If the question of sensation or perception arises in a discussion of Hegel, the focus of the discussion is likely to be the opening chapters of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* of 1807. Such a focus is, however, a mistake. The examination of sense certainty and perception in the *Phenomenology* bears on the question of the proper categories to be applied within experience, but there is no discussion there of the actual nature of sensation or perception as states of organic and spiritual beings within a natural world. To understand what Hegel thinks sensation and perception themselves are we must turn to his Anthropology and Psychology.

Hegel’s theory of sensibility tries to do justice to the insights of such predecessors as Aristotle, Hume, and Kant while also providing a framework within which the empirical research of the day can be comprehended systematically. His theory does not answer all the desiderata imposed on philosophical theories of perception by analytic philosophers today, such as detailing a set of necessary and sufficient conditions to distinguish veridical from nonveridical per-

1. D. W. Hamlyn, in his *Sensation and Perception: A History of the Philosophy of Perception*, commits precisely this error and makes the mistakes such an error could be expected to foster; he attributes to Hegel a “minimum of attention to the role of sensation in perception” and the notion that “the only thing which is ‘given’ is experience as a whole,” and claims that “idealism makes it difficult for itself to justify the claim that anything independent of ourselves exists” (pp. 144–45). Others among English-speaking authors who emphasize the *Phenomenology of Spirit* too heavily in this regard include Charles Taylor and R. C. Solomon.
ception, or mere perceptual mistake from hallucination, but it does show a sensitive consideration of problems in the ontology of sense and the differentiation of various levels of perceptual experience.

Hegel's distinction between sensation and the higher mental activities, like Kant's, is phrased in terms of a distinction between active and passive. Although, as he repeatedly claims, spirit is essentially active, Hegel does not believe that there is no passive, receptive element in the individual, subjective spirit. His theory of sensation and intuition is best seen as an attempt to explicate the nature of the receptive element in spirit and its relation to the spontaneous, rational essence. His most important theses are these:

1. Sensation, though clearly mental, is not itself cognitive; the intentionality of sensation is not the intentionality of thought.
2. Sensation is nonetheless basic to cognition and is the starting point of all knowledge and experience.
3. The world of one's direct sensory experience is a phenomenal world in the sense that it is a construction by the mind out of its affections. Given Hegel's metaphysics, however, this does not entail that we are confined to knowledge of a merely phenomenal world.
4. There are different levels of spirit's emergence from the passivity of pure sensation as spirit liberates itself from its dependence on the body and its immediate physical environment.

We begin by discussing the nature of sensation in Hegel's theory. Hegel makes several related attempts to differentiate the sentient from the nonsentient; after looking at these, we discuss in greater detail the nature of the relation between mind and object in sensation.

The Sentient and the Nonsentient

Sensation is a property of animals as well as humans, but we cannot recount the whole of the Philosophy of Nature here in order to get the proper background for understanding the emergence of sensation within the animal organism. In what follows I summarize what I take to be the most important points.
The Nature of the Animal Organism

The animal organism is a highly organized chunk of nature, composed of the objects of the lower levels of nature, the physical and the chemical. But it is not simply a conglomeration of such objects (see §350, Zusatz). What, then, is the animal itself? The animal is a unity in a way no inorganic conglomeration is. The unifying telos is, in the case of the animal, internal, unlike the inorganic, the telos of which is some external goal. Hegel expresses this important difference, perhaps unfortunately, in terms of the animal being its own universal over against its particular aspects:2

"An even more complete triumph over externality is exhibited in the animal organism; in this not only does each member generate the other, is its cause and effect, its means and end, so that it is at the same time itself and its Other, but the whole is so pervaded by its unity that nothing appears as independent, every determinateness is at once ideal, the animal remaining in every determinateness the same one universal, so that in the animal body the complete untruth of asunderness is revealed" (§381, Zusatz, Miller tr.).

