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Notes on Hegel (Fall, 2022)—updated on 12/23/2022

"… and the Spirit of God was brooding upon the surface of the waters." (Genesis 1:2b, *RV*)

The following notes consist in summaries of my independent study of Hegel based on Robert Brandom's and David Landy's interpretations/exegesis. Despite differences between Brandom's and Landy's view, I think that they largely overlap since both are influenced by Wilfrid Sellars. I would like to call their version of Hegel *Brandegel*. This is only a general survey of some aspects of *Brandegel* (*A Spirit of Trust*, Introduction to Chapter 12). Therefore, it might not completely represent this version of Hegel.

<u>The history of epistemology according to Brandom (and me)</u>

The general problem of knowledge:

What is knowledge? If it is justified true belief, how is this possible? Under what condition can we say that our beliefs (or how things appear to us) are erroneous, wrong, or unjustified?

> A belief could be true, but unjustified. It seems that there is more to calling a belief erroneous or wrong than just treating it as untrue. While beliefs can be true without our *knowing* (having justifications) that they are true, we have access to true beliefs *as true beliefs* only in respect to our knowledge or justifications for their acceptance.

Under what condition *can we say* that the belief is true? (The question of justification)

It is appropriate to hold the attitude of belief towards *P* iff "*P*" is true.

Premodern (Greek) theories—resemblance

P is true iff "*P*" resembles reality.

Modern theories—representationalism

P is true iff "*P*" represents reality.

Through the development of algebraic geometry (Descartes) and the success of applying this system to the physical world (physics), it has been noted that the world and our way of talking about the world (mathematics) do not resemble each other. Instead, modern thinkers employed the notion of representation: mathematics represents the world.

> Mathematics (algebraic geometry) is rooted in deductive reasoning (Euclidean geometry). Conclusions are drawn from premises. If there is no point of stop (axiom), the infinite regress happens (in the form of either Carrollian or Givenness regress). Intuition (Kant), clear and distinctive ideas (Descartes), sense datum (Russell), principle of contradiction (Leibniz), etc. seem to be some candidates for the epistemic bedrock that were proposed by contemporary and modern thinkers.

Kant—from epistemology/theory of truth to semantics

Awareness/cognition/representing in general (both correct and incorrect mental state) is apperception/judgment. Making judgments is applying concepts (rules for synthesizing or organizing intuitions—spatio-temporal units of sensorial intakes). What it is to have correct cognition is to apply the right concepts (to conform to the appropriate rules). Concepts are inferential: applying one concept implies/requires applying another. Therefore, to make judgments is to commit oneself (or one's mental state) to an inferential rule.

Frege—sense and reference

Sense is analogous to representing, and reference is to represented. Senses/representing (modes of presentations) are that through which one identifies/grasps the referent/represented.

Hegel's criterion for the theory of knowledge

It must be accounted how knowledge of things-in-itself (noumena, the Absolute) is possible.

> Kant's view cannot account for how noumenal knowledge is possible. If what warrants judgments or gives determinate content or determinateness to some cognitive content is the application of concepts, which concepts or applications are right? Where does this norm come from? Kant locates it in the individual (willpower, disposition, etc.). If so,

there is a gap between the conceptual framework of an individual and the things-in-themselves (the world prior to the sensorial intakes), thus the individual has access only to thing-as-it-appear (phenomenon). But what we wanted was not merely how things appear to us. We wanted to know whether appearances match the reality (things-in-themselves), not to limit our language to how things appear to us. Thus, there is a need to identify a different source of norms (source of determinateness of mental states/cognitive or semantic contents).

To remedy this, *Brandegel* proposes three theses: conceptual realism, objective idealism, and conceptual idealism:

(1) Conceptual (modal) realism: The world (reality, noumena, the Absolute, infinity, thing-in-itself) and the mind (appearance, phenomenon, Consciousness, finiteness, thing-as-it-appears) are of the same structure, conceptual. In being (cognitively) conscious of the world, one is committed to material incompatibility between objects or properties.

(2) Objective idealism: The objective world is reference-independent on the subjective mind (contra Berkeley), but is sense-dependent on the subjective mind.

