Some Hegelian Ideas of Note for Contemporary Analytic Philosophy

Robert Brandom

I. Atomism and Holism

I take my point of departure from Paul Redding's thoughtful and thought-provoking book *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought,* which I see as a paradigm of the sort of philosophy Hegel described as 'its time, captured in thought.' It is at once impressively and usefully learned, and philosophically insightful and suggestive. Redding's strategy is to tunnel from two directions. On the one hand, he has interesting things to say about what elements in the analytic tradition make it ripe for a Hegelian turn. On the other, he lays out some features of Hegel's views that are particularly amenable to appropriation by that tradition. I want to say a bit about each of these topics.

Redding is good on the origin myth that Bertrand Russell concocted, which locates the wellsprings of the analytic movement in a principled recoil from what the British Idealists made of Hegel. At the core of Russell's story is the opposition between Hegelian holism, viewed through a Bradleyan lens, and the atomism he saw as demanded by the new quantificational logic. The overarching choice he saw was between ontological monism and pluralism: as he memorably put it, between seeing the universe as a bowl of jelly and seeing it as a bucket of shot. On such an understanding, semantic, logical, and metaphysical atomism is an, indeed *the*, essential, founding principle of analytic philosophy.

But the early analytic tradition did not speak with just this one, Russellian, voice. Redding also reminds us that the first step on the holistic road to Hegel was taken already by Kant, who broke with the traditional order of semantic and logical explanation by insisting on the primacy of judgment. He understood particular and general representations, intuitions and concepts, only in terms of the functional role they played in judgment. (I think that is because judgments are the minimal units of *responsibility*, so that the primacy of judgment should be understood as an immediate consequence of the *normative turn* Kant had given

philosophy of mind and semantics—more on this point later.) Frege took up this Kantian idea, in the form of his 'context principle': only in the context of a sentence do names have reference. Wittgenstein, early and late, sees sentences as playing some such distinguished role, first as the minimal unit of sense, and later as the minimal linguistic unit that can be used to make a move in a language-game. In other important figures, such as Carnap and C. I. Lewis, the empiricist-atomist current of thought, which had motivated Russell, coexisted and blended with serious neo-Kantian influences, even where those did not take the form of treating propositional contents as primary in the order of semantic explanation. Redding credits this Kant-Frege-Wittgenstein strand in analytic philosophy with opening up the space within which an eventual rapprochement with Hegel might take place.

I think he is right about that. But I also think that continuing the story beyond the early history of the analytic movement on which Redding focuses helps round out the story. For the Kantian promotion of judgment to pride of logico-semantic place is only the first step away from the atomism of the traditional order of explanation towards full Hegelian holism. Hegel didn't just start in the middle of the traditional order, with judgment rather than concept; he fully turned it on its head, not only understanding objects and concepts in terms of judgments, but understanding judgments in terms of their role in inference. And just as some philosophers who played central roles in the analytic tradition followed Kant, others took the further holist step down that road that Hegel had pioneered. Indeed, all these strands of thought were represented already in the classical American pragmatist tradition: not only the empiricist-atomist line (think of James's radical monism), but also the Kantian (Peirce) and even the Hegelian (Dewey, and Peirce as well). Quine, heir to both this tradition (via his teacher, C. I. Lewis, himself the student of James and the Hegelian Josiah Royce) and the logistical-analytic one, in 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism', took the minimal unit of meaning to be, not the proposition, but what he called 'the whole theory': everything one believed, and all the inferential connections linking them to each other and to other believables. It is closely analogous to what Hegel means by 'the Concept'. Davidson deepened and developed this thought, and explored its consequences for a number of topics of central concern to the analytic tradition. To those coming of philosophical age during this period, the influence of this line of thought could seem so pervasive that someone like Jerry Fodor could, with some justification, see his reassertion of semantic atomism as swimming against the dominant tide of the times.