Hegel wants to maintain that the mode of being of the animal organism and even more so of the human involves a rather special relation between universality and particularity. The relation of an inanimate object to its genus is, according to Hegel, external. The individual is merely subsumed under the genus, which just collects a set of otherwise disparate individuals; there is no intrinsic uniting power active in them. There is, for instance, no intrinsic, active essence that all red things have in common.3 To this extent the inanimate individual and its universal are both abstract. In the animate object, on the contrary, its universal, its concept, is distinctly active within it, and the animate, organic individual actualizes and maintains itself from within.4 In the animal the externality

2. If one recalls here the Aristotelian doctrine of substantial forms and its applications in biology and psychology, these views do not seem as strange.

3. Not all properties of inanimate things are equally external. The natural kind to which a thing belongs has a closer relation to the thing than do its other characteristics.

4. The self-organization Kant attributes to organisms (Naturzwecke) is, along with Aristotle's concept of the organism, an important influence on this aspect of Hegel's theory.
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of nature is overcome, for we can only explain and understand the animal’s structure and behavior, Hegel thinks, by thinking of its structure and behavior as the expression of a unitary (though complex) concrete universal active within the animal.5

Botanical, animal, and human beings are self-organizing. The animal, qua universal, is the principle that orders and gives coherence to its various elements and properties, but in contrast to a desk or a rock it does so itself, from inside. A rock, for instance, is at best only nominally organized; even in complex crystal structures there is no need to refer to functions within a system to explain the organization of the crystal. That a rock has the structure it has and behaves as it does depends solely on the stuff it consists of and its external situation. Artifacts are more highly organized. The properties and behavior of a desk are explained in large part by the function it is intended to serve. It can be made of wood, metal, plastic; we can even slowly replace wood with metal parts and retain the same desk. The desk is free of strict dependence on its material constitution. Nonetheless, its principle of organization or essence is extrinsic, bestowed on it by some person. In an organism the principle of organization is intrinsic—organisms are not designed by someone to fulfill a purpose but are themselves their own purpose. The organism is an active universal because, although a universal in relation to its parts, it must be mentioned in any adequate explanation of them. The organism is its own effect and therefore must be active.

The Sentient Organism

Feeling occurs in the animal, according to Hegel, “as the individuality which in the determinateness6 is immediately universal to itself, simply remains with and preserves itself: the existing ideality

5. Hegel makes the contrast between internal and external do a great deal of work; it separates animal organisms from inanimate nature, but it is also used, as we have seen, to separate spirit from nature. It has been suggested that there is a simple ambiguity in Hegel’s usage, there really being two different contrasts—one Aristotelian, which culminates in the internality of the organism, and the second Cartesian, which culminates in the internality of a subjectivity (E. Heintel, “Aristotelismus und Transzendentalismus in ‘Begriff’ bei Hegel”). I prefer to think that there is one univocal contrast with an articulated structure, but I am not yet sure of that.

6. “Determinateness” is Hegelian for a quality of something.
of being determined” (PN, §351, Miller tr.). “Feeling is just this omnipresence of the unity of the animal in all its members which immediately communicate every impression to the one whole which, in the animal, is an incipient being-for-self” (§381, Zusatz, Miller tr.). These are obscure passages, to say the least, but not unusually so among passages in which Hegel tries to distinguish the sentient from the nonsentient. The most complete statement Hegel makes on the subject is in an only recently published unfinished manuscript of a projected, book-length version of the *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*:

If neutral water is coloured, for example, and so simply possesses this quality, is simply in this condition, it would be sentient if it were not only for us or as a matter of possibility that it differed from the condition, but it were at the same time to distinguish itself from itself as being so determined. Differently expressed: the genus color only exists as blue, or as a certain specific color; in that it is blue, it remains the genus color. But if the color as color, i.e., not as blue but at the same time as color, persisted in opposition to itself as blue color—if the difference between its universality and its particularity were not simply for us but existed within itself, it would be sensation of blue. (*PSS*, vol. 1, p. 123)

These passages are confusing and obscure, but Hegel is trying to describe something the evanescence of which has frustrated all philosophers. He is trying to describe what it is in the nature of certain beings that makes them sentient, that qualifies them for the predicate “aware.”