(3) Conceptual idealism: The relations between conceptual realism and objective idealism, between material incompatibility and sense-dependence of the objective world, must be understood "in terms of the *processes* that institute those relations." (*ST* 369)

Conceptual realism

Modality (necessity and possibility) is primitive to objects and properties. Being red *necessarily* excludes or is incompatible with being blue. This is material incompatibility. Conversely, some objects and properties are compatible with some others: e.g., being red and being large. As such, modality constitutes inferential rules, concepts.

Modality is shared between the world (objective) and the mind (subjective). Thus, concepts are not just some dispositions within individuals, but the features of the world as well. Material incompatibility in the world is of alethic model: it is true that *a* is *F* and *a*

is not *G*. Material incompatibility in the mind is of deontic model: one must give up the belief that *a* is *G* if he accepts that *a* is *F*.

This view of modality is *Brandegel*'s version of the possible world semantics (the inverted world). In contrast, Lewisian possible world semantics does not start with modality. It starts with classes of properties and objects (no material relationships among them) and then try to define modality by the functional relations between properties and objects.

$$\Box \neg (Fa \wedge Ga) := <F \cap G = \varnothing>$$
$$\Diamond (Fa \wedge Ga) := <F \cap G \neq \varnothing>$$

Brandom's criticism of Lewisian semantics is that, since modality is not a material feature of the world (rejection of conceptual realism), but a formal feature, it is vulnerable to Quine's criticism of analytic/synthetic distinction (or I think to some version of psychologism?).

As far as I understand it, *Brandegel*'s reason for accepting conceptual realism or the inverted world semantics (and rejecting Lewisian semantics) is two-fold. First, just as John McDowell points out, there is no way to epistemically base our thoughts on the world if the world does not share the same structure as our thoughts (requirement of isomorphism). Second, if we insist on the requirement of isomorphism, our view is invulnerable to Quine's criticism. I think that this is Brandom's reading of Hegel that infinity is inside finiteness (contra Kant).

Another way to understand the difference between inverted world and possible world semantics would be the following. For inverted world, modality is essential to something being an object or a feature—what it is for something to be an object or a feature is for it to have some material (in)compatibilities with some others. There is no object until some notion of modality is in place. For possible world, objects and features exist without any modal relations. Unlike for inverted world, $\exists a$ does not require that *a* stands in some material (in)compatibilities with some others. Each and every individual object or feature simply exists on its own (in whatever way it may be in). Perhaps, this is what Lewis means by 'natural kinds,' but further studies are needed.

Textually, Hegel argues *up to* conceptual realism by rejecting a series of alternative (positivist?) views: sense certainty, perception, and force and understanding. The general point is that in sense certainty and perception, although it seems that non-modal facts (this/that) anchor our thoughts, these non-modal facts (referents) are actually imbued with modality in exercising normativity over our thoughts. In force and understanding, it seems that the objects or forces exercise normative authority, but what really underlies their normativity is the rules we follow in upholding them as forceful. So, it seems that the authority really comes from our dealing (coping?) with them (or upholding them as forceful) rather than the objects themselves. More on this below (particularly, in Landy's section).

Two models of conceptual realism

    (a) Alethic model (world)

        a. What it is for Fa and Ga to be materially incompatible is that it is false that *a* is both F and G.

        b. That this is so stems from the fact that being blue in itself excludes the condition of being red (and vice versa).

    (b) Deontic model (mind)

        a. What it is for Fa and Ga to be materially incompatible is that an agent cannot commit himself to hold that *a* is both F and G.

        b. In discovering or facing contradictory (inferential) commitments, the agent has the *duty* to either resolve the tension or give up one commitment.

Red and blue are materially incompatible whereas red and large or sour are materially compatible. Thus, it is *possible* for *a* to be both red and large or sour. The concept of object is that it is the basic unit of collections of materially compatible properties. For instance, apple is the basic unit of collections of various properties: round, red, sour, etc.

