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THE FAILURE OF DESIRE:
A CRITIQUE OF KANTIAN COGNITIVE AUTONOMY
IN HEGEL'S *PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT*

by

REBECCA HARRISON

Under the Direction of Sebastian Rand

ABSTRACT

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Immanuel Kant offers a revolutionary approach to cognition, wherein cognition can be understood as an action carried out by a cognitive agent. But giving the subject such an active role raises questions about Kant's ability to account for objective cognition. In this paper, I will argue that the cognitive autonomy thesis central to Kant's model renders it unable to account for the normativity required for objective cognition, and that G.W.F. Hegel makes just this criticism in the Desire section of his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel proposes an alternative: some basic intersubjective structure must be built into cognition on a fundamental level. For Hegel, the possibility of disagreement is an *a priori* requirement for objective cognition in general.

INDEX WORDS: Kant, Hegel, Cognition, Autonomy, Intersubjectivity, Normativity, Desire

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REBECCA HARRISON

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2013

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Hegel, <i>Phenomenology of Spirit</i>	Hegel, PhG
Kant, <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i>	Kant I
Kant, <i>Critique of Practical Reason</i>	Kant II
Kant, <i>Critique of the Power of Judgment</i>	Kant III

INTRODUCTION

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Immanuel Kant outlines a revolutionary approach to cognition. Rather than conceiving of cognition as a passive reception of information from the outside world, Kant argues that we must think of cognition as an *activity* carried out by the subject.¹ For Kant, the cognitive subject is actively engaged in the constitution of the content of its own cognition – cognition is a creative act over which the subject is authoritative and for which the subject is responsible.² So, on Kant’s view, if we want to know about objects, we should inquire into what kinds of cognitive structures one would need in order to come to think about objects in the ways that we do.³

¹ For example, Kant defines “synthesis,” the most basic function of cognition, as “the action of putting different representations together with each other and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition” (Kant I, B103) and “an action of the understanding” (Kant I, B130). In a more vivid example, he remarks that objects of the senses “[awaken] the cognitive faculty into exercise” (Kant I, B1).

² Significantly, Kant remarks that the understanding might be “the originator of the experience in which its objects are encountered” (Kant I, A94/B127). The word for “originator” here, *Urheber*, could also be translated as “author” – and in fact is so translated in Gregor’s *Groundwork*, e.g. “Thus the will is not just subject to the law, but subject in such a way that it must also be viewed as *self-legislating*, and just on account of this as subject to the law (of which it can consider itself the **author**) in the first place” [emphasis added] (Kant, *Groundwork* IV:431.20).

³ Kant exhorts us to “try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition” (Kant I, Bxvi).

According to Kant, all human cognition is *conceptual* cognition,⁴ by which he means that the cognitive activity by which the subject constitutes its objects is a norm-governed activity: the synthesis of the manifold of intuition requires a concept to act as a rule for that synthesis.⁵ But in order to see how this kind of norm-governed activity can produce *objective* cognition – cognition that can get beyond mere subjective dispositions and put us in touch with the world – we need something more, something that can provide justification for cognitive activities in accordance with concepts. The threat of subjectivism looms large for Kant, who remarks that one of the main problems for his project will be to show how “subjective conditions of thinking should have objective validity.”⁶ Kant’s answer to this problem will be to show that there are structural features of subjectivity – rules for cognition inherent to the subject – that are necessary and universal.⁷ If this is so, according to Kant, such features can be considered conditions for the possibility of cognition in general, and hence would be applicable to any possible object.

It is not clear that Kant is successful in this endeavor. In order to bring properly objective cognition into view, Kant needs to provide an account of cognitive

⁴ “The cognition of every, at least human, understanding is a cognition through concepts, not intuitive but discursive” (Kant I, B93).

⁵ Concepts involve “functions” that consist of “the action of ordering different representations under a common one” (Kant I, B93), and are made use of by the understanding, which Kant refers to as “the faculty of rules” (Kant I, A126). Elsewhere he remarks that, for example, the concept of cause “signifies a particular kind of synthesis” (Kant I, B122/A90).

⁶ Kant I, B122

⁷ These rules are the *categories*, which Kant calls “original pure concepts of synthesis that the understanding contains in itself *a priori*” (Kant I, A80/B106).

norms that shows how we could be said to “get it right” or “get it wrong” when engaged in Kantian conceptual cognition. Although the rules Kant takes to be essential to subjectivity are supposed to be universal to all cognitive subjects, they are nonetheless conceived of as *a priori* principles inherent to each individual subject. Commentator Paul Guyer refers to this component of Kant’s model as the “cognitive autonomy” of the Kantian subject.⁸ In this paper, I will argue that the notion of cognitive autonomy central to Kant’s model of cognition results in a failure to account for the kind of normativity required for objective cognition – and that G.W.F. Hegel makes just this sort of criticism in the “Desire” section of his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. According to Hegel, I will argue, the cognitive autonomy characteristic of the Kantian model of cognition fails to appreciate the deep importance of intersubjectivity for cognitive norms, and the possibility of *disagreement* among different subjects is an *a priori* requirement for objective cognition in general.

In furtherance of this argument, I will provide an interpretation of both Kant and Hegel that draws out the way in which Hegel responds to certain failures he perceives in Kant’s account of cognition. First, I will give a brief summary of Kant’s cognitive model in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, with particular attention to his argument for the objective validity of the categories, and the way in which this objective validity is to underwrite conceptual cognition.⁹ Then, I will argue that

⁸ Guyer 2006, 72.

⁹ My exposition of Kant’s text will largely follow that of commentators Terry Pinkard and Robert Pippin.

Hegel's discussion of "Desire" in the Self-Consciousness section of the *Phenomenology* constitutes a criticism of Kant's model, specifically insofar as Kant's reliance on the notion of cognitive autonomy renders his model unable to account for the normativity necessary for objective cognition. Finally, I will argue that the ensuing "Struggle to the Death" in the same section of Hegel's *Phenomenology* provides a preview of how Hegel thinks this problem can be resolved. Namely, Hegel argues that "self-consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness"¹⁰ that the normativity required for objective cognition can only enter the picture given the possibility of disagreement from other subjects. Thus, some conception of intersubjectivity must be built into cognition on a fundamental level. Furthermore, this solution should not be read as an extension of a basically Kantian project,¹¹ but as a radical restructuring of the cognitive model. For Hegel, to have objective cognition is to be in some way beholden to one another, not as a consequence but as a defining feature.

¹⁰ Hegel, PhG §175

¹¹ As Pippin and Pinkard would have it see the end of the "Struggle" section of this paper for this argument.

I. KANT

1. *Conceptual Cognition*

Cognition, on Kant's account, requires two components jointly: intuition and concepts.¹² Intuition consists of content provided to us through the simple reception of information. This reception is possible in virtue of the faculty Kant calls "sensibility," i.e., "the capacity (receptivity) to acquire representations through the way in which we are affected by objects."¹³ In other words, intuition provides us with the "stuff" for cognition. But this bare content alone is unable to provide us with fully fledged cognition. Within such representations, there lies a "manifold" of information — a manifold which, considered apart from the conditioning influence of *concepts*, is unintelligible. The manifold of intuition taken by itself cannot be said to represent anything -- indeed, it is difficult to conceive of what such a manifold could be like without the organization given to it in virtue of concepts.¹⁴ In order to make sense of the content given in intuition, the manifold must be *synthesized* in virtue of the relevant concepts.¹⁵

¹² See Kant I, A50/B74: "Intuition and concepts therefore constitute the elements of all our cognition, so that neither concepts without intuition corresponding to them in some way nor intuition without concepts can yield a cognition."

¹³ Kant I, A19/B33

¹⁴ Famously, "intuitions without concepts are blind" (Kant I, A51/B75).

¹⁵ Pinkard remarks, "Our sensory intuitions become representations *of* objects of nature only by being combined with non-intuitive conceptual forms" (Pinkard 2002, 34).

A *concept*, therefore, is that in virtue of which a manifold of intuition is synthesized, and only through this synthesis can the manifold come to be unified in an object of cognition.¹⁶ The otherwise disorganized “stuff” of intuition – the information presented to us through sensibility – becomes intelligible only in virtue of its being organized conceptually. While receiving intuitional content is essentially a passive affair – it “rest[s] on affections” – concepts can be thought of as rules for a certain kind of cognitive action, or “the unity of the action of ordering different representations under a common one.”¹⁷ Concepts serve as rules for the synthesis of the manifold of intuition, principles in virtue of which we actively bring together and organize the disparate elements of the manifold such that we can have objects of cognition.

The conclusion Kant draws from this characterization of concepts is that the use of concepts, unlike the passive receptivity of the intuition, is “grounded on the spontaneity of thinking.”¹⁸ That is, the synthesis of the manifold should be thought of as a kind of *action* done by the cognizing subject in accordance with certain rules. Summarizing the Kantian view, Terry Pinkard writes, “Having a concept is more like having an ability – an ability to combine representations according to certain norms than it is like having any kind of internal mental state.”¹⁹ For Kant, cognition is a

¹⁶ This is a rephrasing of Kant’s own definition of an *object*, viz. “that in the concept of which the manifold of a given intuition is united” (Kant I, B137).

¹⁷ Kant I, A68/B93

¹⁸ Kant I, A68/B93.

¹⁹ Pinkard 2002, 32.

doing, an action that consists of bringing what is passively provided by the intuition to the rule-governed synthesizing activity of the thinking subject. Thus, objects as such and cognition in general depend deeply upon the concept-guided activity of the cognizing subject.

Along with Pinkard, I take it that the Kantian conceptual cognizer should be thought of as an entity dramatically different from an observer passively receiving empirical information from the outside world. Instead, Kant envisions the human mind as *actively constituting* its experience in cognition.²⁰ Kant reinforces this interpretation of his point in his criticism of Hume, remarking that Hume did not consider that “perhaps the understanding itself, by means of these concepts, could be the originator of the experience in which its objects are encountered.”²¹ In other words, the cognitive subject should be thought of as the *author* of its conceptual cognition,²² in much the same way that the *Groundwork*’s agent is the “author” of its law-governed action.