A nonsentient being, a stone, for example, can have a color property, say gray. The distinction between the stone and its grayness is a simple modal distinction (to use the Cartesian terminology). An animal can be colored in precisely the same way. But if the animal senses something gray, how is it then related to grayness? A dualist might say that this is again a simple modal distinction between the mind (instead of the body) and one of its properties. Being gray and sensing gray have two different subjects. In contrast to this dualistic picture, Hegel wants to keep a unitary subject. The same thing—the animal—can both be gray and sense gray. The difference between being gray and sensing gray lies in the relation the subject bears to the properties of its sense organs.
The nonsentient subject is exhausted in its properties, Hegel seems to be claiming; it makes no distinction between itself and its properties, although we do. The sentient being, however, retains for itself an identity over against its particular properties, it makes a distinction between itself and its properties. This is all pretty mystifying, but I think some sense can be made of it.

Hegel insists that the sensible quality is now posited within the soul as ideal. Hegel often uses “ideal” to characterize something as being unconditioned by anything external, and we would normally think of sensation as a prime example of determination by the external. “That the soul finds itself so determined, that is why the determinateness is at the same time posited as ideal in the soul, and is not a quality of it. In that the ideality of this determinateness is not another determinateness, which takes its place and drives out the first, but rather that the soul itself is the ideality of the determinateness and is reflected into itself, the finite, i.e., is infinite, the determinateness is also not a mere state” (PSS, vol. 1, p. 122; my tr.) Hegel’s notion seems to be that sensations are peculiar because, although they are in one sense properties brought about by external factors (by and large), what they are depends crucially on their occurrence in the context of a complex organic whole. Hegel’s point is, I believe, that there is no simple connection between the physical state of a sensory organ and the organism’s sensory state. Particular sensations—how the state of the sense organs affects the total sensory state—are dependent on that total sensory state as well. To the extent that each sensation is also dependent on the total state of the organism, the sensation does not upset the self-determination of the organism.

Perhaps an example can help. Thermostats are sensitive to temperature—but they do not sense heat or cold. Hegel would say, it seems, something like this: “If the temperature as temperature, that is, not as 78° but at the same time as temperature, persisted in opposition to itself as 78°, it would sense 78°.” In some ways our sense organs are meters of our environment, capable of recording its state with sometimes surprising accuracy. We might, then, try to think of our possession of a certain sense as our possession of a metering subsystem that feeds its output into some central processor where it can be calculated into our total behavior function. In such a complex system, we might claim, the temperature as tem-
perature, in the form of the special metering subsystem, persists in opposition to any specific value it may output. But clearly there are many such systems—for example, central heating systems—which do not literally sense heat or cold.

What Hegel would find repugnant in the above example is not the isolation of a particular metering system—this would correspond to a sense organ, and Hegel never doubts the existence of those. Rather, he would object to the form of connection between the metering system and the central processor. The meter is conceived of as fully independent of the central processor, adding its isolable input without regard to the state of any other part of the whole. In other words, the meter is fully modular. This is not an organic unity. The input-output function of the meter would also at least have to have a reciprocal dependence on the total state of the whole system in order for this condition to be met. Only to a system exhibiting strong reciprocity between the particular states of its parts and the total state (for Hegel its universal) could we attribute sensation.

Is Hegel’s view of sensation and the mind itself therefore refuted by the contemporary evidence that a number of our psychological abilities are modular? Although he consistently rails against faculty psychology, Hegel does make distinctions among sensation, feeling, intuition, and imagination. Modularity is not all or nothing, and Hegel does not seem to require total nonmodularity in the mind. We therefore cannot say that the apparent modularity presently attributed to a number of our psychological capacities is a refutation of Hegel. But it certainly seems fair to say that the more highly modular are our abilities, the less attractive is a Hegelian theory of mind. In his emphasis on the rationality of spirit and human nature, Hegel may well have gone too far in thinking that all

