THE OPENING MOVEMENTS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT: TRANSCENDENTAL ARGUMENT OR PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPOSITION ?

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The Opening Movements Of the Phenomenology of Spirit: Transcendental Argument or Phenomenological Exposition?

by

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Abstract

Charles Taylor in his essay "The Opening Arguments of The Phenomenology" argues that the first three chapters of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit are an essay in transcendental argument. This suggests that Hegelian phenomenology is principally concerned with establishing what the transcendental preconditions of human knowledge and action are. In this thesis I will argue that Hegel's work should be seen as an attempt to move beyond an idealism that simply appeals to subjective reason, and thus the opening chapters of the "Phenomenology" should not be construed as a transcendental argument.

Hegel is often critical of transcendental method, and of modern epistemology generally, precisely because it views knowledge as primarily a dimension of human self-consciousness. It is Hegel's view that Kantian epistemology, for example, is flawed in that it is a procedure that assumes an original distinction between our consciousness and the world, which once assumed can never be bridged. And while Hegel recognizes that knowledge in some manner involves self-conscious reason, he calls for a reversal of the modern predilection to ground it solely within such a reason.

Accordingly, in Chapter One I examine Hegel's concept of phenomenology and his criticism of subjective idealism; in Chapter Two, in the light of this criticism, I address Taylor's view of transcendental argument, and his claim that phenomenological argument is similar in structure; and finally, in Chapter Three, the specific issue of whether the opening movement of the Phenomenology of Spirit is transcendental in form is dealt with.

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I

In his article "The Opening Arguments of The Phenomenology" Charles Taylor maintains that first three chapters of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit can be read as an essay in transcendental argument. Specifically, it can be read as a transcendental argument of the Kantian form. But given Hegel's frequent criticisms of Kant's philosophical method, is this an appropriate formulation of Hegel's work? In his lectures on the Lectures on the History of Philosophy, for example, Hegel criticises Kant's philosophy for being merely subjective. Kantian philosophy he states:

> ...leads knowledge into consciousness and self-consciousness, but from this standpoint maintains it to be a subjective and finite knowledge. Thus although it deals with the infinite Idea, expressing its formal categories and arriving at its concrete claims, it yet again denies this to be the truth, making it a simple subjective, because it has once for all accepted finite knowledge as the fixed and ultimate standpoint.[1]

In the Logic: The Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences, as well, Hegel makes a similar criticism of the Kantian standpoint:

> Thoughts, according to Kant, although universal and necessary categories, are only our thoughts - separated by an impassable gulf from the thing, as it exists apart from our knowledge.[2]

But Hegel immediately responds that:

> ...the true objectivity of thinking means that the thoughts, far from being merely ours, must at the same time be the real essence of the things, and of whatever is an object to us.[3]

It is clear from much of Hegel's commentary on Kant's work that he rejects the dualism between the thing as it exists "for consciousness" and as it exists "apart from our knowledge". Taylor commends Hegel for opposing epistemological and ontological dualism, yet he thinks that Hegel is using transcendental argument, which, as we shall see, Hegel contends arises out of a dualistic view of knowledge and being. Is it possible, then, to oppose dualism, as Hegel does, and employ transcendental argument as Taylor insists that Hegel is doing?

The focus of the present chapter, accordingly, will be an examination of Hegel's account of his own method and how he views it as differing from traditional epistemological. Fortunately, most of what Hegel has to say on the subject of phenomenology is outlined in the "Preface" and "Introduction" to the Phenomenology of Spirit, although it is in the "Introduction", specifically, that Hegel outlines in detail his method of carrying out phenomenological inquiry.

In the "Introduction" Hegel straightaway poses the question which epistemology sets for itself. Can our knowing afford us genuine access to the world or is it in some way defective? The agenda for any epistemological inquiry involves determining the limits of our knowledge, in order to establish the validity of our knowing. Hegel frames the matter in the following way:

> It is a natural assumption that in philosophy, before we start to deal with its proper subject matter...one must first of all come to an understanding about cognition...because cognition is a faculty of a definite kind and scope, and thus, without a more precise definition of its nature and limits, we might

grasp clouds of error instead of the heaven of truth.[4]

In other words, if it is assumed that our knowing is some kind of instrument for getting hold of the truth, then there is the added implication that we need to insure that the instrument is not defective. The need to avoid error, therefore, impels the epistemologist to try to determine exactly what the subject contributes to the act of knowing. In this manner, it is thought, any prejudice that might be inherent in our faculty of knowing can be eliminated, thus leaving us with the object as it really is.

Hegel has serious misgivings with this approach because it assumes that we can set down, in advance, the conditions for the possibility of knowledge. Additionally, in Hegel's opinion, it assumes that knowing is some kind of instrument by means of which we get hold of the truth, or a passive medium through which the truth reaches us. In both instances cognition can only grasp its object as in some way modified, either by the refraction of the medium or by the reshaping power of the instrument. Of the latter process Hegel asserts:

> ...if cognition is the instrument for getting hold of absolute being, it is obvious that the use of an instrument on a thing certainly does not let it be what it is for itself, but rather sets out to reshape and alter it.[5]

Thus, if cognition is viewed as some kind of instrument which alters and reshapes its object, then it must be different from that which it knows. We have cognition, in whatever form it may take, on the one side, and the object as it is in itself on the other.

In both instances, though, a critical inquiry into the nature and limits of knowledge will not resolve the problem. If, for instance, the inquiry attempts to acquaint itself with the

workings of the instrument of cognition, in order that it might eliminate the shaping functions of the instrument, it merely leaves its object exactly what it was before this inquiry. If, on the other hand, the investigation attempts to remove the refracting capacity of the instrument, this will not solve our problem either, because the elimination of the ray will also involve the elimination of the means whereby the truth reaches us. If the ray were eliminated, explains Hegel,

> ...all that would be indicated would be a pure direction or a blank space.[6]

This is to say, if cognition is viewed as a medium through which we get hold of an object, then its removal also entails the removal of access to the object, - i.e. there would be no object of thought for us.

But, as mentioned previously, what is also of concern to Hegel here is the question of whether it is possible to set down, in advance, what knowledge itself is. In the History of Philosophy Hegel states of critical philosophy and its aims:

> And a further claim is made when it is said that we must know the faculty of knowledge before we can know. For to investigate the faculties of knowledge means to know them; but how we are to know without knowing, how we are to apprehend the truth before the truth, it is impossible to say.[7]

Knowledge or science cannot be merely an arbitrary affair, but if we set down, in advance, what knowledge is or is not, we prejudice everything we know. That is to say, we determine in a prior procedure that knowledge, to be valid, must be of a definite kind and scope, and if it is not, then it is illusion, myth, error, etc., but not genuine knowledge. And while Hegel

does not directly mention them in the Phenomenology of Spirit, there are, plainly, other methodological difficulties in any epistemological enterprise, ones which Hegel must be cognizant of in his own inquiry. For instance, how is it possible, if at all, to get outside of our cognitive life in order to make a critical examination of it? If we are able to do this, then what is the status of this knowledge of knowledge? Moreover, if it is also some kind of knowledge, is it not, then, itself subject to the same conditions which it establishes in its preliminary inquiry? All of this would seem to suggest that epistemological inquiries by their very nature are caught in a circle or dilemma. As Hegel remarks in "Introduction" to the Logic: "To examine this so-called instrument is the same thing as to know it".[8] In other words, every epistemological inquiry, if it is making a claim about the nature and validity of knowledge in general, either has to appeal to its own criterion, which would make it a circular argument, or it has to make some preliminary presuppositions about knowledge. In either case we have an epistemological predicament. Whether it is possible to reconcile this view of Hegel's with Taylor's contention that Hegel's argument in the Phenomenology of Spirit will only hold if certain presuppositions about knowledge are made, is a question that will have to be addressed when assessing Taylor's thesis.

It is difficult to see how traditional epistemology can avoid these problems. Even, for example, if the preliminary presuppositions that it made were considered to be provisional ones only, putatively unproblematic as Charles Taylor contends, this is a questionable procedure. Epistemology by its very nature is directed at the entire corpus of human knowledge and so the initial starting point, on the face of it, cannot be exempt from its

investigation. To put this differently, there is no fixed, independent starting point, be it a detached ego - the "I think"- or some "original ground", from which the a priori conditions of knowledge can be determined. As we shall see later, for Hegel, science or knowledge is not merely knowledge of reason or experience as such - i.e. the a priori conditions of all experience and action, but knowledge as it is revealed in human affairs and history.

In addition to these particular concerns with the methodology employed by traditional epistemology, Hegel is also convinced that this view of cognition as either a medium or instrument, and the concomitant preoccupation with "falling into error" gives rise to another difficulty. Specifically,

> ...it presupposes that cognition which, since it is excluded from the Absolute, is surely outside of the truth as well, is nevertheless true, an assumption whereby what calls itself fear of error reveals itself rather as fear of the truth.[9]

In other words, the instrumental view of cognition generates two kinds of truths, what is true 'for us' and what is true 'in itself'. Thus it is a view of knowing which rests on the same subject-object distinction to which we previously referred, a distinction between our thinking, and reality as something other, about which we think.

Hegel's complaint here is that once this distinction is assumed it becomes unbridgeable. Why? Because any preliminary epistemological inquiry which attempts to remove the shaping influences of our cognition will only lead us back to the initial, spurious division between our knowing and the absolute. As he explains:

> If we remove from a reshaped thing what the instrument has done to it, then the thing - here the Absolute - becomes for us

> exactly what it was before this [accordingly] superfluous effort.[10]

To distinguish between two kinds of knowing, one absolute and one finite, as Schelling does, does not solve the problem either, because in the Schellingian system, finite knowledge only appears to be real at the finite standpoint, but is ultimately absorbed into the oneness of the absolute standpoint. Thus Hegel's gibe at Schelling:

> Dealing with something from the perspective of the absolute consists merely in declaring that, although one has been speaking of it just now as something definite, yet in the Absolute, A=A, there is nothing of the kind, for there all is one. To pit this single insight, that in the Absolute everything is the same, against the full body of articulated cognition, which at least seeks and demands such fulfilment, to palm off its absolute as the night in which, as the saying goes, all cows are black - this is cognition naively reduced to vacuity.[11]

That is to say, if all finite standpoints of knowledge are merely absorbed in some absolute standpoint, then they are in a sense annulled. Knowledge when reduced to an abstract principle of identity (A=A), says nothing at all, is vacuous. In other words, if all knowledge is reduced to the principle of identity, all the features and nuances of actual human life either get absorbed or are ignored.

These objections may or may not be valid, but they are genuine concerns for Hegel's own project in the Phenomenology of Spirit. We need to make a beginning in philosophy, but there does not seem, on the face of it, any grounds for doing so. Kantian epistemology is ruled out because it presumes just what it seeks to establish, i.e. knowledge. Hegel makes the following observation on Kant's critical philosophy:

> ...since the investigation of the faculties of knowledge is itself knowing, it cannot in Kant attain to what it aims at because it is that already - it cannot come to itself because it is already with itself...[12]

Furthermore since the various distinctions such as subjective-objective, cognition-truth, etc., which are often employed in investigations or inquiries into what knowing is and what it is not, are terms whose meanings are not yet established. Their meaning, in Hegel's estimation, "...is assumed to be generally familiar..." when indeed they could be even regarded as deceptive.[13] That is to suggest that there is something dogmatic about accepting these terms as well known, when their meaning as not been justified except by the conviction of the philosopher himself. Thus, for Hegel, at the beginning of any inquiry into the nature of knowing, no justification as been given for their use. As Hegel is also aware, he cannot appeal to some external criterion of knowledge because that too would require a justification, and so on *ad infinitum*. As he observes in the "Introduction" to the Logic;

> Philosophy misses an advantage enjoyed by the other sciences. It cannot like them rest the existence of its objects on the natural admissions of consciousness, nor can it assume that its method of cognition, either for starting of for continuing, is one already accepted.[14]

One might ask Taylor how such a claim can be reconciled with his own claim that transcendental argument appeals to two supposedly self-evident and basic facets of experience - the "I think" and the .polarization between subject and object? Taylor, for example, asserts that the first claim of any transcendental argument is self-evident or something we just see. He states:

> We just **see** that experience must be of something to be experience, or that the "I think" must be able to accompany all my representations.[15]

If Hegel is arguing that our own subjectivity, or, as he states, the "natural admissions of consciousness", is not the essential feature in knowing, it is questionable whether his work is transcendental in form as Taylor suggests. But some alternative interpretation of Hegel's work is called for.

What kind of solution, then, is available to solve the predicament that epistemology has wrought? Can Hegel return, in the manner of Kant, as Taylor insists he does, to inquire again into the nature of knowledge? Our preliminary investigation would suggest that he cannot, given his conviction that such an enterprise is destine to fail, because it presumes just what it endeavours to overcome, namely the separation between the inquirer and the object of his or her inquiry. Additionally, any kind of preliminary inquiry into the nature and scope of knowledge is itself an act of knowledge. This, in Hegel's view, is a fallacious procedure, as his observation of the critical method of philosophy indicates.

> In the case of other instruments, we can try and criticize them in other ways than by setting about the special work for which they are destined. But the examination of knowledge can only be carried out by an act of knowledge. To examine this so-called instrument is the same thing as to know it. But to seek to know before we know is as absurd as the wise resolution of Scholasticus, not to venture into the water until he had learned to swim.[16]

Science, philosophy, does not need to start with some antecedent inquiry into the faculty of cognition. Again, Hegel states:

> It may seem as if philosophy, in order to start on its course, had, like the rest of the sciences, to begin with a subjective presupposition...It is by the free act of thought that it occupies a point of view, in which it is for its own self, and thus gives itself an object of its own production.[17]

Another way of viewing this is to recognize that there are not two kinds of knowledge but one, whose justification is not established by some antecedent investigation, employing preconceived criteria or notions of experience. This is to suggest that what knowledge is is not determined by some antecedent investigation, but the result of the very activity of consciousness living through one context of objectivity after another until the standpoint of actual knowledge is reached. Knowing, accordingly, educates itself as to its own legitimate foundations, not by employing external standards but from its own self-critical development.

But Hegel realizes that science in its initial appearance alongside of other modes of knowledge is not yet science in its developed and unfolded truth, and needs, therefore, to establish its credentials.[18] He knows, as he states in the "Introduction" to the Phenomenology of Spirit, that just because science comes on the scene, it cannot merely assure us that it is a different sort of knowing and let the matter stand. Nor, as he further recognizes, can science simply reject ordinary ways of looking at things as untrue or inadequate. As Hegel himself indicates: "one bare assurance is worth just as much as another".[19] Moreover, if science were advanced in this way, its standpoint would be understood as outside of or external to the prevailing views of what knowing is and would be in essence suggesting that they are untrue or wrong. It would also be insinuating that the various stages of finite, or phenomenal knowing, do not constitute the road or pathway to science. The effect of this would be

introduce a dualism between ordinary, finite knowledge and science. But, as we know, Hegel wants to argue that finite or ordinary knowing is a moment of actual knowledge. Emil L. Fackenheim rightly points out that for Hegel:

> There can be no total and unbridgeable dualism between a self-examination occurring in nonphilosophic life, and a philosophic thought in exclusive possession of all criteria for recognition both the fact and meaning of this self-examination. If there were such a dualism, how could any individual...ascend the ladder to the absolute standpoint, handed him by a philosopher who himself is already - quite inexplicably - at that standpoint? [20]

Additionally, if there were such a dualism, we would have the situation where there is two kinds of knowledge, one, the empirical knowledge of the everyday life and the working scientist, and second, the knowledge of knowledge, epistemological knowledge, which establishes the requirements and limits of the former.

If there is no dualism between science and, as Emil L. Fackenheim states, the "self-examination occurring in nonphilosophic life", what is the nature of Hegel's distinction, then, between phenomenal or finite knowing and absolute knowing or science? The difficulty here is that Hegel never gives us a concise definition of what phenomenal knowing is. It is not, obviously, strictly historical for it would be difficult to see how its development could be understood as necessary and ultimately completed as absolute knowing. One way of understanding what Hegel means by phenomenal knowing is to see it in relationship to Kant's notion of knowing presented in the Critique of Pure Reason. For Kant all knowledge is knowledge of phenomena (sense data). That is to say, human knowledge is limited to the

given phenomena of sensible intuition, which for Kant are inevitably objectified through the concepts supplied by the understanding. Thus there is no knowledge of "things in themselves", but only of things as they are "for us". There is no absolute knowledge, only finite knowledge; no knowledge as it arises from the nature of things, but only knowledge as it is constituted by the demands of our own subjectivity.

Hegel does not disagree with Kant on the issue of whether phenomenal knowledge is finite or not. Nor does he disagree with Kant's claim that human knowledge is of appearances. He states:

> The things immediately known are mere appearances - in other words, the ground of their being is not in themselves but in something else. But then comes the important step of defining what this something else is. According to Kant, the things that we know about are to us appearances only, and we can never know their essential nature, which belongs to another world we cannot approach.[21]

But Hegel counters with a different view of the matter:

> For the true statement of the case is rather as follows. The things of which we have direct consciousness are mere phenomena, not for us only, but in their own nature; and the true and proper case of these things, finite as they are, is to have their existence founded not in themselves but in the universal divine Idea.[22]

In the matter of knowledge, similarly, "finite" knowledge is an appearance or a moment in actual or absolute knowledge, not as with Kant mere appearance or knowledge of phenomena. Each configuration of consciousness, therefore, must be the absolute manifesting itself in a particular form. Thus the real question for Hegel is not the relationship

between the knowing subject and what is known, but the relation of knowledge itself to its appearances - i.e. phenomenal forms. But the distinction between phenomenal knowledge and absolute knowledge still needs to be explained. The concise explanation is that phenomenal knowledge is a knowing which is burdened with a division between the knower and what is known - i.e. between what is "for us" and what is "in itself", whereas in absolute knowing all such divisions are set aside. In "sense-certainty", for example, consciousness takes its object to be a sense particular, but discovers that the object as thus understood does not completely conform to this concept of it. In "sense-certainty", then, as with all forms of phenomenal knowing, there is a discrepancy between the concept which animates that form of knowing and its objective reality.