    This does not imply Humean bundle theory because it is not the case that all there are, are properties whereas properties are more basic than objects. Properties are what they are because of material relations with one another, and these relations are possible only in respect to some basic units of compatibility/incompatibility—objects.

Objective idealism

Alethic model (truth) is reference-independent from Deontic model (duty) in the sense that *truth* is not determined by the content of *duty*. If the content of the world (truth/facts) is reference-dependent, it would be some form of Berkeleyian idealism or definite description theory of meaning. If this is the case, then alethic notions do not exercise the same normative authority as they would have been able to otherwise.

Alethic model is sense-dependent on Deontic model in the sense that the content of the world can be *understood* or *grasped* only in respect to what one does deontically. The effect of saying that $<v_{\text{truth}}(Fa \wedge Ga) = 0>$ is that one cannot hold that a is both F and G, i.e., one is responsible for doing something about it when he encounters that he is committed to two contradictory duties.

> Later, Brandom expands on this idea to that what it is for something to be a referent is for it to be the sense (commitment) that one decided to go with over the others *for now*. This is a form of phenomenology: what it is for something to be real (noumenon) is explained or understood in terms of what it is for that thing to be experienced by us (phenomenon). This is not to say that what is real is *determined* by what we experience. What is distinctive about *Brandegelian* phenomenology is that, on its view, the phenomenological structure of mind consists in modal duty.

Conceptual idealism

I still have difficulty understanding many aspects of conceptual idealism. But the general point seems to be that the relations between conceptual realism and objective idealism, between material incompatibility and sense-dependence of the objective world—i.e., between the alethic normativity and our deontic responsibilities—must be understood in terms of the process that institute or maintain those relations. The process under consideration is teleological, i.e., it concerns actions with goals or intentions. The parallel seems to be the following.

(i)   It is in respect to the goal of Deontic model that otherwise accidental pieces of states of affairs (sense certainty) are taken to form platforms for norms.

(ii)   It is in respect to the goal of an action that otherwise accidental movements are taken to form platforms for narratives and rules.

Since objective idealism states that alethic notions are to be understood in terms of deontic notions, alethic notions must be understood in terms of the goal-process of action. The question is then what is to give narratives to a series of movements or moments so that the series could be described in terms of goals and rule-following? Brandom seeks to explain this in terms of Davidson's action theory. The idea is that there are different ways to describe the phenomenon, some of which involves talking about goals, intentions, and deeds.

> The difference between intention and deed is that, in intention (or will), one *knows* what consequences his actions will bring out whereas, in deed, one does not know them. Now, the consequentiality *cannot* be understood in terms of purely objective or (nomologically) causal terms because the very notion of objectivity *is* understood in terms of the deontic actions that agents take (are described to be taking). **Thus, the normative constraints in determining the deed content of the actions must come from elsewhere. To clarify the last point, it is worth investigating into Brandon's discussion of Hegelian desire as well as Landy's own interpretation of Hegelian sociality of reason.**

Hegelian desire (and *Kripkensteinian* inclination)

For exegetical sake, I personally find it very useful to interpret Hegelian, more precisely *Brandegelian*, account of desire in comparison with *Kripkensteinian* account of inclination.

Kripkenstein identifies inclination as the psychological factor in one's going by one pattern of behaviors (or responses to stimuli) rather than another. Here, "inclination" is a kind of brute impulse in that it stems from one's natural disposition or propensity. Thus, at the bottom, it is merely due to the brute impulse that one responds to, e.g., the '+' sign in a certain way (by writing or uttering "2 + 2 = 4"). What gives normative content (= meaning) to impulsive patterns so that there are correct and incorrect responses is agreement with others. That is, when my inclination to utter "2 + 2 = 4" agrees with inclinations of others does it have normative contents. There are no agreements outside a community. Therefore, what provides norms is a community (social interactions between agents).

