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>307</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A686/B714.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, A697/B725.

<sup>309</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:407.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, 5:401.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, 5:406.

understandings, cannot generate objects out of universals, but rather must receive them. Given this peculiarity of our discursive understanding, there is, according to Kant, always an ineliminable contingency to our cognitions of nature. As he says, “[the particular] is contingent in how many different ways distinct things that nevertheless coincide in a common characteristic can be presented to our perception. Our understanding is a faculty of concepts, i.e., a discursive understanding, for which it must of course be contingent what and how different might be the particular that can be given to it in nature and brought under its concepts.”<sup>312</sup> For an intuitive understanding, on the other hand, there would be no such contingency. A being with an intuitive understanding could rightly claim, “all objects that I cognize would **be** (exist), and the possibility of some that did not exist, i.e., their contingency if they did exist, as well as the necessity that is to be distinguished from that, would not enter”.<sup>313</sup> Thus, as Hegel points out in the passage quoted above, for the intuitive intellect “possibility and actuality are one.” This is so because the intuitive intellect does not subsume particulars under universal concepts of the discursive understanding (or, what Kant calls “**analytic universal[s]**”).<sup>314</sup> Rather, it “goes from the **synthetically universal** (of the intuition of a whole as such) to the particular, i.e., from the whole to the parts, in which, therefore, and in whose representation of the whole, there is no **contingency** in the combination of the parts”.<sup>315</sup> Thus, the object is in a sense generated out of this synthetic universal – although it is not precisely correct to speak of generation out of the synthetic universal, since synthetic universal and object come together as a package. The intuitive intellect does not, for this reason, have “two entirely heterogeneous elements” required for cognition, as we do.

Now, why does Hegel claim the Idea of an intuitive intellect is necessary for Kant? At the beginning of §76 of the third *Critique* Kant remarks that the concepts of the understanding (i.e. the categories) “must be given objective reality” – i.e. they must be given objective validity.<sup>316</sup> This is simply another way of stating Kant’s critical project – to prove that through the concepts of the understanding we can come to know nature. The way in which we can give the categories objective

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 5:403.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 5:407.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., 5:401.

reality, so he tells us in the first *Critique*, is by showing them to be *necessary* to experience any object.<sup>317</sup> This, however, requires arguing that empirical nature admits of the systematic unification that we must attempt to bring to it when judging it. If nature does not admit of such systematic unification, then, as Kant says, there is “no coherent use of the understanding, and, lacking that, no sufficient mark of empirical truth”.<sup>318</sup> That is, if nature does not admit of systematic unification, then Kant’s categories cannot be said to have objective reality, or validity; and, since he takes truth to be the “agreement of cognition with its object”,<sup>319</sup> there could be no truth – the result would be skepticism. The problem here is that the inherent contingency to all discursive cognitions of nature means that we can never *know* that nature admits of systematic unification – in fact, we can never even prove this to be a real possibility. The world as a unified absolute whole is not an object of possible experience for us, as noted above. In order to offer a solution to this problem, Kant begins by pointing out that in our experiences we are often presented with things in nature that must be judged as if they are *purposive*. In such a thing, says Kant,

each part is conceived as if it exists only **through** all others, thus as if existing **for the sake of the others** and **on account of** the whole, i.e., as an instrument (organ), which is, however, not sufficient...rather it must be thought of as an organ that **produces** the other parts (consequently each produces the others reciprocally)...only then and on that account can such a product, as an **organized** and **self-organizing** being, be called a natural end.<sup>320</sup>

Kant not only has in mind here living animals, but “even a little blade of grass”.<sup>321</sup> The judgement by which one judges something as if it is purposive is what Kant calls *reflective* and *teleological*,<sup>322</sup> and to

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<sup>317</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A310/B366-67.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, A651/B679.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, A58/B82. Also, in *The Jäsche Logic* Kant says, “[t]ruth, it is said, consists in the agreement of cognition with its object. In consequence of this mere nominal definition, my cognition, to count as true, is supposed to agree with its object.” (Immanuel Kant, “The Jäsche Logic,” in *Lectures on Logic*, ed. J. Michael Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 557-58.)

<sup>320</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:373-74.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, 5:409.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, 20:221. Concerning reflective judgements Kant says, “[t]he power of judgment can be regarded either as a mere faculty for **reflecting** on a given representation, in accordance with a certain principle, for the sake of a given concept that is thereby made possible, or as a faculty for **determining** an underlying concept through a given **empirical** representation.” (*Ibid.*)

make such judgements, he claims, we require “[t]he special principle of the power of judgment [which] is thus: **Nature specifies its general laws into empirical ones, in accordance with the form of a logical system, [o]n behalf of the power of judgment.**”<sup>323</sup> Having such a principle, however, according to Kant, means also having the Idea of an intuitive intellect through which “we can represent that agreement of natural laws with our power of judgment”.<sup>324</sup> It is important to stress that this Idea of reason does not here take on a constitutive status, it does not in any way determine any object of cognition. It merely regulates the use of understanding to judge *as if* the empirical laws of nature accord with the form of a logical system.

Now, all of this explains why Hegel says of the intuitive intellect that it is the Idea of Reason. For it is, according to Kant, meant to be the representation of the adequacy of our thought to empirical nature, the identity of thought and being. We can also now see why Hegel says Kant is led to the Idea of an intuitive intellect as an absolutely necessary Idea. For according to Kant, the Idea of an intuitive intellect is necessary for a being with a discursive understanding simply because such a being *must*, in some cases, make reflective teleological judgements. Moreover, the necessity of the Idea of the intuitive intellect is meant to make the presupposition of the objective reality of the categories also necessary for every being with a discursive intellect. It is thus absolutely indispensable for Kant’s system.<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 20:216.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., 5:407. There is a hint in the first *Critique* that Kant was already on the way to thinking of teleological judgements and their significance for his system. Cf.: “A plant, an animal, the regular arrangement of the world’s structure (presumably thus also the whole order of nature) – these show clearly that they are possible only according to ideas...these ideas are in the highest understanding individual, unalterable, thoroughly determined, and the original causes of things, and only the whole combination in the totality of a world is fully adequate to its idea.”(*Critique of Pure Reason*, A317-18/B374-75.)

<sup>325</sup> Dr Katherine Dunlop has suggested to me an argument that might be put forward against my claim that Kant thinks the Idea of Reason, as we have been discussing it, is necessary for the categories to have objective validity. The argument runs as follows. Kant takes himself to have proven that the categories have objective validity in the “Transcendental Deduction” section of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. But this section, being part of the “Transcendental Analytic”, deals only the use of the understanding. The ideas of reason are not considered until the “Transcendental Dialectic”, which has quite a different project to the “Transcendental Analytic”. So, the ideas of Reason, whatever purpose they have, do not seem to be needed to solve the problem of the objective validity of the categories.

I am thankful to Dr Dunlop for suggesting this objection to me. Yet the argument is defective for the reason that it fails to take into account the following points. The “Transcendental Analytic” finds that cognition requires representations to be brought into a synthetic unity of apperception in accordance with certain categories, or rules of the understanding. The possibility of this process taking place, however, requires that these categories themselves be unified in a single understanding, and in this case the required unification is something that the understanding clearly cannot be responsible for. It is Kant’s arguments in the “Transcendental Dialectic” that are meant to show that it is in fact reason, through its prescribing of principles by means of ideas, that is responsible



### III.II.III – Hegel: The Contingency of Kant's Dualism, the Opposition of Form and Content

But even though Kant is led to the Idea of an intuitive intellect as something necessary, and something without which the categories could not be said to have objective reality, the point remains, as Hegel says, that “[t]he Idea occurs [to Kant] here only as a thought. Notwithstanding its admitted necessity, reality must not be predicated of it.”<sup>326</sup> That is, the Idea of the intuitive intellect is, as Kant would admit, something subjective. What it represents, the final cause and unified whole of the world, the identity of thought and being, remains for Kant, as he himself says, “in its supersensible substratum, from all possible insight into which we are cut off”.<sup>327</sup> Kant wants to remind us here that finitude is our lot, we cannot step over into the infinite in which thought and being are identical. We must, so he thinks, accept his formalism - which Hegel claims constitutes his philosophy as a dualism<sup>328</sup> - according to which, for us, the forms of thought (i.e. categories) are external, and in no way derived from, the manifold of sensible intuitions, i.e. content. It is for this reason that Hegel argues that within the constraints of Kant's system “it is something subjective and contingent that the Idea is only a subjective thing.”<sup>329</sup> In other words, it is merely subjective and contingent that Kant arrives at the conclusion that, for us, form and content are external, that the identity of thought and being remains only a necessary presupposition and not something real. Let us look a little closer at this claim and uncover the reason behind Hegel's making it.

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for the unification of the categories. As Kant himself puts it, “reason is the faculty of the unity of the rules of understanding under principles” (*Critique of Pure Reason*, B359), and, “reason...bring[s] the understanding into thoroughgoing connection with itself, just as the understanding brings the manifold of intuition under concepts and through them into connection.” (Ibid., B362.) Clearly, then, the ideas of Reason are in fact needed, according to Kant, to solve the problem of the objective validity of the categories. For in order for any cognition to take place by means of the categories, Reason, through the ideas, must have unified these categories into an understanding.

<sup>326</sup> Hegel, *Hegel: Faith and Knowledge: An English Translation of G. W. F. Hegel's Glauben Und Wissen*, p. 89.

<sup>327</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:410.

<sup>328</sup> “[Kant's idealism] which in this way sets an absolute Ego-point and its intellect on one side, and an absolute manifold, or sensation, on the other side, is a dualism.” (Hegel, *Hegel: Faith and Knowledge: An English Translation of G. W. F. Hegel's Glauben Und Wissen*, p. 78.)

<sup>329</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

Kant, as we have seen, realizes that in order to prove that his categories are adequate to the world of appearances, or nature, it is necessary to think an identity of these categories and appearances (i.e. of form and content). Or, as Hegel puts it, “[i]t is recognized [by Kant] that this antithesis [of the forms of thought and the sensible manifold of intuitions, of thought and being] necessarily presupposes a middle, and that in this middle the antithesis and its content must be brought to nothing.”<sup>330</sup> But let us now recall that, for Kant, Ideas or concepts of reason are concepts “made up of notions” (i.e., categories). Thus, in proving the objective reality, or validity, of the categories by appealing to the necessity of presupposing of the Idea of an intuitive intellect, Kant is in effect proving the objective reality of the categories by appealing to those very categories themselves. He is, so to speak, grounding his system on the categories. This is clearly circular, but this in itself is not necessarily an issue if it can be proven there is nothing else to appeal to – after all, Kant’s critical project is meant to show that we do not have access to anything that is beyond the categories, so it is going to have to be circular in some way. Unfortunately, the categories for Kant are mere forms of thought, opposed and external to content, and in order to sustain this opposition that determines them as such in the way Kant wants to, even he himself, as we have just seen, admits an identity between the two must be presupposed. As Hegel would say, in order to determine or know the barrier of form, such that it is opposed to content, Kant has to have “at the same time *gone beyond* it.”<sup>331</sup> Hence, Kant could have adopted a position according to which form and content, thought and empirical nature, are moments of an original identity. Indeed, according to Hegel, he should have.

Kant’s failure to adopt this position, or even really consider it thoroughly, was, according to Hegel, a result of his being “insufficiently critical”, as Sally Sedgwick has put it.<sup>332</sup> Kant wanted, as Hegel says in the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, “to know [*Erkennen*] before knowing”, he wanted to “not set a foot in the water before [he had] learned to swim”.<sup>333</sup> And this led him, for one thing, to simply accept

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<sup>330</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>331</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §60.

<sup>332</sup> Sedgwick, *Hegel's Critique of Kant: From Dichotomy to Identity*, p. 152.

<sup>333</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §41 Addition 1.

Aristotle's logic, without question, and base his division of the categories upon it.<sup>334</sup> He, along with many other philosophers, simply presupposed "that infinity is different from finitude, content something else than form, the inner something else than the outer, likewise that mediation is not immediacy".<sup>335</sup> In this sense, Hegel claims Kant offered "only a historical description of thinking and a mere list of the moments of consciousness...[which have been]...empirically gathered",<sup>336</sup> his philosophy is "a systematization that...rests on merely psychological-historical foundations."<sup>337</sup> Because of this it is not necessary that the Idea of the intuitive intellect is something subjective and necessary, as Kant wants to argue it is. The place from which Kant starts in order to arrive at the Idea was only subjectively and contingently chosen – he could have, and according to Hegel *should* have, chosen to regard thought and being as originally identical. Hence, it is only subjective and contingent that Kant does arrive at the Idea as he does. And, by Kant's own arguments, this means he cannot show his categories to have objective reality, objective validity. His philosophy thus results in skepticism – he cannot show that through his categories we can come to know nature. The following statement by John McCumber sums the point up nicely: "Kant's appeal to "knowing before knowing" means that his philosophy never gets onto a properly transcendental footing".<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Erster Teil: Die Objektive Logik, Erster Band: Die Lehre Vom Sein (1832)*, 21, p. 35; *The Science of Logic*, pp. 30-31. Hegel is here making reference to Kant's famous statement in the preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* that "**logic**...since the time of Aristotle...has not had to go a single step backwards...[and]...[w]hat is further remarkable about logic is that until now it has also been unable to take a single step forward, and therefore seems to all appearances to be finished and complete." (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bviii.)

