

## Taylor On Phenomenological Method: An Hegelian Refutation

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### I

In his article "The Opening Arguments of The Phenomenology"<sup>1</sup> Charles Taylor contends that *the* first three chapters of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* can be read as an essay in transcendental argument; specifically, that it can be read as a transcendental argument of the Kantian variety. But given Hegel's frequent criticisms of Kant's philosophical method, is this an appropriate formulation of Hegel's work? In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, for example, Hegel criticizes Kant's philosophy as carried out from a merely subjective standpoint. Kantian philosophy he states:

.. .leads knowledge into consciousness and self-consciousness, but from this standpoint maintains it to be subjective and finite knowledge. Thus although it deals with the infinite Idea, expressing its formal categories and arriving at its concrete claims, it yet again denies this to be the truth, making it a simple subjective, because it has once for all accepted finite knowledge as the fixed and ultimate standpoint.<sup>2</sup>

Again, in the *Logic of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, Hegel is critical of the dualism in Kant's Philosophy.

Thoughts according to Kant, although universal and necessary categories, are only our thoughts - separated by an impassable gulf from the thing, as it exists apart from our knowledge. But the true objectivity of thinking means that the thoughts, far from being merely ours, must at the same time be the real essence of the things and of whatever is an object to us.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Taylor, "The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology", in *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Alasdair MacIntyre (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972)

<sup>2</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *The History of Philosophy* Vol III, trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1963), p. 427.

<sup>3</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Logic: Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. William Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp.67-68.

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It is clear from much of Hegel's commentary of Kant's work that he has fundamental objections to transcendental method. It is also clear from the "Introduction" and "Preface" to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that Hegel has serious objections to traditional epistemology generally.

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

It is a natural assumption that in philosophy, before we start to deal with its proper subject matter ... one must first of all come to an understanding about cognition ... because cognition is a faculty of a definite kind and scope, and thus, without a more precise definition of its nature and limits, we might grasp clouds of error instead of the heaven of truth.<sup>4</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>4</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller ( Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977 ), p. 46.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

the workings of the instrument of cognition, in order that it might eliminate the shaping functions of the instrument, it merely leaves its object exactly what it was before this inquiry. If, on the other hand, the investigation attempts to remove the refracting capacity of the instrument, this will not solve the problem either, because the elimination of the ray will also involve the elimination of the means whereby the truth reaches us. If the ray were eliminated, explains Hegel, "all that would be indicated would be a pure direction or a blank space."<sup>6</sup> That is to say, if cognition is viewed as a medium through which we get hold of an object, then its removal also entails the removal of the object -- i.e. there would be no object of thought for us.

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

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

For instance, how is possible, if at all, to get outside of our cognitive life in order to make a critical examination of it? If we are able to do this, then what is the status of this knowledge of knowledge? Moreover, if it is also some kind of knowledge, is it not, then, itself subject to the same conditions which it establishes in its preliminary inquiry? All of this would seem to suggest that epistemological inquiries by their very nature are caught in a circle or dilemma. In other words, every epistemological inquiry, if it is making a claim about the nature and validity of knowledge in general, either has to appeal to its own criterion, which would make its argument circular, or it has to make some preliminary presuppositions about knowledge, which prejudices the entire procedure.

It is not possible, in my judgment, to reconcile this view of Hegel's with Taylor's contention that the opening arguments in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* will only hold if certain presuppositions -- undeniable facets of experience -- about knowledge are made. For the remainder of this paper I will examine Taylor's specific claim that the opening section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, "Sense-Certainty", is transcendental in form. I will indicate why this interpretation is inappropriate, given Hegel's criticisms of transcendental method and his stated goal of disclosing how the various finite forms of consciousness represent the self-education of absolute spirit to its own spiritual principles. Additionally, I will offer an alternative reading of this opening movement, one that is guided by Hegel's own conception of phenomenology.

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

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>7</sup> Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* Vol III, p. 428.

