Part III
Brandom and Hegel

HEGEL AND BRANDOM ON NORMS, CONCEPTS AND LOGICAL CATEGORIES

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Robert Brandom is unusual among philosophers schooled in the analytic tradition in acknowledging a far-reaching debt to Hegel. What especially attracts Brandom to Hegel is the latter's understanding of concepts.

According to Brandom, Kant taught that we are distinguished from other animals above all by our use of concepts. He also showed that concepts are not mental pictures of things, but rather rules or norms that determine the correct way to understand things. The concept 'dog', for Kant, is not an image in my mind's eye of a hairy, barking animal, but a *rule* that lays down what properties something must have to count as a dog rather than a cat.[1] Hegel is a particular hero of Brandom's because he recognized that concepts are not 'fixed or static items' but the *changing* products of social and historical practices. In particular, Brandom explains, Hegel understood the content of concepts to emerge gradually through the practice of applying and then revising them. Indeed, Brandom's Hegel is a pragmatist who believes that concepts have no content apart from that conferred on them by their application and use.[2]

Brandom's reading of Hegel is original and thought provoking. My aim in this essay, however, is to suggest one way in which, for all its merits, Brandom's interpretation seems to me to miss something significant in Hegel's thought.

Brandom's pragmatist conception of norms

Before I turn to Hegel directly, I need to give a sketch of Brandom's own pragmatist and inferentialist account of norms and concepts. This sketch will be simplified, but not, I hope, too distorting.

According to Brandom, what makes human beings distinctive is that we are subject not just to the laws of nature but also to certain *norms* that govern our actions and beliefs. These norms need not always take the form of explicit rules and principles. Sometimes they can take this form; but Brandom argues that all

norms that are explicit in the form of rules presuppose norms that are *implicit* in our practices of judging and inferring.[3]

Brandom points out, however, that the norms implicit in a society's practices cannot be discerned simply by observing how the members of that society regularly behave. Regularities of behaviour show only what people actually do; they do not by themselves reveal what people deem it *appropriate* to do. To discern what is deemed appropriate or inappropriate in a society, we must consider not just the regular patterns of behaviour exhibited by its members but rather the normative *sanctions* that are applied in it. That is to say, we must examine what actions lead to the granting or withholding of permissions and entitlements in that society. If a person's failure to display a particular kind of leaf before entering a hut leads directly to his or her being prohibited from attending the weekly festival, then the requirement that the leaf be displayed is clearly a practical norm in that society.[4] Norms, for Brandom, are thus not just the *regularities* exhibited by our practice but the *proprieties* that are implicit in that practice.[5]

These proprieties are instituted, according to Brandom, by the practical attitudes of members of a society. That is to say, they are established by being *taken* or *deemed* in practice to be proprieties. Norms do not exist 'out there' in the way in which natural objects do. They arise only in being recognized and acknowledged and so constitute what Brandom calls '*social* achievements'.[6] The laws of nature constrain us whether we acknowledge them or not. Norms, by contrast, exercise an authority over us only insofar as we endorse and acknowledge that authority. In this sense, Brandom argues, 'what *makes* [norms] binding is that one *takes* them to be binding'.[7] Such acknowledgement, as we have seen, need not take the form of an explicit declaration of principles. Our acknowledgement of norms is *implicit* in the practical assessments we make of our own behaviour and that of our fellows.

The fact that norms are established by being *taken* to be norms does not mean, however, that we always fully understand what those norms require of us. Indeed, Brandom notes, the norms that we ourselves institute through our implicit, practical acknowledgement will frequently 'outrun' our own understanding of them.[8] Why should this be? Because the norms and proprieties that are implicit in our practice comprise not only what we *do* in fact acknowledge, but also what we *should* acknowledge, given what we do acknowledge; yet we often fail to grasp these normative consequences of the proprieties we recognize. We may, for example, acknowledge through our practice that the environment should be protected; yet we may not understand that that requires us to take recycling much more seriously than we do.

So who is to determine what norms and obligations follow from the proprieties we implicitly acknowledge in our practice? Brandom credits Hegel with the following answer to this question:

> the determinacy of the content of what you have committed yourself
> to – the part that is *not* up to you in the way that *whether* you commit

yourself to it is up to you – is secured by the attitudes of *others*, to whom one has at least implicitly granted that authority.

Brandom continues:

> As Hegel puts it, I have a certain *independence* in which commitments [and norms] I embrace. Apart from my acknowledgement, they have no normative force over me. But in exercising that very independence, I am at the same time *dependent* on the attitudes of others, who attribute and hold me to the commitment, and thereby administer its content.[9]

The process of instituting norms and proprieties is thus a complex one. On the one hand, we ourselves institute norms – in the sense of giving them authority over us – by our practical acknowledgement of them. On the other hand, our acceptance of certain norms commits us in the eyes of others to further norms and proprieties that may exceed our immediate understanding. For Brandom (and for Brandom's Hegel), the norms and proprieties that are implicit in our practices comprise *both* ones we acknowledge *and* ones that are attributed to us by others on the basis of those we acknowledge. We are thus not in a position purely by ourselves to determine what norms are in fact implicit in our own practice. Rather, the precise content of those implicit norms is determined through 'a process of *negotiation*' involving ourselves *and* those who attribute further norms to us. We implicitly acknowledge certain norms in our judgements and actions; others then attribute further norms to us on the basis of what we acknowledge; and, in the ensuing conversation between ourselves and those who assess what we do, determinate ideas emerge of what is in fact implicit in our practice. This process, which goes on both *within* and *between* societies and which Brandom identifies with what Hegel calls 'experience',[10] continues indefinitely and reaches no final conclusion. 'There is never any final answer as to what is correct', Brandom writes; 'everything . . . is itself a subject for conversation and further assessment, challenge, defense, and correction'.[11]

Brandom's inferentialist conception of concepts

What I have sketched so far is the pragmatist conception of norms that Brandom believes he shares with Hegel: the idea that norms are instituted by being *taken* to be authoritative, that is, by being *acknowledged* in our practice and *attributed* to us by others. I now want to look at the inferentialist conception of concepts that Brandom also claims to share with Hegel.

Concepts, for Brandom, are norms that are applied in *judgements*.[12] When we judge that 'this car is red', we employ the two concepts 'car' and 'red'. These concepts are not, however, to be thought of as abstract pictures of objects or of properties of objects. They constitute norms that lay down what is to count as

a 'car' or as something 'red'. That is, they determine what something *should* be understood to be, if it is considered to fall under one or other concept.

The judgements or assertions in which concepts are applied are taken by Brandom to express certain beliefs or *commitments* by which we stand.[13] The concepts involved in the judgements can thus be understood to specify exactly what it is that we have committed ourselves to in making the judgements. If we judge that the red object is a car, then we have committed ourselves to understanding it one way, but if we judge that the red object is an apple, then we have committed ourselves to understanding it another way. Grasping a concept, therefore, does not involve forming a mental picture of the thing being conceived, but entails 'knowing . . . what else one would be committing oneself to by applying the concept, what would entitle one to do so, and what would preclude such entitlement'.[14] Indeed, the concepts we employ require us to undertake a whole chain of commitments whenever we make a judgement. They serve as norms determining 'the *correctness* of various moves' from one commitment to another, and so lay down how we should go on to understand something, given the judgements we have made.[15]

It should be noted that, for Brandom, content is actually conferred on our concepts *by* the commitments we acknowledge (and are deemed by others to have undertaken) in our practice. It is *because* we take the commitment expressed in a judgement to entail further specific commitments that we understand the concepts employed in that judgement to have a certain content. This is what Brandom has in mind when he claims that 'concepts can have no content apart from that conferred on them by their use' (or, rather, by the *proprieties* of their use).[16] Nonetheless, once concepts have been established (even if only temporarily), they then determine what we commit ourselves to when we make a judgement. In this way, they come to serve as norms governing our actions and beliefs.

As we saw above, Brandom holds that we do not control or decide completely by ourselves the *content* of the norms we acknowledge. The same is true of the concepts that determine the nature of our commitments. Thus, even though we freely acknowledge a certain commitment in making a judgement, we do not control precisely what we have thereby committed ourselves to. Our commitment will entail other commitments as its consequences, whether or not we recognize that fact. What specific commitments follow from the one we acknowledge is determined by the specific concepts that we employ. So, if we judge that it is a car we see, we are committed (whether we like it or not) to its being inedible (or at least not very nutritious), and if we judge that it is an apple that we see, we are committed (whether we like it or not) to its being extremely difficult to drive.

Our commitments (and the judgements in which they are expressed) thus stand in what Brandom calls 'inferential' relations to one another: one commitment necessarily provides the premise from which others can then be inferred. The specific inferences implicit in a given commitment are determined by the

concepts that are employed in the judgement in which the commitment is expressed. Concepts are thus norms determining that certain inferences should be drawn from the judgements and assertions that contain those concepts. Indeed, Brandom argues that the content of a concept consists principally in the inferential connections in which it stands to other concepts.[17] The content of a concept is partly determined by the circumstances of its correct application; but it is determined primarily by the other concepts which it makes necessary (or which it excludes from itself). Concepts, as Brandom puts it, are thus 'inferentially articulated'.[18]

The content of a particular concept is not, however, simply something given. It consists in the inferential connections that it is *taken* to have by those who use it. That content can never finally be decided, but is determined through a process of negotiation. As we saw above, this process of negotiation takes place between those who assume in their practice that a concept licenses one inference, and others who judge that it licenses different inferences. It is in this social and historical conversation between interlocutors, therefore, that the precise contents of the concepts we employ are worked out.

Brandom understands Hegel to share this broadly inferential conception of concepts. The idea that the content of concepts consists in their inferential connections to other concepts appears in Hegel as the idea that concepts are 'mediated' by one another.[19] Hegel is also said to share Brandom's view that the inferential connections between concepts that constitute the core of our discursive practice are *material*, rather than purely *logical* in character.

Material inferences, for Brandom, depend on and articulate the non-logical *content* of the concepts involved.[20] They are taken to be good inferences not because they have a particular logical form, but because there is a material connection between the contents of the concepts that are incorporated into their premises and conclusions. In *Articulating Reasons* Brandom explains such inferences as follows:

> Consider the inference from 'Pittsburgh is to the west of Princeton' to 'Princeton is to the east of Pittsburgh', and that from 'Lightning is seen now' to 'Thunder will be heard soon'. It is the contents of the concepts *west* and *east* that make the first a good inference, and the contents of the concepts *lightning* and *thunder*, as well as the temporal concepts, that make the second appropriate. Endorsing these inferences is part of grasping or mastering those concepts, quite apart from any specifically *logical* competence.[21]

This last phrase is particularly important. Endorsing a material inference requires mastery of the relevant empirical (and spatio-temporal) concepts, but it demands no 'specifically logical competence'. To know whether a material inference is good, we thus do not need an explicit or implicit understanding of logical relations or of the rules of deductive inference. We simply need to

understand what further concepts and judgements we commit ourselves to – or are deemed to commit ourselves to – when we use concepts with a particular empirical content.

For Brandom, therefore, neither explicit nor implicit mastery of logical vocabulary is required in order to count as rational. So what role does logical vocabulary play when we do learn to use it? Brandom maintains that it plays an 'expressive' role, 'namely, making explicit the inferences whose goodness is implicit in the conceptual contents of nonlogical concepts'.[22] In everyday discourse, we implicitly endorse all manner of material inferences through our behaviour and judgements. For example, we avoid stepping out in front of buses for fear of being run over, or we put up our umbrella when it rains in order to stay dry. Many of the inferences we implicitly draw are good ones, but some are not. In order to assess whether they are good or not – that is, to make them available for proper public scrutiny – we need to make their particular *inferential* structure plain for all to see. Logical vocabulary enables us to do this by putting an implicit inference in the explicit form of 'if p, then q'. Logical vocabulary thus allows us to present the inferences we implicitly endorse in a form that makes them subjects of rational debate and argument. It facilitates rational discussion of those inferences; but it is not needed in order to understand and endorse the inferences in everyday practice.[23]

For Brandom, therefore, being rational means understanding what we are committed to by the material – empirical and spatio-temporal – *content* of the concepts we use. It does not require that we have an explicit or implicit grasp of *formal*, logical relations (such as that between antecedent and consequent, or between particular and universal). It is especially important to note that for Brandom our ability to understand material inferences does not require any *implicit* grasp of logical relations.[24] Understanding in practice what follows from its being a rainy day does not require an implicit grasp of the conditional or of the rules of deductive inference; it simply requires a grasp of what follows from its being *a rainy day*. The role of logical vocabulary is not, therefore, to render explicit any implicit *logical* understanding on our part. Logical vocabulary, such as the conditional, enables us rather to state explicitly the *material inferences* we implicitly endorse in our practice. Such vocabulary allows us to formulate such implicit material inferences as explicit claims. It thereby lets us '*say* (explicitly) what otherwise one can only *do* (implicitly)'.[25]