²⁰ Pippin remarks, “[For Kant,] consciousness itself must be understood as a discriminating, unifying activity, paradigmatically as judging, and not as the passive recorder of sensory impressions” (Pippin 2011, 6). Pinkard also writes, “Kant’s line of thought first of all implied that the mind cannot be understood as merely a passive entity of any sort; in becoming aware of the objects of experience, we do not merely passively see or hear something, nor do we stand merely in any kind of causal relation to an object; our cognitive relation to objects is the result of the *active* stance we take toward them by virtue of the way in which we *combine* the various elements (intuitive and conceptual) in our experience” (Pinkard 2002, 34).

²¹ Kant I, A94/B127.

²² Recall our earlier remark in ft. 2 regarding “*Urheber*,” and its use in the *Groundwork* at IV:431.20.

However, this characterization of the relationship between the subject and the objects of its cognition raises some serious concerns. If Kant cannot provide an argument or explanation for how his model can also account for the possibility of *objective* claims, or more generally, how the cognizing subject actually gets a grip on the world, he will be open to certain varieties of skepticism and perhaps even accusations of solipsism. We have already mentioned that Kant asserts that there is nothing external – that is, nothing that can be given in intuition – that can provide us with the kind of organizational principles necessary for cognition. Because the “stuff” of intuition provides only bare content and not the rules for the organization of such content when considered apart from the subject’s conceptualizing activity, we cannot somehow obtain such rules from intuition. While we do clearly have empirical concepts (i.e., concepts informed by content given in sensibility), the sorts of organizational principles that make it possible for us to recognize the kinds of empirical regularities that inform empirical concepts cannot themselves be generated by anything external. Thus, our empirical concepts are parasitic on some non-empirical (or “pure”) cognitive rules. There is nothing “in the world,” taken independently of the cognizing subject, that requires us to combine any particular impressions on our sensibility in one way rather than another. So, what guarantees that we *do* synthesize our intuitions in such a way that we can get a grip on the world?

2. *Apperception and Objectivity*

Perhaps the central claim of the Transcendental Deduction is that there are pure *a priori* concepts, and that these concepts can and necessarily do ground all our cognition and make objective judgments possible. For Kant, objects synthesized in cognition in accordance with the categories should not be the product of merely subjective dispositions. Instead, Kant intends to show that the cognition of such objects is grounded in universal cognitive norms, norms which inhere in the cognizing subject but which nonetheless make *objective* judgment possible.²³

We can begin to understand Kant's argument in more detail by considering the role of the categories in Kant's theory of cognition. While concepts serve as rules for the synthesis of intuitions, categories are rules for the synthesis of concepts.²⁴ Importantly, the categories are what make *judgment* possible, insofar as they are the primitive rules by which concepts can be connected to each other.²⁵ So, Kant's immediate answer to the question of what ensures our correct use of first-order

²³ See Kant I, B167-B168, in which Kant advocates against a view that construes the categories as "subjective predispositions for thinking" rather than objectively valid.

²⁴ The categories are rules for the activity of conceptual cognizers, or "rules for an understanding whose entire capacity consists in thinking" (Kant I, B145). Pierre Keller refers to the categories as "metarules," since they can be thought of as something like second-order concepts (Keller 1998, 55).

²⁵ "The categories are nothing other than these very functions for judging, insofar as the manifold of a given intuition is determined with regard to them" (Kant I, B143). Guyer comments, "The ways in which we must structure our concepts of objects in order to make judgments about them are the pure concepts of the understanding, or the categories" (Guyer 2006, 75).

concepts – that is, how it is that basic judgments such as “X is P” are possible – is that such use is conducted in accordance with the categories.

Of course, this does not completely solve the problem of providing justification for conceptual cognition: the demand for justification can be pushed back onto the categories themselves. The motivating question behind the Transcendental Deduction can be thought of in the following way: *By what right* can and do we make use of the categories?²⁶ The issue at hand in the question of our *right* to the categories is just how to make it unequivocally clear that Kant’s model of cognition can avoid the threat of subjectivism, and the aforementioned skeptical complaints along with it. That is, Kant must be able to resist subjectivism while also maintaining the central feature of his model: our cognitive autonomy,²⁷ the claim that the fundamental cognitive norms are *a priori* principles inherent to the subject.²⁸ Kant must therefore show why it is that we should not take his talk about *a priori* norms inherent to individual subjects to endorse a “subjective dispositions” view of cognition. In other words, Kant must show how his model provides a robust account of *objective* cognition

²⁶ Kant himself uses “rights” language in introducing the Transcendental Deduction (see Kant I, A84-85/B116-117). Guyer’s articulation of this question also leans on the normative dimension of the “rights” talk here. According to Guyer, the Transcendental Deduction “concerns our right to use the categories... not the mere fact that we do” (Guyer 2006, 81).

²⁷ As previously mentioned, this useful phrase is Guyer’s: see Guyer 2006, 72.

²⁸ Recall the aforementioned definition of the categories as “original pure concepts of synthesis that the understanding contains in itself *a priori*” (Kant I, A80/B106).

the kind of cognition that can produce objective judgments, cognition that gets a grip on the world.²⁹

Kant's first step in this project is to establish the objective validity of the categories, or their necessary applicability to all possible objects of cognition. In order to do so, Kant focuses on what he takes to be the most basic activity of human cognition: *combination*.³⁰ "Combination" is the name Kant gives to synthetic activity in its most general form, or the unification of distinct impressions or pieces of information.³¹ On Kant's model, all cognition necessarily requires combinative activity; there cannot be any synthesis of intuitions under a concept (or, for that matter, a manifold of intuition *qua* unified manifold) without combination. Kant's discussion of combination highlights the way in which cognition is to be understood as an *act* done by a cognitive agent: "*combination... is not given through objects but can be executed only by the subject itself.*"³² In other words, we are not given objects pre-combined, as it were, and the norms for combination cannot be derived from objects; it is an activity that a subject carries out in accordance with its own internal norms.

²⁹ The project of the transcendental deduction can be thought of as an attempt to show how it is that such *a priori* concepts "can be related to objects that they do not derive from any experience" (Kant I, B117/A85). Pinkard points out that the question about our *right* to use the categories amounts, for Kant, to the question: "How can a representation be *about* anything at all?" (Pinkard 2002, 31).

³⁰ Kant I, B130.

³¹ See Kant's discussion of "combination" at Kant I, B130-B131, e.g., "Combination is the representation of the synthetic unity of the manifold."

³² Kant I, B130.

The categories can be thought of as the basic rules through which this combinative activity takes place. But, just as the categories are meant to provide the justification for our use of first-order concepts, Kant must show what provides a justification for our use of the categories. After outlining his definition of the categories, Kant points out that our use of the categories presumes something deeper: a primitive concept of unity, something that makes possible and justifies our basic combinative activity. That is, in order to take part in this combinative activity at all, we presume that there is some underlying unifying principle that renders all these disparate impressions or pieces of information of a sort that *can* be so combined. Since a category “already presupposes combination,” Kant writes, “we must therefore seek this unity... someplace higher.”³³ Whatever it is that undergirds our basic combinative activity, Kant thinks, should provide at least a clue as to how the categories could be objectively valid.

Kant famously wrote, “The *I think* must be *able* to accompany all my representations.”³⁴ This claim is Kant’s immediate response to the search for a “higher” unity that undergirds our combinative activity. Kant believes that this “*I think*,” which he later refers to as the “original synthetic unity of apperception,” is what provides the unifying “glue” that can underwrite the combinative activity that characterizes all cognition: according to Kant, there *is* an underlying unifying feature

³³ Kant I, B131

³⁴ Kant I, B132

of everything present to me cognitively, and that is precisely that it is present *to me*.³⁵ If all my presentations belong *to me*, I must be, in principle, able to construe them as of the same kind (i.e. mine) and therefore relatable in at least this most basic sense.³⁶

Kant writes, “The thought that these representations given in intuition all together belong to me means, accordingly, the same as that I unite them in a self-consciousness, or at least can unite them therein.”³⁷

This “one self-consciousness” that is to ground all combinative activity is *not* empirical self-consciousness, or a general subjective self-awareness. Instead, this “*I think*” refers to the unified activity of the cognizing subject, the synthetic activity that makes it possible to conceive of all of my representations as fundamentally mine. Since this activity is an essential feature of all cognition in general, this “*I think*” is not to be taken as merely subjective. Instead, Kant writes:

The synthetic unity of consciousness is therefore an objective condition of all cognition, not merely something I myself need in order to cognize an object but rather something under which every intuition must stand in order to become an object for me.³⁸

³⁵ “All manifold of intuition has a necessary relation to the *I think* in the same subject in which this manifold is to be encountered” (Kant I, B132).

³⁶ “The manifold representations that are given in a certain intuition would not all together be *my* representations if they did not all together belong to a self-consciousness; i.e., as my representations... they must yet necessarily be in accord with the condition under which they *can* stand together in a universal self-consciousness.” (ibid.)

³⁷ Kant I, B134

³⁸ Kant I, B138.

In other words, one should not take the “I think” here as anything like some occurrent belief “I think that P,” or some conscious perception of myself as having some representation or another. Instead, one might emphasize the word “*able*” in B132: the claim that “The “I think” must be able to accompany all my representations” is not a claim about what I am currently doing, but a statement about the kind of thing a representation is, i.e., that a representation is the kind of thing that I could in principle attribute to myself.

In this sense, the original synthetic unity of apperception can be thought of as imposing a *requirement* on cognition: any representation must be able to be unified in a single subject. Whatever conditions there are for representations to be able to “hang together” for a subject must apply to representations in general. Thus, such conditions would count as “objective” on Kant’s account, inasmuch as they are required for representations as such. But the categories are just such conditions. Combination is the fundamental cognitive activity by which representations are made to hang together for a subject, and the categories are the rules for this activity. Since all cognition essentially consists in this combinative activity, and the categories are the rules for the conduct of that activity, according to Kant, the categories must be

applicable for any possible object of cognition, that is, the categories must be objectively valid.³⁹

In this way, Kant proposes an answer to our question above about how it is that his model of cognition, in which our “cognitive autonomy” is central, can account for the possibility of *objective* claims. For Kant, we are justified in our concept use insofar as all possible objects of cognition are necessarily subject to the rules that govern such use, rules which are found not in the world but *a priori* in the cognizing subject as such. Or, in other words, all possible objects of cognition are necessarily subject to the categories, and every cognitive subject necessarily engages in cognitive activity through the categories. The universal necessity of the rules that govern our cognitive activity is supposed to guarantee that our concept use cannot be construed as ultimately the result of subjective dispositions.

