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Locke's Empiricism and the Opening Arguments in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*

In the analytic trend of philosophy, the German Idealists, and G.W.F. Hegel in particular, are most aften represented as metaphysical mystics. Their intricate and often obscure theories are thought to bear little or no relation to the tradition that identifies its modern roots in the works of Bertrand Russell and British Empiricists.[1] This paper is an attempt to bridge some of the chasm that has grown between these two philosophical camps. Specificially, I shall show that the two opening arguments in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* - 'Sense-Certainty' and 'Perception'- are immensely significant to the empiricist programme, and in fact comprise a powerful criticism that empiricists will be hard pressed to answer. To focus this discussion I shall apply what I take to be a charge of explanatory circularity by Hegel to the empiricist theory espoused by John Locke in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding.*

I have chosen Locke as the target for Hegel's criticism for two reasons. First, it is evident from his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* that Hegel had read Locke's *Essay* and thought it worthy of critical attention. He also had read at least some of George Berkeley's and David Hume's works, but he considered these philosophies only to be of interest in that they completed the absurdities implicit in Locke's empiricism[2] Indeed, Hegel devoted a robust fifteen pages in his *Lectures* to the explication and rejection of Locke's work, and only five and seven pages respectively to the writings of Berkeley and Hume.

Secondly, I believe that close examination of Locke's theory, and specifically of his doctrine of simple ideas, will help to reveal the essence of Hegel's position. Traditionally, Locke has been interpreted as contradicting himself on the subject of simple ideas, for

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he seems both to describe them as universal properties which are given in experience (and hence are the essential constituents of all objects) and as merely mental properties which are gotten through the comparing and contrasting of different objects (the process of abstraction). This interpretation makes Locke easy prey for Hegel's criticisms as they appear in the first two chapters of the *Phenomenology*. For it is precisely Hegel's aim to show that if consciousness takes itself to be a passive receptor of extra-mental stimuli (which is how Locke characterizes it), it is forced to vacillate between the two contradictory descriptions of properties outlined above. I think that the traditional interpretation of Locke's doctrine of simple ideas is incorrect. I shall therefore offer what I believe to be the correct interpretation, and suggest how Hegel's original criticisms can be altered to accommodate it. I shall further argue that these alterations preserve what is essential to Hegel's position, but show it to be a much more powerful criticism of empiricism than its original form in the *Phenomenology* might suggest.

Before I begin my discussion proper, it is necessary to point out that Hegel's intent in the *Phenomenology* is not merely to refute particular philosophical theories and subsequently replace them with doctrines of his own. For in order to do this he would have to establish his own criterion for the truth of a philosophical doctrine, which he believes would be nothing more than making a bare assertion about what counts as bonafide knowledge. Rather, Hegel suggests that we look to consciousness itself for the standard that knowledge claims are to be measured against. Because consciousness is essentially self-reflexive, it has the characteristic of knowing that it knows. It thus simultaneously recognizes the object of its knowledge and its knowledge of the object. The investigation of what is truly knowledge, then, becomes a comparison of these two moments within consciousness, that is, it becomes a comparison of consciousness with itself. If the two moments do not correspond, consciousness is forced to change its knowledge so that it will conform with the object. But this process is not simply a wholesale rejection of different modes of knowledge, for when consciousness clarifies the notion of its object at a particular phenomenal level, it becomes manifest that only a particular kind of knowledge will correspond to that object. Hence Hegel's insistence that the only true negation is a determinate one. With the negation of each particular claim to knowledge appears a specific direction that

consciousness must follow to achieve parity between its knowledge and its object. The *Phenomenology,* then, is a systematic description of the dialectical movement consciousness undergoes until it reaches the point where its knowledge corresponds to its object. Then, and only then, consciousness will have achieved Absolute Knowledge.[3]

This is not to say that none of the phenomenal levels described can bear affinities to actually - held philosophical theories of the nature of knowledge. It is precisely Hegel's point that all theories preceding his, theories propounded before the time was ripe for philosophy to become Science, are abstract embodiments of natural consciousness being trapped through self-deception at immature phenomenal levels. It is one of the aims of this paper to show that Locke's empiricism is the theoritical encapsulation of the first two levels of natural consciousness. To begin this project, then, we must turn to the description in the *Phenomenology* of the first level of phenomenal consciousness : sense-certainty.