In this connection it is interesting to recall the considerations that impelled Quine to endorse this holist move. His slogan was 'Meaning is what essence becomes, when it is detached from the thing, and attached to the word.' This dictum expresses the translation of *ontological* issues into a *semantic* key that was the

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hallmark of the linguistic turn—and I would see as already prefigured in Kant. Quine rejected essences because he rejected as ultimately unintelligible everything expressed by the vocabulary of alethic modality. (In another fine phrase, he dismissed modal logic as at best 'engendering an illusion of understanding.') He did so on two grounds. First of all was the residual empiricism that remained even after he had rejected the 'two dogmas of empiricism.' As far as modality went, he thought that 'the Humean condition is the human condition.' Second was the fact that the new logic, in the post-Fregean, pre-Kripkean, Russellian stage of development that Quine perfected, did not have the expressive resources to deal semantically with modality. For these reasons, Quine had to reject the distinction between internal and external relations: those that are essential to the identity of a thing and those that are merely accidental to it. (In a Bradleyan example: the relation between the rungs and the rails of a ladder are internal to it, while its relation to the wall it is leaning against is external.) Since one of the empiricist dogmas Quine was rejecting was its semantic atomism, he could not follow Russell (and the *Tractatus*) in responding to his rejection of the distinction by, in effect, treating *all* relations as external. The result was his recoil to a thoroughgoing semantic holism, in which all their inferential relations are treated as constitutive of the meaning of sentences and (so) the terms and predicates they contain—as all being, in effect, internal relations. Attempting to evade what Whitehead called the 'fallacy of lost contrast', and in keeping with his Russellian logic, he construed those inferential relations extensionally, as not being modally robust, in the sense of counterfactual-supporting. But even so, semantic holism had been let loose in the land.

This development demonstrated a dynamic that I think is active in our own time, and that Russell and Moore had already warned against. For the fighting faith they crafted for the new analytic movement did not define its creed just by rejection of Hegel. They understood the idealist rot they fought against as having set in already with Kant. They suspected that one could not open the pearly gates of analytic respectability far enough to let Kant slip through, and then close them quickly enough to keep Hegel out. Both Quine's example and some contemporary developments suggest they might turn out to have been right. In this connection I think it is instructive to recall just how recently it is that Kant has re-entered the analytic canon. Russell's and Moore's strictures by and large held until they were loosened in the late '60s by Strawson's and Bennett's work on and use of Kant's theoretical philosophy, and by Rawls's Kantian work in practical philosophy (especially his 1970 *Theory of Justice*). Since then we have had several academic generations of first-rate analytic work on Kant. And now, as day follows night, we see the first stirrings of what Redding calls 'the return of Hegelian thought' in analytic circles. My guess is that Hegel is just too interesting a reader of Kant to be struck off the rolls of the readable once Kant himself has

moved to centre stage (elbowing empiricism into the wings). Wilfrid Sellars once said that he hoped that an effect of his work would be to begin to move analytic philosophy from its Humean to its Kantian phase. And Rorty has characteris

ed my work, and that of John McDowell, as aimed at helping to begin to move it from its incipient Kantian to its inevitable Hegelian phase. Wittgenstein is an interesting case in point for such a transition. For if we think about the pride of place given to propositional content in the former, and the social theory of the normativity characteristic of intentionality in the latter, we can see the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* as a neo-kantian, without Kant's residual empiricism, and the Wittgenstein of the *Investigations* as a neo-hegelian, without Hegel's revived rationalism.

II. Modality

I have already mentioned another Kantian, anti-empiricist, ultimately anti-atomistic theme running through recent analytic philosophy. It, too, I think, will eventually support a renewed appreciation of Hegelian ideas. This is the axial role *modality* should be understood to play in semantics, logic, and metaphysics. One of the driving motors of Kant's recoil from empiricism is his realization that the framework of empirical description and explanation—the constellation of commitments, practices, abilities, and procedures that form the necessary practical background within the horizon of which alone it is possible to engage in the cognitive theoretical activity of describing and explaining how things empirically are—essentially involves the use of concepts whose job is *not* to describe or explain how things empirically are. The characteristic expressive job of these *categorial* concepts is rather to make explicit necessary features of that framework that provides the context that makes possible describing and explaining. These include what is made explicit as statements of *laws*, using alethic modal concepts to relate the concepts applied in descriptions. As Sellars put the point:

> It is only because the expressions in terms of which we describe objects, even such basic expressions as words for the perceptible characteristics of molar objects, locate these objects in a space of implications, that they describe at all, rather than merely label.[1]

