doi:10.1017/hgl.2018.12
Hegel Bulletin, 40/1, 29–50
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Perspective and Logical Pluralism in Hegel

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Abstract

In this paper, I consider the role of perspective in Hegel's metaphysics, and in particular the role that multiple perspectives play within the ultimate structure in Hegel's metaphysics, which Hegel calls 'the idea [*die Idee*]'. My (somewhat anachronistic) way into this topic will be to inquire about Hegel's stance on what Adrian Moore has called 'absolute representations'. I argue for the claim that perspective is maintained, even in the absolute idea, which generates the task of understanding the nature of that perspective and its compatibility with absoluteness. I attempt to accomplish this task by asking what a logical perspective could be, and how it might be related to visual perspective. Then I inquire into the relation that perspectives have to each other, i.e., to the system of perspectives. I construe those relations in reciprocal and dynamic terms, so that absoluteness takes the form of a structured round of perspectives rather than a relation to reality 'once and for all'.

In this paper I consider the role of perspective in Hegel's metaphysics, and in particular the role that multiple perspectives play within the ultimate structure in Hegel's metaphysics, which Hegel calls 'the idea [*die Idee*]'. My (somewhat anachronistic) way into this topic will be to inquire about Hegel's stance on what Adrian Moore has called 'absolute representations'. In Moore's sense of that term, an absolute representation is one that does not depend on any particular point of view, and can simply be added to any other representation directly, without first having to state the point of view from which the second representation obtains (Moore 2000: chap. 1). One can simply add the fact that the number five is odd to the fact that it is one more than four; one need not accomplish this through the mediation of saying *that from Jill's point of view* it seems odd and *from Jack's* it seems to be one more than four, *and Jill's and Jack's perspectives can be integrated*.

Of course, this is related to a number of other discussions concerning Hegel and externality, and the general logical possibility of a 'view from nowhere' or 'nowhen'. But I want to start with Moore's formulation both because Moore has a sophisticated account of the relation between perspective and absoluteness, and because I believe that the concept of a point of view has a deep resonance with

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2018.12 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Hegel's method of continually turning logical objects from side to side to make out their different features. For one fundamental problem in understanding the import of Hegel's metaphysics as a whole is to understand the relation between perspective and absoluteness in the method that goes by the name 'the absolute idea'. On this point hang the answers to questions of pluralism or monism, the validation of individuality or the subsumption of difference in the universal, and the preservation or elimination of an external touchstone of truth.[1]

I proceed as follows: In Section I, I explore the relation between Hegel and Moore's thought on this issue. An essential motivation of Moore's thinking is brought to light, namely the need to *both* do justice to the perspectival nature of much of the content of thought *and* maintain its referential relation to reality. I argue that such a dual tension animates Hegel's thought on this point as well, and that this sets criteria of adequacy for his treatment of logical perspective. In Section II, I introduce three metaphors that exploit features of visual perspective to render more perspicuous the essential features of logical perspective that are articulated in these criteria of adequacy. In Section III, I employ the resources developed in Section II to reconstruct Hegel's doctrine of the idea in a way that demonstrates how it meets the criteria of adequacy set out in Section I. In his review of Moore's book, Robert Brandom claimed that the burden on an extension of visual perspective to conceptual phenomena is to provide an articulated coordinate system that explains both how the information provided to and by the different perspectives systematically varies between perspectives and depends on the object that the perspectives have in common (Brandom 1998). This paper is an attempt to reconstruct the way that Hegel attempted to carry this burden.

I. Point of view in the absolute idea

Moore defines 'point of view' as 'a location in the broadest possible sense. Hence points of view include points in space, points in time, frames of reference, historical and cultural contexts, different roles in personal relationships, points of involvement of other kinds, and the sensory apparatuses of different species' (Moore 2000: 6). In turn, a representation is inherently perspectival if its content is so tied to the point of view from which it is made that no representation of the same content could be from another point of view, and a representation is absolute if it is from no point of view at all. In the example given above, the reference to Jill's perspective in relating the information that the number five is odd is otiose, because it is a representation that could be made from any point of view. In contrast, the information that the number five is her favourite, or is associated by her with the taste of pineapple, cannot be given without reference

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to her point of view and is thus inherently perspectival in Moore's sense. The question here is not about the presence or absence of perspective in the genesis or even function of the representation, but rather the necessity of connection between perspective and the content of the representation itself. An absolute representation lacks such a necessary connection to any particular perspective (or set of perspectives), which is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for its potential to be taken up from *any* perspective.

In the very paragraph in which Hegel explains the difference between finite forms of the idea and the absolute idea, we find terms that certainly seem to suggest absolute representations in Moore's sense of the term:

> The individuality of the subject with which the subject was burdened by its presupposition [of the need to realize the good] has vanished together with the presupposition. Thus the subject now exists as *free, universal self-identity* for which the objectivity of the concept is a *given* [*eine* Gegebene], just as immediately *present* [Vorhandene] to the subject as the subject immediately knows itself to be the concept determined in and for itself. (*WL*: 12.235, 29–33; all emphases in original)[2]

And yet this absolute representation apparently from no point of view is nonetheless a representation of a *given* object. Hegel's use of terms he normally reserves for discussing sensible affection is striking, here at the very point of introduction of an apparently absolute representation. The receptivity that is here indicated by terms such as 'given' and 'immediately present' is only slightly mitigated by Hegel's claims that such a subject is confident of the conceptual form of the objectivity that confronts it. That confidence might be interpreted as precisely a certainty that such an objectivity could be so represented from any subjective perspective.