Brandom maintains that Hegel shares his conception of everyday, 'material-inferential' rationality. He insists, therefore, that for Hegel *logical* categories and vocabulary are not constitutive conditions of everyday rationality itself but play a purely secondary, explicitating role. As Brandom puts it in *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, 'one of the overarching methodological commitments that guides my reading of Hegel is that the *point* of developing an adequate understanding of these categorical [or logical] concepts is so that they can then be used to make explicit how ordinary empirical concepts work'.[26] A later footnote in this book further clarifies the role of Hegelian logical categories. Whereas formal

logical vocabulary allows us to express material inferences (and incompatibilities) as explicit claims, Hegel's logical categories allow us to 'make explicit the process by which the system of determinate concepts and judgments' – that is, the system of *empirical* concepts – 'progresses and develops'.[27] Such categories thus enable us to tell the story of – or at least *a* story about – the emergence of determinate, empirical concepts, but they do not constitute the implicit preconditions of the employment of empirical concepts themselves. In what follows I offer a different account of Hegel's view of logical categories.[28]

Hegel on logical categories

On my reading, Hegel does not believe that logical categories merely enable us to render explicit 'how ordinary empirical concepts work' and how they are developed. He believes that these categories constitute the *precondition* of employing empirical concepts in the first place. Consequently, they are also the precondition of the material inferences that depend on and articulate the content of our empirical concepts. Indeed, for Hegel, a grasp of logical categories is the essential condition of all human consciousness and cognition. This is the case because an understanding of logical categories is built into the very fact that we use concepts and words at all. Hegel makes this clear in the preface to the second edition of the *Science of Logic*:

> The forms of thought [*Denkformen*] are, in the first instance, displayed and stored in human *language*. ... Into all that becomes something inward for man, ... into all that he makes his own, language has penetrated, and everything that he has transformed into language and expresses in it contains a category [*Kategorie*] – concealed, mixed with other forms or clearly determined as such, so much is logic his natural element, indeed his own peculiar *nature*.[29]

Like Kant, therefore – though for different reasons – Hegel maintains that not only empirical concepts but also *logical* categories are essential to ordinary, everyday discourse and understanding. This does not mean that Hegel is a 'regulist' in Brandom's sense. He does not maintain that we always need an *explicit* understanding of logical relations and categories, or training in formal logic, in order to appreciate why it is not appropriate to jump in front of a bus if one wants to stay alive. Hegel mocks precisely this kind of regulism when he takes to task those who want an explicit grasp of the rules governing cognition before setting out to know things or who feel they need a full and detailed knowledge of how to swim before they venture into the water.[30]

Yet Hegel insists equally that we cannot employ empirical concepts, make judgements or undertake intentional actions without an *implicit* grasp of categories and logical relations. Such logical categories include, amongst others, 'reality', 'negation', 'something', 'other', 'identity', 'difference', 'actuality', 'possibility',

'necessity', 'cause' and 'object'. To understand a material inference, such as the one from 'Lightning is seen now' to 'Thunder will be heard soon', we must thus understand not only the concepts of 'lightning' and 'thunder', as well as 'now' and 'soon', but also the highly general concepts or categories of 'something', 'something else' and 'necessity'. For we must have an implicit grasp of what it means for something simply to be what it is and be different from something else, as well as an understanding of one thing's *having* to follow another. Without a grasp of those general concepts, we could not think of thunder as being *something* that *necessarily* follows *something else*. Similarly, without an implicit grasp of the way in which particulars and their universals are related, one could not recognize that the judgement 'That's scarlet' commits one to the judgement 'That's red'. An implicit understanding of logical categories and relations is thus, for Hegel, the indispensable precondition of even the simplest everyday inferences.

This should not be taken to imply that Hegel denies the existence of material inference in something like Brandom's (or Sellars') sense. Hegel need not disagree with Brandom's claim that most of the inferences we make in our everyday lives articulate the contents of the empirical concepts we employ. Hegel's insight is simply that no material inference can be *purely* material, since our practical grasp of the propriety of every such inference is informed by our implicit understanding not only of the empirical concepts involved but also of logical categories, such as something, other, identity, difference and necessity. To put it another way, there are no purely material inferences because all our understanding of the *matter* of the world is shot through with an implicit understanding of the general *form* of things and of their general ontological relations. In this sense, Hegel is closer than Brandom is prepared to acknowledge to the great, grey father of us all, Plato.

Hegel's claim that logical categories are built into the fabric of thought (and language), and so are implicit in everything we think and say, is more than a mere assertion. In the *Science of Logic*, he endeavours to support his claim by *proving* that such categories are immanent in thought as such. Hegel starts out in his *Logic* from what he thinks is the least that thought can be – the thought of simple, indeterminate being – and shows that this indeterminate thought transforms itself dialectically into a series of progressively more determinate categories. In this way, he claims, we discover that a whole array of logical categories is made necessary by and so inherent in thought itself.

According to Brandom, Hegel's *Logic lacks* necessity in two important senses. First, it offers merely a 'rationally reconstructed trajectory by which [logical concepts] *might* have developed' in history. Second, the task of reconstructing this trajectory is not itself one that it is necessary for philosophy to undertake: we would be better off simply using those logical categories to render explicit the way that ordinary, empirical concepts are produced.[31] In Hegel's own view, by contrast, the *Logic* attempts to provide an a priori derivation of the logical categories of thought that follows a strictly necessary path. Furthermore, the

task of providing that a priori derivation is itself a necessary one, for without it we are left in the same uncritical position as Kant, namely that of just *assuming* without proper warrant that these categories, rather than those, are intrinsic to thought.

The role of Hegel's logic

This is not the place to provide an extensive discussion of Hegel's *Logic*, but I do wish to clarify a few things.[32] The *Logic* shows that certain categories are made *logically* necessary by thought. This does not mean, however, that every human society in every period of history will have a fully explicit understanding of these categories. Nor, indeed, does it mean that every society will have an *implicit* grasp of *all* the basic logical categories. Most categories will be implicit in the thinking of most societies, but some – such as the categories of 'causality' or 'chemism' – may be absent.

This discrepancy between what is logically necessary and what is found in actual historical societies is to be explained partly by the presence of irreducible contingencies in history that do not affect the logical development set out in Hegel's *Logic*. It is also to be explained by the fact that different historical societies inevitably embody different levels of understanding and so fall more or less short of what the logical necessity inherent in thought demands.

Even where an understanding of all the basic logical categories does implicitly suffuse given societies, Hegel claims that they will not always be understood in precisely the same way.[33] Indeed, some societies (or some of the individuals within a given society) may well display in their practice a profound *misunderstanding* of the categories. In this respect, therefore, the logical derivation of the categories undertaken by Hegel plays a corrective or normative role: it discloses how the categories implicit in our understanding and practice *should* in fact be conceived. As Hegel writes,

> at first [the categories] enter consciousness separately and so are variable and mutually confusing; consequently they afford to mind only a fragmentary and uncertain actuality; the loftier business of logic therefore is to clarify [*reinigen*] these categories and in them to raise mind to freedom and truth.[34]

What Hegel's *Logic* shows in particular is that logical categories – like empirical concepts – are (to use Brandom's phrase) 'inferentially articulated'. That is to say, they are connected through their own logical structure or 'content' to other logical categories. These connections, Hegel argues, are not merely historically contingent but are logically necessary. Hegel's *Logic* shows, therefore, that judgements we make that implicitly involve one logical category necessarily commit us to further judgements involving other categories. Let us briefly consider an example.

In his *Logic* Hegel argues that the category 'something' is intrinsically connected to the category 'other'. Every something must thus be understood to be other than something else. Furthermore, every something necessarily has a character or 'determination' of its own – its *Bestimmung* – which it asserts in its relations to other things. It also necessarily has a 'constitution' (*Beschaffenheit*) which is intrinsically vulnerable to being altered by the other things to which it relates. Finally, every something has a qualitative limit which renders it finite and so subject to ultimate destruction.[35] These logical connections between categories are built into the logical structure or content of the categories themselves and so commit us – whether we like it or not – to certain inferences concerning anything we judge to be 'something'. Such inferences can be regarded as 'material inferences' insofar as they are made necessary by nothing but the *content* of the categories; but they are logical-material, rather than empirically material, inferences.

So, when we judge that the car is scarlet, we not only commit ourselves to the further empirical judgement that the car is red, we also commit ourselves to the judgement that the car is vulnerable to damage caused by other things and subject to eventual decay. (And we also commit ourselves to the judgements that the car has a size, form, mechanical structure, and so on). These further judgements are made necessary not by the empirical content of the concepts 'car' or 'scarlet' but rather by the logical content of the category of 'something'. The category of 'something' thus serves (in Brandom's terms) as a norm that determines what inferences we commit ourselves to whenever we make a judgement about 'something' in the world.

Note that my account of Hegel's understanding of logical categories does not conflict with Brandom's inferentialist interpretation of Hegel. It is at odds, however, with the thorough-going pragmatism that Brandom endorses and attributes to Hegel. I shall not contest here Brandom's claim that Hegel has a pragmatist understanding of *empirical* concepts. We would need to look more closely at Hegel's account of the role of reason in history in order to determine fully how he understands our empirical cognition to develop; but the claim that Hegel understands empirical concepts to gain determinacy through a broadly pragmatic process of 'negotiation' strikes me as worthy of consideration. The process whereby our *actual* understanding of *logical* categories has changed in history might also be conceived – with some qualification – as one of pragmatic negotiation. In Hegel's view, however, the process through which we are finally to discover – in the science of speculative logic – how logical categories *should* be conceived is clearly not one of pragmatic negotiation, but rather one of a priori derivation. This process will turn out to be dialectical, but it is not conceived as being intrinsically dialogical.

This is not to say that the philosophical process of deriving the logical categories is an esoteric activity intelligible only to a few. Hegel regarded philosophy as an exoteric discipline to which 'all self-conscious reason', not just a handful of initiates, may contribute.[36] His point, however, is a methodological

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one: namely, that the way to determine the proper content of the categories is not through open-ended discussion and debate, but rather through seeking to unfold a priori what is logically inherent in thought as such. Only in this way, he thinks, can we discover the categorial norms to which we as rational beings are subject as a matter of logical necessity rather than historical contingency – the norms that *should* logically govern our lives. Any rational being may participate in this project; but they are all required to do the same thing: focus on the minimal character of thought and render explicit what is implicit in it.

This method of deriving the logical categories is privileged, in Hegel's view, precisely because it seeks to unfold what is in truth *immanent* in thought, rather than merely what has been held to be the content of the categories by philosophers and logicians of the past. Whether Hegel succeeds in providing a truly immanent derivation of the categories is a matter for debate. For Hegel, however, it is only by attempting to provide such an a priori immanent derivation that we will be able to determine the categories or norms that should *of necessity* govern our actions and beliefs.

The way to secure immanence, Hegel tells us, is to suspend all our inherited assumptions about thought and its categories and focus on thought at its most minimal. The science of logic, in other words, should be radically *presuppositionless*.[37] This claim has been subject to serious misunderstanding ever since Hegel's own day, so it is worth briefly explaining what it does and does not entail.

Hegel does not deny that what he calls 'speculative logic' presupposes the ability to use language and the ability to hold in mind abstract and often highly complex concepts. Such logic also presupposes a certain familiarity with the basic concepts of thought on the part of the philosopher or student: for if we lacked this familiarity, we could not recognize that the concepts developed in the *Logic* are in fact revised and 'clarified' versions of the concepts we use in everyday life. In these respects, therefore, speculative logic is clearly *not* presuppositionless.[38]

In two other respects, however, such logic is to be presuppositionless. First, we should not assume at the outset of logic that the categories of thought are to be understood in a specific way, or indeed that thought entails any particular categories at all. We should keep in the back of our minds the familiar, ordinary senses of the categories, but in the science of logic itself we should start from scratch by considering the sheer 'simplicity of thinking' as such and wait to discover which categories, if any, are inherent in such simplicity and how they are to be conceived. As new categories are derived in the course of speculative logic, we can compare them with the categories with which we are familiar and so determine to what extent our everyday understanding of the categories is adequate. That familiar, everyday understanding should not, however, play any role in the logical derivation of the categories themselves. In speculative logic itself the categories must be derived purely immanently – without presuppositions – from the sheer 'simplicity' of thought.[39]

Note that we may not, therefore, presuppose that the categories have a specific logical-material inferential structure or, indeed, that they have any *inferential* structure at all. We must rather wait to discover within the science of logic whether they are inferentially articulated and, if so, how. Hegel demonstrates in the course of the science of logic that the categories do entail one another and so are, in Brandom's terms, 'inferentially articulated', but he may not, and does not, assume from the start that this will be the case (just as he may not assume from the start that concepts are predicates of possible judgements).[40]

Second, we may not take for granted at the outset any specific rules or laws of thought. We may not presuppose that thought should abide by the rules of deductive inference or that it should be governed by the law of non-contradiction, and so may not find thought wanting if it fails to respect these rules and laws. Nor, indeed, may we presuppose from the outset that thought should be 'dialectical' (and certainly not that it should develop according to the pattern of 'thesis-antithesis-synthesis'). We may not presuppose such rules or laws because it is part of the task of speculative logic itself to discover *whether* any rules or laws are actually made necessary by the 'simplicity' of thought. Until this discovery has been made, their validity cannot be presupposed.[41]

How then is the speculative logician to proceed? Is there any *method* that such a logician must follow? Yes, indeed. The method we must follow is simply to *let* the 'simplicity' of thought unfold and determine itself before our very eyes according to whatever principles prove to be immanent in it. Heidegger is the philosopher with whom the idea of 'letting be' is usually associated.[42] Many years before Heidegger, however, Hegel argued that 'letting be' lies at the heart of genuinely free, modern philosophizing. 'When I think', Hegel explains, 'I give up my subjective particularity, sink myself in the matter, let thought follow its own course [*lasse das Denken für sich gewähren*]; and I think badly whenever I add something of my own'. My role as philosopher is thus not to pass judgement on this or that proposition or argument according to certain presupposed rules or proprieties of inference, but simply to 'let the inherently living determinations [of thought] take their own course [*für sich gewähren lassen*]'.[43] If one does this, Hegel claims, one will discover what thought proves logically to be *of its own accord*.