<sup>335</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Erster Teil: Die Objektive Logik, Erster Band: Die Lehre Vom Sein (1832)*, 21, p. 19; *The Science of Logic*, p. 21.

<sup>336</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §60 Addition 1.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, §41.

<sup>338</sup> John McCumber, *Understanding Hegel's Mature Critique of Kant* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), p. 49.)

#### IV - Hegel and Getting a Grip on the World

In *Faith and Knowledge* Hegel clearly expresses his opinion that Kant should have taken the prospect of an original identity between thought and being – that is, what is represented by the Idea of Reason – more seriously. Indeed, at times he even seems personally disappointed that Kant did not take it more seriously.<sup>339</sup> But this leaves the question, what exactly would it mean to take such a thing seriously? How can there be an original identity between thought and being? I suggest we can find an answer to this question by looking to Hegel's own account of *judgement*. Moreover, it is in this account of judgement, I want to further suggest, that we can find the best solution to the problem of intentional states both being of or about the singular or individual spatiotemporal objects of the empirical world (such that they can introduce empirical content into the intentional states/attitudes involved in our social deontic linguistic practices) and being able to play a role in inferential reasoning. It is this account then, I suggest, that gives us a way of grounding the social deontic linguistic practices of attributing and undertaking commitments and entitlements, which, following Brandom to some extent, I argue determine the meaning (conceptual contents) of intentional states/attitudes and confer meaning on to things. For, as we will see, Hegel's account of judgement makes it possible to say that intentional states can be about the individual objects of the empirical world precisely because concepts and objects are not external to each other in the Kantian sense. Hegel's development of his account of judgement is not, however, worked out in *Faith and Knowledge* – although there are, as I will point out, hints in that essay as to what its development will involve. Instead, it must wait to find its complete expression in his later works, specifically in the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopaedia Logic*. To explicate Hegel's account of judgement we will, therefore, need to look at those later works in some detail.

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<sup>339</sup> Cf. “The truly speculative aspect of Kant's philosophy can only consist in the Idea being thought and expressed so definitely, and the pursuit of this side of his philosophy is the only interesting aspect of it. This makes it all the harder to see the Rational being muddled up again, and not just that, but to see the highest Idea corrupted with full consciousness, while reflection and finite cognition are exalted above it.” Hegel, *Hegel: Faith and Knowledge: An English Translation of G. W. F. Hegel's Glauben Und Wissen*, p. 92.

#### IV.I - Hegel's Idea

To begin with, let us first draw out the connection between Hegel's account of judgement and an original identity of thought and being. In his later writings, Hegel's terminology changes so that what was once the identity of "thought" and "being" becomes "*true being*, the unity of *concept* and *reality*", or, also, "the unity of *subjective concept* and *objectivity*."<sup>340</sup> Putting it yet another way, Hegel says: "This identity has...rightly been designated as a *subject-object*, for it is *just as well* the formal or subjective concept as it is the object as such."<sup>341</sup> Now, this subject-object unity is, for Hegel, "the Idea", or "the *adequate* [*adäquate*] *concept*, the objectively *true*, or the *true as such*."<sup>342</sup> And, as I will soon show, Hegel's account of judgement is meant to leave us with exactly this, an account of the adequate concept. Hence, his account of judgement is meant to leave us with the understanding of the original identity of thought and being he was calling for in *Faith and Knowledge*. Before we move to explicate Hegel's account of judgement, however, let us deal with some potential interpretive controversies, and in so doing develop more of an understanding of what Hegel means by "the Idea".

To do this, let us ask the question: does Hegel simply mean by "the Idea" what Kant meant by the Idea of an intuitive intellect? That is, is Hegel speaking of an unconditioned author of the whole world, an intellect that can, so to speak, create the world by thinking it? If this were the case, then Hegel's account of judgement would involve developing a proof of the existence of the Kantian-style intuitive intellect, be this intellect ours or some other being's. Hegel would, in this sense, be suggesting that we can know that there is a unity of subjective concepts and objectivity - which would thus mean we could avoid the skeptical conclusions that result for the Kantian system - because we can know that an intuitive intellect, which created the empirical world to accord with our forms of thought, exists. This

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<sup>340</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, ed. Friedrich Hogemann and Walter Jaeschke, vol. 12, *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Felix Einer Verlag, 1981), p. 176; *The Science of Logic*, p. 673.

<sup>341</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 176; *The Science of Logic*, p. 673.

<sup>342</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 173; *The Science of Logic*, p. 670. George di Giovanni helpfully points out in a note to his translation that "Hegel uses *adäquate*, a Latin word obviously intended to bring to mind the traditional definition of truth as *adequatio rei et intellectus*. It is in the "idea" that this conformity of objectivity and subjectivity is achieved." (See, *ibid.*, p. 670 n. 1.). I will have more to say on Hegel's notion of truth in the discussion of judgement below.

would fit with what may be called the “traditional metaphysical view of Hegel’s philosophy”,<sup>343</sup> according to which Hegel is regarded as, in some sense, trying to revive and, to some extent, modify a sort of pre-Kantian metaphysics that runs along the lines of Spinoza’s monism. On this view, Hegel’s “Idea” becomes something like Spinoza’s God, from whose “supreme power, *or* infinite nature, infinitely many things in infinitely many modes, that is, all things, have necessarily flowed, or always follow”.<sup>344</sup> One relatively recent interpretation of Hegel’s philosophy in this vein can be found propounded in Charles Taylor’s 1975 book, *Hegel*, where it is written that “Hegel claims to be able to demonstrate the existence of a cosmic spirit who posits the world according to rational necessity.”<sup>345</sup>

But this cannot be the thesis Hegel was really defending. To begin with, Hegel understands Kant’s use of “the Idea” – taken as the Idea of an intuitive intellect – to mean “a concept which is *transcendent* with respect to appearances, that is, one for which *no adequate empirical use* can be made.”<sup>346</sup> It is a concept that Kant’s system spits out only because it is insisted that reason has, as Hegel says in *Faith and Knowledge*, an “independence from common existence (*Wirklichkeit*),” such that the “eternal”, which is presumed to lie beyond the limits of finite cognition, can be thought (though not cognized).<sup>347</sup> So for Hegel to be suggesting that he can prove the existence of an intuitive intellect, in the Kantian sense, he would have to be suggesting that he can prove the existence of something that necessarily lies beyond the empirical world of perception and common existence, something the concept of which has no possible application to anything we might possibly experience. This would require Hegel to take up a stance of endorsing a philosophy of finitude and dualism – something he clearly thinks is both wrong and untenable. To push the point, Hegel reminds us in the *Science of Logic* that we should not accept a philosophy according to which “all manifoldness [i.e. empirical material] falls *outside it* [i.e. *the concept*], and only the form of abstract universality or of empty reflective identity stays with it [i.e. *the concept*]”.<sup>348</sup> Further, in the *Philosophy of Mind* Hegel asserts that “[t]he genuine

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<sup>343</sup> Paul Redding, "Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel," <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/hegel/>.

<sup>344</sup> Spinoza, *Ethics*, p. 14.

<sup>345</sup> Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 97.

<sup>346</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 173; *The Science of Logic*, p. 670.

<sup>347</sup> Hegel, *Hegel: Faith and Knowledge: An English Translation of G. W. F. Hegel's Glauben Und Wissen*, p. 63.

<sup>348</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 22; *The Science of Logic*, p. 519.

definition of finitude... must be stated thus: the finite is a reality that is not adequate to its concept... The very fact that we are aware of a limitation is proof that we are beyond it".<sup>349</sup> We can't even coherently think a philosophy of finitude. As Sally Sedgwick has stated, Hegel had argued "that if we are to give up the "subjectivity" of our idealism" - something Hegel clearly wants us to do - "we need to abandon the assumption that reason (or as he sometimes says, "thinking [*Denken*]" is a transcendent power, a faculty that enjoys "independence" from "common reality" or the realm of "perception.""<sup>350</sup> So, contrary to the claim that Hegel purports to prove the existence of a Kantian-style intuitive intellect to support his account of judgement, he should rather be understood as suggesting that any attempt at such a proof will be doomed from the outset, since it would require taking reason to be a faculty that is independent of, or completely external to, the empirical world of common existence and perception. And this, to Hegel's mind, relies on a gross and unjustified overestimation of the powers of reason.

So if Hegel does not mean a Kantian intuitive intellect by the expression "the Idea", what does he mean by it? Certainly he does mean by it some *intellect* – concepts and thought, are, after all, caught up in the Idea. But, as is clear from his criticisms of Kant's philosophy, this intellect cannot be an intellect that is an understanding [*Verstand*], regarded as a faculty of concepts that are construed as empty forms, external to content. Rather, for Hegel, as he says in the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, "[t]he idea can be grasped as *reason* [*Vernunft*] (this is the genuine philosophical meaning of *reason*)" – which is to mean, reason that is not independent of the empirical world.<sup>351</sup> This does not mean that we do away with either form or content, or reduce one to the other. Rather, it means that under Hegel's account of reason we ought to come to see that, as he says, "genuine content contains... form within itself, and the genuine form is its own content."<sup>352</sup> Sedgwick is right, I contend, when she suggests that what Hegel is pushing for is the bringing together of concept and intuition through a rejection of the claim that conceptual form is "external" to content and an acceptance of the thesis that

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<sup>349</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Michael Inwood, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, trans. W. Wallace and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), §386 Zusatz.

<sup>350</sup> Sedgwick, *Hegel's Critique of Kant: From Dichotomy to Identity*, p. 95.

<sup>351</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §214.

<sup>352</sup> Hegel and Inwood, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, §383 Zusatz.

[n]ot only must our concepts depend on an independently given sensible content if they are to serve as conditions of cognition; they depend on that content for their nature as well. Even our most basic concepts emerge from a faculty that is an “original identity,” a faculty that is not a pure spontaneity but also in part receptive. Our concepts emerge from an intellect that, as Hegel says [in *Faith and Knowledge*], is “at the same time a posteriori,” an intellect whose freedom from nature and history is conditioned rather than wholly unfettered or absolute.<sup>353</sup>

This intellect that Sedgwick speaks of is what Hegel calls reason, and it is the Idea.<sup>354</sup> In this sense, we can say that subjective concepts and empirical objectivity are what Hegel would call “moments” of the original identity that is the Idea.<sup>355</sup>

This interpretation of these points not only opposes the traditional metaphysical view of Hegel’s philosophy, but, as Sedgwick also points out, it opposes a further view, according to which Hegel is read as recommending that we abandon all claims to thought’s being adequate to some given independent content altogether. All that thought can be adequate to, on this reading of Hegel, is itself. As Sedgwick says, “overcoming the heterogeneity of our concepts and sensible intuitions is for Hegel [on this view] a matter of trading in representationalism for internalist coherentism.”<sup>356</sup> For an example of where such a reading of Hegel’s philosophy can be found in the literature, Sedgwick points to Béatrice Longuenesse’s book, *Hegel’s Critique of Metaphysics*,<sup>357</sup> in which it is claimed that Hegel

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<sup>353</sup> Sedgwick, *Hegel’s Critique of Kant: From Dichotomy to Identity*, p. 160. The quotation from Hegel is at Hegel, *Hegel: Faith and Knowledge: An English Translation of G. W. F. Hegel’s Glauben Und Wissen*, p. 80.

<sup>354</sup> “Reason, which is the sphere of the idea”. (Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 30; *The Science of Logic*, p. 527.)

<sup>355</sup> ‘Moment’ is intimately related to the Hegelian term, *Aufhebung*, usually translated to ‘sublation’. *Aufheben* (‘to sublimate’) has, Hegel states, a “twofold meaning”. Firstly, it means “to keep,” or “to ‘preserve’.” Secondly, it means “to cause to cease,” or “to put an end to.” For Hegel, something subluted is “something that has lost its immediacy”, something that has turned out to be dependent on its opposite to be what it is, something that has thus turned out to be mediated. In this way a subluted thing “has entered into unity with its opposite; [and] in this closer determination as something reflected, it may fittingly be called a *moment*.” (Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Erster Teil: Die Objektive Logik, Erster Band: Die Lehre Vom Sein (1832)*, 21, pp. 94-95; *The Science of Logic*, pp. 81-82.)

