

EMPIRICISM, RELATIVITY AND THE SPEC-ULATIVE
AN INQUIRY FOR ELEMENTS OF A NEW
PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Alper Türken

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A NEW PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

The dissertation of Alper Türken
is approved by:

Prof. Dr. Önay Sözer (Thesis Co-advisor):

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Murat Baç (Co-advisor):

Prof. Dr. Stephen Voss:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hasan Bülent Gözkan:

Prof. Dr. Johannes Fritsche:

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ABSTRACT

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In this thesis, I have argued that a constructive approach to the epistemological difficulties facing contemporary analytical philosophy after the collapse of the “framework of givenness” demands us to revisit our commitments regarding the nature of conception. An important step in moving towards a new philosophical framework which avoids the apparent dilemma between the “framework of givenness” and a problematic coherentism that loses touch with the world is to recognize the spec-ulative nature of conception. The essence of the spec-ulative lies in grasping the opposites in their unity without losing their distinction. Spec-ulative perspective rejects that there is a given non-conceptual component of cognition and involves the idea that all cognitive content is conceptual.

Relevance of Hegel’s thought to the problems of contemporary analytical philosophy has been identified by many analytical philosophers like Sellars, Brandom and McDowell. On the other hand, the particular relevance of the spec-ulative aspects of Hegel’s thought to contemporary analytical philosophy has not been studied and remains overlooked. Main aim of this thesis is to incorporate Hegel’s spec-ulative insight and spec-ulative concept of concept into the framework of contemporary philosophy and

approach contemporary philosophical problems from a speculative perspective. This approach builds on a number of themes which belong to the internal dialectics of the history of analytical philosophy. These are discussed throughout the thesis with a specific focus on philosophers such as Carnap, Quine, Davidson, James and McDowell.

KISA ÖZET
GÖRGÜCÜLÜK, GÖRELİLİK VE KURGUL
YENİ BİR FELSEFİ BAKIŞ AÇISININ
ÖĞELERİ İÇİN BİR ARAŞTIRMA

Alper Türken

“Verililik çerçevesi”nin çöküşü ardından çağdaş analitik felsefenin karşı karşıya kaldığı bilgikuramsal sorunlara etkin bir yaklaşım kavramsallığın doğası ile ilgili varsayımlarımızı gözden geçirmemizi gerektirir. “Verililik çerçevesi” ve dış dünya ile bağlantıyı kaybeden sorunlu bir tutarlılıkçılık arasındaki bilgikuramsal ikilemin aşılmasında kavramsallığın kurgul doğasının bilincine varılması önemli bir adımdır. Kurgulun özü zıtların ayrımlarını kaybetmeden birlikleri içerisinde kavranmalarında yatar. Kurgul bakış açısı bilginin verili olan ve kavramsal olmayan bir bir bileşeni olduğunu reddeder ve bilişsel içeriğin tümüyle kavramsal olduğu görüşünü kabul eder.

Hegel düşüncesiyle çağdaş analitik felsefenin sorunları arasında bir ilgi olduğu Sellars, Brandom ve McDowell gibi pek çok önde gelen analitik felsefeci tarafından savunuldu. Öte yandan Hegel düşüncesinin kurgul yanlarının çağdaş analitik felsefeye ilgisinin çalışılmadığı ve genel olarak göz ardı edildiği söylenebilir. Bu tezin ana amacı Hegel’in kurgul düşüncesinin ve kurgul kavram kavramının çağdaş analitik felsefenin kavramsal çerçevesinin içine alınması ve çağdaş analitik felsefenin sorunlarına kurgul bir bakış açısında yaklaşılmasıdır. Bu yaklaşım analitik

felsefe tarihinin iç diyalektiğine ait bir dizi konu üzerinden geliştirilmiştir. Bu konular tezde Carnap, Quine, Davidson, James ve McDowell'a odaklanılarak tartışılmaktadır.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Alper Türken

PLACE OF BIRTH: Bursa, Turkey

DATE OF BIRTH: 1 January 1977

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

Boğaziçi University.

Middle East Technical University

DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Arts in Philosophy, 2002, Department of Philosophy, Boğaziçi University.

Bachelor of Science in Electrical & Electronics Engineering, 1998, Middle East

Technical University.

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Epistemology, Ontology, Hegel, Kant, History of Analytical Philosophy

DISSERTATIONS & PRESENTATIONS:

Türken, Alper. "Carnap's Empiricist Dogma and Ontological Relativism." Master's Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2002.

Türken, Alper. "On the Very Concept of Spec-ulative.", International Hegel Congress, Istanbul, October 2008.

Türken, Alper. "Hegel's Concept of Concept and Crisis of Contemporary Empiricism.", International Hegel Congress, Istanbul, October 2007.

Türken, Alper. "Reason, Limits and Cultural Relativism.", Alexander Von Humboldt Foundation Colloquium: "Philosophy in Change", October 2005

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Two important historical processes played key roles in determining the general features of contemporary analytic philosophy. The first one is negative in its character and a reaction to the scientific-minded empiricism that has dominated the first half of the twentieth century. What we have seen happening during this period, is a gradual renunciation of the core empiricist principles. It is notable that almost every distinguished philosopher of science and epistemology within the analytic philosophy tradition during this period has contributed to this process by pointing out to certain features of empiricism as untenable. I will call this historical process the “fall of empiricism”.

During the second half of the twentieth century, in parallel with the “fall of empiricism”, a relativistic spirit has started to govern the philosophical era. The rise of relativism, and this is a relativism of a very specific character, had connections with the first process as the fall had relativistic consequences. However, it was also stimulated by a number of other historical developments in the areas of science and politics. For example, it was strongly stimulated by the pluralistic and relativistic consequences of the emergence of non-Euclidean geometries and revolutions in physics, i.e., Einstein’s relativity theory and quantum physics. In many ways, it was also welcome and supported by the large-scale political project of globalization due to its practical need to integrate communities of different cultures into a unified world-system. No matter what, this relativistic movement has a distinct philosophical character which was largely built on the legacy of its anti-relativist empiricist ancestor. I will call this historical process “the rise of conceptual relativism”.

There is a synergy between the two processes, “the fall” and “the rise”. They worked in alliance and have accelerated the realization of each other. The relativistic spirit has motivated the attacks against empiricism, leading to an elimination of the empiricist principles from currency one by one. On the other hand the attacks on empiricism, undermining the very foundations on which the empiricist body of knowledge was supposed to stand, strengthened the relativistic tendencies. In a way, they belong to each other and collectively represent a certain era in the evolution of post-enlightenment philosophy.

Neither of the two historical processes has been realized in full. There are still many empiricist principles in use today by the philosophical theories representing most cultivated relativistic tendencies, while certain anti-relativistic commitments, especially with respect to truth, are still very common. However, both “the fall” and “the rise” are in the process of realization. They pervade our philosophical culture in various ways and levels. It would be fair to say that nearly every respectable philosophical theory that has emerged during the second half of twentieth century is relativistic in at least one aspect (e.g., conceptual, metaphysical, with respect to truth, ontological, etc.) and denies at least one core empiricist principle (e.g., reductionism, verificationism, analytic/synthetic distinction, theoretical/observation language distinction, etc.).

Every reaction is conditioned by what it reacts against. It owes its content, its specific character, to what it reacts against since it is not a reaction in general but a reaction against something specific. In this respect, challenges to empiricism are conditioned by empiricism and they owe their specific character in large to it. Reaction is, in most cases, the development and the expression of what is already implicit in what is reacted against.

For example, challenges to empiricism during the late twentieth century make explicit the inconsistencies and the problems which were implicit in the earlier empiricist philosophy. According to this, challenges to empiricism may also be interpreted as the development or evolution of empiricist philosophy. The important question is whether it evolves into is whether a more cultivated empiricist philosophy or a new philosophical framework of a distinct non-empiricist character. I tend to accept that the latter is the case. The fundamental motive of this thesis is to search for elements of such a new philosophical perspective. This thesis argues that this new framework will have an explicit non-empiricist character and incorporate Hegel's speculative insight: the idea that the opposites should be grasped in their unity in difference. This speculative perspective will require renunciation of some of the core philosophical commitments that have been influential in our philosophical culture since Kant.

The Fall of Empiricism

The genesis of the "fall of empiricism" can be associated with the emergence of skepticism regarding the possibility of constructing a language of science based on a set of observation terms which are direct reports of sense-data and elementary logic. This skepticism was mainly stimulated by the failure of Carnap's heroic attempt in *Aufbau*¹. Carnap undertook in *Aufbau* the realization of the project of logical empiricism. According to this, there is a privileged subset of terms in our language which are direct reports of sense-data. The language of science is based on this privileged subset and elementary logic. Without going into details, in this early era of logical empiricism, the unit of empirical significance and the ultimate building block of language were accepted to be the observation terms. For

¹ Rudolf Carnap, *The Logical Structure of the World and Pseudoproblems in Philosophy* (California: University of California, 1967).

early-days logical empiricists, cognitive meaning is exhausted by empirical meaning and empirically meaningful terms and statements are exhausted by direct reports and logical constructs based on them. By the same token, empirical science is accepted to exhaust the set of cognitively meaningful sentences.² It is important to note the dualist character of the concept of cognition that is in use here. The two sides of the dualism are “observation term” and “sense-data”. The conceptual element “observation term” is authenticated by the non-conceptual “sense-data”, and only after and due to this authentication does the term have valid cognitive use and significance. The dualist concept of cognition is based on the following two fundamental premises: (1) cognition involves a conceptual and non-conceptual element, (2) authentication of the conceptual element by the non-conceptual element is essential to cognition. Commitment to the dualist concept of cognition is an essential feature of twentieth century empiricism. This dualism faces us in different forms during the evolution of empiricist theories. The roots of the dualist concept of cognition go back to Kant³ while the roots of modern dualism go back to Descartes.

After the failure to construct the language of science, based on direct reports and elementary logic, a more liberal attitude towards language and meaning is accepted. This I will call the second stage of “the fall”. At this stage, it is still considered that a certain part of the language of science is based on direct reports and elementary logic. This part is called observation language. However the language of science contains also another part, which is called theoretical language.⁴ Theoretical language has no empirical significance

² Rudolf Carnap “Paul Henle on Meaning and Verifiability”, *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap*, ed. by Paul Arthur Schilpp (London: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 874.

³ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer, Allen W. Wood, Cambridge (New York, Melbourne, Madrid: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁴ Rudolf Carnap, “The Methodological Character of Theoretical Concepts”, *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, vol. 1. *The Foundations of Science and the Concepts of Science and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Herbert Feigl and Michael Scriven (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1956).

and therefore cognitive meaning in itself but obtains significance through correspondence postulates which link the sentences of the theoretical language with cognitively meaningful observation sentences. In this case, the ultimate bearers of empirical significance and therefore cognitive meaning are observation statements. Here we find the “observation term” and “sense data” dualism shifted to another level. At this level, the dualism is twofold. First, there is the dualism of the observation sentence and the sense-data. Second, we have the dualism of theoretical sentence and observation sentence. Theoretical sentences are authenticated through their links with observation sentences. Observation sentences are authenticated directly. The general principle remains unchanged. Cognition involves conceptual and non-conceptual element. The conceptual needs to be authenticated by the non-conceptual to yield cognition and to attain cognitive meaning.

The dualism and “the fall” have taken another form when Quine put forward another challenge for the empiricist position. Quine attacked two fundamental premises of empiricist philosophy before him.⁵ First, he denied reductionism, the theory that there are sentences which can be confirmed or falsified in isolation from the other sentences of a language. This obviously was a lethal attack for the thesis that sentences are the primary bearers of empirical meaning. Reductionism is the basis of Carnap’s theory of observation sentences. If reductionism is false, then there are no observation sentences and consequently no observation language, in which sense Carnap uses these terms.⁶ Second,

⁵ W. V. Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”, *From a logical point of view: 9 logico-philosophical essays* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980).

⁶ Quine has taken a moderate position in his criticism against empiricism in *Pursuit of Truth* compared to his more radical position in “Two Dogmas”. With his emphasis on stimulus meaning and observation categoricals, later Quine comes closer to Carnap in *Pursuit of Truth*. However, the essence of the theoretical/observation language distinction in its form held by Carnap is the commitment to the belief that there is a subset of our language which can be constructed on the basis of direct reports and elementary logic. It is an essential feature of the sentences of the observation language that they are meaningful in isolation from the other sentences of the language due to their direct reducibility to given observational content and elementary logic. This view is clearly rejected by Quine in “Two Dogmas” by his renunciation of reductionism. Thus, observation/theoretical distinction cannot be retained once reductionism is rejected.

Quine denied the analytic/synthetic distinction, which is an essential breaking-point for the following reason: If the analytic/synthetic distinction is untenable, then a conceptual/non-conceptual or observation/theoretical dualism that applies at the level of propositions is without any basis. Sentences can no longer be taken as the primary vehicles of empirical or cognitive meaning. The unit of empirical or cognitive meaning is the theory, science or conceptual scheme in general. Theories face the tribunal of experience, instead of sentences in isolation. This is exactly where the dualism re-emerges. One side of the dualism is the theory or conceptual scheme representing the conceptual, the other side of the dualism is “the given”, the non-conceptual which is the ultimate source of authentication to yield cognition and cognitive meaning.⁷ This is the final element left from the dualistic conception of cognition and renunciation of this dualism is the “fall of empiricism” realized. Davidson⁸ names this “conceptual scheme” and “the given” dualism the third dogma of empiricism and argues that it is untenable.⁹

The Rise of Conceptual Relativism

In parallel with the fall, the rise of conceptual relativism takes the stage. In the early days of logical empiricism, anti-relativism is a noticeable feature of the philosophical common sense. According to this, there is a unique language of science constructed based on direct

A weaker distinction can still be made as obviously some parts of our language have a stronger connection with observation than some other parts. Nevertheless, this weaker form will not provide us with the foundationalist machinery of empirical significance as it was envisioned by Carnap in Carnap, 1956.

⁷ I am conscious of the fact that core empiricist principles regarding cognitive meaning like principle of verifiability or its weaker form principle of confirmability are already given up at this stage. However, the empiricist character of theory of meaning and cognition remains through the notions of “stimulus meaning” or “assent/dissent”.

⁸ Davidson argues that rejection of third dogma entails the rejection of Conceptual Relativism in his famous “On the Very Idea of Conceptual Schemes”. This makes him a key figure for the analysis of both “the Fall of Empiricism” and “The Rise of Conceptual Relativism”, as well as the link between the two processes. Davidson’s position will be examined in a sub-section of 3rd Chapter of this thesis.

⁹ Donald Davidson, “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme”, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).

reports and elementary logic. Empirical science based on that language exhausts the domain of rationality and cognition. Thus, the anti-relativistic spirit prevails.

Initial relativistic elements are admitted into the picture by the acceptance of theoretical language, a legitimate cognitive domain loosely coupled with direct reports. It was considered that there is neither a unique theoretical language nor a unique set of correspondence postulates that will link the theoretical language to the observation language. At this stage, we see Carnap introducing his famous principle of tolerance¹⁰ and internal/external distinction¹¹ through which we face a new philosophical phenomenon emerging: conceptual relativism.

The emergence and widespread acceptance of conceptual relativism are based on two important motivations. First, conceptual relativism is based on the consciousness of an epistemological limitation. Namely, it is closely connected with the self-consciousness of the empiricist tradition that it lacks the necessary conceptual and epistemological tools to construct the unitary and monolithic world-view that it once was envisioning. It is also noteworthy that the relativistic tendencies become more intense and dominant, as the faith in the empiricist principles fades away. This does not mean that the denial of empiricism entails conceptual relativism. However, there is a strong correlation between the loss of faith to the fundamental epistemological principles that are in currency in a certain historical period, and the emergence and widespread acceptance of relativistic tendencies in that historical period.

Second, the unitary world-view of the early logical empiricism fails to make room for the pluralism that emerges in physics, geometry and logics during that period. Early

¹⁰ Rudolf Carnap, *The Logical Syntax of Language* (London: Kegan Paul Trench, Trubner & Co., 1937), p. 207.

¹¹ Carnap, "The Methodological", p. 207.

logical empiricism was envisioning a unique and static language of science that will exhaust rationality. However, this view was in odds with the revolutions in physics and the emergence of new geometries and logics. There is an explicit inconsistency between the historical dynamism of scientific progress and the early empiricist view of science and rationality.¹²

Conceptual relativity is an important historical and philosophical phenomenon and it is linked with the fact that there is a plurality of conceptual schemes or frameworks. I believe we are forced to admit this plurality regardless of whether we associate conceptual schemes with the epistemological core of different cultures or different scientific theories and frameworks (e.g., Newtonian Mechanics, Quantum Mechanics). I accept that there is a plurality of conceptual schemes and that the validity of our beliefs, concepts and principles is relative to the conceptual schemes in which they are formulated. However, I do not accept that conceptual relativity leads to conceptual relativism. Conceptual relativity involves commitment to the thesis that validity and the significance of our concepts and theories are relative to the conceptual schemes or frameworks within which they are formulated. Conceptual relativism goes beyond conceptual relativism. It involves a skepticism regarding capacity to reason that goes beyond the limits of particular conceptual schemes and introduces an impassable epistemological gulf between different conceptual schemes. It takes conceptual relativity as ultimate. In this, it goes beyond conceptual relativity and denies the universality of reason. It is because of this skepticism that the selection and evaluation of conceptual schemes are widely accepted to be based on practical and pragmatic criteria (e.g., Carnap, Quine, etc.). On the other hand, conceptual

¹² Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press., 1996).

relativity is compatible with universality of reason. One can acknowledge that all our concepts and cognitions are relative to conceptual schemes in which they are formulated and consider each particular conceptual scheme as expressing different aspects of a universal reason. According to this, conceptual relativity does not lead to a split and demise of the concept of universal reason. We discover a different dimension of universal reason in each particular conceptual framework. The philosophical challenge is to recognize the universal character of each particular conceptual scheme and bring it under the unity of a more general conceptual scheme and concept of reason. This view is compatible with conceptual relativity but incompatible with conceptual relativism.

We get conceptual relativism when we give transcendental status to conceptual relativity, which is to claim that conceptual relativity is ultimate. However, conceptual relativism does not have the resources to justify this claim, simply because it is relativistic. All relativistic theories go inconsistent, when they make transcendental claims. It is one thing to accept that relativity applies to a certain domain, and something else to defend a general relativistic theory.

The view that conceptual relativity does not entail conceptual relativism appears self-refuting, but it is not. It all comes down to the theory of concept one accepts. In my view, available options are not limited to rejecting a plurality of conceptual schemes (or taking the more radical position of rejecting the idea of conceptual scheme altogether *à la* Davidson) or committing to conceptual relativism. Acknowledging that there is multiplicity of conceptual schemes entails conceptual relativity, but not conceptual relativism. Two different conceptual schemes may involve commitment to an incompatible set of basic principles or concepts, but still can be cognized as moments of a third more general

conceptual scheme. The key is to recognize that every concept worthy of the name, is a unity in difference, rather than a fixed determinacy excluding difference. Once it is accepted that concepts are unities of opposing moments in their difference conceptual relativity does not entail conceptual relativism. Different conceptual schemes can be taken as opposing internal moments of a richer unifying conceptual framework. I envision that one of the fundamental features of the new philosophical framework must be accommodating conceptual relativity without committing to conceptual relativism. I will look into the resources of Hegel's concept of concept and especially the speculative aspects of his system in the second and third chapters of this thesis with a view to propose a solution to this problem.

Discovering the Kantian Roots

I believe that in many ways the fundamental features of the contemporary analytical philosophy were inherited from Kant. I will not dwell in detail here on the link between conceptual relativism and Kant, and I will undertake this in the third chapter of this work. This link has been studied and established by the works of Michael Friedman¹³ and Coffa.¹⁴ As quoted by Michael Lynch¹⁵, William Alston characterizes Putnam's position in *Reason, Truth and History*¹⁶ as relativistic Kantianism. Furthermore, Lynch claims that the conceptual relativist views he develops in his *Truth in Context*, being more Kantian than

¹³ Michael Friedman, *Dynamics of Reason*, (Stanford, California: CLSI Publications, 2001).

¹⁴ J. Alberto Coffa, *The semantic tradition from Kant to Carnap: to the Vienna station*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

¹⁵ Michael P. Lynch, *Truth in Context* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 1998) pp. 4-5.

¹⁶ Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Putnam's, deserves the name relativistic Kantianism even better. Therefore, the link between conceptual relativism and Kant's views is quite uncontroversial and unoriginal.

On the other hand, in my view, there is also an important link between the epistemological position of twentieth century empiricism and Kant. It was mentioned above that the specific empiricist character of contemporary empiricism was based on a commitment to a dualist concept of cognition and concept. I discussed above that this dualist character is essential and was retained in all the different forms empiricism undertook during "the fall". This dualist concept of cognition goes back to Kant's theory of cognition. According to Kant, cognition involves a synthesis of two fundamental elements; concept, which is contribution of the subject, and the intuition, which is given. Both conceptual and non-conceptual elements are necessary for cognition¹⁷. Without intuition, concept is an empty form, which is insufficient for cognition. It is a mere thought. The essence of this view is expressed crystal clear in Kant's famous: "Intuitions without concepts are blind, concepts without intuitions are empty."¹⁸

It is worthwhile to make a further clarification to be fair to Kant at this point. For Kant, forms of sensibility are applied to the "given" intuitive content before the intuitions partake in the synthesis with concepts. On this basis, it may be argued that intuitions which are the elements of cognitions are not given as they involve the forms of sensibility. However, the critical point here is for Kant despite the involvement of forms of sensibility in them, intuitions involve an essential given element. Since intuitions are necessary elements of cognitions, cognitions necessarily involve a given element. On this basis, I consider Kant's theory of cognition as committed to an epistemological dualism:

¹⁷ Kant, *The Critique*, p. 254.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 193-194.

the view that cognitions involve a conceptual as well as a given non-conceptual element. A similar reading of Kant's theory of cognition and concepts is also defended by Brandom. In his *Making It Explicit* Brandom argues "For Kant, concepts contrast with intuitions first as *form* to *matter*, which they structure or organize. Second, they contrast with intuitions as *general* to *particular*. Finally, they contrast with intuitions as products of *spontaneity* or intellectual activity, as opposed to products of *receptivity*."¹⁹

At the core of this dualism stands Kant's concept of concept, which is envisioned as an empty form devoid of content. The commitment to Kant's dualist conception of concept or some variation of it is an essential feature of the twentieth century empiricist philosophical theories and it remained unchallenged during "the fall". Witnessing the final stages of "the fall", we are historically well positioned to challenge this conception. I am inclined to accept a concept of concept based on the view that content as well as the form of cognition is conceptual. The conceptual element has the necessary resources to constitute the content as well as the form.

Hegel and the Spec-ulative Perspective

Once the Kantian roots are recognized, recourse to Hegel, as one of the most profound and comprehensive critics as well as followers of Kant, becomes relevant. As long as we accept that analytical philosophy has a number of fundamental Kantian commitments, then a study of Hegel's critique of those philosophical commitments becomes historically relevant. This approach is further supported once it is recognized that Hegel has a relatively extensive and critical account of such philosophical commitments.

¹⁹ Robert Brandom *Making It Explicit* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998) pp. 615-616.

The relevance of Hegel's thought to the problems of contemporary analytical philosophy has been identified by many prominent philosophers like Sellars, Brandom and McDowell. Therefore, there is nothing original about re-stating this link. On the other hand, the particular relevance of the speculative aspects of Hegel's thought to contemporary analytical philosophy, to my knowledge, has not been studied and remains overlooked. I have aimed for this very specific topic to be the main contribution of this thesis. My aim is to incorporate Hegel's speculative insight into the framework of contemporary philosophy and approach contemporary philosophical problems from a speculative perspective. Despite its radical looks, this approach builds on a number of themes and conjectures which have emerged out of the internal dialectics of analytical philosophy.

It is a curious fact that the positive significance of the word "speculative" is almost entirely lost from English. This loss of meaning, however, is not an accident and has a philosophical background. Primarily, the loss belongs to our philosophical culture. Our philosophical culture lost the insight that was expressed by the positive philosophical significance of the word "speculative". It has not been replaced by any other technical term or concept. It simply disappeared and sank into our collective unconsciousness. We not only want to restore a forgotten meaning of a word, but we want to restore a forgotten philosophical insight. At the expense of sounding provocative or risking misconceptions, I will refer to the concept of concept that will be developed as the speculative concept of concept. In order to distinguish the positive philosophical meaning from the negative everyday usage a hyphen will be used and will be written as "spec-ulative". In the

remaining part of this work, “spec-ulative” will refer to the positive philosophical sense and “speculative” will refer to the negative everyday usage.

As anticipatory remarks, my main motive can be summarized as to explore the possibility and fundamental features of an open-ended conceptual holism, which will accommodate all content and difference within it. The conceptual framework of this conceptual holism is not intended as a merely formal structure that needs to be filled with the content that is outside or transcendent to it but as an unbounded and all-encompassing conceptual unity that contains all form and content within. The key is to obtain unity while preserving all the difference. For this reason, the spec-ulative insight and its dialectical power to preserve difference and internal tension within the inclusive unity of conceptual domain is the central theme of my project.

I think of the conceptual domain, the space of concepts, not as a static deposit of concepts and theoretical principles but as a dynamic unity involving an internal tension which leads to its internal dialectics and constant change. This internal dialectics is the bearer of the historical dynamism of this all-encompassing conceptual whole and its evolutionary spirit.

The motive of the spec-ulative perspective is to develop the holistic conceptual framework that will grasp different moments of the truth within the very specific boundary conditions for which they are valid. The challenge spec-ulative thought sets for itself is not to construct the true philosophical system, conceptual framework, etc. among a number of untrue competing philosophical systems or conceptual frameworks but one that integrates the insight from all conceptual activity. It is based on the consciousness that all cognitive activity is collectively and historically interrelated.

The holistic conceptual framework of the spec-ulative perspective is never to be thought of as a list of categories and concepts. It is in the continuous process of self-evolution and self-making and charged with internal tension and dynamism. Its internal tension and dynamism comes from its internal dialectics. Therefore, it is not a closed philosophical system but a philosophical attitude or better as the name indicates a philosophical perspective. The spec-ulative perspective takes itself all-inclusiveness as an ideal and seeks to develop the conceptual resources that will systematically evolve itself towards this ideal through its internal resources and self-critique. It seeks to convert what is unconscious to what is conscious, what is isolated to what is integrated, and what is neglected to what is cognized.

The second chapter of this thesis will be devoted to an exposition and analysis of Hegel's theory of concept. In the third chapter, I will deal with the question of how the resources of Hegel's theory of concept can be utilized to construct a theory of concept and cognition that can be proposed as the elements of a new spec-ulative perspective. The fourth chapter will be devoted to a discussion of the spec-ulative perspective with respect to its relations with contemporary analytic philosophy.

Before I proceed with my explication of Hegel's theory of concept, I will dwell on the problem of concept in general with a view to explain its fundamental significance among the complex body of philosophical problems.

The Problem of Concept

The problem of concept is fundamental to both epistemology and ontology and stands just at the border of these domains. A theory of concept very much defines the core of a theory of knowledge and ontology. However, what happens more frequently is that one's

views on knowledge and reality commit her to a theory of concept at a conscious or subconscious level. I argue that theory of concept is fundamental to epistemology and ontology and the basic problems of these two domains demand that one is ready to pay attention to her theory of concept in order to deal with their basic problems. This calls for a philosophical critique at a meta-level that goes beyond an analysis of the particular philosophical problems at hand and seeks for a new insight through re-thinking of what the nature of concepts are.

Concepts are of a mysterious nature. They seem to stand at the intersection point of a number of unsurpassable philosophical dichotomies. They are often thought as playing a mediating role between subjectivity and objectivity. A concept is always subjective as it always belongs to a subject. But it is also objective as it involves a particular content that can make it an object for another subject. The relation of concepts with subjectivity and objectivity also gives them a controversial interim position between the domain of freedom as governed by subjectivity and the domain of necessity as imposed by objectivity. Finally, they are very much linked with thinking and thought as there is no thought which does not involve concepts. But they are as much connected with reality as well. For example, an empiricist may argue concepts represent reality. In summary, concepts stand at the juncture of seemingly unsolvable philosophical dichotomies touching both sides of the extremes in a mysterious way: subjectivity-objectivity, thought-reality, freedom-necessity. They seem to occupy an intermediate space between the mind and the world.

When we deal with philosophical problems we deal with conceptual problems, problems between concepts. In philosophy, we analyze and synthesize concepts. We

introduce new concepts and give new interpretations to existing ones. We form philosophical systems by forming general structures out of particular concepts.

Philosophy, more than anything else, is a conceptual activity.

It would be natural for any discipline to develop a clear understanding of its basic subject matter. A physician will be expected to demonstrate a sound understanding of human physiology before being allowed to treat any patients. A chemist will first study the nature and characteristics of basic chemical elements and processes in-depth before starting to perform complex chemical experiments and develop new theories. Similarly, it seems natural to expect a philosopher to develop an understanding of the nature of concepts and particularly the philosophical concepts before she starts to deal with philosophical problems.

However, it can be argued that the situation in philosophy is more complicated than other disciplines mentioned above. It is not possible to study the nature of the concepts in general or the particular philosophical concepts without studying the fundamental philosophical problems. As Hegel would say, it is not possible to learn how to swim before going into the water. Philosophical thought goes circular in a very special manner. On the one hand, the philosophical categories are the products of our thinking on the fundamental philosophical problems. On the other hand, our position with respect to the fundamental philosophical problems is conditioned by our interpretation of the fundamental philosophical concepts. To have a periodic table is a chemist's privilege and there is no philosophical analogue. Philosophy has to stand up, if it can, without foundations.

From a historical perspective, all knowledge accumulation is spec-ulatively circular.²⁰ Philosophy represents this in its most refined purity. What is unique to philosophy is that it falls within its domain and responsibility to grasp the logical nature of this spec-ulative circularity. One cannot help but ask whether this particular form of circularity as exemplified by all manifestations of conceptual activity in the cultivated sense belongs to the very nature of the concepts and what is conceptual.

One may argue that there is no common element between different particular concepts suggesting that any attempt to develop a theory of concept is philosophically futile. According to this, there is no general problem of concept but particular problems connected with particular concepts. This criticism can be dealt with uncovering the fact that this view itself is committed to a particular theory of concept and a theory of universals, which is a chapter of a theory of concept. The truth is one cannot avoid committing to a theory of concept; one can only be unconscious about it. What needs to be done is to bring all these subconscious presuppositions into full consciousness and make them subject to a critique in the context of our philosophical framework, which involves a number of particular philosophical concepts and problems between them. On the one hand, this should offer a fresh perspective regarding the resources available to the conceptual activity and lead to fresh insight regarding some of our fundamental philosophical problems. On the other hand, new insight on the particular philosophical problems should nourish and complement the perspective that will be developed through the theory of concepts. Again, the knowledge accumulation remains spec-ulatively circular.

²⁰ I will discuss the concept of spec-ulative circularity in chapter two.

In summary, the problem of concept takes off from the hypothesis that some of our fundamental philosophical problems cannot be satisfactorily dealt with through a restrictive analysis of these particular issues but a meta-level thinking on the nature of concepts and the conceptual activity are required. Our views on the resources and constraints of the conceptual domain and conceptual activity in general condition our position with respect to the particular philosophical problems. Insights gained on this matter will provide us with fresh perspectives on the particular philosophical problems.

The problem of concept is the very fundamental problem of philosophy since Plato and there is nothing original about emphasizing its importance. We find it as the dominant philosophical subject matter within the works of almost all great philosophers in some form, e.g., Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, Carnap, Sellars, Quine, Davidson, etc. However, the significance of the problem of the concept for us goes beyond general considerations about the special role concepts play for philosophy and thought in general. It is a historical imperative. We are being forced to re-think about the nature of the concepts and our presuppositions about their nature as a consequence of the development of the empiricist philosophy after Kant. Today it is accepted as common sense that the early day logical empiricist views of knowledge and science as founded upon a non-conceptual given element are untenable. However, the consequences of the renunciation of this fundamental philosophical principle have not been developed in full. It is not sufficient to study the implications of the rejection of this principle of “givenness” on different particular philosophical issues and concepts in isolation. The idea of “givenness” is built into the theory of concept with which empiricist philosophers operate since Kant. Therefore, a study of the implications of denial of the principle of

“givenness” on the theory of concept is required. This is one of the fundamental objectives of this thesis. If successful, this should provide us with elements of a new philosophical perspective and insight on some of the fundamental philosophical issues.

On the Very Concept of Concepts

There is a subtle difference between talking about a “theory” of concept and a “concept” of concept. To talk about a theory of concept is metaphysically neutral. One can build a theory virtually about everything. Thus, to talk about a “theory” of concept is far from problematic. The situation is more complicated when we start talking about a “concept” of concepts.

All philosophical problems are problems between concepts. They are to be solved and studied through conceptual resources alone. Sometimes, philosophical problems cannot be dealt with only through the analysis of the particular concepts but a meta-level analysis on the nature of concepts and its resources are required. This requires that the concept of concept in currency is recognized and be subjected to a critique.

The concept of concept is not unique. One can be dualist, representationalist, and inferentialist with respect to her concept of concept. Hence, one needs to be clear about her concept of concept and be consistent with it. As in every other subject, philosophers change their minds regarding what the nature of concepts is over time. There is no single concept of concept that is unique and resists change over time. But a change in the concept of concept is a very fundamental one. It transforms the basic cognitive resources available to a philosopher and the fundamental philosophical problems at hand. It provides new resources to deal with existing philosophical problems; sometimes converting what was once an insoluble dilemma into a relatively straightforward

philosophical subject matter but creating new problems. In many cases, a fundamental philosophical problem is not only concerned with how we interpret the relevant concepts but how we interpret the very concept of concept. The fact is our concept of concept provides a basic but often unrealized constraint for the interpretations we may have for the particular concepts. The solution to the problem at hand may require for us to go for an interpretation which is being cancelled out by the concept of concept we accept. In this case, a tactical re-interpretation of the relevant individual concepts is not sufficient but we need to take a more radical and strategic step. A change in the concept of concept often yields a new philosophical perspective and sometimes a new philosophical framework.

Implications of a theory of concept are all-encompassing and it will be difficult to identify any fundamental philosophical problems that remain untouched by a major revision in the theory of concept one is committed to. However, in the context of this thesis, I will limit myself to a specific set of philosophical problems which I believe are interlinked and collectively represent a complex with significant historical significance for the contemporary discussion.

There are at least three fundamental philosophical issues which are closely connected and require an integrated approach based on a thorough critique of our views on what the nature of concepts is. None of these issues can be dealt in isolation without paying attention to the very theory of concept:

1. Universals and Particulars
2. Realism vs. Idealism Controversy and Problem of Cognition
3. Subjectivity and Objectivity

Obviously, each of these is a big philosophical problem which will require in-depth and comprehensive thesis on its own. It is not my intention to develop a theory of cognition or universals in this thesis. I will focus on developing a theory of concept. However, I will develop the theory of concept in connection with and in the light of these three philosophical issues. At the end of the day, merits of a theory of concept should be evaluated on the basis of the new insight and resources it provides us with to deal with particular philosophical problems.

The second chapter of this thesis will be devoted to an exposition and analysis of Hegel's theory of concept. In the third chapter, I will deal with the question of how the resources of Hegel's theory of concept can be utilized to construct a theory of concept and cognition that can be proposed as the elements of a new speculative perspective. The fourth chapter will be devoted to a discussion of the speculative perspective with respect to its relations with contemporary analytic philosophy.

CHAPTER 2

HEGEL'S CONCEPT OF CONCEPT

Hegel's concept of concept has a central role in his overall philosophical system. Most of his key philosophical theses can be seen as rooted in his concept of concept which was certainly developed taking into account its broader implications. This is not surprising at all given the fact that Hegel was one of the most "systematic" thinkers in history of philosophy. For Hegel, being systematic was not a formal preference but a philosophical requirement deriving from his principle that the form of philosophy actually belongs to its very content. Thus, Hegel's strong commitment to systematic philosophizing makes it a challenge to present and discuss a part of Hegel's system in isolation from the others. It may even be argued that a study that focuses on Hegel's use of a particular concept is problematic due to the above mentioned reasons at the outset calling for a justification of the enterprise before its execution.

A study on Hegel's concept of concept is exempt from this criticism of being unfair to the systematic nature of Hegel's philosophical method due to the very special role the concept of concept plays in Hegel's overall system. The concept of concept is the hardcore and archetype of Hegel's philosophical system. If we use Hegelian terminology the concept of concept is the very concept of Hegel's system of logic. The concept of concept is the totality which brings all particular thought determinations into a systematic unity. If Hegel's concept of concept actually has this character of being a totality and the archetype of his overall system it should lend itself to a focused study.

Representations, Concepts and the Concept of Concept

Hegel uses the word “concept” in a very specific sense. It may be useful to make some clarifications and introductory remarks regarding this usage before we start a detailed presentation of Hegel’s concept of concept.

In the Introduction of the *Encyclopedia Logic*²¹ Hegel distinguishes between representations (*Vorstellung*) and concepts (*Begriff*). He defines representation as the general category of determinations of feelings, of intuitions and of volitions in as much as we have knowledge of them.²² According to this, representations refer to our knowledge or consciousness regarding our feelings, intuitions or desires. Two elements are to be noted in this definition.

First, representations are concerned with determinations of feelings, intuitions and volitions. Thus, representations are concerned with the particular form and content of feelings, intuitions and volitions and not with determinations of thoughts. This is fundamental to the distinction of representation and concept. Representations have thought-determinations in them but these thought-determinations are mixed with the empirical content of feelings, intuitions and volitions. Unlike concepts, they are not pure thought-determinations.

Second, they are concerned with those determinations in as much as we have knowledge of those determinations. Hence, representations are correlated with our knowledge or consciousness of feelings, intuitions or volitions. The ability to have

²¹ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, H. S. Harris (Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hacket Publishing Company, 1991), p. 26.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

representations is connected with the ability to know or to be conscious about our feelings, intuitions and volitions.

On the other hand, concepts are pure thought-determinations. Logic deals with pure thought-determinations only. For Hegel, to be devoid of any empirical content is a necessary condition of conceptuality. Therefore, notions like red, hard, fragile, speed are not concepts in the Hegelian sense. They are treated in empirical sciences but not as a part of Logic. Abstraction from all empirical content is a necessary requirement for concepthood and Logic. It should be seen here that Hegel's concept of concept is linked with Kant's concept of category:²³

In the Logic we have to do with pure thought or with pure thought-determinations. In the case of thought in the ordinary sense, we always represent to ourselves something that is not merely pure thought, for we intend by it something that is thought of, but which has an empirical content. In the Logic, thoughts are grasped in such a way that they have no content other than one that belongs to thinking itself, and is brought forth by thinking. So these thoughts are pure thoughts.²⁴

On the one hand, Hegel claims that concepts are the true content of our consciousness and its object-in-itself. On the other hand, he argues that abstraction from all empirical content is a necessary condition of conceptuality. The implication is that the true content of our consciousness and its object in-itself is non-empirical. To put it in a provocative way, the empirical is non-empirical in itself. This should not be taken as suggesting that the empirical has no significance. The empirical retains its significance for the everyday practice and empirical sciences. However, from the perspective of logic

²³ Hegel's concept of concept is fundamentally different from Kant's concept of category in many ways. These differences will be extensively discussed later in this thesis. Despite their differences, it is important to recognize that Hegel's concept of concept is based on a critical account of Kant's concept of category and there is an important link between the two notions.

²⁴ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 58.

its true content and in-itself is the concept. The fundamental philosophical insight here is concepts are not abstractions from experience or external forms applied to the non-conceptual content of experience. Concepts are the true content of experience. Concepts are in the objectivity as much as they are in the subjectivity.

Second, another key principle we need to note here is Hegel's fundamental motivation to overcome the dichotomy between subject and object. For Hegel, logic is a system of thought-determinations which overcomes the anti-thesis between objectivity and subjectivity. This principle will act as the general dialectical guideline to move dialectically from one concept to a higher one. The capacity to overcome this dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity is an important criterion for Hegel to test the adequacy of a concept of concept: "The Logical is to be sought in a system of thought-determinations in which the anti-thesis between subjective and objective (in its usual meaning) disappears."²⁵

Hegel makes a distinction between the form and content of consciousness. Feeling, intuition and willing are different forms of consciousness. The content of consciousness is its object. The content of consciousness, its object, remains one and the same in-itself regardless of the form under which this very content is apprehended.²⁶ However, the content for-the-consciousness changes depending on the form under which consciousness apprehends this very content, although it remains one and the same in-itself. This is due to the fact that the specific form, under which consciousness apprehends its object, joins itself to the content and gives rise to a particular object for the consciousness. This leads to a distinction of object-in-itself and the object-for-

²⁵ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 56.

²⁶ It is very important to note that this content which remains one and the same regardless of the form under which apprehended should not be confused with the given empirical content in the empiricist sense.

consciousness. The basis of this distinction is that the form consciousness uses to cognize the object does not conform to the form of the object-in-itself. Consequently, the object-for-consciousness is not the same as the object-in-itself. At this level, we encounter a number of dualities. The form and the content, the object-in-itself and the object-for-consciousness, remain distinct. This is a consequence of the limitations of representational form to comprehend the genuine content, or object, of consciousness. It is a primary objective of the cognitive process to overcome these dichotomies.

There is an obvious difficulty here. If the form of the consciousness joins itself to its content leading to a particular object in conformance with it, how can the consciousness go out of this trap and cognize its genuine object as it is in itself? If consciousness imposes its form to its object, does it make sense to talk about the object-in-itself which seems to be destined to remain as an unreachable beyond for the consciousness? Following this insight, our knowledge of the world and ourselves seems limited to the extent we constitute it and it belongs to the pre-critical metaphysics to talk about the object in-itself.

The way out of this difficulty lies in two key insights critical to Hegel's theory of cognition. First, we can know that the form under which we cognize the object does not conform to the object-in-itself without having a fully comprehending cognition of the object-in-itself. Second, cognition is a self-completing dialectical process.

Consciousness becomes aware of the limitation of its cognition before it overcomes this limitation. Sense-knowledge is a good example of this. The general form of the sense-perception is that it is knowledge about a particular given through the senses. But language in general can never grasp or express the particular. It is always under the

form of universality, which does not conform to the strict particularity of the ostensive object. Therefore, consciousness can never comprehend the sensuous object. It cannot even express or say it. Although consciousness cannot fully comprehend its object as it is in itself, the unconformity between its object and its knowledge of it is explicit to it. It is explicit to it that the object presents itself as a particular which is always beyond its cognition. This awareness gives the cognitive process its internal dynamism and pushes it towards a self-critique, towards removing the unconformity between its object and its cognition of it. This does not imply that it can be assumed from the beginning that the genuine object of consciousness is a particular. For Hegel, we can safely conclude that the view that assumes the object as particular and cognizes it through universal categories can yield to partial and defective cognition at best, which is a conclusion that calls for a self-critique and revision of the form under which the object of consciousness is to be apprehended. The revision of the form not only changes how we cognize the object but it also changes the very object for consciousness due to the fact that the object of consciousness is a constituted object.

It is important to realize that for Hegel the object of consciousness is always internal to the consciousness, which means it is always cognized under the forms of consciousness. There is no object for the consciousness which is not apprehended by its very forms. To be apprehended under the forms of consciousness belongs to the very nature of objecthood and this is indeed what makes an object for Hegel. To put it in Sellarsian language, there is no cognition that is not contaminated by the forms of consciousness, or thought in general. However, this does not mean that the object does not act as a constraint for the consciousness. On the one hand, the form of the

consciousness joins itself to its object and makes it its own, on the other hand the object has an intrinsic resistance to the form and it does not lose itself within it. For consciousness, the object and its cognition of this object are distinct. It is through this distinction that consciousness is able to test the conformity of the object with its cognition or concept of it. The ultimate target of the consciousness is to overcome this duality and to reach a standpoint where its object in-itself and its cognition of this object are one. The key insight here is that if it is consciousness that constitutes its object then this constitution is incomplete until the side of objectivity and the side of subjectivity can be cognized under the same form. Therefore, consciousness is burdened with an internal drive and a theoretical need to go through a self-critical process and transform the forms it uses until it cognizes the side of objectivity and subjectivity under the same form. The form of representation is not up to this task.

This links us with the second key Hegelian insight mentioned above, that cognition is a self-completing process. For Hegel, truth is the agreement of the object with its concept. This can be seen as a modified version of the correspondence theory of truth, keeping in mind the very specific significance the terms concept and object have in the Hegelian context. First of all, the object is a constituted object and not a non-conceptual given. Second, the concept is the form under which consciousness cognizes the object. On the basis of what has been discussed above, we get to the truth at the end of a self-critical process where consciousness apprehends the object and its concept of it under the same form. This standpoint is only reached through a process, through a gradual enrichment of the content of cognition. Thus, we do not get to or lose truth at once but at the end of an iterative self-completing process. This process is the totality of

philosophical cognition and one needs to go beyond representational form to get on with it.

In summary, consciousness is not blind to its limitation but can be aware of it. This ability of the consciousness to be aware of the limitation of its mode of cognition is very critical to the Hegelian cognitive framework. Otherwise consciousness would be a closed and a vicious circle rather than a progressive one. It is this ability of the consciousness to become aware of its limitation before it overcomes this limitation which provides the dialectical dynamism and the evolutionary soul of cognitive enterprise.

Philosophy puts concepts in the place of representations. For Hegel, it is only under the form of concept that the genuine content of our consciousness is recovered. “.... the genuine content of our consciousness is preserved when it is translated into the form of thought and concept, and even that it is not placed in its proper light until then.”²⁷ According to this, representations can be thought as metaphors for concepts.