With respect to the receptivity in this passage it is, of course, tempting to interpret it in a Kantian vein by reference to the massive shift of reference that immediately follows the absolute idea in the encyclopaedic presentation, namely its reference to intuited spatio-temporal nature. As essential as this reference to nature is, and is to understand, it is however a derivative form of point of view that plays no direct role in the constitution of the absolute idea and its task, as Hegel reiterates in the very last paragraph of the *Science of Logic* (*WL*: 12.253). But in another respect the temptation is not far off the correct path: though not the specifically *intuitive* form of perspective that is found in the idea's relation to spatio-temporal nature, that of the absolute idea is nonetheless a *receptive* form of perspective in which some object is simply given to and present for the subject. But this is a form of perspective that both Hegel and Moore hold to be compatible with the absoluteness of representations formed from it. With respect

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to Hegel, so much is already clear from the way that perspective is used as the very introduction to the absolute idea. Again, the mere presence or even necessity of *some* point of view is not telling against the absoluteness of the representation given from that point of view; only the necessary tie to some *specific* point of view makes such a representation intrinsically perspectival in Moore's sense.

Indeed for Moore, the very reason to care about absolute representations is our commitment to the substantiality of reality and the possibility of objective knowledge of it. And this commitment requires precisely a direct confrontation of representations by reality: 'If reality is something substantial to which [a purported absolute representation] answers, once and for all, then it ought to be possible to give a single account, equipped to mesh with a similar account for any other possible truth, that reveals how…[I]f such an account is not even possible—if a succession of different accounts is required for pitting [that representation] against different possible truths—then that nullifies the thought that [such a representation] is made true by what is there *anyway*. There are then "just different techniques of indirect integration"' (Moore 2000: 73). That is, there must be a single account of reality in which the particular perspectives of specific representations can be safely disregarded without losing any content, on pain of a sort of infinite regress of piecing together of different perspectival representations.

But for Hegel, the givenness of the object must somehow be made compatible with his usual pleas for including mediation in absoluteness, which is quite a different emphasis than a confrontation 'once and for all'. It is, one might say, a claim that reality must answer 'for all' but not 'once'; and that *reality* (i.e., objectivity) must answer to the concept rather than a representation answering to reality. One sees this in the above passage in the way that it is not so much an object as 'the objectivity of the concept' that is given to the subject perspective. And in his characterization of the logical form of the transition from finite to infinite spirit as finite and absolute forms of the idea, the transition is not from receptivity to complete conceptual closure, but rather from immediate to mediate receptivity (*WL*: 12.198, 12–24).

This is an essential difference, and is present in the paradoxical language of the passage above from *WL*: 12.235, 29–33:

> Thus the subject now exists as *free, universal self-identity* for which the objectivity of the concept is a *given* [*eine* Gegebene], just as immediately *present* [Vorhandene] to the subject as the subject immediately knows itself to be the concept determined in and for itself'.

In this passage, Hegel seems to claim *both* that the subject is completely independent of the object which confronts it externally *and* that the confrontation

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is conditioned by the subject's knowledge that the object is a form of itself (i.e., that objectivity is a way in which the concept *appears* to itself). To speak somewhat schematically, the confrontation of the subject by given objects somehow needs to be both real (external) and yet essentially mediated. And for Hegel, mediation always involves the possibility of variation, i.e., of alternate possible forms of mediation. This is an essential claim of the Doctrine of Being, which can be reduced to three claims and the arguments for them: (1) All content requires mediation (Quality); (2) All mediation requires variation (Quantity); and (3) All variation requires a metric (Measure). If one lacked alternative forms of mediation—here alternative perspectives—the one form of perspective would be indistinguishable from the content itself. (This is a part of Hegel's argument against the knowledge-as-medium conception in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*).

Yet for Hegel no less than for Moore such mediation cannot collapse into an infinite regress of perspectives, each serving as the point of view from which others are integrated, which regress motivates Moore's insistence on the need for a confrontation 'once and for all'. If one is at the same time to avoid a 'bad infinity' *and* offer an alternative to a single theatre of confrontation, one would seem to require a conception of multiple ways in which contents were given to points of view and thus confronted representations. *That is, one must have a system of direct confrontations in each of which something immediately present is given to thought, but in such a way as to be intrinsically coordinated with the other ways something immediately present is given to thought.*

As I see it, there are two tasks necessary for making sense of such a system of confrontations. The first is to get clear on the dimensions or axes of those confrontations, and the second is to give them an interpretation consistent with the notion that it is the confrontation of subjectivity by a given, present, i.e., *in some sense* external object. But these are tasks for the rest of the paper. In the remainder of this section I simply want to support the claim that such mediation between different points of view on objects is maintained even in the absolute idea. This is crucial because Hegel is adamant that the absolute idea is not merely a metaphysical structure but a method. There is no separate method for grasping the absolute idea; rather, the absolute idea is the method of grasping the conceptual truth that it itself contains. Thus, to say that perspective is maintained in the absolute idea is to say that perspective has both subjective and objective significance, a feature of Hegel's view to which we will return in the conclusion. At this point I simply want to use the discussion of the absolute idea to make the point that there is no place in Hegel's system where perspective finally disappears or is factored out in a way that renders it unnecessary.

The first thing to note is that Hegel emphasizes not only the givenness but the *seeming* of logical content, using the term *Schein* that he chooses in part

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because it emphasizes the visual metaphor of point of view (*WL*: 12.237, 15–17 and 12.250, 19–20). Even in the absolute idea one is seeing the subjective in its objective guise (*WL*: 12.241, 11–23). Here there appears to be more than simple externality, rather there appears to be a particular route of access to that externality through a particular way in which it seems to be, which rather suggests intrinsically perspectival representations in Moore's sense of that term. Of course, such a semblance or guise is not the end of the matter—the absolute method sees both the semblance and through it to the essence. But that method is a stereoscopic vision that loses its depth of field if the semblance and thus the point of view is simply eliminated.

Second, Hegel holds that the depth of field is lost if the point of view is given a spatio-temporal interpretation, as this simply allows semblance and essence of the given objects to be represented outside of each other rather than in their essential relatedness, which relatedness constitutes the other perspective on them (*WL*: 12.246, 8–13). A consideration of the object that does not *also* take up this perspective is characterized as merely analytic, lacking consideration of 'the necessity of its concrete identity and of its concept' (*WL*: 12.248, 36–37). This is how to understand Hegel's notion of a turning or inflection point (*Wendepunkt*), a term he uses repeatedly through the section on the absolute idea. We must turn the object—logical or otherwise—from side to side. These inspection movements help us to bring the different aspects of the object into view (*WL*: 12.249–50), and this is the perhaps idiosyncratic sense in which the turning is supposed to count as a deduction or proof of the content (*WL*: 12.249, 3–7).

