

## THE SELF-SUBLATION OF EMPIRICAL CONSCIOUSNESS: DEVELOPING MCDOWELL'S HETERODOX INTERPRETATION OF HEGEL'S LORD/BONDSMAN DIALECTIC

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**ABSTRACT.** The orthodox interpretation of the famous “Lordship and Bondage” dialectic (LBD) of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*PhG*) maintains that the LBD consists in a struggle for recognition between two distinct individuals. John McDowell has provided a heterodox interpretation according to which the LBD consists in a dialectic obtaining between two elements of the self-consciousness of a single individual. This paper will seek to develop McDowell’s heterodox interpretation. Part 1 will establish the often neglected or misunderstood Fichtean backdrop to the LBD. Part 2 will unpack the parts of Hegel’s analysis of self-consciousness in the *PhG* which are illuminated by the previous examination of the Fichtean backdrop to the LBD, with special attention paid to Hegel’s analysis of the *Hauptmoment* of consciousness. Part 3 will work out the fuller implications of McDowell’s argument that a heterodox interpretation of the LBD compels the conclusion that, for Hegel, empirical consciousness *becomes* apperceptive consciousness. Part 4 will respond to some objections that have been raised against McDowell’s heterodox interpretation. Part 5 will offer some tentative suggestions as to how the orthodox and heterodox interpretations of the LBD might be sublated into a higher viewpoint.

**Keywords:** Hegel; Fichte; McDowell; lordship; bondage; self-consciousness

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### Introduction

Perhaps the single most famous episode in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*PhG*) is the “Lordship and Bondage” dialectic (LBD). While this episode has inspired copious and variegated commentaries, a certain interpretive orthodoxy has held

sway vis-à-vis its basic structure. According to the orthodox view, the LBD treats of *two distinct human individuals* confronting each other in an aboriginal struggle for recognition and, furthermore, it is only in and through this struggle that each individual becomes properly self-conscious. Thus, despite disagreements regarding particular details of the struggle for recognition, holders of the orthodox view tend to maintain that the LBD constitutes the *locus classicus* of Hegel's effort to demonstrate that the self-consciousness of any given individual is dependent upon and derivative of a *community* of mutually recognitive self-consciousnesses.<sup>1</sup> The LBD would thus constitute a rejoinder to the supposedly Cartesian view according to which the self-consciousness of an individual constitutes a privileged realm, one which exists independently of any relation to other self-consciousnesses, not to say the "external" world.<sup>2</sup>

John McDowell has challenged (2009) this orthodox interpretation. According to McDowell, the LBD describes a dialectical encounter which obtains not between two distinct individual self-consciousnesses, but between two moments of a single self-consciousness. The point of departure for McDowell's argument is Robert Pippin's thesis (1989: 18ff.) that a major goal of Hegel's entire philosophical project is to develop and sublimate Kant's account of self-consciousness as a Transcendental Unity of Apperception (TUA). Thus, on McDowell's heterodox interpretation, the struggle for recognition between two distinct individuals in which the LBD might initially appear to consist is actually an allegory for a more basic dialectical struggle between 1) the TUA and 2) the empirical consciousness of a single individual (2009: 161ff.). McDowell also maintains that his heterodox interpretation reveals a hitherto neglected but all-important implication of the LBD, namely, that, for Hegel, "empirical consciousness becomes apperceptive consciousness" (2009: 164).

The goal of the present paper is to develop McDowell's heterodox interpretation of the LBD by 1) making its foundations stronger and 2) more fully working out the implications of McDowell's provocative argument that, for Hegel, empirical consciousness becomes apperceptive consciousness. The first task will be accomplished by 1) unpacking the often neglected or misunderstood Fichtean backdrop of Hegel's overall analysis of self-consciousness in the *PhG*<sup>3</sup> and 2) analyzing Hegel's often neglected discussion of the *Hauptmoment* of empirical consciousness at the beginning of his phenomenology of self-consciousness.<sup>4</sup> The second task will be accomplished by showing that, insofar as Hegel is arguing that empirical consciousness in some sense becomes apperceptive consciousness, he must therefore also be arguing that the doctrine of the TUA manifests a radical form of self-alienation and a fundamental lack of self-knowledge, or self-recognition, on the part of empirical consciousness itself.

On this heterodox interpretation, then, the LBD continues to function as a critique of a certain brand of Cartesianism, specifically the kind that develops in the tradition of Kantian and Fichtean-style transcendental idealism. Still, the nature of this critique is radically recast. Instead of arguing that in the LBD Hegel intends to show that self-consciousness can only emerge in the context of a community of

mutually recognitive self-consciousnesses, the heterodox interpretation will argue that Hegel's goal in the LBD is to show that true self-consciousness can only emerge insofar as empirical consciousness recognizes and appropriates for itself the universal power of absolute self-consciousness which, in the case of Kantian and Fichtean-style transcendental idealism, it wrongly projects onto the transcendental ego.<sup>5</sup>

In order to achieve its goal, this paper will be broken up into five parts. Part 1 will establish the often neglected or misunderstood Fichtean backdrop to the LBD.<sup>6</sup> This analysis will include an examination of the salient texts in Fichte as well as Hegel's initial response to Fichte in the *Differenzschrift* (*DZ*). Part 2 will unpack the parts of Hegel's analysis of self-consciousness in the *PhG* which are illuminated by the previous examination of Hegel's treatment of Fichte in the *DZ*, with special attention paid to Hegel's analysis of the *Hauptmoment* of consciousness. Part 3 will work out the fuller implications of McDowell's argument that a heterodox interpretation of the LBD compels the conclusion that, for Hegel, empirical consciousness becomes apperceptive consciousness. Part 4 will respond to some objections that have been raised against McDowell's heterodox interpretation. Part 5 will offer some tentative suggestions as to how the orthodox and heterodox interpretations of the LBD might be sublated into a higher viewpoint.

## 1. The Fichtean Backdrop to the LBD

Hegel's critique of Fichte in the *DZ* centers upon the relationship of domination and servitude which obtains between the absolute self, or transcendental ego, and the empirical self in Fichte's *Science of Knowledge* (*SK*). Let us begin by examining how the relationship between these two selves amounts to one of domination and servitude.

According to Fichte, the absolute self is absolutely self-positing. It is expressed in the proposition of perfect self-identity and self-sufficiency:  $I = I$ . In a sense, there is a distinction between the absolute self *qua* positing and the absolute self *qua* posited. Yet, it is a distinction which is *immediately* annulled or sublated. Thus, the absolute self is an absolute subject-object.<sup>7</sup> The absolute self is unrestricted and unopposed by anything distinct from itself. It is absolute (*SK* 119/117).

Inasmuch as the absolute self is unrestricted and unopposed by anything distinct from itself, however, it cannot explain the restriction and opposition experienced by empirical consciousness. Yet, as Fichte announces in the first of his *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre* (*IWL*), the goal of transcendental philosophy is to articulate the explanatory ground of empirical experience (9/425). Thus, in order to explain the restriction and opposition experienced by empirical consciousness, Fichte says that it is necessary to suppose that the absolute self posits within itself an empirical self which is restricted and opposed by an object or not-self (*SK* 110/110).

The fact that the empirical self with its opposed object is posited within the absolute self, however, raises a difficulty. For, the absolute self is unrestricted and

unopposed by anything distinct from itself. By contrast, the empirical self is opposed and restricted by the not-self. Thus, the empirical self is, by definition, distinct from the absolute self. Yet, the empirical self is posited *within* the absolute self. Thus, the absolute self finds itself opposed and restricted by the empirical self. As Fichte states,

The self is to be equated with, and yet opposed to, itself. But in regard to consciousness it is equal to itself, for consciousness is one: but in this consciousness the absolute self is posited as indivisible; whereas the self to which the not-self is opposed is posited as divisible. Hence, insofar as there is a not-self opposed to it, the self is itself in opposition to the absolute self. (SK 110/109)

Inasmuch as the absolute self posits the empirical self with its opposed object within itself, then, the absolute self finds itself in a state of self-contradiction: it both is and is not absolute.

Hegel declares the absolute self in Fichte thus to be a mere “subjective subject-object,” while the empirical self with its own opposed object constitutes an “objective subject-object” (DZ 123–124/37–38). The absolute self is merely subjective because it finds itself opposed by the whole, infinite realm of life and nature manifested by the empirical self with its correlative object. The absolute self subjectively reflects or abstracts out of this realm into a putatively pure relation to itself. Yet, *eo ipso* the absolute self finds itself related to and opposed by the objective subject-object that is the empirical self.

Thus, the absolute self has two objects: 1) itself and 2) the empirical self *qua* objective subject-object. In the first case, the opposition between subject and object is in fact no opposition; it is immediately annulled. In the second case, however, the opposition is not immediately annulled or sublated. The result is that, in positing the empirical self within itself, the absolute self negates its own pure self-relatedness and self-sufficiency.

For Fichte, the absolute self of its nature refuses to abide its being opposed and restricted by the empirical self. It therefore strives to negate this negation of its hitherto immediate self-relatedness and absoluteness.<sup>8</sup> Thus, once the empirical self with its opposed not-self is posited within the absolute self, the absolute self begins to strive to restore its lost state of pure self-relatedness. The absolute self attempts to satisfy its striving by using the empirical self as an instrument for causally determining the not-self thereby negating the not-self and eliminating its opposition to the empirical self. For, insofar as the empirical self succeeds in negating the not-self the latter will cease to oppose or restrict the former. To that extent, however, the empirical self will itself cease to be restricted, opposed by and related to that which is distinct from itself. In other words, the empirical self will *become identical* to the absolute self. Yet, insofar as the empirical self becomes identical to the absolute self, the absolute self will cease to be in a state of self-contradiction. For, it was only insofar as the empirical self was restricted and opposed by the not-self,

yet also posited within the absolute self, that the absolute self found *itself* opposed and restricted by that which was not itself, namely, the empirical self. Yet, insofar as the empirical self ceases to be opposed and restricted by that which is other than itself, the negation, restriction and opposition afflicting the absolute self is negated.

According to Fichte, however, the absolute self cannot directly cause the not-self. For, if the absolute self were directly to cause the not-self, then either the not-self would simply be absorbed into the absolute self's own act of self-positing and, as such, would cease to be a not-self at all, or, insofar as the not-self was in fact posited absolutely, it would destroy the absolute self since by its nature the not-self excludes or annuls the self (*SK* 254/225). The way in which the absolute self overcomes this state of self-contradiction is by positing within the empirical self a practical faculty by which the not-self might be causally determined by the empirical self.<sup>9</sup>

The absolute self thus employs the practical faculty of the empirical self as an instrument or servant by which to preserve or restore the absolute self's perfect self-relation and absoluteness. For, insofar as the practical faculty of the empirical self succeeds in causally determining the not-self, then the not-self ceases to oppose the empirical self, and, insofar as the empirical self ceases to be opposed by the not-self, the absolute self ceases to be opposed by the empirical self.

According to Fichte, while the empirical self is partly constituted by the practical faculty, it is also partly determined by nature or the not-I through what in the *System of Ethics* (*SE*) Fichte calls "the original, determinate system of our boundedness" and which consists in the empirical self's "drive and feeling" (105/109). The system of natural drives, feelings and inclinations which partially determines the empirical self thus obtrudes as something alien on the truer (i.e. purely self-relating) essence of the self. For, these drives are determined mechanically by laws that the empirical self does not itself cause. As such, a task emerges for the empirical self, specifically for its practical faculty, to causally determine the natural drives, and ultimately nature at large, which otherwise obtrude upon the freedom of the empirical self to act according to laws and determinations it would give to itself (*SE* 105/109).