Here we see an attitude that is in very much at odds with the basic epistemological principles of the empiricist tradition. For the empiricist tradition the given element is essential and provides the content for the cognition. Our inability to construct science based on the given element is considered as an epistemological problem. The basic presupposition of the empiricist tradition apparent here is that the alleged given non-conceptual element enjoys a self-evident cognitive genuineness and legitimacy whereas the conceptual element, which is the contribution of the subject, has a somehow suspicious cognitive status. Therefore, our inability to construct science based on the given non-conceptual element is seen as a problem.²⁸ On the contrary for Hegel,

²⁷ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 28.

²⁸ The relation between contemporary empiricism and the speculative perspective will be discussed in chapter four of this thesis in detail.

immediacy is essentially defective. Any element that presents itself under the form of immediacy or “givenness” needs to be mediated and altered by thought in order to attain higher cognitive status. It is only when representations charged with sensuous content are transformed into conceptual form through thinking that the genuine content of the consciousness is recovered. The genuine content of consciousness is conceptual all the way through. Cognition starts with the poorest form and content and enriches itself through a self-critical process both in its form and the content. For Hegel, cognition is an iterative self-completing process. In each iteration, we have a different form under which the content is apprehended. According to Hegel, “.... thinking it over changes something in the way in which the content is at first [given] in sensation, intuition or representation; thus it is only through the mediation of an alteration that the true nature of the object comes into consciousness.”²⁹

For Hegel, as for the empiricist, the activity of knowing starts at the level of immediacy. Nevertheless Hegel’s notion of immediacy differs from the empiricist notion of givenness. For the empiricist, the given element is non-conceptual all the way through. However for Hegel even the most immediate form of consciousness or cognitive status involves conceptual forms.³⁰ These conceptual forms are not empty forms imposed externally on the given element. On the contrary, conceptual form is the true nature and content of the object. It is only when apprehended under the form of conceptuality that the side of the subjectivity and objectivity can be cognized under the same form and the duality can be overcome.

²⁹ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 54.

³⁰ Hegel provides his account of this in the Sense-Certainty section of his *Phenomenology of the Spirit*.

At the level of immediacy, the conceptual form is mixed with sensuous elements which are contingent, transient and defective. Our knowledge of the object of our consciousness is determined under the form of representation which does not conform with its genuine content. Only when consciousness transforms these representations into true conceptual form can the true nature and the object of the consciousness be cognized. According to Hegel, to comprehend an object is to become conscious of its concept. For Hegel, “.... the true objectivity of thinking consists in this: that thoughts are not merely our thoughts, but at the same time the in-itself of things and of whatever else is objective.”³¹

Consequently, for Hegel concept is the form under which the objectivity and subjectivity can be cognized under the same form. It is only under the form of conceptuality that the object really conforms to its concept and the cognition is a conceptually comprehending cognition.

Obviously, this very controversial view gives an ontological role to the concepts. For Hegel, concepts are not mental structures created by the subject. Hegel's position is not a mentalism and Hegel's concepts are not mental entities. On the contrary, they are viewed as the very in-itself and the true content of everything objective and subjective. This ambitious metaphysical thesis needs further careful qualification:

First, Hegel's view is not a subjective idealism which reduces all objectivity to subjectivity. Concepts are the very forms and the true content of both objectivity and subjectivity. Hence, they are neither objective nor subjective. The converse is also true. They are subjective as much as they are objective. This is the speculative nature of

³¹ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 83.

Hegel's concept of concept and it will be further explicated and discussed in the following sections.

Second, Hegel's position is not a strong relativism which takes subjectivity as the ultimate criterion of all cognitive activity. It needs to be taken into account that for Hegel the true content of consciousness, which is the concept, remains one and the same in-itself regardless of the form under which it is apprehended and implicitly drives the cognitive activity towards its full-satisfaction. Therefore, it cannot be viewed as a strong relativism or a subjectivist position.

Finally, Hegel's concept of the concept is the very hardcore of these controversial philosophical theses. Therefore, it needs to be carefully differentiated from the common sense use of the word concept. In its common sense usage concept is generally considered as a product of the subject. It should be very clear that this view does not apply to Hegel's concept of concept. When Hegel talks about concept he does not have in mind an arbitrary thought-product but a category with very specific epistemological and ontological status. Again the key point to keep in mind here is for Hegel concept is objective as much as it is subjective. This is not because our thoughts somehow conform to an objective world that exists independently and isolated from our subjectivity but both because objectivity and subjectivity are determinations of the same nature which is conceptual. In this lies the speculative nature of the concept which does not merely conform to but overgrasps both objectivity and subjectivity.

But inasmuch as it is said that understanding, reason, is in the objective world, that mind and nature have universal laws to which their life and changes conform, then it is conceded that the determinations of thought equally have objective value and significance.³²

³² G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (New York: Humanities Books, 1916), p. 51.

In summary, for the sake of clarity of terminology, it is important to distinguish three categories and their specific usage: (1) whatever we call concepts in our general usage which do not conform with Hegel's concept of concept. These are determinations of feelings, intuitions and volitions qua our knowledge of them. I will call these representations in the following parts of this thesis in line with Hegel's original terminology. (2) Particular concepts that conform to Hegel's concept of concept. I will call these particular concepts. (3) Hegel's concept of concept which is the universal form of all particular concepts.

Now that we have introduced Hegel's concept of concept and its distinction from representations, I will dwell on Hegel's concept of Logic and its connections with his concept of concept.

Concept and Hegel's Concept of Logic

What has been said in the previous section regarding the concept of concept, its speculative nature and its relation with objectivity and subjectivity cannot be premises but only results of a philosophical enterprise. For Hegel, the concept of concept is the universal form of philosophy³³ and it is the task of logic to develop and justify this form. In the development and justification of this very form also lies the very justification of philosophical cognition in general.

In a nutshell, Hegel's philosophical programme can be interpreted as directed to the following purpose: To develop the speculative concept of concept and to show its

³³ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 33.

application in the spheres of nature and spirit.³⁴ The first part of this task, which is to provide a comprehensive exposition of this universal form, the very concept of concept, is the specific task of Logic: “This is even its unique purpose, deed, and goal: to arrive at the concept of its concept and so to arrive at its return [into itself] and contentment”.³⁵

This naturally raises an important question about the possibility of fulfilling such a task. Do we have the necessary cognitive resources to undertake and fulfill such an ambitious philosophical task? Furthermore, is it justified to proceed with such a philosophical programme or is a prior epistemological justification of the programme required? Hegel refers to what can be called a cognitive holism while addressing this epistemological challenge. Any investigation regarding our cognitive resources involves cognition. Therefore, there cannot be any justification prior to the cognition itself but the cognitive activity needs to be a self-reflective and self-justifying enterprise.

....the faculty of cognition was to be investigated before cognition began. This certainly involves the correct insight that the forms of thinking themselves must be made the ob-ject of cognition; but there soon creeps in, too, the mistaken project of wanting to have cognition before we have any cognition, or of not wanting to go into the water before we have learned to swim. Certainly, the forms of thinking should not be used without investigation; but this process investigation is itself a process of cognition. So the activity of the forms of thinking, and the critique of them, must be united within the process of cognition.³⁶

³⁴ Although Hegel’s philosophy of nature and spirit are outside the scope of this work, it should be kept in mind that for Hegel, philosophy of nature and philosophy of spirit are actually applications of logic, or in other words application of the system of concepts to the spheres of nature and spirit. This approach to philosophy of Nature and Spirit as applied Logic demonstrates the very specific role and status of the concept of concept in Hegel’s overall system. In summary concept of concept is the “archetype” of Logic whereas Logic is the “archetype” of Hegel’s overall philosophical system. On the other hand, the view that both Spirit and Nature are actually Logical, or Conceptual, shows the extent Hegel takes his thesis that the concept is the unity of subjectivity and objectivity and overcomes the subject-object dichotomy to its logical conclusions.

³⁵ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 41.

³⁶ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 82.

Hegel's objection to the project of investigation of the faculty of cognition *prior to a cognitive enterprise* is not an objection to an investigation of the faculty of cognition in general. Hegel does not overlook the problem of knowledge and arguably his *Phenomenology* and *Logic* deal with epistemological issues more than anything else. On the contrary, Hegel's objection to critical philosophy in its attempt to investigate the faculty of cognition prior to cognition is driven by Hegel's epistemological concerns. For Hegel, any such investigation is itself cognitive activity as it involves cognition regarding the nature of our faculty of cognition. Therefore, for Hegel our epistemological challenge is more complicated than it was conceived by Kant. To put it in the terminology used by Kant in his *Prolegomena*: it is not sufficient to explain how natural sciences and mathematics are possible but one should also explain how is it possible for us to explain how natural sciences and mathematics are possible. In this, Hegel criticizes critical philosophy for not being sufficiently critical. For Hegel, thought- determinations should be made subject to a critique in terms of their capacity to grasp truth and this critique itself belongs to cognition, not prior to it. Therefore, the problem of justification arises not only with respect to our first order-knowledge, which involves applications of categories to "immediate" or "given" objects, sense-data or intuitions, but also at the meta-level when defining our system of categories.

The peculiarity of Hegel's thought lies in his view that cognition involves not only the application of categories but also the cognition of them. It is the task of philosophy and logic in particular to cognize and therefore justify the system of categories.

At this juncture, it may be useful to anticipate an interesting connection between Hegel and late Carnap. Carnap argues in his *Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology*³⁷ that questions about linguistics frameworks which can be taken as analogous to systems of categories are not cognitive questions and they should be addressed based on non-theoretical external criteria such as usefulness, simplicity, etc. Carnap's position involves the correct insight that questions about introduction of a category into our language are of a different nature than questions about the application of categories in the context of pre-defined linguistic frameworks. In essence, Hegel's position involves the same insight. However, unlike the logical empiricist Carnap, Hegel believes and argues that "justification" of categories is not only possible but also necessary and it is the fundamental task of dialectical logic to define and justify the system of categories. Furthermore, this process of "justification" of the system of categories, to put it in Hegel's terms to "test the thought-determinations in terms of their ability to grasp the truth", is not prior to the cognitive activity but belongs to it. For Hegel, his dialectical logic is more than anything else is the cognitive enterprise that cognizes and justifies the system of categories.

In summary, investigation of the faculty of cognition involves the cognition of cognition, nothing less. This view is obviously at odds with Kant's a priori foundationalism and twentieth century empiricist foundationalism and involves a circular epistemology. I will discuss this very special form of circularity in the following sections and argue that this is not a vicious circularity but a very special form of progressive

³⁷ Rudolf Carnap, "Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology", *Meaning and necessity: a study in semantics and modal logic*, (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1956a).

circularity which enables Hegel to take a mid-way position between foundationalism and coherentism.

Let us now summarize what has been said so far regarding Hegel's concept of concept and its connection with his concept of Logic:

First of all, the concept is the in-itself of everything subjective and objective. The in-itself of an object is not an unreachable beyond as it is in the case of Kant, but its very concept. This is because for Hegel the concept is the true content and form of all objectivity and subjectivity. Therefore, the concept cannot be comprehended as exclusively objective or subjective but overgrasps both subjectivity and objectivity. The distinction of subjectivity and objectivity is not outside or transcendent to concept but it is within or immanent to it. The concept is richer than either subjectivity or objectivity and their totality.

To comprehend an object is to become conscious of its concept. When the concept of an object is cognized then its in-itself is cognized. When an object is apprehended under some form other than its very concept, there is a disagreement between the form and the content of the cognition. Consequently, this leads to a disagreement between the cognition and its object. This does not mean that the cognition of an object under a form other than its concept is null but simply that it is defective. A defective cognition is one that involves some truth but not all truth on the subject-matter. It is true for some aspect of the subject-matter or under certain boundary conditions. The dialectical cognitive process reveals those limitations and boundary conditions and evolves the cognition towards its fulfillment.

In case of cognition under the form of concept, there is a perfect agreement with the content and the form. The object in-itself is the true content of the cognition. On the other hand, the in-itself of the object is nothing but its concept. Therefore, both the true content and the true form of the cognition of an object is its concept. There is also a perfect agreement between the side of subjectivity and objectivity as both sides are under the determination of the concept. Hence, at the level of the concept the dichotomies of subject-object and form-content are overcome. This does not mean that the distinctions of subjectivity and objectivity or form and content collapse into an undifferentiated unity. They are cognized as moments which have specific roles within the unity of the concept. They are distinctions within the concept. The concept is unity in difference. This is the dialectical and the speculative nature of the concept. It brings opposed determinations into a unity and show them as a complex which on the one hand oppose and on the other hand belong to each other in the sense that one cannot think of or cognize one without the other. Both sides of the relationship are essential to the concept. A cognition that filters only one side of the relationship, either the side of opposition (or negativity) or the side of unity, is defective and cognizes only one side of the truth of the subject matter. To cognize the concept is to cognize the whole including the difference and distinctions immanent to it. Therefore, the cognitive process is directed towards the whole. The concept is the form of the whole. A cognition that stops at less than the whole is partial and one-sided. It still contains some truth but lacks the self-consciousness about its specific boundary conditions and limitations. The concept of the concept is the very form of the whole in the sense that the whole is the unity in difference.

The concept of concept is the universal form of philosophy. Philosophy puts concepts in place of representations and therefore recovers the true content of the consciousness. However, philosophy cannot presuppose this very special form, concept, as given but it needs to develop and justify it. For Hegel, this is the specific task of logic. Logic needs to develop the concept of concept and demonstrate that it is the thought-form under which the dichotomies of object-subject, form-content are overcome. The justification of Hegel's concept of concept is its actual development and the demonstration that it achieves what it promises. This development and demonstration cannot take place in any other way but cognitively and it belongs to logic.

This requires that categories are made subject to a critique in terms of their ability to grasp truth and overcome the subject-object dichotomy in the course of a dialectical process until a complete categorical system which sublates subjectivity and objectivity is developed. This process involves a dialectical development of categories and the cognition of the role of each particular category within the system of concepts.

It is important to understand that this very ambitious philosophical thesis is not a product of mere philosophical extremism or over-excitement, but Hegel has a specific epistemological agenda in formulating this thesis. Hegel believes that there is no foundationalist solution to the problem of knowledge. This applies to both empiricist foundationalism and a priori foundationalism and Hegel develops an alternative incompatible with both views.

For Hegel, even the most immediate form of sense-perceptions involves the use of certain categories and as such there is no cognitive state that is not "contaminated" or actually constituted by thought. Even at the level of assent and dissent to given sensuous

stimuli, categories of “here” and “now” are in play in constituting the object of the consciousness. This eliminates the possibility of any empiricist foundationalist solution to the problem of knowledge.

On the other hand, Hegel also rejects an a priori foundationalism *à la* Kant. For Kant, the constitutive role of the concepts in the formation of the object, i.e., the object is a synthesis of the concept with the given sensible material, imposes a limitation on cognition. This is due to the fact that Kant envisions the concepts as belonging to the ego and as subjective. On the other side of this subjectively constituted object there remains the thing-in-itself which is separated from cognition with an impassable gulf. Kant defends the incompatible views that the thing-in-itself cannot be cognized and the thing-in-itself exists. According to this, we cannot cognize the thing-in-itself but still cognize that it exists, which is problematic. Hegel recognizes the problematic nature of Kant’s account of the thing-in-itself and the fact that it does not have a positive function and cognitive role in his theoretical philosophy.³⁸ Kant saw a limitation in the constitutive role of the concepts in the formation of the object, Hegel saw freedom in this. If the concepts are constitutive of the object, there cannot be an in-itself of the object other than its very concept. To comprehend an object is to cognize its concept which constitutes the object. For Kant, cognition is destined to be limited and cannot fully comprehend because of the constitutive role of the concepts, for Hegel cognition is without limits and can comprehend its object due to the very same reason.

If the concept were merely subjective, this would mean an inflation of subjectivity to contain objectivity. In this case, objectivity would simply be reduced to subjectivity.

³⁸ The thing-in-itself has a role in Kant’s overall system, specifically in his ethics, but this is not a cognitive role in Kant’s theoretical philosophy.

However, this is clearly incompatible with Hegel's position. Subjectivity is not immediately one with objectivity. Otherwise, there would not be any basis for a distinction between the object-in-itself and object-for-consciousness, which is a distinction fundamental to Hegel's overall position. Since objectivity cannot be reduced to subjectivity, cognition is a dialectical process only at the end of which the dichotomy between objectivity and subjectivity can be overcome. The dichotomy can be overcome as concept is constitutive of both subjectivity and objectivity. The dichotomy exists as objectivity is not immediately one with subjectivity and one cannot be reduced to the other. The distinction of objectivity and subjectivity is a distinction within the concept.

Hegel's dialectical or speculative concept of concept is his solution to this very problem. Concepts are not subjective as much as they are not objective. On the other hand, they are subjective as much as they are objective. Conceptual form is constitutive of subjectivity as much as it is constitutive of objectivity. For Hegel, solution of the problem of cognition lies in the re-cognition that the concept is the unity of subjectivity and objectivity while preserving their difference.

To develop this speculative concept of concept is the very objective of Hegel's logic. Philosophy cannot simply inherit the categories from traditional logic as Kant did. It needs to derive them and show their specific significance and role within the system of concepts: a system which should demonstrate that the concept of concept is the unity of subjectivity and objectivity.

For Hegel, logic is also connected with language. The particular concepts are displayed in language and everything expressed in language contains logical categories. Thus, one's language expresses his logic: "The forms of thought are, in the first instance,

displayed and stored in human language.... and everything that he has transformed into language and expresses in it contains a category.”³⁹

The connection of logic with language opens up the social and historical dimension of logic. Language is clearly a social and historical phenomenon. It is a product of social activity developed through time. It contains and expresses the categories accumulated through the history of that language. To learn a language is to learn a set of categories and how to use them to the extent that makes it possible for the learner to partake in verbal or written communication with the other users of that language. In that sense everyday language is not alien to logical categories and uses them, despite its lack of clear self-consciousness about their specific logical character. In this sense logic has a social and historical dimension. Logical categories are developed in a society and within history.

Logic on the other hand deals with pure thought determinations and categories and abstracts from the empirical content to which the logical categories are mixed in the every day usage and tests them according to their capacity to grasp truth. Only in logic are logical categories evaluated according to this criterion and against this ultimate purpose.

In the Logic we have to do with pure thought or with the pure thought-determinations. In the case of thought in the ordinary sense, we always represent to ourselves something that is not merely pure thought, for we intend by it something that is thought of, but which has an empirical content. In the Logic, thoughts are grasped in such a way that they have no content other than one that belongs to thinking itself, and is brought forth by thinking.⁴⁰

One may say that for Hegel logic is socially and historically constructed as long as we are also ready to admit that both history and society are also logically constructed.

³⁹Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 31.

⁴⁰ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 58.

This is due to the fact that thought-determinations and logical categories are always first learned, used and also often developed during everyday activity in a society and within history. They are accumulated in language and transferred between individuals and generations. Thus, in this specific sense logic and concept-usage is socially and historically constructed.

On the other hand, logic and its speculative concept of concept are the true content and the object of consciousness. It is the differentiated unity of subjectivity and objectivity and the true content of everything actual. In this sense, the logical is not subordinate to the social and historical but overgrasps both of them. The social dimension and historicity of the logical do not transcend it, but are immanent in it. In this specific sense, what is social and historical is logically constructed.

It has been said that concepts are the true content of the consciousness and the in-itself of the object. Thus, logic is the system of the in-itself of the possible objects of the consciousness. Therefore, “.... logic coincides with metaphysics, with the science of things grasped in thoughts that used to be taken to express the essentialities of the things.”⁴¹

Now on the one hand, logic is taken as connected with language, and its social and historical dimension has been admitted. On the other hand it is taken as coinciding with ontology. This obviously creates a number of problems requiring focused and lengthy attention. I will identify some of those which are fundamental to Hegel’s overall programme and to the objectives of this thesis in order to address these in the following sections of this thesis:

⁴¹ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 56.

1. Is the system of concepts unique and closed or open-ended? If so, how can this be compatible with the historicity of the concept and logical?
2. Logic is connected with language. If the system of concepts is unique, how can Hegel's system accommodate the fact that there are languages with fundamentally different formal structures?

Now we will look into Hegel's concept as unity in difference in some further detail.

Concept as a Unity in Difference

We have so far discussed that Hegel's Logic deals with pure thought-determinations or categories and tests them in their capacity to grasp truth. For Hegel, truth is the agreement of a cognition or concept with its object. This requires the dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity to be overcome and the object of consciousness to be apprehended under the form of its genuine constitutive concept. However, the dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity is not immediately overcome but only after a self-critical dialectical cognitive process at the end of which, the object-for-consciousness becomes one with the object-in-itself. At this stage, the form of this cognition is one with its content as the genuine constitutive concept is both the form and the content of this comprehending cognition.

This requires that the concept of concept is cognized as a unity of subjectivity and objectivity while preserving this distinction within itself. This brings us to Hegel's concept of concept as unity in difference, which is fundamental to his overall position. I

have argued that Hegel's concept of concept is mainly motivated by a specific epistemological agenda which strives to overcome the limitations of Kant's dualistic view of cognition and concept. However, this project faces the outstanding difficulty of making sense of the notion of "unity in difference", a notion which clearly includes a contradiction within itself. For example, both of the cognitions that "subjectivity is objectivity" and "subjectivity is not objectivity" can be derived from the cognition that "the concept of concept is the unity of subjectivity and objectivity in difference".

To make sense of this apparently outright contradiction, we must take into account two key Hegelian insights. First, according to Hegel everything actual consists of apparently opposed determinations and comprehending cognition requires that it is cognized as the unity of these opposed determinations. Second, Hegel denies that single statements or propositions can be the unit of truth, and develops what can be called a holistic theory of truth.

Hegel's thought takes off by denying all sorts of cognitive dualisms that take concepts to be devoid of content and in need of a synthesis with a non-conceptual element to become contentful. Thought and its genuine form concept are recognized as the sole and the ultimate source of cognitive content. Therefore, all cognitive content is ultimately conceptual.

In Hegel's terminology, to have content is to have determination. To have determination is to include negation that differentiates it from its other. Something is determinate if it negates its other and differentiates it from itself. It is a general Hegelian principle that everything determinate involves determination. Now, except for basic

qualities, everything that exists has multiple determinations and the cognition of that object requires that cognition of it as the unity of these determinations.

According to Hegel, particular concepts are structured into a hierarchical system. This system is not an external form imposed on the particular concepts but belongs to the very internal development of the concept of concept from particular concepts.

The concept of concept is the totality which brings the apparently opposing particular concepts into a systematic unity. The concept of concepts is the whole and it leaves nothing outside of itself. From the perspective of the concept of concept, there is no transcendence. All is immanent to the conceptual domain.

A one-sided proposition therefore can never even give expression to a speculative truth. If we say, for example, that the absolute is the unity of subjective and objective, we are undoubtedly in the right, but so far one-sided, as we enunciate the unity only and lay the accent upon it, forgetting that in reality the subjective and objective are not merely identical but also distinct.⁴²

The concept preserves all the differences and distinctions between the particular concepts within itself. The unity of concept is not an undifferentiated unity, in which all particular determinations, differences and plurality collapses into a monistic uniformity. The unity of concept is a unity in difference. The particular concepts are distinct ideal moments which have specific determinations and functions within the systematic unity of the concept. According to Hegel, “It is in this dialectic ... in the grasping of opposites in their unity or of the positive in the negative that speculative thought consists.”⁴³

For Hegel, the perspective of understanding is not sufficient to grasp the true nature of concepthood. From the perspective of understanding different particular concepts are independent and isolated from each other. This is due the fact that the

⁴² Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 132.

⁴³ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 56.

principle of identity is the fundamental operative principle of understanding. Once two particular concepts are distinguished through the principle of identity, by recognizing that they have opposing determinations an unsurpassable gulf is introduced between these two opposing particular concepts making them two extremes of a philosophical dichotomy (subject-object, universal-particular, thought-being, etc). It is not possible to overcome these dichotomies from the perspective of understanding, which operates based on the abstract principle of identity alone. Therefore, for the understanding the distinctions between these particular concepts are absolute and should be taken as ultimate. However, in fact, these are relative distinctions within the systematic unity of the conceptual domain. It is the underlying unity of the concept of concept, which makes it possible to make these distinctions in the first place. It is the task of philosophy to recognize the specific role and function of each particular concept in the systematic unity of the concept of concept. To recognize this is to recognize the true meaning of these particular concepts and to cognize them comprehensively.

.... it is the requirement and the business of logical thinking to enquire into just this, whether such a finite without infinity is something true, or whether such an abstract infinity, also a content without form and a form without content, an inner by itself which has no outer expression, an externality without an inwardness, whether any of these is *something true* or *something actual*.⁴⁴

Consequently, the concept of concepts preserves all the differences and plurality of particular concepts within itself but brings them under its systematic unity. According to this, all distinctions and differences of the particular concepts are relative to the systematic unity of the concept of concept and are not ultimate. Philosophical

⁴⁴ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p, 42.

dichotomies (and antinomies) arise as a result of the failure to recognize the higher conceptual unity of the two opposing particular concepts.

It must be noted that here again Kant stopped at the negative result (that how things are in-themselves is unknowable), and did not penetrate to the cognition of the true and positive significance of the antinomies. This true and positive significance (expressed generally) is that everything actual contains opposed determinations within it, and in consequence the cognition and, more exactly, the comprehension of an object amounts precisely to our becoming conscious of it as a concrete unity of opposed determinations.⁴⁵

The Concept is a Dialectical Systematic Totality

Hegel's concept of concept is a dialectical systematic totality. Totality in general implies existence of elements that make up the whole. However, a systematic totality is not an arbitrary totality. In a systematic totality, the elements that make up the whole form a system, which means they are interrelated according to a set of well-defined principles. They are not simply put together but they are linked and interrelated.

Nevertheless, the conception of systematic totality does not impose any restrictions on the nature of the principles that will be used to interlink the elements of the system except that such rules should exist. A systematic totality in general is obtained by bringing together multiple elements which exist prior to and independent of this bringing together according to certain principles which are to be defined based on the nature of systematic totality that is to be obtained. One should note that the members of the totality exist prior to and independent of the totality and the principle according to which the totality is formed is external from the perspective of the elements. There is no intrinsic link between the system, the elements and the principle according to which the system is to be formed. In this case, the system does not constitute its elements.

⁴⁵ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 93.

On the other hand, the conception of dialectical systematic totality is more restrictive. In a dialectical system, the elements of the system stand in a dialectical relation with respect to each other. This has a number of significant implications:

First, in a dialectical system it is not possible to talk about the elements in isolation and independent of the system. The converse is also true. It is not possible to talk about the dialectical system independent of its constitutive elements. Therefore, a dialectical system is not only a totality but also a unity. The system constitutes its elements as the elements constitute the system.

However, as the elements are as essential for the dialectical system as the totality, it is not an arbitrary and undifferentiated unity. It is a unity in difference. For the dialectical system, difference is as essential as the unity. Only a unity that preserves the difference is a dialectical system. It is critical to note that this is a difference that is immanent to a unity.

There is an obvious difficulty here. When we talk about a unity in difference, we bring together two particular concepts (i.e., unity and difference) with opposing determinations. The fundamental question is: (How) is it logically possible to bring two particular concepts with opposing determinations into a higher conceptual unity without flying in the face of reason? This is the key theme of Hegel's dialectical programme and in order to be able to understand Hegel's answer to this question, we need to discuss first Hegel's concept of logical.

According to Hegel, everything logical has three moments⁴⁶:

1. **Abstraction or the moment of understanding:** According to Hegel, this is the standpoint of understanding. At this stage, particular concepts (or thought

⁴⁶ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, pp. 125 – 134.

determinations in Hegel's terminology) have the form of abstract universals with opposing determinations.

From the perspective of understanding, unity and difference, subject and object, one and many, etc. are particular concepts with opposing determinations. They are simply inconsistent with each other. If one holds, the other cannot. Understanding takes distinct particular concepts in isolation and as fixed and does not recognize their speculative nature which makes them moments of a higher conceptual unity. For understanding different particular concepts are separated from each other and their difference is ultimate. The ultimate principle of the understanding is the principle of identity. Understanding does not recognize the dialectical nature of the concept but stops at a conceptual atomism.

On the other hand, understanding takes particular concepts as abstract universals which are opposed to non-conceptual particulars. According to this, particular concepts are abstractions or generalizations formed on the basis of experience. This attitude is akin to the one of empiricist foundationalism and the dualist view of concept discussed earlier. At this stage, the concept is not seen as a totality but is only an abstraction from the given non-conceptual element. Because of this, there is always an impassable gulf between the conceptual and the non-conceptual element. By definition, the conceptual abstract universal can never go beyond its own imposed limits and comprehend the non-conceptual particular.

Although understanding takes the principle of identity as its highest principle, it cannot escape from its inherent contradictions. One typical example is the problem of cognition. On the one hand understanding takes the distinction of conceptual and non-

conceptual as ultimate, on the other hand it takes cognition as a synthesis including both conceptual and non-conceptual elements. Consequently, for understanding cognition is both conceptual and non-conceptual, which is inconsistent with its principle that the distinctions of the understanding are ultimate. Recognition of the inherent contradictions of the understanding takes us to the next stage in the dialectic of the concept.

2. The dialectical or negatively rational: It is not possible to construct a coherent philosophical system from the perspective of understanding. This is the irony of the understanding. It suffers violence from its fundamental principle: the principle of identity. When opposed particular concepts are pressed and subjected to a critique, they prove themselves inconsistent with what they present themselves to be. This is not the consequence of a philosophical error, and cannot be remedied by making adjustments to the initial meanings attributed to the particular concepts. On the contrary, this is a consequence of the limitations of the method followed by the understanding and its failure to recognize the true nature of the conceptual as unity in difference. As discussed above, the distinctions of the particular concepts are relative to the systematic unity of their concept and their specific functions within it. They are valid within that unity and not in isolation. Understanding takes the particular concepts as isolated and their distinctions as absolute. When these distinctions are pressed to their extremes, their immanent unity reveals itself and each opposed determination come up to be the opposite of what it initially presented itself to be. This is the consequence of the dialectical nature of the concept. History of philosophy shows us that every new philosophical system identifies inconsistencies within the previous systems and

tries to remedy these by suggesting new interpretations for some of the particular concepts. For Hegel, this is a task that can never be achieved in full. The real philosophical task is to recognize the place of each particular concept and philosophical system within the system of the concept. This requires going beyond the abstract principle of identity of the understanding, and to recognize the spec-ulative nature of the concepts.

The dialectic is the immanent transcending of the isolated one-sidedness and restrictedness of the determinations of the understanding. For Hegel, dialectic constitutes the moving soul of scientific progression. It is through dialectic that immanent coherence and necessity enters into the content of science.⁴⁷ The skeptical standpoint is to analyze the one-sided abstract determinations of the understanding, show the inconsistencies in them and stop at this negatively rational or dialectical result, without moving on to the final moment, positively rational. The dialectical moment, when taken in isolation from the other two moments, leads to skepticism. It is only at the third moment the positive result of dialectic that skepticism is overcome. The spec-ulative moment is not independent of the first two moments and brings them into its higher unity. It recognizes the necessary functions of the understanding (and abstraction) and dialectics within the logical activity without stopping at them.

3. The spec-ulative or positively rational: The dialectic has also a positive result.

The result of the dialectic is not an empty negation, and nothing. On the contrary, the dialectical moment is always negation of a specific determinate content that belongs to the understanding, as represented by the first moment. The positively rational consists in the unity of the first two moments, as these belong to each

⁴⁷ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 128.

other and form a unity. Thus, it has a determinate content as the unity of the first two moments. Unlike the first moment, the result is not a simple and abstract universal, but unity of distinct determinations, the abstract determination of the understanding and its dialectical negation. This positively rational result is a concrete thought. It is filled and enriched by the content of the first two moments. Once the third moment is reached, the dialectical cycle recovers itself. What is obtained by the third moment becomes the first moment and is again subjected to the dialectical process. Through this process, very briefly explained here, an immanent accumulation of thought-content is achieved without addition of any external element and the system of concepts becomes a circle of circles.

Circularity of the concept is not a vicious but a progressive circularity.

These three moments explained above belong to the very nature of everything logical. The concept being the ultimate form of everything logical, is the differentiated unity of all these three moments. Therefore, the concept is not a unity in the sense of abstract and undifferentiated unity. The key here is to recognize that the negative is as positive as it is negative.

All that is necessary to achieve scientific progress – and it is essential to strive to gain this insight – is the recognition of the logical principle that the negative is just as much positive, or that what is self-contradictory does not resolve itself into a nullity, into abstract nothingness, but essentially only into the negation of its particular content, in other words, that such a negation is not all and every negation but the negation of a specific subject matter which resolves itself, and consequently is a specific negation, and therefore the result essentially contains that from which it results Because the result, the negation, is a specific negation it has content. It is a fresh concept but higher and richer than its predecessor; for it is richer by the negation and the opposite of the latter, therefore contains it, but something more, and is the unity of itself and its opposite. It is in this way that the system of concepts as such has to be formed – and it has to

complete itself in a purely continuous course in which nothing extraneous is introduced.⁴⁸

Concept, Circularity and Coherence

Circularity in Hegel's thought is very closely connected with his vision of philosophy as knowledge without presuppositions. For Hegel, philosophy is a very special form of thinking in which thinking becomes cognition; cognition without any presuppositions: "Philosophy is a peculiar mode of thinking – a mode by which thinking becomes cognition".⁴⁹

This creates a unique problem for philosophy; a problem peculiar to it and which is not shared by the other sciences: the problem of beginning. According to Hegel, all sciences apart from philosophy start with two important presuppositions. They presuppose 1) their object as given and 2) their method. Philosophy as it cannot make any presuppositions cannot presuppose either of these and needs to develop both its object and its method out of its own activity. According to Hegel, "Philosophy lacks the advantage, which the other sciences enjoy, of being able to presuppose its objects as given immediately by representation. And, with regard to its beginning and advance, it cannot presuppose the method of cognition as one that is already accepted."⁵⁰

This creates a difficulty of making a beginning for philosophy. First of all, philosophy cannot start with an object that is given to it and it cannot presuppose a method according to which it can operate. It has to develop and justify both of these which leads to the problem of beginning: "The difficulty of making a beginning arises

⁴⁸ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 54.

⁴⁹ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 25.

⁵⁰ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 24.

immediately, because a beginning (being something immediate) does make a presupposition or, rather, it is itself just that.”⁵¹

With respect to the problem of beginning, Hegel considers and rejects two potential relevant foundationalist approaches. The first approach is referred to Kant but can be generalized to many epistemologically oriented post-Kantian philosophers as well. According to this, an investigation of our faculty of cognition is required to define the legitimate limits and resources available to the cognitive process and to identify the foundations on which our knowledge can be built. Hegel acknowledges the merit of this approach in its insight that the forms of thinking themselves must be made the object of cognition. However, an investigation of the cognitive faculty itself cannot take place other than cognitively. Therefore, Hegel correctly denies the possibility of conducting an investigation of the cognitive faculty prior to the cognitive process. This investigation itself which is necessary needs to be incorporated within philosophy not prior to it.

Although this particular criticism of critical philosophy is very widely known and quoted, its fundamental insight is often overlooked. The essence of Hegel’s criticism is his insight that philosophical method needs to be self-reflective. This is a very important requirement for philosophical method. This requirement is a very stringent one and is not fulfilled by even many contemporary minimalist philosophical theories. For example, the strong relativist thesis that all knowledge is theory-laden is not self-reflective. The relativist principle itself is not theory-laden as it is not intended to be applicable within a particular theory but it applies to all knowledge and all theories. This principle of self-reflectiveness is a fundamental element of Hegel’s philosophical method.

⁵¹ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 24.

The second approach Hegel discusses with respect to the problem of the beginning of philosophy is Reinhold's thesis that a provisional beginning must be made with a hypothetical and problematic philosophizing. According to this, philosophy must be considered as hypothetical and problematic until somehow firm foundations can be established within the course of this hypothetical philosophizing. Hegel acknowledges that knowledge based on presuppositions and provisional statements is problematic and hypothetical. However, for Hegel Reinhold's proposal does not solve the problem of the beginning but admits its inadequacy to solve it. Hegel's solution to this problem involves reference to circularity.

In philosophy, thinking makes itself its own object. By this means, thought does not presuppose any object as given but gives itself its own object to start with. This is why Hegel's system of philosophical sciences starts with logic and similarly that is why logic starts with poorest thought-determination that lacks all determination and content. However, it is the task of philosophy to convert this immediate beginning into a result and complete the circle upon itself. Only when this immediate beginning is converted into a result of the philosophical enterprise is all enterprise justified. Circularity is pursued as a method of philosophical justification.

But what we have here is the free act of thinking putting itself at the standpoint where it is for its own self, *producing its own ob-ject for itself* thereby, and *giving it to itself*. Within the Science this standpoint, which in this first act appears as *immediate*, must make itself into the *result*, and (what is more) into its last result, in which it reaches its beginning again and returns into itself. In this way, philosophy shows itself as a circle that goes back into itself; it does not have a beginning in the same sense as the other sciences, so only has a relation to the subject who takes the decision to philosophize, but not to the science as such.⁵²

⁵² Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 41.

However, we need to take into account that this is not an arbitrary circularity. Otherwise, it would have been possible to provide a justification for any principle by an argument which begs the question. The peculiarity of this circle is twofold:

First, it is a requirement for Hegel that the circle is all encompassing and consolidates all pure thought-determinations and all spheres of philosophical science. Here we see another critical element of Hegel's philosophical method: all-inclusiveness. In Hegel's case all-inclusiveness is not a matter of formal preference, but it is a fundamental methodological principle pursued all the way through the development of the system. All-inclusiveness is an essential condition for circularity to have a justificatory role.

Second, the dialectical method described in the previous sections is pursued without introducing any extraneous element into the process. The circle is built through the self-development of the thought-determinations into the system of concepts which closes upon itself when the very concept of concept is reached.

Not only is the whole system a circle, but also each part of philosophy is also a circle. This is due to the nature of dialectical method which advances through triads as described. Each time the third element of logical, speculative or positively rational element is reached a circle closes upon itself. Now the unity of these three moments, the circle, becomes the first moment of a higher circle until the system completes itself into the circle of circles.

By virtue of the nature of the method just indicated, the science exhibits itself as a circle returning upon itself, the end being wound back into the beginning, the simple ground, by the mediation; this circle is moreover a circle of circles, for each individual member as ensouled by the method is reflected into itself, so that in returning into the beginning it is at the same time the beginning of a new member. Links of this chain are the individual sciences [of logic, nature and

spirit], each of which has an antecedent and a successor – or, expressed more accurately, has only the antecedent and indicates its successor in its conclusion.⁵³

In summary, Hegel's philosophical method involves a special form of circularity. A key driver for the circular epistemology is Hegel's vision of philosophy as knowledge without presuppositions. This vision of philosophical cognition as knowledge without presuppositions can only be achieved through a circular epistemology which is self-reflective and all-inclusive. Hegel says: "The essential requirement for the science of logic is not so much that the beginning be a pure immediacy, but rather that the whole of the science be within itself a circle in which the first is also the last and the last is also the first."⁵⁴

The principle of self-reflectiveness requires that all philosophical principles should be shown to be conclusions and cannot be taken merely as premises. This principle is at odds with a pyramid-like foundationalist epistemology according to which our knowledge is based on a set of privileged principles that function as the foundations of our body of knowledge. According to the foundationalist perspective, the development of our knowledge is rather linear. In Hegel's case, there is a requirement to make the premises into conclusions and *vica versa*, which leads to a non-linear and circular perspective.

One important aspect of this self-reflectiveness is the establishment of a form of, to use scientific terminology, feedback loop between the premises and conclusions of an argument. In general, a feedback system is one in which the inputs change as a function of the outputs of the system. In a linear pyramid-like structure, the relations are

⁵³ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 843.

⁵⁴ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 71.

unidirectional. The structure is built through derivation and accumulation of new conclusions from a previously established set of principles. The validity of all the structure rests upon a set of principles which function as the foundation of the entire enterprise the validity of which are established a priori. In a linear pyramid-like structure new results reached do not have implications for the previously established principles but only for potential future results. However, in a self-reflective circular structure due to the requirement that the premises must also be made as conclusions, the relations are multi-directional. Introduction of each new element into the system requires a consideration and often revision of the existing elements of the system as the new element brings with it a number of multi-directional relations which have implications for the existing elements as well as on potential future elements. A pyramid-like system with unidirectional linear relations is relatively atomistic. Each element of the system has a static significance which can be defined independent of the potential future elements that will be introduced into the pyramid. However, in a self-reflective circular structure each element of the system can receive a new significance, role and meaning through introduction of new elements into the system. The implication of this is twofold.

First of all, a self-reflective circular system is dynamic and open. Each of its elements can receive new interpretations and significance through the new elements that will be introduced into the system. Thus, no element is left behind and frozen. Second, due to this openness all elements of the system are active. A rather historical element of the system with an established role and status can receive a fresh significance and become a dynamic operative element yielding a number of new multi-directional relations. Therefore, unlike a pyramid-like foundationalist system which is relatively

simple and atomistic, a self-reflective circular system is complex. In the first case, the system can be reduced to its simple constitutive elements, more or less, without remainder. In the latter case, the system constitutes its elements as much as the elements constitute the system. The role and the significance of each element are constituted by the system whereas the system is altered and re-defined by the contributions of each element.

On the other hand, for Hegel, self-reflectiveness is not sufficient but it must be complemented by all-inclusiveness for the circular epistemology to function as the justificatory method for philosophical cognition. To put it in Hegelian terminology, the concept of concept cannot leave out any otherness or negation outside of itself. It is the negation of negation and includes all otherness within itself. Thus, there is no cognitive content that transcends and is beyond the concept of concept. All thought-determinations are immanent to it. I argue that one of the main motivations behind this thesis is epistemological and Hegel believes that his self-reflective circular epistemology cannot function as the justificatory method for knowledge without pre-suppositions unless it is complemented by the principle of all-inclusiveness.

The requirement of all-inclusiveness can only be appreciated when it is linked with Hegel's notion of truth. For Hegel, truth is the whole. As previously discussed, this is not a holism in the sense that significance of all particularity and individuality is denied in favor of an all-encompassing generality. On the contrary, this is a holism which envisions all difference as well as particularity, individuality and universality as constitutive and intrinsic elements of the same unity. The truth of a subject-matter is the cognition that comprehends it as unity of its opposing determinations including its specific character of individuality, particularity and universality. Each of these moments

can appear as independent and self-subsistent for the understanding. However, in fact they are interrelated and interdependent. There is no universality that does not manifest itself in the particulars. Every particular is the particular it is through its universal qualities and relations which differentiate it from the other particulars and finally there is no individuality which is not a presence of some universal nature mediated through a specific particular character. Everything actual is a unity of opposing determinations and the comprehension of that specific actuality lies in the cognition that grasps these specific apparently opposing determinations in their unity.

Furthermore, for Hegel the conceptual is the unique source of cognitive content. Now once the conceptual is accepted as the unique source of all content and truth is defined as the whole in which all difference inhere, then Hegel's philosophical programme becomes nothing less than cognition of that whole together with all the particular thought-forms or categories that constitute it. Here one should keep in mind that the whole constitutes its elements as much as its elements or moments constitute it as described in the preceding paragraphs.

Hence, philosophical cognition is driven by the motivation to cognize truth, the differentiated whole or the whole that differentiates itself within itself. As thought is accepted as the unique source of content, this task is accompanied by an anticipatory optimism about the possibility of its completion, an optimism which can only be converted into a certainty after the completion of the task.

If truth is the whole or unity that includes all difference within itself and philosophical cognition is tasked to reach cognition of truth, then philosophical cognition cannot fall short of all-inclusiveness. This means all categories and thought-

determinations needs to be cognized as belonging to a single system of concept. This requires that different thought-determinations or categories need to be cognized as moments of a higher unity. Similarly each of these higher unities needs to be cognized as the moments belonging to a higher unity and so on. The philosophical cognition lies in the cognition that comprehends the specific place of each thought-determination within a higher unity with its apparent opposite until a self-reflective and all-inclusive system of concepts is established.

The principle of all-inclusiveness does not imply that the system of concept is closed and exclusive but all-inclusiveness can also function as a value that motivates and directs philosophical activity as a goal. I believe that interpretation of all-inclusiveness as a regulatory value brings a spirit of openness into the philosophical system and enterprise. According to this, philosophy seeks for an integration of all pure thought-forms or categories in all domains, i.e., history, culture, science, etc. Unlike any other discipline philosophy is burdened by the task of incorporating all otherness and difference within itself. It cannot fall short of this as an ideal and take a historically, socially or culturally conditioned approach and announce different cognitive patterns as belonging to certain cognitive islands which are radically separated from each other from a cognitive perspective. The moral of the principle of all-inclusiveness is that there is no radical cognitive otherness, but all cognitive otherness is conjectural. The ideal and the task of philosophy are to overcome this conjectural otherness by cognizing the cognitive boundary conditions of the applicability of each category and through this cognize different thought-patterns and conceptual forms as belonging to a higher-unity. This method relativizes the differences between different cognitive attitudes and tries to reach

a higher cognitive unity that incorporates different conceptual forms within it. According to this perspective, only the whole is absolute. Everything else has its relative place and role within the whole and it is the task of philosophy to cognize and show this. But the definition of the whole requires that it is all-inclusive; therefore the whole is constituted by its elements and does not transcend them. Therefore, the whole can only be cognized through the cognition of its constitutive elements and the cognition of truth is partial and defective if it is not all-inclusive.