And this leads to a third point, which is that an interpretation of the method of the absolute idea that denied it multiple perspectives would have the perverse implication that Hegel himself never uses this method, since of course Hegel's discussions of literally every subsequent topic in his systematic thought involve multiple perspectives, none obviously reducible to the others. In the following section, I elaborate the way that the notion of a logical perspective can capture these three points, in part by using three different metaphors of visual perspective. Then, in the final section, I attempt to show how logical perspective understood in this way is operative in the section on the Idea in Hegel's *Science of Logic*.

II. What is a logical perspective?

A logical perspective is a way of taking an object that makes certain features salient (and thus others not salient). Put another way: a way of taking the object that makes the truth or falsity of certain predications of the object qua subject of judgement apposite. Hegel introduces this notion of a logical perspective via the way in which he distinguishes between different kinds of judgements (and, later, syllogisms). In each different kind of judgement, different categories of predicates

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are picked out as salient. If I want to make a qualitative judgement, then I say 'This plant is red'; whereas if I want to make a judgement of reflection, then I say that 'This plant is healthful'. Perhaps even more perspicuously, a hypothetical judgement takes the perspective on an object that makes its consequences salient, whereas the perspective of a disjunctive judgement makes the alternatives to the predicate salient (e.g., 'The poetic work is either epic or lyric or dramatic').

As in so many areas of philosophy, this need for some indicator of salience is perhaps best displayed in times of breakdown of understanding. Here are two brief examples. First, take the difference between qualitative and reflective judgements. If, in the context of a homeopathic consultation with you, I ask you to tell me about this plant and you respond that it is red, I am liable to think that you did not understand the question—that you did not understand the perspective I was asking you to take up on the object (and which I thought we shared in virtue of the purpose of my visit to you). In this respect, a logical perspective is analogous to the relevance relation that is required to connect explanans and explanandum in an explanation. Nothing ever explains something else simpliciter, but only with respect to some particular kind or form of explanation (see Yeomans 2011: sec. 4.3). Similarly, nothing is ever true or false of a subject simpliciter (at least not in any logically significance sense), but only in virtue of a perspective taken on the object. The second breakdown arises from not seeing precisely this point, and is thematized by Hegel under the title 'the infinite judgement', e.g., 'Spirit is not an elephant'. An infinite judgement is characterized not merely by the falsity of what is predicated—spirit is, indeed, not an elephant—but by the logical insignificance of that falsity. At least the falsity of 'This rose is not red' has some logical significance because red contrasts with some other colour the rose could be. But the falsity of spirit being an elephant does not contrast with some other animal that spirit could be.

Sebastian Rödl makes use of the notion of a logical perspective in his *Self-Consciousness* (2007). He explains the notion using a vocabulary derived from Frege and Gareth Evans:

> The sense of an act of reference, how one refers, may then be seen as consisting in how the object, thus referred to, is apprehended to fall under concepts. Call this the logical perspective on the object afforded by the reference. We must develop this metaphor: what does it mean that a reference affords a perspective on an object from which it is apprehended as falling under certain concepts? (Rödl 2007: 5).

Here the basic structure of a three-term relation is right: there is an object (or the subject of a judgement), concepts under which it falls (the predicate) and the way in which the former falls under the latter (the how, analogous to the relevance

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relation for explanation). Of course, Hegel rejects the subsumption model of connection between concept and object, and has a different terminology for the kinds of things that can play the latter two roles. Furthermore, Rödl's concern is to develop an identitarian theory of self-consciousness, so his particular way of developing this metaphor is of no use in attempting to interpret Hegel (who holds a trinitarian theory).[3] Instead, I propose to develop the metaphor by exploring three different visual versions of it. Then, in the following section, we will come back to the literal meaning of logical perspective in Hegel's own texts and connect it with these visual metaphors.

The first metaphor is that of depth of field in photography. For any lens, there is perfect focus only at a single distance, then there is a range of distances in which the image is approximately focused, and then finally there is a range of distances which is unfocused (or unsharp). So only at one particular distance does a point object produce a point image; at all other distances a point object produces an image in the shape of the lens (usually, a circle). But so long as that circle is sufficiently small, the eye is capable of resolving it into a point (or confusing it for a point), and thus the range of approximate focus is termed the 'circle of confusion'. Outside this range, points are noticeably circles, not points, and so the image is unfocused or unsharp. To make this a metaphor for logical perspective we can say that each logical perspective is a choice of logical distance that makes one group of predicates perfectly salient, another group approximately (or relatively) salient and a third group not at all salient. Note that the third group is not made false; the true and the false are distinct within each group, much as different colours or shapes could be distinguished within each range of distances. Spirit really is not an elephant, and the blurry background of a picture is really still there. This metaphor gives us a simple, non-anthropomorphic way of understanding the first point made at the end of Section I, namely the importance even within logical relations of a particular route of access to an object through a particular way in which it seems to be. Here that 'particular route' is represented in the simplest way as the kind of distance appropriate to a lens. Not every part of an image can be clear simultaneously, and not every aspect of a logical object can be salient simultaneously.

The second metaphor is that of perspective as the anticipation of movement, and here I rely on the work of Ernst Gombrich (1961). The point here is simply that perspective in painting works (in part) by suggesting what we would see if we shifted our perspective on the object represented in the painting. Since we normally do shift constantly in our visual relations to objects, perspectival paintings must suggest what we would have seen were we able to do so and allow us to project that somewhere in the painting. Perspectival paintings then give us three different aspects of the image: the figure itself, a screen on which we project features of the object that we anticipate from the nature of the

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screen and figure, and lastly those aspects which cannot be projected but must simply be inferred. In this metaphor, a logical perspective picks out one group of potential predicates for direct presentation in judgement, suggests a second group to be projected onto the first, but requires inference to the third set of predicates. This would be a way of thinking about the logical perspectives involved in a syllogism: the major premise presents one group of predicates, the minor another, and then a conclusion reached by inference leads to a third group. In this way of understanding the metaphor, syllogisms are the way we move around logical objects, and logical perspectives are the way in which each step (judgement) in that moving around is both limited (or focused) in itself and necessarily related to the other steps. This metaphor gives us a slightly more complicated but still non-anthropomorphic way to understand the second point developed in Section I above, namely the full objectivity of even logical objects is only revealed to multiple perspectives which cannot be taken up all at once, as it were, but must be shifted between.

