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Hegel's Idealism as Radicalization of Kant¹

In Glauben und Wissen zollt Hegel Kants B-Deduktion Beifall. Es mag zunächst so ausgesehen haben, daß für Kant die räumliche und zeitliche Geformtheit unserer Sinnlichkeit unabhängig von der apperzeptiven Einheit ist. In der B-Deduktion wird jedoch deutlich, daß dem nicht so ist. Ich versuche deutlich zu machen, wie Kants Gedankenbewegung in der Deduktion Hegels Ideen nahe kommt, jedoch auch, inwiefern sie in Hegels Augen nicht gänzlich erfolgreich ist. Mein Ansatz ist von Robert Pippins Hegel-Darstellung inspiriert, der zufolge Hegels Theorie auf Kant aufbaut und gleichzeitig über Kant hinausgeht. Gleichwohl kritisiere ich am Ende einige Aspekte von Pippins Lesart.

1. Robert Pippin has urged that we should understand Hegel by appreciating how his thinking is both inspired by and critical of Kant.² I am going to sketch an approach to Hegel on these lines. To begin with, I shall simply appropriate Pippin's execution of that project. I shall note some divergences from Pippin towards the end.

2. In Hegel's view, Kant expresses a fundamental insight when he centres his account of the objective purport of experience on the transcendental unity of apperception. In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel writes (1976, p. 584; WL II, 221): "It is one of the profoundest and truest insights to be found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the *unity* which constitutes the nature of the *Notion* is recognized as the *original synthetic* unity of *apperception*, as the unity of the *I think*, or of self-consciousness." Pippin's reading of Hegel pivots on this passage, which he quotes at 1989, p. 18 and frequently harks back to.

Hegel is alluding to the first Critique's Transcendental Deduction.³ There, especially in the second-edition version (the "B Deduction"), Kant

¹ This is a lightly revised version of a paper that appeared in Italian as McDowell, 2003. I would have liked to revise it more drastically, especially towards the end. But Sebastian Rödl's paper was written as a response to the original version, and I have resisted the temptation to shift the target.

² See especially Pippin, 1989. I shall follow Pippin in focusing on Hegel's response to Kant's theoretical philosophy. I believe this does not preclude finding truth in the thought that Hegel's response to Kant cannot be fully understood without reconstructing his view of all three of Kant's Critiques, but I shall not try to substantiate that here.

³ The understanding of Kant, and especially of the B Deduction, that I shall express in this section and the next is the product of working through the first Critique with

almost achieves an idealism that is authentic by Hegel's lights. (Hegel puts the Deduction in this light in Hegel, 1977.)

Kant explains experience's possession of objective purport – its comprising what at least present themselves as intuitions, sensory states that are immediately of objects – in terms of the idea that intuitions are informed by the categories, the pure concepts of the understanding.⁴ In the so-called Metaphysical Deduction, the Clue to the Discovery of All Pure Concepts of the Understanding, he says (A79/B104-105): “The same function which gives unity to the various representations *in a judgment* also gives unity to the mere synthesis of various representations *in an intuition*; and this unity, in its most general expression, we entitle the pure concept of the understanding.” So another way of describing the Deduction is to say Kant explains the objective purport of experience in terms of its exemplifying logical unities that are characteristic of judging. About judging, Kant says (B141): “I find that a judgment is nothing but the manner in which given [cognitions] are brought to the objective unity of apperception. This is what is intended by the copula ‘is’. It is employed to distinguish the objective unity of given representations from the subjective.” It is through this connection between judging, apperception, and intuition that we can understand his claim, a couple of pages earlier (B139), in a section titled “The Objective Unity of Self-Consciousness”: “The transcendental unity of apperception is that unity through which all the manifold given in an intuition is united [into] a concept of the object. It is therefore entitled *objective* [...]”⁵ Instead of “concept” here, I think one might say “conceptually shaped awareness.”

From what I have said so far, it might seem that Kant undertakes to explain the objective purport of intuitions – their being immediately of objects – in terms of a supposedly antecedent understanding of the objective purport of judgment – its being answerable to its subject matter. That would leave a question about how to understand the supposed starting point of the explanation, the objective purport of judgment. But I think the idea is rather that by invoking the unity of apperception we enable our-

James Conant and John Haugeland, though they are of course not responsible for any defects in my presentation of it.

⁴ Intuitions, in the sense in which they are spoken of here, cannot stand opposed to concepts. Pippin (1989, p. 30) says that Kant, at B160, “takes back, in a sense, his strict distinction between intuition and understanding.” This risks being misleading. In the sense of “intuition” that is relevant to a remark such as the one in my text, there should never have even seemed to be such a strict distinction. (See Sellars, 1967, pp. 2-8, and the elaboration of Sellars in my 1998, especially pp. 451-470.) As we shall see, however, Pippin's point is different.

⁵ “Into” for Kemp Smith's “in”: the German is “in einen Begriff” (accusative), not “in einem Begriff” (dative). See Aquila, 1989, p. 136.

selves to make sense of the objective purport of intuitions and the objective purport of judgments *together*. The Deduction elaborates the idea of a subjectivity that is both intuitionally in touch with objective reality and able to make judgments about it. We are helped to make sense of its having each of those capacities by seeing it as also having the other. (For some elaboration of this, see my 1998.)

Why would this seem promising to Hegel? Judging is at the centre of the treatment of objective purport in general. And judging is making up one's mind about something. Making up one's mind is one's own doing, something for which one is responsible. To judge is to engage in free cognitive activity, as opposed to having something merely happen in one's life, outside one's control. This is the core of Kant's point when he describes the understanding – which is “the faculty of apperception” (B134n.) – in terms of *spontaneity*. See, e.g., A50/B74; and spontaneity is the main theme of the opening section of the B Deduction. (For a helpful treatment of relevant passages, see Pippin, 1997.)