One of the important implications of this view is that philosophy as a cognitive enterprise exhibits a gradual development. Truth does not come or go at once. It is a historical process through which new categories and thought-determinations are introduced, incorporated and cognized. The measure of the richness of content and truth of a philosophical or a conceptual system is the level of diversity in terms of cognitive forms incorporated into the system. All-inclusiveness motivates and directs this activity as an ideal.

On the one hand, the principle of self-reflectiveness drives us towards completion of the cognitive circle by leaving no philosophical principle or concept merely as a premise but showing them as conclusions. On the other hand, principle of all-inclusiveness drives philosophical cognition to incorporate all categories and pure thought-forms into itself by cognizing them as moments of a higher unity. The two principles are interrelated and work in tandem driven by the ideal of cognition of all categories and pure thought-forms as belonging to a single system of concept.

Concept as the Foundation

One of the main difficulties in a study on Hegel is that the dialectical nature of his system prevents us from being able to classify his position by conventional historical categories. This challenge is obvious when we consider Hegel's position with respect to the coherentism vs. foundationalism controversy. I argue that Hegel's position can neither be characterized as coherentism nor foundationalism in the standard sense although it incorporates the important features of both positions. The key is to keep in mind that the dialectical character of Hegel's thought is built into his concept of concept as a unity of opposing determinations.

Hegel's idea of philosophy as presuppositionless knowledge and his emphasis on speculative circularity as the methodological principle to achieve this gives a strong coherentist tone to his theory of philosophical knowledge. According to this, philosophy can not presuppose its method, object or the cognitions that belong to it as given and valid but needs to justify them. The critical point here is that for Hegel philosophical method belongs to the very content of philosophy. It is the task of philosophy to justify its method which is itself the very basis of justification of any philosophical cognition. This is the requirement of self-reflectiveness which is a fundamental principle of Hegel's philosophical method. According to this, all philosophical principles should be shown to be conclusions and cannot be taken merely as premises. The requirement of self-reflectiveness can only be fulfilled through a special form of circular methodology as discussed in the previous section. To formulate it with more contemporary terminology, for Hegel there are no non-inferentially justified beliefs.

It is important to note that this requirement of self-reflectiveness applies to philosophy only but not the other sciences. In the first paragraph of *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel identifies this as a fundamental difference between philosophy and the other sciences: “Philosophy lacks the advantage, which the other sciences enjoy, of being able to presuppose its objects as given immediately by representation.”⁵⁵

Despite Hegel’s emphasis on circularity and self-reflectiveness as essential elements of his philosophical method, which gives it a strong coherentist flavor, Hegel also refers to the concept of “foundation” in several places in his *Science of Logic*. In the preface to the second edition of *Science of Logic*, Hegel refers to the concepts as the indispensable foundation of things. According to this, the concepts of the things are what are genuinely permanent and substantial in the complexity and contingency of appearance.

The following passage reveals important aspects of Hegel’s notion of “concepts as foundation of things”:

.... the nature, the peculiar essence, that which is genuinely permanent and substantial in the complexity and contingency of appearance and fleeting manifestation, is the *notion* of the thing, the *immanent universal*, and that each human being though infinitely unique is so primarily because he is a *man*, and each individual animal is such individual primarily because it is an animal: if this is true, then it would be impossible to say what such an individual could still be if this foundation were removed, no matter how richly endowed the individual might be with other predicates, if, that is, this foundation can equally be called a predicate like the others.⁵⁶

The significance of this passage and Hegel’s view of “concepts as the foundations of things” can be better appreciated when the implicit dialogue Hegel has with Kant in this passage is made explicit. In this passage and the discussion following it, we see a

⁵⁵ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 24.

⁵⁶ Hegel, *Hegel’s*, p. 36.

number of important similarities and differences between Hegel's and Kant's positions which are critical to understand the point Hegel is making. I will start with the similarities and proceed with the differences.

First, Hegel contrasts concepts (of things) with the contingency and transience of appearance. Thus, Hegel should have in mind necessity, simplicity and permanence to associate with the concept. In the passage, Hegel explicitly mentions permanence and implies necessity by saying the concept is the nature, essential and substantial although he does not explicitly refer to simplicity. Then, Hegel distinguishes the concept of a thing from other predicates of the thing and suggests that it would not be possible to say what that individual could still be if this foundation, the concept, were removed.

The distinction Hegel makes between "the concept" and the other determinations or predicates of a thing is akin to the distinction Kant makes between the a priori and the empirical concepts. For Kant, the peculiarity of the a priori concepts, or categories, lies in their role to constitute experience. As a consequence of their constitutive role, the a priori concepts are necessary and universal. Furthermore, as the necessary and universal constitutive elements of the experience, they can be interpreted as the a priori foundations of all experience and all cognition. Although Hegel does not use Kant's taxonomy of a priori concepts vs. empirical concepts, he is a follower of Kant when it comes to making a fundamental distinction between the concepts and representations and associating the former with necessity and permanence. Indeed, Hegel agrees with Kant that the concepts play a constitutive role and therefore needs to be distinguished from representations which are analogous to Kant's empirical concepts. Due to its constitutive role, the concept of a thing is its very foundation.

Although Hegel agrees with Kant that the concepts (or a priori concepts in Kant's terminology) have a constitutive role, his views about the nature of that constitutive role are different. His reference to the concept as the "immanent universal" in the passage above is a direct consequence of this difference. For Kant, a priori concepts are transcendental, they belong to the subject. Although they constitute the experience and the objects, they are transcendental and belong to the formal aspect of experience, not to its content or matter. As a consequence of this transcendentalism, the thing-in-itself remains as an unreachable beyond for the subject. However, for Hegel the concepts constitute the object in form and matter. They are not transcendental but immanent.

The indispensable foundation, the notion, the universal which is the thought itself, in so far as one can make abstraction from the general idea expressed by the word 'thought', cannot be regarded as *only* an indifferent form attached to a content. But these thoughts of everything natural and spiritual, even the substantial *content*, still contain a variety of determinateness and are still charged with the difference of a soul and a body, of the notion and a relative reality; the profounder basis is the soul itself, the pure Notion which is the very heart of things, their simple life-pulse, even of subjective thinking of them.⁵⁷

Concepts are not empty thought forms imposed on an externally given content, on the contrary they are the ultimate source of all cognitive content. Unlike Kantian dualism, which associates concepts with the form and the content with the intuitions, Hegel's speculative thought unites both sides of the apparent dichotomy within the concept, or within thought. According to this, the subjective concept and its object are distinctions not outside but within the domain of concepts. Therefore, the concept is the foundation. It is the foundation of not only the object but also our cognition of it. This is why Hegel refers to the concept of a thing as immanent universal while Kant names his philosophical system transcendental idealism. For Kant, the Idea is transcendental whereas for Hegel

⁵⁷ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 36.

Idea, which is the very concept of concept, is immanent to everything and constitutes it. For Kant, concepts are at the end of the day subjective. For Hegel, concepts are speculative. They are subjective as much as objective and neither merely subjective nor merely objective. In that regard, their role is not only epistemological but also ontological. They are not only the foundations of knowledge but also the foundations of reality.

Here and there in this mesh there are firm knots which give stability and direction to the life and consciousness of spirit; these knots or nodes owe their fixity and power to the simple fact that having been brought before consciousness, they are independent, self-existent Notions of its essential nature.⁵⁸

It is obvious that Hegel's notion of foundation is fundamentally different than that of empiricist foundationalism. Hegel acknowledges the need for foundations for both knowledge and existence. However, he does not adopt a foundationalism which uncritically accepts that certain elements of our knowledge are veridical and the remaining body of our cognition should be founded upon them. His notion of foundations has two aspects: the first concerning the knowledge and the philosophical method and therefore can be referred as the epistemological aspect, second concerning the existence and reality and hence can be referred as the ontological aspect. Due to the speculative nature of Hegel's concept of concept which brings together the subjective and objective side within itself, these two aspects are eventually interrelated and are actually two aspects of Hegel's notion of concept as foundation. They belong to the same unity and are essential to each other. The concept is the foundation in terms of knowledge and cognition just because of its very constitutive role in making up the object and its

⁵⁸ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 37.

ontological function. The epistemological and ontological aspects of this very special form of foundationalism are the two sides of the same coin.

The important challenge with respect to the epistemological aspects of Hegel's notion of foundation is how to combine the circular methodology which has strong coherentist implications with the concept of concept as the foundation of knowledge. There is an apparent tension between the two theses both of which are essential for Hegel's overall position. Hegel's solution to the problem is to argue that circular methodology justifies the concept of concept as the foundation.

In the framework of empiricist foundationalism, the advance is made from the foundation or ground to what is grounded. Certain elements of our knowledge are taken as veridical in-themselves and the validity of the rest of our knowledge is grounded upon them. Those elements which are thought of as given, non-conceptual, non-thought, non-subjective have supremacy in terms of cognitive value and validity. What comes first in terms of immediacy or givenness is superior in terms of validity and ability to ground further beliefs. For Hegel, it is just the opposite way around. The advance in philosophy or logic is actually a retreat into the ground and to what is primary and true. What we start with is poorest in terms of cognitive content and validity. The advance from immediacy to conceptual cognition is actually an advance from the poorest form of cognition to conceptually comprehensive cognition which grounds the earlier cognitive forms. According to this, "the advance is a *retreat into the ground*, to what is *primary* and true, on which depends and, in fact, from which originates, that with which the beginning is made. Thus consciousness on its onward path from the immediacy with which it began is led back to absolute knowledge as its innermost truth."⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 71.

The advance is not an absolute negation of the earlier forms of knowledge in favor of the later ones. Each form of cognition preserves within itself the previous forms. By doing that, the previous forms are recognized as valid within certain boundary cognitions and are relativized within the higher form. Through this, the higher form also grounds them and it demonstrates itself as the ground on which the previous forms are based. In this sense, the advance in logic or philosophy is the deepening of the available forms to cognize their ground or essence. The advance is the re-cognition of the apparently opposing thought determination as moments belonging to a higher unity that grounds them. This higher unity is the very concept of its moments which constitutes and is their very foundation. However, the foundation does not have a validity that is isolated from its moments. Its determination and content is nothing but to be the unity and concept of these opposed determinations. Therefore, the moments are as essential to their concept, which is their foundation, as the concept is essential to its moments. As previously discussed the relationship is non-linear. The beginning and the result cannot be taken as others that exist independently, but they belong to the same unity and are essential to each other. Each particular concept or thought-form is charged with the previous forms it sublates. The beginning is preserved in the result. On the other hand, the result is nothing but what the beginning is in-itself implicitly.

We see therefore that, on the other hand, it is equally necessary to consider as result that into which the movement returns as into its ground. In this respect the first is equally the ground and the last a derivative; since the movement starts from the first and by correct inferences arrives at the last as the ground, this latter is a result. Further, the progress from that which forms the beginning is to be regarded as only a further determination of it, hence that which forms the starting point of the development remains at the base of all that follows and does not vanish from it. The progress does not consist merely in the derivation of an other,

or in the effected transition into a genuine other; and in so far as this transition does occur it is equally sublated again. Thus the beginning of philosophy is the foundation which is present and preserved throughout the entire subsequent development, remaining completely immanent in its further determinations.⁶⁰

By the advance from the beginning to the result and the recognition that the result is the deepening of the beginning, and its very foundation, the result justifies the beginning. The result is the beginning made explicit. Now the beginning is no longer merely a beginning and a presupposition, it becomes also a result. The circle closes upon itself and the beginning is no longer an immediate or given that is simply presupposed, but a result justified on the ground of the philosophical advance. Its place within the system of concepts or circle of circles is recognized: “Through this progress, then, the beginning loses the one-sidedness which attaches to it as something simply immediate and abstract; it becomes something mediated, and hence the line of the scientific advance becomes a circle.”⁶¹

In this progress, the concept shows itself to be the foundation. Its priority and role as foundation is not presupposed but is obtained through philosophical cognition based on the circular epistemology. In terms of cognitive content, what comes after or what is mediated through thought is superior, as it makes what is implicit in the previous form explicit. This is not presupposed or taken as a pre-philosophical or pre-cognitive foundation but developed and justified within philosophy itself: “Now although it is true that the concept is to be regarded, not merely as a subjective presupposition but as the absolute foundation, yet it can be so only in so far as it has made itself the foundation.”⁶²

⁶⁰ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 71.

⁶¹ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 71.

⁶² Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 577.

Here one also needs to pay attention to the distinction between particular concepts and the concept of concept. Each particular concept is the foundation of its moments which makes up its specific determinations and charges it with the particularity that distinguishes it from other concepts. Furthermore, each particular concept is a concept itself and is a moment of a higher concept, which is also either a moment of a higher concept or a moment of the very concept of concept. The circle closes itself with the concept of concept. Each particular concept is the relative ground and the foundation of its moments, which give it its particular content. This triadic deepening of each particular concept to a higher particular concept consummates itself at the very concept of concept, Absolute Idea, which shows itself to be the ultimate result and the absolute foundation of philosophical cognition. On the one hand, the concept of concept is the ultimate result of logic as it is the highest concept which brings together all particular concepts within itself as its moments, moments of its moments, etc. On the other hand, it shows itself as the absolute foundation as it is the ultimate result and the final consummation of the self-deepening of the particular concepts. It is within its unity that all the particular concepts are contained and submerged, not as independent elements in isolation, but in their unity in difference. Each particular concept can be thought as a circle constituted by its moments. In geometry, a circle, and only one, can be drawn that intersects all the corners of a triangle. So the triadic structure of each particular concept as unity of opposed determinations lends itself smoothly also symbolically to the circular methodology. As each particular concept is also a moment of a higher concept which forms again a triadic structure and a circle, Hegel's reference to philosophy as a circle of circles can be better understood. In logic, the circle of circle closes upon itself in the concept of concept,

which contains all the particular concepts and therefore the smaller circles within itself. From the perspective of the methodology and the way the system is developed, Hegel follows a circular methodology with strong coherentist commitments. From the perspective of the overall system, the system is foundational and the concept of concept forms the foundation. Without the concept functioning as the foundation, circular epistemology cannot lead to philosophical cognition. The philosophical cognition requires advance from opposing moments to their unity which is only possible within the framework of concept as foundations. On the other hand, the concept of concept can not be established as the foundation without the circular epistemology which allows the advance from the immediate element to the grounds. Therefore, Hegel's view of concept as the foundation of all cognition and his commitment to a circular methodology despite the apparent tension between the two are compatible and even further complement each other for Hegel's broader epistemological purposes.

The concept of concept is the concept of totality. But a totality that does not transcend but is constituted by its elements. It is not a totality that exists independently and in transcendence but makes itself explicit in its moments. It can only be thought as a system. A system where each constituent element is essential to the whole, but also no constituent has a significance or existence independent and in isolation from it. In this sense, the concept of concept is the foundation of all cognition and reality and Hegel can be seen as a foundationalist in this very special sense. However, this is by no means similar to the empiricist foundationalism in its epistemological and ontological commitments.

Abstract immediacy is no doubt a *first*; yet in so far as it is abstract it is, on the contrary, mediated, and therefore if it is to be grasped in its truth its foundation must first be sought. Hence this foundation, though indeed an immediate, must have made itself immediate through the sublation of mediation.

From this aspect the *Notion* is to be regarded in the first instance simply as the third to *being* and *essence*, to the *immediate* and to *reflection*. Being and essence are so far the moments of its *becoming*; but it is their *foundation* and *truth* as the identity in which they are submerged and contained. They are contained in it because it is their *result*, but no longer as *being* and *essence*. That determination they possess only in so far as they have not withdrawn into this their unity.⁶³

Concept, Sublation and Negation of Negation

We have explained that concept is the foundation of its moments as it contains them within itself in their distinction. The concept is the ground and the principle of the inseparability of its moments, their mutual conflict on the one hand and their belonging to each other on the other. From the relative perspective of the moments, they are in perpetual tension and conflict. From the perspective of the concept or from the perspective of the whole they are in perpetual peace. What appears as repulsion initially, in the concept, turns out to be an attraction and what appears as self-subsistent, isolated and fixed proves itself to be a moment of the whole, dependent on its other, its negative, and transitory. What appears to be a whole proves itself to be a part. Now it is in this specific power of the concept, its capacity to hold its moments with opposing determinations together without losing their difference and distinction, and ground them that the dialectical and spec-ulative soul of Hegel's thought lies. This feature of the concept, its dialectical and spec-ulative nature, is connected with Hegel's concept of "sublation". Hegel devotes a Remark to introduce this concept in *Science of Logic*. In the Remark Hegel discusses his concept of "sublation" with clarity:

⁶³ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 577.

To sublate, and the sublated (that which exists ideally as a moment), constitute one of the most important notions in philosophy. It is a fundamental determination which repeatedly occurs throughout the whole of philosophy, the meaning of which is to be clearly grasped and especially distinguished from nothing. What is sublated is not immediately reduced to nothing. Nothing is immediate; what is sublated, on the other hand, is the result of mediation; it is a non-being but as a result which had its origin in a being. It still has, therefore, in itself the determinateness from which it originates.⁶⁴

Hegel starts his presentation on “to sublate, and the sublated” by making a distinction between “the sublated” and “nothing”. This is due to the reason that sublation involves negation and the result of negation is generally considered as “nothing”, or “null”. Nothing is pure negativity, emptiness, lack of all content and determination. However, for Hegel negation as sublation involves a positive as well as a negative result. Sublation is negation of a specific content. Therefore, it has its origin in this specific content. It is the negation of that specific content, not the negation of all content in general. What is sublated is not cancelled out, reduced to zero, null, nothing or lack of all content and determination. It is the negative of the specific content which it negates. It is not an undetermined negative but a negative with a very specific content and character. Its content is determined by its negativity to the specific content which it is opposed to. Therefore, it is charged with this content.

For example, it may be said that “Enlightenment is the negation of the dogmatism of the middle ages”. Now what this implies, taking into account what has been said above, is that enlightenment has a very specific character which is determined by a negative relation towards a specific form of dogmatism, or a specific framework of values, that belongs to the culture of the middle ages. According to this, enlightenment is not a negation of any arbitrary dogmatism, but a dogmatism of a specific particular

⁶⁴ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 107.

nature. Therefore, its specific character is determined, or charged, by the dogmatism of the middle ages although through a negative relationship. Furthermore, enlightenment cannot be considered in isolation and independently of the middle ages. The middle ages belong to the archeology of the enlightenment and determine its content, nature and identity. These historical remarks are far from controversial. That is why it is accepted as a natural requirement to have a good understanding of history of the middle ages for any scholar of history of enlightenment. But we are making a logical or conceptual point here, not an historical one. The logical significance of the insight implicit into the attitude of the historian who studies the middle ages in order to understand enlightenment is not well-incorporated into our logical and philosophical culture. It is in this juncture that Hegel's notion of "sublation" comes into the picture. The point is that the reason why one needs to have a reasonable understanding of the culture of the middle ages in order to understand the culture of enlightenment is not merely historical but also has a logical component. Two concepts or two distinct frameworks of concepts that negate each other are charged and determined by each other. The negative contains what it negates. Its meaning, significance and content originates from its opposite. Through sublation on the one hand, it puts an end to its other and on the other hand it preserves it within itself. The act of negation, in the sense of sublation, therefore is not a cancellation, annihilation or neutralization, but also involves preservation.

'To sublate' has a twofold meaning in the language: on the one hand it means to preserve, to maintain, and equally it also means to cease, to put an end to. Even 'to preserve' includes a negative element, namely, that something is removed from its immediacy and so from an existence which is open to external influences, in order to

preserve it. Thus what is sublated is at the same time preserved; it has only lost its immediacy but is not on that account annihilated.⁶⁵

Sublation lies in the unity with the opposite. Therefore, when something is sublated it can no longer be considered as self-subsistent, isolated and fixed. Sublation involves the recognition that every individual existence involves more than what it is in its individuality. It is charged with a unity with its opposite, a unity in which it presents itself as the negative of what it is. For two opposing concepts, sublation lies in the recognition of the unity of the opposites and their being grounded on a higher concept of which they are moments. The *prima facie* effect of negation is separation of two opposing determinations. However, the true significance of sublation is holding together two opposing moments without losing their distinction. Sublation is the manifestation of the speculative concept of concept as the unity of opposing determinations in their distinction: “Something is sublated only in so far as it has entered into unity with its opposite; in this more particular signification as something reflected, it may fittingly be called a moment.”⁶⁶

One important consequence of sublation is the development of a conceptual holism instead of a conceptual atomism. The principle of conceptual atomism is that concepts have a role and significance on their own account in isolation from the others and sublation negates this principle. Concepts have significance as moments of higher concepts which are the unity in distinction of their moments in opposition to each other. We will later discuss the important use of this principle in relating and bringing together different conceptual frameworks. The unique value of sublation and the dialectical soul it

⁶⁵ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p 107.

⁶⁶ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 107.

introduces into philosophical thought is its power to bring together without losing difference and distinction.

Conceptual holism is already a well-established position in the post-logical empiricist analytical philosophy with its emphasis on language and with the commitment to different variations of Quine's thesis that language of science is the unit of empirical significance instead of linguistic terms or statements.⁶⁷ However, in the context of Hegel's philosophy conceptual holism has a substantially different significance compared to the nominalistic conceptual holism of post-Quinean analytic philosophy. For Hegel, philosophy is not about words but it is about thoughts or to be more accurate about concepts. Words and language display and store the thought forms and concepts, but concepts or thought forms in general cannot be reduced to words and linguistic forms due to their primitive ontological, epistemological and also psychological functions. Consciousness is prior to language and there is no consciousness without application of thought forms. Hence thought forms and concepts are prior to language. Language is the bearer of the collective (un)-consciousness and its thought forms and concepts accumulated since time immemorial. However, concepts cannot be reduced to language. Therefore, Hegel's view of concept is strongly anti-nominalistic.

Sublation is the dialectical force which brings the concepts which appear isolated in their fixed determinations into a systematic unity. This unity and systematization is not externally imposed on the concepts but belongs to their own development. Therefore, dialectical method should not be seen a conceptual apparatus externally applied to some conceptual content that exists independently of the method. Sublation and its dialectical force are the recognition of the inner movement and deepening of everything conceptual.

⁶⁷ Quine, "Two Dogmas".

According to Hegel, every particular concept contains the germ of its opposite and when pressed to its limits turns to its opposite. This is the dialectical moment of the logical and involves the self-sublation of the particular concepts, or finite thought determinations. This passing to the opposite is not based on an external criterion or a principle brought from the outside but is due to the inherent conflict between the form and the content of the particular thought form, its pretense to capture the truth and incapacity to achieve this: “The dialectical moment is the self-sublation of these finite determinations on their own part, and their passing into their opposites.”⁶⁸

It must be kept in mind that Hegel’s dialectical method as outlined and discussed above is his solution for the problem of the synthetic a priori and the significance of the concept of “sublation” for Hegel’s overall programme should be seen in the light of this. Hegel discusses the problem of the synthetic a priori in his *Science of Logic*:

The synthesis, which is the point of interest, must not be taken as a connection of determinations already externally there; the question is partly of the genesis of a second to a first, of a determinate to an indeterminate first principle, partly, however of immanent synthesis, synthesis a priori – a self-subsistent, self-determined unity of distinct moments. Becoming is this immanent synthesis of being and nothing; but because synthesis suggests more than anything else the sense of an external bringing together of mutually external things already there, the name synthesis, synthetic unity, has rightly been dropped.⁶⁹

Hegel believes that an a priori synthesis is required for philosophical cognition and philosophy in general. This requires the synthesis of thought forms with different determinations. However, this cannot happen if the thought-determinations in question are self-subsistent and have significance in isolation from each other akin to a conceptual atomism. If they exist independently, they can only be synthesized according to an

⁶⁸ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 128.

⁶⁹ Hegel, *Hegel’s*, p. 96.

external principle which will only yield an artificial and arbitrary synthesis that will lack the necessity and seriousness required by the synthetic a priori cognition. Therefore, the synthesis can only take place through the genesis of a relative first principle that will be shown as the ground and the unity of the opposing thought determinations. This lies in the immanent transcending of one-sidedness and restrictedness of the fixed thought determinations of the understanding and their self-sublation. The quotation above also explains why Hegel does not refer to this self-sublation as synthesis a priori as he wants to avoid the implication that synthesis involves the bringing together of the things that exist independently of each other. For Hegel, this self-violence of finite thought-determinations and their self-sublation is characteristic of everything finite.

The two quotations below have been taken from the section in which Hegel discusses the dialectical moment of logical method in *Encyclopedia Logic*. When we compare these two quotations with the one taken from *Science of Logic* in which Hegel discusses the problem of synthesis, the parallel is obvious. In *Science of Logic*, Hegel describes what it takes to form genuine synthesis a priori. In *Encyclopedia*, he discusses the dialectical moment of his logical methodology. Based on these, it is clear that with his dialectical methodology, Hegel believes he has solved the problem of a priori synthesis. Furthermore, his concept of “sublation” plays a fundamental role in his solution. Without dialectical method, there is no solution to the problem of a priori synthesis and without sublation there is no dialectical method.

The dialectic, on the contrary, is the immanent transcending, in which the one-sidedness and restrictedness of the determinations of the understanding displays itself as what it is, i.e., as their negation. This is what everything finite is; its own sublation. Hence the dialectical constitutes the moving soul of scientific progression, and it is the principle through which alone immanent coherence and

necessity enter into the content of science, just as all genuine, nonexternal elevation above the finite is to be found in this principle⁷⁰

But a closer look shows that the finite is not restricted merely from the outside; rather, it sublates itself by virtue of its own nature, and passes over, of itself, into its opposite. Thus we say, for instance, that man is mortal; and we regard dying as having its ground only in external circumstances. In this way of looking at things, a man has two specific properties, namely, he is alive and also mortal. But the proper interpretation is that life as such bears the germ of death within itself, and that the finite sublates itself because it contradicts itself inwardly.⁷¹

In the previous sections, we have discussed Hegel's logical methodology and the three moments it involves which are (1) the abstraction or the moment of understanding, (2) the dialectical or the negatively rational, (3) the speculative or positively rational. Now it should be clear that sublation is essential not only to the second moment, the dialectical or negatively rational, of Hegel's logical methodology but also to the third moment, the speculative or positively rational moment. Hegel's dialectical method stands and falls with sublation.

Hegel's overall position discussed so far in the light of our discussion on sublation can be summarized as follows: All cognitive content is conceptual all the way through. Differences and distinction of cognitive content are the internal distinctions of concept. All distinctions and difference of cognitive content should be accounted for solely conceptually but not by reference to any given non-conceptual element that is supposed to exist in cognition. Therefore, all classical dichotomies such as objectivity and subjectivity, particular and universal, thought and being should be cognized as internal distinctions of the conceptual domain. Particular concepts worthy of the name form a logical system. Hegel's dialectical method is the internal logic of this system,

⁷⁰ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 128.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

which re-cognizes the unity of the particular concepts in their distinction. Each particular concept has its significance only in its unity with its opposite within the higher concept. To comprehensively cognize (*begreifen*) an object is to cognize its concept as the unity of its particular opposing determinations. By the same token, all particular concepts are moments of a logical system. Sublation is the recognition that particular concepts do not have their significance in isolation but in their unity in distinction with its opposite. The passage from a particular concept to its negative is the second moment (dialectical moment) of the logical method and the recognition that these opposing particular concepts are actually moments of a higher concept which is their unity is the third moment (spec-ulative moment) of Hegel's dialectical method. Now these transitions from the first moment (immediacy) to the second moment or from the second moment to the third moment are only possible via sublation.

When the dialectic has the negative as its result, then, precisely as a result, this negative is at the same time the positive, for it contains what it resulted from within itself, and it cannot be without it. This, however, is the basic determination of the third form of the Logical, namely, the speculative or positively rational [moment].⁷²

It must always be kept in mind that Hegel's fundamental motive is the search for totality and all-inclusiveness. All conceptual difference and distinctions should be included in the system and be given their appropriate position in the system. Nothing should be left as an other or remain excluded. This principle should be applied at a meta-level and the system should include the principle of the possibility of its own construction. Thus, the system cannot be limited to the conceptual forms that are constitutive of the cognition of objects of external and internal experience but of the

⁷² Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 131.

forms constitutive of the cognition of those forms. Therefore, the all-inclusiveness also implies self-reflectiveness. Based on this, Hegel's dialectical method should always be thought in connection with these two methodological principles: all-inclusiveness and self-reflectiveness. The philosophical and practical value of these methodological principles goes far beyond the question whether these ideals have been historically achieved by Hegel once and for all. These principles set a positive and practically valuable direction to philosophical activity and regulate it as an ideal with a clear concrete philosophical agenda for action. The implications of these principles for the contemporary discussions on conceptual and cultural relativism will be discussed in the following chapters. Here it is important to recognize that these methodological principles are implemented thorough sublation, which is the bearer of the dialectical soul of the system.

.... the speculative is, neither provisionally nor in the end either, something merely subjective; instead, it expressly contains the very antithesis at which the underlying stops short (including that of the subjective and objective, too), sublated within itself; and precisely for this reason it proves to be concrete and a totality.⁷³

The significance of the concept as the totality of its moments cannot be overemphasized. Cognition of a conceptual moment does not include anything beyond its concept; it does not include non-conceptual content. Cognition of an object comprises a subjective and an objective side. Generally, common sense takes the subjective side as the product of the mind (conceptual) and the object as the independent element to which the subjective side (non-conceptual) needs to conform. The key point here is to recognize that both the subjectivity and objectivity are constituted by the concept. The

⁷³ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 132.

concept is the totality of the subjective and the objective elements. Neither of the moments, subjective and objective, has significance independent of the other. The comprehensive cognition of the object (*begreifen*) is the cognition of the concept that constitutes the objectivity and subjectivity associated with it. This is the cognition that cognizes the unity and the distinction of the subjectivity and objectivity associated with the object. It should be seen that once the concept is recognized not only the subjectivity but also the objectivity associated with it also evolves and yields a new objectivity. This is the result of the third moment of the logical method and is the recognition of the speculative content.

For this reason, too, a speculative content cannot be expressed in a one-sided proposition. If, for example, we say that “the Absolute is the unity of the subjective and the objective” that is certainly correct; but it is still one-sided, in that it expresses only the aspect of unity and puts the emphasis on that, whereas in fact, of course, the subjective and the objective are not only identical but also distinct.⁷⁴

Therefore, the spec-ulative content can only be expressed in the form of a system. The unit of spec-ulative truth is not the proposition but the philosophical system itself. The spec-ulative truth can only be expressed and cognized in a system, totality, of unity of all particular concepts (categories or a priori concepts) in their distinction and relations with each other. This is the project Hegel undertakes in his *Science of Logic*.

In this section, we have introduced the concept of sublation and argued that sublation is the fundamental bearer of dialectical soul in Hegel’s system. We have distinguished sublation from ordinary negation or cancellation and emphasized that it involves preservation as much as negation. The key element in sublation is the recognition that all particular concepts are in an implicit unity with their opposition and

⁷⁴ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 132.

this leads to a particular form of conceptual holism instead of the conceptual atomism of the understanding. We have argued that this particular form of conceptual holism is anti-nominalistic as the conceptuality is prior to language and constitutive of subjectivity and objectivity. Then we discussed the essential significance of sublation for the overall dialectical method. We noted that sublation is essential to the second and third moments of Hegel's dialectical method and Hegel's dialectical method stands and falls with sublation. Before we finish this section, we will discuss another critical element of Hegel's logical method which is closely linked with sublation: negation of negation. According to Hegel, "the negation of the negation is not a neutralization; the Infinite is the affirmative, and it is only the finite which is sublated."⁷⁵

For Hegel, determination involves negation. Everything that has a particular determination involves negation and that which does not involve negation is totally undetermined. To have determination or a particular content is to be distinct from its other. To be distinct from the other is to have an opposing determination with the other. Finally, to have an opposing determination with the other is to negate the determination of the other. Therefore, to be a particular or to have a determinate content is to negate or to have a negative relation with an other. This first negation is the particularity of the concept.

However, each particular concept is the unity of opposing determinations which are the moments of that concept. The concept is not exclusively one with any of its moments but contains them within itself in their distinction. Thus, the concept is richer and has a further determination than the particularity of each of its moments. It is indifferent to the negative relation between its moments and their particular

⁷⁵ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 152.

determinations. It overgrasps both of the moments at the same time. In that it negates the particular determination of each of its moments. It returns to itself and remains one with itself despite the opposing determinations of its moments. When we say concept is the unity of objectivity and subjectivity in their distinction, we say that both objectivity and subjectivity are the concept despite their particular determinations which are distinct and opposing to each other. The richness of the concept overcomes the opposing determinations of its moments. It is not simply one with objectivity or subjectivity. It has the determination of remaining itself despite the opposing determinations it manifests in its moments. By doing that the concept negates the particularity determination of each of its moments. Therefore, the concept involves a second negation, negation of the particularity of each of its moments. This is negation of negation. Negation of negation is not a cancellation or neutralization of the first negation. It is a sublation of the first negation. Negation of negation includes or overgrasps the first negation. It overcomes it on one hand and preserves it on the other. Via negation of negation the concept frees itself from the particularity of its moments and become a universal. This is the universality of the concept. Universality belongs to the concept as much as particularity. Based on this, particularity and universality are not mutually exclusive determinations. Universality involves particularity. In other words universality does not transcend particularity but particularity is immanent to it. There is no universality in isolation from the particularity as there is no concept without being the unity of its constitutive moments. On the other hand there is no particularity in isolation from universality. As discussed a concept is the ground of its moments. Therefore, there is no particularity without the universality. From this perspective, it can be said that universality is the

ground of the particularity. Therefore, the dichotomy of universal vs. particular is illusory. Both universality and particularity are essential determinations of the concept. Without recognizing the negation of negation and the sublation of particularity it involves, it is not possible to recognize the unity of particularity and universality in distinction within the concept. There is no value of a universality which exists in transcendence to the particularity. The true meaning of universality is its being the nature of the particularity and this true meaning can not be recognized without the recognition of the double negation involved in this relation.

Dualism which makes the opposition of finite and infinite insuperable, fails to make the simple observation that in this way the infinite itself is also just one of the two, [and] that is therefore reduced to one particular, in addition to which the finite is the other one. Such an infinite, which is just one particular, beside the finite, so that it has precisely its restriction, its limit, in the latter, is not what it ought to be. It is not the Infinite, but is only finite. In this relationship, where one is situated here, and the other over there, the finite in this world and the infinite in the other world... there is supposed to be an abyss, an impassable gulf, between the two....⁷⁶

It should be clear that Hegel is not a nominalist with respect to universals. So far we have extensively discussed the idea that concepts have ontological significance. Universality is an essential determination of the concept. By the same token, universality has an ontological role. Universality is an essential determination of objectivity as well as of subjectivity.

On the other hand, the universals do not have existence that transcends the particularity. Finite things, which are signified by the particularity of the concept, and infinity, which is signified by the universality of the concept, are not mutually exclusive. Infinity is in the finite, not beyond or outside it. The infinite is immanent to the finite

⁷⁶ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 151.

thing as its concept and it is what is affirmative in the finite. On the other hand, finite things constitute the infinite and manifest its content in their collectivity. The infinite involves the negation of negation. By that it negates and sublates the particular determinations and finitude of finite things and returns to itself. It is the same universal character which manifests itself in the manifold of finite things with apparently opposing particular determinations.

Hegel calls this relation of the finite and the infinite, or particularity and universality, the ideality of the finite. Ideality of finite signifies that the nature of finitude is to be an ideal or to be a moment in the infinite. The finite does not have an existence independent and exclusive of the infinite but is in it or within it. When common sense takes infinite and finite as having independent existence or in other words when infinite is taken as having an existence beyond or above the finite, *prima facie* this looks like an elevation of the infinite. However, in reality when infinite or universal is made independent and exclusive of the finite or particular, it is also reduced to a finitude and particularity and the true significance of infinity and universality is lost.

For Hegel, ideality of the finite is the most important proposition in philosophy. From this perspective, philosophy is the cognition of the infinite or universality or the concept in the particular determinations and finite things. Therefore, the true concept of the infinite, universality and the concept of concept, all of which are interlinked, are the most important concepts in philosophy.

This ideality of the finite is the most important proposition of philosophy, and for that reason every genuine philosophy is Idealism. Everything depends on not mistaking for the Infinite that which is at once reduced in its determination to what is particular and finite. – That is why we have here drawn attention to this

distinction at some length; the basic concept of philosophy, the genuine Infinite, depends on it.⁷⁷

Before we proceed into a discussion on Hegel's concept of truth based on our analysis of sublation and negation of negation, it would be worthwhile to make some clarifications regarding what has been said about universality and particularity in our discussion so far.

It has been said that each particular concept is a unity of its moments in their distinction. Moments have opposing particular determinations and their concept involves the negation of negation which elevates the particularity of its moments into the universality of the concept. In this relation, moments of the particular concept signify the particularity and their concept signifies the universality. However, it should be kept in mind that this particular concept in turn is itself a moment of a higher concept and in that it signifies the particular against the universality of the higher concept. Similarly, the moments of the particular concepts are themselves the unity of their own moments and therefore signify universality with respect to the particularity of their own moments. Thus, within the system of logic each particular concept signifies particularity with respect to higher concepts and universality with respect to lower concepts. Similarly, each particular concept is a moment with respect to higher concepts and is concept with respect to lower concepts. Therefore, universality and particularity of each particular concept has a relative significance depending on which particular concepts are taken into account. The highest concept of the system is the Idea or the concept of concept which is the unity of all particular concepts within the system of logic in their distinction. It is the sublation of all prior particular concepts and contains within itself all logical and

⁷⁷ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 152.

conceptual content as sublated. It is infinite and affirmative in each particular concept or in other words it is the universality of each particular concept. All particular concepts are relative concepts and universals of their moments while the Idea is the absolute concept or the absolute universality of each particular concept. It is the unity of objectivity and subjectivity, being and essence. It is the very concept of concept and the very concept of truth.

Truth and the Concept of Concept

In this section, I will briefly discuss the concept of concept with respect to its relation with the concept of truth. For Hegel, logic is the system of truth and the concept of concept is the fundamental concept of logic. Therefore, an explication of the relation between the two is essential to a study on Hegel's concept of concept.

Hegel refers to Kant's definition of truth as the agreement of cognition with its object and acknowledges this as a definition of great, supreme value: "When Kant, in connection with logic comes to discuss the old and famous question: what is truth? he first of all presents to the reader as a triviality the explanation of the term as the agreement of cognition with its object, a definition of great, indeed of supreme, value."⁷⁸

In other contexts, we see truth also defined as the agreement of concept with its object or agreement of concept with reality. The variations in the definition should not be taken as inconsistency or carelessness on Hegel's part but they are different forms the definition undertakes based on the specific context. What should be noticed in all

⁷⁸ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 593.

these different formulations is that truth is taken as the agreement or the unity between the subjective element and the corresponding objective element. Thus, truth lies in overcoming the dichotomy or separation between the subjective element and the objective element with which it is associated. Based on this, I will take the agreement between subjectivity and objectivity as the most general formulation of Hegel's concept of truth. Now this formulation is already familiar to us as we have said the concept of concept, or the logical idea, is the unity of objectivity and subjectivity in their distinction. According to this, the concept of concept, Idea, is also the concept of truth. This interpretation is supported by clear textual evidence: "The Idea is the adequate Notion, that which is objectively true, or the true as such. When anything whatever possesses truth, it possesses it through its Idea, or, something possesses truth only in so far as it is Idea."⁷⁹

Now that we have established the connection between the concept of truth and the concept of concept by showing their identity, now we need to understand its basis and implications. We will do this by analyzing the very concept of concept and how it is developed specifically with a view to overcome the dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity. The significance of the connection between the concept of concept and truth cannot be overemphasized for Hegel's system specifically and for philosophy in general. Hopefully, this discussion will also enlighten the significance of our discussion so far with respect to its significance for the problem of truth. It should always be kept in mind that Hegel's endeavor in *Science of Logic* above all is an endeavor to develop the conceptual form, the concept of concept that is suitable to be

⁷⁹ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 755.

the bearer of truth. Dialectical method can be seen as a test of truth, a test of the capacity of thought-determinations, particular concepts or in other words categories in terms of their capacity to grasp truth. Progress in dialectical method, every step forward which implies change of the categories with which we operate, is based on the recognition that specific categories at hand are incapable of being the bearers of truth and therefore should be sublated. Therefore, with respect to the interests of philosophy today, Hegel's logical project can be approached in two distinct fundamental ways. First, whether Hegel's concept of concept can contribute to the conceptual forms or categories with which we operate today as yielding better candidates to be the bearer of truth. Second, whether his dialectical method can offer a methodology for relating and analyzing different conceptual forms and frameworks with respect to their capacity to be bearers of truth and development of new forms and frameworks. For Hegel and from the perspective of his system, the two are one. The method develops the concept and the concept is the ground of the method. Collectively and in their unity, they yield truth. But both of these insights, the potential ability of reason to analyze different conceptual frameworks in terms of their capacity to hold truth and to construct new conceptual frameworks, conceptual forms by application of a systematic methodology, are not incorporated into our current philosophical culture.

First and above all, concepts should never be thought as merely subjective occurrences. The recognition of this point is the point of departure for Hegel's account. Subjects do not make concepts but recognize them and this recognition is not only a recognition of the true nature of objectivity but also its own subjectivity. In a figurative

language, it can be said that concept, or in fact Idea, makes subjectivity and objectivity.⁸⁰

Here and there in this mesh there are firm knots which give stability and direction to the life and consciousness of spirit; these knots or nodes owe their fixity and power to the simple fact that having been brought before consciousness, they are independent, self-existent Notions of its essential nature.⁸¹

Our being conscious of the particular concepts and their determinations is not a precondition of the activity of the concept. In this sense, concepts are implicitly active in our cognitive and pre-cognitive activity such as feelings, desires, volitions even if they are not brought into consciousness in clarity and cognized. The function of the concepts in subjectivity when they are not fully brought into consciousness can be compared with the function of archetype in Jung's Psychology. It is the business of logic to clarify and cognize these categories and brings them into full consciousness out of the sensuous material they are submerged into.

As impulses the categories are only instinctively active. At first they enter consciousness separately and so are variable and mutually confusing; consequently they afford to mind only a fragmentary and uncertain actuality; the loftier business of logic therefore is to clarify these categories and in them to raise mind to freedom and truth.⁸²

From this perspective, the problem of the concept and therefore the problem of truth cannot be taken as merely theoretical problems, but should be recognized as subjects of utmost practical significance for the individual. Cognition or consciousness

⁸⁰ In the Preface of his *Reason, Truth and History* Putnam says: "the mind and the world jointly makes up the mind and the world. (Or to make the metaphor even more Hegelian, the Universe makes up the Universe)". Although Putnam refrains from using Hegelian terminology, the point being made is the same.

⁸¹ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 38.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

of the categories conditioning our thought and desires is a prerequisite of any intelligent and free act and is the internal and primary condition of freedom of the individual.

The broad distinction between the instinctive act and the intelligent and free act is that the latter is performed with an awareness of what is being done; when the content of the interest in which one is absorbed is drawn out of its immediate unity with oneself and becomes an independent object of one's thinking, then it is that spirit begins to be free, whereas when thinking is an instinctive activity, spirit is enmeshed in the bonds of its categories and is broken up into an infinitely varied material.⁸³

Concepts do not exist independently of our thinking activity but are the genuine form and content of thought. Similarly on the side of objectivity, concepts should not be regarded as external and formal signs of truth of a content that exists independently. Once Idea is recognized as the unity and true content of both subjectivity and objectivity, homogeneity between two sides which appear independent is established. The concept can no longer be taken as a form that is applied to a given independent content, but is the true content and form of both subjectivity and objectivity. True content and form of both subjectivity and objectivity belongs to the concept. Therefore, there is no gap between the two, and the dichotomy can be overcome. Truth lies in the recognition that both subjectivity and objectivity are of conceptual nature and in going beyond this dichotomy. The concept is neither merely objective nor merely subjective. It is both objective and subjective in their distinction. This is also the truth; agreement of the cognition with its object, thought with reality or subjectivity with objectivity.

What we are dealing with in logic is not a thinking about something which exists independently as a base for our thinking and apart from it, nor forms which are supposed to provide mere signs or distinguishing marks of truth; on the contrary,

⁸³ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 36.

the necessary forms and self-determinations of thought are the content and the ultimate truth itself.⁸⁴

Similarly, as the forms of subjectivity are not external forms that are imposed on a given external content, cognitive activity does not distort the genuine content of the objectivity. Comprehensive cognition of an object lies in becoming conscious of the concept of that object. The concept of the object is the genuine content or the truth of that object.

However, the dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity is not overcome immediately but only through a process. The dialectical method is this process at the end of which the object is cognized in its concept as the unity of opposing moments in their distinction. This is the truth of the object and its moments. As the concept of concept, Idea is also the concept of truth; logic contains the Idea of truth within it and therefore is the archetype of all sciences. In that way logic gives all the other sciences their form, the concept of concept.

As contrasted with these concrete sciences (although these have and retain as their inner formative principle that same logical element, or the Notion, which had served as their archetype), logic is of course a formal science; but it is the science of the absolute form which is within itself a totality and contains the pure Idea of truth itself. this form is of quite another nature than logical form is ordinarily taken to be. It is already on its own account truth, since this content is adequate to its form or the reality to its Notion; and it is the pure truth because the determinations of the content do not yet have the form of an absolute otherness or of absolute immediacy.⁸⁵

When it is said that that logic is formal, it is generally meant that logic is an uninterpreted formal structure, a set of rules of transformation that preserves truth-value

⁸⁴ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 50.

⁸⁵ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 593.

without themselves being true or false. For Hegel, this is not the case and in logic not only the dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity but also the dichotomy of form and content is also overcome. In this sense, the concept of concept, idea or concept of truth is the form adequate to its content. Logic does not need any other content than the concept of concept and the exposition of its determinations in systematic form to be true. As discussed, this is not only the form but also the genuine content of all objectivity and subjectivity and their unseparatedness: concept of truth.