7. See Jerry Fodor, *The Modularity of Mind*, for a general discussion of modularity. Fodor explains his terms as follows: “By saying that confirmation is isotropic, I mean that the facts relevant to the confirmation of a scientific hypothesis may be drawn from anywhere in the field of previously established empirical (or, of course, demonstrative) truths.Crudely: everything that the scientist knows is, in principle, relevant to determining what else he ought to believe. . . . By saying that scientific confirmation is Quinean, I mean that the degree of confirmation assigned to any given hypothesis is sensitive to properties of the entire belief system; as it were, the shape of our whole science bears on the epistemic status of each scientific hypothesis” (pp. 105–7).
our mental abilities have the Quinean, isotropic (that is, multidimensional holistically holistic) nature reasoning exhibits.

Hegel's confusing but tantalizing remarks about sentience and nonsentience do not help us much in the end. Ultimately we are only told that the sensible organism relates to some of its states in very peculiar ways, ways that are understood by reference to the holistic, organic context in which they occur. At best, Hegel is insisting that there is a limit on the modularity of a sentient system. A sentient being must be more tightly unified or more closely and complexly self-related than a conglomeration of modular metering systems attached to some central processing device. This may be true, but without further specification of the relations involved it is not very helpful.

THE OBJECT OF SENSATION

Hegel's attempt to distinguish the sentient from the nonsentient does not succeed, but neither has anyone else's. There is more to be found, however, when we consider the object or content of sensation and the nature of the relation between the sensation and its object. Hegel talks rather loosely of the content or object of sensation, and it appears that there are three candidates for the position: (a) the external object involved in the causal process that culminates in the perceiver's having a certain sensation; (b) the proper sensible itself—a color, tone, taste; (c) the animal or human itself.

The first two candidates are familiar, but the third seems unlikely, so let me note some of the textual evidence that shows that this alternative must be taken seriously. Hegel continually insists that in sensation, feeling, and intuition the subject finds itself, and that such mental activities are the immediate being-for-self of the organism. As a metaphor, the self-directedness of sensation pervades Hegel's discussion. Furthermore, there are plenty of explicit passages such as the following: "In that the animal senses, it doesn't only sense itself, but itself as determined in a particular way" (§357a, Zusatz).

The three objects of sensation—the external object, the proper sensible, and the animal itself—are "objects" of sensation in different senses, and Hegel keeps the senses clearly separate. There
are, however, extra complications arising because of Hegel's distinction between inner and outer sense.

Inner and Outer Sense

The distinction between inner and outer sense does not consist in certain sensations being given as inner and others as outer, for as we shall see, sensations are not given as anything at all. Neither does this distinction have anything to do with the Kantian distinction between the forms of inner and outer sense. Rather, in Hegel's system, the distinction is founded on the etiology of the sensation and its content. External sensations are those determined by causal processes originating in some physical object and affecting the sense organs: "One sphere of sentience distinguishes itself principally as the determination of corporeity (of the eye etc., of the parts of the body in general) and becomes sensation in that it is recollected, internalized within the being-for-self of the soul" (§401). Internal sensations, on the other hand, are not the result of the causal influence of a physical object on a sensory organ; they arise instead through the agency of spirit acting on itself, embodying some higher mental state, for example, a thought, in order that it may be sensed: "Another [sphere of sentience] distinguishes itself as the determinatenesses which have originated in and pertain to spirit, and which are embodied in order to be as if they had been found, or sensed" (§401).

Hegel leaves it unclear whether internal sensation is something that uses its own particular organ of sense. The examples he gives lead one to believe that the actual sensing of an internal sensation is accomplished by the organs of external sensation, for he gives the feelings of anger and courage sensed in the breast and blood, the flushing of the face in shame, the trembling and pallor of fear, and the sensation of meditation in the head as examples, and these can be considered to be sensibles proper to touch. They might, however, be considered sensibles proper to proprioception, the status of

8. Hegel does say this: "It is not to be denied however, that in accordance with the variety of their content, the inner sensations have at the same time a particular organ within which their primary and predominant embodiment takes place" (§401, Zusatz), but this does not answer the question of how we sense such things.
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which is a bit muddy. Proprioception is not one of the standard five senses, and it is peculiar in that one proprioceives only one's own body, never an external object. Nonetheless, by inner sense Hegel clearly does not mean proprioception, for he does not recognize proprioception as a separate sense, and proprioception does not have the proper etiology. Proprioceptive knowledge of the disposition of our limbs or of gastric distress does not rest on inner sensations in Hegel's sense. The etiology of the sensation is the most important difference between the inner and the outer.