Pippin sees the apperceptive character of judging as one case of a general truth, that taking oneself to be ϕ -ing (for a range of mentality-impling substitutions for “ ϕ ”) is partly constitutive of what it is to be ϕ -ing.⁶ I think this is correct for the kind of mentality Kant is concerned with. But it is best seen not as clearly acceptable in its general form, with the application to judging derived as a special case, but rather as owing its very justification to the case of judging. The general claim holds because the capacity to judge is essentially apperceptive, and is inextricably bound up with the capacity for any mental directedness towards the objective – for instance the capacity to have intuitions.

Kant sometimes writes as if any instantiation of the kind of unity that enables directedness at objects reflects *activity* on the part of apperceptive spontaneity. (See, e.g., B129-130.) But this is an overstatement. It requires him, awkwardly, to contemplate exercises of freedom that are unconscious. (See B130: “all combination, be we conscious of it or not, [...] is an act of the understanding.” Compare A78/B103: “Synthesis in general [...] is the mere result of the power of imagination, a blind but indispensable function of the soul, without which we should have no knowledge whatsoever, but of which we are scarcely ever conscious.”) What he needs is only that the kind of unity in question is the kind that is characteristic of judgment. Not all instances of that kind of unity need to be seen as resulting from free cognitive activity. Intuitions just happen, outside the control of their subjects. But their unity is intelligible only in the context of apperceptive spon-

⁶ See Pippin, 1989, p. 21: “my implicitly ‘taking myself’ to be perceiving, imagining, remembering, and so on is an inseparable component of what it is to perceive, imagine, remember, and so on.”

taneity.⁷ And it is this, rather than the mysterious idea that freedom is exercised in intuitions themselves, that underlies the correctness of saying that intuiting is like judging in being apperceptive, that intuitions are at least implicitly self-conscious.⁸

Kant's account of objective purport centres, then, on self-conscious intellectual activity. And it is obvious how this could seem to point towards a Hegelian idealism, according to which the very idea of objectivity is to be understood in terms of the freely self-determining operations of a self-conscious intelligence.

3. It is not just in the centrality it accords to judgment that Kant's Deduction comes close to a Hegelian idealism.

The B Deduction is framed to avoid a certain objection. Kant wants to establish that experience has its objective purport by virtue of being informed by the pure concepts of the understanding. The objection is that that ensures only thinkability. But a condition for objects to be thinkable is not thereby a condition for them to be capable of being given to our senses. Indeed (the objection goes on), the Transcendental Aesthetic has already supplied an independent condition for objects to be able to be given to our senses: they must be spatially and temporally ordered. For all Kant can show, objects could satisfy that condition for being present to our senses without conforming to the requirements of the understanding.⁹ We can re-

⁷ At 1989, p. 26, Pippin implies that subjects judge the content of their experience. (Even if we consider "a subject's experience of the 'internal flow' of his own mental states," we have to suppose, he says, that "such a subject is judging *that* such states are 'flowing' in that order.") This makes judging fundamental in a way that loses the possibility of using judgment and intuition to cast light on each other. The right point is just that the unity of intuitions is the same as the unity of possible judgments.

⁸ That is, *able* to be accompanied by the "I think" of apperception, though not necessarily accompanied by it (see B131). Note that for something to be implicitly self-conscious in the relevant sense, the "I think" must be in the subject's repertoire; the point of "implicitly" is just that it need not *actually* accompany every one of "my representations." Kant's point is not met if the very possibility of explicitly accompanying a "representation" with "I think" is yet to be provided for, in an explicitation such as is envisaged only in chapter 8 of Brandom, 1994. Whatever we have at the earlier stages of Brandom's progression, it is not even implicitly self-conscious in the relevant sense; that is, not apperceptive. Brandom claims a Kantian affiliation and a Hegelian inspiration, but in this respect – that he depicts a possibility of explicit self-consciousness as emerging after conceptuality has supposedly long been already on the scene, rather than being a condition for the presence of conceptuality at all – his thinking diverges radically from Kant, and precisely on a point on which Kant was a source of inspiration for Hegel, as the passage from the *Science of Logic* that I quoted at the beginning shows.

⁹ See A89-91/B122-123 (in the preamble to the Transcendental Deduction, common to both editions). This passage sets out a version of this stage of the potential objection, in the course of explaining why the task of a Transcendental Deduction (showing "how *subjective conditions of thought* can have *objective validity*") is so difficult.

fuse to count a state of a subject as an *intuition*, a case of having an object available for *cognition*, unless the state has categorial unity. But if we do not answer the objection, the requirement that intuitions have categorial unity looks like mere subjective imposition, superadded to the requirement for things to be present to our senses, and nothing to do with the things themselves. Here “the things themselves” means things as given to our senses. The objectivity that threatens to go missing from the idea of a categorially ordered world is the objectivity Kant wants, not what he seeks to reveal as a mirage, the idea of a taking in of things apart from the conditions of our taking things in at all. On these lines, the prospects look poor for the claim Kant is aiming at, that the pure concepts of the understanding have genuinely objective validity.

Kant organizes the B Deduction so as to forestall this objection. The essential move is to deny that the Transcendental Aesthetic offers an independent condition for objects to be given to our senses. We can connect the way our sensibility is formed, the topic of the Aesthetic, with the unity of space and time as (objects of) “formal intuitions” (B160n.). Those formal intuitions are cases of the combination of a manifold into a single intuition, and as such they come within the scope of the guiding principle Kant states at the beginning of the Deduction (B129-130). What he actually says there is that all combination, all representation of something as complex, results from activity on the part of apperceptive spontaneity. And as it stands, that is what I described as overstatement; I urged that intuitions are not outcomes of intellectual activity. But a corrected version of the claim will suit Kant's purpose just as well: no combination is intelligible except in a context that includes the ability to engage in free intellectual activity. Capacities that belong to apperceptive spontaneity are actualized in intuitions. That goes in particular for the pure intuitions of space and time. So the formedness of our sensibility, the topic of the Aesthetic, cannot after all be fully in view independently of apperceptive spontaneity. The unity constituted by conformity to the requirements of our sensibility, which is the unity of the pure formal intuitions of space and time, is not a separate unity, independent of the unity that consists in being informed by the categories.¹⁰ On these lines it seems, at least, that the objection does not arise, and Kant takes himself to be entitled to claim that the categories apply to “whatever objects may *present themselves to our senses*” (as, at B159, he puts what he