Logic being the science of the absolute form, this formal science, in order to be true, must possess in its own self a content adequate to its form; and all the more, since the formal element of logic is the pure form, and therefore the truth of logic must be the pure truth itself.⁸⁶

On this basis, Hegel's logic has a broader scope and significance than the generally accepted formal concept of logic. For Hegel, logic is the science of all categories of subjectivity and objectivity. It is the systematic exposition of all categories of subjectivity and objectivity. All-inclusiveness and self-reflectiveness are the two fundamental principles of this exposition as previously discussed. As logic is an exposition of all categories of subjectivity and objectivity, it contains ontology and epistemology within itself and brings the two together.

The objective logic, then, takes the place rather of the former metaphysics which was intended to be the scientific construction of the world in terms of thoughts alone. If we have regard to the final shape of this science, then it is first and immediately ontology whose place is taken by objective logic.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Hegel, *Hegel's*, pp. 594-5.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

Hegel's concept of concept and the concept of truth associated with it is very hard to swallow for the contemporary mind with its strong empiricist heritage. Although empiricism, as a general philosophical position, is out of fashion today, the implications of a rejection of "the framework of givenness" are far from clear. There is no widely accepted framework that has established itself as the alternative of the "framework of givenness". Historically speaking, we are going through a transition period with oscillations between the correspondence theories which commit themselves to some sort of "framework of givenness" and "coherence theories" which lose the autonomy of the world as a constraint on our thinking. We are seeking equilibrium between these two extremes. The main question here is how to preserve our realist insight that the world is a constraint on our thinking without committing to the "framework of givenness". We want to hold on to the principle that truth lies in the agreement between subjectivity and objectivity, but we can no longer assume that objectivity is or involves an element that is "given". The problem cannot be solved by simply saying that objectivity is constituted by subjectivity. In this case, subjectivity becomes self-subsistent, has validity and substance in its own right and objectivity is reduced into a mere derivative, conditioned by subjectivity. The significance of truth as agreement between objectivity and subjectivity is lost. Hegel's solution to the problem is denying self-subsistence to both subjectivity and objectivity and making both moments of the Idea, the concept of concept or concept of truth. There is no objectivity without subjectivity and there is no subjectivity without objectivity. But neither can be reduced to or is a derivative of the other. Truth is the unity of subjectivity and objectivity in their distinction. All thought-determinations need to be challenged in their capacity to grasp and express this. This is the basic motive of the

dialectical method. Therefore, truth is the differentiated whole. It is the system that brings all categories of objectivity and subjectivity into the systematic unity. In truth, the agreement of subjectivity and objectivity does not take place by transcending the conceptual element and coming to terms with a non-conceptual “given” content. This agreement is immanent to the Idea, the concept of concept, and takes place within it. Cognition of truth involves a reciprocal evolution of the categories of objectivity and subjectivity, or ontology and epistemology, in order to overcome the dichotomy. As it involves a process, cognition of truth does not come or go at once. Each time categories of objectivity or subjectivity are sublated through the dialectical process the new categories are richer in terms of form and content to grasp truth. They are the proximate or relative truth of the sublated categories, which are now moments of the new categories. Therefore, within the context of Hegel’s dialectical logic truth can be used in a relative (or proximate) or absolute sense. Each particular concept, category, is the proximate or relative truth of its moments, the categories it sublates. Absolute truth is the whole.

With this, I will conclude my explication of Hegel’s concept of concept and its specific role in Hegel’s overall philosophical programme. I will now proceed with a discussion on how to incorporate Hegel’s speculative insight into our contemporary philosophical consciousness.

CHAPTER 3

SPEC-ULATIVE CONCEPT OF CONCEPT AND ELEMENTS OF A NEW PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

The objective of this chapter is to introduce elements of a philosophical perspective and a concept of concept which forms the very core of that perspective. These will be referred to as spec-ulative perspective and the spec-ulative concept of concept respectively. The account that will be developed in this chapter is extensively inspired by Hegel's concept of concept and his system of logic in general. Concepts and ideas that belong to Hegel will be frequently used and referred to.

In the broader context of this thesis, the role of chapter two is to set the stage for our discussion in chapter three: to introduce the concepts and terminology that is required for the formulation of our account in this chapter. Chapter two explicates my reading and interpretation of Hegel's concept of concept. On the other hand, chapter three is my proposal on what to do with it and how to incorporate it into our contemporary philosophical context. A discussion of the specific relation of the philosophical perspective and the concept of concept that is developed in this chapter with empiricism and pragmatism will be undertaken in chapter four. Thus, the discussion in chapter three will be mostly theoretical and historical aspects will be left to chapter four.

Hegel refers to his concept of concept and his philosophical method as spec-ulative. This is where the title of the philosophical perspective and the concept of concept come from. I believe there are good reasons to preserve this terminology, despite the fact that the word "speculative" has attained almost exclusively negative significance today.

Therefore, I will discuss the word “speculative” and distinguish its positive philosophical meaning from its negative everyday significance in the first section. Here, the intention is not only to restore a forgotten significance of a word but to restore a forgotten philosophical insight together with it.

My more specific objective in this chapter is threefold and can be summarized as follows. First, spec-ulative insight will be introduced and explicated. In general terms, spec-ulative insight is the recognition that all opposite concepts involve a unity and they can only be comprehended in their specific meaning in this unity with their opposite. My aim here is to show the relevance of this Hegelian insight for our philosophical context and its revolutionary power to transform a number of fundamental philosophical problems.

Second, the spec-ulative concept of concept as the archetype and the core of the spec-ulative perspective will be introduced and discussed. The spec-ulative concept of concept aims to incorporate the spec-ulative insight into the very concept of concept and approaches fundamental ontological and epistemological problems through this insight. It is of course far from trivial to define the minimum requirements to introduce a concept of concept, a theory of concepthood in general. For the objectives of this thesis, I will confine myself to a discussion on theory of universals, the subject-object relation and cognition from the perspective of the spec-ulative concept of concept. I believe once the implications of the spec-ulative concept of concept on these topics are clarified we make reasonable progress in formulating what the spec-ulative concept of concept means.

Finally, spec-ulative perspective as the general philosophical perspective based on the spec-ulative concept of concept will be introduced and discussed. My objective in this

discussion is to show some of the broader philosophical implications of the speculative insight and the concept of concept and distinguish it from some other competing perspectives that have been commonly adopted through the twentieth century: “absolutist” and “relativist” perspectives. Special emphasis will be put on conceptual plurality, conceptual change and the relation of conceptual frameworks and how these conceptual phenomena are addressed by the speculative perspective. Furthermore, how the speculative perspective reconciles the realist insight that world is a constraint upon reason with the idealist insight that the way we cognize the world is always relative to our cognitive resources will be explicated. This discussion is also intended to serve as a transition to chapter four where I will discuss the relation between the speculative perspective and contemporary empiricism and pragmatism.

As anticipatory remarks, my main motive here can be summarized as to explore the possibility and fundamental features of an open-ended conceptual holism, which will accommodate all content and difference within it. The conceptual framework of this conceptual holism is not intended as a merely formal structure that needs to be filled with the content that is outside or transcendent to it but as an unbounded and all-encompassing conceptual unity that contains all form and content within it. The key is to obtain unity while preserving all the difference. For this reason, the speculative insight and its dialectical power to preserve difference and internal tension within the inclusive unity of conceptual domain is the central theme of my project.

I think of the conceptual domain, the space of concepts, not as a static deposit of concepts and theoretical principles but as a dynamic unity involving an internal tension which leads to its internal dialectics and constant change. This internal dialectics is the

bearer of the historical dynamism of this all-encompassing conceptual whole and its evolutionary spirit.

Cognitive agents do not bring their goals and interests to their conceptual or cognitive frameworks from outside. As long as they are cognitive agents they are within the conceptual domain. Their purposes and interests are already constituted by it. Therefore, the relation between the cognitive agents and their conceptual resources cannot be reduced to a relation between an agent and its tool or apparatus. Agent is independent and prior to her tool. She can use this or the other tool without going through a substantial change in her own constitution. On the other hand, a radical change in the conceptual resources of an agent or of a community is a substantial change in the very constitution of the agent or the community. This is due to the holistic and the collective nature of the conceptual unity.

The drives of the individual cognitive agents to reach a harmony between their “subjective” purposes and their objectivity are the basis of the internal tension of the conceptual whole which charges the system with continuous change. As the agents, their purposes and the collective and reciprocal relations of these are internal to the conceptual space, this tension and change is not imposed on the system from outside.

Change and transformation of the conceptual system is self-change and self-transformation. Its dynamism is self-dynamism and evolution is self-evolution. It is a systematic unity that is formed and revised by our collective cognitive activity that involves creation, revision and application of concepts. To the extent we are conscious of this conceptual unity and its content, it is our collective self-consciousness regarding the conceptual essence and the true content of our collective historical experience. To the

extent we are unconscious of it, it belongs to our personal and collective unconsciousness.

The conceptual whole or space is a self-adjusting system of interrelated concepts rather than a list of categories that are defined in isolation from each other. Every element of the system is defined by its very specific role and function in the overall system. This is why it is holistic but not atomistic.

It is never complete and never closed. Every adjustment in the meaning of a specific concept leads to adjustments in other elements. A new addition or revision to the system has impacts on the system overall. A new result or conclusion can lead to a revision of its own premises. Therefore, it is also non-linear rather than linear.

This aspect of being unclosed and open-ended is a major difference between the form of speculative perspective I will try to develop in this thesis and Hegel's position. Hegel's logical system as defined in his *Science of Logic* and *Encyclopedia Logic* consists of a definite number of logical categories and their dialectical relations which exhausts the system of reason. According to my reading of Hegel, the logical system closes itself and there is no room for an introduction or discovery of a new logical category. All conceptual content as long as it is logical in the Hegelian sense fits within the system of logic. Therefore, Hegel's system is closed and not open-ended. The form of speculative perspective that I will try to develop in this chapter diverges from Hegel's position and is open-ended in a very specific sense. On the one hand, it accepts that all conceptual content is essentially interrelated and belongs to a global conceptual whole. This is simply because all human experience is essentially interrelated both at a conscious and unconscious level and forms a historical unity. History is one. Philosophical activity

is essentially the constant endeavor to bring all conceptual content into the unity of an all-inclusive and self-reflective conceptual whole. In this sense, philosophy is our collective self-consciousness of our collective historical experience. Every concept, worthy of the name, is a certain aspect or dimension of that experience. Discovery of every new concept means to raise our self-consciousness to a new level. The conceptual whole represents our accumulated historical self-consciousness regarding the conceptual content or essence of our collective historical experience.

All concepts worthy of the name or categories are archetypes or deposits of a certain aspect of our historical experience whatever the scope and object of that experience may be. It requires a certain degree of self-consciousness regarding a particular aspect of ourselves to recognize a logical category which constitutes that particular aspect of our experience. At a given time in history, our self-consciousness is always partial and is never full. Therefore, at any given time in history the conceptual whole never consolidates all possible conceptual content within itself and is always subject to revisions and adjustments by the development of our self-consciousness regarding a new aspect of our collective historical experience. Since we can never say that we are fully self-consciousness and have converted all the content of our personal and collective unconsciousness into our consciousness and have comprehended the essential content of our historical experience in its entirety, we can never close the system. We work for constant evolution and development of our self-consciousness but this task is never fulfilled *par excellence*.

There is another important reason why the system is open-ended and cannot be completed at any historical point. The conceptual system is obviously not empirical but it

is the logical⁸⁸ essence or the true content of what is empirical. Our self-consciousness regarding the conceptual or philosophical essence of a certain dimension of our experience always follows our actual experience of that particular dimension from a chronological perspective. The system can never be complete until collective human experience is complete. Hence, the system of categories or the conceptual whole is subject to constant changes and revisions in correlation with our historical experience.

It was already stated in the previous chapter that under special historical circumstances a tactical re-interpretation of particular concepts and philosophical principles at hand are not sufficient to deal with the complex of philosophical problems that we face and a more radical and strategic approach is required. In such cases, the very concept of concept that is in currency becomes the object of philosophical critique. The historical insight that motivates this chapter is based on the premise that the historical circumstances facing us today are of a nature that calls for this strategic approach: a critique of our very concept of concept. This is nothing less than a critique of our conscious and subconscious commitments about the nature of the relation between reality and thought, or the relation between subjectivity and objectivity, or the relation between universals and individuals, or the relation between ontology and epistemology. It is our concept of concept that forms the very core of our commitments with respect to these topics. In its entirety this is a too large task for this thesis, but the objective here will be on identifying the direction and elements of such a critique.

⁸⁸ Logical here refers to aspects of reality which are logos-like or related with logos.

On the Negative and Positive Uses of the word “Speculative”

The word “speculative” in its everyday use has a negative meaning. Therefore, the specific significance of the word “spec-ulative” in its philosophical usage as in “spec-ulative concept” needs to be clearly defined and differentiated from the everyday usage of the word “speculative”. Furthermore, the rationale for selecting such a problematic word to attain a key philosophical role needs to be discussed and justified. *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* defines different meanings of the noun “speculation” as follows:

Speculation [Lat. *Speculari*, to view, contemplate]: Ger. *Spekulation*; Fr. *spéculation*; Ital. *speculazione*.

(1) Meditation or reflection of the mind upon itself, or upon spiritual things.

The Greek *θεωρία* meant direct intuition (Schauen) of transcendent, which is not discursive; thus opposed to dialectic.

(2) A form of theorizing which goes beyond verifiable observation and reflection, characterized by loose and venturesome hypotheses (popular use).⁸⁹

The two definitions provided above are useful to distinguish the positive philosophical and the negative popular usages of “speculation”. The following Latin words connected with “speculate” reveal interesting dimensions of its historical roots and uses:

specto

1. To look at, watch (an object or occurrence).
2. (intr.) To direct one’s vision, look (usu. w. direction specified).
3. To watch (entertainments, performers, etc.) as a spectator; to look at (an exhibit sight, etc.)
4. (usu. in pass) to have in view, observe.
5. To look at with approval or admiration; to be considered remarkable (for qualities, features, etc.)
6. To look at closely or carefully, inspect, examine, scrutinize ...
7. To look to (for support, protection, etc.)... b. to look to (for guidance)
8. To pay regard to, consider. b. to look upon, regard as.
9. To have in view, aim at (an object, ideal, course of action, etc.)...

⁸⁹ James Mark Baldwin, ed. *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* (New York, London: Macmillan, 1902), p. 568.

10. To face, point (in a specified direction).
 11. To point (to a meaning, conclusion, etc.) b. (of events, etc.) to show an inclination towards an outcome, be in sight (of); (of persons, etc.) to have in prospect; (of things) to tend (to a condition).
 12. To have respect to or be concerned with, bear on...
 13. To look out or watch for; (transf.) to await.
- ...
- specula
1. A raised structure or eminence used as a look out post...
 2. The act of observing or spying on...
- ...
- speculāris
1. Of or belonging to mirrors.⁹⁰

For our interests, the second, ninth and eleventh meanings of the Latin “*specto*” are especially useful. The philosophical meaning of spec-ulative combines these meanings at once as the spec-ulative is the implicit direction, aim, ideal, meaning and conclusion of its moments. Furthermore, the link with mirrors through the connection with “*speculāris*” is interesting. This may involve a metaphorical connection with the philosophical meaning of “spec-ulative” as the unity of opposites. In order to better clarify the distinction between philosophical and the everyday uses, it will be appropriate to refer to a regular English dictionary. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*⁹¹ provides two different meanings of the verb “to speculate”:

1. To think (about a matter) in a light way or without facts that would lead to a firm result.
2. To buy or deal in goods, shares, etc. whose future price is still very uncertain, in the hope of a large profit.

Longman provides two definitions for the adjective “speculative”:

1. of or being speculation
2. based on reason alone and not facts about the world: speculative philosophy.⁹²

⁹⁰ P.G. W. Glare, *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pg. 1801-2.

⁹¹ Paul Procter, ed. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (Bath: The Pitmann Press, 1984), p. 1073.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 1073.

If we leave aside the commercial or trade-related usage, it is clear that even in its everyday usage the verb “to speculate” and its adjective form “speculative” is connected with thinking. They refer to a special sort of thinking: a way of thinking that is insensitive to the facts of the matter. Furthermore, the second definition of “speculative” reveals an interesting philosophical commitment implicit in this meaning. Here “speculative” is defined as based on reason alone and not facts about the world. Hence, a separation or in fact a dichotomy between reason and facts of the world is presupposed.

It is very important to identify this implicit premise here which can be formulated as “what is based on reason alone is not based on facts of the world”. This is exemplary of a *weltanschauung* that takes “reason” and “facts of the world” as two separate domains. Following this line of thought, one is tempted to say: sound thinking, contrary to speculative thinking, is based on the “facts of the world” as well as reason. *Prima facie*, this way of approaching the matter appears very credible and solid. At the end of the day, we are rational beings that live in a world. Our world is not our product or creation. It is an external constraint on our subjective thoughts, desires and will. It imposes itself on us. We use our reason to cope with this world. Sensitivity to the facts of this world is at least as essential as good use of our reason to cope with it. Many people of high rational capacity fail to cope with the world due to lack of sensitivity to its facts. On the other hand, people with mediocre rational capacity can find a rather decent way to cope with life as long as they are sensitive to the facts of life and do not base their actions merely on their reason, i.e., speculations. All that said, the world is not totally out of our control, we can change it as long as we understand it. For this we need reason to work on the facts of

the world. In this sense, reason is like a tool that works on its substrata, facts of the world. Therefore, it is destined to share the limitations of any tool. It applies to *substrata* external to itself, thus the relation between reason and the world is an external relation. Its application changes the *substrata*. The outcome of the application, knowledge or cognition in this case, is distinct and of a different nature from both the tool and the *substrata*. Thus, we can distinguish three different domains here: the domain of reason, which is the domain of pure or formal thought, of facts of the world; which are the external constraints that are imposed on our thought and the domain of knowledge, the outcome of the application of our rational apparatus to the facts of the world. “Speculative” in the negative sense refers to an insensitivity regarding the distinction of these three domains and their reciprocal relationship. In everyday language, when we criticize someone for being speculative we criticize her for not taking into account all the essential facts of the matter and relying on reason alone which leads to unjustified conclusions that fail to grasp the truth of the matter.

When this is applied to philosophy, the speculative in the negative sense is connected with an anti-empiricist attitude which puts unjustified emphasis on reason at the expense of facts of the world as a source or basis of knowledge. Kant’s critical philosophy can be interpreted as a grand philosophical project to exorcise philosophy from such speculative carelessness.

The speculative attitude in the negative sense in philosophy may also be affiliated with what William James calls the tender-minded temperament in philosophy. For James, the traits of the tender-minded are to be rationalistic (going by “principles” instead of going by “facts”), intellectualistic, idealistic, optimistic, religious, free-willist, monistic

and dogmatical.⁹³ The tender-minded stands in opposition to the tough-minded temperament, which involves being empiricist (going by “facts”), sensationalistic, materialistic, pessimistic, irreligious, fatalistic, pluralistic and skeptical.⁹⁴

To derive such specific conclusions from an entry in a non-philosophical dictionary entry may sound rather “speculative”. However, our philosophy dwells in our language, our use of which commits us to specific philosophical premises. One of the main tasks of the philosophical activity is to bring such commitments to consciousness and subject them to rational critique.

It is a curious fact that the positive significance of the word “speculative” is almost entirely lost from English. If we consider that contemporary English contains thousands of words whose meaning has been preserved to a large degree since ancient Greek and Latin, it is surprising to find a word that has lost the meaning in which it was used by a major western philosopher only two centuries ago. This loss of meaning, however, is not an accident and has a philosophical background. Primarily, the loss belongs to our philosophical culture. Our philosophical culture lost the insight that was expressed by the positive philosophical significance of the word “spec-ulative”. It has not been replaced by any other technical term or concept. It simply disappeared and sank into our collective unconsciousness. Therefore, there is good reason to use it. We not only want to restore a forgotten meaning of a word, but we want to restore a forgotten philosophical insight. At the expense of sounding provocative or risking misconceptions, I will refer to the concept of concept that will be developed as the spec-ulative concept of concept. In order to distinguish the positive philosophical concept from the negative

⁹³ William James 2003 *Pragmatism*, (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2003), p. 5.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

everyday concept a hyphen will be used and I will write as “spec-ulative”. In the remaining part of this work, “spec-ulative” will refer to the positive philosophical sense and “speculative” will refer to the negative everyday usage. Now the positive philosophical meaning of “spec-ulative” will be explicated.

It has been discussed that “speculative” in the negative sense is connected with a distinction between reason and the “world of facts” and insensitivity to the latter in thinking. Now the convincing and common-sensical looks of the *weltanschauung* discussed above disappears when it is challenged by the question: where and how does the distinction between “reason” and “the world of facts” occur?

First, all distinction and differentiation involve negation. Spatio-temporal objects can be distinguished from each other due to their different spatio-temporal characteristics. No spatio-temporal distinction can be made in the absence of difference between spatio-temporal characteristics. Therefore, spatio-temporal distinction requires a negative relation between the spatio-temporal characteristics of the objects that will be distinguished. Verbal utterances can be distinguished from each other based on their different respective verbal functions. Again, the distinction is possible on the basis that each verbal utterance has a determinate verbal function which enables us to distinguish it from the other verbal utterances. Without a difference, a negative relation, between the specific verbal functions, no distinction can be made between verbal utterances. The same line of thought can be extended to the thoughts as well. Thoughts or concepts can be distinguished from each other based on their determinate content. The distinction is made possible by the fact that thoughts to be distinguished have different determinate content. Basically, to make a distinction is to make a negation. Hence, all determinate content

involves negation. What does not involve negation is devoid of determinate content and cannot be differentiated.

Second, all distinctions require a unity within which the distinction can be made. This unity is the basis and the medium for the distinction to take place. It is this unity which is the underlying basis of the relatedness of the elements to be distinguished. There is no difference without an underlying unity. For example, the distinctions between verbal utterances are enabled by the fact that all verbal utterances have determinate verbal functions. The unity of verbal utterances as all having verbal functions is the condition for their being distinguished. This is because they can be distinguished only by their having determinate verbal functions which stand in a negative relation to each other. They can be distinguished from each other because they are all verbal functions. The same line of thought can be developed for spatio-temporal objects and thoughts as well. Similarly, all distinctions take place only within a unity. No distinction can take place in isolation or in a vacuum. Therefore, unity is prior to the negation. Wherever there is something to be differentiated, there is determinate content. Wherever there is determinate content, there is negation. Wherever there is negation, there is prior unity. But this is not a unity that cancels out the negation and difference. On the contrary, this is a unity that enables and makes possible the negation.

Now the following question can be asked: what is the underlying unity that makes the distinction of “reason” from the “world of facts” possible. Here we are questioning the basis for “reason” and “world of facts” to have determinate contents that can be distinguished from each other. This question cannot be simply answered by taking the reason as an internal and subjective entity and saying that world of facts is the sum total

of the external or objective constraints imposed upon us. In this case the question can be repeated at a different level: What is the basis of making a distinction between internal and external or what is the basis of making a distinction between subjectivity and objectivity? The speculative insight here is that there is no externality that stands on its own independent from internality. Similarly, there is no objectivity that stands on its own and is independent from subjectivity. There is internality just because there is externality and vice versa. The speculative insight is that all these polar distinctions, distinctions of opposing moments, cannot be separated from each other and are possible only through and within a higher unity.

This does not imply that difference, distinction or negation are unreal or does not exist. But it does mean that all difference, distinction and therefore negation are always relative and take place within a unity. To say that objectivity is the negative of subjectivity is a truth. But it is a one-sided truth. Objectivity and subjectivity stand in a negative relation with respect to each other. But this negative relation is not an external relation as if objectivity and subjectivity first exist independently and in isolation from each other, then somehow, accidentally, they are related in a negative relationship. On the contrary, the negative relationship between subjectivity and objectivity belongs to their very nature. Therefore, objectivity and subjectivity are inseparable as negative and positive poles of a magnet. Their nature is to stand in a negative relationship within their unity. In other words, their truth is to be opposing moments of a higher unity. Their internal dialectics belongs to their essence and through this they are mutually constitutive of each other. They are two different aspects of the same unity and their reciprocal tension is the internal tension and the dynamism of this unity. The true content of this

unity is the open-ended conceptual whole or unity we have introduced in the previous section.

Both of the propositions, the one that affirms the negative relationship between subjectivity and objectivity and the one that affirms their unity when taken in isolation from the other are true but partial and one-sided. The spec-ulative content is the unity of both affirmations. Failure to grasp the two together is to fall short of the spec-ulative. This is the unseparatedness of opposing moments or unity in difference.

It is in this insight that all negation involves a prior unity, or that opposites need to be grasped not only as opposites but also as a unity, that the positive and the philosophical significance of “spec-ulative” lies: “It is in this dialectic as it is here understood, that is, in the grasping of opposites in their unity or of the positive in the negative, that speculative thought consists.”⁹⁵

This significance of the spec-ulative insight for philosophy goes deep. Once we admit that the internal phenomena and external phenomena stand within a unity in difference, the implication is that neither can be understood in isolation from the other. Internal phenomena cannot be studied and comprehended without studying the external phenomena and vice versa. To comprehend one of the moments is to become conscious of its unity with its opposite and its relative significance within the whole. The nature of the moments is to be the moments of the unity and when a moment is taken in isolation its true content can never be comprehended but it can be known only partially, and this will lack some of the essential determinations that constitute it.

In this sense, an analytical approach that separates the parts from the whole and studies them in isolation does not suffice. Comprehension is only possible when the

⁹⁵ Hegel, *Hegel's*, p. 69.

determinate content of the moment is consciously considered in its reciprocal relationship with the opposite moment and in its unseparatedness with it as moments of a higher unity. This does not mean that a method that falls short of the spec-ulative content cannot yield truth. It does yield truth, but one-sided and partial truth.

Now we can go back to our original discussion and try to formulate the distinction and relation between the speculative in the negative sense and “spec-ulative” in the positive sense. That the word has both a negative and positive significance is an interesting linguistic phenomenon very consistent with the true spec-ulative content of the word “spec-ulative”. It was stated that the everyday and negative meaning of the word “speculative” involves a commitment between reason and the “world of facts” and it signifies insensitivity in thinking to this distinction. The positive or philosophical significance of “spec-ulative” lies in the re-cognition that the distinction of “reason” and “world of facts” is made within a higher unity. Spec-ulative thinking is the form of thinking that does justice to this “spec-ulative” insight. According to spec-ulative perspective, in its philosophical significance, reason and world stand in opposition to each other only as moments of a higher unity. Their relation is not an external relation. Neither can be separated from each other and they can only be studied in their reciprocal relationship and in their unity in difference.

The spec-ulative insight is the recognition that all opposite concepts involve a unity and they can only be comprehended in their specific role in this unity with their opposite. This higher unity, the third, is not a product or something that comes after the first two opposing moments but is prior to them. The possibility of the first two lies in the third. It is their relative or proximate concept or truth or foundation. The opposing

determinations are the manifestations of the content of the third and their contradiction is its internal contradiction. But the third, the spec-ulative, does not dissolve itself in this contradiction and the first two opposing determinations do not cancel out each other. It is this power to overcome the contradiction and maintain its stability while preserving the contradiction within itself that is the unique contribution and richness of the spec-ulative. Whether internal or external, all phenomena are charged with contradiction and it is only by recognizing this and incorporating it in our conceptual resources that we can give it its real due. We will approach object-subject, universal-particular and world-reason dichotomies from this perspective and incorporate the spec-ulative insight into our consciousness regarding these dichotomies.

Defining the Spec-ulative Concept of Concept

My aim is to argue for an all-encompassing holism. In my view, all particular aspects of reality, whether internal or external, subjective or objective, actual or potential, past or future are constituted by their specific role and function in the overall whole. All the tension and conflict is the internal tension and conflict of the whole and belongs to its internal dialectics and self-dynamism. Individuality, universality and particularity, subjectivity and objectivity, reason and world are different aspects of the whole which are constituted by their reciprocal relationships and their specific function within the overall system. The philosophical challenge is to develop a concept of this whole which accommodates these different aspects without doing violence to their particular content and character. The spec-ulative concept of concept is the very concept of this all-encompassing holism. As the different aspects of the whole stand in tension and contradiction to each other, the concept of the whole should involve the power to

accommodate contradiction within itself without losing its unity. This is nothing but the speculative. Therefore, the concept of this all-encompassing holism is the speculative concept of concept.

This philosophical attitude calls for a change of strategy or perspective. It requires one to accept that the philosophizing consciousness is not in the center of the overall picture but it is a certain aspect of it together with others. It requires a critical attitude towards Kant's Copernican Revolution. Instead of starting from the perspective of the individual understanding, consciousness, subject or reason which finds a world given to, or made by the individual, it starts from a view that recognizes itself as a subject among other subjects, at a certain historical point within history. It does not start from the simple and try to build the complex. It starts with the complex, the totality, the whole and tries to understand the rest including itself as a certain aspect or dimension of it.

It balances itself with the twofold recognition that the philosophizing consciousness in its very act of philosophizing, is constantly being made by the whole, its past, its present, its unconsciousness, its social, cultural ties and at the same time by the very same act of philosophizing it makes the whole, the present, the future, the culture, the society, the world and its own self. It accepts the dignity of having the whole in its blood and soul and the humbleness of being a certain aspect of it and not conquering it.

The very fundamental insight of this perspective is that it is only the complex, the whole, the totality that exists. There is no individuality or no universality, no subjectivity, no objectivity that exists in isolation but only their complex, their totality, whole is real. However, the reality of the whole is a concrete reality, not a transcendental or Platonic one. This concreteness is only possible through the existence of the individuals and

particulars. Therefore, each individual and particular aspect is essential to the whole and manifests its true content. Hence, the view I am defending here does not entail an overemphasis of some abstract universality or Platonic ideals at the expense of the concrete existence of the individuals and particulars.

The spec-ulative concept of concept is the concept of this whole, complex, unity, totality. Each particular and constitutive aspect of the whole such as objectivity, subjectivity, ego, cognition, history, reason itself forms a relative whole, complex, a sphere, a unity of universality-particularity-individuality within it. All aspects of the whole that forms a relative whole or unity within the all-encompassing unity of the whole, are constitutive of its own moments or determinations and need to be studied and cognized as a whole. For example, historical phenomena cannot be studied properly unless they are cognized as historical phenomena and constituting a sphere or totality with its internal relations. This does not mean that historical phenomena can be fully comprehended in isolation from the other aspects such as cognition or ego. The wholeness of all these particular domains is relative and their internal dialectics relates them to the each other within the internal dialectics of the whole. The implication of this is a relativization of the boundaries between different disciplines which study different aspects of the whole.

Concepts of such relative wholes are particular spec-ulative concepts. Cognition of a particular spec-ulative concept is recognition of a particular fundamental aspect of the whole, our own selves and the world and has a historical significance. All such concepts are depositories of the consciousness of mankind accumulated throughout history. As these particular spec-ulative concepts are certain aspects of the whole, they

are neither subjective nor objective as subjectivity and objectivity themselves are nothing but certain aspects of the whole, although very important ones. Consequently, when we talk about a spec-ulative concept we are talking about a particular aspect of the all-encompassing whole which constitutes a relative whole, a sphere within itself. This is neither exclusively objective nor subjective. Its significance is ontological as much as epistemological.

The whole is neither complete nor closed. It is in the process of opening up itself and revealing or making its own self through the internal dialectics or interplay of its constituents. This openness has two dimensions. First, it is open in the sense of being in a continuous change and evolution via its internal dialectics throughout history. Second, it is open in the sense that our knowledge of the whole is never full and exhausted. Philosophical activity is a constant collective endeavor to cognize different particular spec-ulative concepts in their relation with others and develops a higher and fuller consciousness of the whole. Since we as individual subjects are constituted by this very whole, under its ontological, historical, cultural, social, physiological, biological, etc. aspects development of consciousness of the whole is actually development of our self-consciousness.

In the following parts, I will discuss the spec-ulative concept of concept from the perspective of some important philosophical topics and problems. My aim here is to develop a reasonably detailed formulation and explication of the spec-ulative concept of concept and also to show its capacity to transform some of the fundamental philosophical problems. I will discuss the problem of universals, Realism-Idealism controversy in connection with the problem of cognition and subject-object relation respectively.

Spec-ulative Concept and Problem of Universals

The theory of concepts is closely linked with the theory of universals. In fact theory of universals is a chapter in the theory of concepts. Hence, it should be appropriate to clarify the position of spec-ulative perspective with respect to the problem of universals.

The problem of universals is concerned with the “reality” and the “status” of universals. Some philosophers think that universals are real and as such they belong to the very constitution of the world as universals. On the other hand, some other philosophers think that only particulars exist and universals do not have an ontological significance. This second group of philosophers believes that universals are abstractions we make out of the concrete individuals we find in our experience by delimiting their common features and omitting their differences. Universals are simply names referring to such common features. In general, the first group of philosophers is called realists and the second group is called nominalists with respect to theory of universals.

D. M. Armstrong in his famous book on universals defines realism and nominalism by referring to the token and type distinction that was originally introduced by Charles Peirce. For Armstrong, realists hold the view that when two tokens are of the same type, those two tokens have something strictly identical. This strictly identical feature is constituent of both tokens. By accepting this, realists commit themselves to the reality of universals.

On the other side, nominalists are the philosophers who think that when we say truly that a number of tokens are all of the same type, then all that we are saying is that the different tokens are non overlapping parts of some larger whole or unity (the tokens are all members of one class, or they all resemble each other in a certain way, or some

other such formula). These philosophers hold, with John Locke, that “all things that exist are only particulars. There are no strict identities reaching across different tokens; there are no universals”⁹⁶

In order to explicate the position the speculative perspective takes with regards to the problem of universals, a distinction needs to be made between abstract universality and the universality of the speculative concept. As the name indicates abstract universality is a product of abstraction and as such it belongs solely to subjectivity. Abstract universality does not have an ontological significance in the constitution of the world. As far as the abstract universality goes, the nominalist position is valid. However, the true universality of the concept is substantially distinct from abstract universality.

Hegel introduces this distinction in the following long quote in very clear terms:

When people speak of the Concept, they ordinarily have only abstract universality in mind, and consequently the Concept is usually also defined as a general notion. We speak in this way of the ‘concept’ of color, or of a plant, or of an animal and so on; and these concepts are supposed to arise by omitting the particularities through which the various colors, plants, animals, etc. are distinguished from one another, and holding fast to what they have in common. This is the way in which the understanding apprehends the Concept, and the feeling that such concepts are hollow and empty, that they are mere schemata and shadows, is justified. What is universal about the Concept is indeed not just something common against which the particular stands on its own; instead the universal is what particularizes (specifies) itself, remaining at home with itself in its other, in unclouded clarity...It is of the greatest importance, both for cognition and for our practical behaviors, too, that we should not confuse what is merely communal with what is truly universal.⁹⁷

If we take a closer look at the way Armstrong defines realism and nominalism, it could be noticed that the commonality is the point of departure for both positions. If we follow Armstrong, there is no disagreement between realists and nominalists concerning

⁹⁶ D. M. Armstrong, *Universals An Opinionated Introduction* (Central Avenue, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1989) p. 5.

⁹⁷ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 240.

commonality as the fundamental principle and the basis for universality. The disagreement is on how to give an account of this commonality. Therefore, it should be seen that the speculative perspective formulates its theory of universals at a different level and avoids the realism vs. nominalism dichotomy at least in its form presented by Armstrong.

In its general approach, the speculative perspective maintains the balance between the emphasis on difference and unity and recognizes that we do not have one without the other. The theory of universals is no exception. Both nominalists and realists identify two different features in our experience, individuals and universals, strip them off and try to explain them in isolation. However, we never have an experience of an individual stripped of all its relations with other individuals. An individual is the individual it is only within the context or sphere of relations it is in with other individuals. It is a part of a whole and a totality. Its relative place and the array of its relations, at least a subset of these, constitute its nature as the individual. Thus, this totality to which the individual belongs is a unity that is constitutive of the individual. The individual stripped of its relations and taken in a vacuum is simply unintelligible. Furthermore, it is also incompatible with experience. No one ever had or will ever have an experience of an individual per se which does not exist in an array of relations and at least some of those relations without constituting its specific individuality. Like words and propositions which have meaning only relative to a language or a linguistic context and like concepts which have significance only relative to a conceptual framework, individuals are individuals only within a totality.

In certain cases, this totality takes a very specific form and is more than the sum total of the relations and individuals but it forms what can be called an organic unity. A typical example to this is organic nature in the sphere of nature. The organism is a totality and its parts have their specific characters and only within the unity of the organism. The totality of the organism is constitutive of its parts and parts do not have their particular nature in isolation from it. The specific states of the individual elements of the organism and the processes which these individual elements are subject to are constituted by the totality of the organism and cannot be cognized when the individual is taken in isolation.

Another important example of organic unity is the ego, I. It should be recognized that there is nothing that remains strictly identical and common to all different temporal stages of the ego and the ego is in a continuous flux of change. Hence, the persistence of the ego in its self-identity, as the same ego, cannot be explained through an element that remains identical and common in all temporal stages of the ego even if we agree to grant ontological significance to such a common element.

Furthermore, the identity of the ego can also not be explained through nominalistic theories which explain universals in terms of class membership, resemblance relations, etc. It should be seen here in this example, as well as in the example of organic nature, that the universality has much to do with inter-relatedness of the individual elements that are in a state of reciprocal effect and constitution, parts of the same processes. The accounts which rely on class membership, resemblance, etc. fail to capture this aspect of the relation between universal and individual. The universal as the totality of the sphere which the individual is a part of has an influence on the current and future states of the individual. The theory of universals needs to capture this aspect of the

relation and class membership and resemblance theories have no resources to incorporate that. Resemblance and class membership are rather arbitrary relations and are relative to a subjective principle as we are allowed to construct the class and identify resemblances according to our will; it cannot give an account of a universality which belongs to the very constitution of the individual.

What is essential to totality, as organic unity, is that its elements, individuals in it, stand in a state of reciprocal relation within that totality. Its current states, potential future states, the processes they are subject to are constituted through this totality and their respective role and position within it. This is fundamental to organic unity. Through this the totality is more than the mere sum of its elements. Summation works with numbers and quanta. As such it is an external relation of elements that exist independently. The elements exist first and then we sum them up. The quanta that will be summed up do not require this particular summation for their existence or their specific constitution. In the case of organic unity, this is the other way around and the unity is prior to the individual. The individual does not exist first and then becomes part of the organic unity of the universal. The individual requires the organic unity for its existence as the individual it is.

However, this does not mean that the organic unity has a prior and separate existence to all individuals that make up the unity. In this respect, universal of the speculative concept should not be confused with the universal of the realist. Realist grants a separate and abstract reality to the universal. For the speculative perspective, the universal is concrete. It is the totality of the concrete individuals that make them up including their respective relations. In that way particularities of the individuals are not accidents that should be omitted from the universal. On the contrary, the individuals in

their particular and concrete existence are the manifestation and the content of the universal. The universal is not some delimited privileged feature of the individuals that make up the organic unity of the totality but it is their concrete totality. According to this, each individual is infinitely important as it manifests a particular determination of the universal, a unique possibility and combination of its horizon. None of the individuals represents or resembles or realizes the universal in its isolation. It is only the totality of the individuals, and this will be an historical totality if we are talking about a concept which has temporality as one of its determinations, that manifest the universal in their totality. This aspect of the spec-ulative insight is very clearly captured in the following quotation from Josiah Royce:

The total world of the interrelated individual is all that exists. The universal is therefore realized in this totality of individual life. For the nature of the universal is the nature of the self, and self is a world of organically interrelated selves, moments of the infinite organism, phases of its infinity.⁹⁸

The logical significance of the universality of the concept and its unseparatedness with individuality and particularity could also be seen in relation with the concepts of “sublation” and negation of negation”. We have discussed the fundamental role of these concepts for dialectical logic, and the spec-ulative concept of concept in Chapter 2.

Particularity is determination. It is the determination of the spec-ulative concept. Therefore, like every determination, particularity involves negation: a distinguishing of itself from the other. As previously discussed, there is no determination and therefore no particularity without negation.

⁹⁸ Josiah Royce, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy: An Essay in the Form of Lectures* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1892).

The universal remains the universal it is despite its diverse particular manifestations. It remains one and the same universal in all particular manifestations of itself. Hence, it resists the negation of the particular. Otherwise it will be an other for the particular and will be another particular and not a universal. Organic unity is the same organic unity it is despite the different particular forms its moments assume. Despite all its internal change and the different particular features its individual elements assume, it remains one and the same organic unity.

In this, universality of the concept involves a negation of particularity. However, particularity is itself a negation. Hence, universality involves negation of negation. It has already been discussed in the second chapter that negation of negation is not a cancellation or neutralization of negation. It is sublation. Sublation has the double-meaning to cease to exist and to preserve. Through the sublation of particularity, universality of the concept preserves the particular in itself. It does not repel or omit it from itself. It does not become a universal “existence” above or beyond the particular. On the contrary, it preserves or contains it with itself. In this, it is charged with all the particularity and the content of the particular.

Now as the universal sublates the particular and becomes one with it, the resulting element includes not only the limited particular or the universal per se but their concrete totality. This concrete totality is the individuality of the concept. These are the three aspects or determinations or moments of the speculative concept. However, these are always to be taken as the different aspects of one and the same unity and totality. There is no universality without particularity and individuality. Similarly, there is no individuality

without universality and so on. What makes them all possible is their organic unity. This organic unity is nothing but the spec-ulative concept.

It is a mistake to assume that, first of all, there are ob-jects which form the content of our representations, and then our subjective activity comes in afterwards to form concepts of them, through the operation of abstracting that we spoke of earlier, and by summarizing what the objects have in common. Instead, the Concept is what truly comes first, and things are what they are through the activity of the Concept that dwells in them and reveals itself in them.⁹⁹

It should be seen that the abstract universal can always be obtained from the universality of the spec-ulative concept via abstraction. When it comes to general terms like color, man, weight, tree we may be content with abstract universality. However when we are dealing with concepts like organism, life, ego, society, cognition, we require more sophisticated conceptual resources in line with the sophisticated constitution of these objects. The spec-ulative concept as the organic unity of concrete totality of universality, particularity and individuality is clearly much more powerful in that respect.

The relation of the spec-ulative perspective with empiricism and pragmatism will be briefly discussed in chapter four. It is clear that the spec-ulative perspective does not agree with empiricist and pragmatist tradition in many fundamental aspects. On the other hand, I will argue that the spec-ulative perspective is historically relevant and philosophically sensitive to the development of empiricist and pragmatist traditions.

It has already been stated that the spec-ulative perspective is committed to the view that all cognitive content is conceptual content. This requires the transformation of all apparently non-conceptual content to be included and captured in the conceptual domain. This project is the enlargement of the conceptual domain to an all-inclusive

⁹⁹ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia*, p. 241.

holistic structure in such a way that this enlargement does not take place at the expense of loss of particularity, difference and distinctions. Without going into details, it should be seen that such an initiative is not historically irrelevant once the collapse of empiricist epistemology over the second half of twentieth century is taken into account. Once it is recognized that the language of science cannot be constructed on the basis of “given” sense-data and elementary logic, an initiative to construct the rational framework on the basis of conceptual resources alone is not totally irrelevant.

The fundamental significance of the spec-ulative concept as the unity of universality, particularity and individuality should be clear at once in the context of such a broader agenda. A concept of concept as the abstract universal leaves all manifoldness, particularity and individuality out of the conceptual domain and makes the concept nothing but an empty form. Consequently, such an empty form requires to be filled with non-conceptual content to be worthy of the name cognition. However, Sellars with the “myth of the given” has taught us that such a concept of givenness, non-conceptual content, is unintelligible and all cognitive content belongs to the space of reasons. The universal of the spec-ulative concept, by taking advantage of the dialectical logic and the very specific logical relation of double negation, contains in-itself the particularity and individuality, and the content associated with them. This is a very important step in establishing a conceptual framework that will hold all cognitive content within itself. The spec-ulatively conceptual domain does not stand in opposition to a world of individuals and particulars and in need of them to fill it with their non-conceptual content. It is the all-inclusive conceptuality. Its evolution is its internal evolution. The organic unity of the universal applies to the objectivity and subjectivity and does not fall outside it. When

subjectivity evolves, objectivity evolves. When objectivity evolves, subjectivity evolves. They stand in a relation of organic unity and reciprocal constitution and the speculative concept is the organic unity within which they exist. The universal of the speculative concept captures that insight. The abstract or ordinary universal has no similar resource.

Realism vs. Idealism Controversy and Cognition

It is a very common and strong conviction that the world imposes itself on us as a constraint and its reality and specific form of existence is independent of us. On the other hand, we cannot rationally make sense of an objective world independent of our minds especially after Kant. The way we experience and cognize the world is always conditioned by our cognitive resources. Furthermore, it is a historical fact that our cognitive resources are diverse and change over time. Hence, we face a dilemma between our strong and commonplace realist conviction and our rational analysis regarding the dependency of cognition on our unfixed cognitive apparatus.

The speculative perspective addresses this dilemma and the way it addresses the dilemma is very much linked with its theory of universals. The dilemma starts from a distinction between the world and our cognitive resources. I will call the totality of our cognitive resources including the potential and actual ones reason. Hence, the dilemma is one that involves world and reason.