Our role as philosophers, therefore, is predominantly passive: we simply look on as the categories emerge immanently from the very 'simplicity' of thought. Yet we are not completely passive observers of this process. First of all, *we* are the ones who think through thought's immanent development: that development does not occur outside of us, like a film or a play, but takes place *in our thinking of it*. Second, although each category is made necessary by the one that precedes it and does not owe its emergence simply to our own astute insight, *we* nonetheless have to render explicit the categories that are implicit in thought at any particular point in its logical development. The deduction of the categories, Hegel maintains, involves nothing more than the '*positing*

[*Setzen*] of what is already contained in a concept';[44] but *we* are the ones who actually have to carry out this act of 'positing' or rendering-explicit.

As speculative logicians who *let* thought determine itself, we are thus both passive and active: we both allow our own thinking to be guided and determined by what is immanent in thought itself *and* play an active role in bringing what is immanent in thought out into the open. Indeed, Hegel notes, there is a degree of activity in our very passivity itself: for we can allow our thought to be guided by the matter at hand only if we actively focus on that matter and hold our own bright ideas at bay. Hegel makes this point in these important lines:

> Philosophical thinking proceeds analytically in that it simply takes up its object, the Idea, and lets it go its own way [*dieselbe gewähren läßt*], while it simply watches, so to speak, the movement and development of it. To this extent philosophizing is wholly passive [*passiv*]. [...] But this requires the effort to beware of our own inventions and particular opinions which are forever wanting to push themselves forward.[45]

One might be forgiven for suspecting that Hegel's method of simply 'letting' thought determine itself is a recipe for vague and undisciplined thinking. This, however, is far from the truth. Hegel's method demands 'that each thought should be grasped in its full precision [*Präzision*] and that nothing should remain vague and indeterminate'.[46] It also demands that one pay close and subtle attention to the logical structure of categories and render explicit only what is implicit in each category. As those who have studied Hegel's *Logic* know only too well, Hegel's method requires considerable mental discipline. It also requires mental flexibility, for speculative philosophers have not only to achieve a high degree of precision in their understanding of categories but also to allow those categories to mutate into new ones before their very eyes as they render their necessary implications explicit.

Logic and being

Like Brandom, Hegel understands the project of philosophy to consist in 'making it explicit'. In particular, it consists in making explicit the implicit conceptual *norms* that govern our lives.[47] For Brandom, all such norms are social and historical achievements. For Hegel, by contrast, empirical conceptual norms may be to a large degree social achievements, but the fundamental categorial norms to which we are – or should be – subject are rooted in the very nature of thought itself. They do not have any transcendent or supernatural ground; but nor are they simply the product of social and historical 'negotiation'. They are made necessary by the inherently dialectical character of thought itself. (As far as logical categories are concerned, therefore, it is not the case – *pace* Brandom – that for Hegel 'transcendental constitution' is nothing but 'social institution'.)[48]

Logical categories are also made necessary, in Hegel's view, by the inherently dialectical character of *being*. Commentators on Hegel, such as Terry Pinkard and Robert Pippin have in recent years popularized the so-called 'non-metaphysical' interpretation of Hegel's thought. Pippin, for example, takes Hegel's *Logic* to disclose the logical conditions under which alone objects can be determinate objects of *thought*, but he does not see it as laying bare the categories that are constitutive of being as such.[49] In my view, however, this 'non-metaphysical' reading of Hegel tells only half the story: for Hegel makes it clear that the categories set out in his logic are both the necessary concepts of thought *and* the intrinsic determinations of being itself. Hegel's logic, by his own admission, is both a logic and a metaphysics or ontology.[50]

The categories laid out in Hegel's *Logic* – such as 'negation' and 'opposition' – are thus both norms governing how we should think, if we are to be fully rational, *and* constitutive features of being itself. Hegel thus finds the categories governing our lives not just in human thought but also out there in the world. This, of course, means that in one sense he derives the 'ought' from the 'is'. At the end of his *Logic* Hegel argues that being proves to be not just being or substance or self-determining reason – the 'Idea' (*Idee*) – but *nature* – the realm of space, time and matter.[51] The categorial norms that Hegel sets out in the *Logic* are thus derived not from a realm of being beyond nature, but from being that proves logically to be nothing less than nature itself. It is nature, therefore, as much as human thought, that requires us to think in terms of dialectical categories such as 'something', 'limit' and 'finitude'. Accordingly, it is nature that commits us to inferences such as the one from the judgement 'this is a tree' to the further judgement 'this tree is something limited and finite'.

So can Hegel be considered a naturalist about categorial norms? In a sense, yes, since he understands those norms to be grounded in being that proves to be nature itself. His claim, however, is not just that the empirical contingencies of nature require us to think about nature in a certain way. Hegel's claim is that the inherent *logic* of nature – the rational dialectic or 'Idea' at the heart of nature – determines how we should think about it, at least in general terms. Hegel is thus ultimately a *rationalist* about categorial norms, rather than a conventional naturalist. He believes that reason alone determines the logical categories in terms of which we should think; but he thinks that reason is inherent both in our own thought and in the nature that surrounds us.

Brandom is right, in my view, to point out that we alone do not decide the content of the norms whose authority we acknowledge. Others can justifiably hold us to further norms that are implicit in the ones we endorse, even though we do not acknowledge those further norms ourselves. Brandom maintains that the content of the norms to which we are subject is determined solely through a process of social and historical negotiation involving both ourselves and others. Hegel, by contrast, maintains that the proper content of the *logical* categories implicit in all our ordinary judgements is determined by something more fundamental. Their content is ultimately determined by the rationality or

dialectical logic that is immanent in thought as such, as well as in being or nature. *Pace* Brandom, Hegel is thus at most only partly a pragmatist, for he is also an a priori rationalist and metaphysician. Indeed, the genius of Hegel is to show precisely how – after Kant – it is possible to be such a rationalist metaphysician.

Notes

1 Robert B. Brandom, *Making It Explicit. Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 8; Robert B. Brandom, *Articulating Reasons. An Introduction to Inferentialism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 80, 163–64, and Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 231–32, 273 [A 105, A 141].

2 Robert B. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead. Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 210, 215.

3 Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, p. 20.

4 Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, pp. 28, 43.

5 Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, p. 16: 'mastering of the public proprieties governing the use of linguistic expressions'.

6 Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, p. 216.

7 Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, p. 219.

8 Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, pp. 627, 631.

9 Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, pp. 220–21.

10 Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, p. 221.

11 Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, p. 647.

12 Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, p. 212, and *Making It Explicit*, pp. 79–80, 624.

13 Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*, p. 80.

14 Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*, p. 11.

15 Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*, p. 29.

16 Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, pp. 52, 210, 220, and *Articulating Reasons*, p. 196.

17 Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*, pp. 15–16.

18 Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, p. 622.

19 Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, pp. 180–81.

20 Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, pp. 95, 390, and *Articulating Reasons*, p. 37.

21 Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*, p. 52; see also *Making It Explicit*, p. 98.

22 Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, p. 109.

23 See Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*, p. 60.

24 Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, pp. 98–99.

25 Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, p. 108, my emphasis.

26 Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, p. 211.

27 Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, p. 387; see also pp. 393–94.

28 It should be noted, by the way, that Brandom understands Hegel's 'Concept' (*Begriff*) to be the system of determinate, *empirical* concepts; see *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, pp. 211, 387. In my view, by contrast, Hegel's 'Concept' – or, rather, his 'Idea' – is actually the system of *logical* categories. See G.W.F. Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic. Part 1 of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*, trans. T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting and H.S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1991) (hereafter *EL*), p. 304 [§ 237 Addition]. For the German text, see G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, eds E. Moldenhauer and K.M. Michel, 20 vols and Index (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969 onward) (hereafter *Werke*), 8: 389.

29 *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 1999) (hereafter *SL*), p. 31; *Werke*, 5: 20.

30 Hegel, *EL*, p. 82 [§ 41 Addition 1]; *Werke*, 8: 114.

31 Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, pp. 211, 393–94, my emphasis.

32 For a detailed discussion of the project, method and opening arguments of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, see S. Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic. From Being to Infinity* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 2006).

33 *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature. Being Part Two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 11 [§ 246 Addition]; *Werke*, 9: 20–21.

34 Hegel, *SL*, p. 37; *Werke*, 5: 27.

35 See Hegel, *SL*, pp. 114–31; *Werke*, 5: 122–42.

36 G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 43; Werke, 3: 65.

37 Hegel, *SL*, p. 70; *Werke*, 5: 68–69.

38 See Hegel, *EL*, p. 24 [§ 1]; *Werke*, 8: 41.

39 Hegel, *SL*, p. 31; *Werke*, 5: 19, and *EL*, p. 124 [§ 78 Remark]; *Werke*, 8: 168: 'die Einfachheit des Denkens'.

40 For Hegel's criticism of the assumption that thought is essentially judgement, see *EL*, pp. 66, 69 [§§ 28 Remark and 31 Remark]; *Werke*, 8: 94, 98. For Brandom's views on the priority of judgement, see *Articulating Reasons*, pp. 13, 159–60.

41 Hegel, *SL*, p. 43; *Werke*, 5: 35.

42 See, for example, M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), p. 405.

43 Hegel, *EL*, pp. 58–59 [§ 24 Addition 2]; *Werke*, 8: 84–85.

44 Hegel, *EL*, p. 141 [§ 88 Remark]; *Werke*, 8: 188.

45 Hegel, *EL*, p. 305 [§ 238 Addition]; *Werke*, 8: 390–91.

46 Hegel, *EL*, p. 128 [§ 80 Addition]; *Werke*, 8: 171. See also J. Burbidge, *On Hegel's Logic. Fragments of a Commentary* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1981), p. 42.

47 A fuller study of the relation between Brandom and Hegel would have to consider in detail whether Hegel does, indeed, understand concepts to be 'norms' in Brandom's precise sense. For the purposes of this essay, however, I assume that Hegel can be taken to regard concepts as norms in so far as he understands them to be capable of being employed *appropriately* and *inappropriately*.

48 Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, p. 48.

49 R. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism. The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 176, 188, 248, 250. See also Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, pp. 137–43.

50 See, for example, Hegel, *EL*, p. 56 [§ 24]; *Werke*, 8: 81.

51 Hegel, *SL*, p. 843; *Werke*, 6: 573.

7

BRANDOM'S HEGEL

Robert B. Pippin

Bob Brandom's marvelous *Tales of the Mighty Dead* is an essay in "reconstructive metaphysics," especially the metaphysics of intentionality. Not surprisingly, he is drawn to early, implicit manifestations of his own account of the essential elements of a successful explanation of intentionality: that it be functionalist, inferentialist, holist, normative, social pragmatist, and, we now see more clearly, historically inflected. Brandom himself wants to claim that intentionality is not the primordial phenomenon in human mindedness; it is derivative, depends on normativity, the achievement of socially recognized normative statuses constituted by normative attitudes, and in such a context, Brandom's Hegel has to qualify as the most promising Brandomian, *avant la lettre*. "Making it explicit" is as important to Hegel as it is to Brandom; Hegel's notions of being-for-self and being-for-others, and their inseparability; the contrast between certainty and truth; the attack on any logical or empiricist atomism; the insistence on holism; the rejection of any Cartesian dualism between body and mind in favor of a compatible and systematically connected distinction between the factual and the normative;[1] the achievement of socially recognitive statuses as essential to the possibility of intelligibility and understanding; all this and much more, all have strong roles to play in Brandom's theory too.

I want to raise a number of questions about Brandom's Hegel, but I should admit at the outset that the relevance of those questions will depend on just what Brandom means by the "de re" method of interpretation he defends at the beginning of TMD.[2] I note that on the one hand, Brandom admits that his methodology involves "selection, supplementation and approximation," "selection" being the source of potential controversy since it is easy to imagine it functioning as a Get Out of Jail Free Card whenever questions about textual fidelity arise.[3] This "selection" issue is especially critical because, as Brandom of course knows, Hegel's theory of normativity in his *Phenomenology* is much, much broader in scope than the issues in Hegel about which Brandom has, up to this point at least, commented. Hegel's theory ranges over religion, art, burial practices, the Crusades, slavery, phrenology, hedonism, morality and forgiveness. Indeed, Hegel's version of the theory seems to do, in effect, exactly what Chomsky worried about when criticizing Davidson (past winner of the international "Hegel Prize"). When Chomsky accused Davidson of "erasing the

boundary between knowing a language and knowing our way around the world generally" and complained that this would push a study of language (conceived in either a Davidsonean or a Brandomian/Hegelian, holist way) into a "theory of everything," Hegel would simply nod and agree and wait for what he would recognize as some sort of criticism to appear.[4] "*Das Wahre ist das Ganze*," after all. While it is of course possible to "select out" most of Hegel's account in order to concentrate on "*what in Hegel's idealist, pragmatist, historicist holism might be relevant to a theory of conceptual content*," that possibility at least raises the question of whether those elements in Hegel's thought are isolatable in this way, whether, seen in the light of Hegel's full *theory of normativity and especially normative change* (in effect what Hegel understood as his philosophical "theory of everything"),[5] even the role of such notions in an account of conceptual content will have to look different.