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

.. presupposes that we can characterize effective experience in terms independent of the model of experience we are working with. Moreover, if we are to show that the model is not just unrealized in a given case, but cannot be realized, we have to be able to identify some basic and pervasive facets of experience independently of our model ( they must be independent, i.e. not derivable from the model itself, if they are to contradict it and show it to be impossible ).<sup>8</sup>

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

For Taylor, the whole dialectical movement of consciousness narrated in the first three chapters of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* depends on such undeniable starting points, or what in an earlier work he calls "criterial properties"<sup>9</sup>. Criterial properties are basic notions of what a standard or purpose must be and which are already met or established. Taylor uses an example from Plato's *Republic* to indicate what he means here. He argues that the various conceptions of justice put forward in the *Republic*, can only be shown to be inadequate because certain criterial properties of justice are already known.<sup>10</sup> Cephalos' definition of justice as telling the truth and paying one's debts is shown to be inadequate because certain criterial properties of justice are already known, specifically, that a just act is a good act. In the case of transcendental argument, which attempts to define the structure of the subject granted certain types of experiences, criterial properties are those undeniable features of experience which are essential and pervasive to our lives as knowing subjects. In 'sense-certainty', for example, the criterial property is 'to know is to be able to say'. Hence, if we have knowledge of the type, then we should be able 'to say' what it is we know. He writes:

For us, knowing is inseparably bound up with being able to say, even if we can only say rather badly and inadequately ... An experience about which nothing at all could be said ... would be below the threshold of the level of awareness which we consider essential for knowledge.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Taylor, "The Opening Arguments" , pp. 159-160.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, ( Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975 ), p. 133.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>11</sup> Taylor, "The Opening Arguments", p. 154

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

For Taylor, to be more specific, this dialectical movement can be best understood as "a relation involving not just two terms but three: the basic purpose or standard, the inadequate reality, and an inadequate conception of the purpose which is bound up with that reality."

He goes on to explain more fully:

We start off with an inadequate notion of the standard involved. But we also have from the beginning some very basic, correct notions of what the standard or purpose is, some criterial properties which it must meet. It is these criterial properties which in fact enable us to show that a given conception of the standard is inadequate. For we show that this conception cannot be realized in such a way as to meet the criterial properties, and hence that this definition is unacceptable as a definition of the standard or purpose concerned. But we show the inadequacy of the faulty formula by trying to 'realize' it, that is, construct a reality according to it. This is what brings out the conflict with the standard.<sup>12</sup>

If the standard we are aiming at is knowing or science, then the given conception of the standard would be a certain concept of knowing considered as a realized standard. Now in the opening section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* this given conception of the standard would be the affirmation on the part of 'sense-certainty' to be a knowledge of the immediate or what simply *is*. We can, Taylor thinks, show that 'sense-certainty' is an inadequate conception of knowing or science because we are from the beginning in possession of a certain criterial property of knowing, namely 'to know is to be able to say'; and 'sense-certainty' can only be shown to be a faulty conception of knowing in our very attempt to realize it, that is, to experience in this way, to have this type of knowledge. 'Sense-certainty', then, and consciousness generally can be judged self-contradictory where certain already existing standards or criterial properties of knowing are not met. Taylor indicates that while this may seem to be to import ideas and theories from outside ordinary consciousness that it is not the case. Criterial properties, he contends, do not violate Hegel's method because they are implicit in us as knowing subjects. In requiring the subject of 'sense-certainty' to say what he knows, argues Taylor, we are not violating Hegel's method because "... implicit in knowing in the sense relevant here is a certain awareness of what is known".<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 133.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141

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

It is argued that Hegel's attack on sense-certainty is essentially based on the fact that sense-certainty cannot or will not *say* anything, and knowledge requires something to be *said*. But if this were Hegel's argument ... it would be clearly ineffectual, and it would do what Hegel always insists that we must *not* do, namely, apply a criterion to a form of consciousness which is not already 'internal' to it, which it does not itself accept.<sup>14</sup>