Thus, Fichte distinguishes two fundamentally different drives: 1) the system of lower, natural drives of the self which is directed towards more or less biological enjoyment and 2) the higher drive of the practical faculty which is directed towards freedom for freedom's sake. The higher drive for freedom is capable of reflecting on the lower, natural drive and, through raising it to consciousness, subordinating it to the ends of the higher drive. As Hegel states,

That which reflects is *higher* than what is reflected: the drive of him who does the reflecting, that is, of the subject of consciousness, is called the higher drive. The lower drive, that is, nature must be placed *in subservience to the higher*, that is, to reflection. This relation of subservience which one appearance of the self has to the other is to be the highest synthesis. (*DZ* 138/49)

At the core of Fichte's ethical system, then, one part of the empirical self – the natural drives – goes into *subservience* to another part – the practical faculty. Moreover, this domination of the “merely natural” element within the empirical self by the practical drive of the empirical self is itself a mediated expression of the domination of the empirical self, in general, by the absolute self. For, the empirical self *qua* pure practical drive functions as a mere instrument and servant of the absolute self's more basic striving to preserve or restore its pure self-relation (SV 8–9/299).

The empirical self is to become master or lord over its lower nature and, by extension, the whole expanse of “irrational” nature in order that the absolute self might preserve or otherwise restore its threatened pure self-relation or harmony-with-self. Thus, the highest synthesis in the self, and Fichte's highest moral ideal, turns out to be a scenario in which the empirical self submits to the domination of the form of the absolute ‘I’ and, in so doing, sets itself about the task of subordinating nature, including itself, to that form (SV 296–7/6–7).<sup>10</sup>

Needless to say, Hegel is critical of the fact that Fichte's ideal of freedom devolves into a mere relation of domination and servitude between the absolute and empirical selves. Let us turn, then, to examining some of the details of Hegel's initial critique of Fichte in the *DZ* as it will help illuminate certain details of Hegel's more mature effort in the *PhG*.

### 1.1 Hegel's Critique of Fichte in the *DZ*

In the *DZ*, Hegel states that the task of philosophy is to sublimate the distinction between absolute or transcendental self-consciousness, on the one hand, and empirical consciousness, on the other. The way in which the philosopher is to achieve this goal is by deriving empirical consciousness from pure self-consciousness (*DZ* 121–22/35–36). Thus, Hegel's position both agrees with and diverges from that of Fichte. For, Hegel agrees with Fichte that a major task of philosophy is to explain the empirical experience of distinction and opposition between subject and object; he also agrees that this is done by showing that empirical consciousness is derived from absolute or transcendental self-consciousness. Still, beyond this transcendental requirement, Hegel adds the speculative requirement that the explanation of empirical consciousness must also show that empirical consciousness *becomes identical* to pure self-consciousness. It is worth quoting Hegel at length on this point:

In ordinary consciousness the Ego [*Ich*] occurs in opposition. Philosophy must explain this opposition to an object. To explain means to show that it is conditioned by something else and hence that it is appearance. Now, if empirical consciousness is shown to be completely grounded in, and not just conditioned by, pure consciousness, then their opposition is suspended [*Aufgehoben*] as long as the explanation is otherwise completely shown – i.e., as long as it is not merely a partial identity of pure and empirical consciousness that has been shown. The identity is only a partial one if

there remains as aspect of the empirical consciousness in which it is not determined by the pure consciousness, but is unconditioned. And as only pure consciousness and empirical consciousness are presented as the elements of the highest opposition, pure consciousness would then be determined and conditioned by empirical consciousness so far as this was unconditioned. The relation would in this way be a sort of reciprocal relation, comprised of mutual determining and being determined. (DZ 119–20/34)

For Hegel, then, philosophy must, indeed, explain the opposition experienced in empirical consciousness. It does so, moreover, by showing that empirical consciousness is grounded in pure self-consciousness. So far, Hegel is in agreement with Fichte. Hegel adds, however, that insofar as empirical consciousness is shown to be *completely* grounded in pure self-consciousness, insofar as it is shown to evolve out of the latter and thereby constitute the latter's *objective existence*, the difference between them is sublated into an absolute unity.

By contrast, insofar as the explanation of empirical consciousness is only partial and the empirical self remains opposed to and thus conditioned by an aspect which is not determined by pure self-consciousness, then pure self-consciousness and empirical consciousness find *themselves* opposed. Indeed, pure self-consciousness thus finds itself not to be absolute at all since it is conditioned by the empirical consciousness which opposes it. As a result, pure self-consciousness and empirical consciousness fall into a relation of mere reciprocal determination and dependence which presupposes an absolute dichotomy. This relation of reciprocal determination and dependence is, for Hegel, ultimately one of domination and servitude in which the opposition is never resolved or sublated into an absolute identity.

Fichte, to a degree, recognizes the speculative requirement to produce an absolute identity between the empirical self and the pure or absolute self. The problem, for Hegel, is that Fichte simply fails to accomplish this task. The infinite striving of Fichte's practical faculty is supposed to be the "supreme synthesis" of the absolute self with the empirical self. Yet, this "infinite progression" of Fichte's practical faculty continues to entail an "absolute opposition" between the empirical self and its object (DZ 134/46). Consequently, speculative infinity is, in Fichte, "shoved into the form" of mere finitude or temporality, and "time [...] immediately involves opposition, extraneousness. What exists in time is something that is opposed to itself, a manifold" (DZ 134/46).<sup>11</sup>

Fichte famously refers to this indefinitely renewed experience within empirical consciousness of a confrontation with that which is (apparently) distinct from itself as an *Anstoß*, which means "check" or "shock" (Breazeale 2013: 156ff.). Thus, it is the perpetually recurrent *Anstoß* of the not-self, or the objective object, that forces upon empirical consciousness, or the objective subject, its awareness of its limitation and lack of self-sufficiency or absoluteness.<sup>12</sup>

In Fichte, then, the relationship between the object and subject of the objective subject-object remains one of infinitely renewed opposition, domination and

servitude. Moreover, it is precisely due to the perpetual renewal of the *Anstoß* of the not-self in the experience of empirical consciousness that the relation of domination and servitude between the absolute self and the empirical self also persists indefinitely. Yet, as discussed at length in the previous sub-section, the problem of domination and servitude within these various moments of the self would be solved if it could be demonstrated that the empirical self *completely* negates and sublates the whole expanse of nature, or the objective object, which seemingly confronts it. For, the empirical self would thereby become identical to the absolute self.

As we shall now begin to see, Hegel's phenomenology of self-consciousness seeks to provide just such a demonstration.

## 2. Hegel on Self-consciousness in the *PhG*

Hegel starts his analysis of self-consciousness by noting that, in the transition from consciousness to self-consciousness, the objects of consciousness have become "moments of self-consciousness, i.e. abstractions or distinctions which at the same time have no reality *for* consciousness itself, and are purely vanishing moments" (*PhG* 105/104). According to the viewpoint immediately preceding self-consciousness, namely, consciousness, its objects initially appeared to possess "simple self-subsistent existence" (*PhG* 105/104). In other words, *for* "mere" consciousness its objects are decidedly *not* moments of itself but exist independently of consciousness. Upon the emergence of *self*-consciousness, however, Hegel maintains that such objects are sublated into moments of self-consciousness and therefore their apparent self-subsistence or independence from consciousness vanishes.

Hegel follows this initial point, however, with a crucial qualification. For, he states that, with respect to the moments of consciousness, "it seems that only the principal moment [*Hauptmoment*] has been lost" (*PhG* 105/104). As previously noted, virtually all commentators on Hegel neglect to analyze this crucial point regarding the *Hauptmoment* of "mere" consciousness. Let us pause then to examine it in detail.

What does Hegel mean by the "*Hauptmoment*" of consciousness? For, Hegel clearly distinguishes the particular moments of consciousness – namely, the 'This, Here, Now,' the Thing and the play of forces – from the *Hauptmoment* of consciousness. By the *Hauptmoment*, Hegel's means the appearance *to* or *for* consciousness that the particular moments of consciousness possess "self-subsistent existence" (*PhG* 105/104). In other words, *the appearance to consciousness that its object exists independently of consciousness* is the *principal* moment which all the particular moments of consciousness, in the first instance, share in common. The *Hauptmoment* of consciousness in Hegel thus correlates closely to the *Anstoß* of empirical consciousness in Fichte. It is the apparently inexplicable "otherness" by which empirical consciousness takes itself to be initially confronted.



In what sense has the *Hauptmoment* of “mere” consciousness been lost upon the transition to self-consciousness? It has been lost inasmuch as the particular moments of consciousness no longer appear to self-consciousness as self-subsistent or independent. For, with the emergence of self-consciousness, the would be independent *objects* of “mere” consciousness have been sublated into *moments* of self-consciousness and as such they have *lost* their *Hauptmoment*.

Yet, this is not the end of the story. For, Hegel maintains that it merely *seems* that *only* the *Hauptmoment* has been lost. Yet, what *seems* to be the case turns out not entirely to be what *is* the case. Thus, even though it *seems* that *only* the *Hauptmoment* of consciousness has been lost, Hegel states, “in point of fact self-consciousness is the reflection out of the being of the world of sense and perception, and is essentially the return from otherness” (*PhG* 105/104). Thus, while it *seemed* that self-consciousness preserves as moments of itself the objects of “mere” consciousness and that it was thus only the *Hauptmoment* of these objects that has been lost, in point of fact, there is a sense in which *all* of the moments of self-consciousness have been lost. For, along with preserving all the moments of consciousness as moments of itself, self-consciousness *also* reflects entirely out of the realm of consciousness and into exclusive relation to itself. Insofar as self-consciousness reflects *out* of the realm of consciousness, however, it thus *appears to self-consciousness* that it does not preserve *any* of the moments of consciousness as moments of *itself*.

Hegel thus distinguishes two moments within self-consciousness itself: 1) self-consciousness which preserves within itself the moments of consciousness, and 2) self-consciousness which reflects or abstracts entirely out of the realm of empirical or sensuous consciousness. Hegel’s point is that *for* the moment of self-consciousness that reflects or abstracts out of the realm of sensuous consciousness, not *only* is the *Hauptmoment* of sensuous consciousness lost, but in fact *all* of the moments of sensuous consciousness are lost inasmuch as they (apparently) do not constitute moments of self-consciousness. Thus, as far as abstract self-consciousness is concerned, it relates only to itself.<sup>13</sup> It correlates, in other words, as Hegel explicitly indicates, to the Fichtean (subjective) absolute self which expresses itself in the immediate, motionless tautology ‘I am I’ (*PhG* 105/104).

Yet, even this is not the end of the story regarding the *Hauptmoment*. For, ironically, even though abstract or subjective self-consciousness pretends to reflect entirely out of any relation to otherness, including all the moments of consciousness, the *Hauptmoment* of “mere” consciousness nevertheless *returns* “in the form of a *being*, or as a *distinct moment*” (*PhG* 105/104). Thus, in the first of its two moments, self-consciousness preserves within itself all the moments of consciousness. As such, the first moment is “self-consciousness in the form of consciousness, and the whole expanse of the sensuous world is preserved for it” (*PhG* 105/104). In its second moment, self-consciousness reflects entirely out of sensuous realm of consciousness into putatively pure self-relation. Yet, Hegel’s point is that abstract

or internally reflecting self-consciousness *eo ipso* finds itself opposed by the very realm of consciousness out of which it presumed to abstract itself.

Inasmuch as self-consciousness distinguishes itself into two moments it possesses two objects, or two moments of a doubled object. The first moment of the doubled object is “the immediate object, that of sense-certainty and perception” – in other words, the generic object of consciousness. The second moment of the doubled-object of self-consciousness is “*itself*, which is the true essence” (*PhG* 105/104).

