

A Hegelian Response to Disjunctivism

Abstract: Epistemological disjunctivism is an insightful and increasingly discussed response to skepticism. In this essay, I first explain a motivation for epistemological disjunctivism that is typically missed by its critics: epistemological disjunctivism is offered as the only way to explain how we can perceptually represent the world. I argue that the insight of epistemological disjunctivism is that I must be able to know, when perceiving that P, that I have factive grounds that P. But disjunctivism couples this insight with the further claim that perception is the source of my knowledge that I have factive grounds that P. Drawing on Hegel's rich and still neglected work on skepticism, I argue second that perception cannot be the source of my knowledge that I have factive grounds that P. That leaves us with the question to which, I suggest in conclusion, Hegel's absolute idealism is an answer: How can I know, when perceiving that P, that I have factive grounds that P?

Introduction

Epistemological disjunctivism aspires to respond to the skeptic while preserving the tradition's idea that knowledge is a self-conscious enterprise. According to epistemological disjunctivism, perceiving that P puts one in a position to know that P because it provides one with a factive ground that P and puts one in a position to know that one has a factive ground that P.¹ So, when we claim that P on the basis of perceiving that P, we know that our justification for claiming that P does not "fall short" of the fact that P.²

¹ I will focus on epistemological disjunctivism about perception, though there are epistemological disjunctivist views of other topics as well (in general, for every cognitive capacity, one can be an epistemological disjunctivist about the acts of that capacity). Further, in line with the dominant conception of epistemological disjunctivism about perception, I will talk about perceiving that P rather than perceiving such-and-such: perceiving that there is a brown bag on the table rather than perceiving a brown bag on the table. There are some versions of disjunctivism that focus on perceiving such-and-such (cf. Haddock 2011 and French 2016). Exploring whether the arguments of this paper apply to these versions of the view will have to wait for another occasion.

Epistemological disjunctivism is often distinguished from metaphysical disjunctivism. Metaphysical disjunctivism is a view about the fundamental kind to which a veridical perceptual state belongs. Epistemological disjunctivism is most notably defended by John McDowell, and metaphysical disjunctivism by Mike Martin. There is a debate about how to understand the relation between these two views (cf. Byrne and Logue 2008, Pritchard 2008, Lockhart 2012). I will set that debate aside and focus exclusively on epistemological disjunctivism (henceforth, simply "disjunctivism") as found in the work of McDowell and others (whatever its relation to the view found in Martin's work).

² This suggests what many defenders of disjunctivism have argued for, that disjunctivism is neither internalist nor externalist: cf. Kern 2017: chapter IV, Rödl 2007: 135ff., and Pritchard 2012. Though this will not be an explicit topic in what follows, my account of disjunctivism is in line with this thought.

It is obvious that epistemological disjunctivism, if it can be made to work, disarms the skeptical threat that (perhaps due to the possibility of demonic interference) the best justification that perception can provide is compatible with things not being as they seem. That is, it disarms the Cartesian skeptical threat to perceptual knowledge. But I argue the deeper motivations for disjunctivism lie in the argument that it is the only way to avoid skepticism about the possibility of so much as representing the world through perception (or Kantian skepticism).³

Appreciating this deeper motivation allows us to see how to resolve the debate between disjunctivist and externalist responses to Cartesian skepticism. The externalist argues that we do not need to know that we have factive grounds that P in order to know that P, and that demanding that we do need to know that leads to Cartesian skepticism. The disjunctivist, by contrast, insists that the only way to avoid Cartesian skepticism is by crediting us with such knowledge, and insists that the externalist is simply Cartesian skepticism in disguise. We can resolve this debate in favor of disjunctivism once we appreciate that we need to know that we have factive grounds that P to avoid Kantian skepticism.

But the disjunctivist insight that we must have knowledge that we have factive grounds that P leads to the question: *how* do we know that? And here disjunctivism goes awry, by arguing that perception is the source of our knowledge that we have factive grounds that P. Drawing on Hegel's underappreciated account of skepticism and how to respond to it, I argue that perception cannot be the source of the knowledge that one has factive grounds that P. I then defend that argument from three different challenges a disjunctivist might make to it.

This essay is a contribution in epistemology. Though one of my hopes is to inspire epistemologists to take Hegel's work more seriously, I will neither quote Hegel extensively nor

³ For the distinction between these two varieties of skepticism, I am drawing on Conant 2012 – cf. [note 8](#).

engage with the scholarship on Hegel's response to skepticism (I do that elsewhere). My focus is rather on the merits of the argument against disjunctivism that I find in Hegel's texts.