So there is some danger that the somewhat broader questions I want to raise could look irrelevant to the specific purpose to which Brandom wants to put Hegel's "objective idealism," or that they can be treated as topics for further study, once the nature of conceptuality is clear. But I don't think that the tasks can be divided like this and I take my bearings on the issue from Brandom's own self-imposed requirements, as when he asks questions like: "Do the notions of objective idealism and conceptual determinations that result from the two Hegel chapters [in TMD] fit well with other things Hegel says?"[6] This is just the question I want to pose,[7] especially because I am not sure that Brandom can get what he wants out of Hegel without something like Hegelian, comprehensive "theory of everything" questions inevitably arising. (I have also not found it possible to deal with Brandom's Hegel without importing a good deal of Brandom's Brandom, in MIE.[8])

There are several examples of how that problem arises. I only have time to discuss four well-known Hegelian claims and Brandom's take on them (or the absence of a take), and, as is common in these encounters, no time at all to describe how much I have learned from these extraordinary and inspiring essays.

(I)   Hegel's philosophy is an idealism.
(II)   This idealism is a holism.
(III)   Rational norms must be understood as *socially* instituted over time. This means that their binding force comes from our having subjected ourselves to them (they are "self-legislated") and that later norms can be understood as the *result* of various breakdowns and crises in earlier, prior institutions. Indeed in Hegel's account our being able to understand them as such responses is a crucial feature in the claim that later norms are more developed, more successful an actualization of the appeal to reason in human affairs and so that they make possible a greater realization of freedom. At the very least one important aspect of this development must involve, Hegel thinks, some sort of social "struggle

for recognition," sometimes violent, resolvable at all only in a state of true mutuality.

(IV) Finally, philosophy is historical, fundamentally and always "of its time," where that means several controversial things. The most controversial was just mentioned: human history should be understood as the progressive realization of freedom and this because reason is more and more "actual" in human affairs and freedom is self-rule according to laws of reason.

In each of these four cases, not only are Hegel's broader ambitions curtailed by Brandom, but the absence of these broader goals means that questions have to arise for Brandom's project which cannot be answered with the resources developed by it.

I

The first issue is *idealism*, a term Hegel uses in a wide variety of ways.[9] But whatever else he means, he certainly also means to signal an attack on at least one dogma of empiricism. The first three chapters in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* are clearly out to argue that no story about the origin of concepts, and no use of such a story to defend the objectivity of concepts, can rely on appeal to any putatively immediately given or non-inferentially warranted content, sensory or otherwise, as foundational or as tribunal. The unavailability of *any* sort of directly intuited item, even in concept realism or rationalist theories of *noesis*, means that we will need a different sort of story to justify the normative constraints imposed on the origination and explanation of judgmental claims, where they can be justified. This does not mean that one of those constraints cannot be something like "what experience won't let us say about it," but the nature and workings of that constraint will have to be different from any appeal to immediacy, the given, etc.

This can fairly be called an idealism since it seems to make the possibility of experience, experiential knowledge, and explanatory success *dependent* on conceptual rules that are not themselves empirically derived, given that the possibility of empirical experience already depends on such discriminating capacities. Thus, it can be said that such required discriminatory capacities and processes are "contributed by us," and are contentful only by virtue of their role in our practices, not by virtue of some story that can be traced back to something directly available in experience.[10] Since many people for many years understood Kant's version of this claim to be saying that such a dependence meant we could not be said to be experiencing external objects in the normal sense but only mind-dependent entities, appearances, or *Erscheinungen*, and since whatever else he is saying, Hegel is clearly not saying *that*, at least in Hegel's case we will have to be careful about what such dependence amounts to.

Brandom proposes a helpful distinction at this point. He suggests that we should distinguish between Sense Dependence and Reference Dependence and

that doing so helps us see there is no evidence that Hegel understood his own claim of dependence as anything but Sense Dependence; that is, that he did not believe all finite particulars were existentially dependent on concepts which could pick them out, or that such objects could only exist when and for as long as they were thought by a human or a divine mind. Rather, in the examples used by Brandom, "the concepts of singular term and object are reciprocally sense-dependent. One cannot understand either without at least implicitly understanding the other and the basic relations between them." Likewise with the concept "fact" and "what is assertable in a proposition"; likewise law and necessity on the one hand, and counterfactually robust inference on the other.[11] Reciprocal sense-dependence like this – essentially between modally robust material exclusions in reality and subjective processes for identifying such exclusions and trying to avoid incompatible commitments – thus helps one interpret some of the well known battle cries in Hegel's assertion of his idealism, such as, in his *Differenzschrift*, "[T]he principle of speculation is the identity of subject and object,"[12] i.e. the principle of speculative idealism is the reciprocal sense-dependence of subjective processes and meaningful claims about objects.[13]

This interpretation of "objective idealism," the claim that the intelligibility of the notion of an objective world is dependent on, is only intelligible in terms of, the subjective process of acknowledging error in experience, or rejecting incompatible commitments, is clearly a variation, albeit a weak variation, on Kant's radical Transcendental Turn, such that all "object talk" could amount to (the only determinate experiential content that could be given the notion) is rule-governed synthetic unity, that the object *is* just "that in the concept of which the manifold is united." But this Kantian heritage would also seem to raise inevitably the Kantian question of just how robust Brandom's version of this dependence is, what I called his weak Kantian variation.[14]

That is, when Kant claimed that there is a "sense-dependence" between a notion like "*event*" and "*capacity to distinguish a succession of representations from a representation of succession,*" and that this discrimination must itself be possible because otherwise there could not be a unity of apperception, and that it *is* only possible on the condition that all elements intuited successively in a manifold follow from another (some other) according to a rule (with necessity), he was not making the rather anodyne observation that the meaning of any claim to discrimination and unity in our experience is dependent on what could count as discriminable to us, given whatever capacities to discriminate we possess, and so that whatever discriminatory capacities we do have constitute in some way what intelligible claims about discriminable objects could meaningfully amount to. *That* sort of observation only gets its bite in positions like psychologism, or the positivist notion of verificationism, or in Kant's transcendental "necessary conditions for the possibility of experience" project, with its accompanying need for a deduction, or Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* idealism in which the limits of language *are* the limits of the world, and I do not yet

see where Brandom thinks his version gets its bite, is more than anodyne. Moreover, for Kant, because object-talk is sense-dependent on our epistemic conditions, Kant feels he has to raise the question: "Granted, this is the only way we could make experiential sense out of 'event,' but what of events in themselves, considered apart from *our* conditions for meaningful claims about events?" This sort of question may already be a mistake (and Hegel certainly thought it was) but it is not clear why or in what sense it is on Brandom's account. It is only the great generality of the claims about objects, facts and laws that makes such a question otiose for Brandom; that is, who could disagree with the claim that the way one *understands* facts is tied to what one *understands* by the content of assertions?[15]

This is important in a Hegelian context because Hegel believed in radical conceptual change, at what Kant would regard (in horror) as the categorical or constitutive, empirically unchallengeable level. This means that it must be possible that a kind of gap can seem to open up in some sense-making practice, the appearance of a gap between what Hegel calls (subjective) certainty and what he calls "truth," which for now we can just mark as the beginning of some sort of insufficiency in that heretofore smoothly running practice. This gap is *internal* to a practice; it is not an empirical insufficiency, or a skeptical doubt about objects as they would be in themselves, and, if we follow Brandom's reformulations this must be understood as a kind of "meaning breakdown." This all suggests that at the very least we should say that whatever subjective capacity or process we *try* to identify as "all that an object or objective structure or value claim or obligation claim *could* mean for us" will have to be *provisional* and that some account of the nature of this provisionality is called for. Emphasizing Hegel's interest in basic historical change in constitutive normative commitments is not necessarily inconsistent with Brandom's take on Hegel, but I take it as significant that Hegel wants to make this point by discussing the relationship between "the This" and sense certainty, "the thing and many properties" and perception, "force" and the understanding, "life" and self-consciousness, reason and itself, and so on, and does not make a case for a general dependence between discriminable and discriminating capacity. That is, there is a determinate account of what this sense dependence could actually amount to and what these co-variations could look like, and it is especially significant that he tells the story of these putative dependencies and the "experience" of their insufficiency in a kind of idealized *narrative*. And in order eventually to get real historical development into Hegel's story of objective idealism, the constitutive (and socially instituted) dependence at issue will have to start out with more substantial claims just so that various specific historical failures (especially failures not due to empirical discovery) can be accounted for.

This issue of normative change will return a couple of more times. For now, we can note simply that for all that Brandom has helped us see how Kant changed the subject – from the character and quality of our grip on concepts to the question of the concepts' normative hold or grip on us – we also need to

see how Hegel refocused the issue *yet again*, how he emphasized as of the greatest importance how a concept can come to lose that normative grip. In typical Hegelian fashion, it is only by understanding *that* that we understand what such a grip amounts to in the first place.[16]

The point is also important when we are talking about thick normative concepts and the sort of binding force they can be said to have in Hegel's account. For the basic ethical notions Hegel is interested in also function as instituted (made more than found) and constitutive. One becomes a citizen by being taken to be one, recognized as one; there *are* citizens only in so far as there *are* these rules applied in discriminating social roles. Yet it is still possible for such a practice to begin to fail in some way not at all tied to something essential in citizenship-in-itself that a former practice had simply "missed" (as, for example, in Hegel's account of the failures of Roman or Jacobin citizenship), nor (to anticipate again) tied simply to what a later community in fact "re-constituted" as citizen. Of course, since Brandom sides with Quine against Carnap, he is happy enough to admit even radical meaning change "within" experience and he has his own common-law analogy to explain it and its progressive character. More on that in the last section of this chapter.

II

Brandom's holism has already been manifest. It is paradigmatically what it is by virtue of its "material exclusions": excluded are any strict concept-intuition, or conceptual scheme vs. content dualism or any conceptual content atomism. He gives us several formulations of the position, many quite illuminating about historical changes in the modern notion of representation. (As in the dawning realization that "The vertical relations between thoughts and things depend crucially on the horizontal relations between thoughts and thoughts."[17]) This theme in Hegel brings us to the heart of Brandom's own theory of inferentialist rationality, his account of double book deontic scorekeeping, and his rich account of the variety of material inferential relations.[18] There is no way to do any justice to the details of what he takes to be manifestations of that theory in Hegel, or how extraordinarily illuminating much of that discussion is. I need to concentrate on the main potential problem Brandom detects in Hegel's version of holism.[19]

It is this. Brandom distinguishes between "weak individuational holism," and "strong individuational holism." The former holds that a necessary condition for the possibility of the determinate contentfulness of concepts is "articulation by relations of material incompatibility" (where, given his dependence claim, he means by such relations both those for properties and states of affairs, and for propositions and predicates). Strong holism claims that articulations by material incompatibility are *sufficient* for determinateness.[20] Since Hegel does not seem to start off with an antecedent set of possibilities, such that knowing what a concept excludes helps establish something like the location in logical

space for such a concept (as in a disjunctive syllogism, say) and holds that immediacy as immediacy (such as direct receptive immediacy) is indeterminate (and this is the notion Brandom will want to "supplement" or alter), Hegel can seem to understand determinacy as *wholly* a matter of these relations of material exclusion, or what Brandom calls "symmetric relative individuation." But if *everything* is determined by relations of material exclusion then "the relata are in a sense dissolved into the relations between them," and we have the obvious problem: "relations between *what*?"[21] (This is actually an old problem in discussions of Hegel. The earlier and very important manifestation of Hegel as a strong individuational holist was the British "internal relations" monist version of Hegel's metaphysics.)

However, there is an assumption in this question that seems to me unHegelian, a kind of misleading either/or exclusive disjunction. It seems plausible to assume that, in coming to understand more and more about a concept's content, in the course either of empirical discovery or changing normative practices, we can just make do with some provisional, fixed designation of the relata, either a provisional definition or paradigm-case locator, which itself is subject to change in the light of broader inferential articulation, perhaps even very extensive alteration. We could even isolate and treat as privileged a small set of clear inferential articulations, holding in place what we are treating as relata so that we can explore various other inferential articulations (of *it*, that relatum, so loosely but effectively defined). We could do this just pragmatically, without any commitment to essentialism or analyticity or there really *being* a privileged set of inferential relations. For example, ultimately the notion of human subjectivity, marked originally by simple consciousness – in Hegel the possibility of a subject having a take on an object – comes to have over the course of the *Phenomenology* a "content" that is a function of very many various reflective and social and ethical capacities that Hegel (*mirabile dictu*) argues are ultimately necessary conditions even for the possibility of a simple take on an object. I see no reason to think that in order to present a theory like this, that, once we understand this array of capabilities, Hegel also owes us an answer to the question: yes, but what is the relatum here, what is *that which* has these capacities or contains these inferential possibilities? There are always provisional ways of picking out designata in order to introduce a more extensive capability, but only a grammatical illusion (a "paralogism" as Kant put it in this particular case) created by this "that which" locution would lead us to think we need a fixed relatum all the way through. (Even Kant's own "Merkmale" theory of concept determinacy allows *great* flexibility in the settling of concept determinacy.[22])

I suspect that Brandom introduces this question and tries to solve it because he is worried about making Hegelian objective idealism compatible with some sort of direct constraint by the sensible world (a way to fix the relata in inferential relations in a way that does not involve representing, claim-making or content, but which ties our concept application to a deliverance of sensibility),

because he wants to preserve in some strongly intuitive way a strict co-variation between subjective processes and objective facts and objects (relations with no fixed relata is obviously counter-intuitive in this regard) and because he is thinking of what he takes to be a Sellarsian picture of how that happens. What Brandom often refers to as "the Harman" point is supposed to help at this point, a distinction between inferential *relations* and inferential *processes*.[23] As he puts it: "Inference is a process; implication is a relation."[24] This distinction will allow us to be more careful in understanding what we mean when we link conceptual content to "relations" of material exclusion. In Hegel's account that means that we should not be trapped into seeing material exclusion everywhere as relata simply *standing* in relations (or as, *per impossibile*, standing in nothing but relations). Objective relations of incompatibility can only be made sense of, in Brandom's sense-dependence claim, as processes of resolving and avoiding subjective incompatibilities of commitment, and fixed concept determinacy must be explicable under these "objective idealist" conditions. Once we understand that the relations in question count as implication relations just by constraining rational belief change, as playing that role in an on-going inferential process, and we understand how that process works, our earlier worry about Hegel's strong holism will not look so suspicious.