<sup>356</sup> Sedgwick, *Hegel’s Critique of Kant: From Dichotomy to Identity*, p. 96.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96 n. 29.



aims to “put an end definitively and radically to all representational illusions, according to which thought could be gauged by any measure other than itself.”<sup>358</sup> According to Longuenesse, Hegel suggests that the act of cognition that depends on both subjective concepts and received empirical content “is the mere phenomenal manifestation of an act of self-thinking and self-accomplishing which is that of being itself”.<sup>359</sup> Or, as she otherwise puts the point, “[w]hat Hegel presents us is not a confrontation between a subject bearing rational forms of thought and a given (un-thought) object, but a confrontation of the two poles of thought itself.”<sup>360</sup> This, however, seems to forget the importance of objectivity, empirical reality, for Hegel. Hegel’s claim is not that in the unity of the Idea, empirical reality gets reduced to thought. His claim is rather that thought and objectivity, real empirical existences, are both equally unified in the Idea. It is difficult to square Longuenesse’s reading of Hegel with the passages in which he seems to make it very clear that he is not merely concerned with the categories required for some act of “self-thinking”, but also with objectivity, real empirical existences. Consider, for instance, his claim that the Idea is “that the *nature* of which *can only be conceived as existing*”,<sup>361</sup> and his expositions of existences and the relations between them in the later parts of both the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopaedia Logic* in the sections titled “Objectivity [*Die Objectivität*]” and “The Object”, respectively.<sup>362</sup> Longuenesse’s problem is that she does not heed Hegel’s advice that we cease thinking in terms of dualisms, finitude, and externality. Sedgwick rightly argues that Longuenesse’s reading of Hegel cannot be correct, because it is simply another form of subjectivism, and it results in essentially the same sort of skepticism that was the catalyst for Hegel’s criticism of Kant’s subjectivism.<sup>363</sup>

Now that we have put these interpretive issues right, and developed a better understanding of what Hegel means by the Idea, we need to explicate his account of judgement so that we may understand

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<sup>358</sup> Béatrice Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*, trans. Nicole J. Simek (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 5-6.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>361</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §214.

<sup>362</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, pp. 127-72; *The Science of Logic*, pp. 625-69; *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §194-212.

<sup>363</sup> Sedgwick, *Hegel's Critique of Kant: From Dichotomy to Identity*, p. 97.

how subjective concepts and objectivity can be properly seen for what he takes them to be - moments of an original identity, or unity, which is the Idea - rather than as abstractions, considered to be external to one another.

#### IV.II - Hegel on the Concept and Judgement

In both the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopaedia Logic* Hegel makes a point of drawing out and playing on the etymology of the German word for judgement, *Urteil*. If we split the word in two and present it as *Ur-teil* we can see why. *Ur* means 'primordial', 'first', or 'original', and *Teil* means 'part', 'to be divided', or 'to be separated', and is thus related to *Teilung*, meaning 'division' or 'partition', since something's being divided means a division has taken place. Hegel thus plays on the word *Urteil* to suggest that judgement, as it "is in and for itself", is a 'primordial division' of an original unity.<sup>364</sup> This original unity is the unity of the Idea – that is, the unity of subjective concept and objectivity, or, in other words, the adequate concept. One important point that can be drawn from noting this point of playfulness is that Hegel, unlike many other philosophers, is clearly not going to treat a judgement as simply made up of a subject term and a predicate term regarded as independent grammatical or syntactic units, since there is no division of a subject-object unity in this rendering. For Hegel, such a construction would be a mere proposition.<sup>365</sup> As Pippin rightly states, for Hegel "[j]udgments are assertions made by a subject; propositions isolate what is asserted, the fact of the matter, and abstracts from the claim-making characteristic of judgment (and from the subjects who make them)."<sup>366</sup> For judgements to be original divisions of a unity of subjective concept and objectivity, as Hegel wants, they must not (at

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<sup>364</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 55; *The Science of Logic*, p. 552. Also, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §166. As Michael Forster has shown, Hegel took the basic structural idea of judgement being *Ur-teilung* (a 'primordial division') from earlier versions of the idea found in the works of his contemporaries, Hölderlin and Schelling. See, Michael N. Forster, *Hegel and Skepticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 48-50.

<sup>365</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 55; *The Science of Logic*, pp. 552-53.

<sup>366</sup> Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 239.

least insofar as they are true judgements) abstract from either subjects or objects, but rather must, in some sense, display a relation of the two.

Hegel does, however, present judgements in their logical constructions as made up of a subject and a predicate connected by a copula (e.g. "is"). But "subject" and "predicate" are, he says, "nothing but names", they are indeterminate, they are names of places in a judgement's structure that need to be filled, or made determinate.<sup>367</sup> So, we may ask, what do take the places of subject and predicate in judgements, according to Hegel? We can begin to answer this question by noting that if the judgement is not to abstract from either subject or object, then it must in some sense be of objectivity, or, of some concretely existing spatiotemporal thing. As we noted in section II.II.III, a concretely existing object cannot only be a mere instance of a kind, i.e. a particular. Certainly a concretely existing object must be an instance of a kind, indeed it must be at the same time an instance of infinitely many kinds. A certain concretely existing object may be at the same time a particular basketball, a particular rubber object, a particular sphere, a particular made-in-China object, a particular collection of atoms, a particular object in such and such positions of space and time, etc. So may another concretely existing object be a particular human, a particular student, a particular bicycle owner, a particular drummer, a particular Australian, etc.<sup>368</sup> In this sense a concretely existing object must be a particular but it must also be infinitely richer than a mere particular. It must be, so to speak, the foundation for infinitely many particularities. That is, a concretely existing object must also be a *singular*; or in Hegel's terms, since a

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<sup>367</sup> "It is therefore fitting and unavoidable to have these *names*, "subject" and "predicate," for the determinations of the judgment; as names, they are something indeterminate, still in need of determination, and therefore nothing but names." (Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 54; *The Science of Logic*, p. 551.)

<sup>368</sup> I should briefly state here that while a concretely existing object must be of infinitely many kinds, it is not therefore of these kinds *equally*. For it will be of some kind(s) *necessarily* and others only *contingently*. A structure that is a house, for instance, may be of the kind *house* necessarily, but of the kind *white object* only contingently (it may, for instance, be thought that it can be painted blue whilst still remaining the house it is). Such necessities and contingencies can be explained by the inferential articulations of the objective facts that pertain to the objects. For instance, a certain object's being of the kind *house* necessarily can be explained in terms of the objective fact "this is a house" being inferentially incompatible with the statement, say, "this object could remain the object it is whilst not being a house." Similarly, the same object's being of the kind *white object* only contingently can be explained in terms of the objective fact "this is a white house" being inferentially compatible with the statement, say, "this object could remain the object it is whilst being painted blue." We will return to the topic of the objectivity of facts in section IV.IV.

particular is a determination of a kind, a concretely existing object must also be a “*determinate determinate* [*bestimmte Bestimmte*].”<sup>369</sup>

Hegel, like Kant, was alive to the point concerning the singularity of a concretely existing spatiotemporal thing, claiming that through singularity the step is made into actuality.<sup>370</sup> Thus he insisted that singularity must find a place in judgements, there must be judgements that are of singular things, where “the singular [*das Einzelne*] is a *one* which is qualitative, or a *this*.”<sup>371</sup> A singular thing is, in other words, the referent of a singular demonstrative, free of a kind term. The singular thing is meant to be what it is independently of standing in any particular relations with other things; it is meant to exist for itself, be “*self-subsisting* [*selbständiger*]”, or immediate.<sup>372</sup> (This is exactly the same point I have stressed several times above.) If a singular thing were in all ways thought to be dependent on standing on relations with other things to be what it is, to be the determination it is, then it would be nothing more

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<sup>369</sup> Hegel, Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff* (1816), 12, p. 49; *The Science of Logic*, p. 546.

A further, and somewhat recent, objection to one form of the idea that objects are merely particulars can be found in Kripke’s *Naming and Necessity*. There Kripke argues that if we are to adequately make sense of the notions of modality (e.g. necessity and contingency), then we must regard spatiotemporal objects as the referents of rigid designators (where a rigid designator is a designator that “in every possible world... designates the same object”, so long as the object exists in every possible world (Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, p. 48)) and not merely the referents of Russellian-style descriptions (ibid., Preface and Lecture I.). If, for instance, the spatiotemporal object I refer to with the designator ‘Aristotle’ is regarded as merely the referent of the description ‘the student of Plato, the teacher of Alexander the Great, etc.’, then it makes no sense to say that Aristotle may have chosen a different path in life such that he never became a student of Plato, or a teacher of Alexander the Great, etc. Nor does it make sense to wonder what Aristotle may have done had he chosen a different path. For on this view Aristotle simply *is* the spatiotemporal object that was a student of Plato and a teacher of Alexander the Great, etc., and any spatiotemporal object that was not a student of Plato and a teacher of Alexander the Great, etc., is not Aristotle. But it seems right to say that Aristotle may have chosen a different path from the one he in fact chose. Indeed, it seems central to our understanding of humans and spatiotemporal objects in general that they could always be otherwise in many respects – e.g. differently coloured, differently located, differently dressed, etc. Thus Kripke argues that a spatiotemporal object must be regarded as the referent of a rigid designator. The object I refer to with the designator ‘Aristotle’, for instance, is to be regarded as the same object in all possible worlds, i.e. the very same object I refer to in the actual world with this designator. On this understanding it is then meant to make sense to wonder what Aristotle would have done had he not entered philosophy, for there are many possible worlds in which the very same person I refer to as Aristotle in the actual world did not enter into philosophy, but chose some different path.

The theory that objects are merely the referents of Russellian descriptions is essentially the theory that objects are merely particulars. For even though an object may be the only object that fits a Russellian description it would still, on this theory, merely be a this-such (where the “such” is replaced by the description). Thus Kripke’s argument against the idea that objects are to be thought of as merely the referents of Russellian descriptions can be counted as an argument against one version of the idea that objects are merely particulars.

<sup>370</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff* (1816), 12, p. 51; *The Science of Logic*, p. 548.

<sup>371</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff* (1816), 12, p. 51; *The Science of Logic*, p. 548.

<sup>372</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff* (1816), 12, p. 52; *The Science of Logic*, p. 549.

than a particular, for this is exactly what it is to be a particular. A particular bike is only a particular bike because it stands in certain relations with other things that qualify as bikes, and certain relations with beings that regard it as an instance of some class of things that may be used for particular purposes, etc.

We have noted before (in section II.II.IV) the traditional concern over judgements of singulars; namely, that they do not very easily seem to play a role in syllogistic inferences. Kant, as we saw in section III.I tried to get around this issue by suggesting that while theoretical judgements involve concepts (general representations) being predicated of other concepts, and are thus not really of singular things, they can ultimately relate back to singular things because the concepts involved subsume sensible intuitions (singular representations). As we now know, however, Hegel finds Kant's formalism, his treatment of intuitions and concepts as utterly external to each other, to be unacceptable. So how does Hegel hold on to the notion of the singular thing as self-subsisting, existing for itself, and yet manage to avoid the pitfall of rendering it utterly external to, or beyond the reach of, subjective concepts?

The answer to this question falls out of noting that Hegel regards *singularity* (*Einzelheit*) as a sort of category or determination, which is only the category or determination it is alongside – that is, in relation to, or mediated by – other categories or determinations, one of which covers subjective concepts – namely, *universality*. According to Hegel, in conceiving of something as singular we 'posit' it as something that falls under the determination of *singularity*, of an indifferent, immediate one, a thing that is not dependent on any particular relations to other things to be what it is. But this of course means that in conceiving of something as singular we are positing it as something that falls under a determination that any number of other things (singular things) may also fall under. It is thus thoroughly conceptual. As Redding states, "[a]nything present to us as a bare 'this' is nevertheless present *as* an instance of the determination of singularity, an exemplification of 'thisness' in general – a '*this* this', as it were."<sup>373</sup> It is, in this sense, already both singular and particular. Furthermore, the required act of positing in all this means that in conceiving of anything as singular, it must already be presupposed that

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<sup>373</sup> Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought*, p. 186.

the singular thing stands in relation with a thinking subject. In order for anything to be conceived as singular at all, a thinking subject must posit it as falling under the determination of *singularity*. This comes out quite clearly in the 'Sense-Certainty' section of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where it is said that when we are presented with a bare 'this', what we find is that there are in fact "two 'Thises', one 'This' as 'I', and the other 'This' as object."<sup>374</sup> And the same point is effectively made in the *Science of Logic* when Hegel states that some singular thing is "a *posited immediacy pointed at* [*gezeigte*] by someone external to it...[and]...is a *this*...only insofar as it is *pointed at* [*monstriert*]. This "pointing at" [*Monstrieren*] is the reflective movement that takes hold of itself and posits the immediacy [i.e. the *this*], but as something external to itself [*aber als ein sich Äußerliches*]."<sup>375</sup> But in the singular *this* being posited as external to the thinking subject and her subjective universal concepts, and as something that is not dependent on any particular relations to other things to be the determination it is, it is being posited as precisely *not* universal and *not* merely particular. And for this reason the immediacy of the singular, while it really is immediacy, also turns out to be mediated. *Singularity* is only the determination it is because it stands in relations with, is mediated by, the other determinations of *particularity* and *universality*. As Hegel says, "singularity thus excludes the *universal* [*Allgemeine*] from itself, but since this universal is a moment of it, it refers to it just as essentially."<sup>376</sup> The same goes for the exclusion of the particular [*Besondere*], since, as we will see, to be a particular is to be an instance of a universal for Hegel.