§1 Disjunctivism

Disjunctivism is a response to Cartesian skepticism. The Cartesian skeptic notes that I can take myself to perceive that P when in fact it merely seems to me that I perceive that P. If I am liable to being misled in this way, the Cartesian skeptic reasons, then I am never in a position to determine that I actually perceive that P, and so can never have perceptually grounded knowledge of P. Call the sort of case in which I am misled in this way the "bad" case. Call the sort of case in which I am not misled the "good" case. Since I am liable to be in a bad case, the Cartesian skeptic argues that I do not know even in the good case. The disjunctivist argues that the fact that I can be in a bad case gives us no reason to think that I do not know that P when I am in the good case.

To defend this claim against the Cartesian skeptic, the disjunctivist develops an account of the good case. First, according to the disjunctivist, in the good case one knows (or is in a position to know) that P in virtue of perceiving that P and has grounds that are "indefeasible" (McDowell 2009a: 234), "factive" (Pritchard 2012: 13), or "truth-guaranteeing" (Kern 2017: 6). That is, one has grounds that suffice to ensure the truth of P. (In the following, I adopt Kern's "truth-guaranteeing grounds" idiom.) And, second, in the good case perception puts one in a position to know that one has such grounds. Combining these two claims we get what I will call the "Core Disjunctivist Claim":

Core Disjunctivist Claim: in the good case, one knows (or is in a position to know) that one is perceiving that P by perceiving, and therein knows (or is in a position to know) that one's grounds for judging that P are truth-guaranteeing.⁴

According to the Core Disjunctivist Claim, my capacity to perceive, we might say, is a self-conscious capacity to perceive, such that, in perceiving, I am (or am in a position to be) conscious of myself as perceiving.⁵ Indeed, as the disjunctivist understands things, my knowledge that I am perceiving (or my being in a position to know that I am perceiving) is inseparable from my having a truth-guaranteeing ground at all. As McDowell puts it, "If the animal in front of me is a zebra, and conditions are suitable for exercising my ability to recognize zebras when I see them (for instance, the animal is in full view), then that ability, fallible though it is, enables me to see that it is a zebra, and to know that I do."⁶ That is, my ability to perceive is an ability *both* to have truth-guaranteeing grounds that the world is as I perceive it to be (it "enables me to see that it is a zebra") *and* to know that I have such grounds when I do ("to know that I..." "...see that it is a zebra"). These are not two distinct abilities; the good case is defined in terms of "their" joint satisfaction because the disjunctivist understands "them" to be inseparable, to be one and not two.⁷

⁴ As I have formulated the Core Disjunctivist Claim, there are really two versions of it. According to one version, I know that P and know that I perceive that P in virtue of perceiving that P. According to the other, I am in a position to know that P and I am in a position to know that I perceive that P in virtue of perceiving that P. Disjunctivists disagree over which version is preferable. Kern, for instance, prefers the former: Cf. Kern 2017: 215-7; for a similar view, cf. Rödl 2007: 144-5 and 154-5. McDowell prefers the latter: Cf. McDowell 1998: 390 and 2002: 277; for a similar view, cf. Pritchard 2012: 25-34. This disagreement does not matter for Hegel's argument: both versions are equally subject to his criticism. I will adopt the former version to avoid needless circumlocution. Those who prefer the latter can supply the needed "position to" whenever pertinent.

⁵ For a helpful discussion that clarifies the role that self-consciousness plays in disjunctivism, cf. Lockhart 2018. It is worth mentioning the case of non-rational animals: they have the capacity to perceive without having the capacity to know that they perceive when they do. The disjunctivist line on this is that they perceive in a different sense: specifically, that their capacity to perceive is not a rational capacity to perceive. I will not discuss our relation to non-rational animals in this paper. For an insightful account that mounts a Hegelian criticism of this aspect of disjunctivism, cf. Gobsch 2017.

⁶ McDowell 2009a: 239; compare Kern 2017: 122. For a helpful account of this aspect of McDowell's thinking, cf. Haddock 2011: 26.

⁷ McDowell's formulation of the Core Disjunctivist Claim is different from the formulation that is due to Pritchard, and the difference will turn out to be significant in what follows. According to Pritchard's version, the fact that I am

What justifies the Core Disjunctivist Claim? Why think one needs truth-guaranteeing grounds, much less ones that are known to be such? In the next section, I will consider what I take to be the best argument for the Core Disjunctivist Claim. I will also argue that it does not by itself establish the Core Disjunctivist Claim, though it does establish part of it. In the sections following that, I will draw on Hegel to show that the Core Disjunctivist Claim is false, and that if we want to respect the insight in the disjunctivist's argument we shall have to depart from the Core Disjunctivist Claim and so also from disjunctivism.