¹⁰ See B144-145, where Kant is setting out what he is going to do in the second part of the Deduction: “In what follows [...] it will be shown, from the mode in which [omitting Kemp Smith's “the”] empirical intuition is given in sensibility, that its unity [that of the mode in which empirical intuition is given in sensibility] is no other than that which the category [...] prescribes to the manifold of a given intuition in general.” He is going to argue that there is only one unity, common to the Aesthetic and the Analytic; not two separate and independent unities.

is going to show). He takes himself to have averted the threat that figured in the objection, that categorial requirements take on the look of mere subjective imposition.¹¹

The threat is that Kant's position is only a subjective idealism. Against this, he aims to show that the requirements of the understanding are not just subjective requirements but requirements on objects themselves. As he puts it at B138 (before he has finished entitling himself to this claim): "The synthetic unity of consciousness is [...] an objective condition of all knowledge. It is not merely a condition that I myself require in knowing an object, but is a condition under which every intuition must stand in order to become *an object for me*." Or, in the prefatory matter to the Principles of Pure Understanding (A158/B197): "the conditions of the *possibility of experience* in general are likewise conditions of the *possibility of the objects of experience* [...]." The requirements of the understanding first come into view as subjective conditions. That is the guise in which they appear when we conceive them as requirements of the understanding. But on reflection it is supposed to emerge that they are equally conditions on objects themselves. This conception, with its equipoise between subjective and objective, between thought and its subject matter, is – at least in aspiration – what Hegel would recognize as an authentic idealism.¹²

¹¹ See Pippin, 1989, pp. 27-31. This is the context in which Pippin makes the remark I cited in n. 4, that Kant here "takes back, in a sense, his strict distinction between intuition and understanding" (p. 30). My point there was that intuitions of empirical objects involve the understanding, in a way that the Deduction is aimed at making clear; in that sense there should not have seemed to be a "strict distinction." But the "strict distinction" Pippin means is not one that would be violated by supposing that understanding enters into the constitution of intuitions, but a distinction between the topics of the Aesthetic and the Analytic – between conditions on experience required because our knowledge is sensible and conditions required because our knowledge is discursive. And Kant's organization of his book – first the Aesthetic, then the Analytic – can certainly make it look (as he acknowledges in the footnote at B160-161) as if there are two independent sets of conditions, as if the pure intuitions of space and time are independent of the synthetic powers of the understanding. This is what Pippin means to say Kant "takes back." But rather than say Kant here takes something back, it would be more charitable to say he tells us he never intended to give such an appearance.

¹² One might be tempted to describe it as an objective idealism. But that phrase is well suited to characterize a counterpart to subjective idealism, which misses the Hegelian equipoise by conceiving its transcendental conditions as primarily objective, where subjective idealism conceives them as primarily subjective. In that role the phrase figures in Hegel's critical response to Schelling, and generally to the kind of idealism in which the real world is seen as an emanation from a world-soul; see Pippin, 1989, p. 61. The idealism of whose possibility Kant's Deduction gives a glimpse achieves genuine objectivity, but it is neither subjective nor objective.

4. So why is it no better than an aspiration? Why does Kant's conception not succeed in being the idealism, not merely subjective, that it aspires to be?

In the second part of the B Deduction, Kant extends into the terrain of the Transcendental Aesthetic conditions that first come into view as constitutive of spontaneous self-conscious thought. (See Pippin, 1989, p. 31, where Pippin speaks of Kant as "extending, or trying to extend, his account of conceptual conditions 'into' the manifold of intuition itself.") Kant's aim is to reveal thereby that that is only the guise in which such conditions first appear – that the conditions are objective no less than subjective.

But given how Kant conceives the role of sensibility in his picture, the extension into the terrain of the Aesthetic can reach only as far as the fact that our sensibility has forms, and not to the specific forms it has: its spatiality and temporality. The most Kant might be able to claim universally, about sensibility as such, is that any sensibility – at any rate any sensibility that partners a discursive intellect in yielding empirical knowledge – would allow the formation of pure intuitions, reflecting the way the sensibility is formed as the formal intuitions of space and time reflect the way our sensibility is formed. But in his picture it remains a sort of brute fact about us – given from outside to the unifying powers of apperceptive spontaneity, and not determined by their exercise (not even in the extended sense of being intelligible only in a context that includes their exercise) – that the pure intuitions that reflect the forms of our sensibility are intuitions of space and time.

In the Aesthetic, Kant tries to ground *a priori* knowledge on the way our sensibility is formed. But in view of the brute-fact character, as he depicts it, of the spatiality and temporality that our sensibility requires, which persists even after, in the B Deduction, he has done the most he can towards embracing those requirements within the scope of apperceptive spontaneity, it is problematic how he can conceive this knowledge as both *a priori* and genuinely objective. In representing those requirements as given from outside to the unifying powers of our apperceptive spontaneity, he makes it look like a kind of contingency that any world *we* can take in through our senses must be spatially and temporally ordered – even if he can say it is not a contingency that the world of any experience must be ordered in a way that fits the requirements of some sensibility or other. The harshest way to put this criticism is to say that though the Aesthetic purports to ground *a priori* knowledge that is objective, in the only sense we can make intelligible to ourselves, what it puts in place is indistinguishable from a subjectivistic psychologism.¹³ Whatever is the case with the requirements that reflect the

¹³ This is what Hegel famously says about Kant's idealism, in a much maligned section of his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. See Pippin, 1989, p. 264, n. 5, and the partial defence of Hegel he cites there, in his chapter 5.

discursiveness of our intellect (and we shall need to reconsider them), the requirements that reflect how our sensibility is formed – the requirements of spatial and temporal ordering – look like subjective imposition. Transcendental idealism, which is just this insistence that the apparent spatiality and temporality of our world derive from the way our sensibility is formed, stands revealed as subjective idealism.