In reflecting into itself and out of the realm of “mere” consciousness, including the whole expanse of the sensuous world, the second moment of self-consciousness constitutes itself as its own object; it is an immediate I = I. Yet, despite, or perhaps because of, its pretension to reflect *entirely* out of any relation to the realm of consciousness, the *Hauptmoment* of consciousness *returns* for this second moment of self-consciousness. Thus, *for* the second moment of the doubled object of self-consciousness, which just is self-consciousness itself in its immediate self-relating, it “is present in the first instance only as opposed to the first object,” which just is self-consciousness *qua* “mere” consciousness (*PhG* 105/104).<sup>14</sup>

Let us pause in order to make crystal clear what is going. In itself or in its “true essence,” self-consciousness is precisely that: consciousness of self.<sup>15</sup> The object of self-consciousness is always at least implicitly itself. Still, in the first instance, self-consciousness differentiates itself into two moments. First, there is the moment of self-consciousness in which has been preserved the whole expanse of the sensuous world. Second, there is the moment of self-consciousness which reflects entirely out of the realm consciousness. Implicitly, or in-themselves, these two moments are in fact moments of a single self-consciousness.<sup>16</sup> Still, in the first instance, the first moment appears to the second moment to oppose it. Thus, the *Hauptmoment* of consciousness which, for we the phenomenological observes, has disappeared upon the transition to self-consciousness, nevertheless returns, or rather, *appears* to return *to* the second moment of self-consciousness.

Abstract self-consciousness, in the first instance, then, takes itself to be opposed by the realm of consciousness. The dialectical development of self-consciousness in-itself will therefore exhibit itself “as the movement in which this antithesis is removed, and the identity of itself with itself becomes explicit for it” (*PhG* 105). In other words, in becoming self-consciousness, not just *in-itself* but *in-and-for-itself*, self-consciousness must make explicit *for* itself that its apparently opposed object – the whole range of the world of empirical consciousness – is not something opposed to or otherwise independent of itself, but rather just is itself. Self-consciousness must make explicit *for itself* (and not just for us, phenomenological observers) that all consciousness is in fact self-consciousness.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, in a manner precisely isomorphic to Fichte’s account of the absolute self and the empirical self, Hegel distinguishes between 1) self-consciousness *qua* empirical consciousness for which the whole expanse of the sensuous world is preserved as its object and which, in fact, just is that object, and 2) self-consciousness *qua* abstract self-relation which reflects out of all differences and has

itself immediately as an object (*PhG* 105/104). The first moment of self-consciousness of the *PhG* would thus further correspond to Hegel's characterization of Fichte's empirical self in the *DZ* as an objective *subject-object*. For, even though we, the phenomenological observers, have learned over the course of the examination of "mere" consciousness that the objects of empirical consciousness just are *moments* of self-consciousness, still, in the first instance, *for* the subject of empirical consciousness, the *moments* of (self-)consciousness appear as independently existing *objects*. Thus, in the first instance, empirical consciousness experiences itself as a subject opposed by an object or not-self.

The second moment of self-consciousness of the *PhG* would correspond to the subjective subject-object of the *DZ*. For, in the first instance, the self-relation of the subjective subject-object is only immediate or "subjective" and, as a result, it confronts the objective subject-object as a further object opposed to itself. Thus, despite the fact that we, the phenomenological observers, know that the sensuous world of empirical consciousness has been sublated into a moment of self-consciousness, *for* abstract self-consciousness as it first appears on the scene, the *Hauptmoment* of empirical consciousness *returns*. It returns, specifically, *as* sensuous, empirical consciousness with its own opposed world.<sup>18</sup>

### 3. The Heterodox Interpretation of the LBD and Its Larger Import

Having established the Fichtean backdrop to Hegel's analysis of self-consciousness, we are now in a position to recount with relative ease McDowell's heterodox argument that the LBD constitutes a kind of allegory for a dialectic among the two moments internal to an individual self-consciousness. In place of McDowell's term "allegory," however, I will use "analogy." By "analogy" I mean a relation of proportion between two sets of terms. In the present instance, the two sets of terms would be constituted by 1) the Lord, the Bondsman and that upon which the Bondsman labors, and 2) abstract self-consciousness (subjective subject-object), empirical consciousness (objective subject), and the *Hauptmoment* (objective object) of empirical consciousness. Insofar as we interpret the LBD as an analogy for the dialectic obtaining between the two moments of an individual self-consciousness, the task of interpretation becomes simply one of correlating the parts of the analogy to their respective analogues. In the case of the LBD, this task is – however surprisingly – relatively straightforward.

Let us, then, begin by simply listing the points of correspondence. First, the Lord in the LBD corresponds to abstract self-consciousness (subjective subject-object). Second, the Bondsman corresponds to empirical consciousness (objective subject). Third, that upon which the Bondsman labors corresponds to the *Hauptmoment* (objective object) of empirical consciousness. Fourth, like Fichte's absolute self, the Lord initially uses empirical consciousness – here represented by the Bondsman – as a means to negate the objective object or the whole expanse of the sensuous world.

Next, recall that in the *DZ* Hegel diagnoses the shortcoming of Fichte to lie in the fact that Fichte failed to show how empirical consciousness *becomes* absolute self-consciousness. Moreover, the reason why Fichte was unable to demonstrate that empirical consciousness becomes absolute self-consciousness is that, in Fichte, empirical consciousness never succeeds in *completely* determining or negating the objective object which appears to oppose it. Yet, perhaps the most famous result of the entire LBD is that the Bondsman – interpreted now as an analogue for empirical consciousness – becomes “master” or “universal power” over “the whole of objective being” (*PhG* 119/116). This mastery results from the empirical experience of fear, service and labor which the Bondsman undergoes. For, in and through this educative experience, the empirical consciousness of the Bondsman negates, not just for us, the phenomenological observers, but *for himself* the apparent independence, or *Hauptmoment*, of the empirical object (*PhG* 118/115). Indeed, unlike Fichte’s empirical self vis-à-vis the *Anstoß* of the not-self, the Bondsman *completely* “destroys this alien negative moment” of the (apparently) opposed sensuous world and, in turn, posits his own (now developed) empirical consciousness for himself as his proper object, thereby becoming absolute self-consciousness (*PhG* 118/115).<sup>19</sup>

Here we have, then, a set of analogical correspondences between the moments of a single self-consciousness and the elements constitutive of Hegel’s LBD.<sup>20</sup> As such, we have provided a stronger foundation for McDowell’s argument that the elements of Hegel’s LBD allegorically or analogically represent moments of a single self-consciousness. Indeed, the true strength of the heterodox interpretation can only be fully appreciated once the Fichtean backdrop to the dialectic is expounded since that backdrop reveals the need for Hegel to demonstrate how his account of empirical consciousness succeeds where Fichte’s fails.<sup>21</sup>

It remains, however, to work out the fuller implications of the dialectical relationship of the elements of the LBD inasmuch as they are interpreted in this analogical fashion.

### **3.1 The Larger Import of the LBD: The Inversion of Transcendental Philosophy**

As previously noted, McDowell recognizes that, insofar as the LBD is interpreted allegorically or analogically, then it must be concluded that, for Hegel, empirical consciousness becomes apperceptive consciousness, or, as I have phrased it, absolute self-consciousness.<sup>22</sup> However, it is only by analyzing still further elements of the analogy and correlating them to their analogues in empirical consciousness that the fullness Hegel’s effort to invert transcendental philosophy is laid bare.

To return to the analogy, then, let us note that, while the Bondsman does succeed in becoming the true master or absolute self-consciousness, nevertheless, in the first instance, the Bondsman projects this universal power of self-consciousness onto the Lord. Thus, Hegel states that while the truth of independent or absolute self-consciousness *is* “the servile consciousness of the bondsman,” initially this truth appears “*outside* of itself” (*PhG* 117/114). In other words, while *in-itself* the consciousness of the Bondsman is absolute self-consciousness, *for* that consciousness

it is the *Lord* that appears to possess the true being-for-self of absolute self-consciousness (*PhG* 117/114).

If we transpose these elements of the analogy to their analogues in a single consciousness, the critical import of Hegel's effort immediately leaps out. For, in Kant and Fichte's transcendental philosophy, "servile" empirical consciousness is most certainly not the universal power of absolute self-consciousness. Rather, that power is accorded to the TUA or (abstract) absolute self-consciousness. Thus, in Kant, it is not empirical consciousness but the TUA which prescribes the law to nature (*KRV* B159ff.); and, in Fichte, it is the absolute self alone which is absolute. Yet, on the basis of the analogical interpretation of the LBD, we can see that, for Hegel, the Kantian and Fichtean ascription of the universal, "lordly" power of absolute self-consciousness to these principles distinct from empirical consciousness is simply the result of an alienated self-projection of empirical consciousness itself. For, as we have seen, absolute self-consciousness just is fully developed, educated and self-sublated empirical consciousness. In other words, for Hegel, *there is no* "apperceptive I" distinct from empirical consciousness. Rather, for Hegel, what Kant and Fichte *call* transcendental apperception or absolute self-consciousness just is their own (alienated) educated and developed empirical consciousnesses.<sup>23</sup>

Let us further elaborate on this point. Hegel's argument is that in and through the empirical experience of the fear, service and labor required to become educated denizens of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century European high culture, Fichte and Kant learned to posit or objectify for-themselves, or in their empirically conscious experience, such putatively absolute or universal and necessary objects as Newtonian mechanics or the Categorical Imperative. In the first instance, however, *this* truth, implicit in empirical consciousness, is not objectified *for* the empirical consciousness of Kant and Fichte. Rather, in the case of Kant and Fichte, this positing of the object occurs "behind the back of consciousness" (*PhG* 56/61). As a result, instead of recognizing their own developed and educated empirical self-consciousnesses as the truth of the TUA or absolute self-consciousness, Kant and Fichte project their universal power of self-consciousness onto them as alien principles.<sup>24</sup> Thus, like with the Bondsman vis-à-vis the Lord, the truth of Kant and Fichte's empirical consciousness remains "outside" that consciousness.<sup>25</sup> What is more, these alienated principles dominate or lord over the empirical consciousness despite the fact that they have their truth and origin *in* educated empirical consciousness.<sup>26</sup>

An example would help to make this argument more concrete. To begin with, recall that Hegel originally states that self-consciousness differentiates itself into the two moments of abstract self-consciousness and empirical consciousness. Yet, on the basis of the analogical interpretation of the LBD, we can now recognize that the self-consciousness which reflects out of the realm of empirical consciousness and which was previously identified as abstract self-consciousness must, in fact, have been empirical consciousness itself all along. And, indeed, this is precisely what Hegel indicates. For, it turns out that the radical reflection or abstraction out of empirical consciousness and the whole expanse of the sensuous world which

initially appeared to be performed by a principle separate from empirical consciousness is, in fact, something performed *by empirical consciousness itself in its empirical experience of the fear of death*. As Hegel states,

In that *experience* [servile consciousness] has been quite unmanned, has trembled in every fibre of its being, and everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations. But this pure universal movement, is the simple, essential nature of self-consciousness, absolute negativity, pure being-for-self, which consequently is implicit in this consciousness. [Emphasis mine] (*PhG* 117/114)

In the empirical experience of the fear of death, empirical consciousness begins its transition to absolute self-consciousness precisely by negating and reflecting *entirely* out of the entire realm of empirical existence. Yet, in so doing, empirical consciousness initiates the process by which it will sublimate *itself*. For, in becoming the absolute negativity or pure being-for-self of absolute self-consciousness, empirical consciousness does not thereby cease to be empirically conscious. Rather, empirical consciousness simply begins to re-cognize or appropriate for-itself what it implicitly was in-itself.<sup>27</sup>

Of course, if Hegel is fully to overcome Fichte's shortcomings, he must show how empirical consciousness not only reflects out of empirical existence but also actively determines that realm such that it no longer experiences it as something by which it is restricted or opposed. Thus, as we have seen, unlike in Fichte, empirical consciousness in Hegel negates and sublimes the *whole* expanse of sensuous, empirical existence through its empirical service and labor (*PhG* 117–9/114–6).<sup>28</sup>

#### **4. Defending the Heterodox Interpretation against Orthodox Objections**

Let us now turn to providing a defense of the heterodox interpretation of the LBD against some objections that have been raised from defenders of the orthodox position. According to the orthodox interpretation, the LBD unfolds, not between two moments of a single self-consciousness, but between two distinct individual self-consciousnesses confronting one another in a life-and-death struggle for recognition. Yet, according to McDowell (2009: 159), in reducing the LBD to one obtaining between two individuals, the orthodox interpretation faces the following troubling question: “what has happened to ‘the whole expanse of the sensible world?’” More precisely, what has happened to self-consciousness in its moment as empirical consciousness for which the totality of the sensuous world has been preserved? None of the defenders of the orthodox interpretation who have attempted to respond to McDowell's heterodox interpretation have provided a satisfactory answer to his question. Let us turn to examining some of the proffered responses to this key question from McDowell's and to McDowell's larger heterodox position.