But science cannot come about, as noted previously, by inquiring once again into the nature of knowledge in the Kantian fashion. What is required instead is an examination by consciousness of itself. For this reason a "phenomenological" exposition is required. Phenomenological exposition is a recapitulation or presentation of the development of consciousness in terms of the concepts that animate its various phenomenal forms or points of view, and from a standpoint which is in principle already science. Yet the movement and result of this exposition is not something impose externally by the phenomenologist. As Hegel states:

> The necessary progression and interconnection of the forms of the unreal consciousness will by itself bring to pass the completion of the series. To make this more intelligible, it may be remarked...that the exposition of the untrue consciousness in its untruth is not a merely negative

procedure.[23]

Obviously, given Hegel's criticism of Kant's epistemological method, along with his insistence throughout the "Preface" and "Introduction" that consciousness is movement and development, he believes that the analysis and criticism of the concepts of knowing cannot precede but must accompany their use. It is also the case that the "interconnection" of the forms of consciousness must articulate, in a systematic manner, the entire series of concepts that constitute the life of spirit, if a transition from "unreal" consciousness to scientific consciousness is to be effected. The phenomenological exposition of finite or phenomenal knowledge to the standpoint of absolute knowledge is more of the nature of an immanent explication of the movement of what knowing is, rather than a critical inquiry which attempts to establish what knowledge is prior to an actual knowledge of anything.

In summary, there are a number of issues arising out of Hegel's criticism of Kantian epistemology. First, there is his concern with the method employ by traditional epistemology, in particular the distinction it makes between our knowing and the object as it is in-itself. Second, this distinction between what is true "for us" and what is true "in itself" cannot be solved, *contra* Schelling, by making an added distinction between two kinds of knowledge, one absolute and one finite. Finally if, as Hegel maintains, knowledge is one, it still must reconcile its absolute standpoint with all the various phenomenal or finite forms of its appearance. This is the demand that knowledge be science or system. As such, a phenomenological exposition must demonstrate the interconnection of all the various forms of phenomenal knowing as necessary moments in the development of knowledge as such.

In other words, phenomenological exposition must show, *contra* Taylor, that the various forms of finite consciousness are not exclusively aspects or dimensions of human self-consciousness itself, but the various forms of absolute knowledge in its self-education.

II

Thus the call for a phenomenological exposition in the "Introduction" to the Phenomenology of Spirit is not perplexing. Science must be more than just an abstract principle or starting point; it must also involve the development of its principles in systematic form. As Hegel explains:

> In my view, which can be justified only by the exposition of the system itself, everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as Substance, but equally as Subject.[24]

Later on he adds

> That the True is actual only as system, or that Substance is essentially Subject, is expressed in the representation of the Absolute as Spirit...[25]

What exactly, then, do these enigmatic statements suggest about the form "truth" must take? They do imply, minimally at least, that the truth must be more than an infinite substance, an original or immediate unity; that is to say, the truth must also include its concrete self-development.[26] But as the first of the two quotes also suggests, this can only be validated by a complete exposition of the system itself. The implication of the statement is clear: a mere principle, whether it be the principle of identity (A=A) or some other, cannot pass for science, any more than the statement "all animals" can pass for zoological science.[27] In the case of Schelling's principle of identity, for example, no account is given for difference, that

is to say, all difference is ultimately absorbed in the absolute standpoint. Whereas for Hegel, difference or distinction is the actual content of the self-manifestation of spirit. Spirit is not, as he states in the Philosophy of Mind,

> ...an essence that is already finished and complete before its manifestation...but an essence which is truly actual only through the specific forms of its necessary self-manifestation...[28]

Difference, in other words, belongs to the very nature of spirit. But it is not a difference which is construed as a mere instrument or vehicle of spirit. Difference, otherwise put, as the content of the self-manifestation of spirit, must be real as well as ideal. Hegel illustrates what he means here in his analysis of the Christian adage; "God has revealed himself through Christ, his only-begotten Son". He states:

> ...this statement properly means that God has revealed that his nature consists in having a Son, i.e. in making a distinction within himself, making himself finite, but in his difference remaining in communion with himself, beholding and revealing himself in the Son, and that by this unity with the Son, by this being-for-himself in the Other, he is absolute mind or spirit; so that the Son is not the mere organ of the revelation but is himself the content of the revelation.[29]

So what is other than spirit is not something external to it, but rather the manifestation of its own content. Form and content, in other words, are identical. For the purposes of the present examination I take this to suggest that our consciousness of objects is not merely a matter of an empty form being added to an external content. Knowledge, accordingly, is not merely the knowledge of reason as such, but as it is actually manifested in the world. That is to say, knowledge is not merely knowledge of what knowing is or is not, for example, insofar as it

formulates the a priori conditions of all experience and action, but reason as it is actually manifest in the entire range of activities which characterizes human experience - i.e. consciousness, willing, religion, technology, etc. In the former instance philosophy is fundamentally the critical inquiry by which we ascertain what the preconditions of a particular experience are, and for which transcendental argument is aptly suited. But Hegel's project in the Phenomenology of Spirit is different in that it goal is to effect a transition from the merely subjective or phenomenological standpoint, to what he calls the absolute standpoint or science. The Phenomenology of Spirit, in traversing the complete range of human subjective consciousness, is attempting to bring to light the progress of the coming-to-be of science, and is not, as Taylor suggests, attempting to establish the criterion and limits which apply to particular notions of experiences - "sense-certainty", "perception", etc. The coming-to-be of science is not, for Hegel, an inquiry that sets down in advance what knowledge itself is. It is not, as he states in the "Preface" to the Phenomenology of Spirit, "..an initiation of the unscientific consciousness into science".[30] The phenomenological road to science belongs to a consciousness that is already scientific in principle, and in demonstrating the interconnection of all the various standpoints of human subjective consciousness, the single individual is handed the ladder to science. In other words, in revealing the logic of unscientific or finite consciousness phenomenological exposition effects a transition from the sphere of the mere appearing to know to actual knowledge, which Hegel calls science.

But this procedure brings with it the Hegelian demand that philosophy immerse itself

in what it thinks and relinquish its merely subjective standpoint, of the I, the ego, which merely catalogues and "pigeon-holes" and does not enter "...into the immanent content of the thing...".[31] "Scientific cognition" declares Hegel:

> ...demands surrender to the life of the object, or, what amounts to the same thing, confronting and expressing its inner necessity.[32]

This can only be accomplished if the subject, the "I", relinquishes its position as the final arbiter in all matters of knowledge and recognize itself as a moment in knowledge as such. In other words, in science thought is no longer deemed to be a mere subjective standpoint, but an activity one with the life of the object itself - i.e. its concept. All of this may seem to be implausible or a retrograde step. Surely, it might be argued, the Kantian "I think", as Charles Taylor himself will note in his essay "The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology", is an indubitable facet of our experience as knowers. Yet here is Hegel suggesting that thought is not simply the activity of the subject, the I, but that thought only really thinks truth when it overcomes its own subjectivity and becomes one with what is thought of, the concept, or as Hegel states it, when it enters "...into the immanent rhythm of the Notion".[33]

Hence, the real source of philosophical thinking for Hegel is the concept. Philosophy's element is "...the actual, that which posits itself and is alive within itself".[34] Concepts represent the dynamic character of the object or reality itself and are not the rigid, abstract categories of the understanding. In other words, concepts are not, as they are for Kant, merely forms of synthesis pertaining to the given phenomena of intuition, by means

of which objectivity is constituted. For Hegel : "...things are what they are through the action of the concept, immanent in them, and revealing itself in them."[35] Kant's categories of the understanding, accordingly, are viewed as simply a "...table of terms", which are externally applied to a given material.[36] As Hegel explains in his History of Philosophy, the individual categories of the understanding, because they are empty on their own account,

> ...only have significance through their union with the given, manifold material of perception, feeling, etc.. Such connection of sensuous material with categories now constitutes the facts of experience, i.e. the matter of sensation after it is brought under the categories; and this is knowledge generally.[37]

In this Kantian sense concepts are simply the formal determinations of a thinking subject and do not grasp the reality of the object itself, that is, they do not attach to the object apart from our knowledge of it. But if, as Hegel insists, philosophy's element is the actual, which is the life of the concept, then, as he also states:

> The determinateness, which is taken from the schema and externally attached to an existent thing, is, in Science, the self-moving soul of the realized content.[38]

In other words, the determinateness that attaches to the content is not imposed from without. The concept is the soul of both consciousness and its object.

Accordingly, in the Phenomenology of Spirit the movement of consciousness in its comprehension of the object is just as much a movement of the object itself as it is the movement of consciousness. In the articulation of its concept (the existence of the content, or the being of something for consciousness), consciousness becomes an other to itself, that

is, it confronts its own immediate universality with a particular, objective other. But as Hegel notes, consciousness is also a "..taking back into itself this unfolding [of its content] or this existence of it...".[39] It is in this way, states Hegel,

> that the content shows that its determinateness is not received from something else, nor externally attached to it, but that it determines itself, and ranges itself as a moment having its own place in the whole.[40]

This is to suggest, in one respect at least, that there is not a given material on one side and a set of determinations on the other, which externally orders the material. In other words, the content of consciousness is not something that exists outside of the concept, but in a fundamental sense is deduced from it. To quote the Logic again:

> We speak of the deduction of a content from the notion, e.g. of the specific provisions of the law of property from the notion of property; and so again we speak of tracing back these material details to the notion.[41]

Here, Hegel is again insisting that the concept is not the merely formal operation of thought, but something which possesses a content of its own. And in giving itself this content, the concept involves mediation, i.e."...the notion [*concept*] is what is mediated through itself and with itself".[42]

In the Phenomenology of Spirit, then, while there is a polarization of consciousness and its object, they implicitly form a unity, where each must become other than itself in order to be all that it is. The concept, as the animating activity of the self or consciousness, realizes all that it is by penetrating everything other than itself, and sublating or negating this other with itself. And conversely, the object becomes all that it is, in being thought. That is,

in being thought, the object is given the specific character imposed by its own concept. These two movements form a unity. As Hegel explains, if the subsistence of a thing is its self-identity, this is a pure abstraction (A=A), but this also is thinking (I=I). In either case this self-identity also involves a dissolution, "...the abstraction of itself from itself,...its own becoming".[43] This process of becoming involves both substance and thought becoming other, and to that end, substance must be something that is thought, and thought must think substance. As Hegel might put it, true knowing is when spirit is "for-itself what it is in-itself".

However, because of the tendency of the "I" to abstract from all its content and set itself up as a fixed point, the demand that it give up this standpoint and immerse itself in its object seems to it to be an impossible requirement. Hegel calls this ratiocinative thinking, and it is characterized by the form of judgement, as remarked earlier, which views the determination of a subject by a predicate as simply its doing. Typically in such judgement a rigid distinction is drawn between the subject and its predicate. That is to say, the judgement is thought of as involving two distinct elements, a subject and it predicate, where the subject is taken as separate from its predicate, and to which the predicate is externally related. As Hegel notes in the Logic:

> One's first impression about the Judgement is the independence of the two extremes, the subject and the predicate. The former we take to be a thing or term per se, and the predicate a general term outside the said subject and somewhere in our heads.[44]

In "the Judgement", then, thought can move endlessly back and forth attaching or

determining predicates to the subject as it sees fit. Because the subject's content is related to it as its accident, there is no necessity in its development. All determinations of thought are externally related to the subject of the judgement and to each other.

But Hegel contents that in a speculative proposition the unity of the judgement is taken to be primary, and the two elements, subject and predicate, only the moments. For example, in the statement "the actual is the universal", the predicate, "universal", is meant to represent the essence of the "actual" and not merely something other which is predicated of the "actual". That is to say, it is understood to be the content or revelation of the "actual", not merely something externally added to it. Just as in the statement "God has revealed himself through Christ, his only begotten Son", the Son is understood to be the content of the revelation. The " universal"in the above statement is to be understood as the content or manifestation of the "actual". The point that Hegel is making here is that in speculative judgements, unlike ordinary judgements, thought is not reflected into the empty "I" away from the content. Speculative propositions are not formal statements of the kind, S-is-P, where S is understood to be what the judgement is about, and where P represents what is attributed to the subject by someone doing the thinking. In a speculative judgement, therefore, the subject is not a fixed point, simply supporting the predicates. Nor is there a simple identification between the subject and the predicate. In a speculative proposition the subject passes over into the predicate. So in the above proposition "the actual is the universal", "the actual" is not a fixed point to which the predicate "the universal" is ascribed. Instead "the universal" is meant to signify the essence of "the actual", and in a very important

sense, in passing over into "the universal" "the actual" becomes what it truly is. In thinking the "universal", then, we are not thinking something else, but that which the subject, "the actual", itself is.

Hegel devotes a fair amount of effort to explaining the differences between the two kinds of judgements, a topic which might be perceived to have little relevance to phenomenology. But what I think that Hegel is trying to show here is that in a speculative judgement we see the dynamic character in things and that it is not necessary, therefore, that we import our own adventitious ideas in order to comprehend things. Phenomenology need not state, in advance, what the conditions of knowing or science are, because it already has embodied within it, its own principles. It is not necessary, as he states, "...to clothe the content in an external [logical] formalism".[45] But it is also significant for another reason, in that it also suggests that knowledge or science is not determined solely by the demands of the human subject, the "I think". In a speculative judgement the "I" relinquishes the abstractness of its fixed standpoint, as a detached ego, and immerses itself in what is thought. In other words, in a speculative judgement, thought is no longer posited as a subjective standpoint, but an activity which articulates the inherent dynamic of the object itself - i.e. its concept. For instance, the categories of nature would not be merely forms of subjective consciousness, but are articulations of the actual dynamic in nature.

What, then, does this tell us about the development of science? Fundamentally, if phenomenology is a recapitulation of the various expressions of finite consciousness, then it is not something imposed externally by the phenomenologist. Rather, the path of the

exposition springs from the very nature of consciousness itself. To be more precise, phenomenology is an exposition of the various forms of finite consciousness in terms of the concepts that enliven them.

Consciousness, states Hegel, contains two moments, "...knowing and the objectivity negative to knowing". Accordingly consciousness is characterized by a disparity "...between the I and the substance which is its object". While this can be regarded as their defect, it is also however their "...soul, or that which moves them".[46] Thus, consciousness, in affirming a certain concept of knowing, finds itself plunged into contradiction, but discovers, in its attempt to resolve the oppositions generated by this contradiction, new and more comprehensive concepts of knowing. In other words, the development of pre-scientific consciousness is possible because the conflict intrinsic to consciousness constantly forces it out of every incomplete or partial standpoint, and reinstates it in a more complete form. There is a constant movement back and forth between what consciousness takes to be true at one moment and that which is actually implied in what it takes itself to be. In this sense we see that consciousness, for Hegel, is an inherently formative and dynamic activity. It is this dialectical movement inherent in thought that gives rise to the entire series of phenomenal forms of consciousness, which constitute the pathway to science, and is indeed science itself. This "arising and passing away" of various standpoints of subjective consciousness, states Hegel,

> ...does not itself arise and pass away, but is 'in itself' [i.e. subsists intrinsically], and constitutes the actuality and the movement of the life of truth.[47]

But what is of significance for phenomenological exposition is that consciousness does not need to impose, in advance, its own determination of what this will be. Phenomenology is simply the recapitulation of this development from a standpoint which is in principle science or actual knowing. It is important to note as well, as Hegel does, that the disparity which exists in consciousness is also "...of the substance with itself".[48] So the disparity between the "I" and the object is both a deficiency on the part of the "I" in relation to its object, as well as a deficiency on the part of the object with respect to itself. The disparity, then, between the object and "I", rather than being an impediment to knowing, is the engine that drives it forward until spirit, as Hegel states:

> ...has made its existence identical with its essence; it has itself for its object just as it is, and the abstract element of immediacy, and of separation of knowing and truth, is overcome.[49]

In this manner, then, the whole series of concepts inherent in consciousness get articulated and the pathway to science is established. This suggests that phenomenology is not an endless reflection on or contemplation of the validity of various notions of experience, as Taylor contends, but an attempt to achieve what Hegel calls an absolute standpoint or actual knowledge.

Hegel sometimes refers to this pathway to science as a kind of journey which consciousness must take in order to purify itself for the life of spirit. And at other times he regards it as a pathway of doubt and despair.[50] This may seem like a peculiar way of depicting this development, but if one considers what is actually involved in the process, it

is not at all an inappropriate characterization. That is to say, if the process is also seen as a way of overcoming certain epistemological prejudices concerning the relationship of consciousness and its object, specifically their distinction from one another, then the notion of purification or catharsis is fitting. But the process is also the pathway of despair because from the standpoint of finite consciousness this development appears merely negative, a scepticism destructive of its immediate standpoint. Yet it is not the kind of scepticism which is invoked in order to confirm one's own convictions. Such a scepticism, in Hegel's opinion, is not a truly formative process because it merely dispels those ideas which do not conform to one's own. A truly formative scepticism is one which, in Hegel's words, is a "determinate negation". It does not merely dispel ideas, but engenders new ones, nor does it result in a "determinate nothingness", but is equally a positive outcome in that consciousness is elevated to more complete form.[51] This dialectical movement of consciousness, as we shall see below, is crucial to the phenomenological exposition because it constitutes the pathway to science. But as Werner Marx aptly points out, because this dialectical movement of consciousness goes on behind the back of the consciousness engaged in experience itself, a specific role for the phenomenologist can be assigned.[52] Otherwise put, a role can be assigned to the phenomenologist because he able to recognize that the development of consciousness from one stage to the next is a dialectically necessary one, not merely a chance occurrence. Marx contends that it is for this reason that the pathway itself can be reckoned as itself science.

> We, the phenomenologists, should pay attention to the necessity of the movement, for this is what makes it legitimate to describe even the presentation of the experience

> of consciousness - the road which first leads to science proper - as itself a "science".[53]

And through this presentation, accordingly, the phenomenologist is able, in Marx's view, "...to persuade the contemporary natural consciousness...that in virtue of its own inherent principle it could advance to science, if only it wanted to do so".[54]

Ultimately, though, what is crucial for Hegel's position is that this scepticism be thorough, that it bring about a state of utter despair in consciousness. The scepticism must engender in consciousness a radical doubt concerning the possibility of any objective standpoint. Consciousness must be brought, as it were, to the position where it sees "...the untruth of phenomenal knowledge...".[55] Only then can it realize that its own distinction from an object existing separate and opposed to it, is really no distinction at all. As Hegel puts it at the end of the "Introduction" to the Phenomenology of Spirit:

> In pressing forward to its true existence, consciousness will arrive at a point at which it gets rid of its semblance of being burdened with something alien, with what is only for it, and some sort of 'other', at a point where appearance becomes identical with essence, so that its exposition will coincide at just this point with the authentic Science of Spirit.[56]

The life of spirit, therefore, is not merely a subjective reality, but includes the objective as well. In this sense Hegel believes he has shown the limitations of the dualism presupposed by traditional epistemological inquiry. But what Hegel has also purported to have achieved by the end of his phenomenological exposition is an absolute standpoint or actual knowledge; whereas transcendental argument only articulates something about the nature of our lives as subjects, that is, it merely supplies the norms and limits to particular points of view of human

subjective consciousness, and is not an actual knowledge of anything. Moreover, once one set of problems has been explored, transcendental argument is always "enmeshed in another set of problems"[57] concerning the nature of the subject, or the subject's place in the world.