But inner and outer sensation are also distinguished with respect to their content. In the Zusatz to §401 Hegel talks more specifically about inner sensations, placing them into two categories. First, "there are those which concern my immediate individuality in some particular relationship or condition." His instances of this category are all emotions. By treating emotions as inner sensations Hegel can account for both their purely occurrent felt quality and the often complex intentional structure they contain, since they are the embodiment of and therefore are involved in higher spiritual activities. The second kind of internal sensations consists of those "which relate to that which, in and for itself, is a universal, to right, to the ethical, to religion, to the beautiful and the true." Yet at other places Hegel insists that the object of sensation is always something singular: "Now since what is unmediated is a singularization, everything sensed has the form of singularity" (§400, Zusatz). Besides the specific list of universals he gives as objects of inner sensation, however, Hegel also claims that all the content of the mental sphere—including the objects of thought itself—exists in sensation. How is this conflict to be resolved?

What would count as a sensation of right? It seems to me that we would talk of such a sensation (though we might prefer the phrase "feeling of rightness") in a situation in which we are confronted with a certain state of affairs to which we immediately react, "But that's wrong!" or "That's right!" Hegel's point is that in their mental structure those reactions, insofar as they have a purely felt, noncognitive, affective aspect (that "gut feeling"), are forms of sensation. The pure occurrent felt quality is confined to a particular agent at a particular time in response to a particular situation. It has the "form of singularity." Such sensations presuppose considerable sophisticated mental activity; they need to be learned. The ability to em-
body sophisticated contents in the simple form of sensation is extremely important. Hegel insists that the ideas of right, of justice, and so on are only truly and completely appropriated by spirit when they are not merely the objects of thought but have become internalized in this way. "Principles, religion etc. must be in the heart, they must be sensed, it is not enough that they should be only in the head. . . . One should not have to be reminded however, that what is religious, ethical, true, just, etc. is not justified by the form of sensation and of the heart, and that an appeal in this context to the heart or to sensation is either simply meaningless or downright pernicious" (§400).

Hegel explicitly states that the content of inner sensation is itself properly handled only in the Psychology, the last stage of subjective spirit. At the early stage of the Anthropology, where he introduces the distinction, the concern is the embodiment of inner sensations. Thus the sensation of sin, qua sensation, need not be anything more than a peculiar sensation in the pit of one's stomach or some such. What makes it an inner sensation is its etiology, the fact that it is the embodiment of a higher spiritual act and the capturing of the more complex act in the immediacy of sensation. In making the distinction between inner and outer sensation, Hegel is concerned to account for the fact that our higher mental activities can acquire a purely occurrent affective aspect. The occurrent inner sensation has a content solely in virtue of its causal connection with other states of the organism. One must take this functionalist trend in Hegel's thought seriously.

Mediate and Immediate Objects of Sense

Let us now return to the problem of the object of sensation. The point here is that such things as flashes of light, earthquakes, and one's beloved are mediate objects of sensation; states of the sensory organs are the immediate objects of sensation. The mediate object is the thing that explains why the sense organ is in the sensation state it is in. In the case of external sensation, this is the object at the other end of the causal chain that accounts for that state of the sensory organs are the immediate objects of sensation. The mediate object is sioning object, the concept of right or justice. In this context Hegel places sensation in the middle of a syllogism involving the thing
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and the organism: "Touch, for example, is the mediation between me and the other, for although it is distinct from both sides of the opposition, it at the same time unites them" (§399, Zusatz).