Brandegel identifies desire as the psychological factor in one's going by one pattern of behaviors (or responses to stimuli) rather than another. Here, "desire" is a kind of brute impulse in that it

stems from one's *survival* or orectic disposition (coping)—Brandom acknowledges that there is a sense in which this orectic disposition is proto-conceptual/normative. Thus, at the bottom, it is merely due to the brute impulse that one responds to, e.g., a dark room in a certain way (by clicking the light button). What gives normative content (= meaning) to impulsive patterns so that there are correct and incorrect responses is *recognition* by others. That is, when my desire to clicking the light button is recognized by (the desires of) others does it have normative contents. There are no recognitions outside a community. Therefore, what provides norms is a community (social interactions between agents).

The flow of the reasoning that leads to community as the source of norm is as follows:
- For knowledge (correct mental representation of the world) to be possible, there must be isomorphism between the world and mind in terms of material incompatibility: what it is for *a* to be what it is excludes being something else. (Conceptual Realism)
- Material incompatibility among objects and properties can only be understood or grasped in terms of deontic notions such as commitment—(inferential) normativity. (Objective Idealism)
- The source of this (inferential) normativity of material incompatibility cannot come from immediacy (sense certainty and perception) because immediacy (piecemeal information) presupposes material incompatibility. Nor can it come from objects (basic units of compatibility and incompatibility), for the objects do not write down or enforce the rules themselves. (Failure of consciousness)
- It seems that desires (brute forces) are good candidates for the source. (Self-consciousness) However, this fails. (More on this below)
- The standard of correctness and incorrectness must come from recognitions among agents, or social interactions among community members. (Spirit)

Here is Landy's interpretation of why objects and desires fail as candidates.

> The normative force must come from one of them: objects (world), self, and others. Objects fail as the source because they lack the authority (failure of consciousness). This is because, in Kantian tradition, there is a distinction between merely happening to conform

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to a rule and following a rule (conforming to a rule *as a rule*). It is only in following a rule *qua* rule does the rule have the force of normative binding. If the objects merely force us to behave in one way or the other, it is difficult to make sense of how we come to recognize them as rule-giving: we just do it, but *why?*

Thus, perhaps, the normative force may be stemming from *my* imbuing the objects with rule-giving. But, if so, what constrains me from imbuing the objects with *this* rule rather than the other rules? For instance, I may decide to call green tables 'glorp' at T_1, but decide to call red clocks 'glorp' at T_2. Both decisions are equally valid *ceteris paribus*. If so, neither "decision" (use of 'glorp') has any binding force. Similarly, if one is to make up rules as he goes by, the idea of following rules is absurd. Therefore, the constraint cannot come from one's own brute impulse (desire, inclination, etc.).

Accordingly, the normative constraint must come from others. This kind of constraint is different from self because others can constrain each other synchronically whereas self is free to do whatever it wants at any moment in time. Perhaps, the community (just as self) may contradict itself by giving conflicting norms. (For instance, a scientific community may discover anomalies or contradictory conclusions in their research.) This implies that the community fails to be functional (or, it turns out that *it* was not really a community after all) and a better community (standard) must be sought.

What gives content to (i.e., provides the standard of correctness and incorrectness for) a series of actions that lead to certain *goals* (i.e., accidental pieces of states of affairs—sense certainty—that are taken to form platforms for norms) is therefore the recognitive constraints by others.

The *intended* or *willed* part of the actions (that may or may not successfully manifest as reality) is the brute impulse of the individual agent whose success or failure as an intention can only be judged by the actual consequences of the actions serving as the criterion (deeds). The criterion (what the actions really turned out to be) is provided by others that regard the actions in a certain way: the intention to *light up the dark room* by clicking the light switch failed because the room stays dark (whereas the word 'dark' becomes arbitrary if the condition of darkness depends on *what the individual feels like calling 'dark'*). The individual is not only responsible for his willing to turn on the light, but also for the outcome that the room stays dark (and all the other consequences of that action).

The *appearance* or *look* part of the perception (that may or may not successfully match the reality) is the brute impulse of the individual agent whose success or failure as a representation (perception) can only be judged by the actual consequences of being committed to the representation serving as the criterion (fact/is). The criterion (how things really are) is provided by others that regard the states of affairs in a certain way: the belief that the table is red fails because the table is blue (whereas the word 'blue' becomes arbitrary if the condition of blueness depends on *what the individual feels like calling 'blue'*). The individual is not only responsible for how things appear or look to him, but also for the outcome of committing to that belief (and all of its consequences).