This account of consciousness, it must be observed, corresponds to the Hegelian claim that science is not just a starting point, but equally a result, which in turn touches upon Hegel's continual demand that we free

> ...determinate thoughts from their fixity so as to give actuality to the universal, and impart to it spiritual life.[58]

The various determinate thoughts that consciousness embodies in its phenomenal forms are not to be viewed as rigid and fixed, in isolation from each other, but in a dynamic relationship. In any determinate form, as previously mentioned, consciousness is involved in a relationship of itself with itself, but in such a way that it is also in contradiction with itself. It can only recover its unity by reinstating itself in a more complete form, sublimating within its new shape what was true in the former. Thus, every determination of thought involves a relationship to a previous one, but more importantly for the development of science, each also represents an advancement to another more comprehensive determination. What knowledge is, accordingly, only emerges as consciousness develops and becomes more clear about itself. That is to say, consciousness can only grasp what it is, in a self-critical, systematic development of it thoughts or concepts. This stands in contrast to the view that Hegel is so critical of at the beginning of the "Introduction" to the Phenomenology of Spirit - the view which assumed that it is possible to set down, in advance, what knowledge is or is

not.

III

If as Hegel suggests, then, phenomenological exposition represents the self-elevation of knowledge to the standpoint of science, how is its method different from the epistemological procedures of which he is so critical in the opening passages of the "Introduction"? He clearly wants to distinguish it from the methods of Kant, Fichte and Schelling. Phenomenology, declares Hegel,

> ...will not be what is commonly understood by an initiation of the unscientific consciousness into science; it will also be quite different from the 'foundation' of science; least of all will it be like the rapturous enthusiasm which, like a shot from a pistol, begins straight away with absolute knowledge...[59]

Now, as we have observed, in one manner at least Hegel believes phenomenology is different from epistemology in that both its movement and outcome are not imposed externally by the phenomenologist, but originate in the very nature of consciousness itself. The series of phenomenal forms which consciousness undergoes and which ultimately culminates in scientific consciousness is driven by its own internal logic. What does this tell us about the nature of phenomenological exposition? As suggested earlier, it is not some antecedent method, such as transcendental critique, but a kind of ancillary examination of the development of phenomenal consciousness to the standpoint of science. I mean by this that phenomenology, unlike transcendental argument, does not step back from experience by taking up a 'transcendental' standpoint in order to examine it. To reiterate, this would be to

treat our cognitive life as some kind of 'instrument' or 'medium' through which we discover the truth. I have already mentioned Hegel's objections to this procedure, but it does highlight, as well, Hegel's desire to move beyond the practice of referring questions of knowledge to self-consciousness - to some detached, autonomous ego. This, I believe, is one reason why Hegel adopts the term 'Spirit' when dealing with epistemological or ethical questions. Spirit is a category that is meant to incorporate the objective as well as the subjective orders of practical and cognitive life. Phenomenological exposition, unlike transcendental argument, does not assume a distinction between consciousness and the world or non-ego, but see them as related terms in all knowledge.

But the problem which always bedevils traditional epistemological investigations now seems to pose a problem for phenomenological exposition as well. Hegel states:

> If this exposition is viewed as a way of relating Science to phenomenal knowledge, and as an investigation and examination of the reality of cognition, it would seem that it cannot take place without some presupposition which can serve as its underlying criterion.[60]

But this is just what Hegel claims is wrong with epistemology, namely, that it presupposes exactly what it sets out to determine, the possibility of knowledge. In other words, if we do not know what knowledge is, then how can we have a criterion for testing whether something is or is not knowledge? For the criterion itself, it would seem, must be some kind of knowledge and we have the whole problem of circularity again. An alternative might be that the criterion, in some way, be exempt from its own standards, but that would present another set of problems. If, for example, the criterion is exempt from its own standards then it would

seem, on the face of it, that it must appeal to some other criterion and so on. But that would ensnare us in an endless regress. Hegel, however, sees a solution to the quandary in the very nature of consciousness itself.

> Consciousness simultaneously distinguishes itself from something, and at the same time relates itself to it...and the determinate aspect of this relating, or the being of something for a consciousness, is knowing.[61]

Consciousness, then, by its very nature offers the possibility of determining what knowing is in the very activity of knowing itself. Knowing is a determinate relationship between consciousness and its object, where the "...determinate aspect of this relating...", or the criterion, is one that consciousness sets itself.

Consciousness, however, at least in its finite forms, is characterized by an inherent conflict: on the one hand it takes its object to be independent (the being-in-itself of the object), and yet on the other hand views it as something which stands in relation to it (the being-for-consciousness of the object). Thus, consciousness is both the relating to, and the distinguishing from an object. But there is always the difficulty as to whether the being-for-consciousness of an object corresponds to the being-in-itself of the object, and this induces it continually to seek an external criterion as the measure of this relationship. What, however, consciousness does not yet realize is that the very distinction between the "in-itself" and the "being-for-consciousness" of this "in-itself" is one consciousness itself makes, and which describes what consciousness itself is. That is to say, the "in-itself" is really a concept which consciousness employs to measure what it knows, and therefore is really a comparison of

consciousness with itself. Thus, when consciousness draws the distinction between what is "in-itself" and what is "for it" or the "being-for-consciousness" of the "in-itself", it is comparing its concept of an object with the appearance of the object to consciousness. In other words, it is the relation of the "in-itself" and "for-consciousness" which is true, and not either taken as absolute

Now, if phenomenological exposition is the investigation into the nature of knowing, the problem, as noted above, of having to presuppose some external criterion is resolved by the very nature of consciousness itself. As Hegel explains;

> ...in what consciousness affirms from within itself as being-in-itself or the true we have the standard which consciousness itself sets up by which to measure what it knows.[62]

In sense-certainty, for instance, the "in-itself" or the truth is considered to be the sensory particular, with which consciousness takes itself to be in immediate relationship. But this "being-in-itself" of sense-certainty is a distinction that consciousness itself makes, and so the criterion for testing whether in sense-certainty the object is indeed the kind of essence that sense-certainty declares it to be, is immediately at hand. If consciousness as sense-certainty cannot maintain its object in the way it declares it should, then it will be forced to recast itself in a new, more comprehensive form. The crucial point in all of this is that both the measure of what is true and the knowing of it equally belong to consciousness. But as we have observed, in this self-testing, both what is known and the criterion by which it is measured are constantly being modified, that is, they are being recast in a more complete form. Thus what consciousness takes to be true at one stage - an independent "in-itself"- at another stage

it recognizes as true only for it - the "being-for-consciousness" of this "in-itself". But in each case of finite consciousness the "being-for-consciousness" of the "in-itself" straightaway resolves itself into something which is taken to be true and independent. For finite consciousness, then, no one form is ever adequate; it inevitably goes beyond itself, progressing from one form of consciousness to another more complete. The culmination of this movement, as the phenomenologist knows, is absolute knowing, that is, a knowing which is not burdened with a content external and alien to it. It is the point where consciousness, to employ Hegel's terminology, is "in and for itself", or "...where appearance become identical with essence".[63]

This self-critical development of consciousness, Hegel calls "experience". It is characterized by the movement of consciousness described above, where what consciousness recognizes at one stage as an "in-itself" at another stage is recognized as the "being-for-consciousness" of the "in-itself". In the transition from the former to the latter stage, consciousness is directed back onto itself and is thereby able to have experience of itself by way of the object. In the "Preface" to the Phenomenology of Spirit Hegel states:

> And experience is the name we give to just this movement, in which the immediate, the unexperienced, i.e. the abstract, whether it be of sensuous [but still unsensed] being, or only thought of as simple, becomes alienated from itself and then returns to itself from this alienation, and is only then revealed for the first time in its actuality and truth, just as it then has become a property of consciousness also.[64]

Again in the "Introduction":

> *Inasmuch as the new true object issues from it*, this *dialectical*

> movement which consciousness exercises on itself and which affects both its knowledge and its object, is precisely what is called *experience*.[65]

In this way, then, the examination which consciousness performs on itself is a formative one, that is to say, through its self-critical examination it is able to form itself out of itself.

This a different view of 'experience' than that expounded by Kant. For Kant, 'experience', in brief, is the formal synthesis enacted by the "I" conferring a merely formal unity on sense particulars. Accordingly, the categories of the understanding only have meaning through their union with a given manifold of intuition. As Hegel states of them in the History of Philosophy:

> Thinking understanding is thus indeed the source of the individual categories, but because on their own account they are void and empty, they only have significance through their union with the given, manifold material of perception, feeling, etc..[66]

In other words, human 'experience' is constituted by a sensuous manifold unified and organized by the concepts of the understanding. But this unity is achieved only subjectively, that is to say, the "objectivity" of experience only refers to the order imposed subjectively through the collaboration of our intuition and understanding. To quote Hegel again:

> ...objectivity of thought in Kant's sense, is again to a certain extent subjective. Thoughts, according to Kant, although universal and necessary categories, are only our thoughts - separated by an impassable gulf from the thing, as it exists apart from our knowledge.[67]

Hegel makes two further observations on this issue that are relevant to the present investigation. First, he notes, for Kant:

> ...experience grasps phenomena only, and that by means of the knowledge which we obtain through experience we do not know things as they are in themselves, but only as they are in the form of laws of perception and sensuousness.[68]

And second, as he observes it the Logic:

> ...Reason supplies nothing beyond the formal unity required to simplify and systematize experience; it is a *canon*, not an *organon*, of truth, and can furnish only a *criticism* of knowledge, not a *doctrine* of the infinite.[69]

That is, science in Kant's account of it is merely the endless quest for an ideal totality of empirical or phenomenal knowledge, not its actual accomplishment.

Hegel's own view of 'experience' differs considerably from Kant's. First, experience does not depend upon some antecedent condition, like the Kantian forms of intuition, for example. Hegel's account of experience is expressly formative in nature, later stages incorporate and build upon earlier ones. Werner Marx notes in this regard:

> Above and beyond Kant's apperception, the concept as presented in the Phenomenology - directed towards the "true" in dialectical movements of experience, constantly growing, and completing itself in the **telos** of absolute truth - is able to produce the shape of a system.[70]

Secondly, and related to the this first comment, experience for Hegel is not the mere striving after knowledge, but its actual accomplishment. But "actual knowing" can only be realized in the "systematic exposition" of the series of phenomenal forms which consciousness embodies. While this exposition is provided by the phenomenologist, it is only possible in the first instance because of the formative character of experience itself.

Unlike the Kantian notion of experience, which is antecedently determined by the *a*

priori conditions of its possibility, Hegel's notion of experience develops and enriches itself with every advancement it makes along the pathway to science. Later stages of experience are the result of earlier ones and in turn provide the basis for the further development of other stages. As Werner Marx aptly observes:

> ...to say that in each case the new object - and the shape it determines - is nothing else but the "experience gained" from the preceding object (in its previous shape of consciousness), is to say in fact that these experiences together form a chain.[71]

But in the exposition of the movement of consciousness from its experience of the first object to the emergence of a new one for it, there is, as Hegel states, "...a moment in virtue of which it does not seem to agree with what is ordinarily understood by experience".[72] Why? Because the development of consciousness from one standpoint to another, which has the former sublated within it, is not one which ordinary consciousness understands as an actual development. This is understandable given the formative nature of consciousness. Obviously the later stages in its development are able to comprehend things about preceding stages that are not present to these preceding stages. Ordinary consciousness, accordingly, merely takes its new object as something it discovers by chance. It is invariably convinced that the development from one standpoint to another is a merely negative process, a loss rather than a gain. Sense-certainty, for example, in going over into perception merely feels the lost of its object - the "this"- and regards the emergence of the new object of perception as mere fortuitousness. Sense-certainty, thus, views the supersession of its standpoint by another merely as a refutation or reversal, and not as a genuine development or necessary result. But

from the phenomenological standpoint it is precisely the opposite. As Hegel explains:

> From the present viewpoint, however, the new object shows itself to have come about through a reversal of consciousness itself. This way of looking at the matter is something contributed by us, by mean of which the succession of experiences through which consciousness passes is raised into a scientific progression - but it is not known to the consciousness that we are observing.[73]

The movement of consciousness, then, is only for us - i.e. the phenomenologist - and in comprehending the logic of these phenomenal forms of consciousness, absolute knowing comes to understand what it itself is. In a very real sense, then, in tracing out all the various forms or determinations that consciousness passes through, phenomenological reflection is taken up into its movement and completes it - i.e. elevates it to the standpoint of science.

To reiterate, this self-critical, dialectical development of consciousness is not something imposed externally by the phenomenologist "...since notion and object, the criterion and what is to be tested, are present in consciousness itself...".[74] Phenomenology belongs to a consciousness that, in principle, is already scientific, in that what it knows is the succession of phenomenal forms of itself. In reflecting on and comprehending the logic of this development, one might say that the phenomenologist is bearing witness to the self-education of knowing. In other words, phenomenological exposition is not something which is externally affixed to the various forms of finite consciousness, nor does it ground them in some absolute standpoint. Rather it is the self-education of knowing in relation to its own genuine foundations.

Chapter Two
Transcendental Argument: Its Structure as Argument and its Parallels in Phenomenology

I

What Taylor takes "transcendental argument" to be, and why he believes Hegel's phenomenology is transcendental in form will be the subject of this chapter. In Section One I will examine Taylor's account of the nature of transcendental argument, and why he takes it to be significant as argument. In Section Two the focus will be on the specific reasons why Taylor considers the opening passages of the Phenomenology of Spirit as transcendental in form. I will conclude by arguing that this reading does not agree with Hegel's own view of his work as outlined in the "Preface" and "Introduction" to the Phenomenology of Spirit, as well as with his thinking in the Logic and the Philosophy of Mind.

Taylor does not, in his paper "The Opening Arguments of The Phenomenology of Spirit", provide a detailed account of the nature of transcendental argument, but confines himself to a brief working definition.

> By "transcendental argument" I mean arguments that start from some putatively undeniable facet of our experience in order to conclude that this experience must have certain features or be of a certain type, for otherwise this undeniable facet could not be.[1]

For this reason it will be necessary, if we want a better understanding of what Taylor means by transcendental argument, to use another article of his, "The Validity of Transcendental Arguments." There he provides a more detailed account of the nature of transcendental arguments and why he considers them valid philosophically. Here too he begins with a

definition:

> The arguments I want to call "transcendental" start from some feature of our experience which they claim to be indubitable and beyond cavil. They then move to a stronger conclusion, one concerning the nature of the subject in the world. They make this move by a regressive argument, to the effect that the stronger conclusion must be so if the indubitable fact about experience is to be possible (and being so, it must be possible)[2]

Both definitions describe, according to Taylor, transcendental arguments of the Kantian variety. That is to say, they specify transcendental arguments as regressive arguments which seek to establish the necessary conditions of certain indubitable facets of our experience. As such, they hinge upon being able to identify certain undeniable characteristics of experience in order then to demonstrate the necessary conditions of these apparent, undeniable facets of experience.

Now it is Taylor's judgement that transcendental arguments of the Kantian form, and all other versions for that matter, appeal as "bedrock" to two basic aspects of experience:

> ...its unity (reflected in the fact that the "I think" must be able to accompany all my representations) and its polarization between subject and object (which requires some form of objectivity, that is, a distinction between the way things are and the way they seem)...[3]

All transcendental arguments, in Taylor's view, treat consciousness as the primary and incontrovertible element of experience, but simultaneously they make a radical distinction between this consciousness as subjective and an objective reality about which it thinks. While 'objectivity', in the Kantian sense, refers to the representations brought under the

subjective categories, Taylor is here stressing the radical polarity between subject and object, and thus 'objectivity' also refers to the in-itself 'beyond' consciousness, and as such the radically 'other' of the object.

Yet, it is just this characterization of consciousness as primarily or exclusively the activity of a subject set over against an objective reality, as something other, that Hegel characterizes as finite or phenomenal knowing, not an actual knowing or science. Moreover, a procedure which rests on a subject-object distinction is, for Hegel, one which is flawed, in that it can never overcome this initial dualism once it has been assumed. Hegel, however, is not suggesting that there is no subject-object relationship in experience. As he states in the Phenomenology of Spirit:

> Consciousness simultaneously *distinguishes* itself from something, and at the same time *relates* itself to it, or, as it is said, this something exists *for* consciousness; and the determinate aspect of this *relating*, or of the being of something for a consciousness, is *knowing*.[4]

What Hegel abjures is the "polarization" of consciousness and its object. The notion that knowing is only the relationship of consciousness, as something fixed and independent, and its object as something other about which it thinks - whether it is a chair, man or God - is one which Hegel does not affirm.

> Thoughts, according to Kant, although universal and necessary categories, are *only our* thoughts - separated by an impassable gulf from the thing, as it exists apart from our knowledge. But the true objectivity of thinking means that the thoughts, far from being merely ours, must at the same time be the real essence of the things, and of whatever is an object to us.[5]

The true nature of thought, for Hegel, is to be found in a wider or larger context than the merely formal categories of subjective consciousness espoused by Kant. Both the spiritual-human order, recounted in the Phenomenology of Spirit, and nature are seen in the context of a larger whole - i.e. the "divine Idea" or Logos. In the Logic Hegel observes:

> ...the true and proper case of...things, finite as they are, is to have their existence founded not in themselves but in the universal divine Idea.[6]

This difference between Hegel and Kant can be seen, for example, in the view of nature that each articulates. For Kant, nature is "...not a thing in itself but...merely an aggregate of appearances, so many representations of the mind".[7] Nature, in other words, is determined throughout, in its form, by the *a priori* conditions dictated by the nature of human cognition. The category of nature, accordingly, is nothing else but a feature of human self-consciousness itself. For Hegel, on the other hand, nature is understood as the "universal divine Idea" appearing or unfolding itself as a mindless outwardness, in which all things are mutually external to one another - i.e. things are spatial and temporal. In other words, for Hegel, nature is the whole order of philosophical concepts regarded as an external system of being. In the "Introduction" to the Philosophy of Mind he declares:

> External Nature, too, like mind, is rational, divine, a representation of the Idea. But in Nature, the Idea appears in the element of asunderness, is external not only to mind but also to itself, precisely because it is external to the actual, self-existent inwardness which constitutes the essential nature of mind.[8]

Nature, then, in the both the Logic and Philosophy of Mind, which form a part of the

philosophical sciences proper, is construed within the larger context of the "divine Idea", and not merely as a subjective reality only.