#### 4.1 Critique of Ardis Collins' Response to McDowell

Ardis Collins responds to McDowell's question regarding the status of the whole realm of empirical consciousness with its correlative world thusly:

I answer that the other self functions as the independent otherness of the natural world preserved within the dynamics of self-consciousness. In this role, a literally other self presents itself to the subject self (1) as the unifying life and being-for-self integrity of the objective life system, (2) as the natural world negating itself as not in-itself the truth, and (3) as the world referring itself to the subject self as that for which it exists and in which it has its truth. (Collins 2013: 308)

As I will show, Collins' response fails adequately to answer McDowell's question and runs into several difficulties.

Before addressing Collins' response, however, one further aspect of Hegel's account of self-consciousness demands clarification. Having made his point that self-consciousness differentiates itself into the two moments of 1) abstract self-consciousness and 2) empirical consciousness, Hegel proceeds to identify the moment of empirical consciousness as also a *living* being (*PhG* 105–6/104–5). For, like abstract self-consciousness, or the subjective subject-object of which Hegel speaks in the *DZ*, empirical consciousness, or the objective subject-object, reflects into itself. Thus, empirical consciousness is not merely an object but an objective *subject*-object. Yet, insofar empirical consciousness is a being or *subject* which is internally reflected, it is alive. For, according to Hegel, such self-reflection is a quintessential characteristic of life (*PhG* 106/105).

To return to Collins' argument, it is thus presumably self-consciousness in its moment *qua* living empirical consciousness with its correlative object (i.e. the whole expanse of the sensuous world) to which Collins refers in points 1-3 from the above passage. Yet, in response to Collins' argument, one can simply repeat McDowell's question in a modified form: If the literally other self which confronts the "subject self" presents the moment of living empirical consciousness to the subject self, then what happens to the empirical consciousness of the subject self, including especially the whole expanse of the empirical sensuous world? There are two possible responses to this question, neither of which is satisfactory.

First, one might claim that Collins' "subject self" corresponds to or possesses the moment of self-consciousness *qua* abstracted or reflected out of the world of living empirical consciousness and into itself, while the literally other self corresponds to or possesses the moment of self-consciousness *qua* living empirical consciousness for which the whole expanse of the sensuous world has been preserved (*PhG* 105/104). Yet, this scenario creates an enormous problem. For, if the *literally other individual self* possessed the moment of empirical consciousness, then the "subject self" would cease to be empirically conscious. That, in turn, would render the ensuing dialectic of recognition impossible since it would be impossible for such recognition to occur if one of the parties was not empirically conscious. For example, the "subject self" could hardly treat the literally other self

as a mere sensuous thing or instrument to be manipulated and ultimately enslaved if the subject self were not itself sensuously conscious.

Second, one might claim that *each* of the literally individual selves which confront one another at the outset of the LBD continues to preserve within itself its respective moments of 1) empirical consciousness and 2) abstract self-consciousness. Stephen Houlgate suggests something like this in his response to McDowell (Houlgate 2009: 45–46).<sup>29</sup> Yet, such a scenario would entail the presence of, not two, but *four* moments of self-consciousness, specifically, an empirical consciousness and a “subject self” or abstract self-consciousness for each of the two individual selves. Yet, there is no textual evidence to support such an interpretation.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, it is not clear how one literally *individual* self can “present” to a second individual self the second self’s moment of empirical consciousness since empirical consciousness preserves for itself the *entire*, indeed the *infinite*, expanse of the sensuous world. What could it mean to say that *one individual self* “presents” to another self the whole infinite expanse of the latter’s empirical consciousness? Is the presentation merely figurative or allegorical such that it only *appears to* the “subject self” that it is confronted by a literally other self when in fact, or in-itself (and thus only for us, phenomenological observers), it is opposed by its own empirical consciousness?<sup>31</sup> If so, then we have returned to McDowell’s argument.<sup>32</sup> Or, is the other self-consciousness in fact no mere “presentation” but the *literal instantiation* of the subject self’s empirical consciousness? If so, then, again, the subject self or abstract self-consciousness ceases to be empirically conscious and so cannot possibly participate in the dialectic of recognition.<sup>33</sup>

Lastly, Collins argues (2013: 308) that a crucial flaw in McDowell’s argument lies in the fact that it focuses “exclusively on the internal dynamics of the subject self.” Yet, Collins thereby suggests that there might be some legitimacy to a less exclusive focus on such internal dynamics. It remains rather unclear, however, in what such internal dynamics would consist for the orthodox interpretation if not the dialectic of the two moments of self-consciousness identified by Hegel. If these are in fact the elements constitutive of the “internal dynamics” of the LBD according to the orthodox interpretation, then the orthodox interpretation owes us an account of their dialectical unfolding. For, as it stands, in its account of the LBD, the orthodox interpretation would seem itself to focus exclusively on the “external dynamics” which obtain between two distinct human individuals. As already indicated, any account which, like Houlgate’s, sought simply to combine the “internal dynamics” with the “external dynamics” of self-consciousness at this stage would have to postulate *four* moments of self-consciousness operative within the LBD. Thus, the orthodox interpretation would seem to demand the rejection, not just of an exclusive focus, but of any focus at all on the internal dynamics operative within the LBD. Yet, Hegel clearly identifies the moments of just such an internal dialectic (*PhG* 105/104). Furthermore, the heterodox interpretation would alone seem to capture how Hegel intends to express this “internal dynamic”, namely, as a dialectic of domination and servitude between the two moments of self-consciousness.



## 4.2 Critique of Stephen Houlgate's Response to McDowell

In a pair of responses to McDowell, Stephen Houlgate raises (2009/10a, 2009/10b) a series of objections to McDowell's heterodox interpretation of the LBD to which McDowell provides (2009/10a, 2009/10b) his own pair of more or less successful responses. I do not wish simply to rehearse McDowell's responses. Instead, I will focus on three points that Houlgate raises and, in responding to them, attempt both to clarify and advance the cause of the heterodox argument.

### 4.2.a The Phenomenological Observer

In his critique of McDowell's overall attempt to read the LBD as an allegory for a dialectic internal to a single individual, Houlgate objects (2009/10a: 17–19) that such an approach would be tantamount to ascribing a privileged viewpoint to the phenomenological observer vis-à-vis the forms of consciousness being observed. For, an allegorical interpretation of the LBD entails that, although the form of consciousness under investigation *takes itself* to be involved in a dialectical struggle of domination and servitude between two distinct individuals, *we*, the phenomenological observers, *know* that what is “really” happening is a dialectical struggle between two elements internal to a single consciousness. Houlgate's contends, however, that the relation between a given form of consciousness under investigation and the phenomenological observer should not be construed in this way, for it would violate the Hegelian injunction to generate an “immanent” critique of each form of consciousness. It would do so because it would seemingly allow for the appeal to an *external criterion* – which is to say, a criterion hitherto unrecognized by the form of consciousness under investigation – in order to judge the relative validity of the observed form of consciousness's implicit or explicit claims or “takings” about its knowledge or the object it (putatively) thereby knows. While space does not permit a thorough treatment either of Hegel's notion of an “immanent criterion” or his notion of a phenomenological observer, some basic points might be established that will help clarify and advance the heterodox interpretation of the LBD.

To begin with, regarding Houlgate's objection that McDowell's heterodox interpretation falsely ascribes a privileged status to the viewpoint of the phenomenological observer, we might note that it would depend upon what is meant by “privileged.” In general, the phenomenological observer knows things about the form of consciousness it is investigating that that form of consciousness does not itself know. For example, at the beginning of Perception, *we*, the phenomenological observers, know that “the universal as principle is the essence of perception” and that both moments of Perception – namely, “that which perceives and that which is perceived” – “are themselves universal or the essence” and that, therefore, “both are essential” (*PhG* 67/71). By contrast, Perception itself, at least at this stage, does not know this about itself and so winds up alternately treating now one, now the other of the two moments of itself as alone the essence. To be sure, Perception eventually learns that both that which perceives and that which is perceived are

essential to its knowledge. Indeed, through the labor of dialectical experience, each successive form of consciousness overcomes such ignorance about itself and the nature of its object. Still, it remains that the phenomenological observer does not suffer from this same ignorance.

Importantly, however, not only does each form of consciousness learn through its dialectical experience, they each also forget that very developmental path and consequently revert to its beginning, which is to say, Sense-certainty and/or Perception (*PhG* 64/68–69).<sup>34</sup> Yet, in reverting to Sense-certainty, for example, consciousness *takes itself* to know its object through immediate sensuous experience or apprehension. It also treats the object as Sense-certainty treats its object, namely, not as something posited by consciousness and for which consciousness is thus responsible, but rather as something “found,” “already out there,” standing over-against consciousness. Thus, as a result of this repeated self-forgetting on the part of consciousness, each form of consciousness finds itself repeatedly re-confronting its object as if it were not consciousness itself but an “other” which is “independent” of or “outside” consciousness. In other words, as long as this self-forgetting on the part of consciousness lasts, the *positing* of its object in, for and by consciousness is forever taking place “behind the back of consciousness” (*PhG* 56/61).

For present purposes, however, the key point is to note is that, while consciousness does not know this about itself – that is to say, this fact about its own self-forgetting and what results from it – we, the phenomenological observers, *do* know this. Indeed, consciousness repeatedly forgets lessons about itself and its object that we, the phenomenological observers, recollect. To the extent that we recollect such lessons, whereas the observed form of consciousness forgets them, however, our viewpoint is “privileged,” for we are in possession of knowledge that the form of consciousness under observation lacks. Thus, prior to emergence of the absolute viewpoint, *we* can affirm that how things appear to a given form of consciousness under investigation versus how things are for us or in-themselves are distinct.

To be sure, there remains the special challenge incumbent upon the phenomenological observer to simultaneously inhabit yet observe the various forms of consciousness in question.<sup>35</sup> Yet, this introduces a paradox afflicting the very notion of a phenomenological observer. For, in order properly to observe any given form of consciousness, in order to see, in other words, the more or less naïve presuppositions of a given form of consciousness for what they are and thus not fall prey to them, the phenomenological observer must have already passed through these presuppositions and overcome them. Thus, it would seem that in order to read and understand the *PhG* one must have already read and understood it.<sup>36</sup> Yet, this paradox is simply an instance of the Hermeneutic Circle, and, as we learn from Heidegger (2001: 188ff.) and Gadamer (2006: 268ff.), the task is not to avoid the Hermeneutic Circle, but to enter into it properly. Thus, we might interpret Hegel’s device of the phenomenological observer as his attempt to help the reader enter properly into the Hermeneutic Circle.<sup>37</sup>

In any case, it remains that the phenomenological observer is able to differentiate how things appear to the form of consciousness under investigation and how things really are in-themselves or for us. This leads us back to McDowell's point, to which Houlgate objected, namely, that the life-and-death struggle and later the LBD merely *appears to* consciousness to involve two distinct individuals when in-itself or for us it is something that occurs within a single individual. In order to secure his argument, McDowell points to Hegel's clear statement that his account of the LBD will record how it "appears to self-consciousness," as opposed to how it is in-itself or for us (*PhG* 112/110). What is more, this position would be in keeping with Hegel's general formula according to which consciousness develops to a certain point but forgets the history of its development and so reverts to initial stage of development, namely, Sense-certainty. For, as noted, such a reversion to Sense-certainty, in turn, results in consciousness treating its object – whatever it may be in-itself – as something like a sensuous "This" which is "out there." In the present case, the object of consciousness, or rather the first moment of the doubled object of self-consciousness from which abstract self-consciousness takes itself to have abstracted, is "self-consciousness in the form of consciousness" (*PhG* 105/104). Since, however, consciousness has forgotten its path of development, it reverts to a naïve relation to its object and so it appears to consciousness that its object – empirical consciousness – is a "This" or "body" "out there."