It is important to stress here that none of this means that what is posited as an immediate, independent, indifferent singular is really none of these things. The category or determination that is *singularity* is certainly mediated, dependent on other determinations to be the determination it is, and thus not indifferent. But the thing posited as singular is posited as really immediate, independent, and indifferent.

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<sup>374</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), §92.

<sup>375</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 52; *The Science of Logic*, p. 549.

<sup>376</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 52; *The Science of Logic*, p. 549.

Now, just as *singularity* has turned out to be dependent on being related to the determinations of *universality* and *particularity* to be the determination it is, so too, Hegel argues, do these latter determinations turn out to be dependent on being related to *singularity* and each other to be the determinations they are. In fact, all three determinations are what Hegel calls the 'moments', or determinations, of the Concept [*der Begriff*] (this is sometimes translated as 'the Notion'). And while he acknowledges that it is possible to hold these moments in abstraction from each other, he also argues that we ought to realise that they are really only the determinations they are in their being ultimately and inextricably related to, and mediated by, each other.

Hegel primarily conceives of a universal in terms of what he calls a *concrete* universal,<sup>377</sup> the meaning of which is captured well by Terry Pinkard's statement that it is "like the intelligible *system* to which an individual belongs, a system that explains the determinateness of the individual conceptions of it."<sup>378</sup> Willem DeVries effectively expresses the same point when he states that "a concrete universal is the *truth* of those objects it characterizes and animates. It is their essence, that which explains what they are and why they behave the way they do."<sup>379</sup> What these two statements bring out nicely is that for Hegel a universal, although something distinct from concretely existing things, is not utterly external to them, they are not beyond its reach, since it is only a universal insofar as concrete things belong to it, or are intelligible through it, as particular concrete instantiations of it. As DeVries says, "a concrete universal is not separable from its instances; it actively manifests itself in and through them."<sup>380</sup> The universal thus necessarily particularises, or is concretely instantiated, for Hegel. But in the particularisation we already have singularity. In order for there to be particulars, or instances of a universal, there must be singular or individual things that can instantiate the universal, just as there must be individuals that instantiate the species of a genus. Now, it is of course possible, as Hegel notes, to abstract from particulars and singulars in order to think simply of what he calls "abstract universals" by

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<sup>377</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 35; *The Science of Logic*, p. 532.

<sup>378</sup> Terry P. Pinkard, *Hegel's Dialectic: The Explanation of Possibility* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), p. 77.

<sup>379</sup> Willem A. DeVries, *Hegel's Theory of Mental Activity: An Introduction to Theoretical Spirit* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 174.

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*

themselves, which may equate to what we might think of as empirical concepts, or mere forms of thought (hence, as I said back in II.II.III, what McDowell thinks of as a concept is something like what Hegel thinks of as an abstract universal) – e.g. the concepts *Squareness* (or *Square*), *Animalness* (or *Animal*), *Redness* (or *Red*), etc., thought of free of any concrete empirical determinations.<sup>381</sup> This is why I said above that Hegel conceives of universals *primarily* as concrete universals. But Hegel argues that an abstract universal is “void of truth”, and that in order to obtain it, it must be distinguished from (and hence thought in relation – albeit a negative relation - to) the concrete determinations of *particularity* and *singularity*.<sup>382</sup> The abstract universal is that which does *not* have concrete determinations. There are no instances of the abstract universal *Redness* in the world, though there may be red things; *Redness* is abstract precisely for this reason.

We have from this examination of the determinations of the Concept an answer to the question we asked at the beginning of this section – namely, what, according to Hegel, fill the predicate and subject positions of the judgement (*Urteil*). The judgement is an assertion that expresses the original division of the Idea, or the unity of subjective concept and objectivity, and, as we have just seen, both subjective concepts (qua universals) and existent objects (qua qualitative singulars), are determinations of the Concept for Hegel. (This explains why it can be argued that Hegel defends the claim that our [subjective] concepts depend for their determinations on content, and arise from an intellect that is at the same time *a posteriori*, or involves relations to given ‘Thises’. The determinations of the Concept all depend on each other to be the determinations that they are. There simply are no subjective concepts if they are not mediated by *singularity*, the determination that covers content.) It is therefore expressions of the determinations or moments of the Concept as distinct but relationally determined, that, according to Hegel, take the subject and predicate places of judgements. Thus, in the *Encyclopaedia Logic* Hegel says, “[t]he *judgment* is the Concept in its particularity as the differentiating *relation* of its moments, which are posited as being for themselves and, at the same time, as identical with themselves, not with

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<sup>381</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 35; *The Science of Logic*, p. 532. Also, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §164.

<sup>382</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 35; *The Science of Logic*, p. 532.



one another."<sup>383</sup> But in order for the judgement to exhibit these moments of the Concept as divided and distinct (i.e. "identical with themselves"), yet nonetheless related moments of an original unity, it must take a specific form, according to Hegel. This form is what Hegel refers to as "the *judgment of the concept*", and what we might think of as a sort of evaluative judgement.<sup>384</sup>

In order to show why a judgement must take this form, Hegel first examines several other forms of judgement which fail to exhibit the three moments of the Concept in their unity, and for this reason do not really count as judgements in the sense of being expressions of original divisions of the Concept into its moments. Or, to put this differently, they are judgements that are in conflict with the notion of what the judgement is meant to be. I do not intend to enter into a thorough study or critique of Hegel's treatments of the various judgement forms. Our reason for looking to Hegel's work is only to see if we might find some way to account for judgements of properly singular objects, which can still, nevertheless, play a role in inferential reasoning; and, out of all the judgement forms that Hegel considers, only the judgement of the Concept gives us this. That being said, however, a brief overview of Hegel's discussion of the forms of judgement other than the judgement of the Concept is necessary to help us understand why this is the case. Beyond this there is a further point of interest in looking at the other forms of judgement Hegel considers. For it can be argued that these other forms cover the sorts of judgements that might come out of both something like an Aristotelian term logic and something like a Stoic propositional logic.<sup>385</sup> (I will not argue for this at any length, though I will point out which judgement forms might be said to come out of which system and briefly state why.)<sup>386</sup> The judgement of the Concept, on the other hand, is a judgement form that cannot be accounted for in a system in which either terms or propositions are treated as theoretically prior to the other. The following discussion of the different forms of judgement, then, will help highlight what is to be taken as a further result of the

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<sup>383</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §166.

<sup>384</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 84; *The Science of Logic*, p. 581; *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §178.

<sup>385</sup> Susanne Bobzien has argued convincingly that the Stoics developed what is essentially a propositional logic. See, Susanne Bobzien, "Stoic Logic," in *The Cambridge Companion to Stoic Philosophy*, ed. Brad Inwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>386</sup> For a developed argument to this effect, see, Paul Redding, "The Role of Logic "Commonly So Called" in Hegel's Science of Logic," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 22, no. 2 (2014).

arguments developed in this thesis. Namely, that if we are to adequately account for intentional states that are *of* or *about* objects in the world, then we ought not to accept a philosophical system that requires the exclusive endorsement of a logic according to which either terms or propositions are treated as theoretically, or logically, prior to the other. This is not surprising, it is in fact closely linked with treating neither representation nor inference as explanatorily prior to the other. With this in mind, then, let us briefly go over Hegel's treatments of the different judgement forms.

#### IV.III.I – Hegel on the Forms of Judgement that do not Conform to the Notion of Judgement

The first judgement form Hegel considers is that of the “*judgment of existence [Urteil des Daseins]*”, which has three sub-forms, the positive judgement, the negative judgement, and the infinite judgement.<sup>387</sup> Hegel also calls this the “*judgement of inherence [Inhärenz]*” – as the predicate is meant to inhere in the subject, or, as Hegel puts it, “the predicate...takes on the form of something that does not subsist on its own but has its foundation in the subject.”<sup>388</sup> The judgement of existence is, Hegel says, “*immediate*”, it is not a judgement that results from reflection,<sup>389</sup> but is one that results from perception. Moreover, it is “still caught up in the abstract opposition of *abstract singularity* and *abstract universality*.”<sup>390</sup> Also, in this judgement there is, as yet, no negation involved in the connection of the subject and predicate, hence the copula connecting the subject and predicate of the judgement “can have no other meaning than that of an immediate, abstract *being*.”<sup>391</sup> Which is to say, it means that the predicate is the being of the subject, or, as Stanley Rosen has recently put it, “[t]he subject “is” the

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<sup>387</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, pp. 59-71; *The Science of Logic*, pp. 557-68; *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §172-73.

<sup>388</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 60; *The Science of Logic*, p. 557.

<sup>389</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 60; *The Science of Logic*, p. 557.

<sup>390</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 60; *The Science of Logic*, p. 558.

<sup>391</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 61; *The Science of Logic*, p. 558.

predicate in the sense that it is identified by it".<sup>392</sup> For this reason Hegel also calls the immediate judgement of existence "a *qualitative judgment*", as the subject is identified by having the quality of the predicate.<sup>393</sup> The predicate thus functions somewhat like a name of the thing's inherent and perceived property or form, and the judgement seems to be of a sort that might be accounted for by something like and Aristotelian term logic.<sup>394</sup>

Because there is as yet no negation involved, the judgement of existence is also at first positive. "The first pure expression of the positive judgement is," says Hegel, "the proposition: *the singular is universal*."<sup>395</sup> But this can in fact be taken in two different ways, according to Hegel. One is, "the singular is universal", which Hegel says expresses the judgement "according to *form [Form]*."<sup>396</sup> The other is, "the universal is singular", which "expresses the judgment according to its *content [Inhalt]*."<sup>397</sup> Redding helpfully points out that

[w]ith this [point] Hegel seems to be seeking ways to capture the different *functions* allowed by Kant's intuition-concept distinction. Intuitions paradigmatically serve the function of providing content for cognition while concepts determine the form of that content, allowing the judgement to be integrated into the transcendental unity of apperception. But rather than fixing these functions in two formally heterogeneous representations, Hegel will assign them two different logical forms.<sup>398</sup>

Taken as "the universal is singular" it expresses that the universal is singularized. As Hegel puts it in an example, in this way "the predicate [of the judgement] is determined in the subject, for it is not a

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<sup>392</sup> Stanley Rosen, *The Idea of Hegel's Science of Logic* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), p. 426.

<sup>393</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 60; *The Science of Logic*, p. 557.

<sup>394</sup> For more on this point see, Redding, "The Role of Logic "Commonly So Called" in Hegel's Science of Logic," pp. 10-11.

<sup>395</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 61; *The Science of Logic*, p. 558.

<sup>396</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 63; *The Science of Logic*, p. 560.

<sup>397</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 63; *The Science of Logic*, p. 560.

<sup>398</sup> Redding, "The Role of Logic "Commonly So Called" in Hegel's Science of Logic," p. 10.

determination *in general* but the determination rather *of the subject*. "The rose is fragrant." This fragrance is not some indeterminate fragrance or other, but the fragrance of the rose."<sup>399</sup> In other words, fragrance is being attributed to the rose, but it is not simply fragrance in general (i.e. some common property of fragrance shared by roses, perfumes, etc.), rather it is *the* fragrance that *only* that very rose has. As Redding states, "[s]uch a 'singularized universal' seems close to what is described in contemporary metaphysics as 'tropes', 'abstract particulars' or 'property instances'."<sup>400</sup> In contrast, "the singular is universal" expresses the form of the judgement to the effect that some abstract singular (i.e. some bare *this*) is said to have the being of an abstract universal. Neither the expression of its content or of its form is really separable from the other, however, since "the twofold connection...immediately constitutes the *one* positive judgment."<sup>401</sup> Yet due to its form this judgement cannot, according to Hegel, be true. For a universal "is of wider extension" than a singular, thus "does not correspond to it."<sup>402</sup> A singular does not have the being of an abstract universal.

It is worth briefly saying something about what Hegel means by truth in his discussion of judgement. For his notion of truth here is complex. I agree with Longuenesse when she states that Hegel identifies two traditional definitions of truth.<sup>403</sup> One is the definition that Kant favoured, namely, truth as correspondence or "agreement of cognition with its object."<sup>404</sup> The other is truth as the agreement of subject and predicate in a judgement. He identifies these two notions because, as we have seen, he takes the subject and predicate positions of judgement to be filled by expressions of moments of the Concept, and he translates those things which function for finite cognition as immediately given sensible intuitions and universal concepts into these moments of the Concept. So if the subject and predicate of

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<sup>399</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 62; *The Science of Logic*, p. 560.

