
Intuition

THE ROLE OF INTUITION IN THE PSYCHOLOGY

Intuition is the first division of theoretical spirit, and although Hegel could have called it "rational sensibility" or even "perception," its placement after the Phenomenology emphasizes the difference between intuition and sensation or feeling.

The connection between sensation, feeling, and intuition is that they are all mental states with significant sensory content directed on individuals. In Kant's botanization of the genus representation (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A320/B376–7), an intuition is classed as an objective perception that "relates immediately to the object and is single." This is strikingly echoed in the *Zusatz* to §445, where the first stage of theoretical spirit is described as "material knowledge relating to an immediately *single* object,—or *intuition*." In specifying that intuition is a form of *material* knowledge Hegel is excluding cognitive states that relate to a single object, but that do so formally, as for instance a definite description might. A representation with the content "the tallest man in the room" might well relate to a single individual and yet not be a piece of material knowledge. For, if there were such an individual but no sensory contact between him and the representation, the representation could not be immediately applied to the individual. Not all singular representations are intuitions, therefore—only those that represent an individual directly through their sensory content.

As in Kant, the objects to which intuition relates are highly struc-

tured. The object of intuition is a spatiotemporally extended object, possessing causal properties and sometimes intentions, desires, and reason. It is only at this relatively late stage that Hegel finds a place for the rich perceptual experience of the world with which we are all so familiar.¹ This is important, for the fact that our ordinary perceptual consciousness of the world is dealt with under intuition means that it is *not* under consideration in the Phenomenology. This reinforces our earlier claim that Hegel's Phenomenology is not the proper place to look for his theory of perception.

Sensation provides the material for intuition. "The content that is raised into intuitions is its [spirit's] sensations, just as its intuitions are changed into representations and immediately its representations into thoughts, etc" (§440, my tr.). But sensation, as we saw earlier, is thoroughly nonconceptual, so there seems to be no room for the concept of "rational sensation." And indeed, Hegel writes very little of sensation in the section on intuition. Hegel rather recapitulates the notion of feeling as forming the first stage of intuition. But the notion has broadened in scope here a bit, for Hegel remarks that "feeling has already occurred earlier (§339ff.) as a mode of the soul's existence. In that case the essential determination of the *finding* or the immediacy is natural being or corporeity. Here however, it is merely *abstract*, immediacy in general" (§446). Notice that his reference here is, perhaps surprisingly, not to the section on feeling in the Anthropology but to the *Philosophy of Nature*. Feeling is a determination of the animal and therefore properly treated in the *Philosophy of Nature* as well. In saying that here, in intuition, feeling has become merely abstract, Hegel is opening the realm of feeling and sensation to things that are not simply the mental counterparts of externally determined bodily states. Thus he fulfills his earlier statement (§401, *Zusatz*) that internal sensations are, properly speaking, to be discussed in the Psychology. The important point is that such feelings have not been mediated by the

1. Sellars has argued for years that a Kantian perceptual judgment has the form "This cube is pink," where the subject phrase "this cube" models the intuitive component of the perceptual judgment and therefore the structure of the intuition itself. In Hegel's *Logik* the singular judgment takes precisely this form. If Hegel takes his logic and his statements about the singularity of the object of intuition seriously, he would have to find Sellars's model suggestive and very agreeable. See W. Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics*.

objective, rule-governed constructive processes that constitute intuitions.²

Intuition is for Hegel, like Kant, the constitution of that form of our cognitive experience in which we relate immediately to the singular as singular. Material relation to the singular as singular, however, can be guaranteed only by a sensory connection. Concepts never relate to the singular as singular. In intuition the content retains the form of the found or the given (the immediate), but its givenness is merely the way it appears, for the content is a determination of spirit itself, and in its relation to it spirit relates itself only to itself; that is, the object of intuition seems to be given to us directly, without intermediary process or medium, but in fact the rich structure that the object of intuition is presented as having is itself the work of the constructive processes of spirit itself. Hegel does not believe that this structure is only a subjective artifact of our mental processes—the objective structure of the world and the subjective, cognitive structures of rational beings are ultimately congruent—but that the object as presented in intuition has been constructed in accordance with the categorial structures of consciousness, although that activity is not present to the intuiting consciousness itself.