And the implications that articulate that 'space of reasons' are modally robust, counterfactual-supporting ones. It was appreciation of this Kantian point that led the American neo-Kantian C. I. Lewis to apply the methods of the new logic to develop *modal* logics (indeed, he did so essentially contemporaneously with

Principia Mathematica). Sellars draws the conclusion, which Quine had not, that the 'whole theories' that Quine saw as the minimal 'unit of meaning' were theories that included *laws*. He summed this lesson up in the title of one of his less readable essays 'Concepts as Involving Laws, and Inconceivable without Them.'[2]

A holism that emphasises the semantogenic character of alethic modal relations of necessitation and preclusion brings us much closer to Hegel than even Quine had gotten. For at the centre of Hegel's innovations is a non-psychological conception of the conceptual, according to which to be a *modal* realist about the objective world (the world as it is independent of its relation to any activities or processes of thinking) is thereby to be a *conceptual* realist about it. On this way of thinking about the conceptual, to take it that there really are laws of nature, that it is objectively *necessary* that pure copper melt at $1084°$ C., and *impossible* for a mass to be accelerated without being subjected to some force, is to see that objective world as already in conceptual shape, and hence graspable as such. For Hegel understands what is conceptual as whatever stands in relations of what he calls 'determinate negation' and 'mediation'—by which he means material incompatibility and material consequence. For there to be some determinate way the world is just is for it to be articulated into states of affairs—objects possessing properties and standing in relations—that include and exclude each other in modally robust ways. Grasping those conceptual structures in thought is conforming one's practice of amplifying and criticizing one's commitments to those objective relations: embracing the inferential conse-quences of the commitments one acknowledges, and rejecting commitments that are incompatible with them. I'll return to this point.

The same sort of consideration that convinced Kant that one will not succeed in building up an understanding of facts and states of affairs (statables, claimables, judgeables) from one of objects (and properties and relations thought of as a kind of thing), but must rather seek to understand objects and properties and relations in terms of the contribution they make to facts and states of affairs, should be deployed as well to convince us that facts and states of affairs cannot be made intelligible except in the light of the modally robust, counterfactual-supporting ('lawlike') material consequential and incompatibility relations they stand in to one another and which articulate their propositional contents. To take that step is to embark on one path that leads from Kant to Hegel. For it is to move from the order of semantic and ontological explanation that takes *judgment*, the understanding, as primary, to embrace the metaconception that takes *inference, namely* reason, as primary. In Hegel's adaptation of Kant's terminology, that is to move from the framework of *Verstand* to that of *Vernunft*.

The modal revolution that has taken place in analytic philosophy in the last half-century amounts to a decisive repudiation of the hostility to modality that resulted from the unfortunate consonance on this point of both of the intellectual

inspirations of logical empiricism: traditional empiricist epistemology and semantics based on the new extensional quantificational logic. I take it to have developed through three phases so far: Kripke's seminal development of possible worlds semantics for the whole range of C. I. Lewis's modal logics, the employment of that apparatus to provide an intensional semantics for a host of non-logical expressions, and the metaphysical sequelae of Kripke's treatment of proper names in 'Naming and Necessity.' The last of these, deepened and extended to apply to other sorts of expressions such as natural kind terms, indexicals, and demonstratives, has been associated with the severing of physical-causal and conceptual modalities from metaphysical ones, and the pursuit of semantics in terms of the latter rather than the former. That is, it has carried with it the rejection of the association of modality and conceptual articulation that both Quine and Sellars had taken for granted (the former as a reason to do without both, the latter in embracing them). But that rejection is crucially predicated on a *psychological* conception of the conceptual: one that understands concepts in the first instance in terms of our grip on them, rather than, as Kant had taught, in terms of their normative bindingness on us. We have yet to achieve a reconciliation and synthesis of the Kripke-Kaplan-Stalnaker-Lewis (David) approach to modality with the Kant-Hegel-Sellars one—but perhaps someday we shall.[3]