> The knowledge or knowing which is at the start or is immediately our object cannot be anything else but immediate knowledge itself, a knowledge of the immediate or of what simply is. Our approach to the object must also be immediate or receptive; we must alter nothing in the object as it presents itself. In apprehending it, we must refrain from trying to comprehend it. (*Phenomenology,* p. 58).

These opening lines of 'Sense-Certainty' concisely characterize the theme that runs through this entire first chapter of the *Phenomenology.* The first or beginning phenomenal level must be that in which consciousness knows nothing other than that which is senuously immediate, the pure 'This'. There can be no description, no interpretation, nothing but passive receptivity on the part of consciousness. Hegel begins the *Phenomenology* with this particular claim to knowledge because he is committed to revealing the process by which consciousness itself comes to realize that its object has being only inasmuch as it is relative to or mediated by Spirit. This can only be done by beginning the investigation with the barest possible characterization of knowledge, one in which the act of knowing in no way determines the essence of its object. To begin anywhere else would be to infect the discussion with a bare assertion concerning the nature of knowledge. If it is to be more than such a bare assertion Science must

prove itself as the truth through the dialectic of natural consciousness (*Phenomenology*, p. 43).

The first thing Hegel has to say about the truth of sense-certainty is that such knowledge would be very poor and scanty. This is because sense-certainty, as immediate knowledge, cannot be aware of distinctions or qualities in either litself or its object. That is, consciousness at this level cannot comprehend either itself or its object, its knowledge cannot be the result of deliberation :

> On the contrary, the thing is, and it is, merely because it is. It is, this is essential point for sense-knowledge, and this pure being, or this simple immediacy, constitutes its truth. Similarly, certainty as a connection is an immediate pure connection: consciousness is 'I', nothing more, a pure 'This'; the singular consciousness knows a pure 'This'. or the single item. (*Phenomenology*, pp. 58-59.)

With this in mind, Hegel declares that the truth of sense-certainty must be contained in particular instances of this kind of immediacy. The reasoning behind this is obvious enough. Sense-certainty is knowledge of the immediate, of what is at any given time and place immediately present to it. To say that sense-certainty is true in virtue of immediacy in general would be to introduce the concept of immediacy into a level of phenomenal knowledge where no concepts are possible. As a totally passive form of consciousness, sense-certainty can only ap-pehend the particular 'This' that is at any one moment available to it.

With what he has at this point established, Hegel has little trouble in showing that sense-certainty cannot have knowledge of its intended object. The basic insight that underlies the remainder of the chapter is that without recourse to individuate qualities contained in either consciousness itself or in the object, sense-certainty cannot be said in any meaningful sense to know the senuously immediate. The actual argument proceeds in three stages in which the truth of sense-certainty is variously presumed to be contained in the object, the subject, and in the context of an ostensive difinition.

In the first stage, then, the essential element in sense-certainty is presumed to be in the pure 'This':

> One of the terms is posited in sense-certainty in the form of a simple, immediate being, or as the essence, the object; the other, however,

> is posited as what is unessential and mediated. Something which in sense-certainty is not in itself but through (the mediation of) another, the 'I' a knowing which knows the object only becuase the object is, while the knowing may either be or not be (*Phenomenology*, p. 59).

Hegel's approach to this construal of sense-certainty is deceivngly simple; he challenges it to say what it means.[4] Because consciousness is prohibited from making reference to qualities, it can only respond to this challenge by using terms which represent the unmediated nature of its object. Thus, it must make use of indexicals such as 'Now', 'Here' and 'This'. But the truth of these terms is in no way dependent upon what is sensuously given at any particular time or place. 'Now', for example, refers indifferently to daytime, night-time,noontime, etc. Hegel believes that this reveals an essential truth about such terms: "A simple thing of this kind which is through negation, which is neither This nor That, a not-This, and is with equal indifference This as well as That - such a thing we call a universal." (*Phenomenology*, p. 60).

So it seems that sense-certainty cannot say (or, for that matter, think) what its object is without the use of universal terms, which terms themselves cannot signify specific objects. And, as Hegel points out in the second stage of his argument, it does not improve matters to suppose that the essential element of sense-certainty is contained in the subject. It does not help, for example, to suppose that the object of my knowledge is isolatable in virtue of the fact that I see it, or that I hear it, etc. For the same considerations that applied to the pure 'This' apply to the pure 'I'. 'I' refers indifferently to all people, and even to all temporal instantiations of myself. Do I mean the 'I' that is looking at a house, the 'I' that was in Tahitii last year, etc? I can no more say what I mean through the pure 'I' than I could through the pure 'This'.