The third metaphor is the difference between ancient and modern perspective as understood by Erwin Panofsky (1996). Panofsky argues that perspective is not a distinctively modern discovery, as is usually supposed. Instead, there is a form of perspective presented to modern art and a different form of perspective present in ancient art. The differences between the two that may be valuable to us can be briefly summarized. Ancient perspective adopts the construction that the object is being seen from a curved point of view (like a retina), whereas modern perspective constructs the object from a single point (and is thus linear). Partially as a result, ancient perspective adopts the axiom that magnitudes of objects vary according to the width of the angle from centre, whereas modern perspective adopts the axiom that magnitudes vary with distance. In addition, whereas modern perspective constructs paintings with a single vanishing point, ancient perspective used multiple vanishing points. As a result, individual objects have their own distinctive space in ancient perspective, but the space of the ancient painting is not unified and the distortions introduced are not uniform (as they are in modern perspectival painting). Though Panofsky's understanding is very productive for our purposes, we do not yet have enough of Hegel's own view to apply it. First, we need a grip on the plurality of perspectives in Hegel to see how one could be like ancient visual perspective, and another like modern visual perspective. But in many respects, this is the most productive of the metaphors, since it gives us a sense of how complex a logical perspective might be. Ancient and modern perspective each have a rich set of rules and techniques that are irreducible to each other. And yet we can come to understand how they are perspectives on the same physical objects, even though we ourselves have no non-perspectival access to those objects. This gets us close to the third point made at the close of Section I,

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since it gets at the complexity of the method that Hegel is setting out at the end of the *Logic* and then subsequently uses in all of his other philosophical investigations.

III. Mediation and externality

As I noted above, the way that Hegel uses perspective in the absolute idea requires us to think a system of direct confrontations in each of which something immediately present is given to thought, but in such a way as to be intrinsically coordinated with the other ways something immediately present is given to thought. (This I take to be Hegel's version of Brandom's criteria of adequacy: to provide an articulated coordinate system that explains both how the information provided to and by the different perspectives systematically varies between perspectives and depends on the object that the perspectives have in common (Brandom 1998)). As I also noted, there are two tasks required for making sense of such a system of confrontations. The first is to get clear on the dimensions or axes of those confrontations, i.e., to describe the points of view to which objects are given. The second is to give them an interpretation consistent with the notion that it is the confrontation of subjectivity by a given, present, i.e., *external* object. Together, these two tasks require us to set out the coordinate system that Brandom rightly identifies as necessary. I want to start with the second, since Hegel has a peculiar way of making it open onto the first.

In the same way that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* canvases a wide variety of forms of consciousness, the *Science of Logic* canvases a wide variety of ways in which one representation could be external to another.[4] In particular, forms of externality that might be united or at least mapped onto each other in the views of other philosophers are clearly distinguished and distributed in separate discussions. For example, just as Kant's moral theory is disentangled in this way in the *Phenomenology* into separate discussions of Virtue, Reason as Lawgiving, Reason as Law-testing and the Moral Worldview, his metaphysics is so disentangled in the *Science of Logic*.

As a result, one sees very widely separated discussions of the thing-in-itself vs. thing-for-another (*WL*: 21.150 and 11.331–32), the thing-in-itself vs. its existence (*WL*: 11.324–29), essence vs. appearance (*WL*: 11.247), judgement vs. object (remarks scattered throughout the Subjective Logic), mechanism vs. teleology (*WL*: 21.157–59); and, of course ideas vs. concepts (*WL*: 21.173). And none of these map onto or are even interestingly involved with the distinction between concept and intuition, which is rather a distinction that applies to the whole of logical categories. The categories of the Doctrine of Being, for example, are closely tied to the nature of space and time—but this means that the difference between

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being in itself and being for another is also found within the sphere of spatio-temporal relations, rather than indicating its limit in relation to another sphere.

Hegel's approach here is to say, on the one hand, that the problem of externality is *even worse than it appears* on the Kantian account, in the sense that it is even less clear, univocal, or stable. But on the other hand, as a result, the single form of externality between concepts and intuitions no longer exercises the same hold on the philosophical imagination and thus no longer poses the same Humean-sceptical threat to the applicability of our concepts. Hegel's is less a divide-and-conquer strategy than multiply-and-muddle-through. One can just as well say that there is externality everywhere as that there is no externality in the Humean or Kantian senses. But this strategy is obscured because Hegel also seems to agree that the best single description for these different forms of externality collectively is as a confrontation of subjectivity by objectivity, which would appear to reinstate the same basic dualism he seems so intent on displacing. We have to drill down a bit further into the nature of the confrontation to see why this is not the case.

When Hegel moves to discuss the forms of mediation in the absolute idea, he claims that the object that faces the subject is itself '*a conceptual determination*' (*WL*: 12.199, 6), even though it is given to the subject in the form of an object.[5] But whereas the conceptual perspective is *für sich* from the subject position it is only *an sich* in the object position (*WL*: 12.199, 9–14; also 12.192). That is, from the subject perspective its own conceptuality is its presenting and unifying feature, whereas the conceptuality of the object appears to it as something still implicit, needing to be brought out and developed rather than structuring itself accordingly. This is the basic *logical* form of the difference between subject and object that needs somehow to be given further shape through the metaphor of visual perspective.