III. Normativity

One central dimension along which some orienting concerns of German Idealism have entered the contemporary discussion concerns the normativity of intentionality. One of Kant's revolutionary, revolutionizing ideas is that what distinguishes judgements and intentional actions from the responses of merely natural creatures is that they are things knowers-and-agents are in a distinctive way *responsible* for. They are exercises of a distinctive kind of *authority*: the authority to *make* oneself responsible, to *commit* oneself. Responsibility, authority, commitment—these are all normative notions. Unlike Cartesian subjectivity, Kantian subjectivity is not distinguished from physical objectivity *ontologically*, but *de*ontologically. The overarching distinction is not between minds and bodies, but between facts and norms. Discursivity is the capacity autonomously to bind ourselves by norms in the form of concepts, rules that determine what we have committed ourselves to by applying them in judgement and the endorsement of practical maxims. This idea stands behind many of Kant's other characteristic innovations. In particular, this is the basis of his doctrine of the primacy of judgement: his reversal of the traditional order of logical explanation, understanding concepts in terms of judgements, (as 'functions of judgement',

as he put it) rather than understanding judgements in terms of concepts, as ways of classifying them. At its base is his focus in thinking about concepts: on their normativity, on the nature of their Gultigkeit, their Verbindlichkeit: the nature of their validity or bindingness. Where the tradition had worried about our grip on concepts (is it clear? Is it distinct?), his concern is with their grip on us, with what it is for us to bind ourselves by rules.

This is a way of thinking about intentionality that has been brought to the fore in our own time by the later Wittgenstein. One of his orienting observations concerns precisely the essentially normative significance of intentional states such as believing, intending, and desiring. He has made us sensitive to the issue of how a mental state such as an intention, or a speech act such as a request, could somehow reach out to all possible sequelae to settle which of them would count as being an *appropriate* response in the sense of fulfilling that intention or request. (When the mother asks someone to 'teach the children a game' and he responds by teaching them to bet on dice, she says 'I didn't mean *that* kind of game.' And what she says is true, even though she didn't explicitly think about the matter.) One of the principal ways Wittgenstein uses to make visible to us features of the philosophical picture by which we are bewitched is to demonstrate how puzzling it can make this normativity, when we construe it as something extra that must somehow be added to the 'signpost, considered just as a piece of wood,' to yield something with the normative significance of indications which path it is appropriate to take.

By bringing this Kantian topic back onto the philosophical agenda, Wittgenstein also provided a *point d'appui* for Hegelian ideas. For Hegel insists that the kind of *normative* statuses that matter for intentionality—what we are responsible for, or committed to, what we have invested our authority in—are one and all *social* statuses. In this, he concurs with the Wittgensteinian tradition that emphasises social practices ('uses, customs, institutions') as providing the context within which alone we can understand the normative significance even of such mundane items as signposts, and in terms of which we can ultimately win our way to a place in which the normativity of intentional states generally can be taken in stride as unproblematic.

One huge difference between the thinkers, of course, is that where Wittgenstein is suspicious in principle of philosophical theorizing (wrongly, I think, seeing that attitude as a necessary consequence of his proper appreciation—both early and late—that 'philosophy is not one of the natural sciences'), Hegel is an ambitious, constructive system-builder. This is, of course, a big metaphilosophical issue. But those who are not left wholly satisfied by approaches whose therapy offers little surplus beyond diagnosis, like Wittgenstein's, and on some issues and occasions, McDowell's, can find in Hegel rich resources for more constructive theoretical responses to concerns about the nature of discursive normativity.

The *Phenomenology* is, in no small part, a history of practical conceptions of normativity (which for Hegel, as for Kant, just means discursive normativity). He understands the one biggest thing that ever happened in human history, the advent of modernity, as consisting largely in a structural transformation in the nature of normativity. At its core is a newfound appreciation of the dependence of normative statuses on normative attitudes. The Enlightenment idea that being responsible or authoritative is unintelligible apart from practices of holding people responsible and acknowledging their authority is manifested already in social contract theories of political obligation, and culminates in Kant's replacement of tradition models of normativity as the obedience owed by a subordinate to a superior by his autonomy model. According to that model, a subject's being bound by a rule depends on her acknowledging the rule as binding. Only the subject has the authority to constrain herself normatively, to make herself responsible. Hegel transposes this picture into a social key, synthesizing it with some elements of the traditional obedience model.