The obvious rejoinder to this line of reasoning by someone waiting to defend sense-certainty would be that just because I cannot say what I mean this does not entail that I cannot specify to my-self or to others what it is that I mean. This introduces the familiar theme of ostensive definition :

> We must let ourselves point to it, for the truth of this immediate relation is the truth of this 'I' which confines itself to one 'Now' or one 'Here'. Were we to examine this truth afterwards, or stand at a distance from it, it would lose its significance entirely; for that would do away with the immediacy which is essential to it. (*Phenomenology*, p. 63).

Hegel's response to this theme is somewhat cryptic. He claims that unmediated particulars cannot be pointed out because it is never clear just what is being pointed to. When, for example, I point to the 'Now', what is, the temporal present, that which I point to immediately escapes into the past. But if this is true, then in pointing to the 'Now' I am really pointing to something in the past, to something that is not. Therefore, I must negate this second truth, that something was, wherein I will find myself back with my original assertion - that something is Now. Similarly, pointing to a 'Here' does not establish that which is immediate. Do I mean Here as in 'here above this other here'? Do I mean Here as in 'here below the other here'? Perhaps this can be make clearer by means of a concerete example. When I point to an area in the general vicinity of a rabbit am I pointing to its head? - to its tail? - to one temporal slice of the entire rabbit? Pure ostensive difinition cannot answer such questions.[5]

As Charles Taylor has pointed out, this stage of Hegel's argument bears a resemblance to Ludwing Wittgenstein's private language argument' in his*Philosophical Investigations* (Taylor, pp. 162-165*). Wittgenstein's primary aim is to show that if our general concepts are to be useful in reidentifying new experiences that fall under them, there must be criteria for their correct application. The crucial question then becomes: What counts as the correct criteria for identity? (Wittgenstein, para. 251) Wittgenstein answers that such criteria can only be found in the shared meanings of a linguistic community. He therefore contends that any putatively 'private' descriptive term (such as 'This), unless mediated through the terms of a common terms of a common language, is nothing more than an 'inarticulate sound' (Wittgenstein, para. 261).

What is interesting in connection with Hegel's argument, however, is Wittgenstein's contention that in order even to mean anything by uttering 'This' we must already have an adequate conception of what it is that we are talking about. And this means that, even at the pre-verbal level, we must be capable of applying predicates to the particular experience in question. Thus, in a passage that could just have easily appeared in Hegel's sense-certainty', Wittgenstein writes :

> I have seen a person in discussion on this subject strike himself on the breast and say : "But surely another person cannot have THIS pain" - the answer to this is that one does not defend a criterion of identity by emphatic stressing of the word 'this.Rather, what the emphasis does is to suggest the case in which we are conversant with such a criterion of identity but need to be reminded of it.(Wittgenstein, para. 253)

Similarly, what Hegel is getting at is that meaningfully uttering the word 'Now' or 'Here', whether as a verbal expression of what is sensuously given or in the context of an ostensive definition, requires reference (tacit or otherwise) to the object's qualities or characteristics. Consciousness is essentially self-reflexive, and as such must be able to identify its object if it can in any important sense be said to 'know' at all. This requires the recognition of universals. Each object must be seen as a plurality or unity of universals. Thus, "A Now of this sort, an hour, similarly is many minutes, and this Now is likewise many nows (seconds?) and so on." (*Phenomenology*. p. 64). The same can be said for any 'Here'; it must be seen as composed of many 'Heres': colours, shapes, sounds, etc. Once consciousness sees that this is the truth of sense-certainty, it is forced to a new phenomenal level-that of perception.