<sup>400</sup> Redding, "The Role of Logic "Commonly So Called" in Hegel's Science of Logic," p. 10. It should be pointed out that in a note Redding adds that "[o]f course in appealing to tropes to illuminate Hegel's singularized universals, I am not suggesting that Hegel is committed to anything like an ontology of tropes in the manner of contemporary trope theorists." See, *ibid.*, p. 10 n. 6.

<sup>401</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 63; *The Science of Logic*, p. 560.

<sup>402</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 64; *The Science of Logic*, p. 561.

<sup>403</sup> Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*, p. 207.

<sup>404</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A58/B82.

the judgement agree, then we also have agreement of the moments of the Concept that replace cognition and object.

The result of the positive judgement leads Hegel to the second sub-form of the judgement of existence, the negative judgement, which begins an explicit development of the negativity that he claims was already implicit in the positive judgement, and is indeed implicit in all judgement.<sup>405</sup> Here is how Hegel explains the negative judgement:

*the singular is not abstractly universal – but rather, the predicate of the singular, because it is such a predicate, or because, if considered by itself without reference to the subject, it is an abstract universal, is for that very reason itself something determinate; from the start, therefore, the singular is a particular.*

The singular, in other words, is not universal, but an instance of the kind picked out by the abstract universal (e.g. the rose is a particular red thing). This judgement also turns out not to be true for Hegel, however, because, just as with universality, “particularity is of wider extension than singularity.”<sup>406</sup> This lines-up with the point I have stressed many times about a singular empirical object not being merely an instance of a kind. Hegel captures the point in the *Science of Logic* by stating, “[t]he rose is not a thing of some color or other”,<sup>407</sup> and in the *Encyclopaedia Logic* by saying, “the rose, as something concrete, is not merely red; instead it also has an odour, a determinate form, and many other forms of determinations that are not contained in the predicate ‘red’.”<sup>408</sup>

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<sup>405</sup> “The positive judgment is the connection of the singular and the universal which are such *immediately* and each, therefore, is *not* at the same time what the other is. The connection is therefore just as essentially *separation*, or *negative*; for this reason the positive judgment was to be posited as negative.” (Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 66; *The Science of Logic*, p. 563. See also, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 61; *The Science of Logic*, p. 559.)

<sup>406</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 68; *The Science of Logic*, p. 566.

<sup>407</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 68; *The Science of Logic*, p. 566.

<sup>408</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §172 Addition.

Hegel is, through this result, led to the final sub-form of the judgement of existence, the infinite judgement. The examples of this sub-form he gives are, “that spirit is not red, yellow, etc., is not acid, not alkali, etc., or that the rose is not an elephant, the understanding is not a table, and the like.”<sup>409</sup> Technically these judgements may be correct, but nothing is determined by them. In them there is no agreement of the singular and a universal. For this reason Hegel says “they are *not judgments at all*.”<sup>410</sup>

The next main judgement form that Hegel considers is the judgement of reflection [*das Urteil der Reflexion*]. Again this judgement form has three sub-forms – the singular judgement, the particular judgement, and the universal judgement.<sup>411</sup> In judgements of reflection the predicate is no longer some immediately given abstract singular property, but is rather a universal as a determination that exhibits the subjects of the judgements as standing in relations with others. The predicate is, as Hegel puts it,

a universal that has collected itself together into a unity through the connection of different terms, or, regarded from the standpoint of the content of diverse determinations in general, as the *coalescing* of manifold properties and concrete existences.<sup>412</sup>

As examples of the judgement of reflection Hegel gives the following: “the human being is *mortal*, things are *perishable*, this thing is *useful, harmful*”.<sup>413</sup> In judging something to be useful, in attributing the predicate *useful* to some subject, we do not consider that thing as an immediate, abstract, relationless individual. Rather, we consider it as standing in relations to other thing, in virtue of which it is determined as useful – for instance, the purpose it is to be used for, and the individuals that can use it. It is for this reason that Hegel calls it the judgement of reflection. Yet he also calls it “a judgment of

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<sup>409</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 70; *The Science of Logic*, p. 567.

<sup>410</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 70; *The Science of Logic*, p. 567.

<sup>411</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, pp. 71-77; *The Science of Logic*, pp. 568-75; *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §174-76.

<sup>412</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 71; *The Science of Logic*, p. 568.

<sup>413</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 71; *The Science of Logic*, p. 569.

*quantity*”,<sup>414</sup> and a judgement of “*subsumption*”, since the predicate, unlike in the judgement of existence, is not said to inhere in the singular subject and only in that subject, but is rather said to be a universal under which many individuals can be subsumed:

In this judgment, the predicate no longer *inheres* in the subject, for it is rather *the implicit being* under which the singular subject is *subsumed* as an accidental.<sup>415</sup>

For this reason the judgement of reflection can be seen as the sort of judgement that might come out of something like a Stoic propositional logic.<sup>416</sup>

The first sub-form of the judgement of reflection, the singular judgement, Hegel again expresses as “the singular is universal”, but to more accurately exhibit that the subject and predicate are no longer to be considered in the abstract determinations of the judgement of existence, he reframes it as “this is an essential universal.”<sup>417</sup> Yet, straightway we are told that “a “this” is *not* an essential universal.”<sup>418</sup> For if a “this” were an essential universal, then the universal would once again be a singularized universal, and could not, for this reason, be a universal under which many individuals can be subsumed. The predicate, in the judgement of reflection, is “a predicate which does not inhere in the subject but is rather its *implicit being*...it is the subject that is alterable and needs determination” by being subsumed under the predicate.<sup>419</sup> The predicate is not meant to need determination in a singular subject.

Thus we are led to the second sub-form of the judgement of reflection, the particular judgement. This is expressed by Hegel as “some singulars are a universal of reflection”.<sup>420</sup> The problem here,

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<sup>414</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 71; *The Science of Logic*, p. 569.

<sup>415</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 72; *The Science of Logic*, p. 570.

<sup>416</sup> See, Redding, "The Role of Logic "Commonly So Called" in Hegel's Science of Logic," pp. 11-12.

<sup>417</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 72; *The Science of Logic*, p. 570.

<sup>418</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 72; *The Science of Logic*, p. 570.

<sup>419</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 72; *The Science of Logic*, p. 570.

<sup>420</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 73; *The Science of Logic*, p. 571.

according to Hegel, is that there is already present a level of disproportion between universality and particularity, brought out by the fact that the judgement has a negative expression as well as a positive. Consider the judgement “some humans are happy”. This has, says Hegel, “*the immediate consequence: “some humans are not happy.”*”<sup>421</sup> In other words, “some” means “not all” for Hegel, and for this reason the particular judgement cannot be true.<sup>422</sup> Therefore the particular judgement for Hegel ‘passes over’ into the universal judgement, in which the subject is universality, that is “[t]he set of all [*Allheit*]”<sup>423</sup>, where “the “all” is the all of all the *singulars* in which the singular remains unchanged. This universality is therefore only a *commonality* of self-subsisting singulars, an *association* of such singulars as comes about only by way of *comparison*.”<sup>424</sup>

In the *Encyclopaedia Logic* Hegel gives “all humans are mortal” as an example of this judgement.<sup>425</sup> The problem Hegel raises for this judgement is, as Longuenesse notes, one of induction, that is, “how can one empirically justify a proposition that makes a claim to universality?”<sup>426</sup> The attempt to deal with this problem, according to Hegel, leads to replacing the universality considered as the “all” to the universality considered as *genus*, or the “nature of a thing in and for itself.”<sup>427</sup> In this way one can say that all humans are mortal (that is, one can justify the claim to universality) because one can say that ‘the human being’ is mortal. This alteration, however, means for Hegel that we are no longer dealing

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<sup>421</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 73; *The Science of Logic*, p. 571.

<sup>422</sup> There is a tension here with traditional formal logic that ought to be pointed out, though it is not of any great consequence for our arguments overall. According to the traditional square of opposition (derived from Aristotle, “De Interpretatione” and “Prior Analytics”) “some humans are happy” is read in such a way that it is implied by “all humans are happy” (see, Terence Parsons, “The Traditional Square of Opposition,” <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/square/>.) Hegel, however, seems to treat “some humans are happy” as ambiguous. He treats it such that it can also, aside from its reading according to traditional formal logic, be read in an *exclusive* way. That is, it can be read to mean that *only* some humans are happy. And on this reading “some humans are happy” implies “some humans are not happy.” It is important to see that the ambiguity is in the judgement itself for Hegel. For this means that there is nothing in the judgement that points in favour of one reading over the other, and the *exclusive* reading must therefore be regarded as just as justified as the reading according to traditional formal logic.

<sup>423</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §175, Addition.

<sup>424</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 74; *The Science of Logic*, p. 572.

<sup>425</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §175, Addition.

<sup>426</sup> Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*, p. 211.

<sup>427</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 77; *The Science of Logic*, p. 574.



with the judgement of reflection, since it “constitutes the basis of a new judgment – *the judgment of necessity* [*des Urteils der Notwendigkeit*].”<sup>428</sup>

The judgement of necessity again has three sub-forms - the categorical judgement, the hypothetical judgement, and the disjunctive judgement.<sup>429</sup> In the categorical judgement the subject is a “concrete universal”,<sup>430</sup> or a species which “is a species only in so far as, on the one side, it exists in singulars, and, on the other side, it possesses in the genus a higher universality.”<sup>431</sup> The predicate, on the other hand, is this genus, or “a universality as in it the subject possesses its *immanent nature*.”<sup>432</sup> The predicate is in this sense meant to contain the nature of the subject, without which it could not be what it is. As Clark Butler has pointed out, “Hegel associates necessary judgment in its first stage [i.e. categorical judgement] with the category of substance.”<sup>433</sup> An example of a categorical judgement is thus “the rose is a plant”, for the rose (i.e. the generic rose) is necessarily a plant, being a plant is its nature. But “the rose is red” is not a categorical judgement, for something could be a rose without being red. But, of course, there is more to the rose than simply being a plant, and the genus *plant* is not exhausted in the rose. The rose is a plant, but so too is the daffodil, the agapanthus, the black gum tree, etc. For Hegel this means that “the categorical judgment remains deficient...[for]...in it the factor of particularity does not receive its due.”<sup>434</sup>

Thus we move onto the second sub-form, the hypothetical judgement, expressed as “[*iff A is, then B is*”]; or “*The being of A is not its own being but the being of an other, of B.*”<sup>435</sup> This judgement

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<sup>428</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 77; *The Science of Logic*, p. 77.

<sup>429</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, pp. 77-84; *The Science of Logic*, pp. 575-81; *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §177.

<sup>430</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §177.

<sup>431</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, pp. 77-78; *The Science of Logic*, p. 575.

<sup>432</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 78; *The Science of Logic*, p. 575.

<sup>433</sup> Clark Butler, *Hegel's Logic: Between Dialectic and History* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), p. 225. See also, Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 78; *The Science of Logic*, pp. 575-76; *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §177.

<sup>434</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §177, Addition.

<sup>435</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 79; *The Science of Logic*, p. 576.

expresses that the being of the subject depends upon the being of some other, the being of the rose is dependent on the being of the plant, or, if something is a rose, then it is a plant. But the form of this judgement is such that the necessary connection between *A* and *B* is not exhibited. The dependency of the subject on the predicate is like the dependency of an effect on a cause, and what remains to be exhibited is *why* if *A* obtains, then *B* necessarily obtains. This requires, according to Hegel, exhibiting *A* as a particularisation of *B*, or the species as a particularisation of the genus.

Thus Hegel is led to the final sub-form of the judgement of necessity, the disjunctive judgement, expressed as “*A* is either *B* or *C*.”<sup>436</sup> Taking *B* and *C* as exhaustive, this judgement expresses universality in its relation with particularity, for what it says is that *A* is *B* as well as *C*, and as Hegel says, “this “as well as” indicates the *positive* identity of the particular with the universal; this objective universality maintains itself in its particularity.”<sup>437</sup> But, unlike in the categorical judgement, the particular is given its due. For what the judgement also says is that *A* is either *B* or *C*; hence, that the universal is not exhausted by either *B* or *C* (the universal is not a singularised universal), and that *B* and *C* are determinate particulars that “*mutually exclude one another...for they are the specific difference of the universal sphere.*”<sup>438</sup> Thus, in this judgement the “parting of the subject and predicate is the *difference of the concept*”.<sup>439</sup> But still we are dealing with universality and particularity in a degree of abstraction, for they are not yet exhibited in their unity with singularity. The judgement “*A* is either *B* or *C*” expresses *B* and *C* as being exhaustive of the universal genus *A*. It thus relies on a rather crude rational division of the genus, or, as Hegel puts it “the species comes up for consideration here only under the aspect of its simple conceptual determinateness”.<sup>440</sup> The species is purely relational, it is determined as a

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<sup>436</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 80; *The Science of Logic*, p. 578.