But how is one responsible for deeds (what were not known to him in the stage of willing or appearance)? Edwin Wolf helped me with some thoughts.

John is an engineer, and he has the *intention* to make a stable bridge. With this intention, he builds a bridge which *appears* to be stable to him. However, the bridge collapses. In modern Kantian ethics and Carnapian epistemology, John is *not* responsible for the actual happening (bridge collapsing) because he did not know that his intention will result in this disaster or things were different from how they appeared to him. Yet, we do hold him accountable for his *mistake*. It is a *mistake* because he is not only responsible for his intention, but also for the consequences that follow (deeds). The sense in which John is responsible beyond his mere intention is that we hold him up to a certain expectation: we expect that engineers do better than this! We expect that engineers double and triple check their calculation, use good materials, prioritize safety over efficiency, etc. These expectations (standards of correctness and incorrectness) are given by *others* in that it is the community who decide how much expectation is appropriate. (Up to what are we going to take it as the consequence of his action?) Maybe John did everything he could to the best of his ability that meets our expectations. Then, we do not hold him responsible. In imbuing John's intention with expectations, we must recognize which happenings were the piecemeal actions that led to the consequences. (Is his neglecting of certain risk-factors part of the story that led to the collapse? If this neglecting was not his, then whose neglecting was it? Did someone else, e.g., senior engineer Thomas, cause the neglecting

by not presenting the risk factors to junior engineer John? If the collapse of the bridge somehow created a stock market change that resulted in political shifts in the country, is this attributed to John or Thomas or someone else? —All these questions depend on what *others* recognize as John's or Thomas' intentions and sense certainty and how much these *others* relate certain events to their actions as the *causal* consequences.)

The recognitions among community members provide the norms, i.e., criterion for judging whether some brute impulses (will/intention, appearance/look, immediate/piecemeal) are correct or incorrect (should be acted or not), whether they are part of the story (Whiggish history) that leads to the current commitments (reality, reference, fact, etc.). The community attributes responsibility to the agent of brute impulse by holding him to certain expectations. The expectations consist in which piecemeal happening (sense certainty) is connected with which others (causal)—what led to what. Since the identity of something as *F* or *G* is determined in relations to others, i.e., in terms of material incompatibility and compatibility (modal relations), the content of each action or thought (or meaning of a gesture or a word) is given holistically in respect to all the other actions or thoughts (words or gestures) that are brought together (inverted world). The items under holistic consideration are brought together by the community. The synchronic constraints by the community may fail as the community may produce contradicting norms (or, better put, if the community ends up producing anomalies or contradictions, it was not a community after all—the community was an unstable one). There is always a need for a new community (standard of correctness and incorrectness, holistic consideration) to replace the unstable community that collapses from within. In replacing the old community, the new one *re-collects* the piecemeal actions and appearances and rearrange them as to give new platforms for judgment. (What the old community, or *paradigm*, considered to be successful actions or thoughts may be re-interpreted or re-recognized by the new community as unsuccessful if the new paradigm has a new commitment-reference.) It is in this sense *Brandegelian* contents/norms are historical or recollective. (Here, temporality has a dynamic dimension as it is not temporal in the Newtonian lineal sense. Rather, events are given temporal dimensions in the sense that they are always vulnerable to new interpretations or recognitions and sequencing.)

In this sense of determinateness or contentfulness (or referentiality), the determinateness (norms) is always conditional to temporality. The very activity that generates norms or contents (platform for knowledge) is essentially on-going. Thus, (human) knowledge or success is temporal. There is a sense in which contents are always indeterminate. But it is in respect to this indeterminate activity of generating normativity (viz., humanity) are things seen to be *determinate* (referential). This is the *Vernunft* understanding of determinateness. The *Verstand* understanding only focuses on the determinateness or referentiality itself which, if not understood as part of the determining process, is ever beyond our reach (i.e., infinity is beyond finiteness). *Vernunft* suggests that we understand determinateness or referentiality as products of constant recollective activities. These activities (which are operating at the community or intra-interactive level) are not reducible to the very products they generate (determinateness, referentiality, infinity). I would like to put it this way: norm/content-generating activities are spiritual in the sense that they brood upon the sea (the field of constant flux, changes/immediate/piecemeal particles); as such, community (fellowship, kingdom of ends, etc.) is *not* of that world, but *in* the world.