For, according to Brandom, we always, in our discursive practices, have to start with some sort of *antecedently* differentiated datum – he suggests *signs* like proposition letters. (This is supposed to satisfy our intuitions on the "object side.") This analogy trades on "orthodox mathematical abstraction by the formation of equivalence classes." His point is clearer, I think, in his summary of Hegel on perception.

In his Hegelian example of property determinacy, Brandom tries to make more concrete this model of holistic role abstraction by going over the supposed "stages" in Hegel's account, where properties are first thought of atomistically, determinate apart from any relation to another, and then, given the indeterminacy of these results, thought of wholly in terms of excluding incompatible material relations, a stage that according to Brandom threatens the dissolution of relata mentioned before. *These* relations among roles can now be thought of as consisting wholly in relations because "immediacy," marking as a kind of sign the content of experience responded to differentially, has already made it possible to track a class or set of such markers, even though on their own they remain a *je ne sais quoi*. The key is (and it is impossible to stress it too much) that this immediacy is not *representational*, a sign of something else. Our ability simply to respond differentially and non-inferentially is making a contribution to the process of determination of content (to that which is in relation) but initially only in our differential responsiveness and by such items expressing *potentially* a higher order inferential discrimination implicit in the discriminability of the item but not directly apprehendable as such. *We* must do that work of determination in this process. "(O)ne must build the holistic roles in stages, starting with something construed as

immediate, and then investigating the mediation implicit in taking it to be determinate."[25]

This view of the relation between immediacy and mediation (and the insistence that immediacy play some sort of role like this in experience) strikes me as quite Sellarsian (at least as Brandom interprets him) and suggests the same problem one finds in (Brandom's) Sellars. The problem is the unHegelian language of "stages" rather than "moments," and this way of linking us to the sensible world by merely causally elicited "responses." Brandom's Sellars chapter is called "The Centrality of Sellars' Two-Ply Account of Observation," and the "twoness" involved is similar to what was just summarized. The first ply is what results from a "reliable differential responsive disposition" (or RDRD). We share with non-human animals, some machines and even some normal objects the ability to respond differentially and reliably to distinct environmental stimuli. But these responses, even if they involve the uttering of a word, are not representational, do not yet have content, and this primarily for Sellars because no *commitment* to anything has been established. That happens only with concept application and attribution of commitment by others. (There are several ambiguous formulations about this issue. In the second Hegel chapter, Brandom says, with respect to immediately elicited responses, that in these cases particulars exercise an "authority over the universals or concepts that apply to them."[26] But since these responses are merely elicited, or "wrung" from us, the question of authority should not arise. According to Brandom authority, or a normative claim in general, is something *granted*, not elicited.)

The greater problem comes when one tries to establish a connection between these two dimensions, since the first is a matter of what is simply causally elicited and the second involves a normative commitment not presumably simply provoked, caused or directly elicited by the RDRDs. These responses thus do not seem to be doing any "guiding," and when considered *just* as RDRDs to be normatively inert with respect to what I end up committed to.[27] If even perception is "normative all the way down" (and "reliable" already indicates that) then these causal episodes of elicited responses look like window-dressing designed to comfort a potential reliabilist or externalist or cognitivist. Brandom claims that while some of that might be true, there could not be a *global* independence of observational response from concept use, and he notes that "purely theoretical concepts do not form an autonomous language game, a game one could play though one played no other."[28] But the reason he immediately gives is that "one must be able to respond conceptually to the utterance of others to be talking at all."[29] But this almost concedes that what counts as *reliable* responsiveness (something that must be established for there to be any relation between these two "plys") is itself mediated by the social normativity Brandom is elsewhere eager to stress. If others in the discursive community administer such things as the "reliability" ascription, something of the content of such a norm will eventually begin functioning for

individuals as norms, internal to the discrimination process itself, as a constituent of the sensible uptake itself. Brandom thus concedes that our very dispositions can be said to change as a result of systematic sources of error.[30] And Brandom himself also concedes that for thick moral concepts it is hard to imagine two such separate strands, such that one could differentially respond to instances of courage or cruelty, in a way that was just causally elicited.[31] Since whatever else it is, Hegel's philosophy is systematic, it is hard to imagine that the inapplicability to this case of the "build in stages" picture of the immediacy–mediation relation that Brandom proposes would not mean that something is wrong with the core picture.

The moral here seems to me to redound back to Brandom's account of Hegel on immediacy. Rather than having there be "stages," all in some way or other modeled after the Sellarsian two-ply, reliable-responder/normatively-committing observer, Hegel's position seems to me to be a more thoroughly "processual" holism. His position on the mediate character of even direct sensory experience is not poised to collapse everything into a "strong individuational holism," nor to adopt Brandom's building stages model, but to deny the separability of immediate and mediate elements, even while insisting on the contribution of both. In Hegel's account, I am suggesting, and in full Brandomese: the failure of atomistically conceived property determinacy is not meant to signal that our immediately elicited perceptual responses should therefore be construed as non-representational, sign-like discriminable items that will form something like the basis of an abstraction to roles that *are* inferentially articulated, but that a fuller, more adequate picture of this one-ply, but complexly and inseparably structured dimension of experience is required.[32] To be sure, this will seem to give us a much less robust picture of answerability to the world and a more important role for answerability to each other, but, since on Brandom's account, any immediate element in experience does not cause or on its own constrain concept application, he has that problem anyway. In the Sellars chapter, after noting the very basic theme of his inferentialism, that "grasping any concept requires grasping many concepts," he also has to ask a question that is not helped by his elaborate account of holistic role abstraction. The question is: "*how* good must one be at discriminating . . . in order to count as grasping the concept," and he answers that that is a matter wholly of how one is treated by the other members of the linguistic community, a matter of having achieved a "social status" by having been recognized as having achieved it. This seems to me both to undermine the real role any appeal to our immediate responsiveness to the world plays in discursive practices, and re-raises the problem of an inferential positivism. Our common sense and somewhat realist intuitions still require *some* response here: *what* is the community relying on when such a status is granted? Merely what future communities might, probably, decide? What constrains the granting of such status?[33] Isn't the basic question just pushed back a stage? Hegel has an answer to this but it involves that ambitious

theory of the realization of freedom and "meaning breakdowns" noted earlier and about to arise again.

III

This last issue – our collective responsibility for our norms – obviously raises the question of the nature of the "Brandomian socialism," what he calls the semantic pragmatism, crucial to his theory of normativity and therewith of possible conceptual content, and the way he accounts for the historicity of norms and normative change. In neither case, I want to argue, is there "enough" of a Hegelian notion of sociality or historicity at work. Here is a summary formulation of the sociality of norms claim.

> What is needed is one of the most basic Hegelian emendations to Kant's normative rationalism: an understanding of normative statuses such as commitment, responsibility, and authority as social achievements. Hegel construes having bound oneself by applying a concept as occupying a certain sort of social position, having a certain sort of social standing.[34]

All of this seems to me quite right and a substantial and extremely valuable reformulation of the Kant–Hegel relation. However it is when Brandom goes on to discuss the nature of this social status that his account seems to me not so much wrong as critically incomplete. In Brandom's account (as well as in his account of Hegel's position), what commitments you undertake are up to you but the content of those commitments, just *what* you are committing yourself to by committing yourself to claim P, is not; that is "administered" by others. ("I commit myself, but then *they* hold me to it."[35]) These other score-keepers also resolve questions about what commitments you are in fact *entitled* to make, independently of what you claim to be entitled to. As we saw earlier, what it is to have achieved the social status of a competent concept applier is and is only a matter of being recognized as such by other score-keepers.

Brandom's language of normative commitment being a matter of "having bound oneself" is quite true to the deeply Kantian position on normativity, as necessarily self-legislated, which Hegel took up and vastly expanded, himself following many of Fichte's crucial emendations of the notion. I could not agree more that this is the heart of the heartland, what distinguishes the rationalism of the Kantian and post-Kantian German tradition from its rationalist pre-decessors.[36] Kant's notion that we are only bound to what we bind ourselves to shows up everywhere in what we call German Idealism, reappearing in Fichte's notion of self-positing and clearly manifest in Hegel's otherwise mysterious claims that Geist is a "product of itself," or that the Concept "gives itself its own actuality." It is however a *highly* metaphorical notion in all three thinkers; there is no original moment of self-obligation, any more than there is a Fichtean I which initiates experience *de novo* by positing a not-I. The metaphor is

also very hard to interpret discursively; it can seem, as McDowell has put it, that Brandom is committed to a position "that brings norms into existence out of a normative void."[37]

However, because Hegel formulates the claim in the first-person plural, and as something that occurs over time, any worry about a transition from a normless to a normative situation is much less relevant to him. There is no original normless situation, only an on-going, continuous historical process of initiation or socialization into a community's normative practices, demanding allegiance in all sorts of practical, engaged and largely implicit ways and receiving it in an equally various number of practices of consent, affirmation, sustenance, in a variety of modalities of self-legislation and self-obligation.[38] Hegel thinks that art, for example, is one of these modalities. As noted above though, if the "autonomy thesis" is "[w]hat makes them [norms] binding is that one takes them to be binding,"[39] it is *extremely hard* to present a non-metaphorical notion of this self-imposition. As soon as we move beyond explicit assertoric judgments ("That metal is molybdenum"[40]) and explicit performatives ("I promise to drive you to the airport tomorrow morning"[41]), more practical and implicit modes of "commitment" are much more difficult to discern, both for an individual and for any potential score-keeper. (We can tell *something* by what a person does and what else he is willing to say or has said, but the situation gets immediately very complicated once we venture beyond assertions about molybdenum or promises about driving.) Moreover, equally important, just because such practices are rarely explicit or well-defined with respect to their scope, there is also an on-going unavoidable *contestation* about the claims made on behalf of such rules over historical time, about attribution and entitlement claims and denials, as the context of application changes and strains the original understanding. The issue Hegel is most interested in is one we would now call the basic difference (if there is one) between the *matter-of-historical-fact normalizing practices of the score-keeping police* and some sort of *progressive normative development*. And this still leaves a lot that is metaphorical since, in the phrase of Haugeland's that Brandom borrows and makes use of – "transcendental constitution" is always "social institution"[42] – there is no clear non-metaphorical reading of just *how* "societies" can be said to "institute" anything (or, especially, try and yet fail to do so, end up with mere coercive enforcement of some against many or many against some, rather than something that can be understood as a self-obligation to a self-legislated rule). But there is at least no reason to think this occurs at something like a constitutional convention of original, basic rule making and pledges of allegiance, and there is plenty of reason to think it is a problem that requires some answer if we are talking about genuinely normative social engagements, and not just "carrots and sticks" success at socialization.

Indeed Hegel believes that a kind of systematic sense can be made of the continuities and crises in attempts at institution and maintenance of allegiance; "wholesale" not just "retail" to invoke a Brandomean turn of phrase,

and that without this systematic story we are left with no way to distinguish later normative improvements from later reconfigurations of social power in enforcing a new regime.[43] Without this more ambitious enterprise, a social pragmatist inferentialist holism like Brandom's is indistinguishable from a kind of "inferentialist positivism." I mean by this that while Brandom can avoid what he calls regularism or can justify attributing an original intentionality to a community and not just note regularities in behavior, (that is, he can justify the claim that its participants are playing the normative game of giving and asking for reasons and therewith both undertaking as well as attributing and assessing commitments of others), this does not yet explain *how* either an external interpreter or internal participant can properly challenge the authority of the norms on the basis of which the attributions and assessments are made, or how those norms can fail to meet those challenges. Brandom can describe *what happens* when such a challenge occurs but he wants to stay out of the question of the putative merits of challenges in general. That is for the participants to thrash out, and his (Brandom's) own account remains "phenomenalist."[44] Without that further account, though, we remain mere historical sociologists (or underlaboring explicit-makers); to be sure, makers explicit of what participants count as the *distinctly normative*, and of its history, but resigned to *recording* the sorts of challenges and defenses "they" would regard as appropriate then and there; or we can score them on our current scorecard, but without an account of how "they" got to be "us." While illegitimate claims to normative authority, in other words, are clearly still putative norms, and while, when they are invoked, the game of giving and asking for reasons has begun, unless we can go on to ground the difference between merely putative and genuine claims to authority, the distinction between manipulated or coerced behavior and norm-responsive conduct will be empty. Threatening you offers you in *some* sense a reason to obey me, and you would be obeying in *some* sense in a way responsive to a reason, your interest in your well-being. But it is hard to see how one could describe that as your being responsive to a claim for a distinctively normative authority.[45] ("Positivism" is an apt word for this not only because Brandom's take on idealism can sound a bit like verificationism,[46] but because in normative terms, from his first writings on Christianity and the early Christian community until his last writings on politics, Hegel's self-identified, chief problem was what he called "positivity." He meant by this the successful administration of what appear to be norms, but which, even with actual acknowledgement and the attitudinal support of individuals, still must count as missing some crucial element which would distinguish alienated from a truly affirmative (self-imposed) relation to the law.)