Taking someone to be responsible or authoritative, attributing a normative deontic status to someone, is an attitude that Hegel (picking up a term of Fichte's) calls 'recognition' [Anerkennung]. Hegel's view is what you get if you take the attitudes of *both* recogniser and recognised, both those who are authoritative and those who are responsible, to be essential *necessary* conditions of the institution of genuine normative statuses, and require in addition that those attitudes be symmetric or reciprocal [gegenseitig]. In a certain sense, Hegel also takes it that those individually necessary normative attitudes are jointly sufficient to institute normative statuses. What institutes normative statuses is *reciprocal* recognition. Someone becomes responsible only when others *hold* him responsible, and exercises authority only when others *acknowledge* that authority. One can *petition* others for recognition, in an attempt to become responsible or authoritative. To do that, one must recognise them as able to *hold* one responsible or *acknowledge* one's authority. This is according them a certain kind of authority. But to achieve such statuses, one must be recognised by them in turn. That is to make oneself in a certain sense responsible to them. The process that synthesises an apperceiving normative subject, one who can *commit* himself in judgment and action, become responsible cognitively and practically, is a *social* process of reciprocal recognition that at the same time synthesises a normative recognitive community of those recognised by and who recognise that normative subject: a community bound together by reciprocal relations of authority over and responsibility to each other.

Here is a mundane example. Achieving the status of being a good chess-player is not something I can do simply by coming subjectively to adopt a certain attitude toward myself. It is, in a certain sense, up to me who I regard as good chess-players: whether I count any woodpusher who can play a legal game, only

formidable club players, Masters, or Grand Masters. That is, it is up to me who I recognise as good chess-players, in the sense in which I aspire to be one. But it is not then in the same sense up to me whether I qualify as one of them. To earn their recognition in turn, I must be able to play up to their standards. To *be*, say, a formidable club player, I must be recognised as such by those I recognise as such. My recognitive attitudes can define a virtual community, but only the reciprocal recognition by those I recognise can make me actually a member of it, accord me the status for which I have implicitly petitioned by recognising them. My attitudes exercise recognitive authority in determining whose recognitive attitudes I am responsible to for my actual normative status.

As in the Kantian autonomy model of normative bindingness, we bind ourselves, collectively, and individually. No-one has authority over me except that which I grant by my recognitive attitudes. They are accordingly a necessary condition of my having the status I do. But as on the traditional obedience model, others do exercise genuine authority over my normative statuses—in the cases we care about, what I am committed to, responsible for, and authoritative about. Their attitudes are also a necessary condition of my having the status I do. The two aspects of normative dependence, authority and responsibility, are entirely reciprocal and symmetrical. And together, the attitudes of myself and my fellows in the recognitive community, of those I recognise and who recognise me, are sufficient to institute normative statuses that are *not* subjective in the same way in which the normative attitudes that institute them are.

Hegel wants to respect both these thoughts—the lessons both of the modern autonomy model of normativity and also the lessons of the traditional obedience model. The trouble with them, he thinks, is that each of them construes the reciprocal notions of authority and responsibility, in a one-sided [einseitig] way, as having an *asymmetric* structure that is unmotivated and ultimately unsustainable. If X has authority over Y, then Y is responsible to X. The obedience view sees only the attitudes of X as relevant to the bindingness of the normative relation between them, while the autonomy view sees only the attitudes of Y as mattering. Hegel's claim is that they *both* do. The problem is to understand how the *authority* to undertake a determinate responsibility that for Kant is required for an exercise of freedom is actually supplied with a determinate *responsibility*, so that one is intelligible as genuinely *committing* oneself to something, constraining oneself. This co-ordinate structure of authority and responsibility ('independence' and 'dependence' in the normative sense Hegel gives to these terms) is what Hegel's *social* model of *reciprocal recognition* is supposed to make sense of. He thinks (and this is an Enlightenment thought, of a piece with that which motivates the autonomy criterion of demarcation of the normative) that all authority and responsibility are ultimately *social* phenomena. They are the products of the *attitudes* of those who, on the one hand, *undertake*

responsibility and *exercise* authority, and on the other, of those who *hold* others responsible, and *acknowledge* their authority. In spite of the formal parity of the models as asymmetric, the modern autonomy model represents for Hegel a clear advance on the traditional obedience model in that it *does* aspire to endorse *symmetry* of authority and responsibility. But it does so by insisting that these relations of authority and responsibility obtain only when X and Y are *identical*: when the authoritative one and the responsible one coincide. That immediate collapse of roles achieves symmetry, but only at the cost of making it impossible to satisfy the demand of relative independence of normative force and content.