More on how this works presently, but for the moment I just want to note that Hegel's point thus requires a plurality of perspectives for taking up the subject position and presenting the object position. This is how the problem of the form of givenness opens up onto that of the dimensions of confrontation of subjectivity by objectivity. The displacement of the concept-intuition form of externality is compatible with the summary description of externality as between subjectivity and objectivity only because there are plural forms of subjectivity and objectivity.

Now, how this is supposed to work and why the metaphor of visual perspective helps us articulate these workings, particularly the first metaphor of depth of field. As we just noted, Hegel holds that even when considered absolutely, the object that faces the subject is itself a conceptual determination in the guise or semblance (*Schein*) of an object (WL: 12.199, 6 & 12.235, 33–38). The way to work out this paradoxical notion is through the plurality of

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conceptuality and thus to say that the subject has conceptuality as its object, but a different form of conceptuality from that presented by the subject position. Or, in equivalent language, there is a conceptuality that is presented *by the object to the subject*, and there is a different conceptuality that is the perspective *taken up by the subject on objects*. The subject positions are then played by the three forms of conceptuality, i.e., universality, particularity and individuality. They also play the object role, *but under the guise of the three forms of modality* (*possibility, actuality and necessity*). The givenness of the object consists in the fact that the conceptual perspective within it appears to the explicitly conceptual perspective of the subject as a form of modality; the forms of modality are thus modes of appearance of the forms of subjectivity to itself, or the way in which it brings itself into view. It is this dual appearance of conceptuality (i.e., as conceptuality and as modality) that needs to be construed in terms of the metaphor of visual perspective.

First, take up the metaphor of depth of field, using particularity as our example of the subjective perspective. In this structure, the first form of conceptuality is both the subjective point of view (the lens) and the sharp images at the focal point. At that distance, a point is a point and particularity is particularity. The second form of conceptuality are relatively sharp images within the circle of confusion. They are actually one form of conceptuality confused with another (individuality rendered as particularity), but they are sharp enough to remain visible as conceptual. But outside the circle of confusion, the blurry background is conceptuality rendered as modality (universality appearing as possibility). Thus in this model, conceptuality is represented by sharpness of focus and objectivity by its absence. Just to flesh out the example a bit, here is how the structure looks as the three forms of the idea: from its predominantly particular perspective, life can see the particular features of the object in sharp relief, confuses individuals for particulars but thereby renders them in sharp (conceptual form), but cannot form any clear picture of universality which is rendered as an indistinct background of possibility. From its predominantly universal perspective, the theoretical idea can see the universal features of the object in sharp relief, confuses particulars for universals but thereby renders them in sharp (conceptual form), but cannot form any clear picture of individuality which is rendered as an indistinct background of necessity. From its predominantly individual perspective, the practical idea can see the individual features of the object in sharp relief, confuses universals for individuals but thereby renders them in sharp (conceptual form), but cannot form any clear picture of particularity which is rendered as an indistinct background of actuality.

Second, take up the metaphor of perspective as the anticipation of movement. Hegel claims that each of the conceptual perspectives is tasked with doing something that is in at least some sense beyond its powers, i.e., to present

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the complete concept (e.g., *EL*: §160). In fact, it is this excessive demand that generates the need for multiple forms of the syllogism: 'The figures of the syllogism exhibit each determinateness of the concept *singly* as the middle term, a middle term which is at the same time the concept as an *ought*, the requirement that the mediating factor be the concept's totality' (*WL*: 12.125). Each conceptual perspective is just like the point of view in a (modern) perspectival painting, which needs to see the whole object but is presented with only one face of it and must project and infer the others. But by so projecting and inferring the subject manages to do what we do in ordinary visual perception (and are denied in painting), namely to shift perspectives on the object. Thus, what is beyond the powers of the conceptual moments severally is within their powers jointly, if only that joining is understood properly.[6]

The idea is a combination of syllogism and object. That is, it is the combined coordinate system of subjectivity (conceptuality) and objectivity (modality). In terms of our first two visual metaphors, it combines the partial focus of depth of field with the anticipation (and then execution) of movement. Hegel writes that the absolute idea is the approach to the object 'in which knowing and doing have compensated for each other' [('*in welcher Erkennen und Thun sich ausgeglichen hat* [sic]'] (*WL*: 12.178, 13–14). That is, the absolute idea represents an equilibrium between the two perspectives of cognition, the idea of the true, which is known and the idea of the good, which is realized through action. In this equilibrium each of the two processes compensates for the limitations of the other by revealing a conceptuality in the object which the other cannot bring into focus without losing one of the further kinds of conceptuality it already sees clearly. This compensation is not a static combination but really a shift in perspective. This is precisely how Hegel describes the transitions between the theoretical and practical idea, and between the practical idea and the absolute idea (*WL*: 12.230–31 and 12.233, respectively).

The theoretical perspective shifts to the practical because its impulse to apprehend conceptual individuality is blocked by its own method of demonstration. In proving theorems, Hegel thinks, the theoretical perspective paradoxically magnifies the objective semblance of the object by validating its necessity. As a result, it can see the universality and particularity of the object but cannot make out its individuality and therefore cannot recognize the object as its own, i.e., as fully conceptual. The object remains in some sense inappropriate to the subject, i.e., unknowable. And yet there is also an 'ought': because of the demonstration of the actuality chapter of the *Logic*, anyone taking up the theoretical perspective knows that necessity is supposed to have a conceptual form, namely individuality. By recognizing that norm one shifts one's subjective perspective from the universal (which is dominant in the theoretical idea) to the individual (which is dominant in the practical idea). So the theoretical

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perspective immediately perceived the universality in the object and came to see its particularity, but could not fully recognize itself without being able to perceive the individuality of the object. That individuality is a constituent element of the conceptuality of its own subjective perspective, which was only *predominantly* and not exclusively a universal perspective.[7] So the failure to see individuality means that the theoretical perspective cannot get itself entirely into view.