For Hegel, then, all the categories of nature and the spiritual-human order are not a subjective reality only, nor concomitantly is the radical distinction between a subjective and objective order, made by Kant and other transcendental idealists, absolute. This is the thesis Hegel attempts to work out in the Phenomenology of Spirit. In it Hegel attempts to reconstruct or recount the logic implicit in 'knowing', a process by which consciousness eventually realizes that the polarity between the knowing subject and an objective order, existing independent of it, is actually no distinction.

My concern, however, is not whether Hegel actually works this thesis out, but whether, as Taylor suggests, Hegel is engaged in transcendental argument, and whether we can understand this project to be similar in bent to much of contemporary philosophy whose notion of human experience is, like Kant, strictly identified with self-conscious reason - i.e. strictly a facet of human self-consciousness itself. Is Hegel then, in the Phenomenology of Spirit, occupied with showing that the principles of human knowledge and action have their ground in individual self-consciousness alone - in the "I think"- as Taylor suggests, or is he attempting to show that they must be viewed within the more comprehensive context of Spirit?

Now Taylor's discussion of the validity of transcendental arguments, as already indicated, takes the "I think"and the "polarization" between subject and object to be the indubitable features of experience, which provide the underpinning for any transcendental

argument. While the "I think" and the polarization between subject and object form the "bedrock" common to different versions of transcendental argument, any particular transcendental argument need not start from them *per se*. What these two features represent, for Taylor, are the most basic constituents of experience as such. Without these two undeniable features of experience, argues Taylor, we could not be said to possess an awareness or grasp of objects and events, even in the most minimal of senses, and thus could not be said to have experience. The polarization between a subjective and objective order of things, for example, is required because without it our experience would not be of anything. An experience that is without an object is recognized, Taylor contends, "...to be an impossibility".[9] As we shall observe subsequently, the initial "indispensability claims" concerning experience are, for Taylor, a kind of insight that we all "just see" and recognize as being constitutive of experience as such.[10]

Thus transcendental arguments are meant to say something about our general experience as subjects and not just about this or that particular experience, whether, for example, we experience a cold sensation in winter, or that our eyes water when we peel onions. Kant's argument for the necessary applications of the categories, to give a well known example, is meant to affirm something about the nature of any experience which distinguishes between a subjective and objective order of things.

> It is a claim about the *nature* of our experience and thought, and of all those functions which are ours qua subject, rather than about the empirically necessary conditions of these functions.[11]

While transcendental arguments do not foreclose other possible explanation of experience, in "reductive mechanistic" terms for instance, Taylor believes that they are highly significant for our own self-understanding as political, social, linguistic beings.[12] However, in my view, this also means, *contra* Hegel, that the self-understanding of the individual must also be explicated entirely within the dimension of human subjectivity. That is to say, all accounts of individual experience must invoke our own self-understanding and ultimately be nothing else but a facet of human subjectivity itself.

If we take Hegel at his word that the spiritual-human order is to be understood within the broader context of a "divine Idea" or Spirit, how is it that Taylor can speak of Hegel's work as transcendental in form, especially given Taylor's concomitant claim that all such arguments rest on the "polarization" of subject and object, and are also strictly a facet of the unity of human self-consciousness itself -. the "I think"? The answer to this question can only be furnished, if it can be furnished at all, if we have a fuller understanding of what Taylor means by transcendental argument, and of how and what that kind of argument proves about experience itself.

Taylor identifies three features of transcendental arguments which he thinks require explanation and justification: 1. they are a series of indispensability claims; 2. transcendental arguments, as a series of indispensability claims, are *a priori* and apodictic; 3. they are arguments that appertain to experience. The first feature affirms that transcendental arguments are ones that move, by regress, from an indubitable feature of experience to a "stronger conclusion". While these steps are identified by Taylor as "conclusions", they are

more in the nature of claims or theses concerning the condition of the possibility of the initial, indubitable feature of experience. Together these "conclusions" form a series of "indispensability claims", each claim building on the prior. They are considered to be "indispensability claims" in that they, to quote Taylor:

> ...move from their starting points to their conclusions by showing that the condition stated in the conclusion is indispensable to the feature, identified at the start.[13]

It is Taylor's view that the move to a stronger conclusion tells us, as he states in his definition of transcendental arguments, something about "...the nature of the subject or the subject's position in the world".[14] Clearly, indispensability claims are statements concerning the necessary conditions of experience, or otherwise put, statements about what the structure of the subject must be like in order to have the experiences we do have. As a move from some indubitable feature of experience to a stronger conclusion, a transcendental argument attempts to deduce those conditions that are considered necessary for experience. Thus transcendental argument only works as argument if it can be shown that the conditions reached are necessary, and if we can also identify certain facets of experience that are indubitable and beyond cavil.

A further component of the initial feature of transcendental argument is that the indubitable features of experience, which form the basis of any transcendental argument, must themselves be indispensability claims. According to Taylor they are indispensable because experience must be coherent or intelligible to be experience. A favorite example of Taylor's is Maurice Merleau-Ponty's argument that as subjects we are essentially embodied

agents. This claim about the nature of our experience does not rest on any empirical evidence, but on the nature of our perception. Perception is regarded as an undeniable or indispensable aspect of our life as agents aware of a world. To quote Taylor:

> I can be aware of the world in many ways. I can be pondering the situation in Namibia or last year at Marienbad, considering the second law of thermodynamics, and so on. But the one way of having a world which is basic to all this is my perceiving it from where I am, with my senses, as we say.[15]

That is to say, it would be impossible to speak of experience in any significant sense if perception were not involved. Accordingly, without some kind of perception, for example, an up-down orientation, we could not speak of experience at all, not in any intelligible sense, and we just see that this is so. And it is because perception necessarily involves embodied agency that we can thus conclude that as subjects we are also essentially embodied agents. The crucial point to remember, though, is that transcendental arguments , of whatever version, all appeal to some indispensable feature of experience. "Sense-certainty", accordingly, if it is a transcendental argument as Taylor claims, will also have to start from some indispensable feature of experience. Specifically, it will have to start from the basic starting point that to know is to be able to say what it is we know. Why? Because, as he states:

> An experience about which nothing at all could be said, not even that it was very difficult if not impossible to describe, would be below the threshold of the level of awareness which we consider essential for knowledge...It would have been either lived unconsciously, or else have been so peripheral that we had or could recover no hold on it.[16]

We just see this to be so.

Plainly, the initial indispensability claim of a transcendental argument is not indispensable to some prior claim because it forms the starting point of the argument. In other words, it is not a conclusion, drawn by way of argument, indispensable to some prior position. Its status as an indispensability claim, therefore, must relate to something else. This, as we have seen, pertains to the fact that such claims supposedly delineate certain features of experience that we self-evidently see to be essential for even the most minimal of experiences. They articulate, as it were, an insight into experience that we all recognize to be essential to experience as such. Kant's transcendental deduction, for example, starts from the insight that experience must have an object; that is, that experience must be of something. This insight is one that we all are supposed to recognize as essential to experience as such, and without which experience could not be constituted in any meaningful sense. In other words, it is something that we understand to be self-evident, or undeniable. This is the second determining feature of transcendental arguments.

There are two essential elements to the second feature of transcendental arguments . First, they must be *a priori* and apodictic. Secondly, as a series of indispensability claims, transcendental arguments are supposed to be self-evident. As apodictic claims, transcendental arguments are concerned with what must be the case about the nature of experience, and as *a priori* claims they must be unmixed with anything empirical. Following Kant, these *a priori* claims must possess universal and necessary validity and be known by reason alone. In reviewing Merleau-Ponty's claim that we are essentially embodied agents

Taylor affirms as much. This claim, he states, is

> ...about the *nature* or our experience and thought, and of all those functions which are ours qua subject, rather than about the empirically necessary conditions of these functions. To say that we are essentially embodied agents is to say that it is essential to our experience and thought that they be those of embodied beings.[17]

So the claim that we are essentially embodied agents is derived from the "nature" of our experience as subjects, and not from the fact that we possess certain corporeal features. Furthermore we see that this insight into our experience as subjects is one which is self-evidently true. Thus, as a self-evident statement, an indispensability claim is understood to be one which does not require an appeal to other evidence, it must be something we "just see". This is particularly true, as indicated above, for the first indispensability claim in a transcendental argument. Concerning the first step in Kant's transcendental deduction, for example, Taylor declares:

> We just **see** that experience must be of something to be experience, or that the "I think" must be able to accompany all my representation...We are meant to see with equal clarity that there can't be experience of something unless it is coherent; or that there can't be coherence if the categories don't apply.[18]

The first claim, then, is one we just see or immediately apprehend, requiring no further proof or confirmation, but which nevertheless depends upon certain *a priori*, necessary conditions for its possibility.

Why, then, do we need transcendental argument? If a claim is self-evident, it would seem not to require any demonstration. Taylor would agree. Transcendental arguments are

not meant to demonstrate that something is possible, but rather show how and why it is possible, by demonstrating that what is proved is a necessary condition of experience. Transcendental arguments, as Taylor indicates, "..formulate boundary conditions we all recognize", and a proper formulation will insure their validity - i.e. "...a correct formulation will be self-evidently valid".[19]

The self-evident nature of the initial indispensability claim then, and for that matter of all such claims, is grounded in the very activity of subjective experience itself. Our activities as conscious agents provide the framework, as it were, for the formulation of transcendental arguments, starting from an initial self-evident truth and moving on, by regress, to spell out more exactly what is involved in the initial claim. As we shall see later, Taylor understands this inability to formulate a reasonable doubt about these experiences to be due to the fact that they articulate "...an insight we have into our own activity".[20] This brings us to the third feature of transcendental arguments.

As a series of apodictic indispensability claims, transcendental arguments must pertain to the nature of experience as such. If indispensability claims are not about experience, insists Taylor, then transcendental arguments do not have the unchallengeable anchor they require. They require such a mooring because if the initial point of departure is in some way in doubt, then so is every other claim in the sequence. As Taylor explains it:

> For an argument that D is indispensable for C, which is indispensable for B, which is indispensable for A, tells us nothing definitive about the status of D, unless we already know the status of A.[21]

Because we cannot "...formulate coherently the doubt that we have experience", asserts Taylor, the initial indispensability claim, which itself pertains to experience, secures the whole series.[22] But the initial indispensability claim in a transcendental argument is indubitable because it is understood to be an insight into the most basic sense of what constitutes experience.

Two matters at this point, however obvious, warrant a comment. First, because experience, in this account, only pertains to or is limited to our own subjectivity, transcendental arguments only disclose to us the nature of our experience as subjects. To put this somewhat differently, transcendental arguments are restricted to the analysis of human experience, whether this be cognitive, existential, etc., and say nothing about the nature of things in themselves. Second, and intimately related to this first point, there is an underlying principle operating here that the concepts of knowing that animate the various finite forms of consciousness only have meaning or significance as connected with the certainty of the initial insights we have about ourselves as subjects. If we take the Kantian insight that the "I think" must accompany all of our representations, then the application of the categories of the understanding is seen to be a necessary feature of this experience. But it is reciprocally the case that the application of the categories has significance only in connection with this undeniable feature of experience - i.e. the unity of self-consciousness, whereby we recognize that all our experiences are ours. The two sides, as it were, condition one another. The application of the categories is seen as making the unity of the "I think" possible, and reciprocally, because the "I think" is something we cannot challenge, for it is an undeniable

feature of our experience as subjects, the necessary application of the categories must hold. But what this also means is that the categories or concepts of the understanding are limited to experience, that is to say, they refer only to experience. Concepts for Kant, to give the obvious example, are merely forms of synthesis pertaining to the given phenomena of intuition.

Inasmuch as transcendental arguments, then, are a series of indispensability claims which concern experience, Taylor believes they possess an unchallengeable anchoring. But despite Taylor's contention that "what they show things to be indispensable to can't be shrugged off",[23] the apodictic or self-evident nature of indispensability claims is ambiguous. Typically we view a self-evident claim as one that does not require proof, a claim that is open to direct apprehension. Yet Taylor maintains that it does require demonstration. If we just see that experience must be of a certain type or character, as Taylor insists, why do self-evident claims require demonstration? Similarly, if indispensability claims are supposed to be apodictic, why is there uncertainty about them, especially given that they are supposed to be self-evident as well? Taylor aptly queries: "...what grounds the apodictic certainty or the self-evidence that these claims are supposed to enjoy?"[24] The concise answer is that indispensability claims are:

> ...grounded in our grasp of the point of our activity, that grasp we must have to carry on the activity. They articulate the point, or certain conditions of success and failure; and we can be certain that they do so rightly, because to doubt this is to doubt that we are engaged in the activity, and in this case such a doubt is senseless.[25]

An activity, explains Taylor, has a point and as such there are essential features to it, which if absent would cancel the purpose of the activity. That is to say, these features are constitutive of the activity, and not merely, as Taylor remarks, a "verbal matter". While certain features of an activity may be simply a matter of classification in order to distinguish it from other activities, constitutive features are essential components of the activity which cannot be omitted. Now, as Taylor goes on to argue, in certain activities the agent's insight into the point of the activity is essential to the activity. This is all the more so where the activity involves ".. a degree of consciousness and understanding".[26] Moving the pieces on a chess board, to use Taylor's example, would be meaningless and void the point of the game, which is to capture your opponent's king piece, if moving the pieces did not involve any knowledge of the rules of the game of chess. Even if our moving of the pieces on the chess board happened to coincide with a legal set of moves, it could not be said that we were playing chess if we lacked the understanding of the point of the activity. Our understanding the rules of the game of chess is thus a constitutive feature of that activity. Now it might be that, in some instances, not all points of an activity will be obvious to us, but we nevertheless must have some understanding of what we are doing, or at least we must be implicitly aware of the point of our activity. We may play chess badly, for example, but we, nonetheless, are still aware of the rules of the game and understand their significance for the game. So the playing of the game of chess not only involves a set of rules which are constitutive of the game, but also includes as a constitutive feature the agent's awareness of the point of this activity. Thus, if our awareness of the rules of chess is constitutive of that

game, it is, claims Taylor

> ...hard to see how one could make sense of the doubt that we know how to play chess and are now playing it.[27]

Clearly, for Taylor, any kind of doubt here, even hyperbolic doubt, does not make sense. We cannot be engaged in playing the game of chess with others and still form a coherent doubt as to whether we know how to play the game of chess. In this sense, argues Taylor, the grasp which we have of our own activities is indubitable and self-evident. This means that a constitutive feature or condition of experience is that we be able to understand and articulate what it is we are doing.

Robert Pippin makes a similar observation in Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness. Like Taylor, Pippin argues that for Kant there are basic conditions or claims involving *identity*, *unity*, and *self-consciousness* which must be fulfilled if a subject of experience can be said to have "experiences".[28] Like Taylor, Pippin also argues that for Kant having a grasp of our own activities is a condition of experience because these activities - remembering, perceiving, thinking, etc. - would otherwise not belong to us as subjects. Pippin states:

> Being able to ascribe states to myself and to become conscious of the principles of unification by means of which I effect a unitary experience is not simply a distinct reflective ability I happen to possess. It is a *condition* of experience because, according to Kant, experience itself is "implicitly" reflexive.[29]

In other words, in any conscious intending, whether it be a claim to knowledge or a justification for a particular action, there is a connection between our self-understanding of

that intending and the possibility of that intending in the first place. Pippin uses the example of someone attempting to give a moral justification for an action. Obviously a moral justification for an action can only count as a moral one if there is such a thing as the institution of morality. But, argues Pippin, the individual's self-understanding of what the institution of morality demands is equally a precondition of a "moral" justification for an action[30]. That is to say, our self-understanding of what the institution of morality demands is a condition of moral action, and, as Taylor contends, transcendental arguments articulate or delineate these boundary conditions.

Transcendental arguments articulate an insight we have into our activity of being aware of our world, even if it is the case that our awareness is only of "...impressions, appearances, real physical objects or whatever".[31] Now the activity of being aware of our world, according to Taylor's argument, requires that we be able to recognize certain conditions of failure, such as a lack of coherence in our perception of things. These conditions are not something we formulate prior to the activities themselves, but we must nevertheless have some grasp of what it is to have a breakdown in our awareness. For it could not be said that we were aware in the first place if we could not recognize this. And so, insists Taylor:

> I may hyperbolically doubt whether my memory of chess playing is not a confused dream...But I cannot formulate a coherent doubt whether I'm aware in the sense of conscious, awake, and grasping something. Transcendental arguments articulate indispensability claims concerning experience as such.[32]

Like Rene Descartes, Taylor is expressing the insight that, though we may reasonably doubt all else, we who do the doubting cannot doubt that we think; we cannot doubt our own consciousness or awareness. Still for Taylor, as with Kant, what we are conscious of, "impressions, appearances," etc., are grounded solely in the nature of our consciousness itself. In other words, all being is being-for-consciousness, and what things are in themselves remains problematical. Merleau-Ponty's argument, to cite a previous example, that it is a necessary condition of our being perceptual agents that we be embodied as well, does not, in Taylor's view, establish that we are in fact embodied agents. Nor, as he also points out, does it exclude other possible accounts of perception, for instance, in reductive neurophysiological terms.[33] Clearly, then, transcendental arguments establish or articulate something about the subject of experience of the world, but because they are restricted to, or grounded in the nature of experience they can never preclude other possible accounts of what underlies that experience.

Hegel, however, is critical of this Kantian phenomenological standpoint.

> Thoughts, according to Kant, although universal and necessary categories, are *only ours* thoughts - separated by an impassable gulf from the thing, as it exists apart from our knowledge.[34]

But, he quickly adds,

> ...the true objectivity of thinking means that the thoughts, far from being merely ours, must at the same time be the real essence of the things, and of whatever is an object to us.[35]

How, then, are we to judge Taylor's contention that Hegel's argument in the first three

chapters of the Phenomenology of Spirit, is transcendental in form?

If, as Taylor contends, phenomenology is a version of transcendental argument, then it does no more than "formulate boundary conditions", or more conventionally, establish the "preconditions" of experience[36]. Yet if we accept Hegel's claim that thought is not simply the activity of the subject, then his phenomenological exposition must be more than an attempt to establish the *a priori* limits or conditions that apply to knowing. In other words, Hegel's work is not trying to demonstrate "how" and "why" various forms of consciousness - "visions of experience" - to borrow Taylor's phrase, are possible or impossible, or that certain ones are comparatively better than others. Hegel, on the contrary, includes them all within the more comprehensive category of Spirit or the "divine Idea". In this sense, therefore, he is not committed to discovering the ground and source of human experience within subjective reason or individual self-consciousness, as Taylor implies when he insists that Hegel is doing transcendental argument.