For Hegel, social substance is synthesised by reciprocal recognition. It is articulated into individual recognizing and recognised selves, which are subjects of normative statuses of commitment, authority, and responsibility—statuses instituted collectively by those recognitive attitudes. He sees these social recognitive practices as providing the context and background required to make sense of the Kantian process of integrating conceptual commitments so as to synthesise a rational unity of apperception. Hegel's term for the whole normatively articulated realm of discursive activity (Kant's 'realm of freedom') is 'Geist': spirit. At its core is *language*: 'Language is the Dasein of Geist,' Hegel says.[4] That is where concepts (which for Hegel, as for Kant, is to say, norms) have their actual, public existence. (To look ahead: we might here think of Sellars's principle that 'Grasp of a concept is mastery of the use of a word.')

Here is how I think the social division of conceptual labor understood according to the recognitive model of reciprocal authority and responsibility works in the paradigmatic linguistic case, so as to resolve the tension between authority over force and authority over content. It *is* up to me which counter in the game I play, which move I make, which word I use. But it is *not* then in the same sense up to me what the *significance* of that counter is—what other moves it precludes or makes necessary, what I have said or claimed by using that word, what the constraints are on successful rational integration of the commitment I have thereby undertaken with the rest of those I acknowledge. It *is* up to me what concept I apply in a particular judgment—whether I claim that the coin is made of copper or silver, for instance. But if I claim that it is copper, it is *not* then up to me what *move* I have made, what *else* I have committed myself to by using that term. So, for instance, I have thereby committed myself to the coin melting at $1084°$ C, but not at $1083°$ C—in the sense that if those claims are not true then neither is the one I made. And I have made a claim that is incompatible with saying that the coin is an electrical insulator. I can bind myself by these determinate conceptual norms because they are always already there in the always already up-and-running communal linguistic practices into which I enter as a young one. An essential part of what maintains them is the attitudes of *others*—in this case, of the metallurgical experts who would hold me responsible for those

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commitments on the basis of my performance, if the issue arose. My authority to commit myself using public words is the authority at once to make myself responsible for and authorise others to hold me responsible for determinate conceptual contents about which I am *not* authoritative. It is a petition for determinate recognition (attribution of specific commitments) by those I implicitly recognise as having, and thereby grant the authority so to recognise me.

IV. Idealism, Modality, and Normativity

The ideas I have so far mentioned as making German Idealism of particular interest and value to analytic philosophers downstream from Wittgenstein, Quine, and the modal revolution concern semantic holism, modality, and normativity. I want to close by indicating what I take to be a particularly interesting Hegelian line of thought that weaves those strands together.

As I indicated in introducing the idea of modal realism and its relation to conceptual realism, Hegel's most fundamental semantic-cum-metaphysical concept is **determinate negation**. I take it to be his way of talking about Aristotelian contrareity, or material incompatibility: the relation between **circular** and **triangular**. Equally important, but less fundamental, in my view, is the concept of **mediation**. The terminology here derives from the 'mediating' role of middle terms in syllogistic reasoning, and is principally Hegel's way of talking about inference, in the sense of relations of material *consequence*. One reason I take determinate negation to be systematically the more basic notion is that, although Hegel nowhere points this out, material consequence can be defined in terms of material incompatibility. 'Leibniz was rational' is a consequence of 'Leibniz was a mathematician,' in that everything incompatible with being rational (for instance, being inanimate) is incompatible with being a mathematician. The contrast between determinate negation and formal negation is the contrast between Aristotelian contraries and Aristotelian contradictories. Here two orders of explanation are possible. Thought of one way, contradictories are least incompatibles. **Non-circular** is what is implied by **triangular**, **square**, **polygonal**, and every other contrary of circular. Thought of another way, to be a contrary of **circular** is just to imply **not-circular**. Hegel argues for and adopts the former explanatory strategy. Later, Bolzano introduces, Frege exploits, and Quine emphasises the idea that inferences good in virtue of their *logical form* can be picked out as those (materially) good inferences that remain good upon arbitrary substitution for their non-logical vocabulary.

