HEGEL: NEW DIRECTIONS

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ACUMEN

(the third is, as he remarks, easier to accommodate) so as to fit his overall conception of the *Phenomenology*'s point, but his details (for instance, desire as emerging out of the idea of a lack that drives the pursuit of knowledge) strike me as far removed from what actually happens in the text.

17. Self-consciousness is the shape in which consciousness is now present, and for consciousness the essential thing about its object is that it is not – is other than – itself.
18. See Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, 149. Pippin says that "this chapter ... does not begin a case for the primacy of practical reason" (*ibid.*, 288 n. 11). I am not sure about this claim, when we come to the slave's emancipation through work. But Pippin is talking about the role of desire in the chapter, and I think he is right that that feature of it does not point us to practical reason. However, Pippin's denial is muted by his taking "desire *Überhaupt*" too literally.
19. Fortunately, in this chapter I do not have to try to explain how this happens.
20. "Achieves its satisfaction" rather than, more plainly, "finds its truth" because we are still working with the conception of self-consciousness as desire *Überhaupt*, although in the experience of *Phenomenology* (§175) it learned not to conceive itself as appropriating its object in anything like a literal sense. See n.6 above.
21. No doubt the remark also works if taken straightforwardly, without that understood frame. I think this is quite common in the *Phenomenology*. What I am disputing is only that the straightforward reading captures what Hegel has argued for in his approach to the remark.
22. Self-consciousness starts this movement in its experience with "itself as *pure I* for object" (*PhG*: §173). Hegel announces there that in its subsequent experience "this abstract object will enrich itself and undergo the unfolding we have seen in life". It is going to turn out to *be* what was there unfolded.
23. Compare what he says in the preface about "grasping and expressing the true not [just] as *substance*, but no less as *subject*" (*PhG*: §17). Compare also *Phenomenology* (§790), where he says (ironically), of Observing Reason's culminating identification of the soul with a thing, that "according to its concept it is the most richly spiritual". The concept of spirit as it figures here is the concept of something that is equally object and subject.
24. It is part of the image that, for the consciousness whose experience we are considering, the other views it in the same way. But this symmetry need not carry over into what the image is an image for.
25. I have not seen this obvious point noted by commentators.
26. I have seen a few precedents for this proposal. J. Flay says that "master" and "slave" refer not to separate individuals but to different aspects of consciousness; *Hegel's Quest for Certainty* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1984), 86. Kelly offers an intra-personal reading as a supplement to the more typical interpersonal readings; "Notes on Hegel's 'Lordship and Bondage'", in *The Phenomenology of Spirit Reader*, J. Stewart (ed.), 172–91 (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998). And Robert M. Wallace, in an unpublished book manuscript, says that "a self-consciousness ... can, in principle, be its own 'other'". But none of these authors has what seems to me to be the essential connection between the master–slave dialectic and the project of overcoming otherness.

CHAPTER THREE

HEGEL, McDOWELL AND RECENT DEFENCES OF KANT

Sally Sedgwick

According to Graham Bird, the interpretation and critique of Kant recently defended by John McDowell in his book *Mind and World* is "fundamentally mistaken" (Bird 1996: 219). Bird is not alone in holding this view; it is also shared by other prominent Kantians such as Henry Allison and Michael Friedman.[1] All agree that the account McDowell provides of what he calls the "transcendental" side of Kant perpetuates unfortunate myths about the nature and implications of Kant's idealism, myths forcefully articulated by P. F. Strawson, and by Hegel more than a century earlier.

In the name of setting the record straight, Allison, Bird and Friedman undertake to defend Kant's idealism anew. The myths, they tell us, are products of misinterpretation. What is more, the myths can set us off on an unfortunate philosophical track, as is evident, they argue, in the case of McDowell. The myths can in other words encourage in us the misguided view not merely that there is something valid about the Hegelian critique of Kant, but also that there is something compelling or attractive about the Hegelian alternative. This explains why in the course of their efforts to correct misinterpretation, the Kantians in addition seek to convince us of the virtues of transcendental over absolute idealism. While Kant, they suggest, has the good sense to draw attention to the limits of our knowledge, Hegel seems intent upon persuading us to ignore them.

We learn more about what the Kantians understand the Hegelian alternative to be from the following passage quoted by Bird:

> Kant opened the door to nineteenth century idealism and it rushed ... past him, agreeing with him that mind was not a part of nature, but pressing on boldly to the even more liberating doctrine that nature itself was an externalization, or self-objectification, of Mind.
>
> (John Skorupski, quoted in Bird 1995: 399)

Although hardly self-explanatory, the terms "externalization" and "self-objectification" suggest at least this: that what is "bold" and therefore troubling about post-Kantian idealism is that it deprives nature of its independent reality, of its irreducibility to mind. The flip side of this objection is the worry that this form of idealism awards mind too much creative power and therefore too much free rein. If nature is no more than an "externalization" of mind, mind has nothing outside itself to be answerable to. Its freedom is without limits (or "frictionless", as McDowell would put it). In Michael Friedman's words, "post-Kantian idealism views the objects of rational knowledge as manifestations of an absolute rational freedom *entirely unconstrained by anything outside itself*" (1996: 442, emphasis added).

Kant "opened the door" to this form of idealism, presumably, because of the degree of creative power he awarded our form of cognition. In opposition to empiricism, he argued that mind is more than just a repository of ideas originating from elsewhere; it is more, too, than the mere capacity to perform logical operations on those ideas. Rather, mind according to Kant is productive of its own ideas or forms. These ideas or forms, far from deriving from our perception of objects, in fact determine or make objects possible, in his view.

But while it is true that Kant awards human cognition this degree of creative power, his form of idealism does not imply that nature is a mere externalization or objectification of mind. Kantians remind us that this cannot be his view because he argues that the forms we bring to our cognitions of nature determine a content we do not make: the given content or matter of sensation.[2] Human cognition is thus to this degree limited in its productive powers: it is incapable of simply producing nature out of its own cognitive activity. At most, it is productive of the form through which it is possible for us to know or experience nature. This is why Kant insists that we know nature only as "appearance", not as a "thing in itself".