I do not at all want to give the impression that Brandom is committed to what he calls an "I–We" conception of sociality.[47] He makes crystal clear in Chapters One and Eight of MIE that he does not; that his sociality is of the "I–you" variety. By the "score-keeping police" I mean here whatever, for most score-keepers, when each distinguishes the difference between what another

takes to be "what ought to be done," say, and "what ought to be done," will end up *determining* how they make that distinction in a way that is shared and so "which determines how the attitudes of those who keep score on each other are answerable to the facts."[48] Again, as just noted, Brandom does not want to go there, go any farther than this, thinks the conditions for the success of his theory are satisfied when he explains *what* "objectivity" *will amount to* in his inferentialist semantics (it amounts to being able to make this distinction between normative status (objectively correct) and normative attitude (taken to be correct)); all else is part of the messy contestation that philosophy cannot judge.[49] We need to stop with this understanding of objectivity as "a structural aspect of the social-perspectival *form* of conceptual contents."[50] We should be philosophically satisfied with the claim that "the permanent possibility of a distinction between how things are and how they are taken to be by some interlocutor is built into the social articulation of concepts."[51] This formalism is the most profoundly unHegelian aspect of his theory. From Hegel's point of view, we will not really know what being able to make this distinction amounts to (as distinct from, say, what individual perspectival score-keepers have in various times and places *taken* the distinction to amount to) unless we track the distinction as "realized" concretely and come up with some way to understand if we are getting any better at making it. (If we don't do this, we've got what I called inferentialist positivism.[52]) Put in a formula: Brandom believes that meaning or conceptual content is a matter of use, inferential articulations within a social game of giving and asking for reasons. He is right that Hegel agrees with this, but Hegel also claims that the question of the authority of the articulations scored in certain ways at certain times is also indispensable to the question of such content, and that we cannot understand that dimension except in so far as the possible articulations are, as he says everywhere, "actualized," verwirklicht. (For example, in Hegel's account, understanding why the basic norms of ancient Greek ethical life failed as they did, began to lose their grip, tells us something we need to know and could have come to know in no other way, about the difference between the purported authority of an appeal to a norm, and actual authority.[53]) As we shall see in a minute, this ties Hegel's notion of philosophy *much* more closely to history than Brandom does.

The claim is that from Hegel's perspective, the problem with Brandom's version is not so much a problem as a gap, a lacuna that Brandom obviously feels comfortable leaving unfilled (cf. the earlier discussion here of the "selection" of only some Hegelian themes), but which seems to me indispensable. This might seem a bit unfair. After all, Brandom has roped Hegel into an extraordinary, impressive project that has accomplished a very great deal in itself and as an illumination of Hegel: a way of understanding score-keeping practices sufficient to confer various sorts of conceptual content. These include nonlogical propositional content, contents associated with predicates and singular terms, pronouns, demonstratives and proper names, and even the logically expressive content of conditionals, negation, quantifiers and so on. And

this is not to mention the ingenuity of the demonstration of how anaphoric chains work in communicative success, how one can secure both co-reference and token repeatability "across the different repertoires of commitments that correspond to different interlocutors."[54] Nevertheless, however ungrateful it sounds, there is something crucial to Hegel's project that does not appear in Brandom or Brandom's Hegel. The issue is most obvious in cases where the main problem Brandom tracks – the problem of conceptual determinacy, conceptual content – intersects with the question of conceptual authority; cases where everyone understands what the concept is about, purports to be about (the putative content is determinate), but where serious disagreement has arisen about whether that clear purport is *fulfilled*, justified, legitimate, whether the concept *really* picks out anything. (Since any application of a concept is a normative claim, a claim not that this is what has been thought to belong together, but this is what ought or even must be thought together, these two dimensions of the problem are obviously inseparable.) This distinction most interests Hegel when the issue is change or a partial breakdown with respect to fundamental, paradigmatic normative principles, *what scorekeepers rely on* when they distinguish between what another takes himself to be authorized to do and what he is really authorized (or forbidden or simply ought) to do. Cases like divine and human law, the claims of faith and of Enlightenment, the claims of natural right, moral freedom, revolutionary political authority, or moral purity. (When score-keepers cut up the normative world in a certain way, such as distinguishing between "the law of the heart" and "the frenzy of self-conceit," their scores *already* mean something, carry material normative implications, neither accessible to the parties in play, often directly contrary to their own intentions, and not dependent simply on how future score-keepers will as a matter of historical fact extend and supplement and alter the implications of their commitments.) It is a limitation of Brandom's account, and a mark of his differences with Hegel, that his theory of "meaning normativity" is reductionist in this way, reduces to the attitudinal states of individuals.[55]

The most intuitively clear manifestation of this limitation and the positivism that results from it occurs in Chapter Three of Part One in MIE, the "queen's shilling" example. Brandom calls to mind the eighteenth century practice wherein merely accepting the offer of such a shilling was counted as having enlisted in the queen's navy. The practice was intended to allow a public sign of acceptance for those illiterates who could not sign a contract, but was widely used by recruiters who essentially tricked drunken victims in taverns into such acceptance. According to Brandom, "Those who accepted found out the significance of what they had done – the commitment *they had undertaken*, and so the alteration of their status – only upon awakening from the resulting stupor."[56] I think most of us would say intuitively that the fact that others attributed such a commitment to an individual did not mean that that individual was, in normative fact, truly so committed, that the practice counted something as a commitment illegitimately, that it does not qualify as a commitment.

But for Brandom, to undertake a commitment is *just* for an individual to do something that makes it appropriate for others to attribute a commitment to that individual, where "appropriate" is a matter of a standing actual practice. Brandom's account will allow a distinction between what seemed a commitment but was really not (the recruiter mistakenly used the wrong coin), but not between what others count as a change in status and what really amounts to a change in status. *All* that the latter involves for Brandom is a change in the attitudinal states of others, and this position will not even allow the problem that bothered Hegel his entire career to arise: that problem of "positivity," subjection by others, according to appropriate, public practices, to a status of "undertaken commitments" not recognized as such by the individual. What Hegel takes as deeply problematic is counted by Brandom as a wholly unproblematic example of attributing commitments. (In this regard, the fact that Brandom concedes that "the whole community" may end up wrong in the way they score, even "by their own lights," is an idle concession. As his own theory would have it, unless we know what that concession includes and excludes, how it might actually be used in cases like this one, it is a concession *without content*. Brandom's own willingness to agree that our poor drunken sailor *is* in fact *normatively* committed to service in the queen's navy – that *he* actually *undertook* this commitment – is not encouraging about what such a content might be.[57]) While Brandom sometimes gives the impression that the position defended in MIE or the position attributed to Hegel just leaves open questions about genuine versus illusory claims to normative authority, I would say that it is quite clear that he has already taken positions on normativity, commitment, entitlement and obligation; the positions apparent in this passage.

What the issue comes down to is how, or to what extent, one can make a certain dimension of human sociality – the institution, sustenance, sanctioning, and administering of normative commitments – essential to one's semantics without offering anything like a much fuller social theory, a comprehensive view of the social bond *or* a full blown normative theory, a theory of what counts as the distinction between "exercise of normative authority" and "exercise of coercive power."[58] To be sure, Brandom considers that he has provided a general account of normativity and a sufficient view of sociality. For the former he often invokes "Kant's distinction between the realm of nature, and the realm of freedom, whose denizens are bound rather by their conception of rules – that is by rules that bind them only in virtue of their own acknowledgement of them as binding."[59] As noted, this does not help us much in trying to understand what *counts* as doing this ("acknowledging *authority*") and what settles the question of the scope and content of just what I have bound myself to.[60] When Brandom notes that the latter is a matter to be administered by others, it is easy enough to imagine cases where that appeal settles nothing and only invites further controversy (as when actions are taken in my name by a supposedly representative assembly, where commitments are attributed to me

by others on the basis of what, given the institutional rules of elections and representation, I can be said to have bound myself to).

Moreover, it is precisely this *indeterminacy* that is important to Hegel. His theory of, especially, practical rationality is such a radically historical boot-strapping theory that essential elements will go missing (such as this unavoidable conflict) if we stay at Brandom's notion of "negotiation" between "those who attribute the commitment and the one who acknowledges it."[61] In a footnote, Brandom makes clear that he is well aware of this problem.

> Talk of negotiation is bound to sound too irenic a rendering for the sort of strife and confrontation of inconsistent demands Hegel depicts. But, though the issue cannot be pursued here, I think there are good reasons to treat the martial, uncompromising language Hegel is fond of as misleading on this point. Nothing is absolutely other, nor are any claims or concepts simply inconsistent for him. It is always material incompatibilities of content (rather than formal inconsistencies) whose mutual confrontation obliges an alteration of commitments.[62]

This passage has an odd ring to it. As Brandom clearly suspects, it *does* have a "Can't we all just get along" meliorism or irenicism that does not at all fit the *Phenomenology*. And it comes close to saying: if Hegel had understood Brandomian inferentialist semantics better (the resources for which are already implicit in other aspects of Hegel's project), and so had not sometimes confused negotiable material incompatibilities with formal inconsistencies or the clash of brute otherness, he would not have indulged such "martial" tendencies. But there is no evidence that I know of, and none provided by Brandom, that Hegel's emphasis on the "violence" that consciousness suffers at its own hands is just a result of such a view about brute otherness or formal inconsistencies. There is plenty of room for what Hegel often treats as tragic conflict if those two points are conceded.[63]

Moreover, Hegel's "slaughter bench of history" formulations are not the result of commitments in a philosophical anthropology (wherein, supposedly, a violent struggle for prestige and ultimately recognition as essential aspects of human nature are invoked as explicans for social and normative change). There is another reason why Hegel is so concerned in any account of the social mediation needed for communicative success, political stability or ethical life[64] that one never abstract from or in any way ignore that there are never simply human agents or subjects at play, that any such subject must always first be considered either subject to the will of another or able to subject others to his will, bondsman (*Knecht*) or lord (*Herr*). This is because the status of a person or free agent, someone capable of leading one's own life, of seeing oneself in one's deeds, is indeed, as Brandom rightly notes, not an ontological category for Hegel but a historical and social achievement. That achievement however has as its central task the problem of distinguishing between what we identified

previously here as the difference between the administration of social power (perhaps complete with the "willing" submission of docile subjects) and the achievement of a form of life in which the freedom of one depends on the freedom of all. The whole ball game in Hegel comes down to the question of whether he has in fact discovered a historical, developmental way of making the case that this distinction *can* be made (without any form of moral realism or Kantian "moral law" universalism), of saying what institutional form of life actually achieves this desiderata, and his being able to show that it is the unfinished and still unfolding achievement of modernity to have begun to do all this. Hegel's claim to philosophical immortality rests on this novel attempt to make this distinction between putative claims to normative legitimacy that are in reality exercises of coercive power for the sake of unequal advantage (non-reciprocal recognitive statuses), and successful claims to normative legitimacy, to do so by beginning with an image of a situation regulated exclusively by exercises of power, and to show that the ultimate unsustainability of such a relation can be demonstrated "experientially," or "internally," that ultimate achievement of agent status requires a recognitive social status that cannot be achieved by exercises of power alone.[65] The nerve of this internally self-negating developmental process will ultimately amount to Hegel's theory of freedom, both required for successful normative self-regulation, but impeded or denied by just those forms of institutional practice that implicitly require that very status (of free subjects).

This turns out to be a long story, and I realize that Brandom thinks his version accommodates most of it. Indeed, in another essay on Hegel not included here, he has developed a rich and challenging reading of Hegel's claims that recognitive relations can be said to "develop" out of erotic ones, that reflexive self-relations depend on being able to attribute normative attitudes towards others, and ultimately that I can be a subject that things can be *for* only by recognizing those who recognize me, by being recognized by all those whom I recognize, and by recognizing all those whom those whom I recognize recognize (including, ingeniously, me). This is the story for him of how one crosses "the crucial boundary between the merely natural and the incipiently normative."[66] But here again, the crucial move occurs in attributing to others commitments or normative attitudes in the satisfaction of desire. I take the other to be a subject who *takes* this object to be suitable to satisfy his desire, not a being who merely differentially responds in a reliable way to what elicits such a response. And that again means attributing a possible difference for this other subject between what is taken to be an appropriate satisfier of hunger, say, and "what *is*." And, again, this not only *introduces* us to the basic condition necessary for the attitude to be a normative one (between what is taken to be K and what is K) by appealing to what unproblematically turns out to be empirically unsatisfying (a human cannot eat rocks), this simple empirical disconfirmation remains the only clear example we have of how this distinction can be cashed out. The absence of any such unproblematic "claim-settler" in any more complex

human claim to appropriateness or propriety is why, I am claiming, Hegel's interests turn so quickly to the issue of a *Kampf*, a fight or struggle for recognition, again an issue that Brandom leaves out.[67] It is also why, in Brandom's account, the problem with the Master's assertion of mastery is simply a matter of the Master "overgeneralizing" the human capacity to self-constitution by being insufficiently sensitive to the importance of the distinction between how I take things and how they are.[68] But the Master in Hegel's drama has not simply *made an error*. He represents an immediate option in the unavoidable struggle to determine how we shall make that distinction, once we move beyond the edible and the inedible and the like.