In the other direction, the practical perspective shifts to the theoretical (and thus combines to form the absolute idea) because the practical perspective lacks the ability to recognize its own success, i.e., to recognize any change it might have made in the object on the basis of its own normative demands. Logically speaking, the practical perspective can see the universal and the individual in the object from its own predominantly individual perspective, but it cannot make out the particularity of the object. Instead that particularity appears as an 'externally manifold actuality' (*WL*: 12.233), i.e., as a proliferation of states of affairs with no obvious connection to conceptual ordering. The practical perspective cannot apprehend the particulars in the way that the theoretical perspective can. As a result, the implicit particularity of the subjective practical perspective itself cannot be made explicit. The theoretical perspective can at least understand its predominantly universal perspective as being filled up by those particularities, but the practical perspective loses any sense of givenness and thus its ability to register its own change in actuality and thus any success it might have. Registering that change requires perceiving it, i.e., it requires taking up the theoretical perspective.[8] Otherwise the practical perspective cannot get itself into view.

Let me just briefly add a wrinkle to the notion of perspective as anticipated movement. Modern perspectival painting is constructed on the abstraction of a single point of view, but of course, human vision is binocular. It is our double point of view which allows our vision to be stereoscopic, i.e., to see three-dimensional objects. There is thus one kind of movement which we do not have to anticipate or even execute because we are already in two places at once, as it were. The human perceptual system has the ability to integrate the representations from each of these points of view. To return to Moore's terminology, these representations are intrinsically perspectival and thus cannot simply be added together. But because there are only two perspectives, such indirect integration is a tractable problem. There is a confrontation 'twice and for all' with reality, as it were.

But when it comes to a *conceptually* binocular (not to mention trinocular) perspective, we seem to lack any such automatic system of integration. We also seem to lack a coordinate system analogous to the spatial coordinate system that measures the distance between two eyes. Hegel proposes his three moments of the concept as just such a coordinate system. In sum, we can say that the key to stereoscopic conceptual vision is the shift from the theoretical to the practical

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point of view (or vice versa), and yet the distance between those points of view has to be measured by the difference between conceptual perspectives. Hegel is clear that both the theoretical and practical perspectives are essentially purposive. What distinguishes them is not goal-directedness, but rather the predominance of universality in the theoretical perspective and individuality in the practical. Only because the shift from theoretical to practical is such a shift of perspective along one axis of a conceptual coordinate system can it produce the desired depth in the object. And only because it is a shift between such combinations is it capable of revealing the *Schein* of objectivity as the *Erscheinung* of conceptuality. Yet without the *Schein* of objectivity playing an important role, all sense of an object is lost. (This is why in the passages on the transitions between theoretical and practical perspectives the successfully recognized conceptuality of the object is registered on the subject side of the ledger). But how does it do that—how is this stereoscopic vision supposed to work? Here are two examples.

Perhaps the closest example for the shift from theoretical to practical perspectives is the history of modern doubts about the possibility of causal knowledge. Here a universal perspective of scientific inquiry faces objects that look to it either as scattered actualities (a sensible manifold) or as necessary connections (causal laws). It can come to see the actualities as particulars, either in the simple form of sensible impressions or in the conceptually richer form of spatio-temporal intuitions. In the latter case it is easy to see this as bringing the actualities into conceptual focus by eliding the difference between particulars and universals, i.e., by confusing them (in the visual metaphor) for universals. But the theoretical perspective can see the connection between the universal and the particular only as being offered by its own external reflection as a subject (whether Humean habit or Kantian judgement). It cannot see the individuality of the objects themselves because the completeness that individuality entails seems to go beyond all sensory experience (*KrV*: A567–68/B595–96), and so Kantian ideas remain subjective and regulative conceptions of totality, incapable of phenomenal presentation as objects (*KrV*: A320/B367 and *Prolegomena* 4:328). The ideal, i.e., the idea as an individual, is unknowable and unpresentable in an even stronger sense, even though the transcendental ideal is the ground of all connection between universal categories and spatio-temporal particulars (*KrV*: A576/B604). This is an essential aspect of subjectivity which cannot be brought into view, i.e., which cannot be located in an object. As a result, the subjective necessity of the idea cannot be connected with the objective necessity of the phenomenal world despite Kant's many attempts (such as the doctrine of the transcendental affinity). Neither necessity really comes into focus from the theoretical point of view.

And yet even as he is discussing this theoretical limitation of such ideas and ideals, Kant stresses the legitimacy of their practical source and application

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(e.g., *KrV*: A313–17/B370–74 and A569/B597). More mundanely, the determination of specific causal laws is not a matter of receptive reason but of experimentation (*KrV*: Bxii-xiv). The practical employment of the ideas as regulative (in Hegel's sense of 'practical') functions on Kant's account as a kind of complement to the understanding's exclusively theoretical perspective (again, in Hegel's sense of 'theoretical'). That practical regulative use unifies, orders and provides a sense of depth by supplementing the understanding's focal point. It does so, Kant himself explicitly says, by providing it a focal point in the distance which is both necessary to comprehend the givenness of the object and yet must be sharply distinguished from it (*KrV*: A643–44/B671–72). In the visual metaphor I have been using, this second focal point provides the depth of field in which the object becomes conceptually visible. The shift to the practical perspective brings necessity into view in the individual character of the enlightened person who dares to know and to direct her own action by her principles.

Now an example for the opposite direction, namely shift from the practical misrecognition to the theoretical perspective. There is a proximate example that comes from Hegel's own hand in the section on the Absolute Idea in the *Science of Logic*,[9] but a more helpful focus is found in Hegel's presentation in the *Encyclopaedia* (*EL*: §243). There Hegel complains that the practical perspective on its own can achieve no lasting satisfaction. Whenever it believes it has realized the good objectively, a new opposition between its perspective and the objective world rears its ugly head in the form of something else wrong with the world that it accordingly feels called to change.[10] The unpredictability of these new problems with the world is a symptom of their being out of conceptual focus, as it were. Objects in the blurry background impinge on the universal laws and individual character of the subject as a continual series of surprises. Off goes the youth into a bad infinity says Hegel, whereas the adult comes to see that the very contradictions that seem like crippling contradictions to the youth are also the very way of going on together. The solution to this involves taking up the theoretical perspective in the sense of its acceptance of the goodness and validity of the object—i.e., its bona fide conceptual status as particular—in virtue of which that object is proper for filling its universality. Once the actual features of the context of action are brought into focus, they become, if not always predictable, at least manageable. And they come to seem less like proof of the fallenness of a wretched world and more like the human and institutional foibles that make the world go around.