In any case, the requirement that we *say* what it is we know would be ineffectual, in Solomon's view, because 'sense-certainty' could make its case by just "shutting up".<sup>15</sup> Solomon's contention that Taylor is importing an external criterion into 'sense-certainty', however, stems from his characterization of 'sense-certainty' as a theory of knowledge and not, as it is for Taylor, an actual attempt to experience in a certain manner. Of 'sense-certainty' he states:

It is important to stress that this is a *view* of knowledge rather than an actual form of consciousness in the sense that we will encounter later, that is, a realizable mode of living, a set of concepts that structure our daily experience.<sup>16</sup>

Solomon, nonetheless, does allow that in some instances a form of consciousness, as a theory of knowledge, can include an attempt to 'live' that theory.<sup>17</sup> In spite of this caveat, however, Solomon insists that 'sense-certainty' is not, and can never be, an actual endeavor to experience in a certain way.<sup>18</sup> 'Sense-certainty', in other words, is a view of knowledge and not the content of everyday cognition. Now Solomon's reason for holding this view is his belief that for Hegel there cannot be any immediate knowledge of particulars, that is to say, there cannot be any knowledge unmediated by concepts. 'Sense-certainty', therefore, as a form of consciousness which is supposed to be in immediate contact with objects, is ruled out from the outset. Though, for Solomon, this is a claim which must be demonstrated, not just affirmed.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, Solomon's central point is that we are applying an external criterion to 'sense-certainty' when we insist that it 'say' what it knows, especially given that it is a theory of knowledge which holds that knowledge does not require general descriptions.

This argument against the possibility of identifying particulars has nothing to do with the demand that one must be able to *say* what it is one knows ...

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<sup>14</sup> Robert C. Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 329-330.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 330.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 324.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 352.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 324.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 324-325.

It has to do with the use of universals at the very basis of experience, as a necessary condition for our being able to pick out particular objects. It has nothing to do as Taylor says, with "having to say something just to get started" ...<sup>20</sup>

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

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

The experience of itself which consciousness goes through can, in accordance with its concept, comprehend nothing less than the entire system of consciousness, or the entire realm of the truth of spirit. For this reason, the moments of this truth are exhibited in their own proper determinateness, viz. as being not abstract moments, but as they are for consciousness, or as consciousness itself stands forth in its relation to them. Thus the moments of the whole are *patterns of consciousness*.<sup>21</sup>

The *patterns of consciousness*, to use Hegel's wording, are those extant forms of finite cognition or points of view of human subjective consciousness exhibited in the *Phenomenology*. If, as Hegel observes in his "Introduction", consciousness simultaneously distinguishes itself from something and at the same moment relates itself to it,<sup>22</sup> then ordinary finite consciousness represents the cognitive relationship of a subject to an object. If this is indeed the case, then 'sense-certainty' is a form of finite or ordinary consciousness, not simply a theory of knowledge. However, while I agree with Taylor that 'sense-certainty' is not simply a theory of knowledge, his use of criterial properties can still be considered as violating Hegel's method, although for a different reason than that specified by Solomon.

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

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 334.

<sup>21</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 56.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

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... the advance from one thought to the next, from one form of knowing to the next, must derive from an immanent necessity.<sup>23</sup>

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

Science must vindicate itself not by being measured against some preconceived criterion, but through a descriptive examination of its character as a specific phenomenon, from which its validity will emerge. This is what Hegel understands by a 'phenomenology'.<sup>24</sup>

In both quotes the sentiment is the same, the phenomenological development from ordinary to absolute consciousness cannot be such that its movement and outcome is determined by some preconceived criterion. Accordingly, to use Gadamer's example,

... in thinking the sense certainty which fills it, consciousness can no longer believe itself to be thinking anything other than a "universal 'this,'" and thus it must grant that what it meant is a "universal," and that it perceives it as a "thing."<sup>25</sup>

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

If this exposition is viewed as a way of *relating science to phenomenal knowledge* ... it would seem that it cannot take place without some presupposition which can serve as its underlying *criterion*. For an examination consists in applying an accepted standard and in determining whether something is right or wrong on the basis of the resulting agreement or disagreement ... ; thus the standard is accepted as the *essence* or as the *in-itself* ... But here, where science has just begun to come on the scene, neither science nor anything else has yet justified itself as the essence or the in-itself ... .<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> H. G. Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, trans. Christopher Smith (New Hampshire: Yale University Press, 1976 ), p. 83.