So in the name of ensuring that we not mistake Kant's idealism for the Hegelian alternative, Kantians remind us that transcendental idealism is committed to the thesis of the irreducibility of nature to mind as well as to the thesis that there are limits to what we can know. They sing the praises of his modesty. But in responding in this way to the worry that Kant is somehow responsible for later and less plausible forms of idealism, Kantians invite an objection of a different kind. Kant's thesis of the irreducibility of nature to mind and his resulting restriction of our knowledge to appearances is precisely what gives rise to the representation of his idealism as having ultimately sceptical implications for the possibility of human knowledge. For if we know nature not as it is "in itself" but only as "appearance" (only as conditioned by our subjective forms), it would seem that what we know of nature is at best something "subjective": a mere representation or projection. And, on Kant's account, we have no means of determining whether our projections are also valid of things in themselves.

It is just this portrayal of the implications of Kant's modesty that commentators such as Allison, Bird and Friedman dismiss as a "myth". Transcendental idealism does not commit us to the platonistic tendencies of post-Kantian idealism, they argue, but is not it an ultimately sceptical thesis about the scope of our knowledge either. Any suggestion to the contrary, they claim, is evidence of misunderstanding.

In this chapter I challenge the Kantians' account of both the Hegelian critique of and the Hegelian alternative to Kant. However successful they may be in responding to persistent misrepresentations of transcendental idealism, the recent defences of Kant by Allison, Bird and Friedman do not in my view begin to address the Hegelian critique. What I hope will emerge from this discussion is that Hegel's critique is significantly more interesting than the Kantians make it out to be. And although I shall not argue for this directly, I believe it will follow from my discussion that McDowell's critique of Kant is more interesting as well, at least if we are warranted in taking him at his word when he characterizes his position in *Mind and World* as Hegelian.[3]

I

As just noted, Kantians respond to the charge that transcendental idealism "opens the door" to excessive claims about the creative capacities of human cognition by emphasizing Kant's modesty, by drawing attention to the fact that in his view we must depend in our knowledge of nature on a sense-content we do not make. It follows from the fact that our form of cognition is "discursive" rather than "intuitive", Kant explains, that it is incapable of producing the content of experience out of its own activity; the most it can do is produce the form through which the given *a posteriori* content must be thought and known. Because we are dependent on an independently given sense-content, objects of nature are not for us mere products or externalizations of our cognitive powers; we know of them, he writes in the B preface of the first *Critique*, only "what we put into them" (Bxviii). We know them as conditioned by our subjective forms, not as they are in themselves.

So in response to those who suggest that Kant is responsible for later developments in German Idealism, Kantians urge us to take his dualism seriously. It follows from his insistence that our form of understanding is discursive, that nature on his account cannot be a mere product of or reducible to mind. In response to those who suspect that his dualism has sceptical consequences for our knowledge, the Kantians remind us of his dualism's precise nature and implications. Although it is true for Kant that we know nature only as appearance, only as given via our subjective forms of intuition and as thought through the categories, this does not imply, the Kantians argue, that objects of our knowledge are no more than mere representations and

therefore necessarily less than real. It is a mistake to understand transcendental idealism as entailing that what is "really real" are things in themselves or noumena, and that our knowledge, because limited to appearances, must be an imperfect version of the real thing. If we understand Kant's distinction between appearances and things in themselves in this way, we fall prey to what Allison has called the "myth of the noumenal". This myth, he writes:

> consists in the assumption that Kant is committed to the doctrine that the "real" is equated with a supersensible (and hence noumenal) realm, of which we can know nothing save that it somehow affects us, and that the cognition of appearances of which we are capable is merely a pale substitute for genuine knowledge. (1997: 45)[4]

Along with Bird and Friedman, Allison is convinced that the worries Hegelians such as McDowell raise depend on the fact that they attribute to Kant this "myth". This is an assumption I shall challenge. But before doing so and suggesting an alternative way of understanding the Hegelian critique, it will be useful to review strategies the Kantians adopt in exposing and correcting their opponent's mistakes. This will provide a clearer picture of just who the Kantians take their opponent to be.

II

Again, those persuaded by the "myth of the noumenal" assume that Kant's doctrine of the unknowability of things in themselves implies the unknowability for us of what is "really real". They then attribute to appearances and our knowledge of them a "second class status", as Bird has put it (1996: 234; see also 226, 228).[5] They take transcendental idealism to be a form of scepticism in just this sense.

But as the Kantians point out, numerous passages in the *Critique of Pure Reason* warn us against interpreting the distinction between appearances and things in themselves in this way. It follows from the fact that we cannot know things in themselves, Kant argues, that we also cannot know that they, rather than appearances, are the "really real". If we have understood the distinction correctly, in what he calls its "transcendental" versus "empirical" sense, we will recognize that the predicates "real" and "illusory" or "merely apparent" legitimately apply only to appearances. Again, this has to do with the fact that what "objects may be in themselves" or apart from our forms of sensibility, remains in Kant's words, "*completely* unknown to us" (B59/A42, emphasis added).[6] As unknown, we can have no warrant for claims about their reality.

This is indeed what Kant says. But of course it could be the case that he is inconsistent. It could be the case, for example, that in spite of his many warnings against our supposing to know things in themselves, he nonetheless measures the adequacy of our knowledge of appearances against them. In response to this kind of worry the Kantians remind us not merely of passages in which Kant is explicit in drawing the limits to our knowledge, but of the arguments that lead him to do so. Those tempted to impute to him the "myth of the noumenal", they claim, fail to grasp the basic aims (or, as Allison puts it, the "critical nature") of his form of idealism. We understand the "critical" nature of Kant's idealism, the Kantians argue, only when we appreciate the following two points: first, that it is not the transcendental idealist but rather the transcendental realist, according to Kant, who assumes the knowability of things in themselves; and secondly, that a central aim of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is to provide an *alternative* to transcendental realism.[7]

Let us take a closer look at this strategy for defending Kant. If we ask why Kant was convinced that he needed to find an alternative to transcendental realism, the Kantians recall for us a principal motivation of his critical project: to "save metaphysics". In Kant's view, transcendental realism threatens the very possibility of metaphysics because it can secure for us no necessary knowledge of objects of nature. Kant argued this point with reference to both the Lockean and Leibnizian versions of transcendental realism that he reviewed in the first *Critique*. In assuming that all our concepts derive from sense experience, Lockean empiricism delivered metaphysics into the hands of the Humean sceptic. This is because, as Hume rightly pointed out, we cannot via an appeal to experience demonstrate any *necessary* connection between our concepts and their objects. The "course of nature", he famously reminds us, "may change" (Hume [1777] 1989: 378). Leibniz's effort to guarantee necessity, while not vulnerable to Hume's sceptical arguments, was nonetheless no more successful than Locke's, in Kant's estimation. This is because Leibniz relied on the mistaken assumption that we can ground our claims about the nature and existence of objects on the basis of an analysis of their concepts alone. The strategy Kant seized on in the name of "saving metaphysics", then, involved rejecting assumptions he believed Locke and Leibniz held in common, not the least of which was the assumption he came to identify as transcendental realism.