Kant’s notion of “cognitive autonomy” is therefore meant to be a feature rather than a flaw. The aforementioned requirement imposed on cognition by the original synthetic unity of apperception -- that all representations be in principle combinable, and thereby subject to the categories -- amounts to the cognitive autonomy thesis, that

³⁹ See, e.g., Kant I B142, where Kant writes that representations “belong to one another in virtue of the necessary unity of the apperception in the synthesis of intuitions, i.e., in accordance with principles of the objective determination of all representations insofar as cognition can come from them... Only in this way does there arise from this relation a judgment, i.e., a relation that is objectively valid...” See also Kant I, B161, especially as regards “objects of *experience*”: “...all synthesis, the synthesis through which even perception becomes possible, is subject to the categories; and since experience is cognition through connected perceptions, the categories are conditions of the possibility of experience and hence hold a priori also for all objects of experience.”

all possible cognition must conform to *a priori* rules inherent to the subject. It is our cognitive autonomy that makes us authoritative over our cognitive activity, and it is that same autonomy (i.e., the thesis that the foundational rules of cognition are inherent to the subject) that underlies Kant's argument for our ability to make objective claims about the world.

3. Normativity

Kant's account above is not intended to be just descriptive – if it were, he would (by his own lights) have failed to give an account of the *necessary* rules of cognition, making him open to accusations of psychologism. Kant remarks that any account that conceives of the categories as “subjective predispositions,” even if those subjective predispositions always happen to align with objective reality, robs the categories of their necessity.⁴⁰ Such a model would fail to account for objective claim-making and, according to Kant, relegate us to subjectively qualified claims where one could say “only that I am so constituted that I cannot think of this representation otherwise than as so connected.”⁴¹ Kant's account aims to tell us not just how objects happen to appear to us given our particular psychological makeup, but rather what it

⁴⁰ “In such a case the categories would lack the necessity that is essential to their concept” (Kant I, B168).

⁴¹ *ibid.* Notably, Kant continues, “...which is precisely what the skeptic wishes most, for then all of our insight through the supposed objective validity of our judgments is nothing but sheer illusion.”

is to be an object of cognition as such. The deduction of the categories is not meant to reveal a mere description of the human cognitive structure, but a set of norms for proper cognitive action.

This point brings out a feature of Kant's model of cognition that we have not yet fully touched on: the sense in which we are *responsible* for a certain kind of action in cognition -- responsible for doing the action in the right way -- and the way in which concepts are supposed to be *normative rules* for such an action. Pinkard rightly comments, "To make a *judgment* is to *do* something that is subject to standards of correctness."⁴² If we are to be able to make objective claims, it is not enough to describe how it is that judgment happens to be done, without further specifying the way in which judgment (or any concept use more generally) is a *normative* practice, with some evaluative criteria that can distinguish between correct and incorrect judgments. We have shown above why Kant thinks that concepts, via the categories, can and do apply to all possible objects of cognition. But we have not yet found how one could determine whether or not such concepts are being used *correctly*.

Significantly, objective claims are claims to which we believe *others* should be beholden, not just first-personal subjective claims of the sort mentioned above. Similarly, to make an objective claim is to be in some way answerable or responsive to other cognizing subjects. Kant seems to endorse this idea in several locations. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the categories are meant to be necessary and universal for

⁴² Pinkard 2002, 31.

cognition as such, meaning that any individual cognizing subject will have to be doing the same type of activity according to the same fundamental rules as other cognizing subjects. Kant does not explicitly draw the relation between objectivity and agreement here,⁴³ but a number of commentators⁴⁴ take him to be committed to the view that agreement and objectivity are at least intimately linked. Kant does make this claim more explicitly in some of his other works. For example, in the *Prolegomena*, he writes that objective judgments are distinguished by the fact that we “desire that they shall always hold good for us and in the same way for everybody else,” and we “desire therefore that I and everybody else should always connect necessarily the same perceptions under the same circumstances.”⁴⁵ In the *Critique of Judgment*, the issue of intersubjective agreement is central to his account of the normativity of judgments of taste, and arguably the normativity of judgments *simpliciter*.⁴⁶ At the very least, answerability to other subjects should be a desideratum of any account of normative, objective claim-making; it is at least difficult to conceive of what an objective claim would amount to, if radically divorced from the very possibility of agreement or disagreement from other subjects.

⁴³ Kant does seem to strongly *imply* that there is a link in a number of places in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. For example, Kant takes it that the statement “one could not quarrel with anyone about that which merely depends on the way in which his subject is organized” is a reason to reject the “subjective dispositions” view of cognition (Kant I, B168).

⁴⁴ E.g., Pinkard (2002) and especially Keller (1998) (see further discussion of Keller’s view below, in Section III).

⁴⁵ Kant, *Prolegomena*, 33-34

⁴⁶ See e.g. Kant’s discussion of the “first peculiarity of the judgment of taste,” where he remarks that a judgment of taste makes “a claim to the assent of **everyone**, as if it were objective” (III 5:282).

If the ultimate authority over such claims is and always will be the individual cognitive agent, as it is for Kant's autonomous subject, one might wonder why others should be compelled to engage with such claims as the sorts of things one can agree or disagree about. The universality and necessity of the categories among all cognitive subjects might be said to impart some kind of publicity to cognitive norms. This is the route Pinkard takes, writing "For me to make a judgment is for me to be oriented by the rules that would count for *all* judges."⁴⁷ But the sheer fact of the categories' being universal among cognitive subjects does not by itself determine the correctness or incorrectness of their use. That is, the requirement that cognitive objects as such conform to *a priori* rules internal to the subject -- even if such rules are necessarily common to all subjects -- does not get us to an account of what it would be to "get it right" in our employment of the categories. That is to say, an account of what all human subjects do, even an account of what all human subjects *necessarily must do qua* human subjects, is still only a descriptive account, and is not sufficient to explain the normative grip of our cognitive rules.

Without the normative dimension, Kant's claim to have provided an account of objective cognition weakens considerably. If we cannot say what it is to "get it right" in cognition, we are thrown back onto the same question we have been considering since the beginning, namely, how it is that certain inherent features of a cognitive subject could enable it to have objective cognition. Without some clear entry point

⁴⁷ Pinkard 2002, 34

for evaluations of correctness/incorrectness in Kant's model of cognition, we are left uncertain as to how we might reassure ourselves that Kantian conceptual cognition can and actually does produce objective claims that have traction with the world.

II. HEGEL

In recent years, commentators like Terry Pinkard and especially Robert Pippin have argued that the opening chapters of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* show that Hegel's work in the *Phenomenology* should be read as an appropriation and revision of a fundamentally Kantian project. Pippin, for example, argues that Hegel's work in the *Phenomenology* as well as the *Science of Logic* "extends and deepens" Kant's approach. In particular, Pippin thinks that Hegel's Kantianism "should be understood as a direct variation on a crucial Kantian theme, the 'transcendental unity of apperception.'"⁴⁸ Pippin is right to see an intimate connection between the early sections of the *Phenomenology* and the Kantian apperception theme. The issue of self-conscious cognition plays a crucial role in one of the most influential and controversial chapters of the *Phenomenology*, aptly titled "Self-Consciousness." Hegel's general admiration for Kant's notion of apperception and its role in the Kantian account of cognition is clear from Hegel's own words in the *Logic*, where he remarks that Kant's original synthetic unity of apperception "is one of the profoundest and truest insights to be

⁴⁸ Pippin 1989, 6

found in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.”⁴⁹ It is evident that Hegel was indeed engaged with the Kantian project, especially as regards the apperception theme.⁵⁰

Pippin nonetheless overlooks at least one important way in which Hegel’s account radically diverges from Kant’s in the Self-Consciousness section of the *Phenomenology*. In the following, I will argue that Hegel is sharply critical of Kant’s account of cognition, particularly its reliance on the cognitive autonomy of the thinking subject. Kantian cognitive autonomy, according to Hegel, entails a problematically subjectivist position that Kant’s account cannot resolve. To understand Hegel’s criticism of and development beyond Kant’s model, it is not enough to read him as “extending” the Kantian account of cognition. For Hegel, some notion of intersubjective agreement must be built into cognition on a fundamental level, if we want our account of cognition to put us in touch with an objective world and to give us the ability to make normative claims.

⁴⁹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 584

⁵⁰ E.g., In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel transitions to Self-Consciousness with remarks like “Consciousness of an other, of an object as such, is indeed itself necessarily self-consciousness,” “Not merely is consciousness of things only possible for a self-consciousness; rather, it is this self-consciousness alone which is the truth of those shapes” (Hegel PhG, §164) and even “Thus, with self-consciousness we have now entered into the native realm of truth” (Hegel PhG, §166); below, I will argue that the opening of Self-Consciousness in the *Phenomenology* involves a characteristically Kantian position.