<sup>24</sup> Richard Norman, *Hegel's Phenomenology: A Philosophical Introduction*, (London: Sussex University Press, 1976 ), p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic*, p. 83.

<sup>26</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 52



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

There seems to be a kind of epistemological bias or predisposition in Taylor's reading of Hegel's work to regard knowledge as strictly a dimension of the human subject. In this regard, it is not at all clear that Hegel would accept the use of criterial properties of knowing, given that they are determinations which apply to us strictly as subjects. The use of criterial properties presupposes that our cognition is a kind of medium through which what we know is refracted. In the case of 'sense-certainty', for instance, what is to be known is refracted or shaped by the necessity that knowledge for us be 'sayable'. Moreover, the use of criterial properties would imply an original distinction, and concomitantly a division, between what is 'for us' and what is 'in itself'. But this is just the view of knowledge which Hegel disavows from the outset. The whole impulse or inclination to view knowledge strictly in terms of the demands of the knowing subject is one Hegel sees as untenable, in that it assumes a distinction between knowing and what is known, which, once accepted, can never be overcome.

Hegel's phenomenological exposition of 'sense-certainty' makes no such presuppositions about the nature of consciousness. That is to say, it does not suppose, as Taylor does, that conscious experience is "... that of a knowing subject who has a certain vision of things".<sup>27</sup> Nor does it make any presuppositions about the structure of that experience, qua subject, that it is "inseparably bound up with being able to say...".<sup>28</sup> Rather, for Hegel, the dialectical movement that consciousness undergoes is not about the contradiction between a particular model of experience, construed as a knowing subject who has a certain vision of things, and a particular standard, understood as a certain criterial property or undeniable facet of experience. Consciousness is transformed from within, not because certain models of experience are in conflict with presupposed standards of knowing, but because each form of finite consciousness is characterized by a disparity between its concept and its reality, that is to say, between what 'it is' and what is 'for it'. The dialectical movement of consciousness, in other words, is a result of this immanent self-conflict.

Taylor's approach to Chapter One of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is to frame the argument in terms of the demand that 'sense-certainty' *say* what it knows. 'sense-certainty' claims to be the "richest" kind of knowledge, because it is in immediate contact with its

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<sup>27</sup> Taylor, "The Opening Arguments", p. 158.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

object, prior to any conceptual activity. Hegel's strategy in the face of this claim, argues Taylor, is to take up the position of 'sense-certainty' and "try to say what we know in this way".<sup>29</sup> The attempt "to say", contends Taylor, "will contradict the basic requirements of sensible certainty .. " and ".. will take us beyond its defining limits".<sup>30</sup> Only in this way, maintains Taylor, can 'sense-certainty' stand self-refuted in the way Hegel outlines in the "Introduction" to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Taylor indicates two main ways in which the attempt 'to say' will take 'sense-certainty' beyond its limits. The minor way is its lack of selectivity in its attempt to grasp things, and the major way is its inability to pick out particulars without the mediating instruments of universal concepts. The first attempt, according to Taylor, centers on the claim 'sense-certainty' makes to be the richest and the most inexhaustible kind of knowledge. But when 'sense-certainty' is challenged to say what it really is aware of, then the inexhaustible richness of detail that it professes to possess is shown to be illusory. In its attempt to grasp things, argues Taylor, 'sense-certainty' discovers that it lacks selectivity. The requirement that we say what we know reveals that 'sense-certainty' is not really in contact with an inexhaustible richness of detail, but rather only a certain selection. He explains:

Looking at the objects in my study under their ordinary descriptions as use objects ( typewriter, desk, chairs, etc. ), I cannot see them as pure shapes; or looking at them as pure shapes, I cannot see them as the juxtaposition of different materials, and so on.<sup>31</sup>