Hegel starts with *material* incompatibility (and so material consequence), rather than *formal,* logical incompatibility, because he understands such relations as articulating the *content* of non-logical concepts, such as circular and

mathematician. This is part and parcel of his *non-psychological* theory of conceptual content. According to his theory, to be conceptually contentful just is to stand in relations of material incompatibility and (so) material consequence to other such items. The result is evidently a thoroughly *holistic* conception of the conceptual. For conceptual contentfulness is understood in terms of relations to other items that stand in the same sort of relations, and hence possess the same sort of content. Conceptual content construed as role in a relational structure of material incompatibility and consequence is not atomistic.

The existence of conceptual content in this sense does not depend on the existence of thinkers who grasp conceptual contents. **Circularity** would exclude **triangularity** and **being copper** would imply **malleability** even if there had never been thinkers to think about it. Given this way of thinking about conceptual content as articulation by relations of material incompatibility and consequence (determinate negation and mediation), *modal realism* about the objective world entails *conceptual realism* about the objective world. That is, taking it that nature is lawful—that there are laws of nature that would be expressed by statements using alethic modal terms, that it is impossible for a mass to accelerate without an impressed force and necessary for an object in rectilinear motion to remain in rectilinear motion unless a force is impressed on it–is taking it that the objective world comes in conceptual form. For it is to take it that it is articulated by properties and states of affairs that stand in relations of modally robust incompatibility and consequence. That is what I meant by saying that Hegel's is a *non-psychological* conception of the conceptual.

Yet it is *also* a theory of the contents of our thoughts. For our thoughts, too, stand to one another in relations of material incompatibility and consequence. The thought that the coin is circular is incompatible with the thought that it is triangular, and believing that it is copper commits one to its being malleable. The subjective realm of intentional states, is populated by thinkings and believings that are conceptually contentful in virtue of being articulated by relations of material incompatibility and consequence. Both the subjective and the objective poles of the intentional nexus are in Hegel's sense conceptually structured. 'To him who looks on the world rationally, the world looks rationally back.'[5]

Of course, there is also a crucial difference between the relations of material incompatibility and consequence that articulate the subjective real of thoughts and those that articulate the objective realm of facts. It is *impossible* for the coin to be both circular and triangular, and *necessary* that it be malleable, if copper. But it is *not impossible* for me to believe both that it is circular and that it is triangular. And not *necessary* that I believe it to be malleable if I believe it to be copper. It is just *wrong* for one *subject* to have those constellations of beliefs, where it is *impossible* for one *object* to have the corresponding constellations of properties.

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Believing that the coin is copper *commits* or *obliges* me to believe it is malleable, and believing it to be circular precludes me from being *entitled* to believe it to be triangular. But here is no necessity that I *will* in fact believe as I ought. On the side of thought, the incompatibilities and consequences that articulate material conceptual content are *deontic normative* ones, not *alethic modal* ones. They are a matter of commitment and entitlement, of obligation and permission, rather than necessity and possibility.

But, Hegel insists, the alethic modal and deontic normative senses of 'incompatibility' and 'consequence' are two *forms* that one kind of *content–conceptual* content–can take. That his concept of determinate negation or (as I have rendered it), material incompatibility can take these two forms is essential to it. They are conceived as two sides of one coin. That while it is *possible* to find oneself with incompatible commitments, but that if one does one is *obliged* to *do* something, to *change* one's beliefs, is the reason negativity on his conception is 'restless', is a principle and motive for movement and change. It is also this feature of determinate negation that stands behind his *hylomorphic* theory of knowledge. When all goes well, thought and fact have the same content, which shows up in two different forms. In the opening paragraphs of the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel lays down as a criterion of adequacy of epistemological theories that they should not incorporate semantic theories that preclude the possibility of knowing how things actually are: that it must be at least intelligible that how things are *for* consciousness is how they are *in* themselves. Hegel can say with Wittgenstein (in what is possibly John McDowell's favorite passage) 'When I think, and mean, that things are thus-and-so, my thought, and meaning, do not stop anywhere short of the fact that things are thus-and-so.'[6]