The first step for resolving the dilemma is to recognize the distinction between the universal and individual aspects of reason and world from a speculative perspective. When we talk about reason, we do not talk about the reason of an individual subject. We also do not talk about some universal reason that is common to all rational beings. It is clear from experience that there is no such common reason. Reason is the universal

totality of the rational capacities of each rational being. Universal reason realizes itself in the totality of individual rational beings, not in any single individual and not in a group of them. Its different aspects are realized in different individuals and its total content is manifested in their totality collectively.

Similarly, there is a distinction between the world of the individual and the universal world. The world is what faces the individual as the other side of his individual reason. The world of the individual is the world as felt, intuited and cognized through her particular rational capacity. There is obviously a distinction between the world as universal and the world of each individual as cognized by each individual.

Reason and world in the spec-ulatively universal sense are essential aspects of the all-encompassing whole and as such spec-ulative concepts. As long as, we refer to universal reason and world in the spec-ulative sense, there is one world and one reason. When we talk about reasons, particular rational capacities of individuals, and world, the world as cognized by each individual, there is a multiplicity of reasons and worlds. The relation between reason and reason and world and world is the relation between universal and particular in the spec-ulative sense as discussed in the previous section.

It is important to note here that the world is not an empty beyond, a Kantian thing-in-itself or a transcendental universal. There is no gulf between the world in the universal sense and the world of the individual or individual reasons and universal reason. Reason and world manifest themselves in individual reasons and worlds. In order to clarify the point, I will discuss the cognitive process in connection with this.

Our cognition of an object is fully comprehensive only if we cognize it through all the concepts that are constitutive of it. Every constitutive concept determines a different

aspect of the object and if the cognition of the object does not involve those concepts, our cognition of the object lacks those aspects. If our cognition involves some of the concepts that are constitutive of the object but not all, then our cognition is partial. If the cognition involves categories that are constitutive of the object and some additional concepts that are not actually constitutive of the object, then the cognition is defective. If it does not involve any concepts that are actually constitutive of the object, then there is no cognition.

The worlds of the individuals are partial or defective cognitions of the world, which is the world cognized through some of the concepts that are constitutive of it. Ontologically speaking, there is one world and one reason. The world in the universal sense imposes itself on our reasons as a constraint. Hence, the realist insight holds. As reasons of the individuals are not one with universal reason, our cognition of the world is partial or defective. Therefore, each individual lives in a different world which is conditioned by her conscious and unconscious commitments and her particular cognitive resources. Hence, the idealist insight also holds. There is no contradiction between the idealist and realist insights as long they are formulated in the speculative context with their correct boundary conditions. It is very important to recognize that the world and reason are not abstract universals, transcendental ideals or empty concepts beyond experience. The world and the reason are true content, foundation, blood and soul of individual reasons and their worlds.

During the cognitive process, the individual subject applies certain categories to the phenomena, which could be internal as well as external, that it takes as its object. The categories applied by the subject during the cognitive activity do not necessarily coincide

with the categories that are constitutive of the object as it is in-itself.¹⁰⁰ As explained above, such cognition of the object will fall short of a conceptually comprehensive cognition or comprehension of the object and will be defective. Therefore, it will fail to explain all aspects of the phenomena with its internal and external relations. At this point we face a duplication of the object: first, the object in-itself as ontologically constituted by its complete set of relations under the relevant concepts and second, the object-for-the-consciousness which is a defective or partial cognition of the object failing to grasp the object under the full set of concepts that constitute it. The distinction between the object-in-itself and object-for-the-consciousness enables the subject to re-cognize the defectiveness of its cognition. This would not be possible if the object-in-itself were not rational in-itself and prior to application of the categories by the knower. If the rational element, i.e., concept, were imposed on the object by the subject, then the subject would be trapped in its cognition of the object as it has nothing to compare or test its cognition with. A cognitive content can only be compared with or tested against another cognitive content. To test a cognitive content against something non-cognitive is unintelligible. Therefore, there would be no other available “objective” basis for the subject to test its cognition of the object other than coherence with other cognitions. However, when it is recognized that the object is rational in-itself, this gives the subject the ability to test whether the cognition of the object under different categories yields a richer cognition of the object with its internal and external relations. The cognition will be tested with respect to any new data that becomes available regarding the object and the cognition will be evolved via amendment of the categories used in the cognitive process. This does not

¹⁰⁰ This in-itself should not be confused with the Kantian thing-itself which is for Kant beyond experience and the categories of understanding does not apply to it.

exclude the categories that define the relationship between the subjects and objects and evolution of the cognition can take place in those aspects as well. Comprehension or full conceptual cognition of the phenomena takes place when the phenomena are cognized through all the concepts that are actually constitutive of it. This can be achieved only as a result of an evolutionary dialectical process where the cognition of the object is in a continuous dialectics with the new data that becomes available regarding the object in question.

Here it could be emphasized once more that the speculative perspective does not lose the significance of the objective phenomena as belonging to the world as a constraint upon the knowing subject. Objective phenomena by no means are a mere bi-product of the cognitive activity. The object in-itself or the world is a constraint upon the cognitive process. Subjective and objective sides are not one and in agreement at once and immediately but only after a dialectical evolution process. However, the fact that the object-in-itself is not an existence beyond experience as it is for Kant but is rational in-itself and within the cognitive domain provides us with the possibility of the conceptual comprehension of the object by the subject. This is obviously not granted from the very beginning of the cognitive process at once but a goal to be reached as a result of its self-evolution.

Another important aspect of the relation between the knowing subject and the object to be known is the following: each rational being, subject, does not have full consciousness of all categories of reason and their appropriate use. Furthermore, it is not even certain that at a given point in history humanity as a whole reaches the level of consciousness to have grasped all speculative concepts and their proper significance. In

general, our understanding of reason and world, which is also our understanding of our own selves, is at best partial. Therefore, the cognitive process has another dimension which involves the discovery of new speculative concepts. When humanity loses its consciousness regarding a speculative concept and its specific significance, that particular category does not lose its ontological significance. It continues to constitute the relevant phenomena. However, it drops into the collective unconscious and the significance of the relevant phenomena is not apprehended by the people. Therefore, it is one of the important tasks of philosophical activity to continuously strive to establish a general conceptual framework that will incorporate all speculative concepts. This is our collective effort to develop self-consciousness of ourselves. Every new speculative concept that is apprehended is a new level in our self-consciousness and re-cognition of a new dimension of our true selves. On the other hand a new level of self-consciousness leads to a new level of consciousness and a new dimension of experience of objectivity. This is the dialectical nature of the relationship between consciousness and self-consciousness. Consciousness of a new dimension of objectivity stimulates a process at the end of which a higher level of self-consciousness is obtained. This higher level of self-consciousness involves a fuller apprehension of the speculative concepts which are constitutive of reason and the world. Hence, consciousness and self-consciousness forms a systematic unity within which the unity evolves itself to more intensive and extensive self-realization through the dialectical relationship of its constitutive moments, consciousness and self-consciousness or subjectivity and objectivity.

To achieve that philosophy needs to be on constant alert regarding each new dimension of experience (e.g., psychological, scientific, cultural, artistic, political, moral,

religious), to identify new phenomena that cannot be explained based on existing conceptual resources and discover the categories that constitute the phenomena and integrate the new discovered concept into the conceptual framework working in conjunction with the relevant scientific discipline that studies that particular domain of phenomena. What has been said regarding individual categories applies to alternative conceptual frameworks as well. In this respect, the fundamental task of philosophy is to continuously strive to establish a general conceptual framework that will incorporate all speculative concepts with their true significance and systematic relations.

In this cognitive self-discovery activity, the subject returns into itself and the process becomes the constant endeavor of the subject to re-cognize itself in its-object. The categories that constitute its object belong to the whole which constitute it as well; as a rational being and her knowledge of them is self-knowledge. Each new category that is re-cognized opens up a new dimension of its existence as a subject and enables her to explain a new domain of phenomena or new relations that were not apprehended.

Going back to our original problem, the realism vs. idealism controversy, the speculative concept accommodates both the Realist and Idealist insights. The speculative perspective agrees with the realist that there is one real world which imposes itself as a constraint upon us. On the other hand, it agrees with the idealist that our cognition of the world is always conditioned by our cognitive resources and we do not have access to a mind-independent reality. The speculative concept provides us with the resources to reconcile these two insights without flying in the face of reason. We start with a partial knowledge of the world and evolve this through our collective cognitive activity

throughout history. The philosophical evolution of our knowledge of the world is driven by the evolution of our consciousness of the speculative concepts that constitute it.

This leads us to the question regarding the status of the speculative concepts. What has been discussed so far assumes that the speculative concepts have ontological as well as epistemological significance. In other words, speculative concepts belong to the world as much as they belong to reason. This is a controversial epistemological thesis that calls for a defense.

As was explained at the beginning of the section, the speculative perspective starts from the view that all distinctions and determinations exist and are intelligible only within the all-encompassing whole and their specific characters are constituted by their very function within it. Each particular speculative concept refers to a particular aspect of the whole that forms a relative whole as the unity of opposing determinations within it. Reason and world are such wholes which stand in opposition to each other within the unity of the all-encompassing whole. Their tension and mutual conflict is the internal tension and conflict of the whole. There is no reason that exists independent of the world and no world that exist independent of reason.

When we talk about speculative concepts we do not talk about features or aspects that belong to exclusively to reasons and to reason. We talk about features or aspects of the whole that is constituted by the unity of the world and the reason. Therefore, speculative concepts have ontological significance as they belong to the whole. It is the nature of reason to have the capacity to be conscious of or to cognize the speculative concepts. This is not because speculative concepts belong to reason but because it is the specific function of reason within the unity of the all-encompassing whole to be cognizant of

them. In this sense, spec-ulative concepts belong to the world as much as they belong to reason. One just needs to think of particular spec-ulative concepts in order to clear any doubts about this fact. History, cognition, ego, subject, object, reason, nature, etc.: none of these concepts are intelligible without reference to the world as well as to reason at the same time. Hence, spec-ulative concepts belong to the very constitution of the all-encompassing whole which has the world and reason as two of its particular aspects. As a result of this, spec-ulative concepts have ontological significance as much as their epistemological significance.

We cannot make sense of certain aspects of reality unless we think of them as constituted by their function and role within a whole. This pushes us towards an all-encompassing holistic perspective. This principle repeats itself at the micro level within the whole. There are certain aspects of the whole which cannot be made intelligible unless they are thought as constituting relative wholes, spheres within the whole. We cannot make sense of a particular historical phenomenon unless we think of it as an episode in the historical process. A physiological process can be made intelligible only if it is thought as a physiological phenomenon in connection with other physiological phenomena. The point here is there are certain holistic aspects of reality, as referred to by the spec-ulative concepts, which are ontologically constitutive of the phenomena that belong to their spheres. Therefore, the spec-ulative concept has an essential ontological significance. It brings back the final cause to the philosophical and scientific analysis.

Subjective, Objective and the Spec-ulative

The problem concerning the relation of object and subject is a long standing one similar to the problem of universals. This can be taken as a problem concerning the relation of

the two most general ontological categories that the world consists of. Generally speaking, world can be thought of as consisting of subjects and objects and the relations between the two. The relation between these two ontological categories cannot be totally distinct and independent of what these ontological categories signify in-themselves. Therefore, an account that deals with the subject-object relation cannot avoid at least at some level involving an account of what objects and subjects are in-themselves. Hence, the problem cannot avoid being a problem of ontology.

On the other hand, one of the essential and distinctive features of the relation between objects and subjects is that objects are known by subjects. Therefore, the concept of object involves in-itself the determination of being capable of being known and similarly the concept of subject involves in-itself the determination of being capable, at least as a potential, to know. This is an essential determination that is constitutive for both concepts, object and subject, and even more so when it comes to their relation. Consequently, the problem of object-subject also involves the problems of knowledge and is hence an epistemological one.

Based on the foregoing, when we deal with the problem concerning the relation of object and subject we are dealing with both an epistemological and ontological problem. As a general observation, although this aspect of involving epistemological and ontological dimensions at the same time is very explicit for the problem of the relation between object and subject, it is not unique to it and is shared by a number of very fundamental philosophical problems. Ontology is about the constitution of the world and Epistemology is about how our knowledge of this world is constituted. If we take the world, as the totality that is constituted by subjects and objects, then as knowers, or

subjects, we are part of the world and as such we belong to the constituents of the world. Therefore, how we know the world is not distinct and independent of how the world is constituted in-itself and belong to its very constitution. The specific aspect under which certain individual constituents of the world, subjects, cognize the world, objects, already belongs to the very constitution of the world. According to this, one is tempted to conclude that epistemology in-itself belongs to ontology.

On the other hand, any account we may have as subjects, regarding what the constitution of the world is in-itself belongs to our cognition of it. No subject can have an account of what the constitution of world is in itself without this account being cognition itself, given that the concept of cognition here is being used in a sufficiently broad sense. However, our cognitions of the world will always be constituted by our cognitive resources. As such, our ontological accounts are constituted by the specific constitution of those aspects of subjects, as knowers. If we take it that epistemology is the discipline that studies knowledge and its constitution, then ontology itself becomes at least related to if not conditioned by epistemology.

According to this, epistemology and ontology in themselves cannot be two independent domains. They study two different aspects of the same domain of problems and do not have two separate and independent topics and “objects”. It is very important to make this observation at the very start of our discussion of the object-subject relation from the spec-ulative perspective and its relevance. It sets the stage for the fundamental spec-ulative insight that subjectivity and objectivity stand within a unity in difference and this belongs to their very constitution.

In very general terms, object is what is intuited, felt, perceived, desired or known in distinction from subject which is what intuits, feels, perceives, desires or knows. It is an essential determination or feature of the subject to distinguish itself from the object and return to itself, to its self-identity, from its other, the object. For simplicity and in line with the context of our broader problematic, the discussion below will be confined to the relation between the cognitive object and cognitive subject. The same account can be organically extended to include intuition, feeling, etc.

Even the definitions of subject and object refer to each other and it is not possible to define one without referring to the other. It should be recognized that this applies to all determinate concepts that stand in the organic unity of a higher concept. Similarly, it is not possible to define cause without referring to the effect, or form without referring to the content. This is not a consequence of a limitation of our cognitive resources but belongs to the very constitution of what is to be defined. Therefore, any definition of them should involve not only their distinction but also their unity or unseparatedness. It is not the case that objects and subjects first exist independently and then they are somehow related. It is only in their relation, in which they reciprocally constitute each other, that objectivity and subjectivity exists.

This complex nature of the topic creates a difficulty for the perspective which has the tendency to define and study parts in isolation from the whole. As discussed in the section on problem of universals, it is the universal totality of individuals in their particular determinations that exists but not individuals, particulars and universals in isolation. Here similarly it should be recognized that it is only the universal totality of

subjects and objects that exist, not individual subjects or objects in their isolation. The individual and universal as well as different individuals are in a reciprocal constitution.

The spec-ulative concept of concept is the unity of subjectivity and objectivity in their difference. This principle is so fundamental to the spec-ulative perspective that it cannot be repeated too often. In general and based on our discussion on the problem of universals, the higher concept is the universal totality of its moments in their distinction and manifests itself in their totality. It is the whole or the sphere that contains both and is charged with the content and form of both.

A cognitive subject knows the world through its cognitive resources and context. These cognitive resources and context, essentially concepts, do not necessarily coincide with the spec-ulative concepts that are ontologically constitutive of the phenomenon that the subject takes as its object. We have already argued in the previous section that this leads to a duplication of the object as object-for-the-consciousness and object-in-itself. The key point here is that object-in-itself is not a Kantian unknowable entity but is rational as determined by spec-ulative concepts. The subject has the potential to dialectically evolve its-object-for-the-consciousness to the object-in-itself through self-critique and questioning whether its object-for-consciousness is capable of accommodating all the information available regarding the relevant phenomena within itself. If the object-for-consciousness is a partial or defective cognition of the object-in-itself, which is almost always the case, then there is a contradiction or tension between the information available regarding the phenomena and the object for the consciousness. At this point, the subject can revise its object-for-the-consciousness and develop its cognition in the light of additional information and rational analysis. Therefore, the

subject is not a refugee of its own concepts and cognitive resources. There is a dialectical opening and possibility for a continuous evolution of its cognition until the relevant phenomenon is cognized through the concepts that are actually constitutive of it. This is only possible because the object-in-itself is conceptual and rational in-itself. Otherwise, the subject is trapped within its own concepts and conceptual resources. Its object would be a mere derivative or bi-product of its cognitive resources and it would have no means to break this subjective circle. We need the tension and conflict between an object-in-itself and the object-for-the-consciousness in order to provide the subject with the evolutionary power to break this vicious circle.

It is a historical fact that our knowledge of the world and ourselves evolve in time. We discover new dimensions of our internal and external reality and develop theories which integrate our cognitions of different aspects of it. Each time we make a radical shift in our cognitive resources and concepts this triggers a radical shift in the way we view our world. Hence, the evolution of subjectivity goes hand in hand with the evolution of objectivity. They are two different aspects of one and the same evolution process.

It is possible to give the necessary credit to this only if we recognize objectivity and subjectivity as forming a whole and as complex with internal dialectics. Otherwise, we are stuck between theories which try to explain objectivity in terms of subjectivity, subjective idealism, or subjectivity in terms of objectivity, materialism. Both strategies are problematic. When we are given two phenomena which are related, the standard approach is to try to identify one as prior to the other and explain the latter in terms of the former. This is a methodological prejudice without justification. The speculative concept provides us with an alternative methodological strategy. Each phenomenon can be as

essential as the other. The relation can be a dialectical relationship in which two opposing concepts stand in a dialectical relationship within the unity of the higher concept. We have seen that this strategy makes better sense of idealist and realist insights by placing them in relation to their respective boundary conditions.

Objectivity and subjectivity should always be treated as different moments or aspects of the same organic unity and not as two independent existences. Theories that make one subordinate to the other are misguided. Subjectivity should not be considered as a derivative that needs to adjust itself in order to fit with an objectivity that exists independently from it. On the other hand, objectivity cannot be cognized as being subordinate to subjectivity as a mere by-product of its cognitive resources as in the case of solipsism and some forms of conceptual relativity. Subjectivity and Objectivity should always be considered in their unity in difference, as different forms which collectively manifest one and the same content. Comprehension of the true content is the recognition of the unity of both aspects, subjectivity and objectivity, under the form of the speculative concept of concept, which is the universal form that overgrasps the two. This true content should not be taken as something abstract or merely ideal, but it is concrete. It is the concrete totality of all Subjectivity and Objectivity in their difference and distinctions.

The spec-ulative concept of concept under the aspect of its universality can be taken as the concept of the general conceptual framework of reason, which is the system of all particular spec-ulative concepts brought under the unity of the spec-ulative concept of concept.

It is the nature of the spec-ulative universal to particularize itself and manifest it in the totality of particulars. If the spec-ulative concept of concept under its aspect of its universality can be considered as the general conceptual framework of reason, this general conceptual framework should manifest itself in the organic unity of the totality of the conceptual frameworks of individual subjects. Each individual subject is a subject and the particular constitution of its subjectivity is constituted by this universal reason. However, as discussed the universal reason does not manifest itself in its full content in each individual subject, but only in their totality collectively. Hence, each individual subject is a certain aspect of the universal subjectivity of reason. Therefore, this explains the ontological basis for the methodological commitment of the spec-ulative perspective to all-inclusiveness. It is only in the totality and in the organic systematic totality of each particular conceptual framework worthy of the name, that the true content of the general conceptual framework of reason is exhibited.

This insight is also very important to make sense of the theoretically challenging phenomena of conceptual diversity without falling into conceptual relativism. As the universal form of reason, the general conceptual framework of reason manifests itself in the totality of the individual subjects but not in a single individual subject. This allows us to make sense of existence of one reason and the diverse rational apparatus of different individual subjects at the same time. According to the spec-ulative perspective, the existence of different conceptual frameworks or different category structures that change based on cultural, historical, scientific or individual context does not imply that one reason does not exist. One reason manifests itself in the totality of this diversity and this

diversity is not an accident or deterioration of its universal nature but the manifestation of its true content.

Similarly, the existence of different individual objectivities corresponding to different individual subjectivities does not imply that there is more than one objective world. One objective world is the organic unity of the totality of individual objectivities. Hence, the true principle that there is no mind independent reality does not imply that there is no one world. The world is the one constituted by universal reason. This does not exclude but on the contrary contains within itself the diversity and plurality of the individual worlds of individual subjects. This is unity in difference or unity in plurality and diversity. The fundamental insight here is that the unity that is obtained by abstracting or omitting the diversity and difference is empty. True unity is the one gained through the sublation of diversity and difference. That is concrete and charged with the richness and content of all diversity but still remains in identity with itself in this diversity. In its logical significance, this is the power of negation of negation or sublation.

The spec-ulative perspective can be criticized for committing itself to the concept of general conceptual framework of reason on the grounds that there is no such generally accepted conceptual framework at any point in time. To be clear and precise, the spec-ulative perspective does not commit itself to the existence of such a generally agreed on and accepted framework. It should be noted that the spec-ulative perspective does not even require determination of the general conceptual framework of reason at a certain historical point. It also does not commit itself to the view that a given particular conceptual framework is the general conceptual framework of reason. But it commits itself to the constant endeavor to construct such a framework out of individual conceptual

frameworks and their constant evolution. This is nothing but the effort to bring its particular determinations under the unity of reason. This is to be achieved throughout a historical evolution process in which individual reasons recognize reason gradually.

In that way the spec-ulative perspective is open and inclusive. At every point in history, a new concept or conceptual framework could be recognized that will bring further wholeness and unity to our cognition of ourselves, reason, and the world. Introduction of this new concept or conceptual framework may also open up new significance and interpretations of our existing concepts. As stated earlier, evolution of the cognitive process is non-linear and introduction of a new element may lead to changes in the significance and roles of the existing elements. This is a consequence of the historically holistic nature of the evolution of our philosophical cognitions.

Due to its recognition of this non-linear nature, the spec-ulative perspective is also open ended in a specific sense. It understands the evolution of our conceptual frameworks as a gradual process in which the true content of the whole, the spec-ulative concept of concept is comprehended. Through this historical evolution our cognitions fill themselves with richer and fuller content of the whole until we come to full comprehension. Any particular element of our total framework of concepts and cognitions is subject to revisions by the introduction of new concepts or new elements. However, this does not mean that the previous framework or its elements were untrue but that they are only partial cognitions of the true content. Historical evolution is always a gradual process and never moves from one extreme to the other. This is also due to the holistic nature of the process within which every individual element has its significance only with respect to its position in the overall picture.

Spec-ulative Concept of Truth

The spec-ulative perspective does not entail a fundamental shift in the concept of truth.

The spec-ulative perspective is committed to the view that truth is the agreement of the subjective element with the objective element that corresponds to it, which can be taken as an unconventional formulation of the correspondence theory of truth.

Hegel defines truth as the agreement of the cognition with its object and sometimes refers to it as the agreement of a concept with its object. However, it must be kept in mind that this formulation receives a very special interpretation in the spec-ulative context. First of all, it is very important to note that the distinction of subjectivity and objectivity or the cognition and its object falls within the conceptual domain but it is not a correspondence of a conceptual element that belongs to subjectivity to a non-conceptual element that exists in an objective world that fall on the other side of the conceptual domain. In this way spec-ulative conceptualism eliminates the problem of correspondence of a conceptual content with a non-conceptual content. For spec-ulative conceptualism, all cognitive content is conceptual.

The spec-ulative concept is not an abstract universal or mental entity but it is what constitutes the object. Hence, the truth of a subject matter is nothing but its spec-ulative concept. To be conscious of the concept of the subject-matter in the spec-ulative sense is to comprehend it and to cognize it in its truth.

A distinction needs to be made between the correctness of our representations and the truth in the spec-ulative sense. A representation is our consciousness of a particular determination of a concrete object. This determination can be the outcome of our subjective abstraction of a certain aspect of a concrete totality and as such it does not

belong to its ontological constitution. If it belongs to its constitution it should no longer be called a representation but a cognition. For example, we may have a representation of an object as being red. Whether the object is red is a matter concerning the correctness of my representation, which belongs to the agreement of my representation with its object. But my representation is based on a determination of the object which is not constitutive of the object. The same object may be green or yellow on some other occasion as its color is a not a constitutive determination of the object. Therefore, truth or correctness of a representation is essentially different from truth in the speculative sense. Speculative truth concerns the agreement between the object and its concept. As such, it is not only a matter regarding the mode under which we cognize an object but it is also related with the very constitution of the object.

In order to cognize the object in its truth, one need to be conscious of the constitutive speculative concept and cognize it under the determination of that concept. For example, we can form representations regarding the color and shape of a tissue and these representations may or may not be correct. However to cognize the tissue in its truth is to cognize it as belonging to an organism in its particular constitution as related with other elements of the organism and in its specific role and purpose within the organic unity of the organism. Truth is conceptually or ontologically constituted.

It has already been stated that the speculative concept of concept is the unity of subjectivity and objectivity. Now if truth is defined as the agreement of the subjective to the objective element and the speculative concept of concept is the unity of subjectivity and objectivity, then the implication is that the speculative concept of concept is also the concept of truth. We have said that all cognitive content is conceptual. All concepts are

the unity of their moments in their difference and hence are charged with all the cognitive content of their moments. Subjectivity is the unity of all concepts that are applicable to subjective phenomena and hence is charged with all of their content. Similarly objectivity is the unity in difference of all concepts that are applicable to objective phenomena and therefore is charged with all of their cognitive content. Consequently, the spec-ulative concept of concept holds within itself all conceptual content, subjective and objective, in their difference. Truth, as spec-ulative concept of concept, is the totality of all conceptual content. Each spec-ulative concept, as the unity of its moments in their difference, is the truth of its moments. This spec-ulative concept itself is the moment of a higher concept and has its truth in that higher unity. Therefore, the spec-ulative perspective involves the view that truth is conceptual totality. This does not entail that there is no truth until the perspective of the spec-ulative concept of concept is reached. On the contrary, every particular spec-ulative concept is a truth. The problem is to evolve our conceptual framework to incorporate all spec-ulative, ontologically constitutive, concepts, establish the spec-ulative relations between these concepts and gradually increase the cognitive content that is accumulated in it. Therefore, for the spec-ulative perspective philosophical activity is driven by the ideal of all inclusiveness. This will involve openness to all conceptual frameworks and all concepts regardless of their historical and cultural context and a methodological commitment to a constant evolution of our conceptual frameworks to attain conceptual completeness.

If the truth of a subject matter is its spec-ulative concept which involves totality then consequently the truth of the subject matter is also totality. However, as discussed this totality is not an undifferentiated or unstructured togetherness, but it consolidates

itself to the organic unity of the concept. All the individual elements themselves are speculative concepts, and the true content of the speculative concept and its truth is manifested in the totality of all these individuals. In this, each speculative concept is a sphere. If this is to be made clear by an example, it could be said that all individual human beings are humans, and the true meaning of humanity is not manifested in this or that human being but in the totality of all human-beings in their unity. This will not only involve all particular aspects of the particular humanity of all individual human beings in themselves but also those aspects which will be manifested in their relations and interdependency. The speculative concept of humanity is to accommodate all the particular manifestations of humanity in its content.

However, as truth is totality, it is therefore also a process. Now this process is both a subjective and an objective one. On the one hand side, cognition of truth requires the cognition of the subject-matter in its speculative concept. The cognition of all speculative concepts in their organic systematic unity under the universal form of the speculative concept of concept is not attained at the beginning but only throughout a cognitive evolution process. Therefore, the true significance of each particular speculative concept can only be comprehended as a result of an evolution process. If the cognition of truth requires the cognition of the subject matter under the form of its true speculative concept, then a direct consequence is that cognition of a subject matter in its truth will only be attained as a result of a historical evolution process. This may be a subjective process required for the cognition of the truth of a subject matter.

Cognition of the truth of a subject matter involves a historical evolution process on the objective side as well. It has been stated that the universality of the speculative

concept manifests itself in the totality of individuals in that sphere. Now the individuals referred to in this definition are not those individuals that exist at a particular historical point but throughout all history as long as the specific speculative concept has temporality as one of its determinations. Therefore, the cognition of truth in such a sphere will never be complete but is a continuous evolution. Nevertheless, this evolution fills the cognition with richer and more refined content and involves an expansion in the breadth and intensity of the truth pertaining to that sphere. As an example, developments in biogenetics can open up new dimensions and new forms of manifestation regarding the meaning of life and humanity which may require us to revise our concepts regarding these spheres. This can be called the objective process required for the cognition of the truth of a subject-matter.

We can also call the first process the philosophical process and second the empirical process required for the cognition of truth. The first process manifests itself in the history of philosophy while the second manifests itself in the history of empirical sciences (including mathematics as well). This should show that the cognition of truth whether we take it as the cognition of the truth of a particular subject matter or a sphere or as the cognition of the concept of truth, is a historical process which involves both essential philosophical and empirical aspects. The two historical processes develop themselves in tandem as the two different aspects of a single historical process: cognition of truth. This should shed some light on the relation of philosophy and empirical sciences and their historical nature.

The historicity of the cognition of truth, philosophy and empirical sciences by no means commits itself to historical relativism. Historical relativism will take the content of

the cognitive process to be subordinate to contingent historical circumstances which are in themselves irrational and undetermined by the concept. On the contrary, the speculative perspective by saying that the universal manifests itself in the totality of the individuals throughout the historical process brings the historical process under the determination of the speculative concept and not the other way around. History becomes the history of the manifestation of the true content of the speculative concept. In that way it is rational in itself and determined under the form of the speculative concept of concept. It acknowledges that the cognition of truth, philosophy, science is relative to the historical process in which they develop and fulfill themselves. But they do not lose their unity and universal content in the contingency of the blind forces of history. History becomes conceptualized or rationalized. The speculative perspective accommodates historical relativity without committing to historical relativism.

This concludes my discussion on the speculative concept of concept and its implications on some fundamental philosophical problems, i.e., the theory of universals, realism vs. idealism controversy, subject-object relation and truth. The next section will undertake a discussion of the speculative perspective, the philosophical perspective which takes speculative concept of concept as its core and the fundamental concept. The objective is to clarify the distinctions of the speculative perspective from competing alternatives and discuss some broader philosophical implications of the speculative insight and the concept of concept.

The Speculative Perspective

The motive of the speculative perspective is to develop the holistic conceptual framework that will grasp different moments of the truth within the very specific

boundary conditions in which they are valid. The challenge speculative thought sets for itself is not to construct the true philosophical system, conceptual framework, etc. among a number of untrue competing philosophical systems or conceptual frameworks but one that integrates the insight from all conceptual activity. It is based on the consciousness that all cognitive activity is collectively and historically interrelated.

The holistic conceptual framework of the speculative perspective is never to be thought of as a list of categories and concepts. It is in the continuous process of self-evolution and self-making and charged with internal tension and dynamism. Its internal tension and dynamism comes from its internal dialectics. Therefore, it is not a closed philosophical system but a philosophical attitude or better as the name indicates a philosophical perspective.

The speculative perspective takes all-inclusiveness as an ideal and seeks to develop the conceptual resources that will systematically evolve itself towards this ideal through its internal resources and self-critique. It seeks to convert what is unconscious to what is conscious, what is isolated to what is integrated and what is neglected to what is cognized.

The methodological pillars of the speculative perspective are speculative conceptualism, methodological openness and all-inclusiveness. In order to avoid any confusions the speculative perspective needs to be clearly distinguished from two other alternative perspectives: I will call these alternatives absolutist and relativist perspectives respectively and dwell on their distinction with the speculative perspective.

The Absolutist and Relativist Perspectives

The absolutist perspective is the position that there is a unique conceptual framework that yields truth, and alternative conceptual frameworks are basically untrue. This unique conceptual framework is considered to be true independent of the historical, cultural or scientific context. Alternative conceptual frameworks are misguided and untrue. It must be kept in mind that both sides of the conjunction are essential to the absolutist position. The absolutist does not only deny the uniqueness of the true conceptual framework, but also excludes the alternatives from access to truth. Hence, it is not sufficient to accept that there is a unique true conceptual framework to be an absolutist but this exclusion of alternatives from access to truth, an attitude of closedness and privilege is also essential to it.

This formulation of the absolutist position is generic and all-encompassing. There can of course be absolutism with respect to science, culture, morality, politics, etc. One can be an absolutist in some of these respects without committing to absolutism in others.

There is also no necessary link between absolutism and rationalism or empiricism. Both empiricists and rationalists can be absolutists. Similarly, neither empiricists or rationalists are necessarily absolutists. Philosophers with fundamentally different philosophical tendencies like Spinoza, Kant and Carnap in his early period can be considered as absolutists. All of these philosophers believed and argued that there is a unique conceptual framework through which truth can be grasped at expense of the alternative conceptual framework. In this attitude, they have excluded the alternative conceptual frameworks from the ability to access and grasp truth. Kant is absolutist when he claims that his categories are necessary and universal and that collectively his

categories exhaust the a priori basis for all valid cognition. Early Carnap is absolutist when he argues that there is a unique language of science which can be constructed on the basis of sense-data and elementary logic and what cannot be constructed on this basis is devoid of cognitive content. It can be seen from these examples that absolutism is not a philosophical doctrine or thesis but is a philosophical attitude that can express itself in many different forms. However, I will argue that this attitude is based on a philosophical presupposition, a presupposition that is generally not brought into clear consciousness. This presupposition is one linked with the concept of concept.

First of all, the problem of the absolutist perspective is not that it fails to grasp truth, but its failure to grasp that truth is a totality. The absolutist perspective in its different forms fixes itself to a certain element, constituent or moment of truth and closes itself there. It takes a part or moment of truth as the whole truth. In this attitude, the absolutist perspective can also be called dogmatic. A particular absolutist system can be based on true principles, and it often is. However, it is not based on all true principles and it does not recognize that the nature of philosophical activity lies in the constant effort to evolve the conceptual framework at hand to the level of conceptual structure and richness to incorporate all possible conceptual content.

Truth is all-inclusive systematic totality and the cognition of truth involves cognition of all of its moments in their relative significance and functions within the whole. This can only be achieved with a conceptual and logical, in the broader sense, openness to all alternative conceptual frameworks and in the methodological commitment to bring different conceptual frameworks under the systematic unity of a general

conceptual framework. This links us to the second fundamental defect of the absolutist perspective: its incompatibility with conceptual change and plurality.

Absolutism is incompatible with and cannot explain conceptual plurality and conceptual change. It is a matter of fact that over time we not only accumulate knowledge but also the very conceptual structure of our knowledge changes. New categories are introduced and existing ones receive new meaning and interpretations. Hence, knowledge accumulation, even at the conceptual or structural level, is not a linear activity. It is a non-linear activity where the new elements have an effect on the preceding elements. In that sense it is analogous to a feedback system whose inputs change as a function of its outputs. Those new inputs change the new outputs which in turn change the following inputs and so on. This non-linear nature of the cognitive activity and the constant change not only in its breadth but also in its very conceptual structure is inconsistent with the absolutist perspective. For the absolutist perspective, the structure of the valid cognitive activity is fixed. The absolutist has no resources to explain the fact that there can be two different scientific theories with different conceptual, or a priori, structures, both of which can explain phenomena to a good degree of satisfaction. It finds itself in a very difficult position to select one as the true and the other as the false. This repeats itself in different forms in the domains of culture, morality, politics, etc. In every domain of conscious human activity it is very easy to find examples of conceptual change and conceptual plurality. The absolutist has no resources to cope with this level of complexity and feels obliged to select one among the options as true. But often there is no firm objective basis to make such a decision.

It is very important to see the philosophical significance of conceptual change and plurality.¹⁰¹ It is true that conceptual change, change of conceptual frameworks or categorical structures, is a cultural and historical phenomenon. It can be recognized that cognitive behaviors of individuals in different cultural and historical contexts vary at the level of conceptual frameworks they are committed to, at the level of the a priori structures of their cognitive praxis. However true this observation is, it does not capture the essential philosophical significance of conceptual change or plurality. Although it is true that conceptual change and plurality are undeniably historical and cultural phenomena, beyond everything these are conceptual and cognitive phenomena. Conceptual change and plurality take place in the conceptual domain, to use Sellars' terminology, or in the space of reasons. Therefore, they cannot be explained by making conceptual frameworks subordinate to historical and cultural context. Above all, conceptual change and plurality need to be explained in conceptual and cognitive terms. This will give a sound basis to explain the relevant historical and cultural plurality as well, not the other way around. The important philosophical point here is that all distinctions between different conceptual frameworks which lead to the phenomena of change and plurality are internal distinctions of the conceptual domain.

The change and plurality are not imposed on the conceptual domain externally or something it received from outside. The capacity to accommodate conceptual change and diversity belongs to the very concept of speculative concept. The conceptual plurality is the self-plurality of the concept and conceptual change is its self-change. The change and

¹⁰¹At the level of concept, there is no difference between conceptual plurality and conceptual change. Conceptual change is the existence of different conceptual frameworks or different categorical structures at different times whereas conceptual plurality is the existence of different conceptual frameworks or categorical structures at the same time. At the level of concept, the difference between the two is not essential. The essential point with respect to theory of concept is to give an account of the possibility of multiple conceptual frameworks and their reciprocal relation.

plurality occur within the conceptual domain and not outside it. Hence, the speculative concept by its very nature involves the plasticity to accommodate change and plurality. Any concept of concept that falls short of incorporating this plasticity falls short of its essential task, which should in the most general terms be to give an account of conceptual phenomena. Therefore, an adequate concept of concept should necessarily explain the possibility and dynamics of conceptual change and plurality. The absolutist perspective in all its different forms does not recognize this essential task. Although the absolutist perspective manifests itself in very different philosophical systems and doctrines when it comes to the concept of concept, these different doctrines share a common denominator, the failure to recognize conceptual change and plurality as essential to the concept. This is one of the main reasons why it is justified to group them under the same title when it comes to the theory of concept.

These are two main points in which the speculative perspective distinguishes itself from the absolutist perspective. The true significance of the speculative perspective lies not only in the fact that it addresses these two important limitations but also in the very specific form in which it addresses these. There is also another perspective that recognizes the problems of the absolutist perspective and seeks to address them: the relativist perspective. Hence, it will be in place to briefly discuss the relativist perspective as well in order to differentiate it from the speculative perspective.

The relativist perspective builds on the consciousness of the defects of the absolutist perspective and seeks to address them. In general relativist perspective can be characterized as the philosophical position that is committed to the following principles: i) there are multiple conceptual frameworks, ii) all cognition is relative to the framework

in which it is formulated, iii) there is no cognitive or logical basis that links different conceptual frameworks and no cognitive or logical possibility to bring different conceptual frameworks under the unity of one reason.

First of all, it is important to recognize the positive content of the relativist perspective. The relativist perspective takes off from the true insight that the absolutist attitude that fixes itself to a unique and privileged conceptual framework is not sustainable. It acknowledges conceptual plurality and conceptual change as phenomena fundamental to the conceptual domain and accepts the need to give an account of them.

Furthermore, it acknowledges the relativity of cognitive activity to the conceptual framework in which it is formulated. This is very important as it involves the very important insight that cognition above all is a conceptual activity. It should be noticed that without the premise that cognition is a conceptual activity, the principle that all cognition is relative to the conceptual framework in which it is formulated will be left without any sound basis. The acknowledgment of cognition as essentially a conceptual activity is a very important step towards liberating epistemology from the myth of the given. Once we start to consider cognition as an essentially a conceptual activity then we take a big step towards accepting the fact that all cognitive content is conceptual content and cognition does not involve non-conceptual given content in terms of sense data, etc.

In summary, the relativist perspective improves over the absolutist perspective by recognizing that (i) conceptual plurality and change exist and are essential conceptual phenomena, (ii) all cognition is relative to the framework in which it is formulated, (iii) cognition is essentially a conceptual activity.

Although the relativist perspective makes the correct diagnosis it fails to develop the right cure. The relativist perspective is correct in taking conceptual change and conceptual plurality as essential conceptual phenomena; however it goes too far when it makes them absolutes. It lacks the consciousness that all distinction requires a prior unity and that conceptual change and conceptual plurality are only possible within the unity of the concept, the space of reasons. It takes the difference between two conceptual frameworks as absolute and does not recognize it as the self-evolution of reason. To put it in other terms, the relativist perspective lacks the speculative. It does not recognize that all opposing determinations, concepts, conceptual frameworks stand within the unity of a higher concept or conceptual framework.

All distinctions within the conceptual domain have their significance due to their relative function and place in the whole. No particular concept or conceptual framework has an isolated significance or meaning. Therefore, although conceptual change and plurality are essential, they are not final. The relativist perspective takes them as final. It does not understand that truth is a totality. It takes each conceptual framework as final and self-subsistent. It sees them in their difference, but not in their unity in difference. All conceptual frameworks are possible only through the unity of an unbounded conceptual domain and only within it; not as islands that are separated from each other and exist in isolation. Even the islands exist on the earth and through it, not in isolation. The earth exists within a galaxy in a system of interdependent-relations and so on. For simplicity, we are allowed to make abstractions and study the parts in isolation as long as we consciously accept the inaccuracies that will be brought by it. But in reality everything exists in a network or system of interdependent relations. These relations are constitutive

of the parts and not accidentally attached to them. The spec-ulatively conceptual domain is the true essence of this systematic interdependency.

Once it is recognized that there are multiple conceptual frameworks, and then the question regarding the relation between different conceptual frameworks cannot be avoided. This is not only a fundamental theoretical matter but also a practical one, especially when its implication for the domains of morality, politics, etc. is also considered. The question regarding the relation between different conceptual frameworks has numerous dimensions. If we restrict ourselves to the sciences, this can be considered as a matter of the decision to define the linguistic/conceptual framework to formulate a specific scientific theory or it can also be seen as a question of selecting one of available theories to explain a particular natural phenomenon. However, when taken in its broader and true significance, the relations between different value systems, civilizations, etc. should also be considered in relation with this question. Wherever there is a conflict of norms, which can manifest itself either in the form of conflict of values or also in the form of conflict of meaning postulates and definitions, then either implicitly or explicitly the grand question regarding the relation of different conceptual frameworks is on the table.

In general, this problem can be formulated as follows: At least all value judgments require application of a norm.¹⁰² Wherever there is a norm, there is a concept. Concepts have significance only relative to the framework in which they are used. There is a multiplicity of conceptual frameworks. Furthermore, existing conceptual frameworks change over time due to introduction of new concepts/categories into them or due to re-

¹⁰² I tend to believe that all judgments involve application of a norm. Once this premise is accepted, it can be argued that: Application of a norm involves application of a concept. All judgments involve application of a concept.

interpretation of the existing concepts/categories. Therefore, wherever there is a disagreement or question about norms, we face the grand problem.

The relativist perspective has no conceptual resources to deal with this grand problem. It tries to avoid this problem by making it appear as a non-problem. It either relates different conceptual frameworks on the basis of external criteria such as usefulness, simplicity, etc. or takes them as simply on a par. In this attitude the relativist perspective can also be considered as skeptical. However, neither of the proposed approaches solves the problem. When the problem is posed as a non-theoretical problem that should be addressed as a practical or pragmatical problem based on external criteria, this only shifts the problem to a different level but does not address it. A practical decision involves application of values and reference to goals. Values presuppose norms which in turn presuppose concepts. According to this, we need to have and use concepts in order to be able to make decisions on selection of conceptual frameworks and introduction of new concepts. However, all concept usage is relative to a conceptual framework. Therefore, we need to commit ourselves to a conceptual framework before we decide on which conceptual framework to use. Furthermore, this decision will be relative to the conceptual framework we are originally committed to. This is one of the reasons why Carnap's internal / external distinction is untenable. All cognitive activities, whether we call them practical or theoretical are always relative to a conceptual framework.¹⁰³ We cannot avoid committing to a conceptual framework as long as we cannot avoid thinking.

¹⁰³ Of course this does not mean that there is no difference between practical and theoretical questions or statements. But the point here is that all theoretical and practical activity involves application of concepts and takes place within a conceptual framework.

The relativist perspective is again far from addressing the problem when it assumes that all different conceptual frameworks are on a par at a cognitive level. To deal with the problem of multiple conceptual frameworks is not a question of intellectual luxury but one of vital practical significance. This is a question dictated by life and is not limited to the philosophy class. When the relativist says that all conceptual frameworks are on a par at a cognitive level, the question does not disappear but is left to be answered on irrational grounds. It is the duty of philosophy to confront this challenge as this is a question being asked and answered and will not go away if philosophers decide to take a neutral position on it.

As long as we are engaged in cognitive activity, we always operate within a conceptual framework. Conceptual frameworks are not by-products of some external circumstances, regardless of the nature of those circumstances (e.g., physiological, historical, cultural, etc.). If concepts and conceptual frameworks were merely derivatives, then it could have been that there is no conceptual and logical link between different conceptual frameworks as these may be outcomes of infinitely different external circumstances. All concepts and conceptual frameworks belong to the space of reasons and belong to the very nature of reason. Reason is the natural mediator between different conceptual frameworks. In every different concept and conceptual framework, we have a manifestation of a different content that belongs to reason. Therefore, all concepts and conceptual frameworks are related at a conceptual and logical, in the broader sense, level. All are to be seen as particular manifestations of the universal content of reason. Reason manifests its true content in their totality. Recognition of this elevates us from the relativist perspective to the speculative perspective.

Four Pillars of the Spec-ulative Perspective

The spec-ulative perspective that is defended in this thesis is based on four fundamental pillars. The four pillars are spec-ulative insight, spec-ulative conceptualism, methodological openness and all-inclusiveness. The first two have already been discussed in the previous sections of this thesis. Therefore, they will be briefly mentioned and Methodological Openness and All-inclusiveness will be discussed in further detail.

i) Spec-ulative Insight: The spec-ulative insight is the recognition that all opposite concepts involve a unity and that they can only be comprehended in their specific role in this unity with their opposite. The spec-ulative insight is the bearer of the dialectical soul of the spec-ulative perspective. On the one hand, internal tension and conflict is introduced into philosophical thinking through this insight and on the other hand this tension and conflict obtains a positive significance and attains peace within the unity of the higher concept. It is only through the spec-ulative insight that we can make sense of conceptual plurality and change without committing to conceptual relativism, which has its own problems.