<sup>437</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 81; *The Science of Logic*, p. 578.

<sup>438</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 81; *The Science of Logic*, p. 578. Hegel is relying here on the principle of the identity of indiscernibles.

<sup>439</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 82; *The Science of Logic*, p. 580.

<sup>440</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 82; *The Science of Logic*, p. 580.

determination of its genus, which excludes (and is therefore negatively related to) the other species of its genus. Nothing in the judgement is exhibited as an independent, indifferent *this* – i.e. as a singular.

[A]lthough in the disjunctive judgment the objective *universality* has attained completion in *its particularization*, the negative unity of the latter has only retreated *into it* and has not yet determined itself as the third moment, that of *singularity*.<sup>441</sup>

And since the objects of empirical nature must be presented as singular, no judgement of nature can take the form of a disjunctive judgement. No step can be made, through this judgement, as Hegel says, “into a further self-subsistent *reality*.”<sup>442</sup>

An empirical disjunctive judgment is without necessity; A is either B or C or D, etc., because the species B, C, D, etc., are *found beforehand*; strictly speaking, therefore, there is no question here of an “either or,” for the completeness of the species is only a subjective one.<sup>443</sup>

#### IV.III.II – Hegel on the Judgement of the Concept

This is where Hegel makes the move to the judgement of the Concept [*das Urteil des Begriffs*] – the judgement that exhibits singularity, particularity, and universality as moments of an original unity. The judgement of the Concept, like all the other main forms of judgement that have come before, comes in three sub-forms according to Hegel – the assertoric judgement, the problematic judgement, and the apodictic judgement.<sup>444</sup> Assertoric judgements are *immediate*, which is the same as to say noninferential

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<sup>441</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 85; *The Science of Logic*, pp. 582-83.

<sup>442</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 82; *The Science of Logic*, p. 580.

<sup>443</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 81; *The Science of Logic*, p. 579.

<sup>444</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, pp. 84-89; *The Science of Logic*, pp. 581-87; *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §178-80.

and perceptual. This means that in the assertoric judgement thought is to be regarded as embodied, since the moment of perception requires causal, sensory interaction with objects of nature. The subject of the assertoric judgement is a perceived “concrete singular”, which is to say it is a spatiotemporal singular thing that is a “*concrete existence*”, or has a “*constitution*.”<sup>445</sup> To have a constitution, according to Hegel, is to be “caught up in external influences and in external relationships.”<sup>446</sup> To be so caught up, however, does not mean the subject is not properly singular. As we saw in the discussion of the moments of the Concept above, for something to be conceived as singular it must be presupposed that it stands in relations with at least one other thing – namely, a thinking subject. The important point in the quotation just given is that the relations a thing with a constitution is caught up in are “external”. For what Hegel is suggesting with this wording is that, as he puts it elsewhere, the thing “maintains itself in its reference to the other”.<sup>447</sup> It maintains itself as a singular indifferently subsistent thing in its reference to the other(s) that it is indifferent to. This fits with the singular thing’s being *posited* as singular (discussed in section IV.II).

The predicate of the judgement, on the other hand, rather than being determining or descriptive (as is the case in “the rose is red”, or “that man is old”), is now evaluative (“good”, “bad”, “true”, “right”, “wrong”, etc.). As examples Hegel gives “[t]his house is *bad*” and “this action is *good*.”<sup>448</sup> Such judgements express, Hegel claims, that the singular, in its constitution, is being measured against a universal that it *ought* or *ought not* to conform to. It is measured against the universal as, or as not, an exemplar of it. But because it expresses that the singular *ought* or *ought not* to conform to the universal, the judgement thereby also expresses that the singular may not, or may, conform to the universal. In this sense the judgement contains the fact that a thing’s constitution, in virtue of which it can be determined as a particular, is independent of its “*universal nature* [which] has posited itself as a self-subsisting

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<sup>445</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 85; *The Science of Logic*, p. 583.

<sup>446</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Erster Teil: Die Objektive Logik, Erster Band: Die Lehre Vom Sein (1832)*, 21, p. 111; *The Science of Logic*, p. 96.

<sup>447</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Erster Band: Die Objektive Logik, Zweites Buch: Die Lehre Vom Wesen (1813)*, ed. Friedrich Hogemann and Walter Jaeschke, vol. 11, *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1978), p. 330; *The Science of Logic*, p. 426.

<sup>448</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 85; *The Science of Logic*, p. 583.

concept."<sup>449</sup> Such a judgement can, therefore, be said to be *of* or *about* some properly singular empirical object, because while the subject is measured against a universal, as, or as not, an exemplar of that universal, it has a constitution independent of the universal – which is to say, it is more than a mere instance of a certain universal, and it may turn out not to be of that universal at all. Thus Hegel says,

[t]his constitution [as external to the universal] is the *singularity* which in the disjunctive judgment escapes the necessary *determination* of the universal, a determination that exists only as the particularization of the *species* and as the negative *principle* of the genus.<sup>450</sup>

I agree with Redding here that “[p]resumably...we must regard the subject term of such judgements, despite their syntactic form (‘this house’, ‘this action’) as able to function as *properly singular* terms (demonstratives without sortals)”.<sup>451</sup> This does not mean, however, that the assertoric judgement should be thought of as expressing that some singular object is good, simply in the sense of being an instance of the concept *good*, specifiable independently of any exemplars of universals. Rather it expresses that some singular object is good in the sense of being an exemplar of the universal “house”.

But as it stands, the assertoric judgement is only based upon some subjective assurance. “That something is good or bad, right, suitable or not, hangs,” as Hegel says, “on an external third.”<sup>452</sup> That is, something must be good or bad, etc., and thereby conform or not conform to a universal, in virtue of something; there must be a reason why something is good or bad, etc., a reason why something does or does not conform to a universal. What is missing in the judgement is, as Hegel states, “the *determinateness* that would contain its [the singular’s] connection with the universal concept”.<sup>453</sup> The assertoric judgement is, therefore, found to essentially be the problematic judgement – where the

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<sup>449</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 85; *The Science of Logic*, p. 583.

<sup>450</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 85; *The Science of Logic*, p. 583.

<sup>451</sup> Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought*, p. 184.

<sup>452</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 85; *The Science of Logic*, p. 583.

<sup>453</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 86; *The Science of Logic*, p. 584.

problematic judgement is simply the assertoric judgement insofar as it “must be taken positively as well as negatively.”<sup>454</sup> In the assertoric judgement, where the connection of singular and universal is missing, it remains contingent whether the singular, with its independent constitution, conforms to the universal. For this reason it must be taken positively and negatively. As Hegel says, “the assurance of the assertoric judgement can with right be confronted by an opposing one...[with]...equal justification.” (e.g. “this house is *good*” and “this action is *bad*”, as opposed to “this house is *bad*” and “this action is *good*”, respectively.)

Now, it should be noted that while this might seem like grounds for skepticism, we should not jump to any hasty conclusions. *Singularity* must still be seen as a moment of the Concept, and as thus intimately related to *universality* and *particularity*. Moreover, in order to even have judgements that are really *of* or *about* empirical reality, or “truly objective” as Hegel says, it is necessary that the subject of the judgement have a constitution external to the universal, and be contingent with respect to it, otherwise it simply would not be singular.<sup>455</sup> It is necessary that there always be a discrepancy between our subjective concepts and the concrete spatiotemporal objects of empirical nature, and that the concrete objects always, so to speak, fall slightly short of our subjective concepts (due, somewhat counterintuitively, to the fact that they always exceed our subjective concepts in richness). Could one really think otherwise? Certainly one should not want to suggest that all empirical nature, including Wilhelm Krug’s famous pen, can be deduced from our subjective concepts. DeVries is right when he states that “Hegel wants us to take the fact that there will always be discrepancy between theory and nature as a necessary truth, and he attributes the shortcoming to nature, not to theory. *It is the mark of nature and the natural to be less than ideal.*”<sup>456</sup> But it must also be remembered that it is a concrete thing’s constitution that contains, as Hegel says, the “ground for being or not being what it ought to be” – that is, the ground for being or not being in conformity with the universal.<sup>457</sup> Recognising that the

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<sup>454</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 86; *The Science of Logic*, p. 584.

<sup>455</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 87; *The Science of Logic*, p. 585.

<sup>456</sup> DeVries, *Hegel's Theory of Mental Activity: An Introduction to Theoretical Spirit*, p. 188. My emphasis.

<sup>457</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 87; *The Science of Logic*, p. 585.

problematic character of the judgement resides in the constitution of the subject in this way, according to Hegel, results in the move being made to the final sub-form of the judgement of the Concept – the apodictic judgement.<sup>458</sup>

In this judgement a reason for the initial assertoric judgement is expressed. An appeal is made to the constitution of the subject of the judgement as that which determines it as a particular, which thus mediates its relation with the universal. But as the judgement is still evaluative, it still expresses an *ought* or *ought not*, which means the subject is properly singular because its constitution is still independent of the universal concept that it is being measured against. Another important aspect to this judgement that is carried over from the assertoric judgement is the embodiment of thought – we still have, alongside the universal, the moment of immediacy, which is to say, the moment of perceptual experience brought about by causal, sensory interaction with nature. Hence its truth really would show a unity of subject and object, thought and being. In the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, Hegel presents the structure of the apodictic judgement as “*this* – immediate singularity (*Einzelheit*) – *house* – the genus – *being constituted thus and so* – particularity – is good or bad”.<sup>459</sup> But to make the implicit *ought* more explicit it may also be rendered as: ‘*this* – immediate singularity - *being constituted thus and so* – particularity - *ought to be (ought not to be) an instance of a house* – the genus, or concrete universal.’ (‘An instance of a house’ may sound somewhat imprecise, and one ought to read it as stating that something is an instance of the concrete universal that explains the determinations, as houses, of all those things that instantiate it.) Now, as we can see, all the moments of the Concept are exhibited here as divided but also properly related through mediation. “The concrete identity of the concept...is thus recovered *in the whole*.”<sup>460</sup> It is a judgement that is properly about external empirical reality, a judgement that properly shows how subjective concepts and objectivity can be moments of an original identity. Hegel puts this otherwise by stating that it “*is the absolute judgment on all reality*”,<sup>461</sup> and that

<sup>458</sup> “Perhaps”, as DeVries writes, “he [Hegel] calls it apodictic because “apodictic” literally means “shown” or “demonstrated.”” (DeVries, *Hegel's Theory of Mental Activity: An Introduction to Theoretical Spirit*, p. 186 n. 3.)

<sup>459</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I: Science of Logic*, §179.

<sup>460</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 89; *The Science of Logic*, p. 587.

<sup>461</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 88; *The Science of Logic*, p. 586.

it contains “the *accomplished* copula of the judgment, the copula *replete of content*, the unity of the concept that re-emerges from the judgment wherein it was lost in the extremes.”<sup>462</sup>

As I have already mentioned, it is Hegel’s claim that out of all the judgement forms we have just considered, only the judgement of the Concept, in the sub-form of the apodictic judgement, can be true. Or, as he says, “it is the *truth* of the *judgment* in general” – it is the judgement form that conforms to the notion of what a judgement ought to be.<sup>463</sup> And we can now see why. As we noted above, for a judgement to be true according to Hegel it must exhibit the moments of the Concept as corresponding, which is the same for him as saying it must exhibit the subject and the predicate as agreeing. The apodictic judgement of the Concept is the only judgement form that has exhibited the moments of the Concept as corresponding because it is the only judgement form that mediates the singular’s relation, through particularity, with the universal. And in exhibiting this correspondence it also exhibits the subject and predicate of the judgement as agreeing. The predicate *good* (or *bad*) agrees with the subject because a reason is given for the agreement. The point is not, I think, that none of the other forms of judgement considered above is possible – certainly we make judgements like them all the time. Rather, it is that considered on their own, in isolation, they are not possible. Or, to put it another way, it is judgements of the form of the apodictic judgement of the Concept, and the ability to make such judgements, that make all other forms of judgement possible.

What is more, as Redding further points out, this judgement, containing as it does an appeal to a reason for why the predicate pertains to the subject, has an “implicitly syllogistic form”<sup>464</sup> (Hegel says “the judgement has become the *sylogism*”<sup>465</sup>), which means it is already placed in an inferential context, where propositions are inferentially related. Making the expression of singularity and of the *ought* explicit, it can be rendered as follows:

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<sup>462</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 89; *The Science of Logic*, p. 587.

<sup>463</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 88; *The Science of Logic*, p. 585.

<sup>464</sup> Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought*, p. 189.