And the rot spreads. Before we considered transcendental idealism in this light, Kant's extension of apperceptive unity into the territory of the Aesthetic seemed to forestall the objection that he cannot represent the requirements of the understanding as more than subjective imposition. But what seemed to be a demonstration that the pure concepts of the understanding have objective validity depends essentially on how *our* sensibility is formed. Kant makes this clear at B148-149: "The pure concepts of the understanding [...] extend to objects of intuition in general, be the intuition like or unlike ours, if only it be sensible and not intellectual. But this extension of [the] concepts beyond *our* sensible intuition is of no advantage to us. For as concepts of objects they are then empty, and do not enable us to judge of their objects whether or not they are possible. They are mere forms of thought, without objective reality, since we have no intuition at hand to which the synthetic unity of apperception, which constitutes the whole content of these forms, could be applied, and in being so applied determine an object. Only *our* sensible and empirical intuition can give to them [sense and meaning (*Sinn und Bedeutung*)]."

If we allow ourselves – as Kant encourages – to play with the idea of sensibilities formed otherwise than ours, we can suppose they would generate pure intuitions that reflect their ways of being formed as the formal intuitions of space and time reflect ours. And perhaps we can imagine that beings endowed with such sensibilities might construct their own transcendental deductions of the objective validity of categorial thinking, each exploiting – as Kant's Deduction does – the thought that the unity of the mode in which empirical intuition is given in their sensibility is no other than that which the category prescribes to the manifold of a given intuition in general (compare B144-5). But this fancy is no help when we set out to vindicate the objective validity of categorial thinking for ourselves. What that requires is averting the threat that categorial requirements turn out to be merely subjectively imposed on objects as they are given to *our* senses.

That was the threat that seemed to be averted when Kant noted that the unity of the formal intuitions of space and time is itself a case of the objective unity of apperception.

But now it appears that in the context of the transcendental ideality of space and time, the very idea of objects as they are given to our senses has to be seen as reflecting a subjective imposition. And if that is right, the most Kant can claim to have established is that there is no *extra* subjective im-

position involved in demanding that a world empirically knowable by us conform to the requirements of the understanding. But the subjective imposition that he thus shows we do not add to when we move from considering the requirements of sensibility to considering the requirements of the understanding – the subjective imposition involved in requiring a world knowable by us to be spatially and temporally ordered, as transcendental idealism has us conceive that requirement – infects the whole package of requirements. The Deduction seemed to show that what Kant brings into view in the first instance as requirements of the understanding, and so as subjective conditions, are equally also objective conditions, conditions on objects themselves. But that depends on its being acceptable to gloss “objects themselves” with “objects as they are given to our senses.” And if the relevant characteristic of objects as they are given to our senses – their being spatially and temporally ordered – reflects a subjective imposition, the promise of a proto-Hegelian equipoise between subjective and genuinely objective was illusory. Kant’s whole construction is dragged down, by the transcendental idealism about space and time that is at its foundation, into being a subjective idealism.

This makes it urgent to reconsider the idea that pertaining to things as they are given to our senses is as much objectivity as we can intelligibly want in requirements of the understanding. If there are conditions for it to be knowable by us how things are, it should be a truism that things are knowable by us only in so far as they conform to those conditions. And Kant wants it to seem that if we hanker after an objectivity that goes beyond pertaining to things as they are given to our senses, we are hankering after something that would violate that truism. But it is equally truisitic that a condition for things to be knowable by us must be a condition for a possibility of our *knowing* how things are. And if some putative general form for states of affairs is represented as a mere reflection of a fact about us, as the spatial and temporal order of the world we experience is by transcendental idealism, that makes it impossible to see the relevant fact about us as grounding a condition for our *knowing* any instance of that form. Transcendental idealism ensures that Kant cannot succeed in depicting the way our sensibility is formed as the source of a condition for things to be *knowable* by us.

By arguing that the requirements of the understanding pertain to things as given to our senses, Kant gives the appearance of showing that those requirements have objective validity. But it is after all not recognizable as objective validity, because the requirements credited to our sensibility are not recognizable as conditions for it to be *knowable* that things are spatially and temporally ordered thus and so. To say that the requirements of the understanding pertain to things as given to our senses is not, as Kant needs it to be, just another way of saying that the requirements of the understanding

pertain to things themselves, in the only construal we can intelligibly give to such a claim. Wanting a different conception of objectivity is not chafing at a supposed limitation imposed by the truism that things are knowable by us only in so far as they conform to the conditions of our knowing them. Kant handles what should be that truism so as to depict it as imposing a real limitation, as a truism could not do. According to transcendental idealism, our capacities to know things reach only so far, and beyond that boundary there is something we cannot know: whether things themselves are really spatially and temporally ordered. If we cannot know whether things themselves are really spatially and temporally ordered, that undermines the possibility of recognizing as knowledge the supposed knowledge we are supposed to be able to achieve within the boundary. That in turn ensures that the Deduction cannot succeed in vindicating a genuine objectivity for the requirements of the understanding.¹⁴

5. I may have seemed to be simply assuming that it would have been a good thing for Kant to achieve a Hegelian equipoise between subjective and objective. But my account of the debilitating consequences of his failure to do so should have dissolved any such appearance. Looking at Kant like this suggests that a successful critical idealism would have to be speculative in a Hegelian sense.