In sensation the animal stands in immediate relation to itself, in particular to the body. The relation of the body to the external object determines the properties of the body or sense organ, and this property of the sense organ exists as ideal in the soul, and as such it is the sensation. As I have tried to explain Hegel's position, the animal itself is to be more or less identified with the total state of the organism. When the external object acts on the sense organ, the sense organ's change of state is reflected in the change of the total state, although not in any neat way. The state of the sense organ, by contributing in this complex way to the total state of the organism, is a "moment" within it and in this sense exists as ideal in the animal. This moment is the sensation.

To be able to assign a sensation the proper mediate determinate object—indeed any mediate object—a complex diagnostic task must be performed, a task beyond the ability of the sensitive soul as such. Such diagnosis requires conceptual abilities that go well beyond sensibility. Thus the soul as such makes no such assignation. An external object as such is present to spirit only at the higher stage discussed in the Phenomenology.

We have now explained the sense in which the external thing is the object of sensation and the sense in which the animal senses itself in sensation. But what of the proper sensible? Where do the sensible qualities such as color, texture, or tone fit in? In a discussion in the Encyclopedia that occurs in expanded form in the discussion of Aristotle's theory of sensation in the Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Hegel says that when he senses red or hardness his sensation is itself red or hard. And he says, "Heat, warmth, etc.

9. Hegel was familiar with the Aristotelian logic in which terms, not propositions, are the basic elements. He thought of a syllogism as a mediated relation between terms. This is discussed in much detail in Chapter 12.

10. In this Hegel was probably influenced by Spinoza's view that the ideatum of the lowest-order ideas of the mind is the body of which the mind is the idea. Spinoza says accordingly that the human mind perceives the modifications of the body, which means that the mind contains the ideas that are in the attribute of thought those modifications the body has in the attribute of extension; see B. Spinoza, Ethics, ed. J. Gutmann, pt. II, prop. 22.

are independent and outside, but they are just as much immediately transformed, made ideal, a determinateness of my feelings; the content in me is the same as it is outside, only the form is different" (§357a, Zusatz). Hegel is drawing here on the Aristotelian account of sensation, according to which "the actuality of the sensible object and that of the sense are one and the same, though differently definable" (De Anima, 425b26ff)\(^{12}\). As Aquinas says in his commentary on this passage, "Color has two modes of being: a material mode in the object, a spiritual mode in sensation."\(^{13}\)

Wherever we run into a claim of shared content in different form in Hegel it is helpful to think of the content as being determined by a functional role in a larger system. There are, then, several ways two things can have the same content but different form. They can have the same content either by playing relevantly similar roles in two different systems or by serving the same function (perhaps more or less adequately) within a common system. Their forms differ insofar as the means by which the common role or function fulfilled differs. Neither of these senses of "same content/different form" seems to apply to the proper sensibles in their objective and subjective existences. Sensations of red play a role in my acquisition of beliefs, in my directing my action, and so on, but the redness of things themselves cannot be said to play that role, though sensations of red can play the role they do only in virtue of their connections to red things.

If having a content is playing a functional role, then many philosophers would object in principle to the idea that the proper sensibles are contents. The sensation of red, it is claimed, cannot be defined or explained in terms of its causal powers, for something could be functionally equivalent to a sensation of red—that is, give rise to the same beliefs, desires, behavior—and not be a sensation of red. There are two ways to try to make this claim out: either the organism (or machine) has some sensation that is functionally equivalent to a sensation of red but is not a sensation of red, or, alter-

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12. In the first edition of the Encyclopedia we find the following remark: "Aristotle also recognized the determination of sensation, in that while he recognized the sentient subject and the sensed object into which it is divided by consciousness as only the possibility of what sensing is, he said of sensation that the entelechy of the sentiment being and what is sensed are one and the same" (PSS, vol. 3, p. 121).

natively, the thing has some state—but not a sensation at all—that is functionally equivalent to a sensation of red.