Given how very different the Lockean and Leibnizian theories of knowledge are, it is not obvious that these theories share *anything* in common. But, as the Kantians rightly point out, we need to understand what Kant thought they shared in common if we are to appreciate what he rejected in both approaches and offered in their place. Kant noticed, first of all, that both Leibniz and Locke took for granted that our knowledge of nature depends on one faculty rather than two, on either thought or sensation.[8] One key to Kant's alternative, therefore, was his introduction of the thesis that our knowledge is dependent on the cooperation of two independent or irreducible

faculties: the faculty of understanding (of concepts) and the faculty of receptivity (of intuition).[9] In contrast to the empiricist approaches of Locke and Hume, Kant argued that we possess at least some concepts that are not simply derived from sensation but are "original" or "*a priori*". In contrast to Leibniz, on the other hand, he claimed that our knowledge of nature depends on more than just conceptual analysis. Although we can think via concepts whatever we please (provided that we conform to the law of non-contradiction), knowledge of nature requires in addition that our concepts apply to a content given in empirical intuition (Bxxvi(a) and Transcendental Aesthetic, §1). Our knowledge of nature requires intuition as well as concepts, Kant argued in the "Ideal of Pure Reason", because existence is not analytically contained in any concept.[10]

So one key to Kant's effort to save metaphysics was his commitment to the thesis that neither concepts nor sensations by themselves can provide for the possibility of necessary knowledge of nature; our knowledge of objects of experience, in his view, requires both. A second key has to do with the constraint he placed on how it is that objects of nature must be given to us in sensation: they are given, he tells us in the Transcendental Aesthetic, via our *a priori* forms of sensible intuition, space and time. Any possible object of empirical knowledge not only must be thought through *a priori* concepts or categories but must in addition appear to us via these forms of intuition.

Strictly speaking, it is this second constraint that is responsible for Kant's insistence that our knowledge is limited to appearances. For the claim that we know nature only as conditioned by our forms of sensible intuition is on his account equivalent to the claim that we know nature only as appearance. The "thing in itself", then, is what remains when we abstract this constraint on how objects of possible experience must be given to us.

But why does Kant assert that the positions of Locke and Leibniz are instances of "transcendental realism", and how is "transcendental realism" distinct from his own alternative, "transcendental idealism"? In the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant argues that space and time are "transcendentally ideal" forms of experience. They are "deal", he says there, because they inhere "in the subject" as necessary *a priori* conditions of human knowledge. We have no grounds for supposing in addition that they are valid or have reality for objects "absolutely", for objects "in themselves". Their validity, in other words, is restricted to their role as subjective conditions of human knowledge. They are "ideal" because "in us" or *a priori*; they nonetheless have "empirical reality", Kant claims, just because they condition what is empirically real or a possible object of perception for us.[11]

Locke and Leibniz are transcendental realists, according to Kant, because neither identifies the role of space and time as *a priori* or subjective conditions determining how objects of experience must appear to us. Neither is therefore in the position to acknowledge a distinction between appearances and things in themselves in the Kantian sense. For Locke, we can by means

of sensation know the nature of things in themselves; for Leibniz, we know things in themselves via thought alone.

This explains Kant's insistence that it is the transcendental realist and not the transcendental idealist who claims that we can know nature as a thing in itself. As Allison puts it, the transcendental realist assumes, "that what can alone satisfy the truth conditions of human knowledge must be something to which the mind has access *independently of its own conditions of cognition*" (Allison 1997: 46, emphasis added).[12] Allison and others then argue that if we have understood the "critical nature" of Kant's idealism – its opposition, namely, to transcendental realism – we shall recognize the absurdity of imputing to Kant the claim that we can know things in themselves. Again, it is the transcendental realist who is committed to this position, but transcendental realism in Kant's view provides us with no way to save metaphysics. Precisely because Kant rejects transcendental realism, he must rule out as illegitimate or as instances of "transcendental illusion" any claims about the possible reality or existence of things in themselves, including the claim that they are more real than appearances. In his words, the thing in itself or noumenon is no more than a "limiting concept", the function of which is "to curb the pretensions of sensibility" or remind us of the limits to what we can know (A255/B311).[13]

III

The above line of defence takes itself to establish that there can be no justification for either of the following two charges against Kant: (i) that he is inconsistent because although he claims that we have no knowledge of things in themselves on the one hand, he nonetheless assumes their reality on the other; and (ii) that his idealism is ultimately a form of *scepticism* because it implies an *unbridgeable gap* between what is "merely real for us" and what is "really real". In his recent review of McDowell's *Mind and World*, Friedman defends Kant against these charges as well and tells us that, on a proper reading of Kant's critical philosophy, we discover that rather than imply scepticism, transcendental idealism in fact "closes" the gap between mind and world. Like Allison and Bird, Friedman employs the strategy of interpreting Kant's philosophy in light of the transcendental realist alternatives to which he was responding. It is not Kant who leaves us with a gap between mind and world, Friedman claims, but his transcendental realist opponents. Transcendental realism implies for Kant a gap between mind and world, Friedman argues, in precisely the ways we have just reviewed: neither empiricist nor rationalist versions can guarantee necessary knowledge of nature and therefore "save metaphysics". Thanks to his two-faculty doctrine and introduction of "revolutionary new doctrines of a priori sensibility", however, Kant

succeeds in "closing" the gap, Friedman suggests (1996: 437), that transcendental realism leaves open.