Kant's attempt to secure objective validity – pertinence to something we can genuinely conceive as objects themselves – for the requirements of the understanding founders because, although he manages to represent the unity of our formal intuitions, *qua* intuitions, as a case of a kind of unity that can be understood only in terms of its role in free intellectual activity, nevertheless something else remains outside. That is a way of putting the thesis that space and time are transcendently ideal.

We can conceive that “something else,” which Kant still conceives as given from outside to our apperceptive spontaneity, as the matter of our formal intuitions. Kant conceives that matter as having its own form, prior to the unity that informs the formal intuitions. It is because the pure matter of our outer sensibility is as it is, reflecting the formal character of our outer sensibility, that the result of unifying that matter into an intuition is a pure intuition of *space*. And similarly with our inner sensibility and the pure intuition of time.

¹⁴ It should be clear that this objection cannot be dismissed as depending on an unwarranted “two-worlds” reading of Kant on appearances and things in themselves. I have formulated the objection in a way that does not contradict Kant's identification of “things as objects of experience” with “those same things as things in themselves” (Bxxvii). That identification does nothing to dislodge the fact that Kant makes the spatial and temporal organization of things as objects of experience into a mere reflection of a fact about us.

What goes wrong in Kant's attempt at the equipoise is that the requirements that derive from the form of our sensibility are only partly embraced within the scope of the kind of unity effected by apperceptive spontaneity. The obvious conclusion is that nothing that enters into our ability to relate cognitively to objects must be left out. The insight that is fundamental to critical philosophy is that conditions for the possibility of our knowing things are not derived from independent conditions on things themselves. If we are to accommodate that insight while conceiving the conditions in such a way that they are genuinely recognizable as conditions of our knowing things, we need to bring the conditions entirely inside the sphere of free intellectual activity.¹⁵

From this viewpoint, we can see how Kant deserves the praise he receives from Hegel – for instance in the passage I quoted from the *Science of Logic* – for his reaching towards an idealism balanced between subjective and objective. That is what animates his attempt to put the objective unity of self-consciousness at the centre of his picture. But he is to be blamed – though no doubt not as severely as Hegel does – for not realizing that he cannot have what he aims at without bringing everything relevant to our ability to direct our minds at objects within the scope of the unity of spontaneous self-consciousness.

I hope the way I have let this conception emerge from considering Kant has done something towards making it conceivable that we need that Hegelian conception if we are to preserve Kant's critical insight. But if the idea is to be credible, it is crucial to stress that what I am criticizing Kant for leaving outside the scope of the unity of apperception is only what I have suggested we can conceive as the matter of our formal intuitions. The problem is not with Kant's conception of empirical intuitions. The problem arises because he frames that conception within the claim that space and time are transcendently ideal. A Kantian conception of empirical intuitions – intel-

¹⁵ Henry Allison usefully characterizes transcendental idealism in terms of a distinction between “conditions of the possibility of knowledge of things” and “conditions of the possibility of the things themselves.” See Allison, 1983, p. 13. Transcendental, or pre-critical, realism rejects the distinction by seeing conditions of the possibility of knowledge as derivative from autonomous conditions of the possibility of things. Allison's claim is that if we try to reject the distinction while retaining the basic critical thought that knowledge cannot be thus understood in terms of a pure passivity, we inevitably fall into a subjectivistic phenomenalism. But this reflects Allison's assuming that any attempt to reject the distinction while remaining critical could only be a symmetrical counterpart to transcendental realism, taking “subjective” conditions to be autonomous as such where transcendental realism takes “objective” conditions to be autonomous as such. What goes missing is the Hegelian alternative, which is inspired by how Kant wants to think of the requirements of the understanding: that the relevant conditions are inseparably both conditions on thought and conditions on objects, not primarily either the one or the other. See my remarks about Allison in 1994, p. 43, n. 18.

ligibly of objects by virtue of exemplifying unities of the kind characteristic of judgment – almost succeeds in showing how the very idea of objective purport can be understood in terms of free intellectual activity. (This is easier to see if we correct what I described as a tendency on Kant's part to overstate the extent of spontaneous *activity*.) What spoils things is that when we widen the picture to take in transcendental idealism, it turns out that the "objects" that we have contrived to see empirical intuitions as immediately of, thanks to the fact that the intuitions have a kind of unity that must be understood in terms of apperceptive spontaneity, are after all, in respect of their spatiality and temporality, mere reflections of another aspect of our subjectivity, one that is independent of apperceptive spontaneity. If we can contrive not to have transcendental idealism framing the picture, we are not subject to this disappointment. Discarding the frame is just what we need in order to arrive, at least from this angle, at a Hegelian radicalization of Kant. In the resulting picture, the objects of empirical intuitions are both genuinely objective and such that the very idea of our getting them in view requires an appeal to apperceptive spontaneity.

There is a temptation to accuse Hegel of reconstruing objective reality as a precipitate of utterly unconstrained movements of the mind, and to suppose that seeing the matter of our pure intuitions as external to the spontaneity of the understanding immunizes Kant against any such downplaying of the world's independence. (See, e.g., Friedman, 1996, especially at pp. 439-444.) But this is exactly the reverse of the truth. Kant frames his attempt to vindicate objective validity for the categories within transcendental idealism about space and time. And so far from ensuring a common-sense realism about objective reality, that is just what ensures that it is not really objective validity that he contrives to establish for the categories. The way to protect the common-sense conception of empirically accessible reality as independent of us, while retaining the critical insight, is precisely to see our way to discarding that frame.