#### **4.2.b The Dialectic of Desire**

Houlgate further objects that McDowell fails sufficiently to advert to the basic lesson of the dialectic of desire, which is, according to Houlgate, that self-consciousness learns that its goal is or must be "to be explicitly conscious of itself in relation what is other than it" (2009/10b: 45). To the extent that I understand it, Houlgate's argument proceeds more or less as follows:

Desire manifests the fact that self-consciousness seeks to relate purely to itself. Yet, in the first instance, self-consciousness *qua* desire finds itself confronted by an "other" which "presents itself" as an independent object/life (*PhG* 109/107). Therefore, in order to satisfy its desire to relate purely to itself, self-consciousness seeks to destroy this "other" through consuming it. Yet, in the very satisfying of this desire, self-consciousness, despite itself, reveals the independence of the "other." For, in order to consume it, the object must already "*be there*" (2009/10b: 18). Still, despite self-consciousness's discovery of the independence of the object, the demand by self-consciousness that it relate purely to itself persists. Thus, in order for consciousness both to preserve the apparent insight that the "other" is already "really there" yet simultaneously achieve its goal of pure self-relation and thus become properly self-conscious, the "other" itself must negate itself. Yet, the only object that is capable of such self-negation is self-consciousness itself. Thus, in order for self-consciousness to become properly self-conscious there must be another (albeit radically self-negating) self-consciousness which is also "really there." Therefore, McDowell's larger heterodox interpretation of Hegel's analysis of self-consciousness,

which would deny that, at this stage, another individual self-consciousness is “really there”, cannot be correct.

Before addressing this part of Houlgate’s objection to McDowell, it will be helpful to note the contrast between immediate desire, or desire as it first appears on the scene, and labor. As compared to labor, the problem with immediate desire is not that it pretends to negate the independence of the object only to learn that the object is actually independent. Rather, the limitation of immediate desire is that it lacks mediation, or the negation of this negation, which is to say, desire held in check (*PhG* 117–18/114–15).<sup>38</sup> Yet, desire held in check is just labor, which is also a self-positing. Thus, labor does not merely immediately or abstractly negate the *Hauptmoment* of the object of consciousness, which is to say, the appearance to consciousness that the object is “other” than it; it negates this negation by positing itself as its own object.<sup>39</sup>

By contrast, desire as it first appears on the scene corresponds to (abstract) self-consciousness for which the first moment of its doubled object, namely, empirical consciousness, is not posited by self-consciousness but is instead an “other” existing “outside” of consciousness. In other words, instead of knowingly positing [*Setzen*] its object, abstract self-consciousness, including abstract self-conscious *qua* immediate desire, initially presupposes [*Vor-aus-setzen*] its object to be “already out there.”

Indeed, compare this last point with Hegel’s discussion in the *EL* of being-for-self or self-consciousness *qua* cognition, which just is self-consciousness *qua* desire or drive for knowledge. For, while the object of self-consciousness *qua* cognition is in-itself self-consciousness, still, self-consciousness *qua* cognition winds up “repelling itself as a totality from itself, and, to be precise, of presupposing *itself* as an *external universe*” [Emphases mine] (*EL* 294/377). This presupposing of itself as an external universal by self-consciousness *qua* desire for knowledge, however, “is not yet a positing,” and “for that reason, the objective Idea [or the objective subject-object] is for the subjective Idea [or the subjective subject-object] the immediate world that is *found to be already there*” [Parentheses mine] (*EL* 295/377–78).<sup>40</sup> Thus, it is only finite, abstract self-consciousness or the subjective subject-object which “presupposes the independence of the object” (*EL* 301/386). The larger task of *self-knowledge*, as opposed to mere self-consciousness *qua* cognition, is for cognition to re-cognize the object as posited by consciousness itself and thereby overcome the appearance or presentation to consciousness that its object was something it had merely “found” “already out there.”<sup>41</sup>

Let us return, now, to the moment of desire in the *PhG* and the apparent lesson that consciousness learns there. At the beginning of the dialectic of desire, we again find an abstract self-consciousness which has itself as an immediate, abstract object, namely, the abstract genus (*PhG* 109/107).<sup>42</sup> This abstract self-consciousness, like all self-consciousness, moreover, is alive. Still, abstract self-consciousness *qua* abstract also finds itself confronted by an “other” which “presents itself” to abstract self-consciousness as an independent life. Yet, as we know, this “other” object is

simply the first moment of the doubled object of self-consciousness, namely, self-consciousness in the form of empirical consciousness (*PhG* 105/104). Thus, despite how things may present themselves or otherwise appear to abstract self-consciousness, this independent “other” just is the moment of self-consciousness itself *qua* living, empirical consciousness. In other words, the life which abstract self-consciousness confronts or presupposes is its own.<sup>43</sup>

Still, since abstract self-consciousness insists on being *for itself* in immediate self-relation *to itself*, or an ‘I = I’, it cannot abide the *appearance to* it that it is confronted by and, thus in relation to, that which is not itself. Thus, in the first instance, abstract self-consciousness experiences desire as the urge to negate the “external” object which appears to confront it.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, it thinks that it can negate this opposed object and thus establish or restore its immediate self-relation through a singular act of consumption. Yet, famously, the desire along with the object continually reemerge.

It is important, however, to see *why* the desire and its object continue to reemerge. They reemerge because, in immediate, abstract desire, self-consciousness only succeeds in maintaining a “negative relation to the object” (*PhG* 109/107). In other words, immediate, abstract desire does not achieve the negation of the negation, which is thus also a positing, characteristic of labor. Instead, it merely presupposes the object and then attempts to immediately negate it.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, in the dialectic of desire, self-consciousness *qua* desire does indeed learn that the object is independent, but *it does not learn that in which such independence consists*. For naïve consciousness, “independent” or “absolute” means “already out there.” For developed, educated, and self-recognitive consciousness, “independent” or “absolute” means that which is unconditioned because it is self-conditioning, which is to say, that which posits its own conditions or presuppositions only to fulfill or sublimate them.<sup>46</sup> Self-consciousness as abstract, immediate desire is still a naïve form of consciousness. Thus, while *for us* or *in itself*, the independence or unconditioned-ness of the object of self-consciousness *qua* desire consists in its being a principle of absolute self-negation and self-mediation, which is to say, a living self-consciousness, still, *for* self-consciousness *qua* abstract, immediate desire, the independence of the object consists in its being a presupposed “body” or “Thing” “already out there” (*PhG* 110/108).

#### **4.2.c Empirical Consciousness and Experience**

In both of his responses to McDowell, Houlgate objects (2009/10a: 20; 2009/10b: 42) that, with its radical claim that empirical consciousness *becomes* absolute self-consciousness, the heterodox interpretation implies that for “absolute knowing, the Concept is the form of *empirical* objectivity in particular” (2009/10b: 42). In other words, so I take Houlgate to be stating, that empirical consciousness should become absolute self-consciousness implies that the absolute object, namely, the Concept, is empirically experienced. For, indeed, as mentioned in part 4 above, in becoming the absolute being-for-self which ultimately recognizes itself in the absoluteness of

its object, the empirical self does not thereby cease to be empirically conscious. Houlgate objects to this implication of the heterodox argument, however, because, according to him, absolute knowing, for Hegel, “does not involve or incorporate any empirical experience of the world at all” (2009/10b: 42). Houlgate’s objection, however, is grounded in his ascription to Hegel of a highly restricted conception of experience, one which Hegel rejects and which the LBD is itself designed to help overcome.

Let us begin by noting that Hegel routinely criticizes Kant for simply taking over the naïve and restricted conception of experience operative in the empiricists such as Locke and Hume.<sup>47</sup> Experience, for Kant and other empiricists, is restricted to the realm of the merely sensuous. Yet, insofar as Kant restricts his conception of experience to what is merely sensuous, he is effectively in the same position of the Bondsman who is still immersed in the realm of immediate sensuous existence and, therefore, has not universally and absolutely negated this realm in and through his fear, service and labor (*PhG* 119/115–16). As Hegel notes, Kant, like the Bondsman, is still “overawed” by the sensuous object (*SL* 51/32). Indeed, Kant’s continuing attachment to, and domination by, the sensuous object is just the obverse of his projection of his absolute, universal power of thought onto the Lord/TUA. For, if Kant managed properly to *recognize* his own developed, educated and universalized empirical consciousness as the truth of the TUA, then he would already have moved beyond his restricted conception of experience, for he would have recognized that the object of his experience is not restricted to the realm of the merely sensuous.<sup>48</sup>

For Hegel, then, part and parcel of the self-liberation of empirical consciousness is its freeing of itself from its attachment to the merely sensuous and the restricted conception of experience that results from this attachment.<sup>49</sup> Hegel himself, having achieved such self-liberation, therefore, generalizes his conception of experience well beyond the empiricist restrictions that Kant accepts due to his – Kant’s – failure to liberate himself from his domination by sensuousness.

Hegel clearly announces his generalization of experience in the *EL*: “everything that is in consciousness at all is experienced” (32/52). Again, for Hegel, *everything that is in consciousness at all is experienced*.<sup>50</sup> To appreciate the significance of this radical claim it would be helpful to view it in light of a further comment from Hegel regarding Locke in which Hegel both accepts Locke’s insistence that objective knowledge (including absolute knowledge) be grounded in experience yet generalizes his conception of experience beyond Locke’s (and Kant’s) empiricist restrictions:

As to the question in point we must in the first place say that it is true that man commences with experience if he desires to arrive at thought. *Everything is experienced*, not merely what is sensuous, but also what excites and stimulates my mind. Consciousness thus undoubtedly obtains all conceptions and Concepts from experience; *the only question is what we understand by experience* [Emphases mine]. (*LHP III* 303/213–15)

Thus, for Hegel, *everything* is experienced, not simply what is sensuous, but also objects which “excite the mind,” objects including, for example, universal and necessary Conceptual determinations.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, for Hegel, contra Kant, consciousness obtains all concepts from experience. The decisive question is simply what is meant by experience. For Hegel, consciousness experiences everything up to and including its knowledge of the absolute.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, the fact that, for Hegel, empirical consciousness becomes absolute self-consciousness lies at the very heart of the oft-repeated fact that the original title of the *PhG* was “The Science of the Experience of Consciousness”.<sup>53</sup>

Houlgate’s objection to the heterodox interpretation of the LBD because it implies that, in becoming absolute self-consciousness, empirical consciousness thus experiences the absolute object is itself flawed because it rests on a restricted conception of experience, a conception of experience, moreover, which Hegel does not share. Indeed, it is just the overcoming of this restricted conception experience that the LBD, in part, leads towards.<sup>54</sup>

## **5. Future Prospects for a Reconciliation of the Orthodox and Heterodox Interpretations**

As already mentioned, space does not permit attempting a sublation of the orthodox and the heterodox interpretations of the LBD. Still, perhaps some small indication might be provided of one potential line of inquiry. Specifically, we might look for assistance to Hegel’s treatment in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion (LPR)* and in the *Philosophy of Nature (PN)* of the two central Christian mysteries, namely, 1) the hypostatic union of two natures in Christ, and 2) the triune God.