The spec-ulative insight is clearly Hegelian. However, in different forms the principle of unity of opposites can be found in various conjectures in history of thought. It is clearly central to many Eastern schools of thought, e.g., the Chinese concept of Tao. Carl Gustav Jung introduced this insight into the conceptual framework of modern psychology through his concept of syzygy: “It is a psychological fact that as soon as we touch on these identifications we enter the realm of syzygies, the paired opposites, where the One is never separated from the other, its antithesis.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Carl Gustav Jung (*Aspects of the Feminine*, trans. W R. F. C. Hull (London, New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 106.

According to Jung, the union of opposites is the most fundamental aspect of inward experience and Western culture lacks a concept for this principle.¹⁰⁵

Unfortunately our Western mind, lacking all culture in this respect, has never yet devised a concept, nor even a name, for the union of opposites through the middle path, that most fundamental item of inward experience, which could respectably be set against the Chinese concept of Tao. It is at once the most individual fact and the most universal, the legitimate fulfillment of the meaning of the individual's life.¹⁰⁶

I will not go into the discussion of the very interesting topic regarding the relation of Hegel's spec-ulative thought and Jung's analytical psychology here. The point I am trying to make here is that although the spec-ulative insight is clearly Hegelian, its historical significance is not limited to Hegel's philosophical system and it is central to many schools of thought in its different forms.

ii) Spec-ulative Conceptualism: We have already discussed the spec-ulative concept in detail in previous sections. Clearly the spec-ulative concept of concept is fundamental to the spec-ulative perspective. It can be said that the spec-ulative concept is the very core or the archetype of the spec-ulative perspective and it stands or falls with it. The spec-ulative concept of concept enables us to transform a very fundamental philosophical insight, i.e., the spec-ulative insight, into a holistic philosophical perspective.

Spec-ulative conceptualism means that there are certain aspects of the whole which are themselves relative wholes or spheres that constitute the phenomena or concepts within them. These relative wholes are particular spec-ulative concepts and have

¹⁰⁵ This sets very strong evidence that Jung has never seriously studied Hegel. Otherwise, it would have been impossible for Jung to fail to notice that this insight is central to Hegel's philosophical system.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

ontological as well as epistemological significance. Consequently, the speculative concepts are the true content of all objectivity as well as subjectivity. They are fundamental constitutive features of the world and reason. They are not empty concepts that are imposed by reason on the world but they are in the world as its true content and constitutive character.

Another important aspect of speculative conceptualism is the principle that all cognitive content is conceptual. As speculative concepts are ontologically constitutive of the world and reason, Subjectivity and Objectivity, Universality and Individuality, all cognitive content falls within the speculatively conceptual domain. This is only possible if all these distinctions can be formulated as speculatively conceptual distinctions.

It is the essential power of the speculative concept to hold all conceptual distinctions within itself without dissolving them. This is the result of the fact that the speculative concept of concept is unity in difference. As the speculative concept is the archetype of all concepts, all concepts are unity in difference. All concepts hold together their opposing moments in their difference. This unity or holding together is one that preserves the difference without canceling it. This is very important to the speculative concept as it is only due to this that all cognitive content and all conceptual distinctions become the internal distinctions of the speculative concept. Without unity in difference, distinctions either need to be projected out of the conceptual domain and should be considered as distinctions between a conceptual and non-conceptual element or should simply be dissolved. Both ways have their problems and are proven to be unsatisfactory.

The Speculative concept of concept is unbounded and does not stand in opposition to a non-conceptual domain. There is no non-conceptual content or element in

cognition. In that way the speculative perspective is in agreement with the positions of the philosophers like Wilfrid Sellars and John McDowell. The distinctions of being vs. thought, reason vs. world, universal vs. particular are internal distinctions of the speculative concept of concept and not fall outside it. All of these distinctions are intelligible as conceptual distinctions within the speculative concept but not as distinctions of a conceptual element and a non-conceptual element opposing it.

iii) Methodological Openness: In very general terms, the account I have tried to develop in this chapter is an open-ended conceptual holism. The openness or open-endedness of this conceptual holism is a fundamental feature of it and takes place at two different levels.

The first level of openness is related with our knowledge or consciousness of the whole. At any historical point our individual and collective philosophical consciousness is at a certain level which is generally a partial cognition of the whole which we are within. Certain aspects of the whole are cognized by us and belong to our consciousness and some other aspects, although they are constitutive elements of the internal and external reality within which we live and which constitute ourselves, are not cognized and belong to our individual and collective unconsciousness. The fact that a certain aspect of the whole is not cognized by us at a certain point does not imply that this aspect does not have an ontological significance and is not constitutive of ourselves. This is the realist insight I would like to preserve and the speculative perspective has the necessary resources to accommodate it.

Different individuals, societies or cultures can have different levels of consciousness regarding different aspects of the whole. One culture or individual can

have a high level of consciousness regarding certain aspects while lacking the consciousness of other aspects which are cognized by other individuals and cultures. This is why different individuals, societies and cultures have different conceptual or cognitive frameworks. This is also exactly why there is conceptual change. Consciousness of an individual or society can increase or decrease regarding certain aspects of the whole over time. This change in level of consciousness can take place as a result of interactions with other individuals or cultures, education, experience, developments in science, increased communication opportunities, philosophical contemplation, meditation and many other ways. Furthermore, our level of consciousness does not always rise but there can be a decline in our consciousness of certain aspects of the whole. This can be triggered as a result of personal or collective traumas, radical social and cultural changes, etc. In those cases, not only are the values of the ancient regime eliminated from the social or political structure but also the insights which are the basis of those values are eliminated from our consciousness and sink into unconsciousness.

Neither at an individual or a collective level at any historical point is our consciousness of the whole full. A full cognition of the whole would mean that at least all conceptual contents of the unconsciousness have been brought into consciousness and all constitutive aspects of the whole have been conceptually comprehended. Once we accept that our consciousness of the whole is either defective or partial at any historical point, it must also be accepted that all our conceptual cognition is subject to not only expansion in scope but also revision of its existing elements. This is a consequence of the holistic nature of the whole and our cognition of it. All aspects of the whole have their significance and meaning through their function within the overall system. As any new

addition to the system will lead to a change in the overall system, this may require revisions in the specific roles and functions for the existing elements. Therefore, our spec-ulatively conceptual holistic framework is never closed or complete. It is subject to revisions and expansions at any time. The methodological maxim based on this fact is a methodological openness and attentiveness to all potential conceptual discoveries in every domain including the philosophical, scientific, artistic, cultural, political, historical, religious etc. Any domain of experience can reveal to us a new dimension of the whole, a new aspect that we have been unconscious about. Our collective philosophical responsibility is to remain open and attentive to any such new discovery and cognize and integrate it with its specific role and impact to the spec-ulatively conceptual holistic framework.

The second level of openness is ontological. The whole is in the process of constant evolution and change. It is in the process of making itself out of itself. This is the consequence of the internal dynamism and the tension of the whole. This is its internal dialectics. As the whole is in the process of changing and evolving itself through the interplay of its constitutive elements, it is not complete. It has not yet fulfilled or closed itself. Therefore, the whole remains ontologically open.

This ontological openness of the whole is constrained by its internal dialectics and is not blind. The evolution of the whole is the outcome of the internal dialectical relationship between its constituents. Therefore, in the spec-ulative sense its evolution process is rational, determined by the interplay of its constitutive aspects whose true content is spec-ulatively conceptual and hence rational in the spec-ulative sense. Therefore, this openness is not a historical relativism. The evolution of the whole is not

determined by some external factors which fall outside the speculative concept. On the contrary, its openness is its self-act of opening itself. In other words, its openness is its freedom and it is not conditioned by anything else other than what falls within it and constituted by itself.

As the whole itself is never complete and closed, the spec-ulatively conceptual framework can also never be closed. Therefore, it should not be taken as a philosophical system but as a philosophical perspective and framework which accommodates the resources within itself for its constant self-critique and self-evolution. The key point here is that the spec-ulative perspective on the hand is committed to methodological openness and the constant process of self-critique and on the other hand it is committed to the principle of all-inclusiveness, the ambitious ideal of incorporating all cognitive content into a general spec-ulatively conceptual framework. These two principles work in tandem and drive forward the self-evolution of the spec-ulative perspective.

iii) All-Inclusiveness: The methodological significance of all-inclusiveness for the spec-ulative perspective is paramount. It should be seen that all-inclusiveness is not a subjective preference or a nice-to-have feature for the spec-ulative perspective but a key methodological requirement which is connected with its dialectical and spec-ulative spirit.

The spec-ulative as the unity of opposites is all-inclusive in its own sphere. Similarly, a particular spec-ulative concept as the totality and organic unity of all particulars within its sphere is all-inclusive. All-inclusiveness is the methodological application of the same principle at a macro level.

It is one of the key tasks of philosophy to recognize different concepts and conceptual frameworks and continuously evolve them to establish a general speculative conceptual framework. According to this all alternative conceptual frameworks should be interpreted as partial and imperfect approximations of this general conceptual framework. It is essential to recognize that each concept and conceptual framework contain an insight regarding certain aspects of the whole. Therefore, all alternative frameworks are invaluable manifestations of the true content of reason and needs to be incorporated into a general framework. This activity of incorporation and formation of general conceptual frameworks takes place not only at the individual level, through the activity of each philosopher, but also at a collective level as currents of thoughts. According to this, all-inclusiveness becomes a fundamental methodological principle for the speculative perspective. The agenda of the speculative perspective involves the commitment to continuous evolution of a general conceptual framework that will incorporate all conceptual content. This will require a methodological openness to all alternative conceptual frameworks and new categories that may manifest themselves in different dimensions of human experience, such as the philosophical, scientific, artistic, political, moral, cultural, religious, etc. This general conceptual framework will coincide with all ontological categories that are constitutive of subjectivity, objectivity and the relation with the two. In view of this ambitious goal, it recognizes that this goal can only be achieved as a result of a gradual and open-ended historical evolution process. The process is by nature collective and involves self-conscious activities of the people committed to it. It is necessary that this evolutionary process should take openness to all alternative concepts and conceptual frameworks as a fundamental guiding principle and treat each

alternative conceptual framework and concept as a unique and invaluable discovery of humanity about itself. This requires a very qualified and sensitive approach and the constant effort to see what is substantial and what is not in each philosophical system and conceptual alternative.

As some final remarks, how the spec-ulative perspective improves over the absolutist and relativist perspectives can be briefly described as follows:

First, the spec-ulative perspective does not lose the significance of the world as a constraint on the individual subject and fall into an ontological relativism or some form of solipsism. According to spec-ulative perspective the world is constituted by reason and is rational in-itself. Hence, the world imposes its objective constitution on the knowing subject as a constraint and does not give in to its caprice. The spec-ulative perspective preserves the true insight of the absolutist perspective but positions this true insight within its correct boundary conditions.

The spec-ulative concept also recognizes that the subject joins its categories into the object during the cognitive process which leads to a duplication of the object: object-for-the- consciousness. Metaphorically speaking, the object-for-the-consciousness is the approximation of the object-in-itself based on the level of self-consciousness of the subject. The deviation between the object-for-consciousness and object-in-itself is due to the difference between the actual categories of reason that constitute the object and the subject's consciousness of those categories. When the subject becomes fully conscious of the actual categories that constitute the object and the categories that constitute its relation with the object, the object-in-itself and object-for-the-consciousness coincide. This duplication of the object enables the spec-ulative perspective to capture the

contribution of the subject's conceptual resources to the outcome of the cognitive process without losing the world as a constraint upon the cognitive process. In this duplication, the spec-ulative perspective incorporates the true insights of absolutist and relativist perspectives and positions them within their boundary conditions. The basis of philosophical errors most of the time lies in the failure to recognize the boundary conditions within which a true insight is valid.

Furthermore, the spec-ulative perspective copes with conceptual plurality and conceptual change. Philosophy is a continuous collective endeavor to become conscious of the true content of our subjectivity and objectivity. For the spec-ulative perspective, this true content is nothing but our concepts, worthy of the name. Every concept and every conceptual framework is the product of that endeavor and belongs to that evolution. The spec-ulative perspective re-cognizes the unity of all conceptual frameworks in their difference and understands the essential significance of each alternative conceptual framework as a milestone in that historical evolution process. For the spec-ulative perspective, there are no true conceptual frameworks and untrue conceptual frameworks; also there are no conceptual frameworks that should be evaluated based on some external criteria and no conceptual frameworks that are cognitively on a par. In each new concept and conceptual framework worthy of the name, the spec-ulative perspective recognizes a unique monument that belongs to reason and reveals some true insight regarding its very nature. It takes itself as an agenda to incorporate those into a general conceptual framework by recognizing the spec-ulative and dialectical relations with the other conceptual elements. It also recognizes that such incorporation may require re-

interpretation of existing concepts and may introduce fundamental changes in the existing system. It promises the methodological openness to undertake this challenge.

CHAPTER 4

SPEC-ULATIVE PERSPECTIVE AND ANALYTICAL PHILOSOPHY

In chapter three, I have formulated my thesis on the spec-ulative perspective and the concept of concept which is its philosophical core. The objective of chapter four is to discuss the impacts and significance of my thesis for contemporary analytical philosophy. I will approach this discussion under three main sections.

The first section will be devoted to the relation between contemporary empiricism and the spec-ulative perspective. My strategy in this discussion will be to explicate the significance of the spec-ulative perspective with respect to some of the fundamental themes in the development of contemporary empiricism. By doing this, I will not only show the relevance of the spec-ulative perspective to the internal problems of empiricism but I will also argue that the empiricist-tradition has gradually come close to the spec-ulative perspective in a number of important ways as a result of its internal dialectics. My main objective is to argue that adopting spec-ulative perspective is a historically viable strategy on the basis of the development of analytic philosophy since the turn of the nineteenth century to today.

The main themes I will focus on are empiricist foundationalism, metaphysical realism, epistemological constructionism, empirical content, epistemic holism *à la* Quine and Davidson's rejection of conceptual frameworks and McDowell's thesis of the "unboundedness of conceptual". It is highly problematic to categorize philosophers like Davidson and McDowell as empiricists and I have no intention to do so. However, I believe Davidson's and McDowell's positions historically belong to the development of empiricist-minded analytic philosophy and it is important to think of them in the same

context in order to understand the internal forces that have been shaping empiricism and how these led to the demise of empiricist epistemology. This approach by no means overlooks the pragmatist aspects of Davidson's and McDowell's positions.

In the second section, I will discuss the relation between the spec-ulative perspective and William James's account of pragmatism. I will argue that despite their differences in terms of a commitment to empiricism, nominalism and utilitarianism, pragmatism has some common tendencies with the spec-ulative perspective with respect to its method.

Discussions of empiricism and pragmatism should collectively provide a reasonably clear picture regarding the relation of the spec-ulative perspective with the two fundamental tendencies that have shaped analytical philosophy since the turn of the 19th century. The third section will aim to provide a general philosophical evaluation of this relation.

In all these discussions, my minimal aim is to demonstrate the relevance of the spec-ulative perspective to the problems of contemporary analytical philosophy and my ultimate aim is to position the spec-ulative perspective as a viable alternative for doing philosophy going forward.

Spec-ulative Perspective and Contemporary Empiricism

Contemporary empiricism emerged out of the works of philosophers like G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell as a reaction to the British Idealism of the philosophers like Green, Bradley and McTaggart by the end of nineteenth century. As the name of G. E. Moore's reputable article "Refutation of Idealism"¹⁰⁷ clearly suggests anti-idealism was ranked

¹⁰⁷ G. E. Moore, "Refutation of Idealism", *Mind* 12 (1903) pp. 433-53.

high in early day empiricists' agenda and the only relation with Hegel and his speculative thought was considered to be a negative one. Generally speaking, early day empiricism including the early days of the Vienna circle can be characterized by commitment to two philosophical principles: empiricist foundationalism and metaphysical realism, both of which are believed to be at odds with Hegel. Although, this belief is not totally unjustified, Hegel's position in particular and the speculative position in general with respect to realism should be very carefully and sensitively qualified.

It is important to note that metaphysical realism is the ontological basis, and empiricist foundationalism is the epistemological basis of the dominant doctrine of the day as pioneered by philosophers like Moore, Russell, Schlick and early-Carnap. These philosophers were all metaphysical realists in the sense that they all accepted the existence of a mind-independent world. For these philosophers, our knowledge is about this mind-independent reality to which we have direct and unmediated access through experience, observations or sense-data, depending on the different formulations of the empiricist doctrine.

On the ontological side, mind and the world are accepted as totally independent and mind has no contribution to the constitution of the world. This position can be characterized as a pre-Kantian way of thinking without doing any injustice. The incompatibility between the ontological and the epistemological theses of the early day empiricist philosophers was not called into question yet. It was only at a later stage that it was recognized that metaphysical realism cannot be justified by an empirically foundationalist epistemology. Empiricist epistemology has no resources to confirm strong metaphysical claims like that of metaphysical realism.

On the epistemological side, first it is accepted that we have direct access to mind-independent world and therefore a privileged subset of our claims, direct reports, protocol sentences or observation statements about it can be directly verified. Second, all cognitive statements and the entire language of science can be constructed on the basis of that privileged subset and elementary logic. Any statements that cannot be confirmed in terms of protocol sentences and elementary logic are devoid of cognitive content. All such statements need to be removed from scientific and cognitively meaningful discourse. By doing this, all science can be constructed on the firm foundation of experience. It is important to distinguish these two epistemological premises both of which are essential for the early-day empiricist position. They have been given up at different junctures for different reasons. Carnap gradually walked away from the second principle after failure of his project to realize the empiricist ideal in *Aufbau*¹⁰⁸: to construct the language of science on the basis of observation terms and elementary logic. It did not take long to realize that even if it is granted that there is a privileged subset of our language which allows us to formulate statements that can be directly verified or confirmed by experience, it will still not be sufficient to construct all the language of science on the basis of this privileged subset and elementary logic. The problem occurred in the relatively less sophisticated case of disposition terms which are infinitely closer to observation and experience when compared with the highly theoretical language of modern physics.

This insight led Carnap to formulate a distinction of theoretical and observation terms/language.¹⁰⁹ According to this, statements of the observation language can be

¹⁰⁸ Carnap, *The Logical*.

¹⁰⁹ Carnap, "The Methodological".

directly confirmed by experience and are cognitively meaningful. On the other hand, theoretical language contains those statements which are loosely related with experience and are confirmable via their connections with observation language. The statements of the theoretical language are linked with the statements of the observations language through correspondence postulates, which are another special subset of the language of science, which are not directly confirmable although they include observation terms in order to establish the link between theoretical and observation language. Therefore, the empiricist/positivist ideal of constructing science and all cognitively meaningful discourse on the foundations of experience and observation was already compromised independently of Quine's and Sellars' deadly attacks on the first principle of empiricist foundationalism: the view that there are protocol sentences which can be confirmed and verified directly by experience or to put it in another way there is a certain subset of our language which directly corresponds to a mind independent world.

Quine's "Two Dogmas of Empiricism"¹¹⁰ undermined reductionism, which is the view that "every meaningful statement is held to be translatable into a statement (true or false) about immediate experience" or in its weaker form "each statement, taken in isolation from its fellows, can admit of confirmation or infirmation at all", and the analytic/synthetic distinction which was believed to be necessary for Carnap's external/internal distinction.¹¹¹ Sellars' critique of empiricism was even more radical. In his groundbreaking *Empiricism and Philosophy of Mind*¹¹², Sellars attacked what he

¹¹⁰ Quine, "Two Dogmas".

¹¹¹ Carnap's external/internal distinction is also a critical turning point in the history of empiricism and relevant for this thesis. I will discuss and its significance in the foregoing.

¹¹² Wilfred Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000).

called the “framework of givenness”. Although the scope of Sellars’ criticisms was broader, obviously empiricist foundationalism or as Sellars calls them “sense-datum theories” were in the target. Sellars basically rejected the idea that empirical knowledge rests on a “foundation” of non-inferential knowledge. For Sellars, there is no such non-inferential knowledge. All knowledge is essentially inferential and belongs to the “space of reasons”.

In summary, the original empiricist project was compromised in three fundamental ways. First, it was recognized that metaphysical realism which was part of the original doctrine is incompatible with the empiricist epistemology and could not be justified. Second, the language of science and all cognitive statements cannot be constructed on the basis of protocol sentences or observation language even if it was granted that there is such a privileged subset of our language which directly corresponds to the mind independent world of the metaphysical realist. Third, after Quine and Sellars the view that some of our statements directly correspond to a mind-independent reality was considered to be basically untenable.

It is important to recognize the significance of these three points in connection with the original Russell and Moore perspective and clarify the implications of these for the anti-Hegelian commitments of the two.

Basically, the empiricist project was to construct all the language of science and all cognitive domains on the foundations of experience and this would exorcise philosophy from metaphysical speculations which are believed to be non-cognitive pseudo-statements. According to this, confirmability by observations is the sole and ultimate criterion for the meaningfulness of our beliefs about the world. Certainly,

analytic statements are allowed but those are formal statements devoid of any empirical content.

The spec-ulative perspective is clearly at odds with this early form of empiricism both on the ontological as well as epistemological grounds. First, when it comes to its ontological commitments it is very important to qualify what is intended with the concepts “mind” and “world”. Mind may refer to minds of individuals or it may refer to the universal reason which is the organic totality of the individual minds or reasons as discussed in the previous chapter. Similarly, the same qualification needs to be made when we talk about the world. World may refer to the universal as the organic totality of all objectivity or it may refer to the particular objectivity of a specific individual. It is only after this distinction is made that it is possible to formulate and understand the speculative position with respect to the problem of metaphysical realism.

It should be clear that the spec-ulative perspective does not accept a “mind-independent world” as the pre-Kantian attitude of the early empiricism. Nevertheless, for the spec-ulative perspective mind and world are ontologically essential aspects of the whole. They are not independent of each other but they stand in a dialectical relationship within the unity of the whole reciprocally constituting each other. Neither of them is subordinate to or determined by the other but they are also not independent. Consequently, although the spec-ulative perspective does not agree with the view that there is a mind independent world, it is committed to preserve a certain aspect of the metaphysical realist insight that the world is a constraint upon our knowledge. The world as the universal totality of all objectivity is not dependent on this or that particular mind. It is the objective constraint for our cognitive activities. However, it is not mind

independent. This aspect should be clear when one thinks about world history. By “world history”, I am not referring to the research and narrative regarding world history but to the very objective process of the world history.¹¹³ World history is obviously not dependent on this or that particular mind but it is clearly dependent on the totality of the minds. It is impossible to understand and make sense of world history without considering the currents of thoughts, ideologies, religions, developments in sciences, etc. Hence, reason as the universal totality of the individual minds of people is clearly constitutive of the world, its past, present and future. The converse also applies. It is not possible to make sense of the way people think, believe and feel without reference to the world they live in. Theories that explain one exclusively in terms of the other are one-sided. Holism of the speculative perspective is based on this insight. To say that our cognitions are historically and culturally constituted is a truth. But it is a one-sided truth. History, culture, etc. are all ontological aspects of the whole and are also conceptually or when it is used in the broader sense they are logically constituted. Therefore, when our concepts change our world changes and when our world changes our concepts change. One is not prior to the other. The speculative perspective is strictly opposed to all sorts of reductionisms that will give an account of one in terms of the other.

On the epistemological front, the speculative perspective is at odds with both principles of epistemological foundationalism. First, it does not agree that some of our

¹¹³ Here one may object to the existence of such an objective History of the World referring to the availability of different narratives about the History of the World and the fact that all are conditioned by the cognitive resources of the narrator which are constituted by her scientific, social, cultural context. I am using “objective” here in the sense that is not determined by the subjectivities of the individual narrators as belonging to the ontological constitution of the Whole. To say that there is no objective World History because there is a diversity of narratives about World History is no different than saying there is no World as such because all individuals have their different viewpoints about it. This problem in essence is connected with theory of universals-individuals and is resolved by the speculative perspective. I have discussed this in detail in chapter three.

statements correspond to a mind-independent reality as it does not accept the existence of such mind-independent reality in the first place. Second, it obviously does not agree that the cognitive domain can be founded upon statements and terms directly linked with experience. It should be seen that the speculative perspective has a much broader vision of the cognitive domain. Our cognitions are about the whole, the totality that is constituted out of ourselves, the world we live in and the relations between the two. Therefore, whether it is scientific, artistic, philosophical, cultural, political, etc. all activity that is linked with any aspects of the whole stands within the cognitive domain as long as it involves a consciousness regarding the constitution of the whole.

For a further clarification of the relation between the epistemological positions of empiricism and the speculative perspective, we need to consider the connection of both with Kantian epistemological constructionism and representationalism. Especially the former is critical to understand the internal dialectics of the empiricist tradition starting with Carnap's "Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology"¹¹⁴ period, and links it to the speculative perspective. The speculative perspective accommodates within itself a specific variant of Kantian epistemological constructionism, the view that objects of our knowledge are constructed by our cognitive activity and are not independent of our cognitive resources. It is worthwhile to have a brief look into Kant's epistemological position in this respect as we will establish the link between the later forms of analytical philosophy and the speculative perspective via Kant.

Kant's revolutionary insight in recognizing the contribution of the subject to the constitution of its objectivity highlights an important philosophical problem. Once we

¹¹⁴ Rudolf Carnap, "Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology", *Meaning and necessity: a study in semantics and modal logic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

adopt epistemological constructionism and acknowledge the contribution of subjectivity to the constitution of objectivity, we face the risk of losing the autonomy of the world as a constraint on our knowledge. This difficulty can be seen in the problematic status and function of Kant's concept of "thing-in-itself" within his overall account. Things-in-themselves remain as a beyond, an empty concept, an unknowable that stands outside the cognitive domain and cannot attain a determinate cognitive function within Kant's theoretical philosophy. Consequently, Kant's epistemological position suffers from the internal tension between his epistemological constructionism and his tendency to preserve the realist insight that the world is a constraint upon our knowledge. Since for Kant it is not possible to talk about a mind-independent world, he falls back to an empirical realism which is based upon universality and necessity of the categories. Although we do not have access to the thing-in-itself and the noumenal world, we can still be realists with respect to the phenomenal world as it is constructed by a set of universal and necessary categories.¹¹⁵ This weaker form of realism could have been good enough for the purposes of empiricism if it were possible to justify Kant's thesis about the universality and necessity of the categories. However, for many reasons, the universality and necessity of Kant's categories or an alternative set of categories, does not seem defensible today.

¹¹⁵ There is a possible interpretation of Kant's epistemological position as not involving a commitment to the necessity and universality of the categories. Despite potential viability of this interpretation, I believe we find sufficient textual evidence in the First Critique that supports an interpretation which commits Kant to universality and necessity of categories. One such piece of textual evidence is the first paragraph of the A-Introduction: "... if one removes from our experiences everything that belongs to the senses, there still remain certain original concepts and the judgements generated from them, which must have arisen entirely a priori; independently of experience, because they make one able to say more about the objects that appear to the senses than mere experience would teach, or at least make one believe that one can say this, and make assertions contain true universality and strict necessity..."

The very core of Kant's epistemological position is based on his famous principle "Intuitions without concepts are blind, concepts without intuitions are empty".¹¹⁶ The implication is that cognition involves a conceptual as well as a non-conceptual element. Although the forms of sensibility, space and time, are imposed on intuitions before the categories of understanding are applied to them, intuitions, at least in terms of their origins, remain as ultimately given, non-inferential and non-conceptual elements of cognition. This aspect can be named the representationalist aspect of Kantian epistemology and it is empiricist in spirit.

Here my intention is not to argue that Kant's epistemological position can be interpreted as a variant of empiricism that we would normally find within the contemporary analytic tradition. However, I would like to highlight here an epistemological theme common to Kant and the contemporary empiricism. This is the view that cognition involves a conceptual as well as non-conceptual element. This non-conceptual element attains a very special function by anchoring our thoughts to their objects and becomes an essential condition for them to obtain objective validity. This is a view that has proven to be problematic through the later development of empirically-oriented analytic thought. The same theme in Kant was subjected to a comprehensive critique by Hegel. Therefore, this common theme between Kant and contemporary empiricism has critical importance for the interests of this thesis.

In my view, the problem shows itself with an internal tension in Kant's theory of cognition. If cognitions involve a necessary conceptual and non-conceptual element, then all synthetic a priori cognitions need to meet this requirement as well. However, synthetic

¹¹⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer, Allen W. Wood (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 193-194.

a priori cognitions by definition cannot involve any empirical content and the non-conceptual element is by definition empirical. Therefore, it does not seem possible for synthetic a priori cognitions to meet the formula for cognitions as a synthesis of conceptual and non-conceptual elements. It is, of course, the case that synthetic a priori cognitions may involve forms of sensibility, but it will be highly problematic to take these as non-conceptual elements given through receptivity.

The epistemological problem arises when we start talking at a meta level. The essence of the problem is the problem of self-reflectiveness for philosophy. For example, when Kant asserts that “Intuitions without concepts are blind, concepts without intuitions are empty”, the epistemological footing of this assertion remains problematic. As this statement is an assertion, it involves cognition. Since all cognitions should involve a synthesis of concepts and intuitions, the underlying cognition needs to meet this very requirement. I cannot think of any combinations of concepts and intuitions that can yield this assertion.

The problem of self-reflectiveness is an essential problem for all forms of empiricist epistemology in general and should be taken seriously. Kant cannot be classified as an empiricist in the traditional sense. However, it is clear that his epistemological position is empiricist at least in some important aspects. I believe that the problem of self-reflectiveness arises because of these very specific aspects: the commitment to the view that cognition involves synthesis of conceptual and non-conceptual elements.

The problem of self-reflectiveness is characteristic of all theories committed to empiricist epistemology. The same problem could be clearly observed with the

“verification theory of meaning” and its weaker form the “principle of confirmability” as well. Those principles affirm that a statement is cognitively meaningful only if it can be confirmed by experience or deduced from such sentences via application of elementary logic. It is obvious that neither of those statements can be derived from experience, sense-data or observations. Giving them a weaker status as semi-cognitive regulatory principles does not solve the problem. Those are essential elements and foundations of early-day empiricist theories. As long as a non-conceptual element is presupposed as a necessary condition of cognitiveness, then the cognitive significance of all epistemological and philosophical principles in general is bound to be problematic.

Once the universality and necessity of the categories are challenged, then the tension between epistemological constructionism and metaphysical realism becomes explicit. If we contribute to the very constitution of our objectivity, then how can we talk about the independence of that objectivity from our subjectivity? This is one of the defining problems of the post-Kantian philosophy and has certainly shaped the development of contemporary analytic philosophy as well. Post-Kantian philosophical thinking oscillated between two opposing philosophical tendencies: the first tendency is realistic and emphasizes the independence of the world from our thoughts. The second tendency is conceptual relativistic and emphasizes the contribution of subjectivity to the constitution of objectivity. The speculative perspective reconciles these two opposing tendencies. What is needed is to recognize the speculative nature of both subjectivity and objectivity. This involves the principles that all cognitive content is conceptual and that both subjectivity and objectivity are spec-ulatively conceptual.

Kant recognized our conceptual contribution to the cognition process. The extent of this contribution remained controversial since his time. For the early day empiricists, this contribution did not exist for strictly scientific and cognitive discourse. Therefore, at its initial stages empiricist tradition represents a pre-Kantian attitude, a state of unconsciousness regarding our conceptual contribution to the cognitive process. Once this contribution is admitted then the problem is raised at another level which is to define the extent and the specifics of that contribution. This is a very fundamental discussion for analytic philosophy starting with Carnap's middle period, i.e., *The Logical Syntax of Language*¹¹⁷ and "Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology"¹¹⁸ days. This very same topic was one of the focal points for Hegel. Therefore, it is very relevant to consider speculative views on this topic in conjunction with the later discussions in analytic philosophy.

The original empiricist project collapsed due to its difficulties in 3 fundamental fronts: (1) incompatibility of metaphysical realism with empiricist epistemology; (2) untenability of the belief in the existence of non-inferential non-conceptual cognition; and (3) collapse of the project of constructing the language of science on the foundations of direct reports and protocol sentences. Empiricist tradition has adjusted its epistemological position in two fundamental ways. These led to a gradual adaptation of epistemological constructionism and a gradual move from an atomistic epistemology towards a holistic one.

Initially epistemological constructionism made a restricted entry to the empiricist tradition and its scope was limited to the theoretical language. Carnap's "Methodological

¹¹⁷ Carnap, *Logical*.

¹¹⁸ Carnap, "Empiricism".

Character of Theoretical Concepts”¹¹⁹ is a prime example of this attitude. At that time, the belief that there is a certain subset of our language of science which consists of direct reports and elementary logic was still preserved. However, the impossibility of constructing the sophisticated language of science, etc. based on direct reports was dramatically admitted. The solution was the introduction of a theoretical language which is to be defined on the basis of practical considerations such as usefulness, simplicity, etc. But still the empirical significance of the theoretical language was dependent on the link established between the theoretical language via the correspondence postulates to direct reports. Hence, with respect to theoretical language, a weaker form of epistemological constructionism with limited scope was admitted. However, as Quine made his fatal attack on the first empiricist dogma of “reductionism”¹²⁰ and Sellars undermined the framework of givenness, epistemological constructionism has gradually expanded its scope.¹²¹ It should be seen that epistemological constructionism has anti-realist implications. Kant was able to limit these anti-realist implications on the basis of the universality and necessity of his categories. Once universality and necessity of the categories are given up, then epistemological constructionism leads to anti-realism unless the anti-realist implications of epistemological constructionism are balanced with another philosophical thesis. This is one of the reasons for the rise of anti-realist tendencies after the collapse of the logical empiricist / positivist project.

Carnap’s internal/external distinction and reference to linguistic frameworks is a critical milestone with respect to the rise of epistemological constructionism. Although Carnap was still sensitive to protect his empiricist legacy, instead of direct reports and

¹¹⁹ Carnap, “Methodological”.

¹²⁰ Quine, “Two Dogmas”.

¹²¹ Sellars, *Empiricism*.

observation language, now he was talking about our cognitions being always internal and relative to some linguistic framework. Questions regarding selection and definition of linguistic frameworks and their constitutive elements such as rules of formation, rules of transformation, meaning postulates were “external” decisions to be made on non-cognitive practical criteria such as usefulness, simplicity, etc. Now instead of constructing our theories on the basis of direct reports regarding a mind-independent reality, empiricists of the day were talking about our cognitions and hence our objects being relative to our linguistic or conceptual frameworks. The same tendency, reinforced by Pierre Duhem’s principle of underdetermination of theories by evidence and Quine’s thesis of inscrutability of reference, leads to Quine’s ontological relativism.¹²² Basically, the insight was that the objects we refer to cannot be fixed by empirical evidence and everyday objects do not stand on much more firm epistemological footing than highly theoretical terms of quantum physics.

In point of epistemological footing the physical objects and the (Homer’s) gods differ only in degree and not in kind. Both sorts of entities enter our conception only as cultural posits. The myth of physical objects is epistemologically superior to most in that it has proved more efficacious than other myths as a device for working a manageable structure into the flux of experience.¹²³

The key character of epistemological constructionism lies in the very important insight that every time we make a fundamental change in our conceptual frameworks, we not only change our theories about the world but also we end up with new objects and a very new world. Structural change in subjectivity leads to structural change in objectivity.

¹²² W. V. Quine, W. V. “Ontological Relativity”, *Ontological relativity : and other essays* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1969a), pp. 26-69.

¹²³ Quine, “Two Dogmas”, p. 46.

In other words, our concepts determine to a significant degree our ontology or metaphysics.

In correlation with the rise of epistemological constructionism, a gradual ascent in epistemological holism also took place. Initially empiricists were talking about terms directly referring to physical objects of the mind-independent external world. Then the unit of empirical significance shifted from terms to statements. When Carnap introduced his internal/external distinction, the unit of cognitive significance was still statements. However, this significance was now always relative to a pre-defined linguistic framework within which the statements were meaningful. In his “Two Dogmas”, Quine announced that the unit of empirical significance is the language of all science and our statements face the tribunal of experience as a corporate body. Later, historian and philosopher of science Kuhn introduced the idea that all scientific theories are relative to more general theories which he called paradigms.¹²⁴ Throughout the history of science, there are paradigm changes which lead to radical shifts in the scientific context and language which he called scientific revolutions. The scientific revolutions are akin to changes of conceptual frameworks as a result of which not only our scientific theories of the world but also the very objects of scientific inquiry change radically. Epistemological holism goes hand in hand with epistemological constructionism.

Epistemological constructionism coupled with holism leads to a philosophical perspective which has been called Relativistic Kantianism by Lynch.¹²⁵ The view of science representing a mind-independent reality has been abandoned and our necessary conceptual contribution to the cognitive enterprise has been recognized. On the other

¹²⁴ Kuhn, *The Structure*.

¹²⁵ Lynch, *Truth*.

hand, due to the increase in epistemological self-consciousness and the philosophical implications of the recognition of paradigm changes in sciences, it is no longer possible to commit to a monolithic universal and necessary conceptual structure to be the basis of our experience and science *à la* Kant. Kant's a priori categories are now replaced with conceptual frameworks and schemes. Selection and definition of conceptual frameworks are explained by referring to factors that are not strictly cognitive. In more scientifically or pragmatically inclined contexts, conceptual frameworks are thought as being defined by reference to pragmatic considerations such as usefulness, simplicity, etc. In many cases, they are thought as being socially, culturally or historically determined constructs. Examples from history of science about changes in conceptual frameworks are identified and highlighted as evidence of conceptual change and relativity. This obviously leads to a pluralism and relativism with respect to concept use. It now becomes part of the philosophical common sense that there are many different conceptual frameworks as pragmatically, culturally or historically defined possibilities. Our cognitions are always relative to the conceptual frameworks within which we formulate them. Objects of our queries and cognitions are at least correlated if not constituted by our conceptual frameworks. Hence, the resulting position can be characterized as a relativistic Kantianism. At this level, a weaker form of empiricism is still preserved and Sellars' attack on the non-inferential non-conceptual cognitive content has not been fully integrated into the collective consciousness of relativistic Kantianism.

The fundamental problem with this position is that cognitive agents are trapped into their conceptual frameworks. It could be argued that we are free to select our conceptual frameworks depending on our purposes, values, etc. However, this does not

solve the problem. Definition of values and purposes requires application of norms, which requires use of concepts. All concept use is relative to a conceptual framework and hence we need to have a conceptual framework in order to select a conceptual framework. All our cognitions, decisions, choices are always relative to cognitive frameworks. Hence, we end up with a world view which consists of people with different conceptual frameworks constructing different worlds, forming incompatible cognitions and applying different norms.

This would not have been a problem if there was at least a theoretical possibility to bring together this diversity and cognize its unity at a fundamental level without losing its difference. In this overall picture, there is no mediator, universal reason, which we can find at least within ourselves, that will connect different conceptual frameworks.

This conceptual pluralism and relativism acknowledges the diversity and plurality of cultural, social, historical, scientific and in general cognitive frameworks. On the other hand, this is the split of universal reason, a loss of consciousness regarding the universality of reason. When this phenomenon takes place at an individual level and the psyche loses its consciousness of its unity over its different aspects and determinations, this is a well-known psychological anomaly. When this happens at the collective level humanity loses its self-consciousness regarding its fundamental unity despite differences, diversity and individuality. This is an important problem that philosophy cannot ignore. When this happens the genuine concept of reason is sunk into collective unconsciousness. Diversity is richness only if it is brought under a unity and preserved within it. Unity without difference is violence; difference without unity is just split and demise.

As has been extensively discussed in chapter three, the speculative perspective has the resources to accommodate conceptual relativity and change without committing to conceptual relativism, to a split of universal reason. The key to the speculative perspective's solution to the problem lies in its concept of universality as the organic totality of individuals and not as their common element. Each individual realizes a different aspect of the universal. Therefore, different conceptual frameworks can be thought as manifesting a particular aspect of the universal reason or the whole. As the speculative perspective has the dialectical resources to accommodate unity within difference, then there is at least here a theoretical possibility to recognize different conceptual frameworks under the unity of one universal reason. Each conceptual framework worthy of the name, as explaining a certain aspect of the whole, is essential to the universal totality of the reason. The conflict and tension between different conceptual frameworks belongs to the internal tension and dialectics of universal reason and its own dialectics. The speculative perspective based on the principle of methodological openness calls for a holistic approach to recognize all concepts and conceptual frameworks as unique monuments of reason and integrate them into a single general conceptual framework. This can only be the outcome of a conscious collective and historical effort as it is the programme of collective self-consciousness.

Another important dimension, that the speculative perspective can contribute to the contemporary problematic is its capacity to preserve the realist insight that the world is a constraint upon our knowledge at the same time as the epistemological constructionist insight that our cognitions and their objects are conceptually constituted. I

have discussed the dynamics of this process in detail in chapter three and summarized it briefly earlier in this chapter.

Finally, the spec-ulative perspective takes the holistic tendencies of the empirically-minded analytic philosophy to its logical consequences and by doing this it solves the problem of cognition being subordinate to non-cognitive domains *à la* historical realism, cultural realism, etc. On the one hand, it acknowledges that our conceptual frameworks are historically, culturally, socially constituted. If it were to stop at this level, then it would have been a historical, cultural, etc. relativism. However, it adds to this the principle that history, culture, society, etc. are conceptually constituted. To put it in another way: history, cognition, society, ego are spec-ulative concepts which are ontologically meaningful aspects of the whole. The whole is the dialectical unity of its constitutive elements, preserving their difference within its unity. Therefore, all aspects of the whole are in a reciprocally constitutive dialectical relationship. As all aspects of the whole are spec-ulative concepts, nothing falls outside the spec-ulatively conceptual domain. Therefore, the spec-ulatively conceptual is the bearer of all cognitive content. This content is manifest in different domains as art, culture, psyche, history, etc. The spec-ulative perspective is the insight that all these different domains stand within the unity of the conceptual domain and in their reciprocal dialectics.

In the remaining part of this section, Davidson's rejection of conceptual frameworks with a view to his broader position and finally McDowell's concept of the "unboundedness of the conceptual" will be discussed in connection with the historical development of the empirically-minded analytical philosophy and their connections with the spec-ulative perspective.

Davidson and the Very Idea of Conceptual Schemes

Davidson is a key figure within the evolution of contemporary analytic philosophy beyond any doubt. From the perspective of this thesis, Davidson's work is of paramount importance due to his endeavors to formulate a post-empiricist framework for analytic philosophy which involves a conscious effort to avoid commitment to the "framework of givenness" and particularly his critique of the very idea of conceptual schemes.¹²⁶ I will take the latter, Davidson's critique of the idea of conceptual schemes, as the point of departure for my discussion. If Davidson's critique is justified and the idea of conceptual schemes is indeed problematic, then the speculative perspective that I have tried to develop in this thesis needs to be revisited in some fundamental ways. Subsequently, I will develop this discussion to argue that Davidson's endeavor to formulate the post-empiricist framework he wishes to establish is unsuccessful in some important ways and to show how the speculative perspective can improve over Davidson's position.

Davidson's critique of the idea of conceptual scheme is based on two fundamentally important points: First, Davidson argues the idea of conceptual schemes necessarily requires that there are languages which are partially or completely untranslatable to each other. Second, it involves commitment to a dualism of scheme and content, of organizing system and something waiting to be organized, which he calls the third dogma of empiricism. For Davidson, both commitments are fallacies and therefore the idea of conceptual scheme is unintelligible. In opposition to Davidson's position, I believe neither of these two commitments are essential to the idea of conceptual scheme. We can make sense of the idea of conceptual scheme without committing to existence of

¹²⁶ Donald Davidson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme", *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).

untranslatable languages or to a dualism of scheme and content in the sense referred by Davidson. As a matter of fact, the concept of concept in the speculative sense is holistic in the special sense discussed in the previous chapter and is incompatible with a dualism of scheme and content *à la* third dogma. In the following, I will undertake an elaboration of this position.

According to Davidson, the idea of conceptual scheme involves non-translatability or incommensurability of languages. In order to make sense of the idea of distinction of conceptual schemes, we need to identify languages that are partially or completely untranslatable to each other. If that were possible, we could argue those untranslatable languages are related with different conceptual schemes and such a distinction of conceptual schemes would also explicate the untranslatability of those languages.

On the other hand, for Davidson languagehood involves translatability. We are justified to call a particular speech behaviour as use of language of some sort as long as that speech behaviour is translatable to our language. If translatability is a prerequisite for languagehood, then the idea of a non-translatable or incommensurable language is a fallacy. Since, for Davidson, the idea of conceptual scheme is intelligible only if there are languages which are not translatable, the idea of conceptual scheme becomes problematic.

It is curious that Davidson's argument regarding unintelligibility of the idea of "conceptual scheme" does not refer to or discuss the very concept of "concept" by any means. Davidson seems to basically assume that there is no justified way to talk about distinction of concepts as well without referring to untranslatability. For if we could talk

about concepts and distinction of concepts without referring to the untranslatability of languages, then we could argue that sufficient differences in conceptual resources lead to a distinction of conceptual schemes. Indeed this is the line of thought, I am proposing here.