This Hegelian contestation also does not seem to me captured by the notion of ongoing negotiations between individuals and score-keepers. For one thing, there is no reason to expect that there is available a "neutral" notion of what counts as proper negotiation available to both parties. The relevant distinction therefore, to use Kantian and Sellarsean phrasing, is not so much between the space of causes and the space of reasons, between subsumption under law and acknowledgement of the concept of a law, but between the illusory appeal to legitimacy and authority, and a justifiable appeal, between, as it were, the fact of power and the fact of reason. The absence of such a common measure in what counts as negotiating is one of the reasons why the question of the *proper* distinction between the fact of power and the fact of reason constantly arises and why it forms the narrative core of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. (I should also note that Brandom is certainly aware of this issue and raises such a "Foucault" problem in his response to Habermas. But here again he just notes that playing the game of giving and asking for reasons *is* categorically different from doing things with words like exercising power, without telling us *how* to make that distinction, and as if the latter could not go on well disguised as the former, which, according to the early Foucault, it always does.[69])

IV

Brandom's view on what he needs to say about human sociality to satisfy the requirements of his theory of conceptual content is certainly not one that leaves no room for the "challenges" that initiate "negotiation."[70] And he has provided a way to think about the developmental process that results from such challenges and responses. I have already expressed skepticism that the "negotiation" model will get us very far along on Hegelian tracks, but this image requires an independent hearing. There are two premises we need to examine first.

Brandom interprets Hegel's striking remark that the "I," the self-conscious subject of experience *is* the concept, *der Begriff*, as that concept "has come into existence,"[71] as affirming that, just as one becomes a contentful self only in recognitive relations with others, so concepts are contentful only in the social game of giving and asking for reasons, in the double bookkeeping game of

undertaking and attributing/assessing. Spirit as a whole is modeled on being a self, and that means that it is "the recognitive community of all those who have such normative statuses, and all their normatively significant activities."[72] This interpretation is then linked to a fundamental Brandomian theme.

> All there is to institute conceptual norms, to determine what we have committed ourselves to by applying a concept, is other applications of the concept in question ... Thus the applications of the concept ... that have already been made already have a certain sort of authority over candidate future applications of the concept[73]

But also:

> The authority of the past applications, which instituted the conceptual norm, is administered on its behalf by future applications, which include assessments of past ones.

The model is common law applications of case law, where each judge inherits a tradition of past decisions about cases and must rely on, can *only* rely on, those past cases to decide about new, sometimes radically new cases. The authority of the tradition "consists in the fact that the *only reasons* the judge can appeal to in justifying his decisions are procedural."[74] Brandom takes this to be a good model for the Hegelian dialectical claims for both continuity and change in a normative tradition, for the fact that normative developments are in some sense "found," in another "made." The model also fits Brandom's theory well, and aspects of Hegel's, because it is crucial to both that the normative significance of some move or commitment I make almost always "outruns" what I may consciously be taking myself to be committed to and "catching up," being able to make those further aspects more explicit, can look very much like Hegelian development or *Bildung*.[75]

This model is also said to have the additional benefit of explaining what Brandom thinks would otherwise be inexplicable: how Hegel can talk of the human community, Spirit as a whole, as a "self," but yet insist on the irreducibly social character of that self. Who, in this sense, could be said to hold *Spirit as a whole* responsible to itself, since there is no other social subject outside of Spirit, in recognitive relations with it? These different *time slices* are said to answer that problem. "[T]he present acknowledges the authority of the past, and exercises an authority over it in turn, with the negotiation of their conflicts administered by the future."[76]

However, Brandom is out to solve a problem that Hegel does not have (any more than Brandom does), and the solution, the common law analogy, while revealing in many respects, does not go far enough in capturing what Hegel means by tying "normative life" to historical time. The problem again is that Hegel's position is far more substantive, far less formal, than that attributed to

him by Brandom. This is because one of the aspects of what has been made explicit across historical time is not just a set of particular normative commitments (which are administered, altered, perhaps substantially revised by a successor ethical community) *but the nature of normative authority itself*, the "truth" that such authority is socially instituted, tied to claims of reason which are cashed out in terms of social roles embodied in institutions, institutions the basic structures of which have begun to develop in ways finally consistent with, rather than in underlying tension with, the true nature of normative authority. Mutuality of recognitive status (the true source of normative authority), is, Hegel argues, embodied in several modern institutions (the rights-protecting, representative modern state, the modern nuclear family founded on both romantic and parental love, the modern property-owning market economy and civil society, as well as late Protestant religion and theology and lyric romanticism, the final culmination of art). These are not counted by Hegel as *just* proposals for future administration and alteration. Brandom's common law model works well when we consider how one might "update" Hegel's substantive institutional story and extend the application of such a civil and ethical status to women and propertyless citizens, but not for the claims Hegel wants to make about the authority of these basic roles and functions themselves.[77] Their authority stems from the developmental justification Hegel has provided for his distinct account of the nature and authority of freedom ("the worthiest and most sacred possession of man"[78]). This is all parallel to the way in which Brandom's own account of conceptual content is itself a normative claim, a claim that the matter ought to be rendered explicit in this way, as a matter of inferential articulation, instituted social statuses and so forth, and not itself the carrying-forward of a tradition (one among many other philosophical traditions), itself subject later to the "authority of the future." It (Brandom's account) presumably has its own authority, assuming that it is meant as itself a philosophical claim, not just the interpretation and application of other claims.[79]

For the same reason, the common law analogy is too weak to capture Hegel's account of conceptual change. As noted before, Hegel is trying to introduce into a distinct kind of historical explanation an account of the way normative notions can begin to lose their grip, are experienced with weakening authority, and that explanation counts crises like incompatible commitments or tragic dilemmas as arising from *within* the community's own experiences, and not because a new case has contingently arisen. It is possible that some of these crises arise from trying to apply a familiar norm to a new, problematic case, but in almost all the significant cases in his *Phenomenology*, that is not so and the account of the underlying crisis points to the developmental account of the relation between freedom and authority that makes up the basic "plot" of that book. Contemporary concept-appliers are not, in other words, guided only by past cases, constrained too by being subject to future judges. For the most part the nature of normative authority itself is up for grabs, and the Burkean,

Whiggish claim at any point that such authority is best understood as transmitted by history, exercising authority over the present, would have to count as an *episode* in that contestation, and could not count as the general *form* of any such contestation.

Notes

1 Brandom is, I think, profoundly right to say that for Hegel the realm of the geistig, the spiritual, is "the normative order." Robert Brandom, "Reason, Expression and the Philosophic Enterprise," in C.P. Ragland and Sarah Heidt (eds), *What Is Philosophy?* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 74–95, p. 94. See also Robert Pippin, "Naturalness and Mindedness: Hegel's Compatibilism," *The European Journal of Philosophy*, 1999, vol. 7, pp. 194–212; Robert Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing and Discursive Commitment* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 30 ff. and 624 ff.

2 Robert Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), hereafter referred to in the text as TMD. Brandom understands philosophical texts in a way consistent with his way of understanding understanding: the meaning of these texts is a matter of inferentially articulated commitments; we understand what a concept in a particular text means by seeing how it is used by an author, what moves it licenses and what it prescribes, and how it would be understood (used) in the community at the time. Or, in a different approach, we can try to understand how an original concept would be used in a later context, such as ours. In this latter case, one is concerned not with what the author took to follow from her premises, but with what really *does* follow. One can focus on what the conceptual content is *about*; what the author must be committed to if truth is to be preserved, given what one now knows, or given what logical expressive resources one now has. This is roughly what Brandom means by the difference between interpretations or "specifications of conceptual content," or "discursive scorekeeping," *de dicto* and *de re*, and his importation here of his own semantic arsenal, with its core distinction between undertaking and attributing commitments, serves his hermeneutical purposes very well. As the magisterial Chapter Eight of *Making It Explicit* argues, these two specifications are not ascriptions of different beliefs, beliefs with different contents. They "specify the single conceptual content of a single belief in two different ways, from two different perspectives, in two different contexts of auxiliary commitments." Cf. R. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, p. 102.

3 R. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, p. 111.

4 Noam Chomsky, *New Horizons in the Study of Language and Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 146. See also Richard Rorty's very valuable (non-Hegelian) response to such worries in R. Rorty, "The Brain as Hardware, Culture as Software," *Inquiry*, 2004, vol. 47, pp. 219–35.

5 Chomsky of course means that holist, conceptual-role linguists would have to be committed to a natural scientific theory of everything, that their version of language would not leave a discrete research program for modern neuro-linguists.

6 R. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, p. 114.

7 This question of "responsibility" to the text is a tricky problem to raise since however one raises it, one can seem to be insisting on some kind of *priority* for *de dicto* interpretation, and that is not, I think, what Brandom means. This assumption would take us back to thinking of original or core meaning as locked up inside a text, instead of in the process-like, inferential way proposed by Brandom. *De re*

interpretation is something *else*, something different, and equally respectable philosophically. Once Strawson, say, has discarded the problem of the justification of synthetic a priori judgments and Kant's idealist claim that we only know appearances, there is not much in his *de re* reconstruction that Kant could have acknowledged as a commitment. But there is *something* of Kant left after the "selection" and "supplementation," something of what *Kant* really looks like in the new context of Strawsonean descriptive metaphysics. What is left is the distinction between concepts and intuitions, the discursivity of the human intellect, and the idea of there being "bounds" to any experience we could make sense of. *De re* interpretation is a process, a way of navigating in *our* territory, but guided by *some* insight of an historical author. So even within interpretation understood this way, there must *be* this guidance, this responsiveness to, say, *Hegel's* understanding of conceptual content, even when expressed throughout in a non-Hegelian, new "logical expressive" vocabulary. (This is already a version of a common and very sweeping intuitive reaction to Brandom's inferentialism: that understanding the content of a concept cannot be exclusively understanding its inferential articulations since those material implications and incompatibilities must themselves be already guided by (are legitimated by appeal to) a grasp of something which directs such inferential processes. He has several ways of responding to this and the issue will come up frequently below.)

8 R. Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, hereafter referred to in the text as MIE.

9 Sometimes idealism is simply another word for philosophy, sometimes (it is claimed) it is invoked to attack any ontological commitment to finite particulars (cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (New York: Humanities Press, 1969), pp. 154–55; G.W.F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, vols I and II (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1969), p. 145); sometimes (it is claimed) it means a Platonic claim that all of reality is actually a manifestation of "the Absolute Idea."

10 In Hegel's radical language, concepts are "self-determining." He is forever saying that the Concept gives itself its own content. See R. Pippin, "Die Begriffslogik als die Logik der Freiheit," in Anton Koch, Alecander Overauer and Konrad Utz (eds), *Der Begriff als die Wahrheit: Zum Anspruch der Hegelschen Logik* (Paderborn/München: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2003), pp. 223–37.

11 For a much fuller defense of such views, especially with regard to the role of singular terms, see Chapter Six of Brandom, *Making It Explicit*. The great advantage of Brandom's way of formulating the issue of idealism is that it demystifies the notion of a normative fact. See Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, p. 625, and especially Jürgen Habermas, "From Kant to Hegel: On Robert Brandom's Pragmatic Philosophy of Language," *European Journal of Philosophy*, 2000, vol. 8, 322–46 and Brandom's reply in R. Brandom, "Facts, Norms, and Normative Facts: A Reply to Habermas," *European Journal of Philosophy*, 2000, vol. 8, 356–68.

12 G.W.F. Hegel, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's Systems of Philosophy*, trans. H. Harris and W. Cerf (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1977), p. 80; G.W.F. Hegel, *Differenz des Fichte'schen und Schelling'schen Systems der Philosophie*, in Rheinisch-Westfaelischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (ed.), *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. IV (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1968), p. 6.

13 There is a form of reference dependence in Brandom's fuller account, but it is, as he says, "asymmetrical." There could not be concept-wielding, judging subjects unless reality were conceptually articulated in the way Brandom proposes; but not vice versa.

14 These terms are all relative. Brandom's version is much stronger than Kant's in another sense, since he understands the inferential practices on which object talk (symmetrically) depends to be social in nature, to involve commitments undertaken and attributed to one by others. That is how he interprets Hegel's sweeping remarks

linking the structure of the subject with the structure of *der Begriff*. Cf. R. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, pp. 216 ff.

15 Put in a strictly Kantian way, on Brandom's account it would seem that we could get by with an "empirical deduction" (indeed a somewhat historically open-ended account, without a firm distinction between pure and empirical concepts), and not require a "transcendental deduction." And when Hegel calls the *Phenomenology* a "deduction" of the standpoint of philosophical science he seems to have more in mind than this general dependence claim.

16 G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 51; G.W.F. Hegel, *Die Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1999), p. 57.

17 R. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, p. 26.

18 See his introductory chapter in TMD: "Five Conceptions of Rationality," for a lapidary summary, as well as R. Brandom, *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).