Regarding the hypostatic union, Christ represents the quintessential instance of the sublation of a lordly/absolute and slavish/empirical consciousness in a single individual.<sup>55</sup> Yet, Christ *qua* head of the Mystical Body is also a *community* of individuals reconciled in the Spirit. Thus, Christ is both the single individual and the species, just as Israel is both an individual person and a nation. Perhaps worthy of note in this connection is that, in his *Life of Moses*, Gregory of Nyssa treats the story of the Israelite’s flight from Egypt as an allegory for the liberation of the individual soul.<sup>56</sup> To be sure, Hegel’s views this would-be liberation of the Israelites as simply the exchange of one external master (Pharaoh) for another (Yahweh) even more oppressive and remote (*ETW* 191/282–83). The point is simply that Gregory’s allegorical reading indicates how the whole socio-historical event of liberation can, and from a Hegelian point of view, perhaps should, be interpreted as an allegory for an internal struggle of domination and servitude.

Regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, we might note how the immanent Trinity would correspond to the subjective subject-object, while the economic Trinity would correspond to the objective subject-object (*PN*12ff./22ff.). Thus, in the immanent Trinity, the Father would correspond to “subject” of the abstract Fichtean absolute self, or the first ‘I’ in the ‘I = I’ formula; the Son would correspond to the “object”

of the abstract Fichtean absolute self, or the second 'I' of the 'I = I' formula; and the Spirit would correspond to their immediately and abstractly sublated identity, or the '=' in the 'I = I' formula. With respect to the economic Trinity, however, God *qua* Creator would correspond to moment of the Father; Creation or Nature would correspond to the moment of the Son; and the concrete, historical and universal spiritual community (including a sublated Nature) would correspond to the moment of the Spirit. For present purposes, however, it is important to note that, for Hegel, it is only in and through the historical, "empirical" becoming of the economic Trinity that the eternal, immanent Trinity is actualized, for they are ultimately the same (*LPR* 425ff./209ff.). Yet, the historical becoming of the economic Trinity is not fully completed with the death and resurrection (or negation and negation of the negation) of the individual person, Jesus of Nazareth, but in the community of believers resurrected in the Spirit (*PN* 14/24).

Thus, it may be that *both* the single individual *and* the universal "World-Spirit" "pass through" all the "formative stages" of consciousness (*PhG* 16–17/24–25). This point is in keeping with the peculiarly Hegelian principle according to which not only is the part in the whole, but the whole is in every part, or that ontogeny (i.e. the development of the individual) recapitulates phylogeny (i.e. the development of the genus/phylum/whole).<sup>57</sup> However, insofar as Lordship and Bondage is indeed a form of consciousness, it must be the case that individual *qua* individual experiences *all* of the elements of this stage. Otherwise, the *PhG* would fail in its task self-assigned task to provide a "ladder" by which the *individual* might reach the absolute viewpoint (14–15/23).<sup>58</sup>

## 6. Conclusions

Hegel begins his discussion of self-consciousness by describing two moments of a *single* self-consciousness which come into conflict (*PhG* 105/104). The conflict stems from the fact that self-consciousness initially relates to its own empirical existence as something alien to itself, as a living being that is not itself.

There is thus a clear Kantian and Fichtean backdrop to Hegel's discussion of self-consciousness, and articulating this backdrop illuminates the entire dialectic. For, analogously to the moments of self-consciousness in Hegel, in Kant and Fichte the empirical inclinations of the empirical self and indeed the whole expanse of nature obtrude as something alien upon the exclusive self-relation or "auto-nomy" of transcendental/absolute self-consciousness. This tension ultimately results in a relationship of domination and servitude between these two moments of a *single* self-consciousness in which the (putatively) exclusively self-relating moment of self-consciousness prescribes the law to or otherwise dominates the (putatively) alien moment.

The orthodox interpretation thus suffers on several major counts. First, it fails adequately to respond to McDowell's basic question regarding the status of empirical consciousness, including the whole expanse of the sensuous world, in the LBD.



Second, it must simply neglect the crucial clues to the Kantian and Fichtean backdrop to the LBD supplied by the *DZ*. Third, the orthodox interpretation does not adequately account for the pattern of self-positing, self-forgetting, self-confrontation, and self-sublation of an apparently “other” by which the dialectic of self-knowledge actually unfolds over the course of the *PhG*.

By contrast, a fully worked out heterodox interpretation clarifies with great precision the place of empirical consciousness in Hegel’s account of the dialectic of self-consciousness and the emergence of self-knowledge. Moreover, the heterodox interpretation alone illuminates what constitutes among the profoundest elements of Hegel’s LBD, namely, the manner in which it dialectically inverts transcendental philosophy’s conception of the relationship between empirical and transcendental/absolute self-consciousness.

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The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

## **NOTES**

1. Holders of the orthodox position are legion. Notable among them would be: Houlgate (2005, 2009/10a, 2009/10b, 2013), Hyppolite (1974), Kojève (1969), Pinkard (1994, 2012), Pippin (1989, 2008, 2011), Siep (2014), Stern (2013), Westphal (1998), and Williams (1994).

2. Regarding such “anti-Cartesian” interpretations of the LBD, see Westphal (2011) and Stern (2012).

3. McDowell acknowledges that an analysis of the “intervening contribution” of Fichte between Kant and Hegel would be relevant to his argument (2009: 153). McDowell seems to miss, however, the utter indispensability of the role of Fichte for understanding both the details and the larger import of Hegel’s LBD. This paper will fill this lacuna both in McDowell’s argument and in the larger literature.

4. None of the contributors to the controversy sparked by McDowell’s heterodox argument, including McDowell himself, even mention Hegel’s discussion of the *Hauptmoment* of consciousness. This despite the fact that *Hauptmoment* is a principal, or indeed *Haupt*, moment in Hegel’s larger phenomenology of the development of consciousness into self-consciousness. As will become progressively clearer over the course of this paper, this omission on the part of these commentators is not unconnected with their shared neglect of the Fichtean backdrop to Hegel’s analysis of self-consciousness. For recent contributions to this controversy, see Collins (2013), Houlgate (2009/10a, 2009/10b, 2013), McDowell (2009/10a, 2009/10b), and Pippin (2011).

5. It must be granted that the orthodox and heterodox positions may not constitute two mutually exclusive positions. Thus, it may be possible to sublimate the orthodox and heterodox

interpretation into a higher viewpoint. Although some suggestions will be provided in part 5, working out the full details of such a sublation extends beyond the scope of this paper. G.A. Kelly provides (1998) some helpful suggestions regarding what such a sublation might look like. Indeed, as Kelly notes, “the ultimate Hegelian apex” must entail some kind of sublation between the “inner” and the “outer,” or the individual and the social contexts of domination and servitude (1998: 186). Yet, this means that “the social reading [of the LBD], taken alone, can encourage sharp distortions” (1998: 186). The general aim of this paper is to contribute to the elimination of the distortions caused by the exclusive focus on the social context of the LBD. Rauch does not seem to acknowledge (1999: 88) the more radical heterodox implications of Kelly’s suggestions regarding the “innerness” of the LBD.

6. Siep (2014) and Redding (2008) discuss the influence of Fichte on Hegel’s conception of self-consciousness. Still, the upshot of their respective efforts is to defend the orthodox interpretation of the LBD by first identifying the “anti-Cartesian” elements in Fichte’s conception of self-consciousness, especially in his ethical works, and then indicating how Hegel was likely influenced by these. This “anti-Cartesian” reading of Fichte is fairly common and likely has influenced the reading of Hegel’s conception of self-consciousness. Thus, according to Breazeale (2016: 121), for Fichte, “without material objects and other persons there could be no self-conscious I.” And, according to Farr (2010: 249), for Fichte, “if there are to be [rationally self-conscious] human beings at all, there must be more than one.”

7. As Fichte states, “The self’s own positing of itself is thus its own pure activity. The *self posits itself*, and by virtue this mere self-assertion it *exists*; and conversely, the self *exists* and *posits* its own existence by virtue of merely existing. It is at once the agent and product of action; the active and what the activity brings about; action and deed are one and the same” (SK 96/97); “The self is a necessary identity of subject and object: a subject-object; and is so absolutely, without further mediation” (SK 98/99).

8. As Fichte states, the absolute self “necessarily strives” to preserve or restore its perfect self-relatedness in light of the emergence of restriction, opposition and contradiction within itself (SK 265/234).

9. As Fichte states, “There lies a major antithesis, which spans the entire conflict between the self as intelligence, and to that extent, the self as an absolutely posited and thus unrestricted entity; and which compels us to adopt as a means of unification a practical capacity of the self” (SK 247/219).

10. As Hegel states, “In [Fichte] the relation of freedom and nature is supposed to become one of subjective lordship and bondage, a suppression of nature by *oneself*” (DZ 149–50/59).

11. Fichte concedes to the intrinsic incompleteness and opposition which characterizes the “bad” infinite striving of the empirical self’s objective practical activity: “The ideal is an absolute product of the self; it can be elevated out to infinity; but at each determinate moment it has its limits, which *at the next determinate moment* must be utterly different” [Emphases mine] (SK 269/237).

12. See Breazeale (2013: 121–123).

13. See Hegel’s reference in the *Philosophy of Mind (PM)* to this moment of “subjective” self-consciousness as “abstract self-consciousness” (153/213).

14. See Hegel’s discussion in the *PM* of the moment of abstract self-consciousness to which the moment of empirical or sensuous consciousness appears as an opposed, external object (153/213).

15. As Hegel states in the *PM*, the concept of self-consciousness “consists in being in relation to its own self, in being I = I” (155/214).

16. See Hegel’s discussion in the *PM* in which he asserts that self-consciousness differentiates itself into abstract self-consciousness and consciousness (153/213).

17. See Hegel: “The truth of consciousness is *self-consciousness* and the latter is the ground of the former, so that in existence all consciousness of another object is self-consciousness” (*PM* 152/213); “The two things are one and the same [...] consciousness and self-consciousness” (153/214); “This rift between self-consciousness and consciousness forms an *inner contradiction of self-consciousness with itself*, because self-consciousness is also the stage directly preceding it, consciousness, and consequently is the opposite of itself” [Emphasis mine] (*PM* 153/214).

18. See Hegel’s discussion in the *PM* in which he states that the object which the abstract ‘I’ initially treats as an alien body just is empirical consciousness or “*natural mind itself*” [Emphasis mine] (*PM* 41/27). Also, in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (*EPR*), Hegel states that the will has two initial moments: 1) abstract universality and 2) empirical existence. Moreover, the abstract will initially relates to *its own* empirical existence as something nevertheless existing independently of, and in opposition to, itself (35ff./46ff.).