To flesh out this second example a little more we can see how this plays out in the final section of the Morality chapter of the *Philosophy of Right*, Good and Conscience. The practical perspective (here primarily the perspective of the bureaucracy and educated civil society) feels the force of its own normative demands to real justice in the individual state and furthermore sees the

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individuality in the objective world as well in virtue of the promise of historical progress. Furthermore, it identifies the universal values both within its own norms and within the objective public sphere as right, on the one hand, and welfare, on the other. But it has no grasp of right and welfare as particulars. Or rather, it has no grasp on the particulars by which right and welfare as universals are mediated with one another. That is, it cannot bring into focus the historically given mosaic of specific rights and modes of flourishing and thus cannot order such a mosaic and extend the limited foci of its tiles by means of the regulative function of its own norms.[11] It flounders between mere compilation of customs and the brute insistence on arbitrary administrative regularities; between the historical school of law and the *Code Napoleon*.

The solution is to also take up the theoretical attitude to the objective side of social life and actively balance these competing universals (right and welfare) by means of mediating particulars. We find those mediating particulars by looking at the ways that right and welfare are embodied at the intersections of different institutions and different ways of life, i.e., by looking at ethical life. When one supplements the practical (moral) perspective with the theoretical (sociological) perspective, one comes to see the object in its depth both as object and as conceptual. This is the stereoscopic perspective of the Good in its final development as a view onto Ethical Life.

So far, we have discussed the two forms of the idea that see things from the predominantly universal and individual perspectives, respectively. I have tried both to indicate how each is an articulate structure in itself, and how each is necessarily related to the other. In so doing, I hope to have responded to Brandom's demand that the extension of the visual metaphor provides an articulated coordinate system that explains both how the information provided to and by the different perspectives systematically varies between perspectives and depends on the object that the perspectives have in common. But, of course, for Hegel conceptual vision is trinocular and thus no reconstruction of this coordinate system is complete without considering that form of the idea which sees from the predominantly particular point of view, namely life. Here we can add to the visual metaphor by making use of Panofsky's distinction between ancient and modern perspective.

From its predominantly particular perspective, life can see the particular features of the object in sharp relief, confuses individuals for particulars but thereby renders them in sharp (conceptual form), but cannot form any clear picture of universality which is rendered as an indistinct background of possibility. At first, the perspective of life sees only scattered individuals, consistent within themselves and basically possessed of conceptual integrity, but each with its own life process proceeding more-or-less independently of the others. In this initial view it looks for what it sees with, namely particularity, and

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sees this in a field of diverse living beings. To use our focal point metaphor again, it confuses individuals for particulars. It can see that, in principle, they all have the same kind of integrity but it cannot integrate the actual appearances of such integrity into a unified picture. Even when it constructs an image of the genus, this remains a mere collection of diverse particular creatures.

In this respect, it is analogous to ancient perspectival painting. On Panofsky's analysis, 'The art of classical antiquity was a purely corporeal art; it recognized as artistic reality only what was tangible as well as visible. Its objects were material and three-dimensional, with clearly defined functions and proportions, and thus were always to a certain extent anthropomorphized' (1996: 41). Ancient perspective is the particular (from a curved retina out towards multiple vanishing points) that can see the individual (three-dimensional, functional objects) but loses the universal (in part, by producing inconstant distortion).

Ancient perspective sees from one particular point of view (represented by the curved retina) onto these particular creatures. Then, through the need and desire for *one* of those particular creatures, it accomplishes a very specific shift in perspective, namely into the represented field itself and the perspective of one of the objects within it. As Hegel writes of this shift:

> The individual, in thus rejoining the objectivity at first presupposed as indifferent to it, has equally constituted itself as actual singularity and has superseded *its particularity*, raising it to *universality*. Its particularity consisted in the disruption whereby life posited the individual life and the objectivity external to it as its species. Through the external life-process, it has consequently posited itself as real universal life, as *genus*. (*WL*: 12, 189)

The problem is that it cannot quite bring this universal into focus. It can be rendered as a particular living individual with which the subject can relate through need only in an image of the reproductive process. But that process appears to the subject involved in it as the sheer possibility of different sexual partners and offspring. The only way to bring that genus into focus, i.e., to see it as universal, is by shifting point of view entirely, a change of perspective in kind to the idea of cognition. This, again, is analogous to the shift from ancient to modern perspective. Modern perspective is the universal (it views from a point and creates a unified field with constant and predictable distortion) that can make out the particular (specific geometric relations defined by algebraic cross-products) but loses the individual (the corporeal integrity of objects is lost in the depiction of spatial unity). In order to capture the individual, the shift must be made to the idea of the good. In this way, the coordinate system closes on itself and is complete.

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IV. Conclusion

Finally, let me return to Moore's questions with which we started. I take the above argument to show that point of view is maintained for specifically logical representations in Hegel's method of the absolute idea. But the fundamental question concerns the status of this perspective, and in particular whether the representations so formed are inherently perspectival. To recall Moore's definition, a representation is inherently perspectival if its content is so tied to the point of view from which it is made that no representation of the same content could be from another point of view. Here everything turns on whether one takes representations formed from a predominantly particular point of view, for example, to present a different content than representations from a predominantly universal point of view. This is certainly a natural way to think. But Moore himself emphasizes that there is nothing in the notion of absoluteness that prevents the same rather fundamental differences in outlook:

> I do not think that we need balk at the idea that there should be absolute representations of two distinct kinds, produced in accord with two separate outlooks … It is no part of the belief in the possibility of absolute representations that anyone representing the world absolutely is constrained to see the world in one particular way, structured as it were into one particular combination of foreground and background. (Moore 2000: 95–96)