But what has all of this to do with Locke's empiricism? First of all, it is clear that Hegel has in mind some philosophical doctrine as the theoretical embodiment of sense-certainty. For in commenting on the fact that consciousness itself overcomes this phenomenal level, he says :

> It is therefore astounding when, in the face of this experience, it is asserted as universal experience and put forward, too, as a philosophical proposition, even as the outcome of Sceptcism, that the reality or being of external things taken as Thises or sense-objects has absolute truth for consciousness. (*Phenomenology*, p. 65)

In this context we may note that Locke's empiricism was in part a reaction to what he saw as the inevitable sceptical outcome of the metaphysical meanderings of the Schoolman:

> Thus Men, extending their Enquiries beyond their Capacities, and letting their thoughts wander into those depths, where they can find no sure Footing, 'tis no Wonder, that they raise Questions, and multiply disputes, which never coming to any clear Resolution,

> are proper only to continue and increase their doubts, and to confirm them at last in perfect Scepticism. (Locke : I,I,6)

It is precisely the existence of 'sense-objects' that Locke believes provides the 'sure Footing' from which to deny scepticism. Furthermore, it is upon these ideas of sensation, and the subsequent ideas of reflexion, that the entire ediface of human knowledge is erected.

Now Hegel was well aware that this was Lock's position, as is evidenced by the following passages from (Hegel's) *Lectures*: "Locke does not get beyond the ordinary point of view of consciousness, viz, that objects outside of us are the real and the true." (p.296), and

> The reason that the positive point of view which (Locke) opposes to any derivation from within, is so false, is that he derives his conceptions only from outside and thus maintains Being-for-another, while he rejects the implicit.(p.302)

Whether Hegel's claim is correct as to the falsity of Lock's position, it seems clear that he equates Locke's brand of empiricism with the phenomenal level of sense-certainty.

Are the two positions compatible? Well, there are some undeniable similarities between them. First, it is true that the essential tenet of both sense-certainty and Locke's empiricism that external objects exist and are the basis of truth upon which knowledge depends. Secondly, Locke's position contains, like sense-certainty, a commitment to the passivity of consciousness in receiving sense-objects:

> In this part, the Understanding is merely passive... the Objects of our Senses, do many of them, obtrude their particular Ideas upon our minds, whether we will or no... These simple Ideas, when offered to have, nor alter, when they are imprinted, nor blot them out, and make new ones in it self, than a mirror can refuse, alter, or obliteate the Images or Ideas, which the Objects set before it,do therein produce. (Locke: 2,I,25)

It is here, however, that the similarties end.Locke's theory holds that sensory -objects possess,or are composed of,the distinct qualities of'Sounds,Tastes,Smells,visible and tangible Quallities' which correspond to the appropriate simple ideas received by the mind

(Locke:2,2,3).From these 'very plain and easy beginnings',the understanding can form many different complex ideas. It is through the comparing and contrasting of these original sense data that the undestanding forms 'abstract' ideas, that is, it acquires the use of universals.

We can see already that there is a serious point of contetion between what Hegel and Locke believe can be recognized by the mind in a state of pure receptivity. Hegel believes that identifying the qualities possessed by sense-objects requires mediation or comnprehension by consciousness. In other words, consciousness must actively survey its object to discern its qualities. Locke, on the other hand, is perfectly satisfied that the mind just does passively apprehend objects that are posessed of specific colours, tastes etc. This disagreement is fundamental, and will become the focal point on which this essay will turn. However, to gain greater clarity as to the reasons behind this disagreement we must now turn to the second phemomenal level in the *Phenomenology* : that of perception.

The title of this second chapter, 'Perception: Or the Thing and Deception, is an apt one. For Hegel's intent here is to reveal a basic contradiction inherent in consciousness' new object, which consciousness will try to overcome by attributing this inconsistency to the process of perception itself. Ultimately, consciousness will see that this is an exercise in self-deception, and will be forced to abandon perception as legitimate knowledge.

' Perception' begins with a description of consciousness'new object. In perception the sense-element is still present in the object, but consciousness now realizes that this content is necessarily mediated. So although the object is still conceived as something exterior to consciousness, and hence as something received, consciousness now sees that it must interpret the object as a plurality of universals. Also, as in sense-certainty there occurs a duality between subject and object, a bifurcation between the knowing and that which is known. Here that duality is expessed as the act of perceiving and the object perceived.

The first attempt by consciousness to account for the manifold of properties perceived in the object places this diversity solely within the object itself : "Since the principle of the object, the

universal, is in its simplicity a mediated universal, the object must express this its nature in its own self, this it does by showing itself to be the thing with many properties". (*Phenomenology*, p. 67) *Perceiving* the object in this manner, consciousness notes that although contained in an abstract medium, that is, the 'thinghood' or "pure essence", the properties are independent of each other for their being. Thus, although whiteness, cubicalness, and tartness all occur in the same cube of salt, each universal, as a determinate, is essentially rlated only to itself, and is connected with the others only in virtue of the 'indifferent Also'- the thinghood or essence of the object.