<sup>465</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft Der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik, Die Lehre Vom Begriff (1816)*, 12, p. 89; *The Science of Logic*, p. 587.



Premise 1: Houses are essentially constituted thus and so.

Premise 2: This is (is not) constituted thus and so.

Conclusion: This ought to be (ought not to be) an instance of a house.

This type of judgement, which we may call a sort of evaluative judgement, provides us, I contend, with what we have been looking for. Its implicit syllogistic form, which has it already placed in the space of reasons, and the fact that it contains the moment of the immediate singularity of perception rendered independent of, and contingent with respect to, the universal by the expression of the *ought*, but also rendered as related to the universal by the mediating moment of particularity, means that it is perfectly suited to the task of being of or about spatiotemporal objects in the world in such a way as to introduce empirical content into the intentional states involved in our social, deontic, linguistic practices.

I want to conclude this section by expanding on and further elucidating the discovery we have just made, and I think a good way to do this is by bringing P. F. Strawson into the frame. For Strawson was a philosopher whose work largely focussed on the topic of the introduction of empirical content into the propositions caught up in our linguistic practices, and many of the conclusions he reached, I suggest, run parallel to those Hegel came to. Indeed, the only real reason I see for preferring to work more extensively with Hegel than Strawson is that Strawson did not see the need for something to perform the role of the *ought* in propositions that are meant to introduce empirical contents, and thus his account of such introduction fell slightly short of adequate.

#### IV.IV - Strawson, Hegel, and Empirical Content

Instead of speaking of judgements, as Hegel does, Strawson speaks of sentences of ordinary language, or of assertions of propositions. Nothing of any relevance to our discussion rests on this difference, and I will continue to speak of judgements in order to maintain a sense of continuity. However, it should be remembered that at all times 'sentences of ordinary language' or 'assertions of propositions' can be

substituted in for 'judgements'. Moreover, in the wider context of this thesis as a whole I intend judgements to stand for the more general notions of theoretical intentional states or attitudes. With this in mind, let us begin with the question of how, according to Strawson, can a judgement be of or about a spatiotemporal object, such that it can serve to introduce empirical content into the intentional states/attitudes involved in our discursive practices?

According to Strawson this is possible only if the judgement expresses "two different non-linguistic items, or *terms*,"<sup>466</sup> copulated such that one term occupies the referential position while the other occupies the predicative position, *and* if the term occupying the referential position serves "the purpose of *identifying* the object [for our purposes, a spatiotemporal object], of bringing it about that the hearer (or, generally, the audience) knows *which* or *what* object is in question".<sup>467</sup> It should also be noted that according to Strawson the judgement is true "if what the first term [i.e. the term occupying the referential position] designates or signifies is a case or instance of what the second term [i.e. the term in the predicative position] signifies."<sup>468</sup> Two further questions now need answering. First, how is it that two different terms can come to occupy two different positions – the referential position and the predicative position – such that we can obtain a judgement that introduces empirical content into the propositions that are involved in our linguistic practices at all? And second, how does the term in the referential position serve the purpose of identifying a spatiotemporal object?

With regard to the first question, Strawson argues that different terms only come to occupy the referential position or the predicative position of a judgement *relatively*. Whether a particular term comes to occupy the referential position or the predicative position will depend on how it relates to the other term of the judgement. The relevant relation here, according to Strawson, is one of *grouping*. He argues that for a term to take the predicative position it must be of a higher 'type' than the other term of the judgement; where to be of a higher type than the other term is to group things signified by other terms, one of these terms being the other term of the current judgement, according to some principle.<sup>469</sup>

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<sup>466</sup> P. F. Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (New York: Routledge, 1959; repr., 2005), p. 140.

<sup>467</sup> P. F. Strawson *Logico-Linguistic Papers* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2004), p. 45.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

This is what Strawson refers to as his “type-criterion.”<sup>470</sup> So, for instance, in the judgement ‘That structure there (we can imagine the speaker pointing) is an instance of a house’ it is determined that the term expressed by ‘an instance of a house’ takes the predicative position because it groups things – one of these things being the thing signified by the term expressed by ‘that structure there’ - according to some principle for what it takes to instantiate it, i.e. a principle for what it takes to be an instance of a house; say, it must have walls, a roof, offer shelter, etc. The term expressed by ‘that structure there’ does not, on the other hand, group things, where one of these things is identified by the term expressed by ‘an instance of a house’, so it must take the referential position of the judgement. Indeed, terms that designate individual spatiotemporal objects, like ‘that structure there’, according to Strawson, *cannot* perform the grouping function in a way that would determine them as anything but of the lowest type, so they are guaranteed to never take the predicative position.<sup>471</sup>

This, I suggest, helps to expand on and clarify what is happening in Hegel’s discussion of the apodictic judgement of the Concept, and we only need to substitute Hegel’s moments of the Concept in for Strawson’s terms to see how. Just as Strawson argues that two different terms come to take the referential position and predicative position of a judgement (thereby making it possible for empirical content to be introduced into the propositions involved in our discursive practices) only according to the type-criterion, i.e. relative to each other and according to a principle of grouping, so by Hegel’s lessons we only get a judgement that is apt to introduce empirical content into the intentional states involved in our discursive practices if the moment of singularity is related to the moment of concrete universality in an apodictic judgement of the Concept according to a principle of grouping. (Indeed, the universal is a *concrete* universal in this judgement precisely because it groups the singulars that instantiate it, the singulars in and through which it manifests itself as the intelligible system that in turn explains their determinations, *and* because it groups them according to a principle which may also be

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<sup>470</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid., p. 69. Strawson does accept that terms that designate individual spatiotemporal objects may be said to also group together spatiotemporal objects. ‘That structure there’ may, for instance, be said to group together walls, a roof, doors, etc. But he claims such terms “obviously” perform any grouping function according to “quite a different sort of principle” from that according to which terms like ‘an instance of a house’ group their instances. (Ibid., p. 68.)

called on as a reason for why it [the concrete universal] pertains to the singulars.) This is exactly what was made clear when we brought out the implicit syllogistic form of this judgement. The principle according to which things are to be grouped, and according to which the moments of singularity and universality are to be related through particularity, was stated in the first premise: Houses are essentially constituted thus and so. The difference here between Hegel and Strawson, is that Strawson leaves the principle of grouping implicit, whereas Hegel makes it explicit.

Allow me to briefly fend off an objection that some may be harbouring. It may be thought that there is an important disconnect here between Hegel and Strawson that makes Strawson's thesis inappropriate to the task of helping to expand on and clarify Hegel's discussion of the apodictic judgement of the Concept. The sections of Strawson's work we have been looking to focus specifically on the *predication* of one term of another according to some principle of grouping. But, it may be asserted, a concrete universal is not the right sort of thing to be predicated of some singular, and for this reason the bits of Strawson's work that we have been looking to are not at all useful in helping us to understand how the moment of singularity and the moment of concrete universality relate in Hegel's apodictic judgement of the Concept. Indeed, one may claim that the bits of Strawson's work we have been focussing on seem to lend themselves rather to explanations of how *abstract* universals, which can be predicated of things, come to occupy the predicative position in a judgement. If they did so lend themselves in this way this would certainly make Strawson's work entirely inappropriate to the task I am suggesting it be used for here. For then Strawson would effectively be suggesting that something like Hegel's judgement of existence can serve the task of introducing empirical content into the intentional states involved in our discursive practices, and as we have seen this is not possible by Hegel's lights.

Certainly it is right to claim that a concrete universal is not the right sort of things to be predicated of something. One does not predicate a system of the things that instantiate it. This is exactly why Hegel presents 'good' or 'bad' as taking the predicate position in an apodictic judgement of the Concept. But this does not mean that Strawson's work cannot be put to use in the way I have suggested above. And certainly one is not committed to regarding that which takes the predicative position in a

Strawsonian judgement of the sort we are concerned with as an abstract universal. The example I gave above whilst spelling out Strawson's thesis – namely, 'That structure there is an instance of a house' - allows us to see this. Provided one reads 'an instance of a house' as stating that the structure is an instance of the concrete universal that explains the determinations, as houses, of all those things that instantiate it, then one can see that no abstract universal is being predicated of anything. Rather, being an instance of an intelligible system, a concrete universal, is being predicated of the thing signified by 'that structure there'. That is, *inclusion* is what is being predicated. This fits very well with what we found happening in Hegel's apodictic judgement of the Concept. In both cases – in both my Strawsonian example and my Hegelian example - a concrete universal is grouping the thing in subject position (or, more precisely for Strawson, the thing signified by the term in subject position) together with other things, but it is not being predicated of this thing.

There is nothing to stop Strawson's type-criterion being used in examples where an abstract universal is predicated of something identified by a term in referential position – e.g. 'That house there is warm'. Indeed, Strawson himself often puts it to such use. I would of course argue that these examples are not sufficient to show how empirical content is introduced into the propositions of our discursive practices. But what is important here is to note that there is also nothing to stop Strawson's type-criterion being put to use in the way I have above. It is perfectly appropriate to the task of helping us to expand on and clarify what is happening in Hegel's discussion of the apodictic judgement of the Concept.

There is, however, a problem with Strawson's account of how two different terms come to occupy the referential and predicative positions of a judgement – which, remember, is thereby meant to be an account of how empirical content can be introduced into the propositions that are caught up in our discursive practices. The problem is that Strawson's account relies too much on the term in the predicative *actually* or *successfully* grouping what it is that is signified by the other term of the judgement with other things. It does not allow for the possibility that that which is signified by the term in the referential position might turn out not to be an instance of what the term in predicative position groups together according to a principle. For this reason Strawson's account, as it stands by itself, is inadequate for explaining the introduction of empirical contents into the propositions involved in our

discursive practices. Any adequate account must make room for the possibility of our being wrong about nature; for nature, as we noted above, is less than ideal. It must be possible for a judgement that introduces empirical content into the intentional states that are involved in our discursive practices to turn out to be false. This is precisely what Hegel's *ought* allows, and this *ought* is precisely what is missing in Strawson's account. The right account would have it that the term in predicative position *ought* to group what is signified by the term in referential position.

This issue aside, however, there is still more to be gained by answering the second question we asked above: how, according to Strawson, does the term in the referential position serve the purpose of identifying a spatiotemporal object? Let us allow him to answer in his own terms.

This identificatory task [of the term in the referential position] is characteristically the task of the definite singular term. The term achieves its identificatory purpose by drawing upon what in the widest sense might be called the conditions of its utterance, *including* what the hearer is presumed to know or to presume already or to be in a position there and then to perceive for himself...The possibility of identification in the relevant sense exists only for an audience antecedently equipped with knowledge or presumptions, or placed in a position of possible perception, which can be drawn on in this way.<sup>472</sup>

Or, as he otherwise puts it, terms which identify spatiotemporal objects "present or represent facts, or presuppose or embody or covertly carry presuppositions."<sup>473</sup> These presuppositions need not be explicitly stated, they may be carried implicitly.

We are interested in the introduction of empirical content into intentional states at the ground level, so to speak, i.e. at the level of perceptual experiences brought about by causal interactions with worldly objects. The judgement 'The longest book in the world has more than one page' does not really

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<sup>472</sup> Ibid., pp. 45-46.

<sup>473</sup> Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*, p. 190.

serve to introduce empirical content into intentional states because it is left undetermined exactly which spatiotemporal object the judgement is about. If it comes to be determinately about some particular spatiotemporal object, this is because some other judgement serves to introduce that object. Similarly, my judgement 'Ben's house is warm' may be determinately *of* or *about* some particular spatiotemporal object, but it does not serve to introduce, at the ground level, empirical content into any intentional states involved in our discursive practices. It is only determinately about some particular spatiotemporal object because at some time someone causally, sensuously, interacted with this spatiotemporal object (i.e. because it was an object of her perceptual experience(s)) and here, at the ground level, she introduced it into one of her intentional states. We are therefore interested in the presuppositions drawn on in introducing empirical content at this ground level. In *Individuals* Strawson gives an example of just what these presuppositions might be.

Suppose I say, pointing, 'That person there can direct you'. The expression, 'That person there', introduces, or identifies, a particular [i.e. a spatiotemporal object that is a person]. It is clear enough both what the fact is upon which the term-introduction rests, and what its relation is to the words used. The term-distinguishing fact is that there is just one person there, where I am pointing; if there is no one at whom I could be taken to be pointing, my putatively term-introducing expression fails of a reference and my statement fails of a truth value.<sup>474</sup>

In other words, the term introduces, or identifies, a spatiotemporal object by carrying with it the presupposition that there is an object located at the position where the speaker is pointing, and that there is just one object there that is a person.