But because 'sense-certainty' attempts to take in everything it lacks the selectivity required to grasp particular things and is thus condemned to emptiness, to fall over into a "trancelike stare".<sup>32</sup>

Now, earlier in his article, "The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology", Taylor states:

An experience about which nothing at all could be said, not even that it was very difficult if not impossible to describe, would be below the threshold of the level of awareness which we consider essential for knowledge.<sup>33</sup>

Because 'sense-certainty' is deficient in this respect, the obvious implication is that it lacks the minimum level of awareness necessary for knowledge. Thus Taylor takes this minor argument to be a transcendental one. We start with the putatively undeniable facet of experience, that to know, we must be able to say, and this allows us to demonstrate the illusory nature of the claim to be able to take in everything in an inexhaustible richness of

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.162-163.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

detail. But because language by its very nature is selective, it also demonstrates that our experience is necessarily mediated by the use of concepts.

The second way in which the attempt to say will take 'sense-certainty' beyond its limits, argues Taylor, involves a refutation of its claim to be in immediate contact with sensible particulars. For Taylor this refutation will involve two stages. In both stages the challenge will be for 'sense-certainty' to say what it knows. In the first instance, this will involve 'sense-certainty' answering the challenge by use of "pure demonstratives".<sup>34</sup> In the second instance, the challenge will be answered with the use of "ostensive definition".<sup>35</sup> Each attempt, however, fails to answer the challenge because the attempt at effective awareness of the sensible particular can only be realized by employing universal terms or concepts, rather than through the object's own particularity. In the first instance, for example, the use of demonstratives such as 'this' or 'here' or 'now', because they can apply indifferently to a variety of contexts, operate like universals. Similarly, the use of ostensive definitions is only available in context, and this requires the use of descriptive terms such as 'day', 'night', 'hour' and so on. But these are general terms which can never capture the particularity of the object. And so, Taylor states:

... Hegel concludes, there is no unmediated knowledge of the particular.  
Sensible certainty ends up saying the opposite of what it means, and this is  
the proof of its contradictory nature.<sup>36</sup>

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

Now the contradictory nature of 'sense-certainty' can be demonstrated only if we first start from some undeniable characteristic of experience, that is to say, if we first have certain preestablished criterial properties of knowing. In the case of 'sense-certainty', then, the undeniable characteristic of experience is that our knowing is inseparably bound up with being able to say. The implication of this, however, is that our experience or cognition must be of a certain type, i.e., it necessarily involves the mediating instrument of universal concepts. Now, Hegel would not disagree with the view that immediate knowledge of sensible particulars is impossible. But what he would object to is Taylor's presentation of this idea as if it were simply about our cognition, namely, that it is a faculty of a certain kind and scope, whose nature and limits we need to define by means of transcendental argument. To treat conscious experience or cognition as a faculty of a definite kind and scope is to treat it as an instrument or medium through which we get at the truth. But as already suggested, this characterization of cognition also introduces an original distinction between ourselves and the real world, which for Hegel, once established, can never be surmounted.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>37</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 46-47.

Transcendental argument can only work if subjective consciousness is understood as a pure, autonomous self to which certain transcendental criteria apply, a priori. Transcendental argument, accordingly, is directed to the conditions of the possibility of cognition or knowledge on the part of this subjectivity. But a phenomenological exposition of the experience of consciousness considers the actual dialectical movement in consciousness itself. That is to say, it is entirely taken up with how each of the various phenomenal forms of human subjective consciousness actually give way to more comprehensive ones, and how in this dialectical movement of the concept, qua subjective, the system of science is constituted. In this sense, there is never any "undeniable" or "permanent" feature of experience from which we can determine, a priori, the principles of knowledge. Hegelian phenomenology, briefly put, is an exposition of the various forms of finite consciousness in terms of the concepts which animate them and not in terms of preestablished criterial properties or transcendental requirements of knowing. The whole point of a phenomenological exposition is to demonstrate how the various forms of finite consciousness, which take themselves to be permanent and original, are really moments or elements in knowledge as such.