Hegel sees his work in the Phenomenology of Spirit as a "ladder" to actual knowledge or the 'absolute standpoint'. That is to say, Hegel supposes that in completing the insight into the logic of the series of phenomenal forms outlined in the Phenomenology of Spirit he is bringing about a transition from the mere appearance of knowledge to actual knowledge. Transcendental arguments, on the other hand, assume from the outset a distinction between knowing and the world - i.e. they assume that there is always a distinction between the way things are and the way they are "for us". The sole function of transcendental argument, accordingly, is to establish the limits which pertain to knowing "for

us", and to that extent it is not an actual knowledge of anything.

Transcendental arguments, as we have seen, are self-evident and indubitable because they are

> ...grounded in our grasp of the point of our activity, that grasp we must have to carry on the activity.[37]

In being so grounded we can be assured that what they explain about ourselves as subjects is genuine, because to doubt is to doubt we are engaged in the activity of being aware, of grasping something, and this is not possible in any coherent sense.[38]

But at the same time Taylor also admits that transcendental arguments do not foreclose questions of the ontological status of the object of experience. The real object of an act of knowledge as distinguished from the epistemological object is accordingly problematical. What things are in themselves is recognized by Taylor as being beyond the scope of transcendental argument. But this, as we saw in the first chapter, is what Hegel is critical of, precisely because such an argument never deals with the actual, conceptual dynamic in things. In both the "Preface" and the "Introduction" to the Phenomenology of Spirit, Hegel is clear that the heart of philosophical method, in his view, is not the purely subjective formulations that we find in philosophical propositions of the form "S is P", but the concept or notion. Thus in a proper speculative judgement the predicate is not merely something which is asserted of the subject, but is meant to express the actual essence or dynamic of the subject. In the judgement "the actual is the universal", to repeat an earlier example, the "universal" is not something else which is predicated of "the actual", but rather

is meant to express the essence of "the actual". The real objects of knowledge, therefore, far from being rooted in the forms of subjective consciousness, as Taylor suggests, are in speculative philosophy the actual concepts or notions which animate things. Accordingly, in speculative philosophy no distinction is made between thinking, as something which is ours, and an objective reality as something other, about which we make judgements. Yet Taylor is insisting that Hegel's position can be shown to be nothing other than another form of Kantian transcendental argument, which takes as basic to experience the polarization between subject and object. This is a view which in the "Introduction" and "Preface" to the Phenomenology of Spirit Hegel rejects.

II

In this section I propose to examine Taylor's specific claims for considering the first three chapters in the Phenomenology of Spirit as transcendental in form. Taylor's argument has two parts: first, he argues that Hegel's work can be identified as transcendental in form in that it has a common bent or affinity with other transcendental arguments; second, he argues that Hegel's method as outlined in the "Introduction" to the Phenomenology of Spirit is similar in structure to transcendental argument.

In his essay "The Opening Arguments of The Phenomenology" Taylor's initial reason for considering the first three chapters of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit as an essay in transcendental argument is the affinity he believes they have with arguments of this kind. Transcendental arguments of the Kantian variety have, according to Taylor , a certain bent in common. They are all, he alleges,

> ...directed against one or other aspect of the dualist picture of experience developed and handed down to us by Cartesianism and empiricism.[39]

Both the empiricist and Cartesian traditions, in varying degrees, contends Taylor, understand experience to consist of the "...passive reception of sense data, so that the nature of experience itself is not bound up with the way we interact and deal with the world".[40] It is this view of experience that Taylor believes Hegel is taking aim at in the second chapter of the Phenomenology of Spirit. Why? Because this model of experience lacks a causal dimension. As Taylor explains:

> This view, as Hume amply demonstrated, cannot help but make causality problematical. For, as he eloquently argued, there is no room within a contemplative account of perception for an impression of natural necessity, of "power".[41]

It is Taylor's view that Hegel's work represents a working out of, or a recovering of, this phenomenal causality that in particular is absent in the empiricist tradition. Transcendental argument generally, and Kant's in particular, represents an attempt to refute or to demonstrate the implausibility of this empiricist view and to establish our experience of causality. In Taylor's judgment, to the extent that Hegel in his chapter on "Perception" is attempting to refute the contemplative account of perception, he is in the same company as Kant and other transcendental philosophers. But whether Hegel's agenda is similar in this respect is an issue that needs to be confronted. Besides, as Taylor himself points out:

> ...transcendental arguments are not identified by their bent but by their structure as argument, and this is the parallel we have to show to Hegel's work.[42]

Although it is not integral to Taylor's argument, it is nevertheless debatable whether it is the case that the Phenomenology of Spirit, like Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, represents an attempt to establish the implausibility or impossibility of the notions of experience represented by Cartesianism and empiricism. Nor is it clear why Taylor makes this claim, because, as he later states, the dialectical movement that results when consciousness realizes the inadequacy of its notion of experience

> ...is a real change and not simply a disappearance of a model thus smitten with a contradiction; for the contradiction between model and reality is a determinate (*bestimmt*) one.[43]

But the "disappearance of a model" of experience does not imply that it is refuted or shown to be impossible. Robert Pippin rightly points out:

> ...Hegel is not trying to show that various candidate accounts of experience are individually impossible...or comparatively better or worse than others.[44]

However I do not agree with Pippin that Hegel's interest is, to quote him again,

> ...a reconstructive account of the possibility of experience driven by the consciousness/self-consciousness problematic and the objectivity issues that it raises.[45]

Pippin is correct in asserting that Hegel is trying to establish that the various forms of experience are not just "..subjective impositions, cutting us off from things in themselves...".[46] However, the various forms of consciousness and the concepts that animate them are not simply internal to any "subject's self-understanding" as Pippin also contends, but are moments within the more comprehensive category of Spirit, which in turn must be seen as part of a larger whole which comprises a logical and natural order of things as well.

Phenomenology, as we saw in our examination of the "Preface" and "Introduction" to the Phenomenology of Spirit, in no way attempts to demonstrate that a given philosophical standpoint, be it Cartesianism or empiricism, is literally wrong or false. That is to say, a particular philosophical standpoint is never viewed as a false notion of experience. Hegel stresses throughout the "Preface" to the Phenomenology of Spirit that the "true" is the whole or system and that each of its configurations is a necessary moment in the development of science a such. It is for this reason, to quote Hegel, that:

> ...the *length* of this path has to be endured, because, for one thing, each moment is necessary; and further, each moment has to be *lingered* over, because each is itself a complete individual shape, and one is only viewed in absolute perspective when its determinateness is regarded as a concrete whole, or the whole is regarded as uniquely qualified by that determination.[47]

Additionally, the various philosophical outlooks that make up this path, whether Cartesianism, empiricism or some other philosophical system, represent for Hegel the "...progressive unfolding of truth", and each contains, potentially, within itself the entire series of concepts that constitute knowing or science.[48] At the very beginning of the "Preface" to the Phenomenology of Spirit Hegel likens this emergence of science to the development and formation of a plant. He states

> The bud disappears in the bursting-forth of the blossom, and one might say that the former is refuted by the later; similarly, when the fruit disappears, the blossom is shown up in its turn as a false manifestation of the plant, and the fruit now emerges as the truth of it instead...Yet at the same time their fluid nature makes them moments of an organic unity in which they not only do not conflict, but in which each is as

necessary as the other...[49]

Thus philosophical systems do indeed supersede or displace one another, but they are not literally refuted, since each philosophical system is as necessary as any other to the development of science, and what is true in any one standpoint is preserved in subsequent ones. The falsity of any particular standpoint does not imply that it is something over and done with; otherwise the false would be one thing and the truth something other. To say, therefore, that Cartesianism is false in some respect does not imply that it is something annulled and finished, nor does it mean that it is a standpoint which is isolated from the truth. Cartesianism, like all philosophical standpoints under examination in the Phenomenology of Spirit, must be viewed as the whole truth manifesting itself in one of its forms. The fact that it becomes unsatisfactory implies that it is in some manner incomplete or partial, not that it is literally false or external to the truth.

Actual knowledge, as it is revealed in the entire progress of human experience is, for Hegel, not a separate realm from the "truth". The dialectical movement intrinsic to consciousness or thought does not, in this reading of Hegel, entail the refutation of any particular philosophical standpoint. In fact, each philosophical system, be it Cartesianism, empiricism or any one of the countless others that have arisen within in the history of philosophy, is the whole "truth" revealing itself in one of the "...shapes of Spirit..." noted above. In the "Introduction" to the Logic Hegel makes this point more directly.

> Each of the parts of philosophy is a philosophical whole, a circle rounded and complete in itself. In each of these parts, however, the philosophical Idea is found in a particular

> specificality or medium...The Idea appears in each single circle, but, at the same time, the whole Idea is constituted by the system of these peculiar phases, and each is a necessary member of the organization.[50]

Thus Cartesianism may express this Idea more explicitly or comprehensively than empiricism, or vice versa, but neither is literally false or wrong. In this regard, then, Hegel is not anti-Cartesian or anti-Empiricist as Taylor suggests. Each part of philosophy, whether it is Cartesianism or Empiricism, is a necessary moment in the series of concepts that constitutes what knowing is. The fact that one particular form or phase of this philosophical whole becomes unsatisfactory, merely means the occasion for the development of a new and more comprehensive form of philosophical thought, incorporating the previous form within it.

In terms of organization or structure, then, how is the argument of the Phenomenology of Spirit similar to transcendental argument? First, let us briefly review Taylor's account of transcendental argument given above. Transcendental argument is one which, starting from some indubitable facet of experience and proceeding through a series of indispensability claims, draws certain conclusions concerning the characteristics that the initial indubitable facet of experience must have in order to be possible. Hegel's method, therefore, if transcendental in nature, will have to conform to this structure of argument.

Hegel's procedure for carrying out his phenomenological exposition assumes that philosophy or science is an actual knowing, not, as he notes in the "Preface", just a `love of knowing'.[51] But as actual knowing it must, as indicated previously, reveal itself in the entire

sphere of human knowledge or experience, not merely in a set of first principles or *a priori* conditions, understood as the conditions of any possible knowledge whatever. For Hegel, then, actual knowing or science cannot be limited to what is possible for human cognition; otherwise we would have two kinds of knowing; a finite knowing, what is true for us, and an absolute knowing, knowledge of what things are in themselves. But, as we previously observed in our examination of Hegel's method, this is an assumption which presupposes:

> ...that the Absolute stands on one side and cognition on the other, independent and separate from it, and yet is something real; or in other words, it presupposes the cognition which, since it is excluded from the Absolute is surely outside of the truth as well, is nevertheless true....[52]

That is to say, the presupposition being made by Kant and others is that there is finite, empirical knowledge, but there is no knowledge of the Absolute or knowledge of what things are in themselves. Now for Hegel, like Kant, it is certainly the case that it is through reason that we gain knowledge, but the object, for Hegel, is not simply there, independent of our thinking, in some noumenal realm for instance. Moreover, if the object is not ultimately independent of cognition, as Hegel suggests, then it is also the case for Hegel that we only think the object when we abandon a purely subjective formulation of things, i.e. overcome our own subjectivity. Taylor's claim, though, is that Hegel's work is an example of transcendental argument, and allows with Kant that subjective arguments are incapable of establishing anything about things as they are in themselves. They articulate something about our life as subjects, that is , the world as we experience it, but it always is the case that our own self-awareness could be profoundly flawed. As Taylor observes:

> They prove something quite strong about the subject of experience and the subject's place in the world; and yet since they are grounded in the nature of experience, there remains an ultimate, ontological question they can't foreclose - for Kant, that of the things in themselves...[53]

The view, therefore, of both Kant and Taylor is that transcendental argument or transcendental philosophy is not an actual knowledge of anything except perhaps a knowledge of what knowing for us is, or is not. In the Kantian philosophy, for instance, concepts are understood in terms of their function in judgment, that is to say, they are forms of synthesis pertaining to the given phenomena of intuition, or they can be viewed as rules for our unification of representations. In either case they are the subjective condition for the possibility of experience, rather than a comprehension of the actual, dynamic structure of things. So, while Taylor sees the distinction between appearances and things in themselves as an unacceptable aspect of Kant's philosophy, he nevertheless agrees with Kant on the basic role of transcendental arguments. Specifically, he holds that transcendental arguments only express something about the nature of the subject's position in the world, rather than articulating any kind of insight into the nature of the world itself. But Hegel's own conviction, as I have been attempting to show, is that if knowledge is merely knowledge of reason as such, or, to use Taylor's formulation, knowledge of `experience as such', then it is not of much value.

Hegel's own view is expressed in the saying that thought or reason must have its ground in reality, and, conversely nothing can be said to be, except that it is in some sense known. The latter part of this expression is taken to mean that the real nature of things is

brought to light in reflection. In the Hegelian system the objective world is not something different from our thought of it, but something which is brought out in the thinking of it. In the Logic this is clearly affirmed:

> The real nature of the object is brought to light in reflection; but it is no less true that this exertion of thought is *my* act. If this be so, the real nature is a *product* of my mind, in its character of thinking subject...in one word, in my Freedom.[54]

It is also the case, nonetheless, that the object is not merely a product of my mind, in the sense that the categories of reason are not merely the forms of subjective consciousness. Reason or thought, for Hegel, must be manifest in the actual world. This is not to ascribe, as Hegel notes, consciousness to the things of nature, but to recognize that reason or '*nous*' governs the world.[55] However, this means that these two aspects of thought must be in some way reconciled or harmonized. Again as Hegel notes in the Logic:

> ...it may be held the highest and final aim of philosophic science to bring about...a reconciliation of the self-conscious reason with the reason which is in the world - in other words, with actuality.[56]

Thus Hegel's famous statement that what is reasonable and what is actual are the one and the same.[57] The reconciliation of self-conscious reason with the world, however, can only be achieved, as we noted in Chapter One, by a subjectivity or self-conscious reason which immerses itself in actual reality (reason as it is in the world), and by the concomitant raising of 'being' or the world out of absolute 'otherness'.

Epistemologically speaking, what does this all imply? In the first instance it means the discovery that reason is manifested in the world - the realization that reason is not fully actual

unless it passes over into existence, or is made manifest in something objective. It is the realization, for example, that nature is rational, that it is not, as it is for Kant, merely "...so many representations of the mind"[58]. As Hegel notes it in the Philosophy of Mind: "External Nature, too, like mind, is rational, divine, a representation of the Idea."[59] Secondly, and subjectively speaking, it means that the object is not merely something 'other' about which we think, but is explicitly an object which is as much subject as it is an object. Thus, knowing, *contra* Taylor, is that activity where the polarization between subject and object is surmounted. This process of overcoming the distinction between consciousness and its object first comes to light in the Phenomenology of Spirit in the transition from "Consciousness" to "Self-Consciousness", and finally concludes when consciousness has traversed the entire range of phenomenological standpoints. Only then does absolute knowing come to know what it is, an actual philosophical knowing.

It is this reconciliation or integration of the spiritual life of man with the outward reality of nature and history that Hegel works out in the Phenomenology of Spirit. But as he proposes in the "Preface" and "Introduction" to the Phenomenology of Spirit, and as he exhibits in the body of that text, this can only come about as an examination of consciousness by itself. This self-critical movement of thought - "experience" - is the

> ...dialectical movement which consciousness exercises on itself and which affects both its knowledge and its object...[60]

Thus, through this dialectical movement in which consciousness realizes that its own distinction from a world existing independent of it is not an absolute distinction, both

knowledge and object are affected. Nature, as we noted above, is no longer a mere object, independent and opposed to self-conscious reason, but is understood to be rational as well - i.e. a representation of the Idea.

It is this dialectical movement of consciousness that Taylor claims is transcendental in structure and which, he claims, Hegel employs in his rejection of the mind/body dualism of Descartes and the Kantian "Ding-an-sich". In other words, Taylor thinks Hegel presupposes and seeks to overcome dualism. But it is my position that Hegel is not attempting to do this because his standpoint does not rest on an absolute distinction between subject and object. Nor is it the case, as Taylor suggests, that Hegel is attempting to overcome this dualism by showing that all our experience or consciousness of things is built on some original engagement with the world.[61] Hegel's point in the Phenomenology of Spirit is that there is no 'original' engagement, just as there is no 'original' or'transcendental' standpoint which conditions our consciousness of things. Science or absolute knowing comes to know what it is through its own phenomenological development, which is not a critical inquiry into the nature of what knowledge is "for us", since such an inquiry assumes what it seeks to overcome, specifically the polarization between the inquirer and the object of his inquiry. Thus the claim that our consciousness of things, to quote Taylor, "..can only be understood by reference to a prior handling of or engagement with the world" does not overcome the initial division between our knowing and what is known,[62] for this claim rests on a subject-object distinction as well, in that knowledge or experience is still nothing but a dimension of human self-consciousness itself. That is to say, the claim that our consciousness of things

is not primordially receptive, but built on a more original engagement with things, is still one which springs from the nature of human subjectivity itself, and not from the nature of things.

That Hegel does not, in my view, see knowledge as standing or falling on such possibilities, does not also imply that Hegel understands experience, qua finite subjects, as not being engaged in the world. On the contrary, to quote Hegel at length:

> Mind is not an inert being but, on the contrary, absolutely restless being, pure activity, the negating or ideality of every fixed category of the abstractive intellect; not abstractly simple but, in its simplicity, at the same time a distinguishing of itself from itself; not an essence that is already finished and complete before its manifestation, keeping itself aloof behind its host of appearances, but an essence which is truly actual only through the specific forms of its necessary self-manifestation; and it is not...a soul-thing only externally connected with the body, but is inwardly bound to the latter by the unity of the Notion.[63]

I take this to mean that 'consciousness', 'will', 'religion', 'morality', etc. - all those activities which signify for Hegel spirit - are very much "in the world". Thus, knowledge, our consciousness of things, is not characterized by reason as it is laid down, *a priori*, in a set of principles, but as it is actually manifest in the entire range of human affairs and experience.