This is important for a feature of Hegel's relation to Kant that I have not so far mentioned: his rejection of the sharp boundary between understanding and reason. In Kant understanding is conditioned by sensibility, whereas reason is unconditioned. Now the conditionedness in question is the very thing that spoils Kant's attempt at a non-subjective idealism. What it means to say, in this context, that understanding is conditioned by sensibility is precisely that the scope of apperceptive spontaneity does not include the matter that is united into our formal intuitions of space and time. The point is not about the way empirical thinking is beholden to the independent reality disclosed in experience. That is not, just as such, an infringement on the freedom of apperception. It constitutes what we might conceive, rather, as the medium in which that freedom is exercised. Hegelian talk of the pursuit of knowledge as the unconditioned activity of reason rejects the frame in

which Kant puts his attempt at such a conception, not the conception itself. Such Hegelian talk does not manifest “a tendency to distance rational thought from sensible experience and to minimize the empiricist elements in Kant’s own conception.”¹⁶

6. I have followed Pippin in considering the B Deduction, and in particular its second part, as a Kantian inspiration for Hegel. But I have diverged from some aspects of Pippin’s treatment. I hope saying something about this will sharpen the picture. I shall consider two main issues.

First, Pippin does not isolate the specific reason why the Deduction fails – the fact that for Kant the matter that is united into our formal intuitions cannot be embraced within the scope of apperceptive spontaneity. By the same token, he does not pinpoint how the Deduction almost succeeds.

He rightly singles out the attempt to extend the unity of apperception into the sphere of the Aesthetic as Kant’s closest approach to a Hegelian position. But he does not make the crucial point that the extension can embrace only the unity that constitutes the form of our pure intuitions. Rather, he considers the extension, without specifying its limits, as a proto-Hegelian *lapse* on Kant’s part from his more characteristic position.¹⁷ And he sees the results of this supposed lapse, taken all together, as if they exemplified an idealism that ought to be, just as such, congenial to Hegel. Thus, when he defends the claim that the tendency of the Deduction is idealistic, what he points to is the fact that, according to Kant’s own claims for it, the Deduction shows objective validity for the categories only in relation to objects of human experience.¹⁸

But in the first place, the extension of apperceptive unity to include the unity of our pure intuitions is not a lapse. It is, as Kant sees, crucial to such success as the Deduction can claim. It is not inconsistent with the Aesthetic.

¹⁶ Friedman, 1996, p. 440. Of course I do not deny that rejecting the frame, and hence making room to see the pursuit of knowledge as the unconditioned activity of reason, has substantial consequences for Kant’s outlook. Notably, objective validity for “ideal” requirements can spread into the terrain of the Transcendental Dialectic of the first Critique. Requirements that Kant can see only as regulative – as meeting subjective needs of ours rather than characterizing objective reality itself – can be seen as objectively valid. See Pippin, 1989, p. 68.

¹⁷ See the passage at Pippin, 1989, p. 30, which I discussed in earlier notes. Compare p. 37: “If [...] Hegel is right that Kant’s own case for the apperceptive condition of any possible experience undercuts his strict separation between concept and intuition, [...]”

¹⁸ See Pippin, 1989, p. 32; and (particularly disquieting) p. 267, n. 23, where Pippin argues that the Deduction’s reliance on pure intuitions “necessarily idealizes the argument.” The thrust of that note is that the Deduction involves a commitment to *transcendental* idealism. But if I am right, that is exactly why it goes wrong in Hegel’s view, not a way of identifying the feature of it that will have struck Hegel as pointing in the right direction.

At most it corrects a misleading impression that could have been given by the fact that Kant starts with the Aesthetic. (He has to start somewhere.)

And, in the second place, the idealism involved in claiming objective validity for the categories only in relation to objects of human experience is the idealism of the whole package. As I have urged, it degenerates into subjective idealism because of the transcendental idealism about the matter of our formal intuitions that persists even when Kant corrects the impression that their unity is independent of apperception. This is exactly not an idealism Hegel would applaud. To find the germ of a Hegelian idealism in the Deduction, we have to note, as Pippin does not, the limits of Kant's extension of apperception into the territory of the Aesthetic. That is what opens up the prospect of a proper idealism, achievable by overcoming those limits.

Hegel claims in "Glauben und Wissen" that the "inner unity" of the activity of the transcendental imagination, for Kant, "is no other than the unity of the intellect [*Verstand*] itself" (Hegel, 1977, p. 89). Pippin says this "would provoke a vigorous denial by Kant." In spite of the B Deduction passage Hegel approves of, Pippin says, "the predominant Kantian position is clearly that the intellect *cannot* produce unity within experience 'on its own,' that the form and matter of intuition are required" (1989, p. 77). This belongs with Pippin's suggestion that the near success of the Deduction depends on a lapse from Kant's basic thinking, in a Hegelian direction. But as I have insisted, the extension of apperceptive unity to the unity of the pure intuitions is quite consistent with Kant's basic thinking. And, given how transcendental imagination figures in the second part of the B Deduction (in a way that culminates in the claim that the unity of the formal intuitions of space and time is a case of the apperceptive unity that characterizes intuitions in general), Hegel's remark, so far from being something Kant would deny, is a close paraphrase of Kant's own programme for the second part of the Deduction – to show that the unity of "the mode in which empirical intuition is given in sensibility" (which he goes on to spell out in terms of the activity of the transcendental imagination) "is no other than that which the category [...] prescribes to the manifold of a given intuition in general" (B144-145). Of course matter is required for any instance of such a unity, but Kant's hopeful thought is that the unity belongs to form – including the unity of the formal intuitions of space and time, which is "produced" by transcendental imagination. This is the very reason the Deduction comes as close as it does to succeeding. Here Hegel reads Kant more perceptively than Pippin does.

Pippin's unfortunate focus on the whole package, instead of isolating transcendental idealism as the ingredient that spoils it, is reflected in his describing the "transcendental skepticism" to which Kant is vulnerable and which Hegel must avoid in such terms as this (1989, p. 277, n. 1): "since the phenomenal world was 'conditioned' by our conceptual scheme, had we a

different scheme, there would be a different (phenomenal) world; hence the thing-in-itself problem." But Kant's idealism degenerates into subjective idealism not because of relativity to "our conceptual scheme" but because it contains a subjective idealism about spatiality and temporality, a subjective idealism that reflects their being conceived precisely as external to apperceptive unity, and so external to anything one could call a "conceptual scheme."