A phenomenological exposition of 'sense-certainty', therefore, will have to take up the argument from within 'sense-certainty' itself, exhibiting the logic of this form, and demonstrating the necessity of its advance to 'perception'. In other words, the dialectical progress of finite consciousness is not something externally imposed by the phenomenologist, but derives from consciousness itself. But we do not have to presuppose, as Taylor claims, some already accepted criterion by which to judge 'sense-certainty', we need only attend to the logic of the inherent conflict within 'sense-certainty' itself. It is this inherent self-conflict which is the means whereby consciousness as 'sense-certainty' recasts itself in a more complete form. But it is phenomenology which, in reflecting on this process, demonstrates the necessity of the advance, and which in turn ensures its completion as an actual knowing.

## II

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

corresponds to its object, and conversely whether its object corresponds to its concept. But what is crucial for the present examination is that in this testing both the measure of the truth and the knowing of it belong to consciousness. In this dialectical movement, where both knowledge and object undergo change, what Hegel calls *experience*, no presuppositions about the nature of experience, independent of any particular model or form of experience, need be made.

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

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

.. .is distinguished from the other modes of consciousness, not by the fact that in it alone the object is given to us by the senses, but rather by the fact that on this stage the object, whether an inner or an outer object, has no other thought-determination than first, that of simply being, and secondly, of being an independent Other over against me, something reflected into itself, an individual confronting me as an individual, an immediate.<sup>39</sup>

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

.. .neither I nor the thing has the significance of a complex process of mediation; the 'I' does not have the significance of a manifold imagining

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>39</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, trans. A. V. Miller ( Oxford: Oxford University Press 1971 ), p. 160.

or thinking; nor does the 'thing' signify something that has a host of qualities.<sup>40</sup>

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

While, as Taylor acknowledges, there are recognizable empiricist themes in this section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, such a theory is considerably more complex than what is being exhibited in 'sense-certainty', namely, the naive affirmation of the immediately 'given' world. The nature of this 'given' is never explicated as it is in empiricism, but merely affirmed. There is, as previously indicated, no "complex process of mediation" in such a standpoint, but merely the apprehension of what simply *is*. To say more than this is to go beyond the immediacy of 'sense-certainty' to something else, namely some kind of mediation. In 'sense-certainty', consciousness or the 'I', is not characterized by any imagining or thinking, it is simply a pure 'This', just as the object is a pure 'This'. Hegel makes the following observation about how consciousness and its object must be construed for 'sense-certainty':

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

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

Now Taylor claims that phenomenology can only do this if we first identify certain pervasive and undeniable facets of experience which are outside any particular model of experience under examination. For Taylor, dialectical movement, as explained earlier, is a relationship involving three terms. First, a certain model or notion of experience; second, specific criterial properties of knowing that furnish the standard that effective experience must satisfy; and third, effective experience which is guided by this model of experience. It is the second term which, for Taylor, accounts for the contradiction in ordinary consciousness. But this would suggest that a phenomenological account of 'sense-certainty' would not be an exposition in terms of the concept of knowing which animates 'sense-certainty' as such i.e. its claim to be immediate knowledge. Furthermore, the contradiction within 'sense-certainty' would not be between its concept and its reality, i.e., what it is and what is for it, but between effective experience guided by 'sense-

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<sup>40</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 58.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

certainty' and certain presupposed undeniable facets of experience which condition the knowing subject, the 'I'. This characterization of knowing, however, is just what Hegel opposes in the "Preface" and "Introduction" to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, although it is not limited to that work. In the *Philosophy of Mind*, for example, Hegel writes:

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

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

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

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

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

What, then, is the logic of 'sense-certainty'? It claims to be immediate knowledge of what simply *is*, a simple registering of an immediate content. In other words, it holds that

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<sup>42</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, p. 154.