This is to say that the notion of reality, truth, determinateness, and referentiality is to be grasped or understood in terms of what we do in respect to, in targeting, this notion. The *limit* of our language (infinity, truth) is to be understood in terms of the fact that the *limiting* is innate to the language we speak. (Our language seeks to lay out its rules and define itself by limiting itself, by upholding the notion of limit.) Due to this feature of our language and cognition, determinateness (or knowledge) is temporal. Humanity (epistemic and moral activity) is meant to be on-going and constantly operating on hardware products (objects and features). This very humanistic phenomenon—being human/rational—is spirit, breath, or wind.

Thought #1

If norms (correct/incorrect) do not arise until being constrained by others, then it seems that either disagreement is impossible (since I cannot know what is true without relying on others whom I disagree with on what is true)—in which case no one can constrain one another by judging each other as correct or incorrect—or disagreement is possible only in appeal to some robust notion of expert. (If disagreement is impossible so that no one can constrain another, then norms are impossible as well.) This expert is an ideal knower, epistemic saint, whose virtue is

that what he thinks corresponds with reality purely due to the fact that he sets the norms for all the others—singularity point of knowledge. In entering into the space of reasons (spiritual realm of normativity), in granting the status of rational agent to oneself and the others, one upholds the ideal of epistemic saint. In my opinion, this figure is what we mean by 'God'.

*규범(옳고 그름)이라는 것이 타인에 의한 제약이 있기 전까지 발생하지 않는 것이라면, 진리를 알기 위해서는 타인의 의견에 의존해야 함으로 타인과의 의견 충돌(disagreement)은 불가능하거나 오직 '전문가'(expert)라는 개념을 상정할 시에만 가능하다. 만약 의견 충돌이 불가능하다면 아무도 서로를 옳거나 그르다고 판단할 수 없기 때문에 타인에 의한 제약이 불가능하다. (따라서 규범도 불가능하다.) 여기서 '전문가'란 이상적인 지식인(ideal knower), 모든 규범의 근원으로서 자신의 생각이 실제와 일치하는 미덕을 지닌 인식론적 성인(epistemic saint), 즉 지성의 특이점이다. 각 개인은 이성의 공간(space of reasons) 혹은 규범성의 영적인 영역(spiritual realm of normativity)에 입장할 시, 즉 자신과 타인에게 '이성적 행위자'(rational agent)라는 지위를 부여할 시, 인식론적 성인에 대한 이상을 떠받들어야 한다. 여기서 인식론적 성인이라는 인물이 우리가 '신'(God)이라고 부르는 존재라는 것이 나의 의견이다.

<u>Thought #2</u>
Even if it is granted that norms do not arise until a community is formed, there are at least two concerns: (1) What constitutes and maintains a community? (2) What enables an individual to form and participate in communities?

First, it is quite mysterious to appeal to Wittgensteinian *form of life* in accounting for what constitutes and maintains a community. Communities depend on individuals recognizing each other *as well as* each individual recognizing/knowing that others recognize him *and* one another. In the absence of what accounts for this recognitive psychology, it seems that the phenomenon of community (therefore, the rise and existence of normativity) is left unexplained.

Second, in my opinion, the jump from desire (inclination) to recognition is left unexplained, either. I think that norms do not just spring out of nothing at the formation of communities, but rather that, already at the level of inclination, *the aptitude to perceive things in terms of rules, norms, or orders* is at work. That is, human psychology (even as a brute impulse) is imbued with the propensity to take in impressions in some form of organization. I talk about this in my publication: "In Defense of Kant's Deduction of Pure Aesthetic Judgments," American Society for Aesthetics Graduate E-Journal (2022).