It would seem that, for Hegel, the whole consciousness/self-consciousness framework is flawed. That is to say, the principle of viewing all consciousness of objects as presupposing self-consciousness in the form of the "I think" or "transcendental unity of apperception" is flawed. Why? Because such a principle views all thought or reason as entirely subjective, that is, as ours and ours alone. The upshot of this is that reason as it is manifested in the actual world and conscious life is ignored, and is instead confined, in the manner of Kant, to a

variety of first principles of knowledge and action. But a dialectic of consciousness on this view of reason strictly focuses on our thinking alone. In other words, the dialectical movement of consciousness is merely about a "knowing subject who has a certain vision of things", to borrow Taylor's phrase, and not also about what is thought.[64] Taylor sees Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit as an essay in transcendental argument because he holds with Kant that reason is to be identified with or grounded in pure self-consciousness - the "I think". One begins with some basic feature of our experience, some fundamental starting point such as the "I think" or the "existential" subject, as Taylor notes, and then one demonstrates it to be impossible unless some other feature is posited with it. This is done until the whole system of necessary conditions of experience is worked out, or alternatively, as Taylor states, to again "enmesh" oneself in another set of problems, more rewarding to explore.[65] This would suggest a kind of endless investigation or exploration of human experience, where Hegel's goal of reconciling or harmonizing self-conscious reason with the reason that is in the world is ignored, ignored because transcendental arguments only say something about the nature of our own self-awareness and self-activity and nothing about the way in which reason is actually manifested in the world. This stands in stark contrast to Hegel's own view:

> Pure self-recognition in absolute otherness, this Aether as such, is the ground and soil of Science or knowledge in general. The beginning of philosophy presupposes or requires that consciousness should dwell in this element.[66]

In other words, subjective consciousness must immerse itself in "absolute otherness" or objective reality in order to raise this "absolute otherness" out of isolation. This will also

require that self-consciousness give up the ideal of setting itself up as a wholly independent and truncated ego whose sole concern is the *a priori* conditions of knowledge and action.

Yet this is a demand that Taylor ignores when he characterizes Hegel's work as transcendental in form. The various arguments in the Phenomenology of Spirit all presuppose, in Taylor's reading of them, the Kantian "I think". Everything that occurs in experience - what is given a posteriori - is conditioned, *a priori*, by this subjectivity. Consciousness, in other words, is constrained by a prior set of transcendental conditions, which is averse to any mediation by thought. For Taylor, accordingly, the various forms of finite consciousness either fulfill or fail to fulfill these conditions, and those that fail to satisfy these prerequisites are shown to be an unacceptable conception of experience. Consciousness, on this view of it, is fixed and is not inherently dialectical in the Hegelian sense, where both consciousness and its object actually undergo change.

Taylor's analysis of the Phenomenology of Spirit begins with an examination of Hegel's method - i.e. Hegel's notion of the dialectical movement inherent in consciousness. Hegel's goal is in this regard, in Taylor's view, to "...show that 'consciousness' is ultimately one with 'self-consciousness'".[67] Hegel's method, as Taylor understands it:

> ...will be to start with ordinary, "natural" consciousness and show that on examination it transforms itself into another "figure" (*Gestaltung*).[68]

But how can ordinary consciousness "transform itself into another 'figure' "? Because for Hegel, states Taylor, "...natural consciousness...comes to see its own untruth or inadequacy".[69] We need to note, however, that for Taylor a "figure" of consciousness means

a consciousness which is "...shaped by a certain *idea* of what experience is".[70] Additionally, this notion of experience, to quote Taylor again, is "...that of a knowing subject who has a certain vision of things".[71] Now what Taylor means by the "untruth" or "inadequacy" of consciousness seems to have to do with the erroneous or false nature of the notion of experience adopted by ordinary consciousness. But this is a view of consciousness, as noted previously, which Hegel does not hold. Consciousness is never literally false. It may be incomplete, partial, one-sided, but it always carries within itself - i.e. within its "figure" - a conception of what knowing is. Yet it is precisely because it is manifest in one particular form or "figure" that it is the occasion for its becoming unsatisfactory or ineffective, to use Taylor's terminology. As Hegel states:

> Consciousness...is explicitly the Notion of itself. Hence it is something that goes beyond limits, and since these limits are its own, it is something that goes beyond itself. With the positing of a single particular the beyond is also established for consciousness, even if it is only alongside the limited object as in the case of spatial intuition.[72]

In other words, the very fact that consciousness affirms a particular idea of what knowing is, involves for it a beyond, or something further, as well. It does not, therefore, have to be literally a false or wrong notion of experience, as Taylor implies, in order to involve transition, movement, and development.

But the specific question which Taylor considers is: how can consciousness come to see its own inadequacy? Or analogously, how can consciousness transform itself from within? This will involve giving an account of the dynamic, self-moving character of consciousness.

More importantly, for Taylor, such an account will have to demonstrate why this dialectical movement intrinsic to consciousness is transcendental in structure. For the purposes of this paper I take the dialectical movement of consciousness to be the self-critical movement of consciousness in so far as its objects fail to accord with its concepts. And in its attempt to cling to these oppositions, new, more comprehensive forms of consciousness and knowing emerge. Except, for Hegel, this process is not the mere striving after knowledge but is its actual accomplishment - i.e. science or philosophy.

Now Taylor accepts this dialectical movement as integral to the development of consciousness, but he construes it strictly in terms of the contradiction that arises between a model of experience - understood as a knowing subject with a certain vision of experience - and that model as it "effectively" is, that is to say, as a model of experience that consciousness attempts to realize. In other words, for Taylor all thought is something which is ours and only ours, simply a particular outlook on the world, and we can never be certain whether we are not in some important way deceived.

For Taylor, ordinary, "natural" consciousness, as I noted above, understands experience as comprised of "...a knowing subject who has a certain vision of things...".[73] Thus, any notion of experience that consciousness possesses is determined by what it takes to be experienced: "sense-data", "particular data", etc.. But ordinary consciousness cannot come to see the inadequacy of any particular notion of experience by judging that "vision of things" by something "...effectively there in the world".[74] Why? Because, explains Taylor, this would be introducing a "yardstick" external to the particular model of experience affirmed by

the knowing subject. Additionally, this procedure would be superfluous because "experience is not just a function of what is there in the world to be experienced".[75]This is not an unexpected statement given Taylor's claim that all transcendental arguments must appeal as bedrock to the "I think" as a basic facet of experience. In other words, ordinary consciousness's experience of the world is nothing other than a dimension of a "knowing subject" - i.e. self-conscious reason itself.

But this notion of experience is not one that Hegel employs in the Phenomenology of Spirit. Hegel does not, when discussing consciousness or knowing in the "Introduction" to the Phenomenology of Spirit, employ notions such as "knowing subject", "cognition", "objective" and "subject", precisely because their meaning is not yet established. As he states early in the "Introduction":

> ...to give the impression that their meaning is generally well known, or that their Notion is comprehended, looks more like an attempt to avoid the main problem, which is precisely to provide this Notion.[76]

To employ certain ideas such as "subject" and "object", etc., as if their meaning were familiar, is to presuppose a certain view of experience even before its nature has been fully explored. In other words, if we set down in advance what these notions of cognition are, then we prejudice our inquiry from the very start. Thus, one of the reasons for doing a phenomenology of spirit is to disclose the meaning of these terms in a systematic fashion, and not to presuppose their meaning in advance. Yet this injunction, not to make any preliminary assumption about experience, is one which Taylor does not heed in his analysis of Hegel's

work. Taylor assumes that experience is of a certain, definite character.

> Our ordinary notion of experience is that of a knowing subject who has a certain vision of things; the notion of experience is characterized by the notion we have of what is experienced, sense-data (sensible qualities), particulate data (fields), and so on.[77]

He presumes that the primary element in experience is the "knowing subject who has a certain vision of things". That is to say, for Taylor it is our subjectivity, or consciousness alone, which is the essential feature in our experience of the things - i.e. our own consciousness is an essential and inescapable fact or our existence. For Hegel this is not an assumption which can be justified at the beginning of any inquiry into the nature of knowledge. The beginning of any inquiry, in other words, must be presuppositionless.

In Taylor's commentary on the first three chapters of the Phenomenology of Spirit, the essential feature of experience, then, is the "knowing subject", the "I", who embraces a certain "vision of things". Experience, accordingly, is conceived as exclusively a function of the "knowing subject", and being so, transcendental arguments only make claims concerning the nature of that experience, qua subjective. So conceived, the distinction between an "I" which does the thinking and an objective reality as the correlate of the "I" again enters the picture. For Hegel this division represents the standpoint of finite consciousness, even though this standpoint idealizes external nature or the object which stands opposed to it. Finite consciousness is characterized by the experience of itself as an autonomous and indifferent ego to which things are referred; a consciousness that does not yet realize or comprehend its unity with its other. But this is not the spirit's final repose, as Hegel repeatedly notes in the

"Introduction" to the Philosophy of Mind:

> ...mind is not satisfied, as finite mind, with transposing things by its own ideational activity into its own interior space and thus stripping them of their externality in a manner which is still external; on the contrary...as *philosophical* thinking, it consummates this idealization of things by discerning the specific mode in which the eternal Idea forming their common principle is represented in them.[78]

In other words, for Hegel, consciousness eventually realizes, as 'philosophical thinking' or 'absolute knowing', that its own distinction from an indifferent world existing independent of it, is actually no distinction. But this transition from the mere appearance of knowledge to "actual knowledge" is one that, in Taylor's view of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, is not effected. While I agree with Taylor that for Hegel our consciousness of things is not essentially receptive, but is characterized by some type of engagement with them, this, for Taylor, merely demonstrates what our experience as subjects must be - i.e. "originally" engaged with things. For Taylor, transcendental argument does not and cannot attempt to discover whether this is actually so or not, for it assumes from the outset a subject-object distinction which excludes that possibility. For Hegel this would mean that we have "experience" but not "science" or "actual knowledge". Transcendental argument, accordingly, is not an actual knowledge of anything, but an attempt to furnish a rationale for particular kinds of experiences.

Chapter Three
Sense Certainty: Transcendental Argument or Phenomenological Exposition?

I

In this chapter I propose to examine Taylor's specific claim that the first section of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, "Sense-Certainty", is transcendental in form. I will suggest why this interpretation is inappropriate, given Hegel's own view of phenomenology as outlined in the "Introduction" and "Preface" to the Phenomenology of Spirit. Additionally, I will offer an alternative reading of the chapter on "sense-certainty", one that I think is guided by Hegel's own conception of phenomenology. If, as I have argued, Hegel's goal in the Phenomenology of Spirit is the self-education of knowing by way of a tracing of the logic of the various finite forms of absolute knowledge, then "sense-certainty" must be seen as part of this development. That is to say, "sense-certainty" must be understood as a moment or element in this dynamic and formative process, and not, as Taylor suggests, a model of experience which does not effectively fulfill some underlying standard, taken to be an undeniable facet of our experience. My argument is that the chapter entitled "sense-certainty" cannot be given a transcendental form, that this reading is inappropriate, given Hegel's criticisms of transcendental method and his stated goal of disclosing how the various finite forms of consciousness represent the self-education of absolute spirit to knowledge of its own spiritual principles.

Transcendental arguments, as Taylor defines them, are ones that start from some putatively undeniable facet of experience and by regressive argument articulate the necessary

conditions of this experience. In other words, transcendental argument reasons back from what experience is like to what the form of the subject must be if this experience is to be possible. In each case, transcendental argument presupposes that we can identify certain basic and pervasive features of experience which are beyond cavil. Taylor holds that the opening movements in the Phenomenology of Spirit, like transcendental argument, presuppose certain undeniable features of experience. In Taylor's judgment, the dialectic of consciousness narrated in the opening sections of the Phenomenology of Spirit, like transcendental argument,

> ...presupposes that we can characterize effective experience in terms independent of the model of experience we are working with. Moreover, if we are to show that the model is not just unrealized in a given case, but cannot be realized, we have to be able to identify some basic and pervasive facets of experience independently of our model (they must be independent, i.e. not derivable from the model itself, if they are to contradict it and show it to be impossible).[1]

In other words, the impossibility or inadequacy of a particular model of experience can only be shown if it is in contradiction with certain presupposed and undeniable characteristics of experience.

For Taylor, the whole dialectical movement of consciousness narrated in the first three chapters of the Phenomenology of Spirit depends on such undeniable starting points, or what in an earlier work he calls "criterial properties"[2]. Criterial properties are basic notions of what a standard or purpose must be, and are properties or characteristics which are already met or established. Taylor uses an example from Plato's Republic to indicate

what he means here. He argues that the various conceptions of justice put forward in the Republic can only be shown to be inadequate because certain criterial properties of justice are already known.[3] Cephalos' definition of justice, telling the truth and paying one's debts, Taylor explains, is shown to be inadequate because certain criterial properties of justice are already known; specifically, that a just act is a good act. In the case of transcendental argument, which attempts to define the structure of the subject, granted certain types of experiences, criterial properties are those undeniable features of experience which are essential and integral to our lives as knowing subjects. In "sense-certainty", for example, the criterial property is 'to know is to be able to say'. Hence, if we have knowledge of this type, then we should be able 'to say' what it is we know. He writes:

> For us, knowing is inseparably bound up with being able to say, even if we can only say rather badly and inadequately...An experience about which nothing at all could be said...would be below the threshold of the level of awareness which we consider essential for knowledge.[4]

The principle that conscious experience must be sayable or that knowing is bound up with being able to say is, then, a criterial property which is brought to bear on "sense-certainty". For Taylor, the whole dialectic of "sense-certainty" presupposes this fundamental and pervasive feature of experience. Without it the inadequacy of "sense-certainty" cannot be demonstrated and another notion of experience cannot be introduced.

For Taylor, to be more specific, this dialectical movement can be best understood as

> ...a relation involving not just two terms but three: the basic purpose or standard, the inadequate reality, and an inadequate conception of the purpose which is bound up with that

reality.[5]

He goes on to explain more fully:

> We start off with an inadequate notion of the standard involved. But we also have from the beginning some very basic, correct notions of what the standard or purpose is, some criterial properties which it must meet. It is these criterial properties which in fact enable us to show that a given conception of the standard is inadequate. For we show that this conception cannot be realized in such a way as to meet the criterial properties, and hence that this definition is unacceptable as a definition of the standard or purpose concerned. But we show the inadequacy of the faulty formula by trying to 'realize' it, that is, construct a reality according to it. This is what brings out the conflict with the standard.[6]

If the standard we are aiming at is knowing or science, then the given conception of the standard would be a certain concept of knowing considered as a realized standard. In the opening section of the Phenomenology of Spirit this given conception of the standard would be the affirmation on the part of "sense-certainty" to be a knowledge of the immediate or of what simply *is*. We can, Taylor argues, show that "sense-certainty"is an inadequate conception of knowing or science because we are also from the beginning in possession of a certain criterial property of knowing, namely 'to know is to be able to say'. But, as Taylor indicates, "sense-certainty" can only be shown to be a faulty conception of knowing in our attempt to realize it, to have this type of knowledge.

"Sense-certainty", then, and consciousness generally, can only be in contradiction with itself if there are already certain standards or criterial properties of knowing that are already established. Taylor indicates that while this may seem to be importing ideas and

theories from outside ordinary consciousness, this is not the case. Criterial properties, he contends, do not violate Hegel's method because they are implicit in our way of knowing. In other words, criterial properties are not considered outside of ordinary or finite consciousness because they apply to us as knowing subjects. In requiring the subject of "sense-certainty" to say what he knows, argues Taylor, we are not violating Hegel's method because "...implicit in knowing in the sense relevant here is a certain awareness of what is known".[7]

Robert C. Solomon, in his book In the Spirit of Hegel, argues that Taylor does indeed employ an external criterion when he insists that "sense-certainty" *say* what it knows. Solomon states:

> It is argued that Hegel's attack on sense-certainty is essentially based on the fact that sense-certainty cannot or will not *say* anything, and knowledge requires something to be *said*. But if this were Hegel's argument...it would be clearly ineffectual, and it would do what Hegel always insists that we must *not* do, namely, apply a criterion to a form of consciousness which is not already "internal" to it, which it does not itself accept.[8]

In any case, the requirement that we *say* what it is we know would be ineffectual, in Solomon's view, because "sense-certainty" could make its case by just "shutting up".[9] Solomon's contention that Taylor is importing an external criterion into "sense-certainty", however, stems from his characterization of "sense-certainty" as a theory of knowledge and not, as it is for Taylor, an actual attempt to experience in a certain manner. Thus of "sense-certainty" Solomon states:

> It is important to stress that this is a *view* of knowledge rather than an actual form of consciousness in the sense that we will encounter later, that is, a realizable mode of living, a set of concepts that structure our daily experience.[10]

Solomon, nonetheless, does allow that, in some instances, a form of consciousness, as a theory of knowledge, can include an attempt to 'live' that theory.[11] In spite of this caveat, however, Solomon insists that "sense-certainty" is not, and can never be, an actual endeavor to experience in a certain way.[12] "Sense-certainty", in other words, is a view of knowledge and not the content of everyday cognition. Now Solomon's reason for holding this view is his belief that, for Hegel, there cannot be any immediate knowledge of particulars: there cannot be any knowledge unmediated by concepts. "Sense-certainty", therefore, as a form of consciousness which is supposed to be in immediate contact with objects, is ruled out from the outset, though, for Solomon, this is a claim which must be demonstrated, not just affirmed.[13] Nevertheless, Solomon's central point is that we are applying an external criterion to "sense-certainty" when we insist that it 'say' what it knows, especially given that it is a theory of knowledge which holds that knowledge does not require general descriptions.

Now, for Solomon, the argument in "sense-certainty" is a "contextualist" one, that the identification and re-identification of particulars presupposes a context. He writes:

> ...the designation of particulars presupposes a context in which reference (whether by pointing, grunting, saying "this," or providing some more elaborate phrase,--e.g. "the man in the white suit") is defined.[14]

Later he adds:

> This argument against the possibility of identifying particulars has nothing to do with the demand that one must be able to *say* what it is one knows...It has to do with the use of universals at the very basis of experience, as a necessary condition for our being able to pick out particular objects. It has nothing to do as Taylor says, with "having to say something just to get started"...[15]

The breakdown of "sense-certainty" for Solomon, then, has more do with its inadequacy as a theory of knowledge rather than a failure of an actual model of experience which results from an attempt to *say* what one knows.