<sup>43</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 21.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

there is an immediate identity between a registering consciousness, the 'I', and a given datum, the 'This'. 'Sense-certainty' signifies the immediate identity of two particulars, the 'I', and the 'This'. In the dialectic of 'sense-certainty', however, the 'I' and the 'This' reveal themselves to be something other than this, namely, mediated and universal. Hegel remarks at the beginning of the argument:

... pure being at once splits up into what we have called the two 'Thises', one 'This' as 'I', and the other 'This' as object. When *we* reflect on this difference, we find that neither one nor the other is only *immediately* present in sense-certainty, but each is at the same time *mediated*. I have this certainty through something else, viz. through the thing; and it, similarly, is in sense-certainty *through* something else, viz. through the 'I'.<sup>45</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.



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

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

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

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

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

What does not disappear in all this is the 'I' as *universal*, whose seeing is neither a seeing of the tree nor of this house, but is a simple seeing which,

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p 60.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

though mediated by the negation of this, etc., is all the same simple and indifferent to whatever happens in it, to the house, the tree, etc..<sup>52</sup>

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

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

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

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

Similarly:

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

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

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

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

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

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

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

In other words, knowledge, for Taylor, is determined throughout, in its form, by the a priori conditions imposed by the nature of human cognition. The fact that knowing, for us, is inseparably bound up with being able to say, for example, precludes immediate knowledge of particulars. We can only get hold of the particular through the mediating instruments of universal concepts. That is to say, it is only through the mediating influence of concepts that the 'given' of 'sense-certainty' can be an object for us. It is impossible then, a priori, to grasp sensible particulars except as mediated through universal concepts. But it is also the case that the universal concepts or descriptive terms in our experience have meaning only through their union with sensible particulars. In either case, within 'sense-certainty' objectivity i.e. what can be an object for us is constituted by the prior rules laid down by our own subjectivity. We could not have knowledge of sensible particulars without the mediating influence of universal concepts,

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

and we know this to be so because for us knowledge is inseparably bound up with being able to say.

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

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

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

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

Transcendental arguments thus may establish something about our lives as subjects, but this is all that it does; it never gets around to what Hegel calls actual knowledge or speculative philosophy. Transcendental arguments, accordingly, are the endless reflections upon one context of objectivity after another, without ever getting around to actual knowledge.

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 56-57.

<sup>57</sup> Charles Taylor, "The Validity of Transcendental Arguments" in *Philosophical Arguments*, ed. C. Taylor (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995 ), p. 26.

<sup>58</sup> Taylor, "The Opening Arguments", p. 187.

### III

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

Another way to understand the difference between Hegelian phenomenology and transcendental argument is in terms of what each seeks to accomplish. What is sought in transcendental argument is a principle of objectivity for self-conscious human reason itself. In Kant's work, to give an obvious example, transcendental argument is employed to determine how objectivity is constituted for the understanding within the context of the given phenomena of immediate experience. What the world is actually like, however, remains always problematical. Taylor, in construing the argument of 'sense-certainty' a transcendental one, is carrying forth the same procedure: in 'sense-certainty', universal concepts are the mediating instruments by means of which objectification is determined; that is to say, objects can be present to us only through the mediating influence of universal concepts. For both Kant and Taylor, though, knowledge is strictly a matter of human consciousness imposing its own form on what it comes to know. Correspondingly, things are only what they are in the light of reflected reason, or as they are subjectively constituted. But as such, objects, and the world generally, are without significance and independent meaning. Subjectivity or reason is not manifested in the actual world, and the world, accordingly, is very much something which is 'alien' and 'other'.

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

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<sup>59</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 56-57.

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

Thus, while Hegel recognizes, like all modern philosophers from Descartes on, that things must be understood in the light of the principles of subjective reason, i.e. what they are for thought, the above quotation suggests that he also insists that this reason must discover itself in 'absolute otherness', in the world. Philosophical knowledge or science, in other words, is not merely knowledge of reason as such, but of reason actually manifested in the world. To the extent it is this idea that Hegel espouses the opening passages of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* do not constitute an essay in transcendental argument.

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.