But now a tension appears. If the self-differentiating properties are held together only by an indifferent Also, it does not seem as though they can be essential or distinctive characteristics of the object itself. As a universal, each property could just as easily exist in any thing. As a thing in-and-for-itself, there must be something essential about the objects, which 'binds' its diverse properties together., This essential aspect is 'Oneness'-an over-arching property that ensures that the object is utterly self-relating, that is, not dependent on its relations with other objects for its being.

> As a result of this tension, we now see the object as:
> (a) an indifferent, passive universality, the Also of the many properties or rather 'matters';
> (b)negation equally simply; or the one, which excludes opposite properties;and (c) the many properties themselves, the relation or the first two monents, or negation as it relates to the indifferent element, and therin expands into a host of differences; the point of singular individuality in the medium of subsistence radiating forth into plurality. (*Phenomenology*, p.69)

Now it seems clear that the object cannot be all three of these things simultaneously. For the Also is merely an abstract universal medium, a 'This' which is not distinctive to any particulat object.[7] Conversely,'Oneness'differentiates an objects'properties from all others, it is what is essential to the object and so cannot possibly exist in another. And yet again, as a mere group of self- differentiating universals, the object qua object ceases to exist- if there exists nothing but properties, there can be no objects.

Consciousness' reaction to these contradictory aspects of its object is to take the inconsistencies upon itself. This seems reasonable as

the object is what is essential, whereas consciousness is unessential, and so can be mistaken or deceived. We therefore have a similar movement as is sense-certainty-consciousness is driven back into itself to account for indeterminacies in the object. However, this time consciousness is not conceived as the truth, but rather as the responsible party for error. In this way the object can be maintainted as the pure and essential One, while the illusion - that it contains many self-differentiating and universally applicable properties is attributed to consciousness:

> We get the entire diversity of these aspects, not from the Thing, but from ourselves, and they fall asunder in this wayfor us, because the eye is quite distinct from the tongue, and so on. We are thus the universal medium in which some moments are kept apart and exist each on its own. Through the fact, then, that we regard the characteristic of being a universal medium as our reflection, we preserve the self-identity and truth of the Thing, its being a One. (*Phenomenology*, p. 72)

But now consciousness realizes that an object cannot possess essential being, it cannot be fundamentally distinct, solely in virtue of its being One. For Oneness is simply the relation of self to self, a property possessed by all objects. There it must be the object that is white, tart, and so on, if it is to be distinct from other objects. The object, then, is essentially an Also of many properties.

We have now come full circle. Consciousness has variously placed the One and the Also within itself and within the object. Tired of this vacillation, consciousness attributes both of these characteristics to the object - but with a new twist. It considers the object as essentially One or self-identical, and as only contingently an Also or a thing with many differentiating qualities. In other words, the object is a One when considered alone but is an other (a diversity of aspects) in its relations with other objects. Thus, "The contradiction which is present in the objective essence as a whole is distributed between two objects." (*Phenomenology*, pp. 74-75.)

But this will not save perceptual knowledge either. It becomes manifestly obvious to consciouseness that there is no perceivable difference between an object that is distinct in virtue of its having a spacific quality independent of other objects, and one which is distinctive virtue of it (and its qualities) being opposed or

compared to other objects. With this final observation consciousness realizes that "the object is in one and the same respect the opposite of itself: it is for itself, so far as it is for another, and it is for another as it is the only aspect that was supposed to be unessential. viz. the relationship to another." (*Phenomenology*, p. 76)

What Hegel has done in this chapter is to show that a form of knowledge that takes extra-mental objects as the Truth is beset with a fundamental interdependence between particulars (objects) and universals (properties). As we saw in 'Sense-Certainty', particulars cannot be indentified without the use of universals[8]. But, as we have just seen in 'Perception', the identification of a particular's properties cannot be done independently of its comparison with other particulars. This circularity has resulted precisely because conciousness began with an external object as its truth. The indeterminacy of the bare particular that is mediated by universals[9].

In the movement from sense-certainty to perception the object of consciousness has been established as something very similar to the object presupposed by Locke's empiricism. We now have a particular that is distinguished from other particulars in virtue of this possessing a unique set of qualities. What remains, then, is to see whether Locke's theory is guilty of the contradiction revealed in 'Perception', and if so, whether Locke might have an adequate reply to them.