1. *Force and the Understanding: Conceptual Cognition*

The first three chapters of the *Phenomenology*, all of which fall under the broad heading “Consciousness,” explore accounts of conscious experience and knowledge that presume a relatively simple subject/object distinction. In these cases, the goal of the account is to show how a subject (here conceived of as mere observer) can come to have experience of or know about objects. What each of these early stages of the *Phenomenology* shows is that such an account must fail. Generally put, if the guiding question presumes that subjects and objects are entirely independent from one another, it proposes a gap it lacks the resources to close.⁵¹

Towards the end of the third chapter, entitled “Force and the Understanding,” Hegel proposes a route out of this problem: the possibility that self-consciousness can ground our knowledge of objects. Hegel characterizes the position in the following way:

The *necessary advance* from the previous shapes of consciousness, to whom their truth was a thing, that is, was something other than themselves, expresses precisely the following. Not merely is consciousness of things only possible for a self-consciousness; rather, it is this self-consciousness alone which is the truth of those shapes.⁵²

⁵¹ Pippin gives a more specific gloss of the first three chapters as “Hegel’s attempt to undermine various realist alternatives in epistemology.” (Pippin 1989, 131)

⁵² Hegel, PhG §164

For the “previous shapes of consciousness,” objects were conceived of as fundamentally other than the subject. Thus, an account of cognition of these objects would have to show how it is that subjects could be said to get a grip on these objects, on “something other than themselves,” despite the posited gap between them.⁵³ In *Force and the Understanding*, Hegel develops this problem further: there is a tension between conceiving of the object as entirely “other” (e.g., as just the material cause of certain impressions on our senses) and being able to account for the ways we unify the diverse elements of the object and differentiate that unified object from other objects.⁵⁴ It appears that we must possess some kind of mechanism for being able to determine things like what impressions belong to which objects, and such a mechanism cannot simply be given along with the very material it is to mediate.

We can already begin to see why commentator Paul Redding would refer to this position as “a type of radicalized Kantianism.”⁵⁵ The problem at hand at the end of *Force and the Understanding* is precisely the one of *a priori* synthesis. Hegel’s first three chapters have shown that an account of objective cognition requires some mechanism by which cognition is able to unify an otherwise disparate manifold into

⁵³ Pinkard makes a similar remark, writing that in such accounts “we will always be caught in the dilemma of trying to match the mental objects with the other kinds of objects, and we will find that all the proposed matches ultimately undermine themselves.” (Pinkard 1994, 43)

⁵⁴ One of the ongoing themes of *Force and the Understanding* is the general problem of how to think about intelligible synthesis of particulars under a universal; see, e.g., Hegel PhG §134 (“Such a content would be some kind of determinate mode of being for itself and of relating itself to others”), §136 (“The universal exists in itself in undivided unity with this plurality,” yet “the many distinct matters are likewise self-sufficient”), §151 (“there is in the law a durable existence of all the moments whose relation was expressed by the law”), etc.

⁵⁵ Redding 2008, 95

intelligible and differentiable objects, about which we are able to make objective claims. Additionally, such a mechanism cannot be generated from the objects in question, or more generally from some external source.⁵⁶ The move that Hegel makes at the end of Force and the Understanding is precisely the Kantian one: to ground cognition of objects in the original unity of self-consciousness.⁵⁷

Hegel here relinquishes the view of an object as some entirely independent entity, and instead takes an object to be the result of our own synthesizing cognitive activity.⁵⁸ As a result, the notion of *self*-consciousness takes up a central role in the account of cognition. For there to be an object at all requires that the subject be self-conscious, and self-conscious in the way that Kant describes as transcendental, rather than empirical. That is, the self-consciousness Hegel requires at this point in the text must be one that possesses some notion of itself as a primitive unity, one that can thereby provide the proper grounding for the combinative activity necessary for objective judgment. This is the way in which, in the quotation above, Hegel's position goes beyond just the claim that self-consciousness is necessary for the cognition of

⁵⁶ Compare, e.g., Kant I B134: "Combination does not lie in the objects, however, and cannot as it were be borrowed from them through perception and by that means first taken up into the understanding."

⁵⁷ "Consciousness of an other, of an object as such, is indeed itself necessarily self-consciousness, being-reflected into itself, consciousness of its own self in its otherness" (Hegel PhG, §164). I take this passage to mean, essentially, that the cognition of objects turns out to be grounded in self-consciousness, such that what had previously been regarded as "other" is now understood as really just a "reflection" of a self-conscious subject's own cognitive activity.

⁵⁸ Hegel remarks, "While it undeniably seems to be pursuing something else, [consciousness] is really just consorting with itself" (Hegel PhG, §163).

objects – objects which could still be conceived of as externally determined and presented to a self-conscious but passive observer. It is the synthesizing activity of a self-conscious subject that determines its objects: what it is to be an object depends upon a self-conscious subject.⁵⁹

Thus, what the opening chapters of the *Phenomenology* took to be an independent or external object is shown, at the end of Force and the Understanding, to be essentially dependent upon the subject for its unity. The subject's own conceptualizing activity is to be the mechanism by which the disparate manifold can be combined into an intelligible, differentiable object. In other words, Hegel proposes a distinctly Kantian response to the problem developed in the first three chapters, and it is roughly the same answer we saw in our account of Kant's work above: cognition is fundamentally a certain kind of activity, not some passive receptivity, and this activity is grounded in self-consciousness.

Hegel's account of cognition is no longer an issue of crossing some problematic gap, but an issue of the subject's relation to its own cognitive activity. Thus, for Hegel, the inquiry into self-consciousness in the subsequent section of the *Phenomenology* is also an inquiry into the necessary condition(s) for conceptual cognition. One of the main questions we are left with at the end of Force and the

⁵⁹ Recall Hegel's aforementioned claim, "Not merely is consciousness of things only possible for a self-consciousness; rather, it is this self-consciousness alone which is the truth of those shapes" (Hegel PhG §164). Compare Kant I B138: "The synthetic unity of consciousness is therefore an objective condition of all cognition, not merely something I myself need in order to cognize an object but rather something under which every intuition must stand in order to become an object for me."

Understanding is remarkably similar to one that especially concerned Kant, the question that runs throughout our account of Kant above. If cognition is to be grounded in the subject's own activity, we stand in need of an explanation of how we can account for objective cognition, and the normativity of objective claims.⁶⁰ Or, in Pippin's words, we are left with "the issue of by what right certain concepts rather than others are relied on and in what sense they can be considered objective, more than merely subjective, requirements."⁶¹

2. "Desire" as a critique of Kant

Self-Consciousness, the fourth chapter of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, picks up where Force and the Understanding left off: our position is one in which the subject regards its own conceptualizing activity as the grounds for all its cognitions. The subject regards itself, not the "sensuous world," as the ultimate cognitive authority and source of epistemic legitimacy.⁶² Commentator Axel Honneth puts this point nicely, writing that "whatever 'truth' about reality [self-consciousness] is capable

⁶⁰ As Hegel puts it, we need to further investigate "what consciousness knows when it knows itself" (Hegel PhG, §165).

⁶¹ Pippin 1989, 133

⁶² As we begin the section on Desire, Hegel characterizes our cognitive and epistemological position as follows: "The being of what was meant... no longer exists as the essence." Rather, it exists "merely as moments of self-consciousness. That is to say, it exists as abstractions or distinctions which are at the same time nullities for consciousness itself, that is, they are no distinctions at all but purely vanishing essences," and "The whole breadth of the sensuous world is preserved for [self-consciousness], but at the same time only as related to the second moment, the unity of self-consciousness with itself" (Hegel PhG, §167).

of calling to mind is due not to its passive registering of reality, but to an active act of consciousness that has antecedently constituted the alleged ‘object.’”⁶³ In this sense, our cognitive subject at the opening of Self-Consciousness is essentially a Kantian one: we have cognitions of objects just in virtue of the subject’s necessary conceptualizing activity, and this necessary conceptualizing activity can only be carried out by the sort of subject that possesses an *a priori* synthetic unity capable of undergirding this activity, i.e., a subject with transcendental apperception.⁶⁴

For Hegel’s subject here, as for Kant’s subject in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, objects of cognition are made possible in virtue of the subject’s synthetic unity of apperception, and this “unity of self-consciousness” constitutes the ultimate authority on how cognition should be done. It follows that such a subject regards the “sensuous world” as no longer possessing any independent authority itself. To be sure, it is not that the subject is somehow radically divorced from the sensuous world. Rather, the sensuous world is no longer recognized as independent, authoritative, or otherwise restrictive of the subject’s cognitive activity – it is only there in virtue of that activity, and is thereby “posterior” to it. In Hegel’s words, “The whole breadth of the sensuous world is preserved for [self-consciousness], but at the same time only as

⁶³ Honneth 2008, 78. He also remarks here that “The subject can now be aware of itself as an authoritative source of its own knowledge about the world.”

⁶⁴ Honneth has a similar take on the characteristically Kantian position at this point in Hegel’s text: “In a certain sense, [we] have thus advanced to an epistemological standpoint already characterized by Kant in his transcendental philosophy. As a result, [we] are faced with the question as to the nature of the knowledge that subjects can have of themselves as creators of true claims.” (Honneth 2008, 78)

related to... the unity of self-consciousness with itself,” and the sensuous world is rendered “merely *appearance*.”⁶⁵ These remarks make it clear that Hegel has Kant’s model of cognition, and its consequences for how we regard “the world,”⁶⁶ firmly in mind at the outset of Self-Consciousness.

It is in this context that Hegel introduces his famous statement that “self-consciousness is *desire* itself.”⁶⁷ Many commentators argue that this moment marks a turn away from the theoretical concerns of the first three chapters, and into practical or political philosophy, with varying levels of abruptness depending on their particular interpretation.⁶⁸ In general, it is difficult to see how the previous inquiry into cognition is continued here, given Hegel’s seemingly sudden invocation of “desire” and subsequent discussion of life, genus, and the famous Mastery and Servitude section. However, I think we can better understand Hegel’s claim that self-consciousness is desire in light of our remarks above concerning the subject’s characteristically Kantian position here, especially as regards cognitive autonomy and the picture of cognition as an action carried out by agents according to norms. If this

⁶⁵ Hegel, PhG §167

⁶⁶ That is, as the totality of *appearance*, ultimately grounded in the structure of self-consciousness.

⁶⁷ Hegel, PhG §167

⁶⁸ The most widely known example here is Alexandre Kojève’s political reading (see e.g. Kojève 1980, especially pg. 37-44). Pippin provides a quick gloss of the landscape here, remarking (for instance) that “Some very influential commentators, like Alexandre Kojève... write as if we should isolate the Self-Consciousness chapter as a free-standing philosophical anthropology, a theory of the inherently violent and class-riven nature of human sociality,” while “others argue that in Chapter Four, Hegel simply changes the subject to the problem of sociality” (Pippin 2011, 11).

reading is right, then we should not be especially surprised or concerned if Hegel's discussion about cognition develops into a discussion about practical norms.