While I agree with Solomon that "sense-certainty" resembles certain complex theories of knowledge, there is no doubt that for Hegel "sense-certainty", as Taylor also suggests, is a form of phenomenal or ordinary consciousness. At the end of his "Introduction", to give one example, Hegel states:

> The experience of itself which consciousness goes through can, in accordance with its Notion, comprehend nothing less than the entire system of consciousness, or the entire realm of the truth of Spirit. For this reason, the moments of this truth are exhibited in their own proper determinateness, viz. as being not abstract moments, but as they are for consciousness, or as consciousness itself stands forth in its relation to them. Thus the moments of the whole are *patterns of consciousness*[16]

The *patterns of consciousness*, to use Hegel's wording, are those extant forms of finite cognition or points of view of human subjective consciousness exhibited in the Phenomenology of Spirit. If, as Hegel observes in his "Introduction", consciousness simultaneously distinguishes itself from something and at the same moment relates itself to it,[17] then ordinary finite consciousness represents the cognitive relationship of a subject to

an object. If this is indeed the case, then "sense-certainty" is a form of finite or ordinary consciousness, not simply a theory of knowledge. However, while I agree with Taylor that "sense-certainty" is not simply a theory of knowledge, his use of criterial properties can still be considered as violating Hegel's method, although for a different reason than that specified by Solomon.

"Sense-certainty", then, is the reflection of the everyday, naive affirmation of the immediately given world, and not strictly a theory of knowledge, as Solomon suggests. In this regard, Hegel's basic contention is that the development of consciousness from one stage to the next must be one dictated by the subject matter itself, by the particular concept of knowing being embodied in "sense-certainty" itself. The transition from "sense-certainty" to "perception", for example, must result from an immanent necessity and not from the prior demands of our subjectivity itself. Hans-Georg Gadamer, in Hegel's Dialectic, makes the same observation concerning the development played out in the Phenomenology of Spirit:

> ...the advance from one thought to the next, from one form of knowing to the next, must derive from an immanent necessity.[18]

Richard Norman, in his work, Hegel's Phenomenology: A Philosophical Introduction, makes a more general, but similar observation.

> Science must vindicate itself not by being measured against some preconceived criterion, but through a descriptive examination of its character as a specific phenomenon, from which its validity will emerge. This is what Hegel understands by a 'phenomenology'.[19]

In both quotes the sentiment is the same-- the phenomenological development from ordinary

to absolute consciousness cannot be such that its movement and outcome is determined by some preconceived criterion. Accordingly, to use Gadamer's example,

> ...in thinking the sense certainty which fills it, consciousness can no longer believe itself to be thinking anything other than a "universal 'this,'" and thus it must grant that what it meant is a "universal," and that it perceives it as a "thing."[20]

What still needs to be established, however, is how this outcome, as Taylor construes it, violates Hegel's method.

Taylor's criterial properties are preconceived criteria in that they impose, prior to our knowledge of anything, certain restrictions on what can or cannot count as knowledge for us. In the case of "sense-certainty" it is the requirement that we 'say' what it is we know. But it is just this use of a preconceived criterion at the beginning of an examination into the nature of knowledge which, in Hegel's view, is not justified. It is Hegel's conviction that such epistemological presuppositions are not warranted, even though it would seem that if we do not have recourse to some underlying criterion at the beginning of the examination, the examination cannot take place. Hegel's solution to this problem is one we have already addressed in Chapter One, but what I want to emphasize here is his refusal to employ, unlike Taylor, any presuppositions at the beginning of his examination. In his "Introduction" to the Phenomenology of Spirit he writes:

> If this exposition is viewed as a way of *relating Science* to *phenomenal* knowledge, and as an investigation...it would seem that it cannot take place without some presupposition which can serve as its underlying *criterion*. For an examination consists in applying an accepted standard, and in determining whether something is right or wrong on the basis

> of the resulting agreement or disagreement of the thing examined; thus the standard as such (and Science likewise if it were the criterion) is accepted as the *essence* or as the *in-itself*. But here, where Science has just begun to come on the scene, neither Science nor anything else has yet justified itself as the essence of the in-itself.... [21]

Thus, a presupposition such as the criterial property 'to know is to be able to say' has not justified itself for use at the beginning of an inquiry into the nature of knowledge, and cannot, therefore, serve as an underlying criterion or standard. Now while Taylor might argue that a criterial property is not an actual definition of knowledge, but a preconceived standard of knowing which must be satisfied, it is, nevertheless, a presupposition about what can or cannot count as knowledge "for us". Not only does such a prior restriction on what can count as knowing prejudice the entire investigation but, concomitantly , it also implies that knowing is strictly what it is "for us", which then creates a distinction between our thinking, as something ours and entirely ours, and an objective reality as something other, about which we think.

There seems to be a kind of epistemological bias or predisposition, in Taylor's reading of Hegel's work, for regarding knowledge as strictly a dimension of the human subject. In this regard, it is not at all clear that Hegel would accept the use of criterial properties of knowing, given that they are determinations which apply to us strictly as subjects. The use of criterial properties presupposes that our cognition is a kind of medium through which what we know is refracted. In the case of "sense-certainty", for instance, what is to be known is refracted or shaped by the necessity that knowledge for us be 'sayable'.

Moreover, the use of criterial properties would imply an original distinction, and concomitantly a division between what is "for us" and what is "in itself". But, as I have argued in Chapters One and Two, this is just the view of knowledge which Hegel disavows from the outset. The whole impulse or inclination to view knowledge strictly in terms of the demands of the knowing subject is one Hegel sees as untenable, in that it assumes a distinction between knowing and what is known, which, once accepted, can never be overcome.

Hegel's phenomenological exposition of "sense-certainty" makes no such presuppositions about the nature of consciousness. That is to say, it does not suppose, as Taylor does, that conscious experience is "...that of a knowing subject who has a certain vision of things".[22] Nor does it make any presuppositions about the structure of that experience, qua subject, for example, that it is "...inseparably bound up with being able to say...".[23] Richard Norman makes the following comparable observation concerning the exposition of the Phenomenology of Spirit:

> The work is written as a sort of 'biography' of Consciousness, a narrative account of the various experiences which Consciousness undergoes. Where other philosophers (the Empiricists, or Kant, or contemporary British philosophers) tend to speak of what we say, what we know, what we experience, Hegel talks of what *consciousness* experiences or recognizes or discovers.[24]

If the Phenomenology of Spirit is not a depiction of "what we say, what we know, what we experience", then it is not strictly about our thinking. Gadamer makes the following commensurate assessment of Hegel's work:

> Dialectic for Hegel is not of our thinking alone, but rather...of what is thought, of the concept itself.[25]

This would suggest, *contra* Taylor, that the dialectical movement that consciousness undergoes is not about the contradiction between a particular model of experience, construed as a knowing subject who has a certain vision of things, and a particular standard, understood as a certain criterial property or undeniable facet of experience. Consciousness is transformed from within, not because certain models of experience are in conflict with presupposed standards of knowing, but because each form of finite consciousness is characterized by a disparity between its concept and its reality, that is to say, between what "it is" and what is "for it". The dialectical movement of consciousness, in other words, is a result of this immanent self-conflict.

Taylor's account of the movement and denouement of "sense-certainty", as already indicated, holds that it is dependent upon some original or underlying principle or standard, viz. "...if this is really knowledge, then one must be able to say what it is...".[26] "Sense-certainty" can only be shown to be wrong or inadequate if this principle, or criterial property of knowing, can be identified from the start. And it can only be identified from the start because it is understood as an undeniable feature of ourselves as knowing subjects, independent of any model of experience under examination. But this requires that knowing be understood as nothing else but a feature of the human subject itself. It is only in this way that Taylor can claim that he is not violating Hegel's method when he treats the ability to say as a criterial property of knowing. But if, as I have argued in Chapter One, knowing for

Hegel consists of both subjectivity and objectivity and the relationship between them, then it is difficult to see how Taylor is not violating Hegel's method when he construes knowing entirely in terms of the subject. "Sense-certainty", then, as a knowing subject who has a certain vision of the world, is merely a subjective standpoint to which certain criteria or limits apply *a priori*.

Taylor's approach to Chapter One of the Phenomenology of Spirit is, then, to frame the argument in terms of the demand that "sense-certainty" **say** what it knows. "Sense-certainty" claims to be the "richest" kind of knowledge, because it is in immediate contact with its object, prior to any conceptual activity. Hegel's strategy in the face of this claim, argues Taylor, is to take up the position of "sense-certainty" and "...try to say what we know in this way".[27] The attempt "to say", contends Taylor, "...will contradict the basic requirements of sensible certainty..." and "...will take us beyond its defining limits...".[28] Only in this way, maintains Taylor, can "sense-certainty" stand self-refuted in the way Hegel outlines in the "Introduction" to the Phenomenology of Spirit.

Taylor indicates two main ways in which the attempt "to say" will take "sense-certainty" beyond its limits. The minor way is its lack of selectivity in its attempt to grasp things, and the major way is its inability to pick out particulars without the mediating instruments of universal concepts. The first attempt, according to Taylor, centers on the claim "sense-certainty" makes to be the richest and the most inexhaustible kind of knowledge. But when "sense-certainty" is challenged to say what it really is aware of, then the inexhaustible richness of detail that it professes to possess is shown to be illusory. In its attempt to grasp

things, argues Taylor, "sense-certainty" discovers that it lacks selectivity. The requirement that we say what we know reveals that "sense-certainty" is not really in contact with an unlimited richness of detail, but rather only a certain selection. He explains:

> Looking at the objects in my study under their ordinary descriptions as use objects (typewriter, desk, chairs, etc.), I cannot see them as pure shapes; or looking at them as pure shapes, I cannot see them as the juxtaposition of different materials, and so on.[29]

But because "sense-certainty" attempts to take in everything it lacks the selectivity required to grasp particular things and is thus condemned to emptiness, to fall over into a "trancelike stare".[30]

Now, earlier, Taylor states:

> An experience about which nothing at all could be said, not even that it was very difficult if not impossible to describe, would be below the threshold of the level of awareness which we consider essential for knowledge.[31]

Because "sense-certainty" is deficient in this respect, the obvious implication is that it lacks the minimum level of awareness necessary for knowledge. Thus Taylor takes this minor argument to be a transcendental one. We start with the putatively undeniable facet of experience, that to know, we must be able to say, and this allows us to demonstrate the illusory nature of the claim to be able to take in everything in an inexhaustible richest of detail. But because language by its very nature is selective, it also demonstrates that our experience is necessarily mediated by the use of concepts.

The second way in which the attempt to say will take "sense-certainty" beyond its

limits, argues Taylor, involves a refutation of its claim to be in immediate contact with sensible particulars. For Taylor this refutation will involve two stages. In both stages the challenge will be for "sense-certainty" to say what it knows. In the first instance this will involve "sense-certainty" answering the challenge by use of "pure demonstratives".[32] In the second instance the challenge will be answered with the use of "ostensive definition".[33] Each attempt, however, fails to answer the challenge because the attempt at effective awareness of the sensible particular can only be realized by employing universal terms or concepts, rather than through the object's own particularity. In the first instance, for example, the demonstratives such as "this" or "here" or "now", because they can apply indifferently to a variety of contexts, operate like universals. Similarly, the use of ostensive definitions is only available in context, and this requires the use of descriptive terms such as "day", "night", "hour" and so on. But these are general terms which can never capture the particularity of the object. And so, states Taylor,

> ...Hegel concludes, there is no unmediated knowledge of the particular. Sensible certainty ends up saying the opposite of what it means, and this is the proof of its contradictory nature.[34]

Thus, by demonstrating the unsayability of the particular, argues Taylor, we also show that it can only be grasped by the use of universal concepts, that is, by subsuming the particular under universal concepts.

Now the contradictory nature of "sense-certainty" can only be demonstrated if we first start from some undeniable characteristic of experience, that is to say, if we first have

certain preestablished criterial properties of knowing. The basic form of a transcendental argument, as Robert Solomon points out, is,

> (We) have an experience with (undeniable) characteristic *a*.
> (We) could not have an experience with *a* unless (our) consciousness had feature *B*.
> Therefore, (our) consciousness has feature *B*.[35]

In the case of "sense-certainty", then, the undeniable characteristic of experience is that our knowing is inseparably bound up with being able to say. The implication of this, however, is that our experience or cognition must be of a certain type - i.e. it necessarily involves the mediating instrument of universal concepts. Now, Hegel would not disagree with the view that immediate knowledge of sensible particulars is impossible. But what he would object to is Taylor's presentation of this idea as if it were simply about our cognition, namely, that it is a faculty of a certain kind and scope, whose nature and limits we need to define by means of transcendental argument. To say that our conscious experience or cognition is a faculty of a definite kind and scope is to treat it as an instrument or medium through which we get at the truth. But, as I have already indicated, it also introduces an original distinction between ourselves and the real world, which for Hegel, once established, can never be surmounted.[36]

Transcendental argument, if the above reading is accurate, can only work if subjective consciousness is understood as a pure, autonomous self to which certain transcendental criteria apply, *a priori*. Transcendental argument, accordingly, is directed to the conditions of the possibility of cognition or knowledge of this subjectivity. But a phenomenological

exposition of the experience of consciousness considers the actual dialectical movement in consciousness itself. That is to say, it is entirely taken up with how each of the various phenomenal forms of human subjective consciousness actually give way to more comprehensive ones, and how in this dialectical movement of the concept, qua subjective, the system of science is constituted. In this sense, there is never any "undeniable" or "permanent" feature of experience from which we can determine, *a priori*, the principles of knowledge. Hegelian phenomenology, as I have already discussed, is an exposition of the various forms of finite consciousness in terms of the concepts which animate them, and not in terms of preestablished criterial properties or transcendental requirements of knowing. The whole point of a phenomenological exposition is to demonstrate how the various forms of finite consciousness, which take themselves to be permanent and original, are really moments or elements in knowledge as such.

A phenomenological exposition of "sense-certainty", therefore, will have to take up the argument from within "sense-certainty" itself, exhibiting the logic of this form, and demonstrating the necessity of its advance to "perception". To cite Gadamer again:

> ...the dialectic which we spin out in reflection is only an ancillary mediation performed on the natural presuppositions of consciousness...[37]

In other words, the dialectical progress of finite consciousness is not something externally imposed by the phenomenologist, but derives from consciousness itself. But we do not have to presuppose, as Taylor claims, some already accepted criterion by which to judge "sense-certainty", we need only attend to the logic of the inherent conflict within "sense-certainty"

itself. It is this inherent self-conflict which is the means whereby consciousness as "sense-certainty" recasts itself in a more complete form. But it is phenomenology which, in reflecting on this process, demonstrates the necessity of the advance, and which in turn ensures its completion as an actual knowing.

II

I now propose to take up Hegel's exposition of "sense-certainty" and attempt to follow the structure of the argument, according to the method outlined in the "Introduction" to the Phenomenology of Spirit. My primary focus will be to show how the transition from "sense-certainty" to "perception" is the outcome of consciousness' own self-experience. This will involve, as I have already indicated, showing how the transition to "perception" is a result of an inherent self-conflict between what "sense-certainty" is and what is for it. In other words, it will entail showing how the contradiction within "sense-certainty" is the result of the disparity between its concept and its reality - not between a model of experience, characterized by a knowing subject who has a certain vision of the world, and a presupposed standard, "to know is to be able to say". All this is already implied in Hegel's understanding of what consciousness is, namely, the relating to and distinguishing from an 'other', in which the determinate aspect of this relating is "knowing". It thus belongs to consciousness that it is always testing whether its concept corresponds to its object, and conversely whether its object corresponds to its concept. But what is crucial for the present examination is that in this testing both the measure of the truth and the knowing of it belong to consciousness. In this dialectical movement, where both knowledge and object undergo change, what Hegel

calls *experience*, no presuppositions about the nature of experience, independent of any particular model or form of experience, need be made.

At the commencement of his exposition Hegel states that our approach to the object must be *immediate* or *receptive*, exactly as it is for "sense-certainty". "In apprehending it", he goes on to explain, "we must refrain from trying to comprehend it".[38] Thus Hegel lets us know, from the outset, that he proposes to take up the argument from within "sense-certainty" itself. This is as it should be, given his claim that phenomenology is the dialectical exposition of the various forms of finite consciousness in terms of the concept of knowing which animates each of them. Concomitantly this suggests that the movement of "sense-certainty" must spring from the internal logical action of "sense-certainty" itself - i.e. it must derive from the disparity between what it is (its concept) and what is for it (its reality).

"Sense-certainty", or ordinary, naive consciousness, then, takes as the foundation of our knowledge of the world that which is "given" to us immediately through the senses. In other words, "sense-certainty" is the view or notion that we immediately apprehend the "given" in its entirety without comprehending it. Or, otherwise put, it is the view the there exists within consciousness as "sense-certainty" an identity between consciousness itself and its given object. Accordingly, the "given" of "sense-certainty" has being only in our consciousness of it, and conversely there is only a registering consciousness where there is a "given" to register. This is the essential point in "sense-certainty". Sensuous consciousness, as Hegel explains in the Philosophy of Mind,

> ...is distinguished from the other modes of consciousness, not

> by the fact that in it alone the object is given to us by the senses, but rather by the fact that on this stage the object, whether an inner or an outer object, has no other thought-determination than first, that of simply being, and secondly, of being an independent Other over against me, something reflected into itself, an individual confronting me as an individual, an immediate.[39]

Thus, "sense-certainty" is, firstly, immediate consciousness, and all that it can say of its object is that it simply *is*. The object, for its part, is represented as something which is immediate and individual or singular. Neither consciousness nor the object is anything other than a pure "This". In "sense-certainty", as Hegel explains,

> ...neither I nor the thing has the significance of a complex process of mediation; the 'I' does not have the significance of a manifold imagining or thinking; nor does the 'thing' signify something that has a host of qualities.[40]

But whether this is the truth of "sense-certainty" is something which will only come to light in its development.

While there are recognizable empiricist themes in this section of the Phenomenology of Spirit, as Taylor also acknowledges, such a theory is considerably more complex than what is being exhibited in "sense-certainty", namely, the naive affirmation of the immediately "given" world. The nature of this "given" is never explicated as it is in empiricism, but merely affirmed. There is, as previously indicated, no "complex process of mediation" in such a standpoint, but merely the apprehension of what simply *is*. To say more than this is to go beyond the immediacy of "sense-certainty" to something else, namely some kind of mediation. In "sense-certainty", consciousness or the 'I', is not characterized by any

imagining or thinking, it is simply a pure 'This', just as the object is pure 'This'. Hegel makes the following observation about how consciousness and its object must be construed for "sense-certainty":

> ...the 'I' does not have the significance of a manifold imagining or thinking; nor does the 'thing' signify something that has a host of qualities. On the contrary, the thing *is*, and it *is*, merely because it *is*. It *is*; this is the essential point for sense-knowledge, and this pure *being*, or this simple immediacy, constitutes its truth. Similarly, certainty as a *connection* is an *immediate* pure connection; consciousness is 'I', nothing more, a pure 'This'...[41]

What a phenomenological exposition of "sense-certainty" must consider is how this particular consciousness, in relating to and distinguishing itself from an other, is, through its own inherent self-conflict, forced out of its position as the knowledge of the immediate or of what simply *is*.