19. It is worth noting that, although in principle the “negativity” or opposition of the *Hauptmoment* vis-à-vis consciousness is completely negated by the Bondsman/empirical consciousness, the Bondsman/empirical consciousness’s labor winds up being a figure or, indeed, an analogy for the labor that will in fact take the entire course of the *PhG* to complete. For, as will be discussed at greater length in part Four, each time consciousness develops by negating or destroying the *Hauptmoment* of its object, it nevertheless “forgets” its very path of development and reverts to the stage of mere consciousness with its correlative *Hauptmoment* (*PhG* 64/68–69, 14–41/133, 20–09/19–91, 34–41/30–04). Consciousness’s culminating task, therefore, is to *recollect* and thus *re-cognize* its path of development and that the object which it has forged in and through that path is indeed its own doing (*PhG* 485–86/427–28, 49–93/43–34). For, recall, the *Hauptmoment* of consciousness is not the actual independence or opposition of the object, but merely the *appearance to* consciousness that the object – whatever it might be (e.g. sensible or intelligible) – exists independently of, or in opposition to, consciousness. The appearance to consciousness that its object is “outside of” or opposed to it is thus simply the result of the ruse consciousness plays with itself in its game of self-development, self-forgetting and self-recollection. See Hegel: “The movement of the Concept must be considered, so to speak, only as a play; the other which it posited by its movement is, in fact, not an other” (*EL* 309/238); “But in the realising of the purpose what happens in-itself is that the one-sided subjectivity is sublated, along with the semblance of an objective independence standing over against it. In taking hold of the means, the Concept posits itself as the essence of the object” (*EL* 285/366); “It is within its own process that the Idea produces that illusion for itself; it posits an other confronting itself, and its actions consists in sublating this illusion” (*EL* 286/367); “The semblance of mind’s being mediated by an Other is sublated by the mind itself, since mind has, so to speak, the sovereign ingratitude of sublating, or mediating, that by which it seems to be mediated, of reducing it to something subsisting only through mind and in this way making itself completely independent” (*PM* 25/15); “There is simply no out-and-out Other for the mind” (*PM* 11/3).

20. Worth noting is that, even in the *System of Ethical Life* in which Hegel’s seems clearly to speak of the LBD as occurring between two distinct individuals, there is another

sense in which the whole discussion of ethical life is framed as a dialectic within “a single man”, something that is “in him but concealed in him” (*SEL* 102/4).

21. Worth noting is that the ultimate result of the fear, service and labor that consciousness undergoes over the course of the entire Self-consciousness chapter is the emergence of Reason, and yet Reason just is “the *single* individual consciousness” grasping that it is itself universal and absolute (*PhG* 139/132). Siep gestures (1996: 279) at this self-sublation of the single individual consciousness, but he remains largely within the confines of the orthodox interpretation of the LBD.

22. Both McDowell (2009) and Pippin (1989) seem to have overlooked the fact that Hegel declares Kant’s doctrine of the TUA to be “a barbarous exposition of the matter” (*LHP III* 437/343). Indeed, Hegel conspicuously avoids using the term “transcendental apperception” except when analyzing or critiquing Kant precisely because the doctrine of the TUA, according to which “transcendental apperception” is opposed to or otherwise dominates empirical consciousness, expresses just the kind of self-alienated, self-enslaved vision of consciousness that Hegel is attempting to overcome. If anything, Hegel maintains that “pure apperception” is not something which merely accompanies or otherwise opposes empirical consciousness; rather, it expresses “the nature of *all* consciousness” [Emphases mine] (*EL* 85/118).

23. Stekeler-Weithofer (2008) takes over McDowell’s heterodox interpretation and so sees in the LBD and, more especially, in the preceding life-and-death struggle an effort by Hegel to critique Kant. He does not acknowledge or attempt to develop, however, McDowell’s radical claim that empirical consciousness *becomes* “apperceptive” or absolute self-consciousness. In fact, he seems to preserve the duality and even the relation of domination and servitude between these two principles inasmuch as he simply allegorically transposes the Lord and Bondsman into “two roles” one of which provides a kind of formal “normative control” vis-à-vis the “content” of other (2008: 233–34).

24. In an exceedingly pregnant passage, Fichte, himself, voices his frustration that Kant does not provide a phenomenology of how the Categorical Imperative is given in conscious experience: “The intellectual intuition of which the *Wissenschaftslehre* speaks is not directed toward any sort of being whatsoever; instead, it is directed at an acting – and this is something that Kant does not even mention (except, perhaps, under the name ‘pure apperception’). Nevertheless, it is still possible to indicate the exact place within Kant’s system where he should have discussed this. For Kant would certainly maintain that we are conscious of the categorical imperative, would he not? What sort of consciousness is this? Kant neglected to pose this question to himself, for nowhere did he discuss the foundation of *all* philosophy. Instead, in the *Critique of Pure Reason* he dealt only with theoretical philosophy, within the context of which the categorical imperative could not appear; and in the *Critique of Practical Reason* he dealt only with practical philosophy and discussed only the content of this sort of consciousness, and thus the question concerning the very nature of this sort of consciousness could not arise with the context of the *Second Critique*. – Our consciousness of the categorical imperative is undoubtedly immediate, but it is not a form of sensory consciousness. In other words, it is precisely what I call ‘intellectual intuition’” (*IWL* 56/472). Hegel would agree that we are empirically conscious of such putatively universal and necessary principles as the Categorical Imperative (*EL* 49/72). But he would clarify that such consciousness is far from immediate. Rather, it is heavily mediated by the empirical experiences of fear, service and labor.

25. Thus, along with the unsublated *Hauptmoment* or otherness on the side of the “object” (i.e. the *Anstoß* of Fichte or the *ding-an-sich* of Kant), transcendental philosophy

also posits an unsublated otherness on the side of the “subject” in the form of the absolute self or TUA. Indeed, being mere avatars of the true absolute or the unconditioned (namely, fully developed, educated and universalized empirical consciousness), these two apparently distinct, unsublated othernesses constitutive of transcendental philosophy are just two sides of the same self-alienated, self-enslaved coin.

26. Even from the time of his *Early Theological Writings (ETW)*, Hegel viewed Kantian morality as a form self-enslavement. Thus, in *The Spirit of Christianity*, Hegel states, “The man who listens to his own command of duty [...] carries his lord in himself, yet at the same time is his own slave” [Emphasis mine] (211/323). Despite quoting this same passage in his investigation of the *PhG*, Forster fails to note (1998: 38ff.) any connection between Hegel’s evident early concern with the self-enslavement of a single individual and the LBD. This is particularly unfortunate because, for Hegel, it is precisely the figure of Christ who represents the quintessential instance of the sublation of empirical/slavish consciousness and absolute/lordly consciousness in a single individual (*ETW* 211ff./323ff.; *LPR* 452ff./234ff.). In his comparison of Hegel’s account of Lordship and Bondage with that of Nietzsche’s account of Master morality and Slave morality (1998: 36-37), Forster also misses the opportunity to discuss Nietzsche’s account of how such mastery and slavery occurs *within a single will* (*Beyond Good and Evil*: 18–20).

27. In noting that “Similar to Kant, Hegel takes self-consciousness to be the essence of empirical consciousness,” Kok seems to miss (2014: 77) the further dialectical inversion that, for Hegel, educated, developed and universalized empirical consciousness is the *truth* of Kantian-style transcendental self-consciousness.

28. Kok agrees (2014: 86) that Hegel’s account of self-consciousness has to do not with an embryonic social encounter between two individuals but with “the general form of self-consciousness.” Still, while Kok’s position (2014: 95) that true self-consciousness is the fruit of the self-sublation of nature is in accord with the present interpretation that absolute self-consciousness is achieved in and through the self-sublation of empirical consciousness (which, of course, includes the whole expanse of sensuous nature), it is not clear whether or not Kok recognizes that, in the final analysis, the independence of nature is simply an appearance, semblance or illusion, one, moreover, which consciousness posits for itself (albeit, in the first instance, behind its own back) but which is also negated in and through the negation of the *Hauptmoment* of consciousness. See Hegel: “For, in fact, nature is posited by spirit, and it is spirit itself that makes nature into its presupposition” (306/391).

29. Other aspects of Houlgate’s response to McDowell will be discussed in the next sub-section.

30. Pippin’s more or less orthodox response (2011) to McDowell’s basic question regarding the status of empirical consciousness with its correlative world would be subject to the same points of critique.

31. See Hegel’s discussion in the *PM* in which he states that the identity of abstract self-consciousness and its object is, in the first instance, only known to the phenomenological “onlookers” (*PM* 153/213). Yet, in-itself or for us, this object just is empirical consciousness itself. Thus, it is only *for abstract self-consciousness* that “it and consciousness are still two different things [e.g. two different individuals] confronting each other” [Parentheses mine] (*PM* 154/214).

32. As Hegel indicates, the task is for consciousness to successively overcome “the first, immediate presentation of the object” (*PhG* 104/103).

33. Worthy of note is that, for Fichte, the (abstract) absolute self is indeed empirically unconscious. See: *IWL* 9/424–25, *WL* 259/295, *WL* 264/301, *FNR* 4–5/2–3, *Nova Methodo* 84–5/9–10, *Nova Methodo* 103/23.

34. For instances of such self-forgetting and consequence reversion to the viewpoint of Sense-certainty and/or Perception on the part of consciousness, see *PhG* 140–41/133, 208–09/190–91, 340–41/303–04.

35. Regarding the process of simultaneously inhabiting yet observing the various forms of consciousness, Hegel undoubtedly owes a debt to Fichte and his phenomenological method of “abstraction” and “intellectual intuition.” See Fichte: “‘Intellectual intuition’ is the name I give to the act required of the philosopher: an act of intuiting himself while simultaneously performing the act by means of which the I originates for him” (*IWL* 37/454); “there is a double series within the intellect: a series of being and a series of observing. [...] The essence of the intellect consists precisely in the indivisibility of this double series” (*IWL* 21/436); “The intellect, as such, observes itself, and this act of self-observation is immediately directed at everything that the intellect is. Indeed, the nature of the intellect consists precisely in this immediate unity of being and seeing. Everything included within the intellect exists for the intellect, and the intellect is for itself everything that it is” (*IWL* 20–21/435). It is rarely observed, however, that with the emergence of self-consciousness and its ability to radically abstract from, yet still observe itself (hence, *self-consciousness*), Hegel is describing how the very viewpoint of the phenomenological observer itself begins to come into existence. In other words, phenomenological self-observation is just a heightened, or more educated and trained, instance of self-consciousness (Cf. *Observing Reason* which, of course, immediately succeeds the Self-consciousness chapter in the *PhG*). Yet, this is in keeping with Hegel’s larger effort to explain the very existence of *all* philosophies (*qua* expressions of forms of consciousness), including his own. As Bernard Lonergan puts it (2005: 553), “Hegel has obliged [philosophers] not only to account for their own views but also to explain the existence of contrary convictions and opinions.”

36. Heidegger was perhaps the first to note this paradox, as he states, “we can begin to understand the [*PhG*] only if we have already reached its end [...] However, the first reading is not a guarantee that with the second reading we really understand the work. Perhaps the first reading must be frequently repeated” (1994: 36). Thus, we might say that the viewpoint of the phenomenological observer is “privileged” only for the person who inhabits it properly, and learning how to inhabit it properly may take any number of “first” readings.

37. Parry recognizes (1998) that the device of the phenomenological observer presents us with an instance of the Paradox of Learning as well as the Hermeneutic Circle. In the Introduction to the *LHP*, Hegel provides a clear articulation of this hermeneutic paradox specifically with respect to the (profitable) study of the history of philosophy (*LHPI* 30–1/49–50). For, according to Hegel, one must know one’s mind in order to understand the history of philosophy, but one must study the history of philosophy in order to know one’s mind. Stated differently, if one does not know one’s mind as a self-developing organic system, then one will be unable to re-cognize the various historical philosophies as successive expressions of the moments of that system (as opposed to a mere haphazard succession of freaks). Yet, it is only through studying the history of philosophy that one comes to recognize that the mind is a self-developing system whose various moments are expressed in the various philosophies.

38. Notice how the “check” [*hemmen*] of consciousness, here, is not supplied by the “check” [*Anstoß*] or “external stimulus” of the *Hauptmoment* of consciousness, but by consciousness itself. See Hegel: “The concept needs no external stimulus for its actualization [...] In a merely ratiocinative approach the conclusion certainly appears more or less arbitrary; in philosophical science, by contrast, the concept itself sets a limit to its self-development by giving itself an actuality that completely corresponds to it” (*PM* 14–5/7); “Therefore limitation is not in [...] mind: it is posited by mind in order to be sublated” (*PM* 37/23–4).