Our subject at this point is one who sees the external world as not *really* external, insofar as any relevantly accessible presentation of the external world will be parasitic on the subject's own cognitive capacities. In other words, objects are not in any radical sense other than the subject; the rules that govern the subject's own conceptual apparatus are those by which objects are constituted for the subject, and as for the Kantian subject above those rules are conceived of as inherent to the subject. The "otherness" of external objects is in a sense only provisional⁶⁹ objects are presented phenomenologically as "other," but what is really essential to the object is that it is determined by the subject's own capacities.⁷⁰ This provisional otherness is what Hegel means when he says that "the immediate object" is "marked" for self-consciousness "with the *character of the negative*," but that self-consciousness "itself" is the "true essence." External objects are posited as "other" in appearance, but we understand such appearance to be ultimately constituted by a cognitively autonomous self-conscious subject.⁷¹

⁶⁹ I am borrowing the notion of "provisional otherness" here from Pippin; he remarks, "Objects are only provisionally "other" than a desiring being takes them to be; soon they are simply "devoured," destroyed or ignored, and so *not* other." (Pippin 1989, 156)

⁷⁰ This is basically what I understand Hegel to mean in some of the more obscure passages here, e.g., PhG §167: "The sensuous world is thereby for it a durable existence, which is, however, merely *appearance*, that is, is the distinction which *in-itself* has no being. But this opposition between its appearance and its truth has only the truth for its essence, namely, the unity of self-consciousness with itself..."

⁷¹ Hegel, PhG §167

The notion of “provisional otherness” can provide some insight into why Hegel would characterize this position as *desire*. Kant’s own definition of desire in the *Critique of Practical Reason* reads, “The power of desire is the being’s power to be, through its presentations, [the] cause of the actuality of the objects of these presentations.”⁷² For desire, objects are always provisional – what is essential to desire is that an object’s actuality is constitutively dependent upon the activity of the subject.⁷³ Desire sees external objects as “inessential,” contingent, fundamentally characterized by their availability to and constitution by the subject. Desire is the subject *qua* “cause” of its objects, i.e., the subject as entirely authoritative of its objects. Desire is satisfied when it can show that objects do in fact depend upon the subject’s activity in this way, that is, when it can display its own *success* at constituting its object.⁷⁴

The idea that objects are essentially dependent upon the subject’s conceptualizing activity in Desire has a twofold consequence. First, the subject regards itself as the ultimate authority over its cognition, and second, objects are thereby “negated” or “sublated” as independent entities. Hegel summarizes this position in the following way:

⁷² Kant II, 9, ft. 90

⁷³ Redding reads Hegel’s use of “desire” here in a similar way: “Desire seems to provide a good instantiation of the idea of a self grasping *itself* as the essence of its apparently given object.” (Redding 2008, 97)

⁷⁴ See also Kant’s gloss of “pleasure” immediately after his aforementioned definition of “desire” in Kant II, [9 ft. 90], particularly as the “agreement” between the object and its subjective conditions.

Certain of the nullity of this other, [self-consciousness] posits *for itself* this nullity as its truth, it destroys the self-sufficient object, and it thereby gives itself the certainty of itself as *true* certainty, as the sort of certainty which in its eyes has com to be in an *objective manner*.⁷⁵

The subject of Desire regards its own conceptualizing activity as the standard by which any and all cognition (and thereby all resultant truth claims) must be determined. In so doing, it denies the independence of the object, and only recognizes the object insofar as the object depends on it – roughly, insofar as it can regard the object as fundamentally “mine.” Moreover, the subject asserts that its own conceptualizing activity does in fact obtain objective truth, since it believes it can show that all possible objects necessarily *belong* to it in this way.⁷⁶ This claim recalls Kant’s own explicit discussion of cognitions *belonging* to the subject as *mine*,⁷⁷ and his ensuing assertion that through the objective validity of the categories, cognition could “prescribe the law to nature and even make the latter possible.”⁷⁸ External objects do not provide constraints for the subject’s cognition; cognition contains within it the

⁷⁵ Hegel, PhG §174

⁷⁶ Neuhausser characterizes this “simplest conception of self-sufficiency,” in the voice of the subject: “I am, on my own, fully self-sufficient. Any object I have before me may appear to exist independently (and thus to place external constraints on my knowledge or will), but I am certain that my object has no independent being (and that I am therefore subject to no such constraints). Moreover, I can *prove* that my object is nothing – that I, not it, am self-sufficient – by showing its very being to depend on me (on my knowledge or will).” (Neuhausser 2009, 40-41)

⁷⁷ According to Kant, representations must “all together belong to a self-consciousness” and “throughout belong to me,” and are “all together *my* representations” (Kant I, B132 and B134).

⁷⁸ Kant I, B159

constraints to which objects as such must adhere.⁷⁹ In a certain sense, objects are as they are just in virtue of Desire's subject *making* them that way, according to whatever rules belong to Desire *a priori*.

The beginning of Hegel's criticism of Kant can be seen just in this characterization of the cognitively autonomous subject: this subject is *always* in the mode of Desire. Hegel's criticism, however, does not proceed by arguing *against* some claim that Desire is the fundamental mode of self-consciousness. Instead, his argument proceeds with an investigation of the consequences of such a model of self-consciousness, and whether it can satisfy its own requirements. The question now becomes whether this model of self-consciousness, which Hegel characterizes as Desire, can do what it set out to do: legitimize our use of conceptual cognition, and justify our assertion that such cognition allows us to make objective, normative claims about the world.

Commentator David Landy also takes the opening of Hegel's Self-Consciousness to represent a basically Kantian model of conceptual cognition. The characteristic feature of this model, according to Landy, is that conceptual cognition essentially consists in "certain of the activities of the spontaneous understanding, i.e., we make rules for ourselves and determine, by ourselves, what counts as following them."⁸⁰ Given the overall project of grounding conceptual cognition, Landy's claim

⁷⁹ As in Kant, the subject in Desire regards "the sensuous world" as "merely appearance, that is... *in-itself* has no being" (Hegel PhG, §167).

⁸⁰ Landy 2008, 175

here does seem accurate to the position of Hegel's subject of Desire, especially in that it "gives itself the certainty of itself as *true* certainty."⁸¹ If this is the case, then Desire is in a strange position. Because of Desire's radical autonomy when it comes to basic cognitive rules and the standards for what counts as successful cognitive acts because these standards are internal to an individual self-consciousness *a priori* it is hard to understand what significance Desire's claim to success could have.

In order for something to count as a rule in this case, in order for a concept to count as a rule for synthesis in the way we need it must be possible not only to follow but also to *fail* to follow the rule. In the case of Desire, there are no standards for rule-following (i.e. concept use) outside of the individual, autonomous subject's own rule-following activities. As was noted above, "external" objects as such do not provide any thoroughgoing external constraint on this subject's cognition. The subject cognizes, and in so doing, makes use of whatever *a priori*, inherent-to-the-subject rules govern cognition. The determination of the *correct* use of such rules (or even whether these rules are good ones to have, or not) does not seem to enter the picture; Desire has only the objects it can call "mine," and is thus in a sense always "successful" at calling such objects "mine." In other words, requiring that objects as

⁸¹ The "self-certainty" (i.e. cognitive autonomy) theme reappears at numerous points in Self-Consciousness, e.g. Desire takes itself to be the "true essence" (Hegel PhG, §167) or "true certainty" (Hegel PhG, §174), and regards anything outside of itself as a "nullity" (ibid.), or "the negative" (Hegel PhG, §167 and §168) -- that is, Desire takes itself to be sufficient unto itself for determining what makes for good cognition (i.e. "certainty") and not to be beholden to anything besides itself. As we will see, this issue is central to Hegel's discussion of the "Struggle to the Death," in which the subject of Desire encounters another subject who "is likewise self-sufficient" (Hegel PhG, §182).

such necessarily conform to *a priori* rules internal to the subject entails that there can be no such thing as an object that fails to conform to those rules, or an exercise of those cognitive capacities that can “get it wrong.” Because there is no possibility of being wrong, there is no possibility of being right either.⁸² Thus, Desire cannot be “satisfied” in any substantial way: its claim to success is ultimately empty.

Hegel draws out this problem through his discussion of a tension inherent to Desire: the subject, supposedly radically autonomous, is nonetheless defined as a subject that conducts a “negating” activity on its objects. In other words, it appears that the subject in the position of Desire is in some sense importantly dependent upon the objects that it negates. Hegel puts this point in the following way:

Desire and the certainty of itself achieved in its satisfaction are conditioned by the object, for the certainty exists by way of the act of sublating the other. For this act of sublating even to be, there must be this other. Self-consciousness is thus unable by way of its negative relation to the object to sublimate it...⁸³

The cognitive autonomy of the subject in Hegel’s account of Desire carries with it the assertion that the subject is not constrained by the object – the object is without any independent substance. But in order for the subject to take itself to be authoritative, it must take itself to be authoritative *over something* – there must be some

⁸² Landy seems to agree with my assessment: “...as long as whatever Desire does is correct, there can be, for Desire, no distinction between correct and incorrect at all, no getting it right. Desire, thus, cannot recognize following a rule as such because to it everything seems to count as following a rule, and there is no basis other than this seeming for it to judge” (Landy 2008, 177).

⁸³ Hegel, PhG §175

acknowledgement of the independence of the object in order for the subject's authority over it to count as in any way meaningful.⁸⁴ But Desire, *ex hypothesi*, cannot admit such independence. Desire is unable to account for its authority over objects, and thus fails to be satisfied.