In the Psychology there is a steady progression in the explicitness of the activity of spirit. "Psychology is therefore concerned with the faculties or general modes of the activity of *spirit as such*—intuiting, representing, recollecting, etc., desiring, etc." (§440, my tr.). In intuition the activity of spirit, its constructive contribution, is not

2. It is not altogether clear, however, that in his discussion here Hegel respects his own distinction between sensation and feeling. In particular, my interpretation of the distinction seems to be belied by his remark that "cultivated, true sensation is the sensation of a cultivated spirit that has acquired the consciousness of determinate differences, essential relationships, true determinations, etc., and in which it is this rectified matter that enters its feeling, that is, contains this form" (§447, my tr.). This sentence is rather obscure, but I take it to imply, not that sensation comes as loaded with essential relations, but that in their very entry into feeling, as a result of the immediate synthesis of sensation to create feeling, they already obtain this form, since the unconscious synthesis is now informed by reason. This sentence, so interpreted, does not threaten my interpretation of the distinction between sensation and feeling. There are passages in the Additions where these terms seem to be used loosely, but this is not surprising, for in writing the Additions Boumann had a variety of different sets of notes, both from Hegel's hand and from his students', some of which were relatively early, before Hegel had solidified this distinction.

yet evident in the experience, however present it may be to the mind reflecting on the nature of intuition. Theoretical spirit is “the activity by which the seemingly *alien* object [of the stage of Consciousness] receives, instead of the shape of something given, isolated and contingent, the form of something inwardized, subjective, universal, necessary, and rational” (§443, *Zusatz*, Miller tr.).

It is therefore a mistake when theoretical spirit is sometimes distinguished from practical spirit by characterizing the former as passive and the latter as active. This distinction does, indeed, appear to be correct. Theoretical spirit seems only to accept what is already there, whereas practical spirit has to produce something that is not yet externally to hand. In truth, however, as we already indicated in the *Zusatz* to §442, theoretical spirit is not a merely passive acceptance of an other, of a given object, but reveals itself as active by raising the inherently rational content of the object out of the form of externality and singleness into the form of reason. (§444, *Zusatz*, adapted from Miller tr.)

Theoretical spirit begins with a *found immediacy* (its apprehension of the object of consciousness). In this seemingly immediate apprehension of the object of consciousness spirit indeed knows the external object—but it does not yet apprehend its own self and the extent to which the object of consciousness is its own, its self (because constituted by it). The concepts with which subjective spirit understands its own activity are the subject of the Psychology. The Psychology is a crucial level of Hegel’s system, for its thoroughgoing self-reflectivity is the defining characteristic of spirit.

ATTENTION, SPACE, AND TIME

Full-fledged intuition is not, of course, present at the lowest level of intuition; as we have seen, the lowest level is simply feeling recapitulated and abstracted. The level above that, called “attention” by Hegel, has (as is common with the second step of a triad) two “moments” within it. The fact that spirit finds itself in intuition implies an internal split, a distinction between that which finds and that which is found. In intuition spirit is self-related, which requires

that there be two distinguishable (though not necessarily separable) moments. Naturally, these two moments are thoroughly correlative: the moment of spiritual activity is attention; what is found is a spatiotemporal world.

It is important to note here that attention is apparently conceived of as the mental activity through which experience receives its spatiotemporal form.³ But this notion seems implausible, for attention (*Aufmerksamkeit*) is a fairly strong word, implying a high degree of conscious mental activity and willful self-control. The constitutive function of the perceiving spirit is not a conscious function of spirit, yet in the Addition to §448 Hegel seems to say that it is. This view would seem to make the constitution of the spatiotemporal world of our experience something we do by paying attention either to our feelings or sensations or to the objects of experience, and this seems patently false.

To understand Hegel's concept of attention we must remember that it occupies a place within the dialectic of intuition parallel to that occupied by self-feeling and by the whole level of consciousness insofar as it is in consciousness that the distinction between the subjective and the objective is made explicit. I take it to be the case that self-feeling, consciousness, and attention are all different levels of one and the same generic form of mental activity, with attention being a more highly developed and articulated level of this activity or function of mind. Each of these levels has as a primary feature a subject object split in which the object is projected away from the subject or externalized.

Two observations have to be made in respect of the significance of this externality however; firstly, since what is spiritual or rational constitutes the objects' own nature, what is sensed assumes the form of a self-externality in that it becomes an object external to the internality of spirit. Secondly, we have to note that since this transformation of what is sensed proceeds from spirit as such, what is sensed is endowed with a spiritual, that is to say with an abstract externality, and so acquires the same universality as that which can pertain imme-

3. The implication is clear: the objects of consciousness in the *Phenomenology* do not have a spatiotemporal form. This continues the remark in the *Phenomenology* (§418) that "here" and "now" are determinations that do not really apply to the object of sense certainty but are properly reserved for intuition. This is made even clearer in the Addition to §418.

diately to what is external, a universality which is still entirely formal and devoid of content. (§448, *Zusatz*)

These are the two respects in which intuition differs from its earlier counterparts. First, Hegel says, intuition experiences its objects as self-external. This means that in intuition we experience objects as imperfectly manifesting a determinate essence, an essence independent of that singular object and only *fully* realized by us, through our conceptual grasp of it. Insofar as the object of intuition is determined by this essence—without which, of course, it would not be what it is—the object is self-external. Second, the externalization of the sensuous content is performed in intuition by spirit as such, and this dictates the form in which that content is externalized. The point here is that the external form imposed on something by spirit itself is essentially appropriate—it is the externality the thing itself has. So when spirit imposes an external form on the sensuous content presented to it, it imposes the same form of externality as singular, sensuous things themselves have—space and time.