The first formulation raises, in effect, the problem of the inverted spectrum. I know of no discussion of this problem in Hegel, but I think his Aristotelian theory of sensation would have led him to deny the meaningful possibility of someone’s phenomenal spectrum being the inverse of other people’s. After all, it is the same thing—red—that exists in the object and in the mind. But since Hegel describes the sensation as ideal and as having a content, we still might be able to preserve everything he says about sensations while admitting the possibility of an inverted spectrum. In that case the content of the sensation, Hegel would maintain, is unaffected, for the sensation typically caused by red things would be a sensation of red, given that functional equivalence is maintained (where functional equivalence includes preservation of the typical connections to emotional states, aesthetic properties, etc.) Otherwise, Hegel would claim, we would be trapped in a subjective idealism.

I am less sure of Hegel’s response to the notion of a complete, but sensationless, imitation human. Such a notion is surely not a live option for him. If such an imitation is supposed to do everything we do but sense, that is, imagine, understand, and reason, Hegel would declare it an impossibility, for sensation is a necessary condition of these higher activities. Hegel would also deny the possibility of a complete behavioral imitation devoid of internal reasoning. But how are we to take the impossibility of sensationless imitation? Does it mean that any rational agent ipso facto senses (so that if we succeed in building a rational agent, it will have sensations), or that to build an imitation of us one must not only make it reason but also make it sense? Surely Hegel would reject the latter alternative—it destroys the unity of spirit, chopping it into separable, autonomous units.

Hegel seems well on the way to denying the possibility of absent qualia and thus sustaining the notion that sensations are specified by content, by functional role. We need, then, to worry a bit more about what role that is exactly, so that, for example, heat as an inner and an outer state shares one content with different forms. The point seems to be that, while nature and spirit constitute significantly different systems on their own, our sensation states do map some of the natural properties of things, preserving their most
important relations, and are the sensations they are because of these ties to their typical causes. The content is primarily determined by the abstract relations within the sensory range and the causal links to the object, although, as we have seen, it must be open to other influences as well.

**Sensation as Noncognitive**

There is a more radical thesis about sensation lurking here which it is now time to flush out: that sensation is, although mental, noncognitive. The individual qua individual is, for Hegel, unknowable—another easily recognizable Aristotelian principle. Sensation is entirely singular and devoid of universality and can therefore be cognitive, conceptual, at best only potentially.

One criterion of cognitivity—a necessary but not sufficient condition—is that cognitive activities be subject to standards of correctness. But when considering sensation as a pure affection of the subject, it makes no sense to ask whether the sensing was done correctly or whether it is true. Hegel adopts the Kantian view that knowledge requires the organization of experience under certain objective constraints. Although a state may be called a sensation only when it participates in a complex, organically structured unity in a certain way, calling it a sensation is still treating it as a simple, without consideration of the specific role it may play in the cognitive life of the organism. Occupying a place in a cognitive system, sensations are no longer considered merely the passive affections of the animal and are no longer merely sensations; they have become what Hegel calls feelings.¹⁴

Since concepts are that which organize our experience, the unorganized material of experience must itself be nonconceptual. In a sense Hegel believes that there is a given element in our experience—he uses the metaphor that these elements are found by the soul within itself rather than given to it—but it is not an epistemological given, and terms of epistemological appraisal are not appli-

¹⁴. Hegel uses “feeling” (Gefühl) for both the sense of touch and a later stage of subjective spirit beyond sensation; see Chapter 5.
It is true that all experience has its root in the sensations found within the individual organism and taken up by spirit. But the sense in which spirit is rooted in sensation must be properly understood. Sensation is the genetic, causal root of the spiritual, but no sensory episode plays a foundational epistemological role.