We can certainly talk about distinction of concepts without referring to untranslatability. We can certainly make sense of distinct concepts of history, ego, force, time, psyche, space, concept, etc. without going into a discussion regarding untranslatability of languages these concepts belong to. Indeed our ability to make a distinction between concepts is a necessary condition of scientific activity if not communication in general. We cannot make sense of most of our scientific theories at least, if we can not make sense of the distinctions of the concepts they employ. A discussion of untranslatability of the languages which these concepts are used is secondary and does not constitute a condition for the distinction of the concepts. The concepts are distinct when their meanings are distinct and not when the languages are untranslatable.¹²⁷

Based on this, we can argue that sufficient difference in conceptual resources leads to a difference in conceptual schemes. An exact definition for such criterion of “sufficiency” is neither necessary nor possible. However, it could be said that certain concepts and their meanings determine our metaphysics. It is fundamental that these concepts have a constitutive role. Depending on the context, these constitutive concepts may include concepts such as space, time, substance, causality, value, ideal, freedom,

¹²⁷ I am not overlooking here the Quine –Davidson line of thought which tries to eliminate talk about meanings as residues of Platonism or essentialism. Indeed the very core of the problem highlighted here goes to the theory of meanings. If this line of thought does not allow talk about distinction of concepts without referring to (un)translatability, stimulus meanings etc. then my tendency is to take this as its limitation to give an account of conceptual and cognitive phenomena and hence its reductio.

dignity, love, etc. In some special circumstances, the metaphysical structure with which we operate changes through changes in the meanings of our constitutive concepts or introduction of new concepts or elimination of existing concepts. At those times, it is justified and useful to talk about change in conceptual schemes.

It should be recognized that all distinctions of conceptual schemes or frameworks are relative. It is a matter of stipulation on our side whether we should identify a particular conceptual difference as a difference of particular conceptual resources within the same conceptual scheme or a distinction of conceptual schemes. However, when the conceptual distinctions also imply a distinction of underlying metaphysical structures, it is useful to talk about distinction of conceptual schemes. This should be obvious in the case of the conceptual schemes of Newtonian physics and quantum theory or the conceptual scheme of businessmen living in a post-capitalist society and the conceptual scheme of yogis living in Himalayas. Both the subjectivity and objectivity that is associated with each of these cases are fundamentally different from the other and this difference cannot be explained on the basis of differences of factors independent of our conscious and unconscious conceptual commitments. When the yogi and the yuppie stand in the same room, their experiences are substantially different at both the subjective and the objective level. The difference in their experience cannot be reduced to “peripheries” of the experience which will then claimed to be common at the core or to different interpretations of the same objectivity as experienced by both. The yogi will say she is experiencing auras, energy waves and an astral domain which are irrelevant for the experiences of the yuppie. Basically, they operate with different constitutive metaphysical structures. Constitutive is the key word here as it is the bearer of the anti-

nominalistic nature of concepthood. Consequently, there is a clear and useful sense in which we can claim the conceptual schemes in these cases are distinct. When there is a substantial difference at a structural level in both subjectivity and objectivity, or in consciousness and self-consciousness, of distinct individuals or groups of individuals this is strong evidence that we are facing distinct conceptual schemes. Conceptual schemes are distinct when the correlated metaphysical structures are distinct. Therefore, making distinctions between conceptual schemes is both theoretically possible and practically useful.

On the other hand, it is important to understand why Davidson approaches the problem of conceptual scheme via this counter-intuitive link with untranslatability of languages. Why cannot Davidson simply say as we just did “concepts are distinct when their meanings are distinct and when there are sufficient conceptual differences then there are different conceptual schemes”?

Davidson points to a difficulty of deciding whether rejection of a sentence by the speakers of an alien language is due to difference in opinion or difference in concepts. According to this, we can translate this sentence of the alien language by a sentence to which we are attached on a community basis and explain the difference as due to difference in conceptual schemes between our community and the speakers of the alien language. On the other hand, the same fact can also be explained by referring to difference of opinion, not of concepts, between our community and the speakers of that language. For Davidson, there is no possible evidence on the basis of which we can decide whether the difference is due to difference in conceptual schemes or basically difference in opinions.

If we choose to translate some alien sentence rejected by its speakers by a sentence to which we are strongly attached on a community basis, we may be tempted to call this a difference in schemes; if we decide to accommodate the evidence in other ways, it may be more natural to speak of a difference of opinion. But when others think differently from us, no general principle, or appeal to evidence, can force us to decide that the difference lies in our beliefs rather than in our concepts.¹²⁸

From this Davidson concludes that we could not be in a position to judge that others have concepts or beliefs radically different from our own and comes to the conclusion that we cannot give a solid meaning to the idea of conceptual scheme.

Despite its convincing looks, I think this argument overlooks an important case which is necessary to take into account in order to come to a definitive conclusion regarding the significance of the idea of conceptual scheme. If we could have direct access to the beliefs and concepts in question then we could decide in a conclusive way whether the rejection of the sentence is due to difference in concepts or difference in opinion. Indeed there is such a special case where we have direct access to the concepts and beliefs in question; this is when the concepts and beliefs belong to us. If I happen to reject a sentence that I used to assert previously, I know with full authority why I have changed my mind and also know, barring the cases of psychological anomalies, whether this is due to a change in my opinion about the subject matter or a change in the meanings I give to the words. If I would use Davidson's example; when I see a ketch sailing and my companion says "Look at that handsome yawl", I may not be able to decide at that moment whether my friend has mistaken a ketch for a yawl or the way she uses the word "yawl" is different than mine. However, if the following day she sees the same ketch and recognizes that it is the same individual boat but this time she says "This is a handsome

¹²⁸ Davidson, p. 197.

ketch”, she definitely knows with full authority why she is calling the same boat a “ketch” instead of a “yawl” this time. Hence, the problem Davidson mentions with respect to beliefs and concepts of others is not applicable to ourselves.

If I assign different truth-values to a large group of sentences due to changes of meanings of my existing concepts or introduction of new concepts to my language, this change can be attributed to a change in my conceptual scheme. This phenomenon can be observed in various degrees in many different cases such as: changes of religion, changes in commitment to philosophical or ideological systems, changes in commitment to scientific theories, major psychological transformations, changes in commitment to the tradition or culture within which the individual was brought up, changes in social status and class relations, etc. In all these cases and many others, we can make very good sense of the idea of conceptual scheme and use it to explain the changes in the way we assert or deny our sentences. Hence, the idea of conceptual scheme has a solid significance and use to account for the developments in our own cognitive commitments. Without the idea of conceptual scheme, it is not clear how we can make sense of such broad changes in our cognitive commitments, specifically those changes which are related with changes in our metaphysical commitments.

Once it is accepted that the idea of conceptual scheme is significant and useful when applied to our own speech behavior and beliefs, then I do not see how it can be argued that this significance cannot be expanded for others. If I can make the idea of having a conceptual scheme intelligible for myself, how can I not make the same idea intelligible when applied to others? If I can understand that a change in my own religious, philosophical, scientific, cultural commitments will lead to a change in my conceptual

scheme, I can definitely conclude that others having different religious, ideological, philosophical, scientific, cultural commitments may have different conceptual schemes than mine.

Certainly conceptual schemes of others are not as transparent to us as our own and the difficulties Davidson points out in identifying them remains. However, those difficulties are far from establishing that the idea of “conceptual scheme” is unintelligible. We are indeed unable to decide at once whether the difference in truth-value we assign to a sentence with others is due to differences in opinions or due to differences in concepts. However, if this fact does not make the idea of “difference in opinion” unintelligible why should it make the idea of “difference in conceptual schemes” unintelligible?

Such decisions cannot be addressed at once, but only through an iterative process. It takes time and intelligent effort to discover a new conceptual scheme. This is an effort of a different nature than a merely empirical method based on careful observation of objective phenomena but also involves introspection, self-critique and reflection. Each different conceptual scheme involves a different mode of consciousness and/or self-consciousness. Unless someone is able to develop the same mode of consciousness and/or self-consciousness within her, she will not be able to recognize the “alien” conceptual scheme. There is no mechanical methodology to achieve this but an open minded dialectical and dynamic process between two conceptual schemes needs to take place within the consciousness of the individual.

Despite its difficulty, it is possible to understand other conceptual schemes and expand the limits of ours based on this understanding. We are not prisoners of our

conceptual schemes as long as we engage in the conscious activity of understanding them and making them subject to an honest self-critique and remain open-minded to other conceptual commitments. This is not because we can take a neutral position independent of any conceptual scheme. This is obviously impossible. However, we can be conscious of the limitations of our own conceptual schemes and evolve them. A particular conceptual scheme represents a particular mode of consciousness or self-consciousness regarding reason and world. As rational beings we are capable of developing our consciousness and self-consciousness. Therefore, we are capable of developing our own conceptual schemes. Communication and dialectical interaction with the “other” is a necessary condition of this development.

This is why communication and conflict resolution between individuals and communities with different conceptual schemes are fundamentally challenging. This is especially critical for our *Zeitgeist* as the interactions between different cultures, religions, etc. are more intense than ever in our globalized world. Rejecting the idea of conceptual scheme will certainly not help.

I believe one of the reasons which led Davidson to overlook potential solutions to the difficulties he identified with the idea of conceptual scheme was a nominalistic bias.

Davidson seems to be under the influence of a nominalistic bias which belongs to the common sense of the empiricist tradition. This nominalistic tendency shows itself in the constant endeavor to convert philosophical issues on concepts and meanings to issues on words and use of language and is consistent with the agenda of rejection of the idea of conceptual schemes: “Instead of living in different worlds, Kuhn’s scientists may, like those who need Webster’s dictionary, be only words apart.”¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Davidson, p. 189.

It is critical to go beyond this nominalistic bias in order to comprehend the essential significance of the problem of concept and conceptual scheme. In essence, each concept worthy of the name in the speculative sense opens up a new dimension of consciousness. Introduction of a new concept to our vocabulary has a much deeper significance than addition of a new entry to our dictionary. Without the underlying consciousness the concept is not actually acquired. As the concept is the unity of subjectivity and objectivity, each particular concept involves a consciousness of a particular domain of both objectivity and subjectivity. Introduction of a new concept to our language involves expansion of our consciousness and/or self-consciousness.

For example, in behavioristic terms “meditation” can be described as a particular form of posture, a special form of sitting and staying silent without any movement in the body. No dictionary entry can convey the true significance of the word “meditation” for someone who has not experienced and developed the relevant consciousness associated with the actual act of meditating regardless of the level of detail with which it describes the behaviors of the individual during meditation. Through no verbal utterance can the true content of the word can be conveyed. The dictionary meaning of the word “meditation” can be learnt but the true cognitive content of the concept is not cognized. Therefore, we cannot solve conceptual disparities via Webster’s dictionary as suggested by Davidson. An effort at a deeper level that involves an expansion of consciousness and/or self-consciousness to cognize the content is necessary. Cognition at a conceptual level requires us to get our hands dirty.

I believe in this example we see the clear limitation of all sorts of behavioristic theories of meanings. When interpreting the actions, and speech behaviour is a special

case, of an agent we have another essential source in addition to the behaviours and responses of the agent we are interpreting. This additional source is our own repertoire of possible contents of consciousness and self-consciousness. No overt behavior can lead us to interpret an agent as being in a state of conscience, compassion, love, dignity, honor, disgrace, wisdom, etc. unless we find the relevant content within our consciousness among possible states of the agent. Hence, we do not map behaviours and responses of the agent to an infinite and unconstrained set of content but to the repertoire of our own consciousness and self-consciousness. Through consistent observation, introspection and reflection, if we recognize a consistent failure in this mapping, we are encouraged to come to the conclusion that we do not find the relevant content manifested by the agents' actions in the repertoire of our consciousness. Under favorable psychological circumstances, this will trigger a process of introspection and self-critique which may lead to a new level of consciousness and self-consciousness and potentially a revision in our conceptual commitments.

Davidson as a consequence of his nominalistic tendencies overlooks the relation between concepts and consciousness and self-consciousness. Once this link is realized, the essential significance of concepts and conceptual scheme in the overall domain of cognitive and psychological phenomena becomes clear. The subjective significance of concepts and conceptual schemes is rooted deep in our psyche. A concept represents a very specific mode of consciousness. For the individual, to elevate a psychic content from the level of feeling, intuition, etc. to the level of conceptual content is a lengthy and troublesome psychological process and involves a number of transformations requiring a significant amount of psychological energy and effort. Words do not have the same

content as concepts. They may refer to any other content as well like feelings, intuitions, representations, etc. Hence, when we try to convert discussion about concepts and conceptual schemes into discussion about words, we lose this very special link between our language and our consciousness and ultimately with our souls.

Furthermore, concepts involve a unity of subjectivity and objectivity. Consequently, concepts are constitutive of our subjectivity as well as objectivity. Hence, Kuhn's scientists as referred to by Davidson in the previous quote are more than words apart. I agree with Davidson that they live in the same world, not in two different worlds. But they live in the same world with different modes of consciousness. Hence, the world as they experience it may be as different as two different worlds and to this extent I agree with Kuhn's insight. For the speculative perspective, there is no essential tension between these two insights. Davidson is correct when he asserts that different points of view makes sense only if there is a common coordinate system on which to plot them. The common coordinate system is the whole, which is constituted by reason and the world throughout history. All our actions, existences, cognitions are significant with respect to their function and role within this whole.

This is how the speculative perspective can incorporate conceptual relativity without committing to conceptual relativism. The speculative perspective is not conceptual relativist as it does not make reality relative to the conceptual schemes. The world is one, but our consciousness or cognitions of it are many. Our cognitions are relative to our conceptual schemes, but the world is not. Our consciousness and cognitions evolve when our concepts and conceptual schemes evolve.

Davidson does not recognize the contribution of our concepts in our cognitive

process and the way they determine cognitive content. In order to explicate this point, it is worthwhile to take a brief look at Davidson's position with respect to the content of our thoughts and beliefs.

For Davidson, the basis of all objectivity is intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity is achieved via triangulation that involves the speaker, interpreter and the world. Contents of our thoughts and beliefs are also fixed via this triangulation process. Davidson explains this as follows: "The ultimate source of both objectivity and communication is the triangle that, by relating speaker, interpreter and the world, determines the contents of thought and speech."¹³⁰

The key point here is the role of this triangulation in determining the content of thought and making our utterances meaningful. For Davidson, the cause of a belief or thought is an external object or an event. Once we identify the salient cause of the utterance of the person we are trying to understand or interpret, we define the very content of her utterance. It is assumed here there is transparency between the external object or event which is the cause of my belief and the very content of my belief. By this Davidson tries to eliminate any intermediaries between our thoughts and beliefs and the external objects and events. It is also critical here to note that this content fixation process requires two people and hence intersubjectivity becomes the pre-requisite for having, and not only expressing, contentful thoughts and beliefs.

It takes two points of view to give a location to the cause of a thought, and thus to define its content. We may think of it as a form of triangulation: each of two people is reacting differentially to sensory stimuli streaming in from a certain direction. Projecting the incoming lines outward, the common cause is at their

¹³⁰ Donald Davidson, "The Structure and Content of Truth", *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 87, No. 6 (June 1990), p. 325.

intersection. If the two people now note each other's reactions (in the case of language, verbal reactions), each can correlate these observed reactions with his or her stimuli from the world. A common cause has been determined. The triangle which gives content to thought and speech is complete. But it takes two to triangulate.¹³¹

It is critical to note here that when Davidson talks about objects, as the causes of our thoughts and beliefs, he does not refer to sense data, intuitions or any form of mental entities; he has external objects and events in mind.

My approach is by contrast [to Quine] externalist: I suggest that interpretation depends (in the simplest and most basic situations) on the external objects and events salient to both speaker and interpreter, the very objects and events the speaker's words are then taken by the interpreter to have as subject matter. It is the distal stimulus that matters to interpretation.¹³²

In my view, this approach is an improvement over classical empiricist epistemology in its acknowledgement of the holistic relationship between thoughts, beliefs and their objects. The transparency between the object and content of my belief is an important step forward in overcoming the "framework of givenness" and realizing that the subjective and objective side of my cognitions are two different sides of the same coin. However, according to Davidson, the relation between our thoughts and their objects is causal. By definition, a causal relation is one-sided. Cause exists prior to and independent of the effect. Therefore, for Davidson, the objects of our thoughts and beliefs exist prior to and independent of our thoughts and beliefs. This naturally commits Davidson to some form of realism.

In opposition to this view, I have argued in this thesis that our subjectivity and objectivity are reciprocally constitutive of each other. Without this principle, it is not possible to make sense of the phenomenon previously exemplified by the yogi and the

¹³¹ Donald Davidson, "Three Varieties of Knowledge", *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), p. 213.

¹³² Davidson, "The Structure", p. 321.

yuppie. Hence, the relations between our thoughts and their objects are not causal but conceptual in the speculative sense. The one-sided nature of the causal relationship does not capture the dialectical and the holistic relationship between our thoughts and their objects. Radical changes in our thoughts lead to changes in our objects. Similarly, radical changes in our objects, e.g., historical, political, psychological, cultural, physical, etc., lead to changes in our thoughts. Concepts in the speculative sense are complexes that bring these two sides together while preserving their distinction in their dialectical relationship. Davidson does not recognize this important philosophical truth.

In this section, I have argued, against Davidson, that we can make sense of the idea of conceptual scheme without reference to untranslatability of languages. I have shown that we can make sense of conceptual schemes when applied to ourselves and that the idea of conceptual scheme is theoretically justified and practically useful. Once the applicability of conceptual schemes to ourselves is accepted, there is no ground on the basis of which the applicability of this idea to others can be rejected.

It has also been discussed that the idea of conceptual schemes does not necessarily commit us to the third dogma of empiricism. The speculative concept is incompatible with commitment to a dualism of scheme and content and it is holistic in the special sense discussed in chapter three.

I have also argued that Davidson's nominalistic commitments prevent him from recognizing the link between concepts and our consciousness and incorporating the true significance of concepthood into his theory. Each concept opens up a new dimension of consciousness regarding the world and ourselves. In this lies the essential significance of concepthood.

McDowell and the Unboundedness of the Conceptual

McDowell's thought can be interpreted as a critical milestone in the evolution of contemporary analytic philosophy towards a Hegelian direction.¹³³ What makes McDowell critical for the objectives of this thesis is that McDowell's Hegelian tendencies are motivated by the internal problems of analytical philosophy which are mainly linked with the problem of the myth of the given and the coherentist response to it led by philosophers like Davidson and Sellars.

McDowell recognizes that some of the characteristic anxieties of modern philosophy, to use his own words, are due to a tension caused by two conflicting positions, both of which, for McDowell, are unsatisfactory. McDowell talks about a tendency to oscillate between a pair of unsatisfying positions: on the one side a coherentism that threatens to disconnect thought from reality, and on the other side a vain appeal to the given, in the sense of bare presences that are supposed to constitute the ultimate grounds of empirical judgments.¹³⁴

One of these positions is a minimal empiricism that commits itself to the myth of the given. This minimal empiricism takes off from the insight that our conceptual capacities when operative in judgments, which are results of a subject's actively making up her mind about something, cannot represent or depict the world in the absence of an external constraint. According to this view, the voluntary nature of the exercise of our conceptual capacities lead to a requirement for our thoughts to have some form of friction

¹³³ This section has the limitation of being mainly based on a reading of McDowell's *Mind and World*. More recent work from McDowell on Hegel suggests further development of McDowell's thought towards that direction. However, this section does not take into account any new dimensions of McDowell's thinking that may have been expressed in such more recent work.

¹³⁴ John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 24.

from outside in order to be connected with reality. In the absence of such friction, our thoughts are merely subjective, empty and lack objective validity.

The proposed solution to this problem by the minimal empiricism is to assign experience some form of justificatory role that goes beyond the exercise of our conceptual capacities. Following this line of thought, the space of reasons, which is the space of justifications or warrants, is more extensive than the space of concepts. It includes the tribunal of experience, to use Quine's words, or some other form of supposedly non-conceptual elements. The view that the space of reasons is more extensive than the space of concepts and involves non-conceptual elements is essential to the minimal empiricist position. This non-conceptual element functions for connecting our thoughts with reality and is supposed to be involved in justification of our beliefs.

We can seem to be forced into the idea of the given; that is what happens when we are impressed by the thought that conceptual capacities belong to a faculty of spontaneity, and fall into worrying that our picture deprives itself of the possibility that exercises of concepts could be what it depicts, because it leaves out any rational constraint from outside the sphere of thought.¹³⁵

However, as the internal dialectics of twentieth century empiricism has demonstrated, this is a desperate path. We can understand the relations in virtue of which a judgment is justified only as relations within the space of concepts. Relations such as implication or probabilification hold between beliefs, which are products of our exercise of conceptual capacities. This is the lesson Sellars and Davidson taught us:

Now the idea that epistemic facts can be analyzed without remainder – even “in principle” - into non-epistemic facts, whether phenomenal or behavioral, public or private, with no matter how lavish a sprinkling of subjunctives and

¹³⁵ McDowell, *Mind*, p. 15.

hypotheticals is, I believe, a radical mistake – a mistake of a piece with the so-called “naturalistic fallacy” in ethics.¹³⁶

This leads us to the second position referred to by McDowell. This second position commits itself to some form of coherentism and recognizes that the space of reasons coincides with the space of concepts. What justifies a belief can only be another belief, which are the products of the exercise of our conceptual capacities, and not the tribunal of experience, sense-data or any other form of supposedly non-conceptual element. McDowell refers to Davidson as the leading figure for this coherentist tendency. According to Davidson, “what distinguishes a coherence theory is simply the claim that nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another belief. Its partisan rejects as unintelligible the request for a ground or source of justification of another ilk.”¹³⁷

According to McDowell’s reading of Davidson, experience and its correlates are extra-conceptual impacts on sensibility and therefore stand outside the space of reasons. Experience is causally linked with subjects’ beliefs but it has nothing to do with their justification.¹³⁸ McDowell finds this account of experience and its relation with our beliefs unsatisfactory. For McDowell, experience must have some form of justificatory significance in order for it to function as an external rational constraint for our thoughts. On the other hand, to have an external rational constraint for our thoughts is absolutely necessary since without it, our thoughts are empty, merely subjective, lack objective validity. Without an external rational constraint, our thoughts cannot represent the world

¹³⁶ Sellars, *Empiricism*, p. 19.

¹³⁷ Donald Davidson “A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge”, *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), p. 141.

¹³⁸ I have already discussed my views on the limitations of this aspect of Davidson’s position in the previous section on Davidson.

at all. Basically, according to McDowell we cannot make sense of our thoughts having empirical content unless we allow experience to have some form of justificatory role. This is the point where Davidson's position runs into difficulty. According to McDowell, ".... we should be suspicious of his [Davidson's] bland confidence that empirical content can be intelligible in our picture even though we carefully stipulate that the world's impacts on our senses have nothing to do with justification."¹³⁹

Sellars and Davidson precisely diagnose the problem with the framework of givenness. The space of reasons cannot extend to have some non-conceptual elements. We cannot look for such non-conceptual elements to be involved in justification of our beliefs. This is why the given as the ultimate foundation or justificatory source of our beliefs is really a myth. However, we cannot walk away from the correct insight involved in the myth of the given which is that our thoughts need a rational constraint from outside if they are to represent the world. The problem is not addressed by saying that our thoughts and beliefs are causally linked with external objects, experience, intuitions, etc. A causal connection cannot fulfill what is required from an external rational constraint:

But the myth of the given has a deeper motivation, in the thought that if spontaneity is not subject to rational constraint from outside, as Davidson's coherentist position insists that it is not, then we cannot make it intelligible to ourselves how exercises of spontaneity can represent the world at all. Thoughts without intuitions are empty, and the point is not met by crediting intuitions with a causal impact on thoughts; we can have empirical content in our picture only if we can acknowledge that thoughts and intuitions are rationally connected.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ McDowell, p. 15.

¹⁴⁰ McDowell, p. 18.

This is exactly where we face the tension McDowell sets to resolve. On the one hand, we have the theories that commit themselves to the myth of the given. These theories correctly recognize the requirement that our thoughts and beliefs need an external constraint in order to represent the world. However, they fail to provide a satisfactory account by accepting that this external constraint, (experience, intuitions, external objects, etc.) is non-conceptual. The space of reasons cannot be more extensive than the space of concepts and this is what the theories of the given fail to recognize. On the other hand, we have Davidson's coherentism which recognizes that the space of reasons coincides with the space of concepts. For Davidson, experience, intuitions, external objects, etc. are non-conceptual and therefore stand outside the space of reasons. As a result of this, Davidson's coherentism fail to accommodate a rational external constraint to provide our thoughts and beliefs with empirical content. The causal link between these non-conceptual elements and our thoughts, beliefs will simply not do.

It should be noticed that both sides of the tension have something in common. Both the theories of the given and Davidson assume that experience, intuitions, external objects are non-conceptual. This is the point on which McDowell's solution focuses. Once it is accepted that experiences are receptivity in operation but still equipped with conceptual content in themselves, then, McDowell argues, the tension is resolved. Experiences can function as a rational external constraint due to two main reasons. First, since they belong to the operation of receptivity and not spontaneity, they are external and not internal constraints. Hence, the first requirement to accommodate an external rational constraint is met. Second, they are equipped with conceptual content in themselves; therefore they have a role in justification of our beliefs. They are rationally,

not causally, connected with our beliefs. According to this, experiences are conceptual and consequently belong to the space of reasons and are not external to it. Consequently, as experiences are conceptual and belong to the space of reasons, they are a rational but not merely causal constraint. When we have external constraints which are also rational, or conceptual, then we have all we need to link our thoughts and beliefs with the world.

In the conception I am recommending, the need for external constraint is met by the fact that experiences are receptivity in operation. But that does not disqualify experiences from playing a role in justification, as the counterpart thought in the myth of the given does, because the claim is that experiences themselves are already equipped with conceptual content. This joint involvement of receptivity and spontaneity allows us to say that in experience one can take in how things are. How things are is independent of one's thinking (except of course, in the special case in which how things are is that one thinks such-and-such). By being taken in experience, how things anyway are becomes available to exert the required rational control, originating outside one's thinking, on one's exercises of spontaneity.¹⁴¹

The exact meaning of the statement "experiences are equipped with conceptual content" needs to be carefully qualified. For McDowell, the experiences are not conceptually equipped because we read our concepts into them or because they are conceptually constituted by the activity of the subject, but because they are conceptual in-themselves. What we receive by the operation of receptivity of our sensibility is conceptual content and not a content of any other sort. Hence, in terms of content there is no difference in the content of an experience and the judgment that endorses that particular experience. This is to say that empirical content is conceptual. By the same token, all cognitive content is conceptual all the way through.

According to the picture I have been recommending the content of a perceptual experience is already conceptual. A judgment of experience does not introduce a

¹⁴¹ McDowell, p. 26.

new kind of content, but simply endorses the conceptual content, or some of it, that is already possessed by the experience on which it is grounded.¹⁴²

According to this picture offered by McDowell, there is no ontological gap between the sort of thing one can mean and the sort of thing that can be the case. When we think truly what we think is what the case is. Since the world is everything that is the case, then there is no gap between thought and the world. Thoughts can be false and in this case they fail to represent the way things are and therefore the world. But there is nothing implicit in the idea of thought itself that introduces a gap between our thoughts and the world.

It should be clear that, for McDowell, to say that there is no ontological gap between our thoughts and the world is by no means inconsistent with the realist view that the world is independent of our thoughts. On the contrary, for McDowell, the independence of the world from our thoughts and its role as a rational external constraint for them is a necessary condition for them to have empirical content and represent the world.

The world is not thought but it is thinkable. The world as the rational constraint of our thoughts is external to them but not external to what is thinkable. The fundamental distinction between our thoughts and experiences is not that one is conceptual and the other is not but lies in the fact that our thoughts are products of the operation of spontaneity, as results of a subject's actively making up her mind about something, whereas our experiences are products of receptivity.

This thesis of the unboundedness of the conceptual is McDowell's proposed solution for the tension between the theories of the given which fail to recognize that the

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

space of reasons coincide with the space of concepts and Davidsonian coherentism which excludes experiences and its correlates from the space of concepts and hence fails to accommodate a rational link between thoughts and the world.

One of the implications of this view is that concepts can no longer be pictured as intermediaries between subjects and a non-conceptual world. This has the important advantage of eliminating the scheme-content dualism, a very fundamental commitment of the empiricist tradition, and hence avoiding Davidson's powerful criticisms of it as the third dogma of empiricism.

We must not picture an outer boundary around the sphere of the conceptual, with a reality outside the boundary impinging inward on the system. Any impingements across such an outer boundary could only be causal, and not rational; that is Davidson's perfectly correct point, and he urges that we should settle for holding that in experience the world exerts a merely causal influence on our thinking. But I am trying to describe a way of maintaining that in experience the world exerts a rational influence on our thinking. And that requires us to delete the outer boundary from the picture. The impressions on our senses that keep the dynamic system in motion are already equipped with conceptual content..... My point is to insist that we can effect this deletion of the outer boundary without falling into idealism, without slighting the independence of reality.¹⁴³

McDowell's thesis of the unboundedness of the conceptual, takes analytic philosophy a long path towards Hegelian and speculative thinking. McDowell is certainly conscious of this conjecture and clearly acknowledges it in his *Mind and World*:

It is central to Absolute Idealism to reject the idea that the conceptual realm has an outer boundary, and we have arrived at a point from which we could start to domesticate the rhetoric of that philosophy. Consider, for instance, this remark of Hegel's: "In thinking, I am free, because I am not in an other" This expresses exactly the image I have been using in which the conceptual is unbounded; there is no thing outside it.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ McDowell, p. 34.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

McDowell's approach to the tension between minimal empiricism and Davidson's coherentism fits nicely into the philosophical as well the historical perspective I have been trying to develop in this thesis. So far, I have been suggesting that the empiricist tradition is liable for failure to recognize that all cognitive content is conceptual all the way through and a lot could be gained by admitting this Hegelian principle. In this section, I have tried to demonstrate that McDowell takes this critical step in full consciousness of its Hegelian nature. It is an important historical phenomenon that McDowell's position is motivated by the internal problems of analytic philosophy and particularly its empiricist tradition. I believe this gives strong support to my thesis that the internal development of analytic philosophy come to a stage which makes Hegel and his speculative thought significantly relevant to deal with its internal problems.

Concepts are in the world as much as they are in our minds. To cognize an object is to become conscious of the relations that are constitutive of it and those relations are rational and conceptual all the way thorough. In this context, the word "rational" means nothing more or nothing less than "conceptual". Concepts are not mere subjective products of our minds and they have ontological significance.

This is why we are not trapped into our own concepts and conceptual schemes. Every genuinely fresh experience, internal or external, opens for us a new dimension of consciousness. Every new level of consciousness regarding ourselves and the world brings us new concepts associated with it. Each concept signifies a complex of relations regarding a particular aspect of our internal or external reality and the relevant consciousness. As such, each concept is a depository of historical experience of mankind

about ourselves and the world. The space of reasons, or one could also call it reason, is the historical whole that exhibits this dynamic enterprise in its dialectical totality.

It should be clear that to acknowledge that the world is rational in itself and that there is no ontological gap between our thoughts and the world by no means requires us to hold that the world is dependent on our subjective thoughts and concepts. Space of reasons accommodates our subjectivity as well as the objectivity and the dialectical interplay between the two.

Now it should be seen that this line of thinking comes close to the turn McDowell tries to give to analytic philosophy and is more than Hegelian nostalgia. Once it is accepted with McDowell that the space of reasons coincides with the space of concepts and the content of experience is conceptual, then the problem of the concept I have raised at the beginning of this thesis and discussed throughout becomes fundamentally relevant for analytical philosophy as well. The important philosophical question we need to face here is concerning the nature of concepthood. What is the nature of concepthood such that all cognitive content is conceptual? What are the implications of admitting that the world is rational, or conceptual in-itself, without losing its independence from our subjective thoughts? How can we talk about conceptual plurality and conceptual change without losing the unity of reason? These problems that I have tried to deal with in this thesis are inevitable once we take this Hegelian step. I have tried to develop some elements of a new way of thinking about those through the speculative perspective here. McDowell is one of the few thinkers via whose thought speculative thinking can be closely linked with the internal dialectics of the analytical philosophy.

In the next section, I will undertake a discussion of William James's pragmatism in relation with the speculative perspective. Pragmatism has been one of the mainstream philosophical tendencies that have been shaping contemporary analytic philosophy since the beginning of twentieth century. I am hoping to show some connections between the speculative perspective and James's pragmatist thought.

The Speculative Perspective and Pragmatism

Pragmatism is, beyond any doubt, one of the major philosophical currents that have shaped contemporary analytic philosophy. Although what the word "pragmatism" exactly signifies remains controversial, it generally refers to a way of philosophizing originating in the works of three great American philosophers, Charles Sanders Peirce, William James and John Dewey which later deeply influenced the works of pioneers of analytic philosophy like Carnap, Quine, Sellars, Rorty, Davidson and Brandom, just to name a few. Consequently, it would be worthwhile to discuss the relation between the speculative perspective and pragmatism, in order to position the speculative perspective in a relevant historical and philosophical context.

In this section, I will focus exclusively on James's pragmatism and its relation with the speculative perspective. This is obviously less than sufficient to give the full picture regarding the historical and philosophical relationship at stake especially considering the recent interest in Hegel from a prominent pragmatically oriented philosopher like Brandom. However, my objective here is to discuss the relationship between some characteristic tenets of the general pragmatist thinking and speculative perspective. James is clearly much better positioned to represent those general tenets than Brandom due to latter's specific interest in Hegel and much differentiated inferentialism

which is definitely not a common feature of the pragmatist philosophers. I will leave the discussion on Brandom to a different work.

As pragmatism has been transformed into many forms and incorporated into different philosophical programmes, it is not easy to isolate its generic character from the works of different pragmatist thinkers. In his *Pragmatism*,¹⁴⁵ James clearly defines the basic motivations and philosophical agenda of the pragmatist programme:

Being nothing essentially new, it harmonizes with many ancient philosophical tendencies. It agrees with nominalism for instance, in always appealing to particulars; with utilitarianism in emphasizing practical aspects; with positivism in its disdain for verbal solutions, useless questions and metaphysical abstractions.¹⁴⁶

Again in *Pragmatism*, James mentions that pragmatism represents the empiricist attitude in philosophy:

Pragmatism represents a perfectly familiar attitude in philosophy, the empiricist attitude, but it represents it, as it seems to me, both in a more radical and in a less objectionable form than it has ever yet assumed... That means the empiricist temper regnant and rationalist temper sincerely given up. It means the open air and the possibilities of nature, as against the dogma, artificiality, and the pretence of finality in truth.¹⁴⁷

The passages quoted above clearly reveal that nominalism, utilitarianism, empiricism, anti-metaphysics, anti-rationalism and open-endedness are some of the fundamental features of pragmatist thinking. The affinity of this broad philosophical agenda with the philosophical agenda of the early twentieth century empiricist movement is noteworthy. At a minimum, nominalism with respect to language and universals,

¹⁴⁵ William James, *Pragmatism* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2003).

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

commitment to empiricism, anti-rationalism and anti-metaphysical attitude are common to both movements. This should give a good basis to understand why it was so natural for many empiricist and analytical thinkers, like Carnap and Quine, to incorporate pragmatist themes into their philosophical positions. As the empiricist foundationalism of the early twentieth century started to lose ground the pragmatist approach has been adopted to defend a broadly similar philosophical agenda in different terms. This is an important dimension of the appeal of pragmatism to empiricist-minded analytic philosophy. This account by no means overlooks the definitive and authentic features of the pragmatist movement and they are those features which enable pragmatism to remain as a philosophically viable alternative today despite the undisputed fall of empiricism as an epistemological position.

According to James, the scope of pragmatism involves a philosophical method and a generic theory of truth. I will briefly discuss both in order to get deeper into the heart and soul of James's pragmatism.

Pragmatist method involves a change of orientation from foundations, from what comes first to consequences, to last things. Instead of focusing on a discussion on first principles, categories and necessary foundations, pragmatist method focuses on the consequences of accepting a notion as true. It does not accept any doctrine nor principle from the outset, but evaluates the consequences of accepting it. If there is no practical difference, and it is quite tricky what practical difference means in this context, in terms of consequences between two conceptual or philosophical alternatives, then the discussion is futile.

An internal tension should be noted here between the basic tendencies of pragmatism and its proclaimed method. On the one hand, James announces nominalism, empiricism, utilitarianism and anti-rationalism as the basic tendencies of pragmatism. On the other hand, he announces that pragmatist method is not committed to any principles, doctrines at the outset and evaluates each notion and principle according to its consequences. It is hard to imagine that a great thinker like James on the one hand commits himself to a philosophical method that involves an open-minded clean sheet approach to all philosophical concepts and principles as long as they are justified by their consequences and on the other hand uncritically commits himself to a number of philosophical doctrines, i.e., empiricism, nominalism, utilitarianism, anti-rationalism, etc. This leaves us with two options: Either James's commitments to empiricism, nominalism, etc. are justified as a result of the execution of the pragmatist method vis a vis their philosophical alternatives or James assumes these philosophical principles are philosophically minimalist positions which are prerequisites to have an open-minded approach required by his pragmatist method. In the absence of any evidence for the existence of such comprehensive comparative analysis of competing philosophical theses in James's work, I am inclined to accept the second option. It is a common tenet of the empiricist orientation to assume that empiricism and nominalism are metaphysically neutral and philosophically low-cost natural positions. However, the history of contemporary philosophy has clearly demonstrated that this is not quite the case.

The question I am raising here is whether the empiricism, nominalism, utilitarianism of James are pragmatically justified. Such justification should involve a demonstration that empiricism, nominalism, anti-rationalism, etc. yield to higher

satisfactions than their philosophical alternatives in terms of their consequences and it can only take place through a comprehensive comparative account of history of philosophy.¹⁴⁸ If James is to be consistent with his pragmatic method, his commitment to empiricism and nominalism should be consequences of a comparative account of philosophical theses competing with empiricism, nominalism and anti-rationalism. However, we do not find such an account in James's works. Therefore, I believe James is uncritical in terms of his commitment to empiricism, nominalism and anti-rationalism. These commitments remain as unjustified presuppositions of his overall philosophical position. James seems to presuppose that empiricism, nominalism and anti-rationalism are philosophical positions which are metaphysically neutral and do not require further justification. This is why on the one hand he declares anti-metaphysics as one of the prominent characteristics of his philosophical position and on the other he uncritically accepts empiricism, nominalism and anti-rationalism without feeling obliged to give a philosophical account of them. He seems to assume that commitment to empiricism and nominalism are prerequisites of having an anti-metaphysical and open-minded philosophical attitude.

It should be questioned, for pragmatism, whether the basic philosophical tendencies, i.e., empiricism, nominalism, anti-rationalism, etc. or the open-minded method takes the priority. It should be recognized that these two aspects of pragmatism are independent and even incompatible. At the end of the day, it may prove that it is not

¹⁴⁸ The possibility of such a justification of a major philosophical thesis against a philosophical alternative can obviously be questioned. Such justification seems to require criterion or reference point independent of the philosophical alternatives that it will be compared in terms of their capacity to yield satisfactions. For James, this may not be problematic and such a criterion may be based on the needs and goals of the individual. Therefore, I do not think that the concept of justification of a major philosophical thesis is problematic for James. It seems he just presupposes that it is not necessary to justify empiricism, nominalism and anti-rationalism as for James these are metaphysic-free minimalist positions.

possible to keep one without giving up the other. I tend to think that pragmatism involves the belief that empiricist, nominalist and anti-rationalist orientations go hand in hand with its anti-foundationalist method that focuses on consequences instead of the first categories, principles, foundations. If it turns out that one side is inconsistent with the other and we give up one of the two sides, the resulting philosophical position can no longer be called pragmatism in the sense in which James used the word. A non-empiricist or non-nominalistic pragmatism is not pragmatism in the Jamesian sense.

The spec-ulative perspective is radically different from pragmatism in terms of commitment to empiricism, nominalism and anti-rationalism. However, the spec-ulative perspective and pragmatism comes closer in terms of their focus on consequences and rejection of a foundationalist approach. It is a fundamentally important methodological principle of the spec-ulative perspective that the content of all concepts and principles needs to be justified as a result of an argument. Uncritical reference to any given or self-evident principles are not allowed. Philosophy is cognition without presuppositions and the continuous exercise of discovering our presuppositions and trying to justify them as results of arguments. No concepts, principles or empirical contents are immune from this continuous critique. All philosophical concepts and theses need to be justified as consequences of arguments. In this sense, the spec-ulative perspective agrees with the non-foundationalist open-minded, clean sheet approach of pragmatist method. However, the spec-ulative perspective takes this principle in a more radical and serious way. It commits itself to a continuous and dialectically comparative analysis of all conceptual alternatives.

James declares at the beginning of *Pragmatism* that the history of philosophy is that of a clash of human temperaments.¹⁴⁹ He recognizes two main types of mental make-up as the basis of this clash which he calls the tender-minded and tough-minded respectively. The tender-minded temperament has the traits of being rationalistic (going by “principles”), intellectualistic, idealistic, optimistic, religious, free-willist, monistic and dogmatical. On the other hand, the tough-minded is empiricist (going “by facts”), sensationalistic, materialistic, pessimistic, irreligious, fatalistic, pluralistic and skeptical. According to James, pragmatism is a philosophical position that can satisfy both sorts of demands. However, pragmatism tries to satisfy the demands of both temperaments through an essentially empiricist approach. James associates rationalism with dogmatism and empiricism with an open-minded approach. However, it is clear that empiricism can be as dogmatic as any rationalism can be. A good example is different sorts of positivisms in philosophy and sciences. The clash between the two human temperaments can be overcome by developing a level of consciousness which can recognize the two sides of the tension as necessary aspects of a single unity. This very tension can be brought to peace if it is recognized as the internal tension of our reason and we stop trying to suppress one side in favor of the other. Rationalism seeks the freedom of universal reason over the particularity of reality and empiricism seeks the concreteness of the reality over the abstractions of subjectivity. Hence, neither can satisfy the demands of the other. Both are healthy but one-sided tendencies that belong to our rational constitution. If both the empiricist and rationalistic attitude belong to the very nature of human reason, what is needed is a deeper and richer consciousness that recognizes these two as two constitutive but distinct elements that belong to the same unity. The spec-

¹⁴⁹ James, *Pragmatism*, pp. 4-5.

ulative perspective allows room for this. The antagonism of empiricism and rationalism can be overcome by recognizing the speculative nature of their reciprocal dialectics and their unity in their difference. This requires going beyond pragmatism and taking a speculative approach which recognizes that true universality does not exclude but involves particularity. I have discussed the detailed dynamics of the speculative position and its approach to the problem of universality vs. particularity in chapter three.

I will now try to consider briefly James's theory of truth to the extent relevant for the purposes of the objectives of this section. My objective here is not to provide a comprehensive account of pragmatist theory of truth, but to identify certain aspects that relate James's pragmatism with the speculative perspective.

James starts with a dualistic universe consisting of objective facts and claims.¹⁵⁰ He also refers to the two sides of this duality as reality and ideas on many occasions. For James, truth is a property of our ideas and claims. If a claim works as a substitute of the relevant objective fact, then the claim is true. He also says truth is the agreement of our ideas with reality. The essence of the pragmatist theory of truth lies, of course, in what is exactly meant by "agreement" or "work as a substitute".

Ordinary epistemology contents itself with the vague statement that the ideas must 'correspond' or 'agree'; the pragmatist insists on being more concrete, and asks what such agreement may mean in detail. He finds first that the ideas must point to or lead towards that reality and no other, and then that the pointings and leadings must yield satisfaction as their result.¹⁵¹

According to James, our true ideas of sensible things basically copy them. This is a very special and unproblematic case for the agreement of an idea with reality. For James, the important question is what does agreement of an idea with reality mean when

¹⁵⁰ William James, *The Meaning of Truth* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1997) p. xix.

¹⁵¹ James, *The Meaning*, p. 191.

the idea does not simply copy that reality? A true idea is the one that helps us to deal with that reality and it guides us to cope with it. It is expedient in the way of our thinking and gives us maximum satisfactions. In different passages, we see James referring to concepts like expedience, satisfactions, guiding and pointing when he explains the agreement of an idea with reality.

To copy a reality is, indeed, one very important way of agreeing with it, but it is far from being essential. The essential thing is the process of being guided. Any idea that helps us to deal, whether practically or intellectually, with either the reality or its belongings, that doesn't entangle our progress in frustrations, that fits, in fact, and adapts our life to the reality's whole setting, will agree sufficiently to meet the requirement. It will hold true of that reality.¹⁵²

Truth in science is what gives us the maximum possible sum of satisfactions, taste included, but consistency both with previous truth and with novel fact is always the most imperious claimant.¹⁵³

First, we have a privileged subset of ideas which simply copy reality. These ideas obviously guide or point us directly to the relevant reality and they give us maximum satisfactions in terms of that reality. Second, those ideas which do not directly copy the reality are true on the basis of their guiding or pointing us toward that reality and giving us maximum satisfactions in order to cope with it. Once we bring the reference to satisfactions or coping on the table, naturally truth becomes a humanistic, pluralistic and dynamic concept. At the end, our satisfactions are a function of our needs and desires. When our needs and desires change then what gives us satisfaction changes. Consequently, the truth-relation becomes a humanistic, pluralistic and dynamically changing relation of our ideas with reality. These three aspects of humanism, pluralism and dynamism are fundamental to James' pragmatism.

¹⁵² James, *Pragmatism*, p. 93.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

To give an extreme example, an atheistic world-view may give us higher satisfactions under particular emotional, intellectual and historical circumstances and a theistic one in others. As there cannot be any idea that can directly copy the fact of the matter regarding the existence of God, then the ultimate decision is to be made in reference to satisfactions from both ideas. According to the pragmatist conception of truth, both alternatives can be admitted as true depending on the circumstances provided that it can be shown which alternative will yield maximum satisfaction under each case. This example should indicate how the pragmatist conception of truth opens the door for a pluralistic universe.