Friedman focuses his attention on the way in which Kant closes the gap left open by the rationalist or Leibnizian version of transcendental realism. We have already considered why Kant was unpersuaded by Leibniz's effort to demonstrate that we can have necessary knowledge of nature. Because Leibniz did not regard intuition as an independent source of knowledge, irreducible to conception, he presumed that the necessary application of our concepts to nature could be demonstrated by way of an appeal to conceptual analysis alone. In Kant's terminology, Leibniz failed in this effort because he in effect conflated the "logical" with the "real" possibility of concepts.[14] Kant set out to close the transcendental realist gap between mind and world, Friedman reminds us, by adopting the following strategy. First, he argued that sensation is not reducible to or a mere species of conception, but rather an independent source of knowledge. Secondly, he introduced his doctrine of *a priori* sensibility in arguing that objects of sensation are necessarily given to us via our *a priori* forms of intuition, space and time, and are therefore known to us as appearances rather than as things in themselves. Finally, he set out in the Analytic section of his Transcendental Logic to demonstrate the necessary application of our *a priori* concepts or categories to nature as appearance. Friedman reminds us, then, of the three principal steps of Kant's effort to "save metaphysics", the three principal steps of his "Copernican Revolution".

If we bear in mind that the "gap" Kant "closes", according to Friedman, is the gap between our *a priori* concepts and nature as appearance (between what Friedman refers to as "mathematical reason" and "sensible nature"), then there is no reason to doubt that Friedman gets Kant's Copernican story perfectly right. Again, Kant's task in the Transcendental Analytic is to close this gap by demonstrating the necessary application of our categories to appearances. How does he do this? By arguing that the categories are forms without which what is given in empirical intuition could not be thought or known by us at all. In the absence of concepts, Kant famously insists, intuitions are blind. By "synthesizing" or "unifying" the content of appearance, the categories first make nature possible for us as an object of thought and scientific enquiry. In Friedman's words:

> For Kant, our sensible experience is necessarily governed by and framed within a "space of reasons" consisting, essentially, of logical and mathematical relations; ... there can be no question, therefore, of an epistemological gap between such rational relations on the one side and our sensible experience on the other.
>
> (1996: 438ff.)[15]

As I said, I find nothing to criticize in this retelling of Kant's Copernican story. What is puzzling, however, is the fact that Friedman along with

Allison and Bird believe that this retelling of the Copernican story counts as a response to the Hegelian critique. Kant closes the gap between mind and world, they tell us, by demonstrating that appearances could not be for us possible objects of thought or knowledge in the absence of the subjective conditions of our thinking and knowing them.[16] If the Hegelian persists in charging that Kant's restriction of human knowledge to appearances in effect leaves another gap open, namely the gap between what is "really real" and what is "merely real for us", then clearly the Hegelian has failed to grasp the fact that for Kant the categories, including the category of "reality", have valid application only for appearances.[17] If the Hegelian assumes that for Kant our knowledge of appearances must be something merely "subjective" or "second rate", it is because he persists in misinterpreting the term "appearance" in an unKantian or "colloquial" sense.[18]

What can be wrong with this as a response to Hegel? Very simply, it ascribes to him interpretative errors he did not commit. Hegel was aware of the essential features of Kant's idealism and its specifically "critical" nature.[19] The same, I believe, may be said of McDowell. If I am right, then it should be possible to provide an alternative account of the Hegelian worry about the Kantian gap between mind and world, an account that does not depend on the assumption that Hegel and McDowell fail to appreciate the "critical" nature of Kant's idealism.

IV

To get this alternative reading underway, we first need to bear in mind that the success of Kant's effort to close the gap between "mathematical reason" and appearances or "sensible nature" requires, as even the Kantians admit, keeping another gap open. The key to Kant's Copernican alternative to transcendental realism depends, as we have seen, on the fact that, as Allison puts it, Kant "factors in" our subjective conditions. In providing his alternative account of how necessary knowledge of nature is possible for us, Kant in other words factors in the role of the categories and forms of space and time. Having done so, he then derives the central tenet of his idealism: that we know objects only as conditioned or determined by these forms, only as appearances. In this way, the success of Kant's Copernican alternative depends on keeping open the gap between our subjective conditions and things considered in abstraction from them. Because the Kantians consider this alternative to transcendental realism an instance of philosophical progress, they applaud Kant's restriction of our knowledge to appearances. They sing the praises of his modesty.

Should the Hegelian raise doubts about *this* gap between mind and world (the gap, namely, between our subjective forms and things considered in

abstraction from them), the Kantians respond by pointing out that this gap does not imply for Kant that we must give up hope of knowing what is "really real". But here it is important that we not overlook the fact that in responding to the Hegelian's doubts in this way, the Kantians merely rehearse for us what Kant's critical form of idealism requires. They assume, in other words, that the Hegelian critique calls merely for a *reminder*, as opposed to a *defence*, of Kant's Copernican strategy.

Surely, however, one can be sceptical about that strategy. One can be sceptical, for example, about the conception of mind and world that leads Kant to conclude that "we can know a priori of things only what we ourselves put into them" and that we therefore have no warrant for knowledge claims about objects independent of our subjective forms. And one can raise doubts about this without failing to acknowledge the implication of transcendental idealism that from the standpoint of theoretical knowledge objects considered in abstraction from our subjective forms can have for us, strictly speaking, no reality. Furthermore, one can raise doubts about Kant's Copernican strategy, as Hegel does, without reviving either a Lockean or a Leibnizian form of realism.