Now Taylor claims that phenomenology can only do this if we first identify certain pervasive and undeniable facets of experience which are outside any particular model of experience under examination. For Taylor, dialectical movement, as explained earlier, is a relationship involving three terms. First, a certain model or notion of experience; second, specific criterial properties of knowing that furnish the standard that effective experience must satisfy; and third, effective experience which is guided by this model of experience.

It is the second term which, for Taylor, accounts for the contradiction in ordinary consciousness. But this would suggest that a phenomenological account of "sense-certainty" would not be an exposition in terms of the concept of knowing which animates "sense-

certainty" as such - i.e. its claim to be immediate knowledge. Furthermore, the contradiction within "sense-certainty" would not be between its concept and its reality - i.e. what it is and what is for it, but between effective experience guided by "sense-certainty" and certain presupposed undeniable facets of experience which condition the knowing subject, the 'I'.

This characterization of knowing, however, is just what Hegel opposes in the "Preface" and "Introduction" to the Phenomenology of Spirit, although it is not limited to that work. In the Philosophy of Mind, for example, Hegel writes:

> The 'I' is...being or has being as a moment within it. When I set this being as an Other over against me and at the same time as identical with me, I am Knowing (Wissen) and have the absolute certainty (Gewissheit) of my being. This certainty must not be regarded...as a kind of property of the 'I' as a determination *in* its nature; on the contrary, it is to be grasped as the very nature of the 'I', for this cannot exist without distinguishing itself from itself...[42]

Knowing, then, is not simply some property of the ego, the 'I'. However this is precisely what transcendental arguments purport knowing to be. Thus, if "sense-certainty" is simply a model of experience, characterized by a knowing subject who has a certain vision of the world, as Taylor contends, it simply establishes that we cannot effectively exercise our subjectivity except through the mediating instruments of universal concepts. And it merely says something about our lives as subjects, whereas Hegelian phenomenology is an exposition or articulation of the essential dynamic of "sense-certainty" itself, its concept; specifically, its necessary connection to "perception", and by extension its essential role in the entire series of concepts that constitutes the becoming of knowledge or science.

Therefore, to challenge "sense-certainty" - to say what it means - would be to deal with knowing as simply a property or determination of the 'I'. What phenomenology does, however, is pay attention to how, in this relating to and distinguishing from something, consciousness tests itself and discloses what in truth it is. In the "Preface" to the Phenomenology of Spirit Hegel observes:

> The immediate existence of Spirit, *consciousness*, contains the two moments of knowing and the objectivity negative to knowing. Since it is in this element [of consciousness] that Spirit develops itself and explicates its moments, these moments contain that antithesis, and they all appear as shapes of consciousness.[43]

It is only in this movement of becoming other to itself that spirit reveals its actuality and truth,[44] and educates itself to its own genuine foundations as an actual knowing spirit. "Sense-certainty" is a moment in this process and is not merely some property of or determination in the 'I', as Taylor suggests.

What, then, is the logic of "sense-certainty"? It claims to be immediate knowledge of what simply *is*, a simple registering of an immediate content. In other words, it holds that there is an immediate identity between a registering consciousness, the 'I', and a given datum, the 'This'. "Sense-certainty" signifies the immediate identity of two particulars, the 'I', and the 'This'. In the dialectic of "sense-certainty", however, the 'I' and the 'This' reveal themselves to be something other than this, namely, mediated and universal. Hegel remarks at the beginning of the argument:

> ...pure being at once splits up into what we have called the two 'Thises', one 'This' as 'I', and the other 'This' as object.

> When *we* reflect on this difference, we find that neither one nor the other is only *immediately* present in sense-certainty, but each is at the same time *mediated*. I have this certainty through something else, viz. through the thing; and it, similarly, is in sense-certainty *through* something else, viz. through the 'I'.[45]

"Sense-certainty", then, shows itself to be much more than the immediate identity between itself and its object; that is to say, it is not simply the immediate apprehension of a pure 'This'. Both the subject, as 'I', and the object, as 'This' are mediated, each is what it is through the mediation of the other. Hegel quickly adds, however, that it is not just we, the phenomenologists, who make this distinction, but it is present within "sense-certainty" itself, "and it is to be taken up in the form in which it is present there...".[46]

"Sense-certainty", then, finds itself falling into contradiction between what it judges its object to be in itself and how it is present to it. In the ensuing attempt to sustain the oppositions that such a contradiction gives rise to, it will reinstate itself in a more comprehensive form. In "sense-certainty" this dialectical development has three phases. In the first phase "sense-certainty" takes the object as that which is essential and unmediated, and the 'I' as that which is unessential and mediated. Now, in this first phase, the question to be answered is whether the object, as that which is essential and unmediated, is what "sense-certainty" proclaims it to be. Hegel states:

> The question must therefore be considered whether in sense-certainty itself the object is in fact the kind of essence that sense- certainty proclaims it to be; whether this notion of it as the essence corresponds to the way it is present in sense-certainty.[47]

His ensuing statement indicates how this question is to be answered.

> To this end, we have not to reflect on it and ponder what it might be in truth, but only to consider the way in which it is present in sense-certainty.[48]

We do not, in other words, have to draw upon some underlying principle, 'to know is to be able to say', in order to reveal what in truth "sense-certainty" is. Because consciousness, for Hegel, is inherently systematic, and so necessarily gives birth to an articulated series of concepts. Thus, we do not need to invoke some 'underlying', 'original' or 'transcendental' criterion in order to determine what "sense-certainty" is.

Now, if we take the object as it presents itself in the first phase of "sense-certainty", it does not correspond to what the object is proclaimed to be, something particular and unmediated. The 'This' of the object, if taken in its twofold shape as "now" and "here", cannot be given a singular or particular designation. If we say the "now" is night, for example, later "now" is not night, but noon; "now" as noon is immediately supplanted by "now" is not-noon, and so forth. "Now" is indifferently any state - day, night, noon, etc., while preserving itself throughout. Indeed, what emerges at this point is the realization that "now" is only permanent and self-preserving "...*through* the fact that something else, viz. Day and Night, is *not*".[49] That is to say, "now" is not something immediate but mediated. But additionally, "now", because it can be indifferently night, day, noon, etc., is in reality, for Hegel, a universal. In the "now" of "sense-certainty", as well as the "here", the pure being of the object remains - i.e. it simply *is*, but no longer with the immediacy which it was taken to have initially. In the "now" and the "here" of "sense-certainty", thus, the object has

emerged as a pure universal. But it is just this new opposition which "sense-certainty" must attempt to sustain which will insure the necessity of the advance.

Accordingly, the undoing of the object as immediate and particular signifies the beginning of a new dialectical phase of "sense-certainty". Because phenomenological exposition cannot be imposed externally by us, where every determinate form of consciousness must be forced out of itself by its own internal logic, "sense-certainty" must be given full reign and allowed to maintain its position. Hence, the immediacy of knowing is now taken to lie in the 'I', in its 'seeing', 'hearing' and so on. As Hegel explains; "'Now' is day because I see it; 'Here' is a tree for the same reason".[50] But "sense-certainty" now experiences the same dialectic as it previously did when the essential element in its knowing was the object. The 'I', like the 'Now' and 'Here', is a universal, indifferent to what happens to it. Hegel observes:

> I, *this* 'I', see the tree and assert that 'Here" is a tree, but another 'I' sees the house and maintains that 'Here' is not a tree but a house instead.[51]

Both are equally legitimate, but the one vanishes in the other. But in this movement of experience what does not vanish is the 'I'. Hegel explains:

> What does not disappear in all this is the 'I' as *universal*, whose seeing is neither a seeing of the tree nor of this house, but is a simple seeing which, though mediated by the negation of this, etc., is all the same simple and indifferent to whatever happens in it, to the house, the tree, etc..[52]

Again, what "sense-certainty" takes to be immediate knowledge turns out to be mediated. The simple seeing of the 'I' is mediated by the negation of the house, etc., and what remains

through all its negations, is the pure universal 'I'.

"Sense-certainty", however, makes a final attempt to preserve its position and declares that it is the whole of "sense-certainty" itself which comprises immediate knowledge. In other words, it is the immediacy of the whole subject/object framework itself which constitutes the essence of "sense-certainty", and not the immediacy of one or the other of these elements. But this pure immediacy of the whole relation will prove unsatisfactory too.

In confining itself entirely to one immediate relation, for example, the I affirms or indicates that 'it is now day', "sense-certainty" seeks to preserve knowledge of what simply is. But the same dialectic operating on its previous incarnations again asserts itself. The 'Now' that is pointed to is never something that merely *is*, because in the very act of pointing it out it ceases to be; that is to say, it is a 'Now' that has been. The 'Now' that is meant, when pointed out, shows itself to be not an immediate knowing, but a knowing of what has been - i.e. something which is superceded. The 'Now' that is meant, just as the 'Here' which is pointed to, shows itself not to be an immediate knowing, but a movement through a plurality of 'Nows' and 'Heres'. What endures is a plurality of 'Nows' and 'Heres', which arise and pass away. Hegel observes:

> The pointing-out of the Now is thus itself the movement which expresses what the Now is in truth, viz. a result, or a plurality of Nows all taken together, and the pointing-out is the experience of learning that Now is *universal.*[53]

Similarly:

> The Here that is *meant* would be the point; but it *is* not: on the contrary, when it is pointed out as something that *is*, the pointing-out shows itself to be not an immediate knowing [of the point], but a movement from the Here that is *meant* through many Heres into the universal Here which is a simple plurality of Heres, just as the day is a simple plurality of Nows.[54]

"Sense-certainty", then, can no longer maintain itself to be thinking anything other than a universal Here. Instead of immediate knowledge of what simply *is*, what emerges is sensible universality in the form of "perception".

In the dialectic of "sense-certainty", then, the contradiction between what it takes to be true for it, and that which actually is for it, is overcome in "perception". Thus the singularity of the object is negated in the dialectic of "sense-certainty" and what emerges is sensible universality. "Perception" comprehends the object as it takes it to be in itself, a universal in general. Hegel's formulation is as follows:

> Perception, on the other hand, takes what is present to it as a universal. Just as universality is its principle in general, the immediately self-differentiating moments within perception are universal: 'I' is a universal and the object is a universal.[55]

But the new object which emerges for "perception", the thing with properties, will again involve consciousness in contradiction. This time the contradiction is between the object as an unconditioned universal and the object as a determinate singular. The entire argument of "perception" is subsequently taken up with the attempt on the part of "perception" to preserve the truth of the object from this contradiction.

Now, for Taylor, the movement of "sense-certainty" reflects our experience itself;

that is, in our attempt to grasp particular objects we discover that we can only get hold of them through the mediating instruments of concepts. We cannot have knowledge of particulars except as subsumed under universal concepts or descriptive terms. But even though the particular can be given an infinite number of descriptions, its full meaning can never be apprehended. Hence there is always a duality between the particular thing and descriptions found true of it. This, for Taylor, is the start of the next transcendental argument. This argument attempts to show that as subjects we cannot operate with property concepts without attributing them to particulars and reciprocally that we cannot identify particulars without the use of property concepts. But in each case the transcendental argument is directed towards defining the nature and limits of our experience or knowledge, and in this sense it is grounded in the subject, the 'I', and thus construes both "sense-certainty" and "perception" as simply subjective forms of experience.

In other words, for Taylor, knowledge is determined throughout, in its form, by the *a priori* conditions imposed by the nature of human cognition. The fact that knowing, for us, is inseparably bound up with being able to say, for example, precludes immediate knowledge of particulars. We can only get hold of the particular through the mediating instruments of universal concepts. That is to say, it is only through the mediating influence of concepts that the 'given' of "sense-certainty" can be an object for us. It is impossible then, *a priori*, to grasp sensible particulars except as mediated through universal concepts. But it is also the case that the universal concepts or descriptive terms in our experience only have meaning through their union with sensible particulars. In either case, within "sense-certainty",

objectivity - i.e. what can be an object for us-- is constituted by the prior rules laid down by our own subjectivity. We could not have knowledge of sensible particulars without the mediating influence of universal concepts, and we know this to be so because for us knowledge is inseparably bound up with being able to say.

Hegel, on the other hand, grounds knowing in the series of phenomenal forms of itself, and not in the subject, the 'I'. Knowledge is not grounded, as in transcendental argument, in some transcendental subject or a thinker behind thought, but in a series of phenomenal forms of itself. However, it is also necessary that science or knowing come to know how the various phenomenal forms of ordinary or finite consciousness are constituent of its standpoint, and, concomitantly, how it is their culmination. Phenomenology, then, is just this exposition of its own development on the part of science, and in completing the logic of the various forms of phenomenal knowing, educates itself as to its own genuine principles and sheds its abstract character as a simply subjective standpoint, with what is only "for it". Hegel writes:

> In pressing forward to its true existence, consciousness will arrive at a point at which it gets rid of its semblance of being burdened with something alien, with what is only for it, and some sort of 'other', at a point where appearance becomes identical with essence, so that its exposition will coincide at just this point with the authentic Science of Spirit. And finally, when consciousness itself grasps this its own essence, it will signify the nature of absolute knowledge itself.[56]

But transcendental arguments, by their very character, are grounded in the nature of experience and only say something about the nature of our lives as subjects. They can say,

to borrow Taylor's example, that our experience is constituted by our sense of ourselves as embodied subjects.[57] Yet they can never preclude ultimate, ontological questions. Thus no transition is ever effected from the realm of experience to what Hegel refers to above as actual or absolute knowledge. Once one set of problems concerning the nature of our experience and thought is resolved, transcendental argument is always enmeshed in another set of problems. Why? Because transcendental argument is a method of procedure which by its very nature rests on a subject/object distinction - i.e. it rests everything on consciousness and its world. So Taylor concludes his article, "The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology", with the following comment:

> ...once out of the bottle, the fly is not free; he is enmeshed in another set of problems, harder if more rewarding to explore.[58]

Transcendental arguments, thus, may establish something about our lives as subjects, but this is all that they do; they never get around to what Hegel calls actual knowledge or speculative philosophy.

III

By way of conclusion I would like to reiterate that Taylor's reading of the opening chapters of the Phenomenology of Spirit is inappropriate given Hegel's criticism of Kantian transcendental method, and also given his effort to show how knowledge is not simply a function of the human subject, the ego. I have suggested that, for Hegel, subjective consciousness must forego its ideal of viewing itself as an autonomous criterion that is the ultimate authority in all issues of knowledge. To this end I have argued that, for Hegel, the

real genesis of science is not the merely formal, apperceptive conditions of knowledge through experience, but the entire series of the forms of finite or ordinary consciousness which are constitutive of knowledge as such. However, any appeal to conscious experience, qua subjective, is only the starting point of an inquiry into knowledge, and not an end. In other words, unlike transcendental argument, an inquiry into the reality of knowledge is not simply about establishing the norms and limits which apply to knowing "for us". Knowledge or science must also come to know how the various finite forms of ordinary consciousness are part of its own standpoint, and concomitantly how it is their outcome and truth. I have argued, accordingly, that the various finite forms of absolute knowledge, embodied in "sense-certainty", "perception", etc., represent the self-education of knowing to its own genuine principles, and that it thereby sheds its abstract character as a merely subjective standpoint. This is the idea which Hegel worked out in the Phenomenology of Spirit.

Thus, insofar as the various forms of finite consciousness are constituents of this process, they are not simply instances of a subject who has a certain vision of the world, to which certain norms and limits apply *a priori*. Likewise, phenomenology, as the dialectical exposition of this movement and outcome, is not a transcendental argument. That is to say, it is not an attempt to infer back from what experience is like to what the structure of the subject must be if this experience is to be possible.

The "Preface" and "Introduction" to the Phenomenology of Spirit make it clear that Hegel's goal is that point where the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity is actually no distinction. In pressing forward to its true existence, consciousness realizes that

its distinction from a world, existing independent and opposed to it, is in fact no distinction. At this point the elements of subjectivity and objectivity still exist, however they are not polarities (isolated terms), but rather are necessary moments within all knowledge. But this absolute standpoint can never emerge if we presuppose an original subject/object division between what things are and what they are "for us". Unlike Taylor, then, I do not see Hegel as trying to overcome dualism, in that his position does not rest upon an original distinction between our knowing and the world. The central distinction in the "Phenomenology" is between finite consciousness, where the opposition between what is "for us" and what is "in itself" remains, and absolute consciousness in which such an opposition is set aside.

Another way of understanding the difference between Hegelian phenomenology and transcendental argument is in what each seeks to accomplish. What is sought in transcendental argument is a principle of objectivity for self-conscious human reason itself. In Kant's work, to give an obvious example, transcendental argument is employed to determine how objectivity is constituted for the understanding within the context of the given phenomena of immediate experience. What the world is actually like, however, remains always problematical. Taylor, in construing "sense-certainty" as a transcendental argument, is carrying on the same procedure. In "sense-certainty", for example, the principle of objectification is determined to be the mediating instrument of universal concepts; that is to say, particular objects can only be present to us through the mediating influence of universal concepts. For both Kant and Taylor, though, knowledge is strictly a matter of human consciousness imposing its own form on what it comes to know. Correspondingly,

things are only what they are in the light of reflected reason, or as they are subjectively constituted. But as such, objects, and the world generally, are without significance and independent meaning. Subjectivity or reason, otherwise put, is not manifested in the actual world, and the world, accordingly, is very much something which is alien and other to consciousness.

Hegel, however, rejects any notion of an other which stands opposed and alien to consciousness. The stated goal of consciousness in the Phenomenology of Spirit is that point where it gets rid of its appearance of being burdened with something which is alien and other to it.[59] In other words, its ultimate goal is that point where the relationship of consciousness and its world is overcome, that is, where reason is an active principle in the world, and not simply subjective. And insofar as this is the ultimate goal of the Phenomenology of Spirit, science or philosophy depends upon this possibility as well. Hegel is quite clear on this point:

> *Pure* self-recognition in absolute otherness, this Aether *as such*, is the ground and soil of Science or *knowledge in general*. The beginning of philosophy presupposes or requires that consciousness should dwell in this its *element*.[60]

Thus, while Hegel recognizes, like all modern philosophy from Descartes on, that things must be understood in the light of the principles of subjective reason - i.e. what they are for thought, the above quote suggests that he also insists that this reason must discover itself in 'absolute otherness', in the world. Philosophical knowledge or science, in other words, is not merely knowledge of reason as such, but as it is actually manifested in the world. To the

extent that Hegel espouses this idea, the opening passages of the Phenomenology of Spirit are not an essay in transcendental argument.

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