§2 Motivating the Core Disjunctivist Claim as a Response to Kantian Skepticism

It is widely and rightly understood that disjunctivism is motivated in large part by an attempt to resist Cartesian skepticism. But it is less frequently understood that the view is motivated by an attempt to avoid what James Conant has called "Kantian skepticism." Cartesian skepticism is the view that the capacity to perceive that P cannot provide us with sufficient grounds for knowing that P. Kantian skepticism about perception is the view that we do not have the capacity to so much as represent the world, whether truly or falsely, through perception.⁸ I believe that the most fundamental argument in favor of the Core Disjunctivist Claim is that it is required to avoid Kantian skepticism, and it is this argument that I will explore in this section. Further, I will show that the argument for avoiding Kantian skepticism does succeed in justifying part of the Core Disjunctivist Claim, but that it falls short of justifying the whole claim.

The capacity to perceive is the source of both perceptions, in the good case, and apparent perceptions, in which – for all I know – things are not be as they seem. I will use the term

perceiving is reflectively accessible to me, such that I know that I am perceiving through exercising my capacity to reflect on what grounds are available to me (cf. Pritchard 2012: 14). I will discuss this version of disjunctivism in §4.1; for reasons I state there, I think it faces additional, insurmountable problems not faced by McDowell's.

⁸ As Conant puts the Kantian skeptical question, "How can my senses so much as present things as being a certain way?" (Conant 2012: 14).

“perceptual representations” to refer generically to both perceptions and apparent perceptions. To make sense of perception as a capacity to represent the world, perceptual representations must be connected to the world along lines that can be characterized in epistemic terms. By this I mean that the perceptual representations must be able to serve as my grounds for belief, and those grounds must be characterizable in epistemic terms as (to speak very generally) sufficient or insufficient to ground the belief. The Cartesian skeptic assumes this, when she claims that no act of the capacity to perceive that P provides a sufficient ground for knowledge that P. In saying that, she assumes that there is an epistemically characterizable connection between the perceptual representation of P and P. If the epistemic connection between perceptual representations and the world becomes unintelligible, then the very idea of perception as a representational capacity that can ground or fail to ground beliefs also becomes unintelligible, and we are forced into Kantian skepticism: skepticism about my capacity to so much as (in an epistemically significant sense) represent the world through perception.

The disjunctivist argues that the Cartesian skeptic cannot make sense of the epistemically characterizable connection between perceptual representations and what they represent. For the Cartesian skeptic takes herself to show that every act of the capacity to perceive is such that we can perform that act while the world is not as it seems to us to be. According to the Cartesian skeptic, an act of the capacity to perceive may be *causally* dependent on the world’s being a certain way. But the way the world seems to us to be, and the way the world is, are disconnected: there is no need for the world to be as it seems to us to be to cause us to perceptually represent that the world is that way. As a result, every act of the capacity to perceive decomposes into a causal component and a representational component.

The causal component cannot render intelligible the application of epistemic characterizations to that which it causes: the effect on the subject, thought about just as a result of a causal impact from the world, is neither a sufficient nor an insufficient ground for belief. This is the familiar point that McDowell makes against those who succumb to some form of the Myth of the Given (e.g., Quine).⁹ Since the representational component is not, by its nature, connected to the way the world in fact is, and the causal component does not explain that connection, then the connection itself becomes mysterious.

To better see the mysteriousness of the connection, consider that the content of a belief grounded in perception must come from somewhere. If perceptual representations were by their nature connected to the way the world in fact is, then we could say that the content of the belief could be explained by appealing to the perception, which, by its nature, acquires its content from the world. But, according to the Cartesian skeptic, the perceptual state is a belief-like state in that it can be either true or false. As such, we have to explain how it acquires the content it has. At this point, it is tempting to appeal to that which causes it. Perhaps the cause of the perceptual representation can explain how it has content of some kind. But what we need is not just any kind of content: we need epistemically characterizable content, content that can be either a sufficient or an insufficient ground for belief. And the cause of the perception, unless it is already conceived as a rationally characterizable cause, cannot explain how the perception acquires epistemically characterizable content. So that kind of content becomes mysterious. The Cartesian skeptic has no account of how a perceptual representation can represent the world (in an epistemically characterizable way). Consequently, the Cartesian skeptic must become a Kantian skeptic. But Kantian skepticism is itself inconsistent with the Cartesian skeptic's starting point, that we can represent the world, and so must be rejected.

⁹ Cf. McDowell 1996: 1-23, 129-146.