V

Assuming that what I have just suggested is true – namely, that Hegel neither fails to recognize the critical nature of Kant's idealism nor adheres to a Lockean or Leibnizian form of realism – how should we begin to piece together the fundamentals of his critique of and alternative to Kant? The first point to bear in mind is that, contrary to what is commonly supposed, Hegel is in sympathy with Kant's claim that our knowledge requires not one faculty but two, neither reducible to the other. As just noted, he embraces Kant's rejection of the reductionist transcendental realisms of Locke and Leibniz. The problem with Kant has to do, then, not with his assumption that our knowledge requires the cooperation of two faculties, but with his particular conception of the nature and contribution of those faculties. The problem, in Hegel's terminology, is that Kant assumes that the contributions of sensation on the one hand and of the mind's forms on the other are "originally heterogeneous" or "absolutely opposed".[20] As McDowell has put it, the problem is that Kant assumes that form and content are not merely separate but also "separable".[21]

On the face of it, the charge that Kant assumes the "separability" or "absolute opposition" of form and content seems anything but plausible. The key implication of his Copernican turn, after all, is that the objects of our thought and knowledge are not bare contents, but unities of form and content: contents which must be thought through the categories and, if knowable, given via our forms of space and time. But this Kantian thesis that subjective form

plays an indispensable role in making possible human thought and experience is not what Hegel rejects. What *does* he then have in mind in charging that Kant assumes the opposition or separability of form and content? Recall what I identified above as the Kantian inference Hegel finds unpersuasive: that from the fact that experience for us requires the contribution of our subjective forms it is supposed to follow, according to Kant, that we have no warrant for knowledge claims about objects considered in abstraction from those forms. Hegel points out that this inference is only conditionally valid – valid, that is, only if we assume a particular conception of form: namely, as already given or *a priori*.[22] Kant's conclusion that we cannot know mind-independent content depends on his commitment to the separability or opposition of form and content in *this* sense. When Hegel insists in his provocative way, then, that things in themselves are indeed knowable for human cognition, he means to challenge Kant's conception of the already given or *a priori* nature of form.[23]

So in opposing the thesis of separability or absolute opposition, Hegel calls into question not Kant's insight that our cognitive access to content is dependent on the role of subjective form, but rather Kant's failure to acknowledge that a relation of dependence obtains in the other direction as well. Subjective form, Hegel seems to suggest, is in some way dependent on content. And this point about two-way dependence is presumably what motivates his mysterious assertion that form and content, rather than absolutely opposed, are in fact "originally identical" elements of a synthetic unity or totality.[24]

Needless to say, the idea that form according to Hegel is inseparable from content is not easy to grasp. It is no easier to grasp than his alternative expression of what is essentially the same point, his claim that reason is "in the world" or "in history".[25] These claims are particularly baffling because, as we saw above, Hegel's idealism is not a return to reductive realism, including the empiricist version of realism that takes form to be reducible to or a mere species of content. Although we might be tempted to say that, in claiming that the nature of form depends on content, Hegel in effect naturalizes the subjective forms that according to Kant are *a priori*, it is essential that we add the qualification that he aims to do so without reviving the reductive empiricism according to which form is nothing but a product of passive sensible affection.

We can derive some idea of the way in which form is dependent on and so inseparable from content, in Hegel's view, from a principal strategy he adopts in his critique of Kant. It is a strategy about which our Kantians have nothing to say because they in fact overlook Hegel's objections to Kant's conception of form. What I have in mind are Hegel's repeated efforts to persuade us that the formal features of experience that Kant identifies as *a priori*, and therefore as universal and necessary, are in some way contingent or only conditionally valid. Hegel employs this argumentative strategy again and again, whether his topic be Kant's Table of Categories, his treatment of substance in the Analogies, or his attempt in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural*

Science to construct the forces of matter. Underlying Kant's account of the *a priori* or pre-given conditions of experience, Hegel argues, are assumptions that escape Kant's critical notice, assumptions that in no obvious way are necessarily and universally valid.

Surely one lesson Hegel wishes us to derive from these discussions is that Kant is insufficiently appreciative of some of the conditions of his own philosophizing (his Newtonianism, for example). But although part of Hegel's aim is to convince us is that Kant is to be faulted for in this way failing to live up to his own rigorous standards of philosophical reflection, Hegel's deeper philosophical objective is to urge us to call into question the standards themselves. That is, Hegel believes we should call into question the conception of philosophical reflection that assumes that when we undertake to identify features of our experience, it is possible for us to leave the influences of our own intellectual culture thoroughly behind. This is why in the opening paragraphs of the introduction to the *Phenomenology* he challenges Kant's conception of a "critique" of reason.[26] The claim of "critique" is that reflection can unburden us of the merely relative or contingent assumptions that tie us to a particular philosophical tradition. The benefit of being unburdened, of course, is that only by this means do we gain access to non-contingent or timeless truths. Hegel finds this conception of philosophical reflection deeply suspect. It presumes, he writes in the preface to his *Philosophy of Right*, that "philosophy can transcend its contemporary world" or that "an individual can overleap his time" (*PR*: 11). Granted, the truths Kant claims to derive from critique are intended to reveal the nature and limits not of things in themselves but of merely human experience. Nonetheless, Kant believes that he has, via critique, revealed to us unconditionally necessary and universal conditions of human experience. He is confident that he has done so, because he believes that his discovery of the *a priori* features of subjective form does not depend on assumptions he has inherited from his "contemporary world". In this way, he presupposes that the forms he discovers are already given or separable from content. Relying on the method of critique, he assumes he is warranted in his claims about the nature of form "in itself".

For Hegel, this understanding of the nature and accomplishments of critique is an instance, not of philosophical modesty, but of vanity.[27] Because Hegel denies that critique in this sense is possible for us, he also denies the validity of the kinds of claims critique is supposed to be uniquely fit to defend. He rejects the supposed pre-givenness of form in favour of a conception of form as having a history and as revisable in response to the forces of history.[28] If we conclude from this that he is a reductive naturalist or positivist about form, then we miss what we saw above is implied by his denial of the thesis of separability: that the relation of logical dependence between form and content obtains in both directions, and that there can be for us as thinkers and knowers no bare or mind-independent content that form is somehow reducible to.

VI

Summing up the points covered so far: we have seen that, according to Hegel (and to McDowell as well, I believe), Kant's account of form implies a gap between mind and world: a gap, namely, between the subjective conditions of our knowledge of nature and things considered in abstraction from those conditions. Our Kantians do not deny that this gap is implied by Kant's idealism, nor do they consider this gap cause for concern. Keeping this gap open, they correctly point out, is key to the success of Kant's effort to save metaphysics. It is what allows him to close another gap, namely the gap between subjective form and nature *qua* appearance. The fact that for Kant we can have no warrant for claims about objects independent of the subjective conditions of our knowing them, the Kantians tell us, does not imply that transcendental idealism is a sceptical thesis about the possibility of human knowledge. If we take it to imply this, then we have yet to free ourselves from the grip of transcendental realism.