That Hegel's approach to the individual's epistemological situation is so Kantian is also seen in the following passages:

The subjectivity of sensation must be sought not indeterminately in man's positing something within himself through sensing, for he also does this in thinking, but more precisely in his positing something not in his free, spiritual, universal subjectivity, but in his natural, immediate, singular subjectivity. This natural subjectivity is not yet a self-determining one, pursuing its own laws, activating itself in a necessary manner, but a subjectivity determined from without, bound to this space and this time, dependent upon contingent circumstances. (§400, Zusatz)

Mere sensation . . . has to do only with the singular and contingent, the immediately given and present, and this content appears to the sentient soul as its own concrete actuality. In that I raise myself to the standpoint of consciousness, in contrast, I relate to a world external to me, to an objective totality, to an internally connected circle of manifold and complex objects standing over against me. (§402, Zusatz; my tr.)

Furthermore, one must take seriously the idea that Hegel believes sensation to be the immediate material of mental activity. Over against this stands the form-giving activity of spirit. Sensation can at best only be considered such as is ripe for the agency of spirit; it is potentially, but not actually, cognitive. How spirit's activity on this raw material of sensation ultimately produces true knowledge is the story of the remainder of the philosophy of subjective spirit. This process begins with the next stage, feeling. But, although absolute knowledge has its roots in man's sensory encounter with the world,

15. D. W. Hamlyn's criticism that only the whole of experience can be thought of as given according to Hegel simply does not hold up against the texts beyond the early Phenomenology of Spirit. The whole of experience is something that spirit constructs—it is a result of the activity of spirit. See Hamlyn, Sensation and Perception.
Hegel claims that this beginning is ultimately overcome, that true thought, free of any sensory admixture, is ultimately achieved.

Hegel's theory does not escape some of the problems that also ensnare his predecessors. We can capture several of these problems in our net by pointing out the slide that tempted so many philosophers: a sensation of pain is of pain because it is a pain; the pain has its proper existence in the mind. A sensation of blue is similarly treated; it can be of blue because it is an actual case of blue in the mind. But patches of color usually have an outline and shape. If there is an actual case of blue in the mind, we then ask, is there also an actual case of shape, say, triangularity? Here, of course, the philosopher balks. The mind is traditionally treated as nonextended, shapes are certainly modes of extension, and therefore there can be no shapes in the mind.

Are problems also generated for Hegel's system by this line of reasoning? There is one immediate difference to be noticed. In contrast to his predecessors, Hegel believes that shape is a proper sensible, a proper sensible of touch: "Three dimensional shape also falls to the lot of feeling, for feeling alone is concerned with general mechanical determinateness" (§401, Zusatz). We can thus state the problem in a very straightforward way. Hegel claims that, when he sees something red, his sensation is itself red. Would he also agree that when he touches something triangular, his sensation is triangular? This question is made still more complex by the fact that in the system it is not until we reach the more sophisticated level of intuition that space and time are explicitly introduced and constructed. Hegel has not really thought out the way spatiality enters into our perceptual experience. Some remarks in the Encyclopedia imply that our visual field is two-dimensional and that we infer the third dimension. But then it would seem that we have separate access to at least two-dimensional shapes through a sense other than touch. Can it be possible for sensations to have dimensions like this and yet not be spatial? A similar kind of problem is caused by the universal objects of inner sensation. If in sensing red my sensation is itself red, in sensing right or wrong is my sensation itself right or wrong?

Our earlier analysis of the content of sensations, however, shows that Hegel need not be smothered by these problems. If a sensation
has a certain content in virtue of occupying a position in a (mental) quality-space isomorphic in the essential respects to the quality-space applicable to the object by which it is typically caused, then some mental analogue of space suffices for us to be able to sense shapes. Inner sensations are still a problem, but if we remember that Hegel is after the "gut feeling" in such sensations, and that justice and right are the mediate objects of the sensation and not the proper sensibles, the problem evaporates.

Perhaps the major source of disquiet in Hegel's treatment of sensation is the fact that he seemingly denies that sensations are cognitive while still attributing them content. The notion of a contentful state seems already to invoke cognitive notions. We have seen in what sense sensations have a content: preserving within the mind a quality-space equally applicable to the outer objects causally responsible for the sensations. The sense in which higher cognitive states have a content is different, though not unrelated. The intentionality of sense is not the full intentionality of the higher cognitive processes.