Thus, another way to look at the perspectives within Hegel's absolute idea is to say that every possible representation has a surprising fullness of content that outstrips our ability to keep it all in focus at any given time. On this way of approaching the issue, the same content is there in representations formed from all three perspectives, and the question is what appears at the focal point, what appears in the circle of confusion, and what appears outside of the depth of field as the blurry suggestion of a concrete object. And yet the blurriness introduces an additional element which *requires* the addition of the representations formed from the other perspectives; or, using the second metaphor, either projection in anticipation of movement or actual movement is required to do what the gaze is trying to do, namely see the object. Yet both of these metaphors of necessity seem foreign to Moore's meaning. There are no 'once and for all', full-stop confrontations with objectivity, but only partial confrontations that must be indirectly integrated with each other, i.e., integrated with each other by means of reference to the perspectives from which they are formed. But if our notion of logical perspective and three metaphors drawn from visual perspective can do the work I have tried to make them do, then we actually have a better handle on such indirect integrations than Moore fears. In large part this rests

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on the argument that there are only three basic forms of such indirect integration. What Hegel proposes is a *tractable* system of indirect integration, a system, if you like, that is 'thrice and for all'.

This leads to one final question, which is whether Hegel holds that there is perspective in the object (i.e., in reality), a view that Moore rejects as incoherent. Here the very splintering of the forms of confrontation between subject and object makes it difficult to know exactly what to say. There is a sense in which Hegel agrees with Moore, of course, since the objective vocabulary turns out to be insufficient to describe the relations between perspectives necessary for the techniques of integration. But since objectivity is just grasped as the way subjectivity appears, one senses that Hegel is off into the land of nonsense for Moore. We might reframe Moore's view as an objection to the view offered in this paper: to claim that perspective can have objective significance is to indulge in the most egregious anthropomorphism. But there is nothing inherently human about the geometry of optics; here I think the metaphor of perspective serves us quite well. To pick up the first metaphor (the circle of confusion), the model here is primarily a camera lens. On this model, even the human eye is just one version of such a lens, and so it is rather an objectification of the human rather than the other way around. To pick up the second metaphor, in Gombrich's conception of perspective the key relation is between the three-dimensional movement inherent in ordinary perception and the two-dimensional static representation of painting. There is nothing about this relation that is essential to humans; one would think that it would apply to any animal that is as heavily reliant on visual information as humans are, as such animals are also prone to the same optical illusions that trick humans and for the same reasons. One could then object that such animal perception is really subjectivity and not objectivity, but at that point 'objectivity' is being used in a Pickwickian way that deprives the anthropomorphism objection of all of its force. Finally, Panofsky's model perhaps does the most to undercut this objection, since it shows distinctively that modern perspective is not actually anthropomorphic at all. The ancient form of perspective relied on particular features of the human vision, namely the curve of the retina and stereographic projection, but the modern form actually presupposes the abstraction of a single point and thus does not even reproduce the stereoscopic nature of human vision. Indeed, as Panofsky argues, 'perspective transforms psychophysical space into mathematical space' (1996: 31). Thus taking perspective seriously shows that it is not ridiculous to see it as a feature of objectivity, and thus that there is some feature closely identified with subjectivity which has objective significance.[12]

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https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2018.12 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Notes

[1] Cf. Koch 2014: chap. 12.

[2] Abbreviations used:

WL = Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, vols. 21 and 11 in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. F. Hogemann and W. Jaeschke (Hamburg: Meiner, 1978/1981); trans. G. di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Citations are by volume, page (and line) numbers in *Gesammelte Werke*.

EL = Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, I: *Die Wissenschaft der Logik*.

KrV = Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (cited according to the first (A) and second (B) editions).

PhG = *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (cited by section number).

Prolegomena = Kant, *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik* (cited according to the Akademie edition).

[3] I have common cause with Rödl's rejection of Fregean logic for its insufficient account of logical significance. But whereas Rödl thinks Frege's emphasis on deductive form should be replaced by a (Kantian) emphasis on our ability (*Vermögen*) to make judgements, I advocate a more Hegelian shift to an emphasis on sociality via the notion of perspective. Different forms of judgement are abstract social perspectives, somewhat like Mead's Generalized Others. One advantage of this shift is the ability to maintain the centrality of deductive form for logic, which is lost on Rödl's account. Deductive form is an abstract register of social interaction: arguments relate different (generalized) social perspectives by relating different kinds of judgements.

[4] I explored this theme in some detail through the notions of internal and external determination in Yeomans 2011.

[5] Also, more clearly as characterizing the absolute idea: *WL*: 12.235, 30–33.

[6] A further problem is that we have nothing else but the three perspectives from which to understood their joining, and so we necessarily have three different conceptions of what their joining is and means. Here I abstract away from this difficulty (which Hegel himself never entirely masters).

[7] I take it to be Hegel's view that the richest logical perspectives (represented by the three forms of the idea) are a combination of the three, differing only in the weight or priority that is assigned to each.

[8] This is another reason to think that some sort of givenness to a perspective has to persist even in the absolute idea.

[9] Specifically, in the discussion of the logical beginning and the way it is confused with finite knowing (*WL*: 12.239–41). But the text is quite difficult to make out and the text remains indecisive, so that it violates the axiom never to use an example more contentious or difficult than the point you are trying to exemplify.

[10] As evidence that this is indeed a relevant example, note that Hegel excuses his brief presentation in the WL of the shift from the practical to the theoretical idea on the grounds

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that the same shift is already presented in the section of the *Phenomenology* on Virtue and the Way of the World (*WL*: 12.233, 12–13; *GW*: 9.210–14; *PhG*: §385–93).

[11] Two excellent narrations of this failure in Germany with respect to very different particular circumstances are provided by Walker 1998 and Koselleck 1967.

[12] This essay was written while on a sabbatical leave from Purdue University generously funded by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, and presented to audiences in Pittsburgh and Munich. The author would like to thank Günter Zöller, Ansgar Lyssy, Robert Brandom, James Kreines, Robert Pippin and Clinton Tolley for comments on earlier drafts.

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