This criticism of Desire points to a deeper problem. The issue above seemed to be whether Desire had any viable method by which to evaluate the *correctness* of its cognition. If the answer to this question is “no,” we have a further problem: whether the content of such cognition is even intelligible in the first place. That is, if Desire cannot say what it is to “get it right” about an object, Desire fails in its task of justifying conceptual cognition. Because every meaningful act of synthesis by a self-conscious cognitive agent implies the possibility of a certain minimally evaluative judgment⁸⁵ that the synthesis should occur in *this way and not that way*—Desire's inability to provide a basic picture of “getting it right” impoverishes its cognitive account so radically that it is no longer able to account for cognition at all. Because it is unable to “get it right,” Desire is unable to determine which representations should be synthesized with which others and in what particular way—it is unable to say

⁸⁴ Honneth refers to this problem as “an element of self-deception in the stance of desire.” (Honneth 2008, 84)

⁸⁵ I take this to be one of the claims that falls out of Kant's discussion of “original apperception,” and one of the features of his model that is reproduced at least implicitly in Hegel's text here. See, e.g., Kant I B134: “The thought that these representations given in intuition all together belong to me means, accordingly, the same as that I unite them in a self-consciousness, or at least can unite them therein, and although it is itself not yet the consciousness of the synthesis of the representations, it still presupposes the possibility of the latter...”

which object it is cognizing, if it is cognizing any object whatsoever, or even whether whatever it claims to be doing is really cognition in any proper sense of the term.⁸⁶ Desire is thus unable to provide an account by which we are able to synthesize a disparate manifold under a concept, and, especially, discriminate between objects. This failure is a direct result of Desire's cognitive autonomy, and its ensuing "negation" of its objects. That is, because cognition for Desire was characterized precisely by its unfailing ability to conceive of objects as essentially dependent upon it for their constitution, Desire may not be able to have any intelligible object at all.

The goal for Desire was not to give an account of just any internally coherent conceptual apparatus, but one that was capable of making claims about an object that extend beyond the merely subjective. What Desire "wants" is not just to "consume" its objects, but to show that its own cognitive autonomy is sufficient to undergird normative objective cognition, to show that Desire is getting it right in cognition. As we have seen, objects themselves cannot provide Desire with proof of this claim. The first three chapters of the *Phenomenology* were spent dismantling the models that purport to allow objects this role, and as a result, the subject's own attitude towards objects is now a "negating" one. But Desire alone cannot provide the necessary proof either, because such a proof is ultimately empty: a standard by which everything necessarily passes is no standard at all. Thus, Hegel's representation of Kantian

⁸⁶ Hegel explicitly notes that this problem renders Desire empty: "Since self-consciousness merely distinguishes itself from itself as itself, that distinction as an otherness is in its eyes immediately sublated. There simply is no distinction, and self-consciousness is merely the motionless tautology of 'I am I'" (Hegel PhG, §167).

cognition as Desire shows how this model fails to reach its goal of showing how cognition could be considered an action with normative rules, an action for which cognitive agents have responsibility. The reason for this failure, the central notion shown to be incoherent, is the radical cognitive autonomy supposed of the subject.

The project of Self-Consciousness in the *Phenomenology* was to be an inquiry into what self-consciousness must be like if it is to undergird objective conceptual cognition. The general point here is that not just any self-relation will do; if self-consciousness is to undergird a genuine relation to objects in the world, it is not enough for consciousness simply to regard itself as authoritative. That is to say, the Kantian picture upon which cognition is grounded in the subject's cognitive autonomy fails insofar as it cannot account for properly normative cognition, the possibility of getting it wrong. What is needed is a self-consciousness that encounters some resistance from the world, a self-consciousness situated within a world that is in some way independent, about which it could potentially be mistaken.

The subject of Desire must now look for a cognitive standard that lies beyond its own internal norms. Such a standard can no longer consist in a simple reference to the objects themselves, given the prior chapters of the *Phenomenology*. These are the considerations that motivate Hegel's famous (and famously obscure) statement that "*Self-consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness.*"⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Hegel, PhG §175

3. *The Struggle-To-The-Death as Primitive Disagreement*

One way to describe the position of Desire in Hegel's *Phenomenology* is to say that all cognitive norms ultimately have their origin in the individual subject. Cognitive norms are generated by "self-consciousness" itself. We argued above that this position represents a subject with Kantian cognitive autonomy, and that such a subject, on Hegel's view, turns out to be incapable of grounding objective cognition on just its own internal standards. Grounding cognition just on one's own internal norms gives way to a problematic subjectivism, so the subject of Desire needs to look beyond its own norms if it is to ground objective cognition. But it is also not an option at this point to ground cognition on standards thought to be provided by the objects themselves.

Although this situation might look intractable, Hegel does provide a suggestion for a way out. In Desire, to be a self-conscious subject just *is* to be a generator of norms. Given that we have already rejected the possibility of norms originating in the objects themselves, it follows that norms must have their origin in self-conscious subjects. Therefore, if a subject in the position of Desire is to look for a cognitive

standard that lies beyond its own internal norms, it must look to *another self-conscious subject*.⁸⁸

Given that Desire's model of self-conscious subjectivity just is the conception of what it is to be a self-conscious subject at this point, the other self-conscious subject must also be in the position of Desire.⁸⁹ There is something about this encounter between two subjects in the position of Desire that generates a conflict, but commentators disagree on the exact nature and origin of that conflict. Some prominent readings take the struggle to be a struggle over limited natural resources, or even just some object of desire in general – a conflict which comes about just because it is supposed to be historically inevitable that two entities in the material world would come to such a conflict.⁹⁰ Other views take the central issue to be a little more abstract. Pippin, for example, takes the conflict to be one in which each subject “rejects the other (“negates” the other) *as subject*.” Nonetheless, Pippin also conceives

⁸⁸ I take it that this general point is developed especially in Hegel PhG §176-§179, e.g. “There is an object for consciousness which in itself posits its otherness... it is a living self-consciousness” (Hegel PhG §179) and thus “self-consciousness is *outside of itself*” (Hegel PhG §179). Part of the strangeness of the text here can be attributed to the fact that our subject has heretofore been the *only* subject. The very concept of “otherness” is not only underdeveloped at this point but actually being worked out within the ongoing inquiry into objective cognition.

⁸⁹ Thus, “this activity on the part of one self-consciousness has itself the twofold significance of being equally it's own activity as well as the other's activity, for the other is likewise self-sufficient. The other is just as enclosed within himself, and there is nothing within him which is not there by way of himself” (Hegel PhG, §182).

⁹⁰ The aforementioned social or political readings of the “Self-Consciousness” section typically hold this view. Kojève, for example, takes the struggle to show that “Human, historical, self-conscious existence is possible only where there are, or – at least – where there have been bloody fights, wars for prestige.” (Kojève 1980, 41).

of the origin of the struggle as being over some object of practical desire that is limited in quantity, and thus can only be “consumed” by one or the other individual subjects.⁹¹

This reading of the moment of conflict in Hegel’s text gets ahead of itself. What is at stake is not practical access to or ownership of some third object, which presumes that we already have a distinct enough conception of one subject, another subject, and their relation to objects in order to even articulate the conflict in this way. The conflict here is much more fundamental, and must be conceived of as logically prior to specific practical conflicts of this sort. In our account above, the central issue for the subject of Desire is its claim to a sort of cognitive autonomy that can ground objective cognition. We can thus understand the struggle here as an attempt to establish the subject’s cognitive autonomy generally, at least at first. This will require that some external standard – the other self-conscious subject – concede (1) that this subject’s claims about the world are correct, and (2) that this subject is a genuine self-sufficient authority, one who is obligated to follow only the rules it gives to itself. However, the other self-conscious subject is in the same position as the first. The second subject is also in the position of Desire, with its own cognitive autonomy and authority at stake, seeking proof of these through the concession of the first.

Because each subject is still in the position of Desire, when they encounter each other their attitude towards each other is not as potentially autonomous, self-

⁹¹ Pippin 1993, 68.

conscious subjects. Instead, they initially regard each other like any other object one would encounter in the world.⁹² That is, each subject regards the other as merely contingent and essentially “mine.” Hence, each self-conscious subject denies the autonomy of the other, and refuses to concede either (1) or (2). Each refuses to concede (2) because its own assertion of completely autonomous authority prevents it from recognizing other such authorities, since it takes everything other than itself to be essentially subject to its own conceptualizing activity, that is, not autonomous or authoritative. Each refuses to concede (1) because, in a very direct way, the claims of each negate the other. That is, one asserts that the other is subordinate to it in the same way as any other object, and the other similarly asserts this of the first. Furthermore, each could only represent the other to be conceding (1) and (2) in the right way if each implicitly takes the other to be *correctly and independently* making such concessions. In this way, the conflict is shown to be not just a matter of happenstance disagreement between otherwise coherent subjects, but a conflict that reveals Desire’s subject as an internally inconsistent one.⁹³

Rather than a disagreement about access to limited resources or objects of practical desire, this is a much more fundamental type of disagreement. On this reading, the disagreement is over which subject is right to claim that their internal

⁹² “In the way that they immediately make their appearance, they exist for each other in the way ordinary objects do” (Hegel PhG, §186).

⁹³ See Hegel, PhG §186: each initially regards the other “as an unessential object designated by the character of the negative,” and yet “the other is also a self-consciousness, and thus what comes on the scene here is an individual confronting an individual.”

rules for cognition provide a legitimate basis for conceptual cognition in general (and the sorts of claims that arise from it). If the model of cognition characterized by Desire requires that such a subject view all objects as essentially “mine,” then when two such subjects confront each other, each will regard the other as essentially “mine.” Thus, the disagreement that arises is a disagreement over the central concept that grounds all cognition for Desire: the concept of *a priori* “mineness.”

The reason each subject’s assertion of “mineness” results in a disagreement is found in the notion of cognitive autonomy that underlies it. This “mineness” assertion is not a mere descriptive fact about empirical perception, but a result of the kind of one-sided cognitive authority the subject takes itself to have. Since each subject, in the position of Desire, regards itself as the ultimate grounding of all its cognitions, it cannot at the same time assent to the other’s assertion of itself as that same grounding. But, because Desire requires the capitulation of this other subject in order to prove its own legitimacy, it cannot simply ignore the other subject either. Thus, the conflict does not arise “inevitably” from the subjects’ material circumstances in the world or the limitedness of available resources. Hegel is not claiming that, somehow, *a priori* conditions for cognition could arise out of *a posteriori* facts about human beings’ natural history (say, competition for resources). Instead, the conflict arises as a necessary logical consequence of the model of self-conscious cognition described in Desire.