19 A qualification here that introduces an issue too large for this context. Many times what Hegel means by "Das Wahre ist das Ganze" is not holism in Brandom's sense but completeness, what the German literature discusses as the "Abgeschlossenheit" of Hegel's system. This involves the claim that for a kind of concept (let us say, whatever sort is the subject of the *Science of Logic)*, full determinacy (and we can never be satisfied with anything else) requires understanding the *complete* inferential articulations of any concept in a system that is itself complete or closed. (See Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik,* vol. II, p. 486; Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 826.) Brandom has (wisely, I think) relaxed that requirement, but as noted at the outset, there is still some sense in which Hegel ties a theory of linguistic meaning to a "theory of everything."

20 R. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, p. 183.

21 Ibid., p. 187.

22 See the discussion of empirical concepts in the second half of Chapter Four of R. Pippin, *Kant's Theory of Form: An Essay on the "Critique of Pure Reason"* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982). See also John McDowell's criticism of Brandom on concept determinacy in J. McDowell, "Comment on Robert Brandom's 'Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel's Idealism'," *European Journal of Philosophy*, 1999, vol. 7, 90–93.

23 That is, to use Brandom's illustration: Modus ponens does not instruct you that from "If *p*, then *q*; and *p*;" you should conclude *q*. You might have better reasons for not concluding *q*. Modus ponens only expresses a logical relation that constrains what we should do (never: all of *p*; if *p*, then *q*; and ~*q*).

24 R. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, p. 192.

25 Ibid., p. 206. "Construed as immediate" already begins to give the game away.

26 Ibid., p. 224.

27 There is such an account in Sellars but it depends on two notions – picturing and analogy – that are best worked out in Wilfred Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes* (New York: Humanities Press, 1968).

28 R. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, p. 366.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid., pp. 366–67.

31 Ibid., p. 367.

32 Cf. Hegel's remark: "die Kantischen Formen der Anschauung und die Formen des Denkens gar nicht als besondere isolirte Vermögen auseinander liegen, wie man es sich gewöhnlich vorstellt. Eine und eben dieselbe synthetische Einheit ... ist das Princip des Anschauens und des Verstandes" (Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, vol. II, p. 327). An obvious concession here: this – "a fuller, more adequate picture, etc." – is easy to say, harder to do. Brandom has made clearer than anyone has just how

tricky and complicated are the issues in perceptual knowledge, singular reference, and modality that have to be faced in an inferentialist, rationalist, social pragmatist position, whether it be Hegel's or Brandom's.

33 This is roughly the kind of issue that arises in the exchanges between Brandom and John McDowell. McDowell typically challenges the notion of self-legislation by claiming, "The sense in which the source of the norms is in us is just that the norms are constitutive of the practice of thinking, and the practice of thinking is not optional for us" (John McDowell, "Autonomous Subjectivity and External Constraint," manuscript, p. 16, presented at a conference in Münster, Germany). But the complaint that any "legislator" is guided by the very norms of rationality that supposedly first have to be "conferred," can arise from any number of directions. Thus Habermas, "From Kant to Hegel," p. 24. I do not believe that Hegel is subject to this charge of paradox. See the reference in the following endnote.

34 R. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, p. 32.

35 Ibid., p. 220.

36 I have defended this interpretation of post-Kantian philosophy in several papers since the later 1990s, especially in the Dotterer lecture at Penn State, "On Giving Oneself the Law." That paper has appeared in German as Pippin, "Über Selbstgesetzgebung," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 2003, Bd. 6, 905–26. See also R. Pippin, "Fichte's Alleged One-Sided, Subjective, Psychological Idealism," in Sally Sedgwick (ed.), *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy. Fichte, Schelling and Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); R. Pippin, "The Realization of Freedom: Hegel's Practical Philosophy," in Karl Ameriks (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and most recently in Pippin, "Die Begriffslogik als die Logik der Freiheit." These are all preliminary chapters in a forthcoming book, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*. See also R. Pinkard, *German Philosophy: 1760–1860. The Legacy of Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) for a narrative of German philosophy that tracks developments in and responses to such an issue.

37 Nicholas Smith (ed.), *Reading McDowell: Essays on Mind and World* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), p. 277. I have a more detailed response to McDowell's worries in R. Pippin, "Postscript: On McDowell's Response to 'Leaving Nature Behind'," in R. Pippin, *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

38 This is one reason why Brandom's invocation of Pufendorf and the strong "imposition" metaphor, like a "cloak thrown over its [the natural world's] nakedness," is, from a Hegelian point of view misleadingly subjectivist. Cf. R. Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, p. 48.

39 R. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, p. 219.

40 Ibid., p. 221.

41 Ibid.

42 John Haugeland, "Heidegger on Being a Person," *Noûs*, 1982, vol. 16, 15–26.

43 Hegel, that is, believes that participants in historical communities can come to suffer in some distinct way from unreason, what Brandom calls incompatible commitments, and that this sort of suffering can explain the most important conceptual-normative change and can explain it as progressive (where it can). He thinks that appeals to reason have a social power that needs to be distinguished from the mere exercise of social power parading as adequate reason, even if philosophers can only do so retrospectively.

44 For Brandom intentionality is derivative of, it depends for its explanation on, normativity. This normativity is understood as a deontic matter, of normative statuses instituted by deontic attitudes. The dependence of norms on institution or imposition resulting *from such attitudes* is normative phenomenalism. This much – that

normative statuses such as commitments are products of social practical attitudes – is not being disputed. The claim is that they cannot *just* be such products, full stop. For the content of the attitudes also needs to be explained, and for Hegel that will lead to a claim about the priority of "objective spirit" over "subjective spirit," or the priority of "institutions of meaning." Something counts as a gift not just because of the attitudes of the participants sustaining the institution of gift-giving, since those attitudes already reflect the institutional rules for the practice into which individuals have been socialized.

45 It is open to Brandom to concede freely that score-keeping practices can break down, change, etc. But if that is all we have to say about it this looks like something that happened *to* the participants, rather than something they did; did to themselves and for an end. The former may be all we can finally say, but the latter is Hegel's narrative ambition.

46 For Brandom's differentiation of himself from verificationism, see Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, pp. 121 ff. Making use of Dummett's distinction, Brandom claims that they, the verificationists, are right to tie meaning to circumstances under which a term can be employed but they neglect that the appropriate consequences of its use are also as relevant.

47 This is another book length theme with respect to Brandom's Hegel interpretation. Hegel does speak of "an I that has become a we," but he does not mean by that that what a "community" as a matter of fact takes to be true or right or obligatory is thereby the criterion of truth or right or obligatory or good for any individual "I," which is what Brandom is worried about in "I–We" talk.

48 R. Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, p. 632.

49 Ibid., p. 601. See also G. Rosen, "Who Makes the Rules Around Here?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 1997, vol. LVII, 163–71; and Brandom's response in R. Brandom, "Replies," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 1997, vol. LVII, 189–204.

50 R. Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, p. 597.

51 Ibid.

52 Again, I hope it is clear that this does not accuse Brandom of what he has called "regularism," the reduction of norms to mere regularities in a practice. We can understand the difference between appeals to norms and summarizing "how we mostly go on" (for example, the latter can only in very odd circumstances be *offered* to someone as a reason and, in Brandom's language, commitments must be understood as instituted by proprieties of scorekeeping, not by actual scorekeeping), all while still remaining confused about how to differentiate appealing to an authoritative norm, and merely seeming to.

53 There are various ways of cashing out this notion of actualization. One would be the more traditional pragmatist emphasis on a kind of "coping successfully with reality" test, where, armed with various cognitive claims, one fails to achieve practical ends; this is the paradigm case for an empirical learning experience. See Habermas, "From Kant to Hegel," p. 330. There are a lot of false positives in this approach but in general it is closer to Hegel's approach than Brandom's, as in Hegel's Jena writings on labor, the account of desire in the *Phenomenology*, and the required transition between observing and practical reason in the Reason chapter there.

54 R. Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, p. 588.

55 Many of Hegel's arguments for the priority of sociality are familiar by now. Participation in a certain form of social life is *transformative* as well as instrumentally useful, and so there is too great a contrast between what an individual becomes by such participation, and what he would have been without it, for the pre-institution individual to serve as a standard for the rationality and authority of the institution.

Such social institutions are also originally *formative* of individual identities, and so would be conditions for the possible development even of rational egoists and rational egoist "culture" and so cannot be viewed as the product, even ideally, of such individuals. And the institutions necessary instrumentally to protect and guarantee individual egoism or conscience-following cannot *themselves* be sustained effectively without relations of trust and solidarity that cannot be supported on considerations of individualist interest or individual conscience. Cf. Rousseau, *Social Contract*, I.8, and R. Pippin, "Hegel on Institutional Rationality," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 2001, vol. XXXIX, Supplement, "The Contemporary Relevance of Hegel's Philosophy of Right."

56 R. Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, p. 163, my emphasis.

57 See Brandom on Dummett on *Boche*, Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, pp. 126 ff. Brandom is right that the explicative task of philosophy can help make clear that the consequences implied by the use of a term (like *Boche*) betray materially bad inferences (that all Germans are unusually aggressive and war like), but he appeals here to an inference that everyone (or most everyone) would agree is simply empirically false. By and large that is not what is "discovered" or what is relevant in a claim that the status of a lord, or the nature of honor, or the private ownership of capital, all involve materially bad inferences, as if the badness of the inference can be discovered in this empirical sense. Even with *Boche*, it is highly unlikely that the use of the term became inappropriate when its empirical falsity was finally displayed.

58 There is a parallel here to a remark Brandom makes in *Articulating Reasons*, that "I have managed to say a lot about conceptual content in this essay, without talking at all about what is represented by such contents." Cf. R. Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*, p. 77. One might say that Brandom has managed to say a lot about the social administration of norms without telling us much about what a norm is (what it materially excludes) or what a society or social administration is.

59 R. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, p. 219.

60 There are also passages in TMD that give one pause for thought about the firmness of the distinction between nature and norm, fact and ought. In the essay on Sellars, he suggests that responsiveness to norms can be assimilated into, are just another manifestation of, reliable differential responsive dispositions, causally elicited, not the acknowledgement of what there is reason to say. See p. 360 of TMD:

> Besides these language entry moves, the language learner must also master the inferential moves in the vicinity of 'green': that the move to 'colored' is OK, and the move to 'red' is not, and so on. Training in these basic language-language moves consists in acquiring more RDRDs, only now the stimuli, as well as the responses, are utterances.

This sounds like Quine at his most behaviorist, not anything to do with Kant or Hegel. But see the bottom of p. 626 of MIE on irreducible normativity. Does a trained-up language-language move that is essentially triggered by an utterance-stimulus count as a normative commitment?

61 R. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, p. 221.

62 Ibid., p. 388.

63 Antigone and Creon both agree that there is a divine law and a human law and that each should stick to its proper place. Their disagreement is both "material" and not one of brute otherness, but it is nonetheless tragic. They are both right, as Hegel reads it.

64 The Fred Astaire–Ginger Rogers "dance" of sociality, with entwined, shared commitments, while allowing each his or her own different moves, the particularity of each, is the image Brandom sometimes evokes. See the exchange with Habermas.

65 Brandom is certainly willing to state that the entire community may be wrong about what commitments they are entitled to, and that if so, this can only be wrong "by their own lights," "wrong given how they have committed themselves to its being proper to settle such questions and assess the answers." This is in footnote 29 to Chapter Three of MIE, on p. 674. But Hegel does not treat this as something discoverable by an outside interpreter. He (Hegel) wants to understand what goes wrong *in* the actual game of giving and asking for reasons when things begin to "go wrong by their own lights," how that "going wrong" experience plays a role in the establishment of what going rightly would be.

66 R. Brandom, "Selbstbewusstsein und Selbst-Konstitution," in Christoph Halbig, Michael Quante and Ludwig Siep (eds), *Hegels Erbe* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2004), pp. 46–77.

67 He does, in "Selbstbewusstsein und Selbst-Konstitution" note that a commitment, especially a basic, or identity-constituting commitment, is the sort of thing one will have to make sacrifices for, but he treats the story of a risk of life as a "metonymy" for this sacrifice.

68 It is not clear to me why, on Brandom's premises, he feels entitled to this flat-out claim about "overgeneralization." Suppose as a matter of empirical fact that all the other score-keepers *agree* that the Master is fully entitled to constitute himself as he will. What justifies Brandom's claim to "overgeneralization"?

69 Brandom, "Facts, Norms, and Normative Facts: A Reply to Habermas," p. 360.

70 R. Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, p. 178.

71 R. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, p. 226.

72 Ibid., p. 227.

73 Ibid., p. 229.

74 Ibid., p. 231.

75 Brandom calls this aspect of his project "semantic externalism." See R. Brandom, "From a Critique of Cognitive Internalism to a Conception of Objective Spirit: Reflections on Descombes's Anthropological Holism," *Inquiry*, 2004, vol. 47, 236–53, p. 250, for an interesting application of the notion.

76 R. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, p. 234.

77 Moreover, the common law practice is under-described here. By some accounts, what a contemporary judge is trying to do in applying precedent to a new sort of case is to keep faith with an underlying moral principle, the same one animating the earlier decisions, presumably. By other accounts, when the question is what a decider of the earlier case "would now find rational," the model of rationality is something like "insuring that everyone will be better off, in an economic sense." In other cases, one tries very hard simply to imagine what a constitution framer or earlier judge would himself (that real person) actually decide now.

78 Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 215.

79 I assume it is obvious that Brandom's anti-realist, rationalist, constructivist account of norms in general will, if believed or "actualized" (*verwirklicht*), have all sorts of implications in the real world, from daily social practices to the law (where his position again sounds like legal positivism).