At B145 Kant calls the need for categorial unity "a peculiarity of our understanding." Pippin cites this (1989, p. 33) as if it puts the requirements of the understanding on a level in Kant's picture with those that derive from the way our sensibility is formed. But the context makes it clear that Kant means a peculiarity of our understanding *qua* discursive, finite, dependent on sensibility – not *qua*, specifically, human.

The point here can perhaps be expressed by means of an admittedly difficult counterfactual: by Hegelian lights, Kant's Deduction would have worked if Kant had not attributed brute-fact externality to the spatial and temporal form of our sensibility. In that case, the Deduction would have succeeded in showing how what first comes into view in the guise of the capacity of a finite understanding can be reconceived as the unlimited freedom of reason.

7. I can work into my second divergence from Pippin by reverting to the suggestion that Kant's Deduction points towards a proper idealism, which would be achieved by overcoming the limits in Kant's extension of apperceptive spontaneity into the territory of the Aesthetic. In these terms, the needed alteration to Kant is in one way quite simple, though of course very far-reaching. I do not believe Pippin's conception of Hegel's commitments, as inheritor of a Kantian legacy, fits well into this picture.

Pippin notes that a Hegelian understanding of the objectivity of conceptual determinations, arrived at through appreciating how Kant's approach is nearly but not quite successful, can have no place for an analogue to Kant's Schematism or the second part of the B Deduction (1989, p. 38). But he takes it that the descendant of Kantian categories, in this new environment, is Hegelian Notions (plural), which stand to ordinary empirical concepts in a descendant of the relation in which Kantian categories stand to ordinary empirical concepts (see 1989, p. 258, and p. 305, n. 6). This belongs with the fact that he repeatedly glosses Hegelian talk of the self-determination of the Notion in terms of a development undetermined by experience (see 1989, pp. 93, 100, 145, 146, 250). This strand in Pippin's reading culminates in the suggestion that, even after the *Logic*, Hegel has an "unresolved problem" of specifying the distinction between Notions and ordinary concepts: "So many [...] concepts are clearly as they are because the world is as it is, and cannot possibly be considered categorial results of thought's pure self-determination, that Hegel's project cries out for a more explicit, clear-cut account of when and why we should regard our fundamental ways of taking things

to be 'due' wholly to us, in the relevant Hegelian sense."¹⁹ And it belongs with this that according to Pippin Hegel has a "problem of 'returning' to the empirical world," a reappearance of "Kant's infamous *Übergang* problem" (1989, p. 259).

But if we see Hegel's idealism as the result of changing Kant's outlook only as required in order to overcome the limits in his extension of the scope of apperceptive spontaneity, this suggestion of undischarged obligations looks unwarranted.

The picture is rather on these lines. "The Notion" (singular) is conceptuality as such, properly understood. Conceptuality as such is categorial, in a more or less Kantian sense that we can gloss in terms of apperceptive spontaneity. Conceptual capacities are essentially such as to be exercised in judgment. Hegelian talk of "the Notion" does not allude to special non-empirical concepts about which an issue would arise about how they relate to ordinary empirical concepts. That is just what goes wrong in Kant's treatment of the idea of the categorial; it is because Kant sees things like this that he needs to appeal to something external to apperception in the second part of the B Deduction and the Schematism.²⁰

Talk of "the free movement of the Notion" fits, for instance, the evolution of empirical inquiry. (This is the right instance to begin with if we approach Hegelian thinking from Kant's Deduction.) And empirical inquiry is guided by experience. Kant already almost incorporates experience, as a guide for empirical inquiry, within the freedom of apperceptive spontaneity. As I suggested earlier, if he had not treated the spatial and temporal form of our sensibility as a brute-fact externality, he could have depicted the independent layout of the world we experience as the medium within which the freedom of apperceptive spontaneity is exercised. With the shift that takes us from Kant to Hegel, we can say that the spatiality and temporality of our experience are no more an infringement on the freedom of apperception than are the specifics of the spatial and temporal layout of the world as we experience it, in the conception Kant almost manages. And now the conception Kant almost manages is genuinely available to us.²¹

¹⁹ Pippin, 1989, p. 258. Pippin suggests that a "table of Notions" (transcendentally argued for, rather than just borrowed from the existing state of logic, as Hegel complains Kant's "table of categories" is) would meet this need.

²⁰ At 1989, p. 211, Pippin writes, in connection with Book II of the *Logic*, of "a conflation of an argument for the necessity of 'mediation' in general (conceptual activity, *überhaupt*) with a case for *essential* mediation, the determinate categorial conditions required for there to be determinate 'thought objects'." On the interpretation I am urging, this is not a conflation but a way of making the needed alteration to Kant. The idea that there are two separate topics here is a vestige of the Kantian conception of the categorial.

²¹ At 1989, p. 105, Pippin writes, in connection with the *Phenomenology*: "Clearly, [Hegel] cannot be talking about *any* concept used in knowledge claims when he re-

Here again, Hegelian rhetoric can give the impression that he is representing reality as a precipitate of wholly unconstrained movements of the mind. I have tried to discourage that impression with the image of a medium within which freedom is exercised. What figures in Kant as the receptivity of sensibility does not disappear from the scene, but is reconceived as a “moment” in the free self-determination of reason.²² If we see things like this, there should not seem to be an *Übergang* problem. There should not seem to be a need to “return” from the standpoint of Absolute Knowledge to the empirical world. The standpoint of Absolute Knowledge is a standpoint at which we understand that the pursuit of objectivity is the free unfolding of the Notion. It is not a standpoint at which we have somehow removed ourselves from the empirical world. If the case of the pursuit of objectivity that we are considering is empirical inquiry, we are already engaged with the empirical world in enjoying Absolute Knowledge.²³

It is important to be clear – as perhaps Hegel himself is not – that experience as I am speaking of it here, with guidedness by experience conceived as a “moment” in the free unfolding of the Notion in empirical inquiry, is not experience as it figures in the *Phenomenology*. There we have a series of attempted conceptions of mindedness, the progression through

fers to the necessary inherence of the Notion in consciousness. The enterprise of the *PhG* cannot be to show that our doubts about the objectivity of any concept can be overcome.” This last claim is obviously right. But it does not follow that talk of the Notion cannot be talk of conceptuality as such. Doubts about the objectivity of this or that concept are addressed within what consciousness, in the *Phenomenology*, is taught to conceive as the free unfolding of the Notion. The business of the *Phenomenology* is to educate consciousness into conceiving the pursuit of objectivity in those terms, not to anticipate the results of the activity that we are to conceive in those terms. (Except perhaps in the second-level application to itself that I consider later.)