Because of this conflict, a mere encounter with “another self-consciousness” cannot provide the subject with confirmation of (1) and (2) above. However, the active resistance that each subject provides to the other’s claim introduces a new element into the account. It is no longer the case that the subject meets with no active resistance from the world – that is, nothing with normative force for cognition outside of itself – as it goes about conceptualizing things in one way or another. The particular form of this resistance is *disagreement*. Each self-conscious subject only has one way of understanding something that asserts itself as authoritative and autonomous, and that is as a self-conscious subject.⁹⁴ As such, each subject is in a paradoxical position: each asserts its own authority over the other, but each can only understand the significance of this assertion by at least implicitly recognizing that the other is the sort of thing that can also make legitimate assertions of this kind.⁹⁵

This confrontation, then, begins a breakdown of the previous notion of self-sufficient self-consciousness. The authority and autonomy which each subject ascribed to itself is now *at risk*, and each must attempt to prove to the other that this

⁹⁴ “The movement is thus straightforwardly the doubled movement of both self-consciousnesses. Each sees the other do the same as what he himself does...” (Hegel PhG, §183).

⁹⁵ See, e.g., Hegel §186: Each must “exhibit itself as a self-sufficient object,” and yet “this is not possible without the other being for it in the way it is for the other... that is, without each achieving this by virtue of its own activity and once again by virtue of the activity of the other.” Pinkard characterizes this moment as follows: “The encounter between the two agents is thus an encounter between two agents who cannot have any grounds to admit that any other point of view other than their own subjective point of view has any validity (or could take priority over their own point of view), even though each is supposed to recognize that the other has a point of view” (Pinkard 1994, 56).

ascription was correct. For the subject to prove itself correct, for each subject to show that it is truly radically independent from the other, it must take up a two-pronged engagement with the other: it must (1) attempt to destroy the other and the threat that it represents,⁹⁶ and (2) risk its own life in doing so, thus showing that it is not bound to the sort of limited worldly existence characteristic of contingent, dependent beings.⁹⁷ So, according to Hegel, “They must engage in this struggle, for each must elevate his self-certainty of *existing for himself* to truth, both in the other and in himself.”⁹⁸

In seeking to destroy the other self-consciousness, each also “risks his own life.”⁹⁹ By regarding the other self-consciousness as something which can be so destroyed, each must admit that *it is possible* to destroy a self-conscious entity. This struggle thus shows itself to be self-defeating, and reveals another side of the aforementioned paradox. Desire’s subject cannot justifiably assert its own authority without subordinating another self-conscious subject, but the very possibility of the subordination of a subject undermines Desire’s assertion of its authority, which depended on the presumed cognitive autonomy of self-conscious subjects. Thus, the sense of total autonomy and authority that characterized this model of self-consciousness breaks down. Or, in Hegel’s words, “this trial by death equally sublates

⁹⁶ “Each thus aims at the death of the other” (Hegel PhG, §187).

⁹⁷ Self-consciousness must “[show] that it is fettered to no determinate existence, that it is not at all bound to the universal individuality of existence, that it is not shackled to life,” and thus the struggle “involves putting one’s own life on the line.” (Hegel, PhG §187)

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

the truth which was supposed to emerge from it and, by doing so, completely sublates the certainty of itself.”¹⁰⁰

Thus, this encounter with another self-consciousness fundamentally alters the subject’s conception of itself and what it takes the structure of its own cognition to be.¹⁰¹ The self-conscious subject can no longer assert itself as the basis of legitimacy for all cognition (or seek confirmation of this assertion in the world). Instead, there is now a basic structure of intersubjective disagreement where the grounding subjective unity once was: what each subject finds is that the possibility of agreement or disagreement is intimately tied up with the legitimacy of one’s own claims, and the kind of standard that would finally provide a grounding for objective conceptual cognition.

The new proposal that emerges is that such legitimacy must be obtained through some kind of intersubjective, recognitive activity. Intelligible objective cognition will involve the presumption of some basic intersubjective structure, one that includes the possibility of “getting it wrong,” which is to say, the possibility of some *other* subject “getting it right.” The standard for correct or incorrect conceptual activity will not lie in mere correspondence to external objects or in the coherent activity of a single subject’s conceptual apparatus, but will be something founded upon the possibility of agreement or disagreement among a multitude of subjects.

¹⁰⁰ Hegel, PhG §188

¹⁰¹ In a general sense, I agree with Pippin when he remarks of this section, “[Hegel] argues that everything changes when our desires are not just thwarted or impeded, but challenged and refused” (Pippin 2011, 19).

This aspect of Hegel's argument is highlighted especially in the first move towards resolution of the struggle, in which the subject realizes that "life is as essential to it as is pure self-consciousness."¹⁰² That is to say, the subject realizes that its status as a limited, living being that finds itself already in a world with other similar beings is just as much a fundamental part of its nature as it thought its own cognitive autonomy was.¹⁰³ A detailed, fully-articulated new model is, of course, not given at this point in Hegel's text – it takes the rest of the *Phenomenology* to work out Hegel's positive view. However, Hegel does at least suggest here that some kind of intersubjective activity must be built into cognition on a fundamental level.¹⁰⁴

Both Pippin and Pinkard take Hegel's argument here to constitute a development of a project that nonetheless remains essentially Kantian. On their interpretation, the basic structure of cognition remains essentially the same, except something new is added: the seeking of "reassurances" from other subjects. For both Pippin and Pinkard, the question of intersubjective agreement at hand is primarily a social or even therapeutic issue, a sort of corrective measure for a Kantian subject once "released" into the social world. Pinkard gives the account a somewhat

¹⁰² Hegel PhG, §189

¹⁰³ Notably, this development does *not* completely reject some version of autonomy from the story, just the total autonomy characteristic of the Kantian model. E.g., Hegel notes at PhG §189 that "both moments are essential."

¹⁰⁴ I take it that this is at least a significant part of what is contained in Hegel's famous first mention of "spirit" in the Self-Consciousness section of the *Phenomenology*, at §177: "The concept of *spirit* is thereby on hand for us... this absolute substance with constitutes the unity of its oppositions in their complete freedom and self-sufficiency, namely, in the oppositions of the various self-consciousnesses existing for themselves: The *I* that is *we* and the *we* that is *I*."

psychological veneer when he remarks, for instance, that “The subject’s seeking recognition... is thus an instance of the more general way in which agents seek reassurances that what they take to be authoritative *really* is authoritative.”¹⁰⁵ Pippin characterizes the intersubjective feature of Hegel’s account by saying that “Hegel has thus tied the possibility of some epistemic reassurance about our representational strategies and conceptual schemes to some form of social or mutual reassurance.”¹⁰⁶

But “reassurance,” insofar as it suggests some kind of *ex post facto* validation, does not fully capture the radicality of the proposal Hegel is really making. It is not as though the subject already has its own intelligible, well-formed claims which, out of some insecurity about the possible limitedness of its own point of view, the subject wants others to review and approve. Instead, proper cognitive normativity – any substantial way in which one can “get it right” in cognition – only comes into view *given* a presumption of some intersubjective structure in cognition. That is, the very possibility of having an intelligible object of cognition in the first place depends upon cognition being structured in a way that accounts for the possibility of other subjects, whose claims have some normative force. The possibility of conflict with others’ claims is what makes it possible to “get it wrong” in cognition. In other words, cognitive normativity itself depends on a prior presumption that there could be other subjects with whom one could disagree.

¹⁰⁵ Pinkard 1994, 53.

¹⁰⁶ Pippin 1993, 71

Thus, the intersubjective component of this model of cognition is not to be taken as something that comes along *after* a subject has already constituted and made use of their conceptual schemes, as if it were simply an oversight mechanism applied to an otherwise Kantian subject. In order for cognition to be normative, there has to be some conception of the possibility of other, different ways of cognizing. What Hegel shows in his text on Desire and the Struggle is that such a conception is only possible on the basis of some intersubjective structure already being in place. Hegel here begins an account of cognition (the completion of which requires the remainder of the *Phenomenology*) whereby what it is to cognize at all is, fundamentally, to be beholden to possible challenges from other self-conscious subjects. In opposition to Kant's over-dependence on the radical autonomy of the transcendental self, Hegel thinks that it is in our necessary responsiveness to others that the objectivity and normativity of our own claims can be shown.¹⁰⁷ That is, cognition itself already involves conceiving of oneself as engaged in a fundamentally intersubjective activity.

¹⁰⁷ I do agree in a general sense with Pippin's claim that Hegel's "most important result" here is "that our answerability to the world is inextricably bound with, even dependent for its possibility on, our answerability to each other" (Pippin 2011, 61).

III. A POSSIBLE KANTIAN RESPONSE

One might respond to the criticism of Kant that I have attributed to Hegel by calling attention to the *universality* of the transcendental unity of apperception. Such universality might mean that the subject does not take *itself*, qua individual subject, as the basis for its cognition, but rather something more like a general notion of self-consciousness, one that includes any and every possible human cognizer. Terry Pinkard suggests this view when he emphasizes the universality of “universal self-consciousness,” and glosses this as “for all rational agents.”¹⁰⁸ On this reading, the transcendental unity of apperception is universal not only to all of a particular subject’s representations, but also to all possible representations for all subjects.

Pierre Keller has put forth a sustained argument for such a view in his book *Kant and the Demands of Self-Consciousness*. There, Keller argues that since the “I think” that undergirds all our basic combinative activity in cognition is the *transcendental* rather than the empirical self, we should think of that self as “standpoint-neutral” and “context-independent.”¹⁰⁹ Thus, that self should be understood as “absolutely general” or even “global,” not as a self that actually belongs to any particular individual. According to Keller, Kant’s claim that the “I think” is “in all consciousness... one and the same”¹¹⁰ means that the “I think” “must therefore also be the same in the different states of consciousness that characterize different

¹⁰⁸ Pinkard 2002, 34.

¹⁰⁹ Keller 1998, 72.