For Locke, we first perceive particulars as collection of simple ideas (Locke:2,I2,I). Thus, when I percive an apple I receive the simple ideas of redness, roundness, opaqueness etc. These simple ideas are produced in us by certain qualities inherent in objects (primary and secondary qualities - Locke: 2, 8, 9 - I0). Each is independent of other simple ideas it might appear with for its being (the redness perceived in the apple just have easily occurred in a tomato, a firetruck etc.). Furthermore, once we have received a certain amount of simple idieas, we can recombine them in any manner we choose to form new complex ideas (Locke:2,I2,I).

Thus described, simple ideas sound very much like universals. However, Locke holds that universals are not to be found in perceptual objects, but rather are 'Creatures and Inventions of the

understanding' (Locke:3,3,2). That is, universals are nothing but abstract ideas, which are gotten through the comparing and contrasting of defferent particulars:

> Thus, the same Colour being observed today in Chalk or Snow, which the Mind yesterday received from Milk, it considers that Appearance alone, makes it a representative of all of that kind; and having given it the name Whitness, it by that sound signifies the same quality wheresoever to be imagined or met with; and thus Universals, whether Ideas or Terms, are made. (Locke:2,II, 9)

Traditionally commentators have taken Locke here as contradicting himself[10]. For simple ideas are presented both as the 'given' in experience and as the result of a specific action or process of the mind (the process of abstraction). Of course, this interpretation coheres perfectly with the comments Hegel has made concerning the contradictions inherent to perception. Particulars are identified by their qualities (universals), and universals are identified through the comparing of particulars. Moreover, if this interpretation is correct, Locke seems to be playing exactly the kind of games that Hegel tells us conciousness must to avoid the cotradictions of perception :

> This course, a perceptual alternation of determining what is true, and then setting aside this determining constitutes, strictly speaking, the steady everyday life and activity of perceptual consciousness, a consciousness which fancies itself to be moving in the realm of truth. It advances uninterruptedly to the outcome in which all these essentialities or determinations are equally set aside; but in each single moment it is conscious only of this one determinateness as the truth, and then in turn of the opposite one. (*Phenomenology*, p.78)

Thus, when speaking of perceptual objects, Locke claims that specific combinations of simple ideas (universals) are given in experience, 'setting aside' his later comments concerning the process of abstraction. However, when speaking of this process, he assumes that he has already established how we individuate particulars.

If this interpretation of Locke is correct, his thesis will have been dealt a devastating blow by Hegel's exposition. I believe the interpretation is mistaken. As Peter Schouls has pointed out, experience for Locke is always characterized by a complexity of simple ideas

(Schouls, pp. I59-I64)[11]. Therefore, to obtain individuated simple ideas the mind must perform a process of reduction on its initially complex experience. I have argued that this process of reduction must consist of a series of comparisons between similar perceptual objects. Briefly, the argument goes as follows : Consider a black sphere. Given the perfect coexistence of its blackness aspect and its spherical aspect, what possible basis in experience is there for the mind separating the two (simple ideas)? To obtain a hint that there might be different aspects to consider in the sphere, the mind would have to compare this object with another that is both similar to, yet significantly different from, the original one. Such another object would be a black cube. By comparing these two objects, the mind can see that the blckness aspect of the sphare need not be essentially joined to its sphereical aspect. Thus the mind comes to have the simple ideas of blackness and sphericalness. Notice, however, that as far as the isolated percept of the sphare is concerned. the individuated simple ideas do not exist. They appear only after the process of abstraction has taken place[12].

The major consequence of my interpretation is that while for Locke simple ideas are indeed universals, they are not gotten directly from experience. So, when Locke speaks of perceptual objects as being composed of collections of simple ideas, what he means is that we, so to speak, 'read into' the objects the simple ideas that we have gained through abstraction.Thus, to say that an object is composed of certain simple ideas is to say that the object is classifiable according to a number of these purely mental universals.

We can see that my interpretation makes much more sense of Locke's claim that universals are merely 'Creatures and Inventions of the Uderstanding'. He can adhere to his nominalist position and contend that perceptual objects are possessed of qualities that are utterly peculiar to themselves. We then acquire universals by comparing resembling objects and abstracting common features.[13] More importantly, he can also claim that we individuate particulars in virtue of their possessing fundamentally distinct qualities. This claim, if true, would seem to overcome the Hegelian objection that without a prior notion of universals we cannot identify particulars. Locke would

insist that every single object has an absolutely peculiar set of properties and as such can be identified as distinct from other objects.