In light of the fact that the Hegelians object to the gap left open by Kant's idealism, we might suppose that what they are after is some way to close it. This is true in one sense but not in another. Clearly, the Hegelians seek an alternative to Kant's conception of form. They find unsatisfactory the implication of Kant's conception of form that we can know of things only what we put into them. But it would be inaccurate to suggest that in their effort to close the gap between mind and world, Hegel and McDowell set out to re-establish for us justification for supposing that we can transcend the realm of subjective form. This cannot be what they are after for the simple reason that this strategy ignores the side of Kant's idealism they accept. They accept what we might refer to as Kant's half-hearted commitment to the thesis of inseparability: his insight that we can know and think content only as already formed.

In what way, then, *do* Hegel and McDowell seek to close the gap between mind and world? Perhaps what we should say is that they undertake to persuade us that we are mistaken in believing that there is a gap that needs to be closed. This response – the response that we have been fretting over a pseudo-problem – may seem too easy. But it is nonetheless implied by Hegel and McDowell's commitment to the thesis of inseparability. The thesis of inseparability, remember, denies the validity of the terms that define the supposed gap between subjective form, on the one side, and mind-independent content, on the other. It asserts that, for our cognition, form and content considered "in themselves" or in isolation from each other are empty abstractions: expressions of what McDowell (following Sellars) refers to as the myths of the "exogenous" and the "endogenous" Given.[29] If we assume that securing the possibility of our knowledge of nature requires that we find some way of bridging the gap between subjective form and mind-independent content, then it is clear that we still cling to these myths.

So closing the gap between mind and world, according to the Hegelian, cannot be a matter of appealing outside the realm of subjective form or presuming to know the exogenous Given. Nonetheless, Hegel and McDowell seek to bridge the gap between mind and world in some sense. As mentioned above, they seek an alternative to the conclusion that we can know of things only what we can put into them. Otherwise put, they set out to persuade us that subjective form is more than, in McDowell's words, a "frictionless spinning" valid merely "for us" (see McDowell 1994: 11). How do they argue this? The answer is that they draw our attention to an implication of the thesis of inseparability. As we saw above, giving up the idea of form as already given or inseparable from content is equivalent to granting that form has a history and is in principle revisable. If we grant this, we in effect admit that form does not determine experience simply of its own accord; it adjusts to forces that are not of its own design or creation. (Hence Hegel's emphasis on the *conditioned* or *contingent* character of form or law and McDowell's emphasis on the *partially passive* nature of experience.) According to the Hegelian idealist, we cannot justify the claim that form has friction or is objective by appealing outside the realm of subjective form, because no such appeal is possible for us. If a case is to be made for closing the gap between mind and world, then, it must depend on rejecting the assumption that the nature of form is already given. For the Hegelian idealist, in other words, form owes whatever friction or objectivity it has to its inseparablility from content. If we follow Hegel and McDowell in "exorcising" the myths of both the "exogenous" and the "endogenous" Given, this is all the realism we get. But for the Hegelian, it is all the realism we should ever want or need (see McDowell 1996: 285).

The Hegelian alternative to Kant thus ends up looking like this: the Hegelian accepts Kant's thesis that we can think and know content only by means of our subjective forms. The Hegelian in other words accepts the thesis of the inaccessibility for our cognition of the "exogenous Given". But the Hegelian does not follow Kant in concluding in light of the indispensable role of subjective form that we can know of things only what we put into them. Again, the Hegelian avoids this conclusion by rejecting Kant's conception of form as already given and as therefore in no way a reflection of or responsive to content. The key to Hegel and McDowell's effort to bridge the gap between mind and world, then, is their insistence that the idea of an already given form "absolutely opposed" to or "separable" from content, is for our cognition as much of an empty abstraction as the idea of a bare or unformed content.

VII

We might ask, in conclusion, why the Kantians we have been considering suppose that the Hegelian's worry about a gap between mind and world is based

on the mistake of ascribing to Kant the "myth of the noumenal", that is, of assuming that Kant "demotes" our knowledge of appearances and inconsistently awards noumena the status of the "really real". Why do they miss the point stressed above that the Hegelian is critical of Kant's insistence that our subjective forms are *a priori* or already given versus to some extent dependent for their nature on and inseparable from content? Regarding their reading of McDowell, why do they overlook what is clearly a central proposal of *Mind and World:* that we give up the idea not merely of the exogenous but also of the endogenous Given and therefore think of subjective form on the model of a partially naturalized versus "rampant" form of Platonism (McDowell 1994: 92)?

In responding to these questions we need to expose some of the Kantians' own myths. We saw evidence of the principal myth in the opening pages of this chapter. This is the myth that to be a Hegelian is to be a platonist of the most rampant sort. This type of platonist, we saw, is committed to the thesis that nature is nothing other than an "externalization" or "self-objectification" of mind. Our Kantians apparently interpret the Hegelian in this way because they assume that the Hegelian's only suggestion for how we can successfully close the gap between mind and world is that we reduce the latter to the former, and in so doing deny world or nature independent reality. They assume that, for the Hegelian, the creative capacities of the human mind are unlimited and without external constraint. This is supposed to explain why the Hegelian is frustrated with Kant's restriction of our knowledge to appearances, and why the Hegelian insists, against Kant, that we can indeed know the absolute.