²² Pippin gives expression to this conception in at least two places. At 1989, p. 68, he describes the Hegelian rethinking of Kant’s distinction between reason and understanding by saying: “[...] reason’s ‘self-legislation,’ as Kant called it, can be viewed as constitutive of the possibility of objects if [...] it can be shown that what Kant thought was an independent intuitive condition was itself a moment of Reason’s self-determination.” Again, at p. 87 he speaks of “Hegel’s assertion that receptivity must be considered as somehow a moment in a subject’s progressive self-understanding.” These passages strike me as fundamentally right. I do not see how Pippin squares them with the idea that the unfolding of the Notion is not guided by experience. That idea looks like a vestige of the Kantian reflective dualism that spoils the Transcendental Deduction.

²³ At 1989, p. 246, Pippin suggests that “self-consciousness about the spontaneity of Notional determination [...] appears to be the *extent* of [Hegel’s] resolution.” I think that is exactly right. What I am objecting to is Pippin’s thought that such a “resolution” leaves work to be done, on the lines of coming up with a “table of Notions.” – I say there *should* not seem to be an *Übergang* problem, or a problem of returning to the empirical world, because it is not clear that Hegel gets his own drift clear enough to be definitely immune to such problems. But my claim is that if we see his enterprise in the light I am recommending, he need have no such problems.

which is supposed to reveal finally that what they are attempted conceptions of is properly conceived as the free movement of the Notion. “Experience” is a label for what befalls these attempted conceptions, successively found unacceptable by their own lights in a way that propels “consciousness,” the recipient of the *Phenomenology’s* education, into improvements. If this is a case of the free movement of the Notion, it is at a second level: the free movement of the Notion of the Notion. The *Phenomenology* educates “consciousness” into seeing its *ordinary* intellectual activity (theoretical and practical) as the free movement of the Notion, by chronicling a series of, as we might put it, efforts on the part of the Notion to come to explicitness, as that whose free movement ordinary intellectual activity is. Perhaps at the second level we can see this philosophical journey as itself a case of the pursuit of objectivity – objectivity about the pursuit of objectivity – and so apply its results to itself. But it is a good idea to avoid conflating the levels.²⁴

8. As I said, this angle on Hegelian thinking points to a way of arriving at it that is in one sense very simple: just eliminate the externality that vitiates Kant’s Deduction. Of course, as the lengths I have needed to go to indicate, such a move cannot be executed in as short a space as it takes to describe it. In any case, for whatever reasons, Hegel does not give a presentation that starts from Kant. But there is reason to think a route from Kant’s Deduction is at least one course Hegel’s thinking takes; here I follow Pippin, even if I dissent from him over the details of the route. This recommends keeping in mind the “simple” route to a Hegelian position as we try to understand the more complex progressions Hegel himself offers.²⁵

²⁴ “Experience” reveals each of the successive conceptions, short of Absolute Knowledge, as inadequate by its own standards. Pippin registers, at 1989, p. 106, the essential point here, that each of these efforts at conceptions of objectivity embodies its own criterion of objectivity. This makes mysterious, at least to me, his procedure on the next page (one of the places where he gets Notions, in the plural, into the picture), where he argues that “the question of the adequacy of any potential Notion [...] can only be understood relative to other possible Notions.” As far as I can see, the question of adequacy always arises, in the experience of “consciousness” at a given stage, from within a candidate conception of objectivity, which emerges as inadequate in the light of *its own* criterion. There is no need for this invocation of relativity to other conceptions of objectivity. Pippin goes on (p. 107): “Such a Notion is necessary for there to be experience; there *is* experience, and the question of legitimacy thus can only arise relative to other possible Notions.” But this use of “experience” (meaning experience of ordinary objects) is what I am urging is foreign to the *Phenomenology*. There is no need to *assume* that there is the experience that is relevant to the *Phenomenology*. It happens in the course of philosophical reflection.

²⁵ The destination of the “simple” route looks much like what I set out in my 1994 (as improved and corrected by my 1998). Wolfgang Carl suggested (in conversation) that what I presented in my 1994 was what a Strawsonian reading of Kant’s Transcendental Deduction should have looked like, whereas what Strawson offers as a reading of the Deduction is a better fit, in aim and orientation, to the Refutation of Idealism.

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(See Strawson, 1966.) I had already suggested (p. 111) that Strawson's Kant, who was my Kant in that work, was closer to Hegel than Kant. – In Brandom, 1999, Brandom gives a very different picture of Hegelian thinking. He cites the passage from the *Science of Logic* that I began with (p. 168), and claims to be following Pippin's lead as I have (p. 183 n. 9). But Brandom's own thinking is remote from Kant's in just the respects that the "simple" route exploits. He undertakes to recast Kant's thinking about spontaneity and receptivity in a way that omits the very idea of intuitions, conceived as episodes in sensory consciousness that are directly of objects. See Brandom, 1994, pp. 712-713, n. 10, and see chapter 4 for Brandom's attempt to do without intuitions. Unsurprisingly, then, Brandom's reading of Hegel does not make contact with the details of what happens in the B Deduction. In spite of Brandom's claim to take off from Pippin, he does not follow the methodological recommendation I state in the text.