This is the doctrine of perfect particularism, that everything in the world is utterly distinct from all other things. Whether or not this doctrine is correct, I do not believe that it escapes the main thrust of Hegel's criticism. For consider a book. As a perfect particular it possesses a set of qulities utterly peculiar to itself. However, there are many perfect perticulars contained within the book itself. It is, for example, a certain shade of colour. It will likely have words on its cover, each of which is composed of perfectly particular letters. In fact, in the instance where a person can be said to see a particular book, all that is actually being 'appeared to' her is a pattern of colours and shapes. How does she decide to focus on just that portion of this pattern that constitutes a particular book? The answer seems to be that she would have to have a prior notion of what a book is before she could identify a particular book. But where did she get this prior notion of what it is to be a book?

This brings us to Locke's discussion of substance. In 2.23.3 of the *Essay* Locke says:

> .....we come to have the ideas of particular sorts of Substances, by collecting such Combinations of simple Ideas, as are by Experience and Observation of Men's Senses taken notice of to exist together, and are therefore supposed to flow from the particular internal Constitutions, or unknown Essence of that Substance. Thus we come to have the Ideas of a MAN, Horse, Gold, Water etc.

If we read this passage on the interpretation I suggested above, Locke is saying that over a course of time we happen to notice that certain objects possess similar (but not identical) sets of properties. Thus, although two apples will be possessed of distinct shapes, colours, tastes etc., the qualities of one apple will bear enough resemblannce to those of the other to warrant our calling both objects 'apples'.

However, whether or not a defender of Locke's position could construct a plausible theory of resemblances (contra the realist explanation), he would still be left with our original problem: why focus on just those properties which characterize apples (or any other substance)? As

Hegel puts it in his *Lectures*, apart from recognizing resemblances between substances:

> There is another question... Are these general determinations absolutelyy true? And whence come they not alone into my consciousness, into my mind and understanding, but into the things themselves?... This point of view, the question whether these determinations of the infinite of substance, etc. are in and for themselves true, is quite lost sight of. (*Lectures*, p.3II)

Of course we know that this is one question that Locke cannot answer. When faced with the problem of how we know that an object is of a particular kind of substance he is forced to admit that:

> every one upon Enquiry into his own thoughts, will find that he has no other Idea of any Substance, v.g. let it be Gold, Horse, Iron, Man, Vitrol, Bread, but what he has barely of those sensible Qualities, which he supposes to inhere with a pre supposition of such a Substratum, as gives as it were a support to those Qualities, or simple Ideas, which he has observed to exist together. (2.23.6)

We can see that the Locke's explanation of how we come to recognize particular objects is inadequate. The concepts (substances) under which we characterize similar concatenations of properties as distinct particulars are no more given in experience than are the particulars themselves. This is consistent with Hegel's thesis concerning consciousness as a passive receptor of sense-objects. As noted above, Hegel believes that the perceptual object possesses two opposing aspects, neither of which can be identified independently of the other. He explains this opposition in terms of universals (simple properties) and particulars, but it is most concisely expressed as the indistinguishability of an object's being-for-itself and its being-for-another(*Phenomenology*. p.76). That is, an object cannot be isolated as a 'one', as an essentially self-identical particular, without its being contrasted with oher objects, and vice-versa. This vicious explanatory circle is only made to spin faster by attempting to identify concepts, like Hegel's simple properties, is universal in character, that is, it is applicable to many different particulars. Therefore, a concept can only be arrived at through the comparison of a number of similar

particulars. But then these particulars can only be identified by their subsumption under concepts. The circle again has been completed.

On this construal Hegel's thesis becomes a very powerful criticism of expiricism, for its force is not contingent upon a commitment as to the ontological status of universals. Whether a nominalist, such as Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, or a realist, such as Russell, the empiricist is subject to the Hegelian charge of circularity. If he cannot offer an independent account of either the mannner in which the mind comes to recognize particuulars or universals (concepts) he is left without a plausible explanation of two integral components of the empiricist description of experience. Hegel has provided what I find to be a very credible account of why the empiricist cannot do this. One of the basic tenets of empiricism is that the mind is passive in its initial apprehension of perceptual objects. This passivity renders the initial ideas or sense data abstract and ineffable. As such the mind is forced into a position where it must accept a principle of pure or concrete universality so as to individuate its experience. With this commitment to pure universality the mind cannot make reference to particular experiences, because these are precisely the phenomena that the principle of universality was invoked to excplain. But since universals and particulars enjoy an essentially symbolic relationship, the empiricist is left with a viciously circular explanation of them both.