¹¹⁰ Kant I B132

persons.”¹¹¹ That is, Keller takes this “standpoint-neutral” self to be a self that doesn’t belong to anyone in particular, standing apart from any particular selves and serving as a sort of universal “self” for all subjects in general, and through which all subjects have some access to each other.¹¹²

Keller goes on to argue that because the transcendental unity of apperception, now conceived of as a “global” self, is taken to be a necessary feature of any and all cognitive subjects, it must be this same unity that undergirds *everyone’s* cognitions. Just as the individual subject is required to justify its own cognitions on the basis of their affinity with each other and agreement with the categories, analogously all of our claims among multiple individuals have the same normative constraint – we *should* seek out agreement among all cognitive subjects, because all of our claims should be reconcilable in virtue of their belonging to this global self. On this view, Kant’s cognitive model in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is already one upon which individual subjects are required to be answerable to each other. Thus, we can and should conceive of Kantian conceptual cognition as an intersubjective activity that can make

¹¹¹ Keller 1998, 71.

¹¹² E.g., “We must be able to think of all of these possible contents of self-consciousness belonging to different possible individuals as belonging to one possible global self-consciousness” (Keller 1998, 72).

objective claims possible, in virtue of the intersubjective universality of the transcendental unity of apperception.¹¹³

If Keller's view is right, it would show that our criticism of Kant's model of cognition as too reliant on a conception of "cognitive autonomy" misunderstands the depth and complexity of Kant's view, and Hegel would no longer seem to have made much progress over the Kantian account. Keller's view could also have at least one of two consequences for our interpretation of Hegel's view: either Hegel misunderstands or misrepresents Kant's view, or the section on Desire in the *Phenomenology* is not a critique of Kant after all. However, I think there are two closely related problems with Keller's interpretation of Kant that make his view less plausible, and less problematic for our argument above than it may at first appear.

First of all, Keller mistakenly equates "standpoint-neutral" with "robustly intersubjective." It does not follow that being "standpoint-neutral," where "standpoint-neutral" means something like "abstracted away from any contingent features of any individual subject," can at all amount to the same thing as the sort of intersubjective activity that goes on among a multitude of individuals. Hegel argues against just this kind of equivocation in Desire, where the desiring subject understands itself as universal, not in any way contingent, and in that sense certainly standpoint-neutral. There, we found that the kind of standpoint-neutrality that

¹¹³ See Keller 1998 pg 71-72, as well as pg. 81: "The universality of the unity of transcendental self-consciousness that Kant invokes... cannot be restricted to the representations in my individual consciousness alone, for then it could not support the objective validity that he identifies with transcendental apperception..."

characterizes the Kantian cognitive subject makes Kant's model unable to account for the kind of normativity necessary for objective cognition. Insofar as the subject takes its own (allegedly "standpoint-neutral") point of view as ultimately authoritative, there is no possibility of "getting it wrong" in cognition. The subject's inability to recognize any standards beyond its own, which amounts to the subject's inability to properly recognize other self-conscious subjects and the normative grip of their claims, renders its position empty.

But Keller argues that the standpoint-neutrality that belongs to transcendental apperception gives the individual subject an ability to represent the possible contents of *other* points of view.¹¹⁴ Having access to the contents of other points of view is important, Keller argues, because the "mineness" that undergirds the synthesis of my particular representations is only meaningful if I can consider it in light of "other distinctive unities of consciousness, that is, to other distinctive histories, histories that are yours, his, hers, and its."¹¹⁵ Keller gets something about "mineness" right here, insofar as describing something as "mine" is only substantial in light of some understanding of notions like "yours, his, hers, and its." Indeed, the idea that "mineness" is only meaningful when considered in relation to and contrast with what we might call "not-mineness" could be a way of articulating one of the main themes of our interpretation of the Struggle in Hegel's *Phenomenology*. But whether Keller could

¹¹⁴ Keller 1998, 77.

¹¹⁵ Keller 1998, 77.

be right about “mineness” in general here is a different question than whether he is right about Kant.

By Keller’s own argument, this “mineness” belongs to “distinctive unities of consciousness,” *not* a universal or “standpoint-neutral” point of view. The “mineness” characteristic of the kinds of distinctive unities that can make up an intersubjective community cannot be the same “mineness” characteristic of a standpoint-neutral global self. It is one thing to say that a subject can abstract from its own point of view to a standpoint-neutral one – it is quite another to say that the subject thereby has access to a multitude of other *non-neutral* points of view. Thus, if Kant is advocating for a view upon which objective cognition is grounded on the unifying power of a standpoint-neutral global self, as Keller says he is, it is still entirely unclear how he could arrive at a properly intersubjective model.

This leads into the second problem with Keller’s view: the claim that we are obligated to seek coherence amongst the claims of a multitude of individual subjects in just the same way that we are obligated to seek coherence in an individual subject’s cognitive activity. Keller rightly says that a sort of answerability to each other is built into judgment in general,¹¹⁶ but whether or not Kant actually succeeds in effectively capturing this important feature is precisely what is at issue. The argument for Kant’s success relies on the idea that the “global self” would be structured in roughly the same way as an individual self, or even that this global self just is the subject of Kant’s

¹¹⁶ E.g., “Judgment involves the possibility of agreement or disagreement between different persons about some purported state of affairs” (Keller 1998, 78).

discussion in the relevant text. If this is so, the argument goes, then the obligation to cognitive coherence for any individual subject also extends across subjects, that is, across all the particulars that belong to this global self.

However, it is not at all clear that one should in fact make such an analogy, especially given that “all possible subjects” do not seem to share the same kind of direct cognitive unity with each other that characterizes the various representations belonging to an individual subject on Kant’s account.¹¹⁷ The issue at hand, then, is what the proper domain for the transcendental unity of apperception is. There are two possible options: (1) the synthetic unity of all of each individual’s representations, or (2) the synthetic unity of all representations in general, regardless of individual subjects. Keller argues for (2), but Kant’s text itself proceeds on the basis of (1).

The quotation that both Keller and Pinkard focus on when discussing this universal self says that representations “must yet necessarily be in accord with the condition under which alone they can stand together in a universal self-consciousness,”¹¹⁸ but continues “because otherwise they would not throughout belong to me.”¹¹⁹ Against Keller and Pinkard, I take this text to show that Kant has in mind a single subject when he is discussing the “universal self-consciousness.” Kant’s argument here emphasizes a certain manifold’s belonging to a particular unified

¹¹⁷ In fact, if Hegel is right about the necessity of building intersubjectivity into cognition on the ground level, the order of things here gets it backwards anyway – there would be no already-intelligible individuals ready to be made coherent with each other, if the intersubjective element is a *condition for* such individuals.

¹¹⁸ See e.g. Pinkard 2002, 34.

¹¹⁹ Kant I B132

subject, and argues that what holds this manifold together is precisely that they belong to this subject, that the representations “thoroughly belong to me.” His use of the word “universal” need not muddy this account: the “universal self-consciousness” in this case is the name for the way in which *my* self-consciousness serves as a concept of sorts – a rule of synthesis – for the manifold that belongs to me. In this sense, my individual self-consciousness is universal with respect to the content of my cognition.

It is nonetheless clear that Kant wants the same *a priori* rules for cognition to hold for everyone. His argument for the necessity and objective validity of the categories is meant to show that his cognitive model (as the necessary *a priori* structure of cognition) holds true for all human cognizers. But it seems clear from Kant’s text that his account is originally envisioned as an investigation of the structure of cognition internal to a single subject, and much of the challenge for Kant is precisely this project of determining how certain features of an individual cognizer could be necessary and universal.¹²⁰ Keller’s account largely gets it right about what Kant wants to do, and even perhaps what Kant should do in order to establish an account of normative conceptual cognition. Nonetheless, it is not what Kant actually *does* do – and we need Hegel’s account to show us how to move beyond the problems with Kant’s model.

Intersubjectivity importantly includes differentiation amongst its constitutive members – the “otherness” that was such a problem for Hegel’s subject of Desire.

¹²⁰ See, e.g., Kant I B122: Kant takes himself to be directly addressing the problem of “how subjective conditions of thinking should have objective validity.”

This interpretation of Kant's model, even if one goes along with the controversial notion of the "global self," fails to accomplish this kind of intersubjectivity. At best, the problems with the Kantian account – the difficulties with finding cognitive norms that can be convincingly shown to extend beyond the subject's own limitations, the lingering threat of subjectivism – will be reproduced at the "global" level. For a model of conceptual cognition that includes the intersubjective activity necessary for normative conceptual rules, we need Hegel's criticism of Kant and emphasis on intersubjective recognition in the Self-Consciousness section of the *Phenomenology*.

CONCLUSION

For a judgment to be objective is for the judgment to hold for all subjects. But objectivity is intimately tied up with normativity in cognition; for a judgment to be “objective” is for it to be something that all cognitive subjects *should* assent to, given ideal conditions. In other words, it must be possible for there to be a difference between an individual subject’s cognitions and objective cognition, a difference which the individual subject ought to overcome if possible. This difference is only recognizable given the possibility of *other* points of view – not just some completely generalized “neutral” standpoint abstracted away from the individual, but truly other, distinctive points of view, which could come to disagree with each other in some substantial way. Indeed, one’s own point of view *qua* one’s own – not someone else’s – is only intelligible in light of possible others.

For Kant, the universality of the categories is supposed to do the work in this regard. Hegel’s critique of Kant in “Desire” shows that, even given the universality of the categories, there is still no norm in view that obligates different subjects to come to any agreement or to even engage with each other at all. In other words, even though it may be the case that each subject is possessed of essentially the same internal structure, envisioning that structure as cognitively autonomous means that there is nothing beyond the individual subject – either objects or other subjects – that the subject is beholden to in its cognitive activity. The underlying cognitive principles

might be universal internal to every subject, and thereby universal among subjects in the sense that every subject has this cognitive structure *qua* subject. But this does not show how different subjects could come to take account of possible disagreement with each other, that is, it does not show the possibility of alternative views truly beyond one's own. If we want to account for the normativity necessary for objective cognition, according to Hegel, some conception of such alternative views – some basic notion of intersubjectivity – must be built into cognition, not as a corrective afterthought but as a condition for the possibility of norm-governed cognition itself. Only then can we begin to see how cognition might be properly understood as a subjective *activity*, which nonetheless can put us in touch with the objective world.

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