But this leads us to ask a more probing question: Are we to understand that sensations are themselves in a spatiotemporal ordering, even though spirit, although perhaps temporal, is certainly not spatial? We have already seen a quandary similar to this in our discussion of sensation, a problem that we decided was a weak spot in the Hegelian theory. Here however, the situation is different, for whether Hegel realizes it or not, he has room for a sophisticated answer to the present problem.

The answer is, as it should be, a decided yes and no. Yes, the ordering of sensation is spatiotemporal, but no, this does not engender special problems once we realize what Hegel intends by a spatiotemporal ordering. If we turn to the relevant discussion in the *Philosophy of Nature* (§254–59), we find Hegel discussing the idea that space is a mere form of intuition. To this notion he replies, eliminate the element of subjective idealism in this statement and it is right—for “space is a mere form, that is, an abstraction” (§254). Or, as he says in §448, space is “the form of indifferent juxtaposition and quiescent subsistence.” Time, also a mere form, is the “form of restlessness, of the immanently negative, of successiveness, of arising and disappearing.”

I suggest that we take Hegel seriously here and think of time and

space as purely formal ordering relations indifferent to what they order other than that (since they are the forms of self-externality) it be self-external. It might well be the case then that there are two different sorts of items exhibiting these sorts of relations among themselves, the objects that really are "out there" and the sensations that arise in the subjective mind. The idea is that space and time, as formal orderings of items, can apply to different kinds of items as long as the internal structures of the domains are isomorphic. There is in the mind a formal isomorph of the perceived spatial relation between two objects of intuition, and this is sufficient for the spatiality of the intuition, since space is, by its nature, formal.⁴

This idea of counterpart dimensions to account for the spatiotemporality of our experience is not clearly among the arsenal of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophers. Sellars, in his discussion of Kant, for instance, can only claim that, had Kant made a few of the distinctions Sellars has made, he would have been led to some such idea. Yet the case that something like this was in the back of Hegel's mind seems stronger, for he also makes it clear that "if we have said that what is sensed derives the form of what is spatial and temporal from the intuiting spirit however, this statement must not be taken to mean that space and time are *only subjective* forms. . . . The truth is that the things in *themselves* are spatial and temporal, this dual form of extrinsicality not being one-sidedly imparted to them by our intuition, but in origin already communicated to them by the implicit, infinite spirit, by the eternally creative Idea" (§448, *Zusatz*). Space and time are both internal to the subjective spirit and real forms of nature.

Why are space and time the forms of intuition? Could there be other forms of intuition? Kant, it seems, has to acknowledge the

4. I am obviously drawing on some of the suggestions that Sellars has put forward in his interpretation in *Science and Metaphysics* of Kant's views on space and time, but there are some significant differences here. On my reading of Sellars, the sigma- and tau-characteristics of impressions would be properties the impressions have because of their causal history. For Hegel this causal influence is nugatory; they would rather be characteristics assigned to sensations by the mind because the mind here, as spirit, implicitly cognizes their nature as self-external and takes them as having the appropriate form—gives them this form, in effect. Of course, spirit only gives to them what they already are in their nature, but the spontaneity of mind in the constitution of the spatiotemporal order seems to me heavily emphasized in Hegel.

possibility of other forms of intuition and can offer no reason why space and time happen to be the forms of our intuition. For Hegel, though, such a question does not really arise. Space and time are the determinate forms of self-externality in general (see the arguments in *PN* §254ff.); this is why they are not merely subjective forms but are present in nature itself. They are forms of our intuition simply because they are the forms in which self-external individual objects are realized. If those objects could adopt a different form, the form of our intuition of them would change accordingly. Hegel's derivation of space and time from self-externality is overly aprioristic, but his belief that the forms of our intuition depend on the structure of the world, and not vice versa, represents a healthy realism on his part.

Hegel exploits the fact that attention is more determinate and focused than mere consciousness, for the object of attention is more than a relative other, it has become totally determined, located in the determinate metric of space and time, given an independent existence all its own, and thus, since it *is not* really independent, made self-external. "Intelligence thus determines the content of sensation as something that is external to itself, projects it into time and space, which are the forms in which it is intuitive" (§448, Miller tr.). But finite things *are* self-external and spatiotemporal, according to Hegel, and intuition thus gets at their very heart.