Friedman among others subscribes to this myth, which is why he writes that the tendency of "post-Kantian absolute idealism" is to "distance rational thought from sensible experience and to minimize the empiricist elements in Kant's own conception" (1996: 440). Because the post-Kantian idealist minimizes the role of the empirical and downplays the necessary role in our experience of an external or intuitive constraint, it is "not surprising", Friedman continues, that this form of idealism "eventually leads to explicitly Coherentist conceptions of the objects of rational knowledge" (*ibid.*).[30] This is a relatively common representation of Hegel; it is as common, perhaps, as the equally inaccurate portrayal of him as a reductive naturalist or positivist. But if what I have been suggesting here is correct, we are more on the right track if we say not that the Hegelian encourages us to minimize the role of the empirical in cognition, but rather that the Hegelian encourages us to pay more attention to it. On the interpretation I have proposed, the possibility of knowing things themselves and therefore of closing the gap between mind and world, depends for the Hegelian on our recognizing what is empirical or historically conditioned in the purportedly universal and necessary.[31]

NOTES

1. Friedman describes as "seriously misleading" the picture McDowell presents of "the Kantian conception of the understanding" (M. Friedman, "Exorcising the Philosophical Tradition: Comments on John McDowell's *Mind and World*", *Philosophical Review* 105 (1996), 427–67, esp. 436). See also H. Allison, "We Can Only Act Under the Idea of Freedom", Pacific Division APA Presidential Address, *Proceedings and Addresses of the APA* 71(2) (1997), 39–50.
2. While the form of appearance is *a priori*, Kant says, the matter [*Materie*] of appearance is "given to us a posteriori only" (A20/B34). Except when otherwise indicated, I rely on the Norman Kemp-Smith translation of the *Critique*.
3. See, McDowell's preface where he describes his work as "a prolegomenon to a reading of the *Phenomenology*" (J. McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), ix). I discuss the Hegelianism of *Mind and World* in S. Sedgwick, "McDowell's Hegelianism", *European Journal of Philosophy* 5(1) (1997), 21–38. In the final section of that paper, I made what I now believe was the mistake of suggesting that McDowell and Hegel have no good grounds for charging that Kant's views about the contribution of spontaneity in any way commit him to the myth of the given. I hope to correct that mistake in this chapter.
4. See also Friedman, who writes that according to McDowell's "domesticated" rendition of post-Kantian absolute idealism, Kant "embeds" his "empirical realism in a 'transcendental story' according to which appearances are the transcendental products of a non-empirical interaction between our sensibility and things in themselves, and this makes the empirical objectivity of appearances seem 'second rate'" (Friedman, "Exorcising the Philosophical Tradition", 440ff.).
5. Bird represents Kant's view as follows: "It is not that there really are two distinct realms, a natural, empirical realm and a non-natural, transcendent realm of things-in-themselves; rather there is just one realm, empirical reality, and a conceptual apparatus which tempts us to transcend it. In this account there is no suggestion that empirical reality should be demoted, or that 'absolute reality' in the shape of transcendent claims, should be regarded as superior" (G. Bird, "Kant and Naturalism", *British Journal of the History of Philosophy* 3(2) (1995), 399–408, esp. 406).
6. Kant draws our attention to the "transcendental" versus "empirical" interpretation of his distinction between appearances and things in themselves in the Phenomena and Noumena section of the *Critique* as well. See, for example, B313ff., referred to by G. Bird, "McDowell's Kant: *Mind and World*", *Philosophy* 71 (1996), 219–43, esp. 229.
7. The "critical nature of Kant's idealism ... emerges," Allison writes, "primarily through the demonstration of the inadequacy, indeed, incoherence, of the opposing transcendental realism" (Allison, "We Can Only Act", 45).
8. Kant characterizes the positions of both Locke and Leibniz as reductionist. Leibniz, he writes, "intellectualized appearances" (sensations), while Locke "sensualized the concepts of the understanding" (A271/B327). For an illuminating discussion of Kant's effort to find an alternative to the approaches of both Locke and Leibniz, see L. W. Beck, "Kant's Strategy", in *Essays on Kant and Hume*, 3–19 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978).
9. The "receptivity of our mind", Kant writes, is its "power of receiving representations in so far as it is in any wise affected ..."; "the mind's power of producing representations from itself" is its "spontaneity". "These two powers or capacities," he tells us further, "cannot exchange their functions. The understanding can intuit nothing, the senses can think nothing. Only through their union can knowledge arise" (B75/A51).
10. "Being," Kant writes at A598/B626, "is obviously not a real predicate ...". It is a "logical predicate" and therefore establishes at most the logical possibility of a concept. To determine whether a concept applies to an existing object, we must, he says, "go outside" the concept; we must, that is, establish that the object of our concept is given in perception according to empirical laws. See Kant's discussion "The Impossibility of an Ontological Proof of the Existence of God" (A592/B620ff.).
11. For Kant's discussion of these points, see the Transcendental Aesthetic (§§6–8). He writes: "It is ... indubitably certain, that space and time, as the necessary conditions of all outer and inner experience, are merely subjective conditions of all our intuition, and that in relation to these conditions all objects are therefore mere appearances, and not in themselves [*für sich*] given in this way ... For this reason ..., while much can be said a priori as regards the form of appearances, nothing whatsoever can be asserted of the thing in itself, which may underlie [*zum Grunde liegen*] these appearances" (B66/A49, translation modified).
12. For the transcendental realist, Allison writes: the "real world" and "purported object of human cognition" is noumenal or supersensible "in the sense that the truth conditions of claims regarding it are to be determined completely independently of any consideration of the subjective conditions of human cognition (the forms of sensibility and the schematized categories)" (Allison, "We Can Only Act", 46).
13. As Allison puts it, the thing in itself or noumenon refers not to a metaphysically distinct "non-natural realm of true being" but to a "conceptual" or "normative" space (*ibid.*, 47). This point is argued by Bird as well. He writes that Kant's commitment to noumena is not "a material commitment to a supernatural world, but ... a commitment to its conceivability. It claims that that conceivability is required if such features as normativity, even in the moral sphere, are to be properly located" (Bird, "McDowell's Kant", 243).
14. See note 11 above.
15. He continues: "Since nature as the object of modern mathematical science is first made possible or constituted by the a priori rational structures that Kant has articulated, one cannot distance the latter from nature without making nature itself impossible" (Friedman, "Exorcising the Philosophical Tradition", 439).
16. We might identify this line of defence as the "application argument". Its general form is as follows. Kant closes the gap between mind and world because in the absence of the application of our *a priori* subjective forms, nature as an object of theoretical enquiry would not be possible for us. As Allison puts it, transcendental idealism with its transcendental distinction between appearances and things in themselves is required in order to "determine the conditions of empirical truth" (Allison, "We Can Only Act", 46). Bird, too, adopts this strategy of defence. He responds to McDowell's complaint about a gap between Kant's transcendental self and world, for example, by reminding us that Kant ends up with a transcendental account of subjectivity as part of the "standard procedure of abstraction", which he "deploys in identifying the a priori aspects of experience" (Bird, "McDowell's Kant", 230).
17. As Friedman puts it, "pure concepts or categories have objective meaning only when applied to the spatiotemporal world of sense. (This, for Kant, is the meaning of the

slogan 'thoughts without content are empty')" (Friedman, "Exorcising the Philosophical Tradition", 438).