39. Needless to say, labor will promptly forget that its object has been posited through its own self-activity.

40. The “Idea,” of course, is the unity of Concept and existence, or “subject” and “object.” Thus, the subjective Idea would be a subjective subject-object, while the objective Idea would be the objective subject-object.

41. See Hegel: “[H]ence the sensuous world is for [abstract self-consciousness] an enduring existence which, however, is only appearance, or a difference which, in itself, is no difference. This antithesis of its appearance and its truth has, however, for its essence only the truth, viz. the unity of self-consciousness with itself; this unity must become essential to self-consciousness” [Emphases and Parentheses mine] (*PhG* 105/104); “The finitude of cognition lies in the presupposition of a world that is found to be already there. [...] Finite cognition does not yet now itself as the activity of the Concept, which it is only in-itself but not for-itself” (*EL* 296/379). As in the *EL*, throughout the *SL*, Hegel repeatedly critiques the attitude of presupposing the object as something “found” “already there,” rather than as posited.

42. The abstract genus is, of course, the immediate predecessor to the abstract Category that will constitute the immediate object of Reason as it first appears on the scene (142ff./134ff.). It is due, moreover, to the immediacy and abstractness of the Category as well as to the fact that Reason as it first comes on the scene also reverts to the viewpoint of Sense-certainty, that it *appears to* Reason that it must seek a *further* object, namely, the sensuous empirical “filling” or “content” for this abstract Category. This “objective content” will, of course, be supplied in and through the scientific labor of empirical consciousness.

43. As McDowell points out (2009: 162), recognizing this fact helps to resolve a serious ambiguity in Hegel’s account of the life-and-death struggle, namely, why it would be that, in seeking the death of the other, self-consciousness *eo ipso* risks its own life. For, surely, we can imagine scenarios in which one individual pursues the death of another individual without the former *eo ipso* risking its own life – for example, through cleverness, treachery or simply superior technology. Yet, if it is its own empirical existence that self-consciousness seeks to negate or abstract from, then in pursuing this end it *eo ipso* puts its own life at risk. Worthy of note is that in the *EPR* Hegel identifies the will’s moment of abstract being-for-self as a willingness to destroy its own empirical, biological mode of existence. In other words, the question of suicide, which is only analogously present in the *LBD*, here becomes literal: “It is inherent in this element of the will that I am able to free myself from everything, to renounce all ends, and to abstract from everything. The human being alone is able to abandon all things, even his own life: he can commit suicide” (*EPR* 51/38).

44. Here, we might recall that it is precisely due to the fact that Fichte’s (abstract) absolute self-consciousness (unconsciously) posits an empirical consciousness with its correlative object that (abstract) absolute self-consciousness begins striving to negate this very opposition and so restore its lost immediate unity or harmony-with-self. Thus, as in

Fichte, so in Hegel, desire is the initial emergence into conscious experience of the contradiction between one's concept (or abstract self-consciousness) and one's existence (or empirical consciousness) along with the concomitant urge to sublimate this contradiction. *Desire*, in other words, is *what contradiction feels like*. We desire because we feel – however implicitly – that our existence is not adequate our concept, that we have not become what we truly are. Desire is thus not primarily related to some putatively “external” object “out there,” including some putatively “external” human being or “other mind” with perhaps its own desire, as in the standard Kojevian interpretation. Primarily, or in-itself, desire is self-relating; it is a principle of self-mediation. See Hegel: “[N]eed and drive are [...] the felt contradiction, as it occurs within the living subject itself” (*EL* 360–1/281); “Where something identical with itself bears within itself a contradiction and is filled with the feeling of its implicit identity with itself as well as with the opposite feeling of its inner contradiction, then there necessarily emerges the urge to sublimate this contradiction. The non-living entity has no urge because it is incapable of enduring contradiction; it perishes when the Other of itself forces its way into it. By contrast, the ensouled creature and the mind necessarily have urge, since neither the soul nor the mind can be, without having contradiction within themselves and either feeling it or being aware of it” (*PM* 154–5/216).

45. In analogous fashion, the abstract Kantian TUA merely presupposes the “empirical” manifold of intuition. Moreover, since abstract self-consciousness in the form of the TUA does not recognize that it posits this manifold, it maintains a merely negative relation to it, i.e. it merely dominates it by prescribing the law to it. As a result, the manifold “presents itself” to consciousness as an “appearance” of the object-in-itself “out there.”

46. See Hegel: “Thought, and, more precisely, the Concept, is the infinite form, or the free, creative activity that does not need a material at hand outside it in order to realize itself” (*EL* 313/241).

47. See Hegel: “Kant’s philosophy [...] allies itself with naïve empiricism without derogating in the least from the universal principle of empiricism” (*EL* 107/145); Kant’s “empty idealism [...] is bound, therefore, to be at the same time an absolute empiricism” (*PhG* 144/136); “[E]xperience and observation of the world mean nothing else for Kant than a candlestick standing here, and a snuff-box standing there” (*LHPHIII* 444–45/352); “sensuousness and reason remain opposed [...] in the rude empiricism of Kant” (*LHPHIII* 496/405).

48. See Hegel: “Kant possessed a higher principle in which a duality in unity could be cognised, a cognition, therefore, of what is required for truth; but the material of sense, the manifold of intuition, was too strong for him and he was unable to get away from its to the consideration of the Notion and the categories in and for themselves and to a speculative method of philosophising” (*SL* 594/233). It is due, moreover, to Kant’s having failed to liberate himself from his attachment to the sensible realm that he takes himself to be “confronted by an in-itself” “out there” (*PhG* 142/134).

49. See Hegel: “The system of logic is [...] the world of simple essentialities freed from all sensuous concreteness. The study of this science, to dwell and labour in this shadowy realm, is the absolute culture and discipline of consciousness. In logic, consciousness is busy with something remote from sensuous intuitions and aims, from feelings, from the merely imagined world of figurate conception (*SL* 58–59/41); “Thought acquires [...] independence and unconditioned-ness [when it] becomes at home in abstraction and in progression by means of Notions free from sensuous substrata” (*SL* 59/41); “Thought says farewell to even this last element of the sensible and is free, at home with itself; it renounces external and internal sensibility” (*EL* 48/70).



50. See Hegel: “[N]othing is known that is not in experience” (*PhG* 487/429).

51. See Hegel: “Would one ever have thought that philosophy would deny truth to intelligible entities because they lack the spatial and temporal material of the sensuous world?” (*SL* 590/228); “[A]nother circle of objects shows up that are not part of this field [of empirical science]: freedom, spirit, God. The reason that these are not to be found upon that field is not because they ought not to belong to experience” (*EL* 32/52); Kant’s “concepts of the understanding” are “elements *within* experience” (*EL* 81/113); “But, of course, the content of the categories is not one that is perceptible to the sense. Nor is it spatio-temporal; but this is not to be regarded as a defect, since it is really a merit” (*EL* 86/120) “It is empirically given in [...] consciousness that universality, as well as the determinations that follow in its train, is found in [the *facta* of one’s consciousness]. Of course, the presence of a trained capacity for attention and abstraction is required for the observation of the *facta* of one’s consciousness” (*EL* 49/72). Hegel’s point would be that (putatively) universal and necessary categories such as causality are experienced in and through the operations of understanding or conceiving them. Thus, as Hegel ceaselessly repeats throughout the *EL* and *SL*, concepts are not “forms” for which intuition provides the “content”; rather, concepts are themselves contents of *acts* of conceiving or “thinking-over.” It takes the labor of becoming a trained phenomenologist, however, to learn to advert to or recognize these elements of one’s experience.

52. See Hegel: “[T]he Idea is what is perfectly present, and it is likewise to be found in any consciousness” (*EL* 288/369).

53. Williams insists (1992: 132) that, for Hegel, “the phenomenological observer must not be collapsed into the natural consciousness” since this would apparently entail the reduction of phenomenology to “mere” anthropology. Thus, Williams would deny that Hegel intends to show how natural or empirical consciousness raises itself to the level of absolute self-consciousness and becomes capable of engaging in the self-observation characteristic of phenomenological inquiry. Yet, the centerpiece of Hegel’s critique of Fichte in the *DZ* is precisely that Fichte fails to demonstrate how empirical consciousness becomes identical to pure or absolute self-consciousness. Indeed, Williams identifies (1992: 46) it as an *advancement* on Fichte that Hegel apparently draws and maintains a tripartite distinction between 1) natural/empirical, 2) phenomenological and 3) speculative consciousness. We have an indication of the source of this very aberration in Williams’ account, however, in the distinction which he both adopts himself and imputes to Hegel between “eidetics” and “empirics” (1992: 16 et passim.). For, this distinction clearly presupposes the same kind of restricted empiricist conception of experience, or of the “empirical,” for which Hegel criticizes Fichte and which, according to Hegel, results precisely in Fichte’s inability to affirm the ultimate sublated identity between empirical, absolute and observing consciousness. For Hegel, by contrast, the realm of the eidetic or conceptual is given in experience. In other words, it is only by generalizing one’s conception of experience beyond empiricist restrictions that one attains to the properly philosophical viewpoint in which it is recognized that universal and necessary conceptual or “eidetic” determinations are given in experience.

54. The further radical point that follows from the fact that, for Hegel, everything that is in consciousness at all is experienced is that whether or not any particular experience has to do with an “object” versus a “subject” is a further determination posited in, by and for consciousness. It is not, in other words, “given” that this or that experience is “of” an object versus “merely” “of” a subject. Kant thinks that sensuous intuitional experience has a special status with respect to objects in that he maintains that consciousness relates immediately to

objects through intuition and that objects are “given” in intuition (*KRV* A19/B33, *et passim*). But, for Hegel, the reason why Kant would maintain these positions and, in fact, treat them as obvious is that, while Kant has in one sense reached the viewpoint of Reason, he has nevertheless forgotten his own (empirical) path of development and so has reverted to the viewpoint of Sense-certainty for which it indeed appears to be obvious that cognition relates immediately to objects through “receptive” sensuous experience or intuition and that objects are “given” in such intuition (*PhG* 140–45/133–37).

55. Needless to say, just as the heterodox interpretation entails that Hegel would dialectically invert the relationship between Kantian-style transcendental self-consciousness and empirical consciousness, so this interpretation also ultimately entails that Hegel would radically invert the orthodox Christian view on the relation between nature and grace. For, insofar as nature sublates itself into spirit, it is not only self-sublative but self-salvific. Voegelin explicitly registers (1990: 200) this criticism when he notes that Hegel’s work already has “the flavor of Nietzsche’s advice to modern man to redeem himself by extending grace to himself instead of waiting for a divine redeemer by the grace of God”. Voegelin repeats (2000: 320–21) this point in another context in which he indirectly refers to Hegel as “the speculator”: “In the closed existence of the speculator [...] the thinker must now, in Nietzsche’s phrase, extend grace to himself. He must develop a ‘divided self’, with one self acting the role of ‘man’ who suffers the human condition and the other acting the role of God who brings salvation from it. The man who performs this feat *combines in his person the two natures of God and man* in the sense of the definition of Chalcedon; he is the new God-man, the new Messiah” [Emphases mine].

56. Adelman draws (1998) further analogies between the LBD and Biblical narratives such as the story of Adam and Eve. Adelman might have done well, however, to note that, in *On Genesis*, Augustine interprets Adam and Eve as allegories for two parts of a single soul.

57. See O’Regan (1994) for a complex treatment of Hegel’s Christological and Trinitarian theologies.

58. See Houlgate’s point (2013: 51) that, in the final analysis, it is just ordinary or “empirical” consciousness itself which, through its labor, “builds its own ladder” to the absolute viewpoint.

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