It seemed, above, that Hegel might be insisting that we are conscious in intuition of bestowing spatiotemporal form on objects. But I do not think that he is in fact committed to such an implausible doctrine. Even though in attention spirit is actively directing itself on certain aspects of the world rather than others, this need not be a conscious effort, nor need a person be aware of doing so. That would indeed be a higher level of self-consciousness than is present in intuition.

Much of Hegel's talk of attention treats it as the ability to focus on one thing, which involves both the negation of one's self-assertiveness and the ability to give oneself to the matter at hand. Whereas in feeling the distinction between subject and object is indeterminate, "intelligence necessarily goes on to develop this difference however, to distinguish the object from the subject in a *determinate* manner" (§448, *Zusatz*). The focusing of attention emphasizes the subject's activity in cognition and determines the object more fully

for the mind, thus sharpening the split between mind and object while also fostering a deeper appropriation of the object in its fullness by the mind and thus overcoming the split between subject and object.

INTUITION PROPER

In feeling proper the item found is "found" as a member of an indeterminate connectedness; in consciousness it is found as external and independent of the ego, and the ontological structure of the object itself comes under investigation. In intuition the item found is found as an item (or as belonging to an item) in an external, spatiotemporal world. The structure of the connectedness among the found sensations is now completely specified. And it is only in intuition that adequate sophistication is reached to account for the experience of a spatiotemporal world as spatiotemporal. On Hegelian principles, animals cannot be attributed the experience of a spatiotemporally ordered world.⁵

The third step in the triad of intuition is the rather bland assertion that intuition proper is the "concrete unity" of the moments already discussed. We may take the time to differentiate intuition proper from some of its other neighbors, as Boumann's *Zusatz* does.

One of the more interesting remarks in the Addition to §449 is the contrast drawn between intuition and the sensuous consciousness of the *Phenomenology*. As stated, though, it seems to set intuition off, not just from sensuous consciousness, but from all those attitudes summed up under the heading "Consciousness." Such consciousness, he says, "in unmediated and wholly abstract certainty of itself, relates itself to the immediate singularity of the object, which falls apart into a multitude of aspects. Intuition, on the contrary, is a consciousness which is filled with the certainty of reason, its general object having the determination of being something rational, and so of constituting not a single being torn apart

5. Hegel takes spatiotemporal relations to be not merely qualitative but also metric, and we cannot attribute to animals knowledge of a metric: "Space is, in general, pure *quantity*. . . . Consequently, nature begins with quantity and not quality" (*PN* §254).

into various aspects, but a totality, a connected profusion of determinations." (§449, *Zusatz*). "True intuition," he goes on to say, "apprehends the genuine substance of the object."

It is clear here that somehow intuition gets a hold on the essences or concepts of things in a way that is impossible for phenomenological consciousness; can we explain how this can be the case without calling on the vague and unhelpful point that intuition is informed with reason and therefore grasps things as they are? We have seen that the big advance in the nature of the object constructed by intuition over consciousness is that it is explicitly spatiotemporal, and this provides us with the key, for the objects constructed by intuition trace a path through space and time. It would seem from most of Hegel's pronouncements about the abstract nature of space and time, their low level of reality, for instance, that the spatiotemporality of an object has very little to do with its essence. But such is not quite the case. It is true that in intuition the grasping of the object is still merely immediate and is not yet true cognition, for "it has not yet achieved the immanent development of the substance of the object, but rather limits itself to apprehending the unexplicated substance still surrounded by the concomitants of the external and contingent" (§449; *Zusatz*, my tr.). But what intuition must have a grasp of is the *recipe* for constructing a spatiotemporally extended object—an object with a backside, an inside, a past, and a future—on the basis of the sensations that have none of these qualities. This recipe is the first step toward possessing the essence, the concept of the thing, for this recipe is the important recombination into a "living" totality of what consciousness has separated and analyzed. The object is no more the simple conglomeration of its causes and effects, its past and its future, its parts and the whole, than bread is the simple conglomeration of flour, yeast, water, sugar, eggs, heat, and pressure.

Because Hegel insists that all content can occur in feeling, and therefore in intuition, he can also use his account of intuition to approximate the more everyday sense of the term (which it has in German as well as English). Thus he talks of a historian's intuition, and of course of the artist's intuition. These remarks, however, dilute the pure epistemic force of his position and have probably led many of his readers astray, but an immediate grasping of the es-

sence of the object is what any kind of intuition is about. In intuition one conceives the object correctly, but it is mere correct belief, for one's justification is not made evident for or by intuition.

When, on reflection, the subject realizes that strictly speaking its object is not really external, but internal and determined by the subject, the move is made into representation, that set of mental activities surrounding memory and imagination. This is the topic for chapters 8–10, but it is fitting to note here that in representation the intuitive activity of the mind provides the material for further, more complex activities. Intuition is extremely complex on Hegel's account, yet it is but the first stage of a series of successively more complex, compounded levels of mental activity.