One thing of significance to briefly note here is that just as one cannot say that for Hegel the judgement is explanatorily prior to the moments of the Concept that fill its subject and predicate positions, or that the moments of the Concept are explanatorily prior to the judgement, so we can now

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<sup>474</sup> Ibid.

say that one cannot claim that for Strawson the proposition is explanatorily prior to the terms that take its referential or predicative positions, or that the terms are explanatorily prior to the proposition. They are equiprimordial. Terms, being determined as the terms they are, in the positions they take, presuppose propositions; and propositions presuppose terms being related in certain ways. This also means that inference cannot be taken as explanatorily prior to representation, both presuppose the other.

Now, Strawson's explanation of how a spatiotemporal object is identified by the term in the referential position of a judgement helps us to understand in more detail how Hegel's apodictic judgement of the Concept introduces empirical content. The judgement '*this* – immediate singularity - *being constituted thus and so* – particularity - *ought to be (ought not to be) a house* – the genus, or concrete universal' serves to introduce empirical content precisely because the moments of the Concept identify some spatiotemporal object by drawing on certain presuppositions which are, in this judgement, made explicit. As the 'this' and the 'being constituted thus and so' show, these presuppositions include that there is some singular spatiotemporal object which is being causally, sensuously interacted with, that is has a constitution that is thus and so - which thus means it is a particular so and so - and that it is the only thing that is such a particular at the location that the individual making the judgement is directed towards.

Thus Strawson's notions of position determination by principled grouping and term introduction by presupposition help to elucidate what is happening in Hegel's discussion of the apodictic judgement of the Concept. Let me now wrap this section up by saying something that begins to bring this thesis back full circle. The successful identification of some spatiotemporal object - and thus the introduction of empirical content into the intentional states involved in our discursive practices - along the lines just described, requires that *objective* facts be presupposed. If those propositions it presupposes are not objective facts, then, quite simply, there is no introduction of empirical content. This is why, in the example above, Strawson says, "if there is no one at whom I could be taken to be pointing, my putatively term-introducing expression fails of a reference and my statement fails of a truth value." So there is a remaining question of how to account for this objectivity. And this is where our story begins to loop back on itself. For I suggest that we account for this objectivity in the Brandomian way of accounting



for the objectivity of our conceptual norms, which we discussed in section I.II.IV. In other words, I suggest the required objectivity can be accounted for by an *I-thou* structured set of social deontic linguistic practices of attributing and acknowledging commitments and entitlements, in which objectivity arises out of each individual's intentional stance of attributing a commitment or entitlement. Let us look at an example of how this is meant to work. Let us assume that my expression 'This, being constituted as having walls, a roof, a door, etc.' does in fact serve to introduce a spatiotemporal object, and that it does so because it presupposes certain objective facts – e.g. that there is some singular object which is being causally, sensuously interacted with, that this thing is constituted as having walls, a roof, a door, etc., and that it is the only thing that is constituted in such a way at the location I am directed towards when I make the judgement. The objectivity of these facts can then be accounted for by regarding it as founded in the practices of individuals (and this includes me) *attributing* to me the *entitlements* to believe these facts, which is the same as saying the objectivity of these facts is founded in the practices of these individuals *acknowledging* their own commitments to these facts. Of course we must remember there is no privileged position, the objectivity is founded in *every* (and this is not a collective *all*) individual practitioner's appeal to the *I-thou* social structure as they go about acknowledging and attributing commitments and entitlements.

This explanation has the added benefit that one can turn out to be somewhat wrong about the constitution of a thing, and thereby fail in one's attempt to predicate something of it, hence make a false judgement, and yet still make a judgement that serves to introduce empirical content. For instance, knowing that what you are pointing at is nothing but a very realistic façade, others may not attribute to you the entitlements to believe that the spatiotemporal object towards which you are directed has walls, has a roof, is a house, etc. But they may attribute to you the entitlements to believe that there is a spatiotemporal object towards which you are directed, and that this object looks like a house, and is the only thing in the location towards which you are directed that looks like a house; which attributions of course constitute these as objective facts. This in itself would be enough for your judgement 'This, constructed as having walls, a roof, a door, etc., ought to be a house' to introduce empirical content, even though your judgement would be false. The reason why others may attribute to you such

commitments (which you have not made explicit) is because something's being constructed thus and so can be regarded as presupposing that it *looks to be*, or *appears to be* constructed thus and so. If something did not appear to be constructed thus and so there would be no way of saying it *is* constructed thus and so.<sup>475</sup> Thus your expression, 'This, constructed as having walls, a roof, a door, etc.,' can be regarded as really presupposing, for instance, that there is a singular object to which you are directed, that it has a constitution such that it *looks* like it has walls, a roof, is a house, etc., and that it is the only object to which you are directed that has this constitution.

But if others do not even attribute to you the entitlement to believe that there is a spatiotemporal object in the location towards which you are directed, then the attempt to introduce empirical content would fail altogether. The same may go for a case in which they do not attribute to you even the entitlements to believe that there is an object, towards which you are directed, which appears to be a house. This is the right result. For we do want to be able to say that we can make judgements about nature in such a way as to introduce empirical content into the intentional states involved in our discursive practices, even if these judgements turn out false. We do want to say, for instance, that the Ancient Greeks believed things of or about the sun, even though much of what they believed about it may be false. But we also want to say that if one gets nothing right about an object, or if there is no object for one to introduce, then the introduction of a spatiotemporal object must fail.

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<sup>475</sup> This does not mean that it literally has to visually appear to one that something is constructed thus and so. One could, for instance, develop a mathematical model according to which something appears to be constructed thus and so.

## V – Conclusion: Bringing it all Together to Determine and Confer Meanings

We began this thesis by inquiring into who 'we' are. On the condition that to be one of 'us' is to be an individual that is able to treat oneself and others as members of a group, any group, we contended (beginning in the later subsections of I.I and the subsections of I.II) that we are those creatures who take part in Brandomian linguistic social deontic practices of attributing and acknowledging commitments and entitlements and can thus treat intentional states/attitudes/performances *as such*, and use them in inferential reasoning. That is, to be one of us is to have a hand in determining and conferring meanings. Our task then became one of accounting for these practices – i.e. showing them to be possible, and showing them to be the only practices one can reasonably regard as able to determine meanings and confer them on to things. As we discovered in the later subsections of I.II, Brandom's own Inferentialism does not offer us an adequate way of doing this. For as we saw in those subsections, this system ultimately founders due to Brandom attempting to treat inference, i.e. his inferential practices of attributing and acknowledging commitments and entitlements, as logically, or explanatorily, prior to representation, hence as prior to meaning. The reason this results in his system foundering, as we now know, is that the very inferential practices he wants to treat as logically primordial in fact presuppose representation and thus meaning. For fundamentally they require that individuals can take up intentional stances that are of or about those individuals to which they are attributing commitments and entitlements.

Yet it was suggested in section I.II.VII that if we could account for how our perceptual responses to objects in the world can be normatively efficacious *for us* as the perceivers, which would of course mean treating inference and representation and meaning as explanatorily, or logically, equiprimordial, then we should be able to hold onto an account of the Brandomian-style social, deontic, linguistic practices of attributing and acknowledging commitments and entitlements, such that these practices can be regarded as able to determine meanings and confer them on to things, and such that they can be regarded as the only things reasonably able to be regarded as such. Thus in section II we turned to McDowell, who has spelled out two broad ways of depicting perceptual responses as normatively efficacious for perceivers, both of which require formulating a notion of conceptually contentful

experiences. The first of these ways involves regarding perceptual experiential content as propositional. This, as we saw (in section II.II.II), is an untenable idea. For a proposition is articulated in a way that the content of an experience is not. The second way of depicting perceptual responses as normatively efficacious for perceivers is to regard the contents of perceptual experiences as *objects*. I have argued that, depending on how one cashes out this idea, this must be correct. Unfortunately McDowell does not have the resources to cash out this idea in a way that makes it anything but unacceptable. He only makes room for the idea that the contents of perceptual experiences are objects as 'this-suches', as mere particulars. And this, as we saw in section II.II.III, ultimately means he endorses the untenable view that the way the world is is tied to the contingency of our existence and our subjective concepts. The correct way to cash out the idea that the contents of perceptual experiences are objects, I have argued, is to regard these objects as *singular*, as indifferent and not dependent on our existence or our subjective concepts to be the objects they are. But, as we noted in section II.II.IV, this leaves us a new problem to be solved. If we are to regard the contents of perceptual experiences as singular objects, and have these perceptual experiences as normatively efficacious for us as the perceivers, then we need a way of accounting for intentional states/attitudes that are both of or about singular objects and able to play a role in inferential reasoning.

I argued that by recasting what we mean by "concept" - such that we mean by it what Hegel meant, i.e. something that has the distinct but related moments of *singularity*, *particularity*, and *universality*, categories that amongst other things cover spatiotemporal objects and subjective concepts - and by looking to Hegel's discussion of the apodictic judgement of the Concept, we can solve this problem. This was, however, no easy task. It first required spelling out (in section III) many aspects of Kant's theoretical philosophy, as well as Hegel's critique of this system of "finitude", as he would say. This then allowed us to undertake (in section IV) a study of aspects of Hegel's own system, which was in large part set up in response to the Kantian framework. With this study completed, and with a solution to the problem of showing how an intentional state/attitude can be both about or of a singular object and play a role in inferential reasoning, we now have an account of how our perceptual experiences can be

normatively efficacious for us, and thus we should also now be able to properly account for the Brandomian social deontic linguistic practices. And indeed we can.

Taking what we have learnt from Hegel's discussion of the apodictic judgement of the Concept we can now ground the social deontic linguistic practices of attributing and acknowledging commitments and entitlements in judgements (intentional states/attitudes) of the following form: This – immediate singular – as a subject acting in such and such a manner (i.e. constituted in such and such a way) – particularity - *ought* to be a subject taking on the entitlement (and/or commitment) to such and such - concrete universality. For this judgement is properly of or about a singular spatiotemporal object (the individual subject), and because it has, as we have seen, an implicit syllogistic form it is already placed within the space of reasons and can thus play a role in inferential reasoning. E.g.:

P1 – A subject taking on the entitlement (and/or commitment) to such and such essentially is a subject acting in such and such a way.

P2 – This is a subject acting in such and such a way.

C1 – This ought to be a subject taking on the entitlement (and/or commitment) to such and such.

P3 – A subject entitled (and/or committed) to such and such is a subject entitled (and/or committed) to so and so, and not entitled to...

P4 - This ought to be a subject entitled (and/or committed) to such and such.

C2 – This ought to be a subject entitled (and/or committed) to so and so, and not entitled to...

Etc.

But now, being so grounded, the Brandomian social deontic linguistic practices of attributing and acknowledging commitments and entitlements can be understood to determine meanings. For inferential articulation of meaningful things can be understood as determined by the interplay between commitments and entitlements that was explained in section I.II.VI. What is more, since the inferential

relations between the presupposed facts that introduce empirical contents into intentional states, which determine these fact *as* serving to so introduce empirical content, will thus be understood as determined by commitments and entitlements, the representational aspect of meaningful things can also be understood as determined by the social deontic linguistic practices of attributing and acknowledging commitments and entitlements. This is not to suggest, however, that the representational aspect is treated as logically subsequent to inference. For, since the social deontic practices are grounded in intentional states that are of or about individuals and their taking on of commitments and entitlements, representation is presupposed at the ground level, and will thus have a hand in making the determining of meaning possible at all. Inferential practices and representation are equiprimordial, and mutually determining.

Finally, the Brandomian social deontic linguistic practices of attributing and acknowledging commitments and entitlements can now also be understood as conferring meaning on to things. For it precisely treating a subject as committed or entitled that confers meaning. For instance, if a subject is treated as entitled to believing that the sign signals that no one may enter, this is the same as it being understood to be the case objectively that the sign does signal that no one may enter. The attribution(s) of entitlement thus confer meaning onto the sign. Also, my acknowledging (i.e. attributing to myself *as* myself) the commitment to my experience normatively requiring me to attribute commitment  $x$  to  $A$  is the same as my treating it to be the case objectively that  $A$  is committed to  $x$ . Hence, the acknowledging of commitments can serve to confer meanings on to the actions (or, perhaps, ways of appearing) of other subjects. But, of course, the *I-thou* structure of these Brandomian social deontic practices means that there is no privileged position from which the real or ultimate objective meanings are conferred on to things. Objectivity comes out of (is grounded in) the intentional stances of all those subjects taking part in the Brandomian social deontic linguistic practices.

With all this in mind we can thus now say that we have been able to adequately explain the conditions for being one of 'us', that these conditions include being a creature that takes part in Brandomian-style social, linguistic, deontic practices of attributing and acknowledging commitments and entitlements, and thus also being a creature that can have objectively correct intentional

states/attitudes that are about oneself, others, and the world, and that we have shown how such conditions can be understood as possible. We can, therefore, say that we have fully answered the questions 'who are we?' and 'how must we understand our relations to the world and each other, such that knowledge of ourselves and the world is understood as possible?', which is where we began.

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