18. To interpret "appearances" in a "colloquial" sense, Bird writes, is to treat them as "subjective mental states such as sensations". Those such as McDowell who interpret "appearances" in this way then go on to attribute to them "second class status" (see Bird, "McDowell's Kant", 233ff.). McDowell's mistake, Bird writes, is to ascribe to Kant an "empiricist construction programme" (*ibid.*, 240).
19. I am asserting this rather boldly and do not set out to defend this assertion here. The evidence in support of it, however, is ample. Here is a single-sentence example taken from one of Hegel's earliest essays, "Faith and Knowledge" of 1802–3: "According to Kant, all these concepts of cause and effect, succession, etc., are strictly limited to appearances; the things in which these forms are objective as well as any cognition of them are simply nothing at all in themselves" (*FK*: 101). The last part of this (difficult to translate) sentence reads: "die Dinge, in welchen diesen Formen objektiv sind, sowohl als eine Erkenntniss dieser Objekte ist schlechthin nichts an sich" (*GW* 4: 350).
20. See, for example, for Hegel's use of this language in characterizing Kant, his Jena Writings of 1802–3, in particular the section "Kantian Philosophy" in "Faith and Knowledge".
21. This is McDowell's language in *Mind and World*, but it is Hegel's language as well. In, for example, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, he refers to our faculties of thought and of willing as "inseparable" [*untrennbar*]: "in every activity, thinking as well as willing," Hegel writes, "we can find both moments" (*PR*: §4, my translation).
22. It would not be correct simply to say that Hegel rejects the very idea of the *a priori* (the idea of either *a priori* concepts or of *a priori* knowledge). More precisely, he rejects a particular conception of the *a priori*, a conception to which he believed Kant adhered. In the section "Kantian Philosophy" in "Faith and Knowledge", he writes that Kant "conceived of the a priori only under formal concepts of universality and necessity ... [H]e turned the true a priori back into a pure unity, i.e., one that is not originally synthetic" (*FK*: 73; *GW* 4: 330). What Hegel rejects, then, is that conception of the *a priori* that presupposes the thesis of absolute opposition.
23. In contrast to Kant, both Hegel and Fichte tend to use the term "things in themselves" to pick out not merely objects independent of our subjective forms of space and time, but objects independent of our subjective forms of thought as well.
24. In "Faith and Knowledge", Hegel claims to find at least the suggestion of original identity in (for example) Kant's conception of productive imagination. The "original unity" that is implicit in the idea of productive imagination, Hegel tells us, is not a unity that presupposes the antithesis of the manifold on the one side, and self-conscious Ego on the other. It is an "original identity" precisely because it is out of this "original synthesis" that "the Ego as thinking subject, and the manifold as body and world first detach themselves" (*FK*: 71; *GW* 4: 328).
25. This claim is so central to Hegel's idealism that it appears, in some form or other, in all of his writings. Relatively accessible versions of it, however, may be found in the introduction to his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* and in the preface to his *Philosophy of Right*.
26. See also Hegel's discussion of critique in *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences I: Logic*: "One of the main points of the in the Critical Philosophy is the following: before we embark upon the cognition of God, or of the essence of things, etc., we should first investigate our faculty of cognition [*Erkenntnisvermögen*] itself, to see whether it is capable of achieving this. We should first get to know the instrument, before undertaking the task that is supposed to be accomplished by means of it ... But the investigation of cognition cannot take place in any other way than cognitively ... To want to have cognition before we have any is as absurd as the wise resolve of Scholasticus to learn to swim before he ventured into the water" (*EL*: §10).

27. The theme of the "vanity" of the Kantian philosophy appears in many places in Hegel's writings; see, for example, his introduction to "Faith and Knowledge", Chapter 2 of his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, and the preface to his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. I owe thanks to William Bristow for clarifying for me the meaning of Hegel's vanity charge against Kant.
28. Compare this with Kant's characterization of reason as "present and the same in all the actions of men and in all situations; it is not itself in time and does not fall into a new state in which it was not before" (A556/B584, translation modified).
29. McDowell is most explicit in urging us to reject, not just the idea of the "exogenous Given" but also the idea of the "endogenous Given", in Part I of his Afterword to *Mind and World*. An important insight of both Sellars and Quine, he says, is that we should find suspect "the idea that something is Given from within the very structure of the understanding" (McDowell, *Mind and World*, 135). If we fail to reject the idea of the endogenous Given or persist in presupposing (what I have been referring to here as) the "already given" nature of form, then it will not be possible for us to think of the space of concepts, McDowell points out, as "unbounded on the outside". In this way, a commitment to the endogenous Given forces on us an unbridgeable gap between mind or form and mind-independent content (or "world"). If we in other words draw a boundary around form, we of course then create for ourselves the problem of having no way to account for the relation between the forms inside the boundary and objects outside. This is a problem that, on McDowell's analysis, Kant and the coherentist such as Davidson share. Here is perhaps the place to note that although "form" for McDowell refers to the contribution of "spontaneity" (i.e. concepts), I have been identifying "form" throughout this paper with subjective form more broadly understood, that is, with Kant's forms of spontaneity and forms of intuition. This is because I understand Hegel's critique of Kantian form to be aimed at both.
30. Friedman says that he does not see how McDowell can escape the charge of coherentism either ("Exorcising the Philosophical Tradition", 444).
31. I am indebted to members of the philosophy departments at the University of Sheffield and Keele University for inviting me to present an earlier draft of this chapter to them. I am also grateful to Graham Bird for encouraging my work on this chapter and for being the ideal *Gesprächspartner*. Finally, I thank both Rolf-Peter Horstmann and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for the support that made possible a ten-month leave in Berlin.