I have tried to show in this paper that Hegel's opening arguments in the *Phenomenolgy* are very much applicable to the empiricist system of philosophy. It is interesting to note that his position on the relationship between particulars and universals has been the one universally adopted by analytic philosophers up until abouut fifteen years ago.Philosophers as diverse as Wilfred Sellars, Norwood, Hanson, and Nelson Goodman have adhered to the thesis that concepts are a necessary antecedent to individuating experience. Recently, this thesis has come under attack, especially by philosophers of language such as Saul Kripke and Fred Dretske, who claim that we need not stand in an epistemic relation to objects in order to 'see' them. This is not the place to decide whether the Hegelian thesis ultimately is correct. If I have shown that Hegel's philosophy has relevance for the analytic tradition of philosophy, I will have accomplished the task I set out

at the beginning of this paper. Correct or not, the Hegelian charge of circularity demands a response from those who would defend a ' sense-object' theory of perception.

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Notes

1. Both the German Idealists and analytic philosophers have claimed Descartes' writings as their heritage. That the two traditions have interpreted the importance of Descartes differently is reflected in their widely divergent methodologies.

2. Hegel saw Berkeley's 'crude' idealism as proceeding directly from Locke's difficulties with substance and Hume's scepticism as the fitting and logical end of the empiricist programme. He also thought that Hume's work was of historical significance only in that it became the starting point of Kant's philosophy. See *Lectures*, pp. 364-375.

3. Regarding the above, see the Introduction of the *Phenomenology* pp.46-57.

4. Actually, it is consciousness itself that does the challenging. Because both of the moments where the object is being-for-itself and being-for-another fall within consciousness, it is for consciousness to know whether or not they correspond. We who stand at the time when philosophy is ready to become Science can only " Look on". *(Phenomenology*, p.54)

5. W.O.V.Quine makes this point in *Word and Object*, pp.26-40

6. This abstract universal medium, which can be called simply 'thinghood' or' pure essence', is nothing else then what Here and Now have proved themselves to be, viz. a simple togetherness a plurality ..." (*Phenomenology*, p. 63) As we saw in 'Sense-Certainty' the pure 'This' cannot be used to isolate an object. Hence the need for 'Oneness', that which is distinctive to the object.

7. Of course, for Hegel this is not just an epistemological point. He believes that the unsiezable nature of the particular (through pure ostension) shows that the particular's ontological status is that of being a vehicle for universals.

8. This is a piognant example of Hegel's claim in the Introduction that the exposure of an incomplete or immature level of consciousness is a determinadte negation, one which has content. (*Phenomenology*, p.57) The move to perception was determined by the faillure of sense-certainty to meet its own criterion of truth.

9. See R.I. Aaron, *John Locke* (Oxford, Clarendon Press: I 955), pp. III-II2; and Jonathan Bennet, *Locke, Berkeley, Hume: Central Themes* (Oxford, Clarendon Press: I97I), pp.25-30

10. There are many passages in the *Essay* that suggest that some simple ideas always occur with other simple ideas (2.I2.I, 2.23. I, 2.23.6,etc.) The following passage shows that all sentient states are comprised of at least two simple ideas:

> "amongst all the Ideas we have, there is none suggested to the Mind by more ways.. than that of Unity or one... every Thought of our Minds brings this Idea along with it." (2,26,I).

11. There are several passages in the *Essay* that seem to resist this interpretation. Three such passages are :"Simple Ideas ... are only to be got by those impressions objects make on our minds ..." (3,4,II), "Simple Ideas... are imprinted (on the mind)" (2, I,25), and "Simple Ideas, the Materials of all our Knowledge, are suggersted... to the Mind by..... Sensation and Reflection" (2,2,2). But as Schouls correctly points out, each of these passages can easily be interpreted as merely reiterating Lock's basic empiricist position that all our ideas must ultimately be founded in experience. They give no indication whatsoever that individuated simple ideas come directly from experience. (Schouls, p. I68)

12. To make this position plausible Locke would have to provide a theory of resemblance, which he fails to do.

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