The hylomorphic conception of the relations between the subjective and objective poles of the intentional nexus is built on Hegel's non-psychological conception of the conceptual. At its core is the concept of determinate negation or material incompatibility, construed as essentially involving twinned deontic normative and alethic modal aspects. Understanding the relations between them is the key to understanding Hegel's idealism. I think the beginning of wisdom here is to see that Hegel thinks the deontic and alethic modalities that articulate the two forms conceptual content can take are reciprocally *sense*-dependent, but *not* *reference*-dependent. As I am using these terms, to say that Xs are *sense*-dependent on Ys is to say that one cannot in principle understand what Xs are without *understanding* what Ys are. To assert instead a *reference*-dependence relation is to claim that there cannot *be* Xs unless there are Ys. In traditional (non-Fregean) language, this is the difference between dependence in the order of understanding and dependence in the order being, semantic as against ontological dependence. As an example, consider response-dependent properties. I might define an artificial notion I'll call beauty*, by stipulating that something is beautiful* just in

case seeing it would cause pleasure in an ideal human observer. This concept is sense-dependent on that of an ideal human observer. One cannot understand the property beautiful* except insofar as one understands that concept. But there were beautiful* sunsets before there were humans, and would have been such sunsets even if there never had been humans. For the subjunctive or counterfactual 'If an ideal human observer *had* been present, she *would* have felt pleasure,' can still be true. So there is no reference-dependence corresponding to the sense-dependence.

I think Hegel thinks that the deontic normative and the alethic modal senses of 'materially incompatible' are reciprocally sense-dependent, but not reference-dependent. In introducing the sense in which Hegel's conception of the conceptual should be thought of as 'non-psychological,' I already asserted that he thinks that there would have been object and properties, facts, and laws (articulated by relations of material incompatibility and consequence in the alethic modal sense) even if there had never been concept *users* acknowledging in their practice obligations regarding relations of incompatibility and consequence concerning their commitments. I do think he thinks that we cannot *understand* what it *means* to say or think that the world comes articulated into objects, properties, facts, and laws, except as part of a story that includes the activities of referring using singular terms, classifying using predicates, judging and asserting using declarative sentences, and stating law like principles using modally qualified quantified conditionals. (OK, I admit that he wouldn't have put the point just like that.)

I think we take four big steps towards understanding Hegel's idealism (though I am not claiming that this gets us *all* the way there) when we combine the holistic non-psychological conception of the conceptual made possible by his notion of determinate negation, the conceptual realism it supports, the hylomorphic picture of the intentional nexus it makes possible, and add the doctrine of the reciprocal sense-dependence of the deontic normative vocabulary that expresses the sense of 'material incompatibility and consequence' articulating the **subjective** form of conceptual content and the alethic modal vocabulary that expresses the normative vocabulary that expresses the sense of 'material incompatibility and consequence' articulating the **objective** form of conceptual content. I think all of these are colorable and defensible lines of thought today, and that collectively they constitute an exciting constellation of ideas about topics at the forefront of contemporary research in the tradition of analytic philosophy: the nature of conceptual content, holism, modality, normativity, and intentionality.

Robert Brandom
University of Pittsburgh
RBRANDOM@pitt.edu

Notes

[1] Pp. 306-307 (§107) in: Wilfrid Sellars: "Counterfactuals, Dispositions, and Causal Modalities" In *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, *Volume II: Concepts, Theories, and the Mind-Body Problem*, ed. Herbert Feigl, Michael Scriven, and Grover Maxwell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), p.225-308.

[2] Sellars, W. (1948) "Concepts as Involving Laws, and Inconceivable Without Them." Philosophy of Science 15: 287–315.

[3] I take some initial steps towards one way of doing this in the last three chapters of *Between Saying and Doing*. Although the point is not developed there, as Jaroslav Peregrin has shown, the incompatibility semantics that is introduced there can in large part be translated into possible world semantics, by trading minimal incoherent sets of sentences for maximal coherent ones. I also make an initial gesture in this direction in "Modal Expressivism and Modal Realism: Together Again," which is Chapter Five of *From Empiricism to Expressivism: Brandom Reads Sellars*, forthcoming in 2014 from Harvard University Press.

[4] *Phenomenology of Spirit,* §652.

[5] Introduction to *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, published separately as *Reason in History*, tr. R.S. Hartman 1953, p. 13; Suhrkamp Hegel edition, volume 12, p.23.

[6] *Philosophical Investigations,* §95.