It should of course be noted that when James talks about satisfactions, he talks about satisfactions in the long run and as a whole. With this he tries to protect the pragmatist conception of truth from an opportunistic interpretation. It is obviously questionable whether this maneuver can really avoid an opportunistic interpretation of satisfactions. As the human experience is always partial and incomplete, satisfactions are always relative to the particular needs and goals of a given agent. This opens the door for a relativistic as well as a pluralistic spirit.

It can, of course, be questioned even if we accept that there is such a privileged subset of our ideas that copies reality whether it will necessarily imply that those ideas will give us maximum satisfactions in terms of that reality. If the particular reality in question gives us very strong pain and we cannot, for whatever reasons, cope with that, then we may be better off with an idea that distorts that reality. The distorted idea may give us more satisfactions than the one that exactly copies the reality. In this case, according to the pragmatist conception of truth, we may end up accepting that the

distorted idea is the true one. This is obviously against all intentions of James but it is important to note this difficulty with the pragmatist conception of truth. I believe this is a position all of us choose to adopt regarding many aspects of ourselves and our lives. People choose to adopt a distorted version of reality for their convenience. Convenience may be psychologically, ideologically, culturally, politically or economically defined. However, to allow that distortion of facts to yield higher satisfactions is compatible with truth is actually the loss of the true significance of the concept of truth. It is not clear to me how James can avoid this difficulty once truth is defined in terms of satisfactions. It should also be further considered that if this difficulty cannot be avoided at the level of those allegedly privileged ideas that directly copy reality, the difficulty becomes only worse for those ideas and beliefs which are highly theoretical and more remote from experience.

For James, one way to avoid this difficulty is to have recourse to direct verification of our ideas with reality. They are those ideas which are directly verified with reality which underwrites all our beliefs. With this James cannot avoid distancing himself from his anti-foundationalist pragmatist method and coming closer to the traditional empiricist position. James refers to beliefs directly verified by facts, as the posts of the superstructure formed by all our beliefs. The metaphor of “posts and superstructure” inevitably reminds us of the foundationalist observation language and theoretical language distinction prevalent in the empiricist tradition within the first half of the twentieth century.

Truth lives, in fact, for the most part on a credit system. Our thoughts and beliefs ‘pass’, so long as nothing challenges them, just as bank-notes pass so long as nobody refuses them. But this all points to direct face-to-face verifications somewhere, without which the fabric of truth collapses like a financial system

with no cash-basis whatever. You accept my verification of one thing, I yours of another. We trade on each other's truth. But beliefs verified concretely by somebody are the posts of the whole superstructure.¹⁵⁴

But as discussed above, reference to those privileged beliefs which copy reality and are directly verified does not address the difficulty even if we grant such beliefs exist. I am strongly convinced that there are no such beliefs and ideas, but the problem with the pragmatist concept of truth remains even if there were such beliefs.

For James, there is a strong correlation between truth and verification. He says truth is simply a collective name for verification processes. With this truth becomes humanized and dependent on us, on our very activity of verification. We make our ideas true by verifying them and accepting others' verifications of them. Consequently, he needs to preserve a duality and independence between our ideas and facts in order to avoid falling into some form of subjective idealism. Our ideas are true as long as we make them true. But the facts are not true. The facts just are. The independence of facts from ideas is critical for James to preserve some form of realism. The cost of this is an uncritical acceptance of a dualistic universe that remains immune from a critique through his pragmatic method.

Truth for us is simply a collective name for verification processes, just as health, wealth, strength, etc., are the names for other processes connected with life, and also pursued because it pays to pursue them. Truth is made, just as health, wealth and strength are made, in the course of experience.¹⁵⁵

James struggles to give a theory of truth compatible with his anti-foundationalist tendencies and takes a more foundationalist perspective. This is a consequence of his

¹⁵⁴ James, *Pragmatism*, p. 91.

¹⁵⁵ James, *Pragmatism*, p. 96.

uncritical acceptance of a dualistic universe that consists of facts and ideas. He needs this in order to remain a realist in some form. He does not recognize the essentially dialectical relationship between reality and thought. Reality and thought reciprocally constitute each other in a dialectical relationship and truth as speculative concept is what brings the two together. We do not need to subordinate objectivity to subjectivity in order to recognize the constitutive role of the subject for its objectivity and vice versa. The recognition of this reciprocal constitution requires us to recognize the speculative nature of the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity or thought and reality.

Another very important dimension of James' pragmatism is its pluralism. The humanized notion of truth based on the concept of satisfactions and anti-dogmatism of the pragmatist method are the two pillars of this pluralism. Pragmatism encourages plurality with respect to conceptual alternatives to the extent these competing alternatives yield satisfactions under the particular circumstances in which they are adopted. What are of essential value are the consequences of accepting a particular conceptual position and not the theoretical origins of that position. This open-minded and flexible attitude is one of the fundamental strengths of the pragmatist position. Our needs change; hence the conceptual means called for by those needs may also change over time. Similarly, different conceptual means may yield higher satisfactions under different scientific, cultural, political circumstances at the same historical period. Therefore, the universe of pragmatism is pluralistic in terms of both time and space.

This pluralism is further supported and extended to an ontological level by the pragmatist view that neither reality nor our beliefs about it are static and complete. Both are dynamical and in a state of flux. On the one hand, we are in the process of making the

reality by our actions and on the other hand, we are in the process of cognizing it by our cognitive activity. In this sense, cognition is a special form of action we adopt in order to cope with reality and should not be considered as a way of access to a reality that is static and complete in-itself. We change our concepts in order to find better ways to cope with reality as we also change reality itself by our actions in order to better cope with it. Both sides go hand in hand. The ultimate measure is this very act of coping, the goal or the use for the individual. In this notion of the dynamic relation of the individual and the universe in which the individual is elevated to the level of an active contributor in the making of the universe instead of a mere spectator, the essential powerfulness of the pragmatist position lies.

Furthermore, this powerful notion of a dynamical, pluralistic and open-ended universe strongly positions pragmatism to accommodate the infinitely diverse and ever-changing particularities of the world we live in. It equips it with the necessary modesty and maturity in its openness and flexibility to cope with what may come and what has not yet shown itself. It is mainly due to these aspects that pragmatist tendencies have been on the rise while the logical empiricist and positivist positions which are not too far from it in many of their philosophical commitments, have experienced continuous decline throughout the twentieth century.

On the other hand, the pragmatist position involves a particular philosophical problem in taking the goal, use, or satisfactions as ultimate. To be able to answer the questions of what is of value, what is worthwhile to pursue as a goal and accept as useful is of fundamental interest to reason and cannot be considered as an ultimate given that falls outside the domain of rational critique. To accept that value problems are outside the

domain of rational critique is to subordinate rationality to irrationality. This pragmatist attitude has very negative practical consequences and should be rejected also on pragmatic grounds. It is on these pragmatist grounds that our culture suffers from great levels of immaturity in terms of cultural and spiritual development while it excels in technological and economical sophistication. It is on these pragmatist grounds many great intellects are able to justify their conscious involvement in highly sophisticated scientific and technological processes that lead to creation of atomic bombs, other weapons of mass destruction and many other products the use of which has obvious negative consequences for the rest of humanity. If the pragmatic method involves evaluation of conceptual alternatives in terms of their consequences, then the pragmatic conception of reason and rationality which takes value or goal as ultimate and outside the domain of rational critique is clearly not pragmatically justified. Reason is the unity of practical and theoretical reason. Pragmatism recognizes only one side of reason, the theoretical side, and the other half is left to the powers of unconsciousness as the dark side of the moon.

Value involves application of a norm. Application of a norm is essentially a conceptual function. Therefore, all value problems are ultimately conceptual problems. All conceptual problems are rational in the speculative sense and belong to the domain of reason. How value problems can be delimited from the broader domain of conceptual problems is obviously a major topic of fundamental philosophical significance. I will not undertake this major philosophical problem as a part of this thesis.

It should be recognized that to accept that problems of value belong to the domain of reason does not entail a static, anti-pluralistic, close-ended or dogmatic position. Different forms of consciousness are related with different value systems. It is essential to

accept a plurality of value systems in order to embrace all different forms of consciousness as belonging to the unity of reason. We do not need to conclude from the existence of a multitude of value systems that these distinct value systems are inherently isolated, and in ultimate conflict or clash with each other. Each value system is related with a form of consciousness. Each possible form of consciousness manifests a different aspect or side of reason. Therefore, each value system is inherently and dialectically related with the other within the spec-ulative unity of reason. In this sense, value systems and their inter-relations are not different from the conceptual frameworks and their reciprocal relations. As the spec-ulative perspective accommodates unity in difference, it is equipped with the necessary conceptual flexibility to accommodate pluralism with respect to value systems. From a spec-ulative perspective, we can on the one hand be pluralists with respect to value systems and acknowledge the inherent value of each while on the other hand we can still bring these different value systems under the unity of reason and cognize each value system in its essential significance as manifesting a particular mode of consciousness and a particular aspect of reason.

The spec-ulative perspective is also compatible with a dynamic and open-ended view of the universe. At no historical point is our knowledge of the world and ourselves is complete. We have always more to experience about the world and ourselves. Our self-consciousness is never full. The never-ending openness to extend our knowledge of the world and ourselves is an essential principle of the spec-ulative perspective. There is always more to come and more to be known. This openness is not limited to the epistemological but also applicable to the ontological. The world or Reality is not complete and static. It is in the process of making itself in its dialectical relation with

reason. Therefore, the spec-ulative perspective agrees with pragmatism with respect to the dynamism and open-endedness of the world and our knowledge of it. Finally, speculative perspective is not less anti-dogmatic than pragmatism. Its fundamental methodological principle is that philosophy is knowing without presuppositions and all principles needs to be justified by argumentation. No recourse to givens, self-evident or necessary principles is allowed. No principles are immune from revisions as long as it is conceptually justified.

I have argued that despite their radically different commitments with respect to empiricism, nominalism, anti-rationalism and utilitarianism, pragmatism agrees with the spec-ulative perspective in many fundamental ways. The emphasis on consequences instead of origins or first principles, commitment to anti-dogmatism, pluralism, a dynamic and open-ended view of the universe are among those agreements. I have also argued that pragmatism involves a number of internal tensions and lends itself to a constructive critique from a spec-ulative perspective.

Thinking Analytical Philosophy from a Spec -ulative Perspective

I believe that development of analytic philosophy within the twentieth century has reached a point which requires a fundamentally different philosophical approach which goes beyond tactical re-interpretations of existing concepts and principles at hand and calls for a more radical shift. This requirement is a consequence of the internal dialectics of the history of analytical philosophy throughout the twentieth century. In this chapter, I have tried to discuss some critical themes and milestones that define the character of this evolution. I have argued in many junctures that this very internal dialectics positions the spec-ulative perspective as a viable framework to approach internal problems of

analytical philosophy and take it to a new level. On the other hand, it should be recognized that such a step will result in a new way of philosophizing which can hardly be called analytical in the traditional sense. Spec-ulative sublates analytical. It preserves it in itself but goes beyond it.

Over the last decades, the analytical philosophy tradition has developed a way of thinking about itself which relates it to Kant in many ways. A commitment to a dualism of scheme and content and recognition of the essential conceptual contribution of the subject to the cognition process or epistemological constructionism are among the key Kantian heritages of analytical philosophy. I have critically discussed these commitments in the first section of this chapter.

Once the Kantian roots are recognized, recourse to Hegel, as one of the most profound and comprehensive critics as well as followers of Kant, becomes relevant. As long as we accept that analytical philosophy has a number of fundamental Kantian commitments, then a study of Hegel's critique of those philosophical commitments becomes historically relevant. This approach is further encouraged once it is recognized that Hegel has a relatively extensive and critical account of such philosophical commitments. I have discussed these in various places in chapter two of this thesis.

The relevance of Hegel's thought to the problems of contemporary analytical philosophy has been identified by many prominent philosophers like Sellars, Brandom and McDowell. Therefore, there is nothing original about re-stating this link. On the other hand, the particular relevance of the spec-ulative aspects of Hegel's thought to contemporary analytical philosophy, to my knowledge, has not been studied and remains overlooked. I have intended this very specific topic to be the original contribution of this

thesis. My aim is to incorporate Hegel's speculative insight to the framework of contemporary philosophy and approach contemporary philosophical problems from a speculative perspective. Despite its radical looks, this approach builds on a number of themes that emerged out of the internal dialectics of the history of analytical philosophy. I have discussed these throughout this chapter and will briefly summarize in the following.

We have experienced throughout the twentieth century what can be called a continuous decline of empiricist epistemology. At the core of this decline is the commitment to an epistemological dualism, a dualism of scheme and content. This dualism has taken many forms. At the one extreme of the spectrum stands the atomistic dualism of direct report vs. sense-data and on the other extreme is the more holistic version of the same dualism in the form of conceptual scheme vs. content. Nevertheless, the same philosophical idea underwrites all different forms of epistemological dualism. This is the idea that cognitive content includes a non-conceptual as well as a conceptual element. In McDowell's terms, this is the idea that the space of reasons is more extensive than the space of concepts. This philosophical idea is common to all forms of theories that are committed to the "given". I am convinced, similar to a large group of analytical philosophers, that this very idea is untenable.

Davidson tried to address the limitation of the theories of the "given" by taking an alternative stand. On the one hand, he rejected the scheme and content dualism and the myth of the given inherent to it. On the other hand, he stipulated a causal link between the external objects and our beliefs about them. According to this, our beliefs can only be justified by other beliefs. External objects, sense-data or given non-conceptual elements

of any form cannot justify a belief. By this, Davidson avoided commitment to the myth of the given and adopted a coherentist position. However, being a realist, Davidson had to preserve some form of connection between the external world and our beliefs. He established this link by stipulating a “causal” link between our beliefs and the external objects. It is this causal link which is the source of the empirical content of our beliefs.

In my view, Davidson diagnoses the epistemological problem of the empiricist tradition accurately; however he falls short of proposing the right cure. For Davidson, external objects exist outside the space of reasons. Otherwise, they would be conceptually or cognitively linked with our beliefs and not merely causally. If this causal link had a cognitive significance, then Davidson’s position would be just another form of commitment to the myth of the given. However, if the link between our beliefs and the external objects is merely causal, then there is no cognitive connection between our beliefs and the external world. The consequence is that the world cannot be a rational constraint of our thoughts or we cannot claim to know the world. Stipulating a causal link with mysterious epistemological or cognitive status does not address the problem.

Furthermore, Davidson’s position does not recognize that our subjectivity has a role in constituting our objectivity. While he is trying to overcome limitations of our Kantian heritage, Davidson loses the positive side of Kantian insight: as subjects we have an essential contribution to the constitution of our objects. For Davidson, external objects exist independent of any contribution of our subjectivity. This is why he talks about a causal link between external objects and our beliefs. A causal link is by nature one-sided. Cause is prior to the effect. However, the relations between our objectivity and subjectivity are two-sided. They are reciprocally constitutive of each other. This is their

internal dialectics. The space of reasons, or the domain of conceptuality, or reason, is the medium within which this reciprocal constitution takes place.

Davidson recognizes the fundamental problem of epistemological dualism. The space of reasons cannot be more extensive than the space of concepts. However, his commitment to nominalism prevents him from seeing that objectivity is conceptual as much as our subjectivity. Objectivity and subjectivity are distinctions that fall within the conceptual domain, or within the space of reasons. Hence, the links between external objects and our beliefs are conceptual or rational and not merely causal. The philosophical difficulty here is to recognize that the conceptual, the space of reasons, is the unity of subjectivity and objectivity in their distinction. This is a speculative principle of highest philosophical importance.

It is McDowell who comes very close to this speculative insight. McDowell accepted that our experience is receptivity in operation and as such it is an external constraint on our thinking. On the other hand, he accepted that experience is conceptual all the way through. There is no ontological gap between meanings and facts, thoughts and things or mind and world. For McDowell, the fact that experience is receptivity in operation does not prevent it from being conceptual and forming a rational constraint on our thinking. At the end, it is only another conceptual content that can be a constraint for a conceptual content. Hence, there is homogeneity between the content of experience and the content of our thoughts in terms of both being conceptual. With this thinking, the space of reasons is equated with the space of concepts. This is McDowell's thesis of the unboundedness of the conceptual. According to this thesis, the conceptual does not have an outer boundary. There are no things-in-themselves or non-conceptual posts or

foundations of our knowledge that stand outside the boundaries of the conceptual domain. Whether it is theoretical of the highest degree or directly observational, all cognitive content is conceptual all the way through. With this McDowell recognizes that his thinking becomes very close to Hegel's Absolute Idealism.

It is critical to note here that what we face throughout the history of contemporary analytic philosophy is a gradual move away from epistemological dualism towards what can be called a conceptual holism. At the initial stages the dualism occurs at an atomistic level, a dualism of observation terms vs. sense-data, direct reports vs. external objects, etc. Later the dualism evolves into a more holistic version in the form of a dualism of conceptual scheme vs. tribunal of experience or language vs. sense stimulus. Finally, with Davidson this dualism is rejected although he fails to propose an effective alternative framework to replace it. McDowell recognizes that "unboundedness of the conceptual" is the guiding principle for a new philosophical framework which is not committed to epistemological dualism and the "myth of the given" inherent in it. McDowell's thinking is organically related with the evolution of analytic philosophy preceding it and brings analytic thought on the verge of speculative thinking.

On the other hand, the new level of thinking that analytical philosophy reaches with McDowell is pregnant with a number of important philosophical questions. Once we recognize that the conceptual is unbounded and all cognitive content is conceptual, we face a fundamentally important question about the nature of this very conceptuality. This is the problem of the concept that I have posed and discussed in this thesis. The problem of the concept carries with it a number of grand philosophical problems. What is the nature of concepthood such that it incorporates all cognitive content? How can both

subjectivity and objectivity be conceptual at the same time? How can both universality and particularity be conceptual at the same time? How can the infinite diversity and difference of our cognitions of the world and ourselves be unified under the unity of the conceptual domain? I have posed and discussed some of these questions in this thesis and many more have remained even undiscussed. The main objective of this thesis is to argue that the first step to start discussing these grand philosophical problems in an effective way and to move towards a new philosophical framework that is not committed to the widely recognized problems of the “myth of the given”, is to recognize the speculative nature of conception. This task requires a way of thinking that is up to it; thinking that is able to grasp the opposites in their unity while preserving their difference: simply, speculative thinking.

The speculative perspective has also certain aspects which can build on some tendencies of the pragmatist tradition. It denies any dogmas, self-evident principles, foundations, etc. Philosophy is cognitions without presuppositions. All philosophical principles should be justified as a consequence of an argument. The attention needs to move from first principles to consequences.

That said the speculative perspective does not uncritically deny the idea of foundations. But any foundation can be accepted as a foundation as long as the cognitive enterprise justifies it to be a foundation. No concepts, principles are immune from revisions and critique. It is the primary objective of philosophy to identify cognitive content that is uncritically accepted and subject it to a rational critique. No experience or no self-critique is final. Our cognitive adventure is open to surprises. Our experience of the world and ourselves is never complete. There is always more to be experienced and

more to be known. Hence, our knowledge is philosophically, scientifically and in general open-ended. This open-endedness is holistic and circular. A new level of consciousness may imply revision of previously accepted principles and modify meanings of existing concepts.

Pragmatism as long as it is ready to move away from its uncritical commitments to empiricism, nominalism, etc. can resonate with many of these principles. As a matter of fact, I have argued that James's pragmatism involves an internal tension between its anti-foundationalist open-minded method and its commitment to empiricism, nominalism, a dualistic universe consisting of facts and ideas.

However, more importantly, the fundamental problem of James's pragmatism lies in the fact that it takes use or utility as ultimate. Value is inherent in all pragmatic considerations: goals, objectives, use, utility. There is no value without application of norms. All norms presuppose concepts. Therefore, all pragmatic considerations belong to the conceptual domain or to the space of reasons. No goals, objectives, values, can be taken as ultimate and they are subject to rational critique similar to all other conceptual content. Practical reason is an essential aspect of reason. In lacking this recognition the pragmatist concept of reason is one-sided and lacks the full content of universal reason.

A critical element of the agenda of the speculative perspective is to preserve the concept of Universal reason without losing the distinctions and particularities of individual reasons. For the speculative perspective, all conceptual distinctions are always within a unity. Consequently from a speculative perspective, the idea that individual rational beings have different particular rational constitutions is not incompatible with the idea of a universal reason. In line with the speculative concept of

the universal discussed in the chapter three, it is not necessary for different rational beings to have a monolithic reason common to all, in order for us to talk about universal reason. Universal manifests itself in the totality of the sphere, not in any individual or a group of individuals. Hence, universal reason does not manifest itself exclusively in any particular individual, culture, nation or any other historical group but in the very totality of the history of all rational beings.

Distinct conceptual schemes manifest different aspects of reason and therefore belong to its very unity and its internal dialectics. Each particular conceptual scheme manifests a particular mode of self-consciousness regarding reason and therefore the world. There is always a speculative conceptual way to comprehend the distinctions of different conceptual schemes within their unity, as the ultimate source of all conceptual content is one both at a subjective and objective level. Furthermore, each distinct conceptual scheme is relevant for the other as it potentially involves a particular mode of consciousness and self-consciousness that the other lacks.

The key here is to recognize that for the speculative perspective the ultimate source of all objectivity and subjectivity remains one, but the proximate subjectivities and objectivities are many. The ultimate source of all subjectivity is reason and the ultimate source of all objectivity is the world. Reason and world are also two sides of the speculative whole and stand in a dialectical relationship. They are neither isolated nor independent. Reason makes the world as much as world makes the reason.

The process within which reason and the world make themselves explicit in their reciprocal and dialectical dependency is History. The speculative perspective takes as its ideal the continuous and open-ended project of building the holistic conceptual scheme

that will incorporate different determinations of reason and world within their historical development. This necessarily involves the task of comprehension of each particular conceptual scheme in its dialectical relation with the rest and with respect to its necessary place and function in this historical process. In reality, this project is nothing but the history of philosophy but with a clear self-consciousness regarding its role within history. In one sense, the speculative perspective tries to achieve nothing new but to reach a new level of self-consciousness regarding what is already happening. On the other hand, a new level of self-consciousness is inescapably transformative to what is already happening and gives it a fresh meaning and agenda.

Each theory about concepts like history, psyche, ego, etc. represents a mode of consciousness and self-consciousness regarding the nature of these concepts and captures a subset of their fundamental determinations. The question is not to identify which theory is true and which ones are false, but to bring together the insights from different theories also taking into account their historical development in order to establish and continuously evolve the conceptual frameworks for their comprehension. Each individual subject is conscious of a subset of particular determinations of these spec-ulatively universal concepts. Therefore, each such particular consciousness or cognition is partial and incomplete and fails to comprehend the full content of its subject matter.

When the conceptual differences between such particular theories are large enough and lead to different metaphysical commitments, it is theoretically justified and practically useful to talk about different conceptual schemes these theories belong to. When the difference is deep and broad as it is in the case of the yuppie and the yogi, the example we discussed in the section on Davidson, we have something deeper than two

different theories on the same topic. The source of the difference of conceptual schemes is the difference of the consciousness or self-consciousness on which they are based. The conceptual differences are marks of the differences in the underlying consciousness.

On the other hand, the difference between conceptual schemes is never absolute and can be reconciled because the ultimate source of the consciousness and self-consciousness are one. Therefore, to reconcile and bring together distinct conceptual schemes is not only a matter of cognitive interest but also critical for psychological hygiene and peaceful politics.

Truth is the whole. Our consciousness and therefore cognitions of it are partial. Each particular point of view captures some truth and misses some. Therefore, the speculative perspective is necessarily collectivist in opposition to individualist. Truth is being made explicit in our collective philosophical, scientific, artistic, cultural, political and in general cognitive activity throughout history and does not come or go at once.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have argued that the development of contemporary analytic philosophy has reached a point which demands a fundamentally different philosophical approach that goes beyond tactical re-interpretations of existing concepts and calls for a more radical shift. This is a consequence of the internal dialectics of the history of analytical philosophy throughout the twentieth century and is closely linked with the decline of empiricist epistemology and the renunciation of the idea of the “given”. In chapter three of this thesis, I have discussed some critical themes and milestones that define the character of this evolution. I have argued that this very internal dialectics positions the speculative perspective as a viable framework to approach internal problems of analytical philosophy and take it to a new level. It should be recognized that such a step will result in a new way of philosophizing which can hardly be called analytical in the traditional sense.

Over the last decades, analytical philosophical tradition has developed a way of thinking which relates itself to Kant in many ways. A commitment to a dualism of scheme and content and recognition of the essential conceptual contribution of the subject to cognition process are among the key Kantian heritages of analytical philosophy. I have critically discussed these commitments in the third chapter of this thesis. Once the Kantian roots are recognized, Hegel who is one of the most profound and comprehensive critics of Kant becomes inevitably relevant. As long as we accept that analytical philosophy has a number of fundamental Kantian commitments, then a study of Hegel’s critique of those philosophical commitments becomes relevant for the analytical debate.

The relevance of Hegel's thought to the problems of contemporary analytical philosophy has been identified by many prominent philosophers like Sellars, Brandom and McDowell. Therefore, there is nothing original about re-stating this link. On the other hand, the particular relevance of the speculative aspects of Hegel's thought to contemporary analytical philosophy, to my knowledge, has not been studied and remains overlooked. I have aimed this very specific topic to be the main contribution of this thesis. My aim is to incorporate Hegel's speculative insight to the framework of contemporary philosophy and approach contemporary philosophical problems from a speculative perspective. Despite its radical looks, this approach builds on a number of themes that emerged out of the internal dialectics of the history of analytical philosophy. I have discussed these in chapter four of this thesis with a specific focus on philosophers such as Carnap, Quine, Sellars, Davidson, James and McDowell.

At the very center of the debate lie two important beliefs which have been commonly held within the analytical circles. The first is the belief that cognition or cognitive content involves a non-conceptual component. The second is nominalism with respect to concepts.

The first belief is linked with the view that a non-conceptual component is the raw material of experience. It is the alleged given and pure content to be formed and structured by our conceptual apparatus in order to yield cognitions. According to this, concepts are what belong to our subjectivity while the non-conceptual is the intake. The non-conceptual component is the ultimate link between our thoughts and external reality. It is what underwrites the objective validity of our thoughts and elevates them to the level of cognitions. This belief is fundamental to all forms of empiricism and has lost

substantial ground as a result of the works of philosophers like Sellars, Davidson and Brandom. The gradual loss of faith to this principle within the twentieth century is the main impetus for the fall of empiricism. However, the renunciation of these principles leaves us with a grand philosophical question: how to make sense of cognitive content in general and empirical content in particular if we no longer attribute its raw data, content to a non-conceptual given.

If there is no non-conceptual component involved in cognitions, then all cognitive content is conceptual. To use McDowell's words, the space of reasons cannot be more extensive than the space of concepts. Cognition is conceptual all the way thorough. However, as long as we consider that concepts belong to our subjectivity alone and do not have an ontological significance, then there is an inherent gap between the subjectivity of the concepts and the expected objectivity of cognitions. If concepts are merely subjective, then concepts alone can never grasp reality in the absence of the non-conceptual. Our thoughts are disconnected from the world. Hence, we face a dilemma. On the one hand, if we accept the idea of non-conceptual content, then we commit ourselves to the myth of the given and its known problems. On the other hand, once we reject the idea of the non-conceptual content then we introduce a gap between our cognitions and the external world and end up with a problematic coherentism which loses touch with the world.

Davidson tries to address this by introducing a causal but not conceptual link between external objects and our beliefs. According to this, external objects can cause beliefs but cannot justify them. It is only another belief that can justify a belief. On the other hand, by introducing a causal relation between our objects and our beliefs Davidson

tried to preserve the idea that external objects are the ultimate source of empirical content. Our thoughts are linked with external objects through this causal relation. In agreement with McDowell, I have argued this idea of causal link cannot properly address the problem. The essence of the problem is how to relate our objects with our beliefs rationally and not merely causally. The world can function as a constraint on our thinking only if there is a rational link between the two. The idea of rational link involves capacity to justify. This is exactly what is lacked by the causal relation Davidson stipulates to exist between our objects and beliefs. Hence, Davidson avoids the idea of the “given non-conceptual content” at the expense of losing the status of our objects as rational constraints on our thinking. The problem remains how to preserve the role of the world as a constraint on our thinking without committing to the myth of the given.¹⁵⁶

This links us to the second belief mentioned above: nominalism with respect to concepts. By nominalism with respect to concepts, I refer to the view that concepts belong to our subjectivity and do not have ontological significance; they do not have a role in the constitution of reality. According to nominalism with respect to concepts, concepts are products of subjectivity. According to this view, concepts obtain objective significance in the communication process through their links with either sensory stimulus as it is for Quine, or with external objects as it is for Davidson. Concepts are in the subject and not in the world. This is the standard view of concepts we see in the tradition of analytical philosophy and it is linked with its anti-metaphysical tendencies.

For this view, rationality belongs to us and not to the world in-itself.

¹⁵⁶ This is obviously not the only problem with Davidson’s idea of causal relation between our objects and beliefs. A causal relation is by definition one-sided and by this Davidson loses the constitutive role of our concepts for our objects. Our concepts are dependent on our objects as much as our objects are dependent on concepts. The relationship is reciprocal and dialectical.

The solution to the dilemma between the myth of the given and a coherentism that loses touch with the world requires us to give up nominalism with respect to concepts. Once we accept that concepts are in the world as much as they are in our subjectivity, then we discover a new possibility. If the world is already conceptual in-itself and our experiences of it are essentially conceptual, then it can function as a rational constraint on our thoughts. We can accept that cognitive content is conceptual all the way thorough without losing touch with the world and external objects. We do not read our concepts into the world but the world is already conceptually and rationally constituted. Our scientific, philosophical and ultimately every cognitive adventure is to discover the conceptual and rational constitution of the world and ourselves.

To cognize and comprehend a subject matter is to become conscious of its conceptual constitution. Both subjectivity and objectivity are conceptual. When the concepts used by the subject to cognize an object do not coincide with the concepts that constitute the object in-itself, then the resulting cognition is partial or defective. The cognitive process involves a self-adjusting dialectical evolution to cognize the object according to its original conceptual constitution. This leaves room for conceptual relativity and plurality without undermining our realist insight that the world is a rational constraint on our thoughts. This is the line of thinking that I tried to develop and propose in this thesis.

Among the contemporary analytic philosophers, McDowell comes close to this philosophical perspective. According to McDowell the conceptual is unbounded and the content of experience is conceptual in-itself. This allows experience to function as a rational constraint for our thinking without falling back to the myth of the given.

McDowell recognizes that the way out of the dilemma between the myth of the given and a coherentism that disconnects thoughts from the world is to accept that our experiences are both receptivity in operation and conceptual in-themselves. McDowell avoids the myth of the given by making the experiences conceptual. On the other hand, he preserves the function of experience as a rational constraint on our thinking by acknowledging that experience is receptivity in operation. Experience is not about a subject's actively making up her mind about something but it essentially involves receptivity. For McDowell, this does not prevent experience from being conceptual. The space of concepts coincides with the space of reasons and experiences belong to this space. The conceptual does not have outer boundaries where it meets a non-conceptual space. The conceptual is unbounded.

This new level of thinking that analytical philosophy reaches with McDowell is pregnant with a number of important philosophical questions. Once we recognize with McDowell that the conceptual is unbounded and all cognitive content is conceptual, we face a fundamentally important question about the nature of this very conceptuality. This conceptuality can no longer be the conceptuality of the nominalist which has a subjective significance and does not have any ontological role. To move from the perspectives of the myth of the given and the coherentism which are the two horns of the dilemma discussed above, to McDowell's "unboundedness of the conceptual" and further to the speculative perspective requires us to revise our concept of concept. Nominalism with respect to concepts is inconsistent with a view that takes the conceptual as unbounded.¹⁵⁷

At this point, we have go through a self-critique regarding our commitments and

¹⁵⁷ To the best of my knowledge, McDowell does not say anywhere that his thesis on unboundedness of the conceptual is inconsistent with any particular views regarding the nature of concepthood. Therefore, the view that unboundedness of the conceptual is inconsistent with nominalism with respect to concepts should not be attributed to McDowell. I am also not familiar with any discussions McDowell undertakes regarding the nature of concepthood.

presuppositions about concepthood. This is the natural next step from McDowell's thesis on the unboundedness of the conceptual. Therefore, my work can also be interpreted as an effort to further develop the perspective proposed by McDowell for analytical philosophy in a more radical way.

This links us to the problem of the concept that I have posed and discussed in this thesis. The problem of the concept carries with it a number of important philosophical problems. What is the nature of concepthood to be able to incorporate all cognitive content? How can both subjectivity and objectivity be conceptual at the same time? How can both universality and particularity be conceptual at the same time? How can the infinite diversity and difference of our cognitions of the world and ourselves be unified under the unity of the conceptual domain? I have posed and discussed these questions in this thesis. The main objective of this thesis is to argue that the first step to start discussing these substantial philosophical problems in an effective way and to move towards a new philosophical perspective that is not committed to the widely recognized problems of the "myth of the given" without falling into a coherentism which disconnects thought from the world, is to recognize the spec-ulative nature of concepthood. This task requires a way of thinking that is able to grasp the opposites in their unity while preserving their difference: simply, spec-ulative thinking.

Based on this spec-ulative insight; I have explored the possibility and fundamental features of an open-ended conceptual holism. The conceptual framework of this conceptual holism is not intended as a merely formal structure that needs to be filled with content that is outside or transcendent to it but as an unbounded and all-encompassing conceptual unity that contains all form and content within it. The key is to obtain unity

while preserving all the difference. For this reason, the speculative insight and its dialectical power to preserve difference and internal tension within the inclusive unity of conceptual domain has been the central theme of my project.

All particular aspects of reality whether internal or external, subjective or objective, actual or potential, past or future are constituted by their specific role and function in the overall whole. All the tension and conflict is its internal tension and conflict and belongs to its internal dialectics and self-dynamism. Individuality, universality and particularity, subjectivity and objectivity, reason and world are different aspects of the whole which are constituted by their reciprocal relationships and their specific function within the overall system. As the different aspects of the whole stand in tension and contradiction to each other, the concept of the whole should involve the power to accommodate contradiction within itself without losing its unity. This power belongs to the speculative. Therefore, the concept of this holism is the speculative concept of concept.

The conceptual domain, the space of concepts, is not a static deposit of concepts and theoretical principles but a dynamic unity involving an internal tension which leads to its internal dialectics and constant change. There is a multi-dimensional dialectical relation between individual subjects and objects. On the one hand, we evolve our cognitions about our objects by constantly adjusting our concepts. On the other hand, we act and change the world we live in based on our concepts and cognitions. Furthermore, this constant evolution of our cognitions and our world is shared by all individuals either through communication or through sharing the objective circumstances we live in. Hence, the dialectic operates at a collective and multi-dimensional level. This collective

and multi-dimensional dialectical relation is the bearer of the historical dynamism of this all-encompassing conceptual whole and its evolutionary spirit.

Change and transformation of the conceptual domain is self-change and self-transformation. Its dynamism is self-dynamism and evolution is self-evolution. Conceptual space is a systematic unity that is formed and revised by our collective cognitive activity that involves creation, revision and application of concepts. To the extent we are conscious of this conceptual unity and its content, it is our collective self-consciousness regarding the conceptual essence and the true content of our collective historical experience. To the extent we are unconscious of this conceptual unity, it belongs to our personal and collective unconsciousness.

Cognitive agents do not bring their goals and interests to their conceptual or cognitive frameworks from outside. As long as they are cognitive agents they are within the conceptual domain. Their purposes and interests are already constituted by it. Therefore, the relation between the cognitive agents and their conceptual resources cannot be reduced to a relation between an agent and her tool or apparatus. An agent is independent of and prior to its tool. She can use this or the other tool without going through a substantial change in her own constitution. On the other hand, a radical change in the conceptual resources of an agent or of a community is a substantial change in the very constitution of the agent or the community. This is due to the holistic and the collective nature of the conceptual domain.

The conceptual domain or space is a self-adjusting system of interrelated concepts rather than a list of categories that are defined in isolation from each other. Every element of the system is defined by its very specific role and function in the overall system. This

is why it is holistic but not atomistic. It is never complete and never closed. Every adjustment in the meaning of a specific concept leads to adjustments in other elements. A new addition or revision to the system has impacts on the system overall. A new result or conclusion can lead to a revision of its own premises. Therefore, it is also non-linear.

This aspect of being open-ended is a major difference between the form of speculative perspective I argued for and Hegel's position. Hegel's logical system as defined in his *Science of Logic* and *Encyclopedia Logic* consists of a definite number of logical categories and their dialectical relations which exhausts the system of reason. According to my reading of Hegel, the logical system closes itself and there is no room for an introduction or discovery of a new logical category. All conceptual content as long as it is logical in the Hegelian sense fits within the system of logic. Therefore, Hegel's system is closed and not open-ended. The form of speculative perspective that I propose diverges from Hegel's position and is open-ended in a very specific sense. On the one hand, it agrees that all conceptual content is essentially interrelated and belongs to a global conceptual whole. This is simply because all human experience is essentially interrelated both at a conscious and an unconscious level and forms a historical unity. Philosophical activity is essentially the constant endeavor to bring all conceptual content into the self-conscious unity of an all-inclusive and self-reflective conceptual whole. In this sense, philosophy is our collective self-consciousness of our collective historical experience. Every concept worthy of the name is a certain aspect or dimension of that experience. Discovery of every new concept opens up a new dimension and raises our self-consciousness to a new level. The conceptual whole represents our accumulated

historical self-consciousness regarding the conceptual content or essence of our collective historical experience.

All concepts worthy of the name are archetypes or deposits of a certain aspect of our historical experience whatever the scope and object of that experience may be. It requires a certain degree of self-consciousness regarding a particular aspect of ourselves to recognize a category which constitutes that particular aspect of our experience. At any given time in history, our self-consciousness is always partial and is never full. Therefore, at any given time in history the conceptual whole never consolidates all possible conceptual content within itself and is always subject to revisions and adjustments by the development of our self-consciousness regarding a new aspect of our collective historical experience. Since we can never say that we are fully self-consciousness and have converted all content of our personal and collective unconsciousness into our consciousness and have comprehended the essential content of our historical experience in its entirety, we can never close the system. We work for constant evolution and development of our self-consciousness but this task is never fulfilled *par excellence*.

One of the fundamental insights of the speculative perspective is that it is the complex, the whole, the totality that exists. There is no individuality or no universality, no subjectivity or no objectivity that exists in isolation but only their complex, their totality, whole is real. However, the reality of the whole is a concrete reality, not a transcendental or Platonic one. This concreteness is essential and only possible through the existence of the individuals and particulars. Therefore, each individual and particular aspect is essential to the whole and manifests a particular aspect of its true content. Hence, the view I have defended in this thesis does not entail an overemphasis of some

abstract universality or some form of Platonic idealism at the expense of the concrete existence of the individuals and particulars.

I am convinced that a lot can be gained with a critical look at the problem of universals from a speculative perspective. I have developed an interpretation of Hegel's concept of universality as the totality of the individuals within its sphere. According to this, universality is not based on commonality but on constitutive totality. A true universal is the concrete and constitutive totality of the individuals within its sphere. Each individual realizes a particular aspect of the universal and the true content of the universal is not manifest in any single individual in isolation but in their concrete totality collectively. This particular theory of universals not only lets us avoid the nominalism vs. realism controversy with respect to universals but also plays a pivotal role in my attempt to reconcile the realist insight with the relativist view that our cognitions are always conditioned by our conceptual resources and these conceptual resources are not fixed. Ultimately, this way of approaching the problem of universals is the basis of my endeavor to accommodate conceptual relativity without committing to conceptual relativism.

In summary, the speculative perspective that I developed is based on four pillars: (1) Speculative Insight, (2) Speculative Conceptualism, (3) Methodological Openness, (4) All-inclusiveness. The speculative perspective is extensively inspired by Hegel and I have discussed the backgrounds of these principles in Hegel's system in the second chapter. I have then discussed each of these and their philosophical implications in the third chapter. Finally, I have discussed their specific relevance and implications within the historical context of contemporary analytic philosophy in the last chapter.

Despite being extensively inspired by Hegel my spec-ulative perspective is motivated by some contemporary philosophical developments and agrees with a number of contemporary philosophical tendencies. I believe that after Sellars's and Davidson's critiques, the empiricist epistemology and its framework of "givenness" are untenable. I aim to preserve the realist insight that world is a constraint on our thoughts and to avoid a coherentism that loses touch with the world. In my view, to stipulate a causal link between external objects and our beliefs *à la* Davidson is insufficient to address the essence of the problem. Instead of a causal one, I look for a conceptual and rational link between our thoughts and the world. On the other hand, the world can be rationally and conceptually linked to our thoughts only if it is conceptual and rational in-itself and there is some form of homogeneity between the two. It is necessary for us to revise our concept of concept in order to be able to stipulate this conceptual and rational link between our thoughts and the world. To some extent, McDowell recognizes this problem and tries to address it with his thesis of "unboundedness of the conceptual". My spec-ulative perspective takes McDowell's diagnosis to a deeper and further level by explicitly linking it to the problem of the concept and undertaking a critique of the very concept of concept. In this thesis, I have tried to develop my version of Hegel's spec-ulative insight and spec-ulative concept of concept in order to establish this homogeneity and rational link between our thoughts and the world.

The spec-ulative perspective agrees with pragmatism in many ways. It shares with pragmatism the emphasis on consequences rather than first principles and foundations. Philosophy is a spec-ulatively circular and self-adjusting enterprise. As an ideal, philosophy looks for eliminating all dogmas, presuppositions and unconscious

commitments. No philosophical concepts or principles are immune from this continuous and dialectical critique. The consequences of a principle may lead to its own revision. The holistic nature of the spec-ulative perspective is linked with this aspect. As we are never fully self-conscious, elimination of all dogmas and unconscious commitments from philosophy remains as an ideal that motivates its dialectical and historical evolution. The spec-ulative perspective agrees with pragmatism in recognizing this dynamical and open-ended character of cognitive activity but goes beyond pragmatism by positioning this dynamism within a historical background.

In a very special sense, the spec-ulative perspective has a view of a pluralistic universe. The specific form of spec-ulative pluralism is different from the pragmatist pluralism. The spec-ulative perspective recognizes in each concept, conceptual framework and value-system a different dimension of human experience and a different aspect of our collective consciousness about the world and ourselves. Each conceptual framework or value system represents a different state of consciousness. Therefore each different concept, conceptual framework and value system has a unique inherent value. It is an irreducible dimension of collective and historical human experience. In this specific sense, the spec-ulative perspective is pluralistic. On the other hand, it aims to bring this plurality under a unity without losing its essential plurality, open-endedness and dynamism.

I believe that a constructive approach to the epistemological difficulties facing contemporary analytical philosophy after the collapse of the “framework of givenness” demands that we revisit our commitments regarding the nature of concepthood. An important step in moving towards a new philosophical framework immune from the

difficulties of the “myth of the given” and which does not fall into a problematic coherentism that loses touch with the world is to recognize the spec-ulative nature of conception and acknowledge that all cognitive content is conceptual in the spec-ulative sense. The essence of the spec-ulative lies in the power to bring opposites together without losing their distinction. This simple philosophical insight does not belong to our contemporary philosophical culture. In my view, the spec-ulative insight and the spec-ulative concept of concept can lead to a fresh perspective on a number of important contemporary problems once they are internalized into our contemporary philosophical framework.

This thesis can be further developed in many ways and directions. First, a discussion of Robert Brandom’s position from a spec-ulative perspective can be an appropriate next step. Due to his recognition of the relation between Hegel’s thought and the problems of contemporary analytical philosophy, Brandom promises to be a valuable source for the spec-ulative perspective. Brandom also discusses the relation between dualistic aspects of Kant’s thought and the problems of contemporary analytical philosophy and how this relates to our commitments regarding the nature of conception and normativity which further enhances the link between his position and the account I have developed. It was not possible to undertake this task within the constraints of this thesis.

The relations between the spec-ulative perspective and Jung’s psychology may also open a new dimension for spec-ulative thought. I have briefly mentioned this topic in this thesis. The open-endedness of the spec-ulative perspective is extensively inspired by the psychological concept of “subconsciousness” in general and Jung’s concept of

“collective unconsciousness” in particular.¹⁵⁸ Despite Jung’s well-known critical remarks regarding Hegel and his philosophical system, I believe there is an interesting connection between Jung’s concepts of “archetype” and “collective unconsciousness” and the speculative concept of concept. Recently, Wolfgang Giegerich, David L. Miller and Greg Mogenson have argued for the relation between Hegelian dialectics and Jung’s analytical psychology.¹⁵⁹

Finally, a focused analysis regarding the relation between the speculative perspective and the contemporary systems theory and chaos theory may be illuminating. I believe there are strong links between the open-endedness and holism of these theories and the speculative perspective developed in this thesis. In these regards, Immanuel Wallerstein’s works on world-systems analysis and Ilya Prigogine’s works on chaos, uncertainty and complexity promise to be valuable sources for further research.

¹⁵⁸ At this point, it is worthwhile to mention that I do not agree with views that consider philosophy as a chapter in psychology. Philosophy involves knowledge by means of concepts and this particular mode of knowledge cannot be subordinated to any empirical science.

¹⁵⁹ Wolfgang, Giegerich, David L Miller, Greg Mogenson, *Dialectics and Analytical Psychology* (New Orleans, Louisiana: Spring Journal Books, 1991).

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