The immediate lesson the disjunctivist draws from this is that the only way to explain how beliefs have content is to appeal to perception, understood as a different kind of mental act which is receptive of the way the world is in a way that a belief is not.¹⁰ According to disjunctivism, one avoids Kantian skepticism if the capacity to perceive is one which, in the good case, represents that *P* in virtue of *P*'s being the case. Of course, there can be bad cases, but the capacity to perceive is a capacity to represent that *P* in virtue of *P*'s being the case, and all bad cases are only intelligible as defective exercises of the capacity to perceive. The philosophical point of saying this is that it removes any mystery about how perception is a capacity to represent the world that is epistemically characterizable, and such as to provide grounds (whether sufficient or insufficient) for belief. A happy consequence of this view about what it takes to respond to Kantian skepticism is the rejection of Cartesian skepticism.

The significance of the appeal to Kantian skepticism might be highlighted by considering how it helps resolve the debate between disjunctivists and defenders of a view of perceptual knowledge on which one does not need truth-guaranteeing grounds. On this non-disjunctivist line of thought, one rather needs something less than truth-guaranteeing grounds – for instance, one needs to exclude only those alternatives that are relevant to the claim one puts forward (or relevant in the context in which one puts the claim forward). Defenders of such a view typically claim that the demand for truth-guaranteeing grounds is precisely what leads to (Cartesian) skepticism, as we are never in a position to exclude all possible alternatives. The only way to avoid skepticism is to accept the skeptic's point that we cannot have truth-guaranteeing grounds, and then articulate a conception of knowledge which requires less than that.¹¹

¹⁰ Cf. McDowell 1996: 25, McDowell 2009a, and Kern 2017: 107-115.

¹¹ What counts as relevant may be determined by my beliefs and commitments, or it may be determined by factors I am unaware of. That difference is immaterial for the purposes of the contrast I am drawing with disjunctivism. For an incisive account (with detailed discussion of variants of this non-disjunctivist strategy), cf. Kern 2017: 76-95.

The disjunctivist may respond that if the subject cannot exclude the possibility that what she believes is false, then for all she knows, her belief may be false. That is, there is no way for the subject to arrive at a position in which she can exclude the possibility that her perceptually-grounded beliefs are false. So, the disjunctivist thinks, she must accept skepticism about perceptually grounded beliefs.¹² Rather than imposing an overly demanding conception of what is required for knowledge, the disjunctivist thinks her position is the only genuine alternative to skepticism, that the other view is really skepticism in denial.

So each side in this dispute insists that the other, despite its intentions, leads to (Cartesian) skepticism. This debate may seem to stalemate, so long as we confine our attention to Cartesian skepticism. But if we step back to consider the possibility that an account of perception might lead to Kantian skepticism, then the debate looks like it favors the disjunctivist. For the non-disjunctivist position accepts the Cartesian picture of perception, in particular the always defeasible connection between a perceptual representation and the world it represents. And the disjunctivist, as we have seen, offers an argument that that conception of perception slides into Kantian skepticism.

With this argument, we establish what I will call the “Disjunctivist’s Insight”:

Disjunctivist’s Insight: in the good case, I know that I am perceiving that P, and so know that I have truth-guaranteeing grounds that P.

The Disjunctivist’s Insight is an important component of the Core Disjunctivist Claim. It is justified by the argument advanced in this section, and an account of perception must respect it on pain of sliding surreptitiously into Kantian skepticism.¹³

¹² Cf. Kern 2017: 92, McDowell 2013: 148, and McDowell 2019: 38-9.

¹³ That Hegel means to accept the Disjunctivist’s Insight is plain from his treatment of consciousness (as already conscious of its grounds) in the Introduction and Perception chapters of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*; it is also evident from his early essay on skepticism (cf. Hegel 2.250, 254-7).

One might try to resist this conclusion by conceding to the disjunctivist that one needs truth-guaranteeing grounds, but arguing that one does not need those grounds to be known as such (cf. Williamson 2000). I do not have the space in this paper to work out the disjunctivist's response to this view in detail, but a brief response will help clarify how the disjunctivist thinks about these matters. The basic argument will be the same as the argument against externalism: it fails to make sense of the epistemically characterizable connection of perceptual representations to the world. For if I am in a state that guarantees that P, but do not know that about the state, then I cannot determine that P on the basis of being in the state. I am in a state that ensures that the world is a certain way. But I do not know that it does. Being in the state, then, is irrelevant to me in determining what to believe: it is neither a sufficient nor an insufficient ground for my belief. Even if the state is thought of as a representational state, of perceiving that P, it is not understood to be thereby an epistemically significant state for the one in it. It thus makes epistemically significant perceptual representations of the world unintelligible. And so, for the disjunctivist, this approach slides into Kantian skepticism.¹⁴

I turn now to consider where the Disjunctivist's Insight leaves us. The Insight naturally raises a question as to how one knows, in perceiving that P, that one is perceiving that P. What is the source of that knowledge? In response to this question, the disjunctivist makes a further claim which I will call the "Disjunctivist's Dogma":

Disjunctivist's Dogma: In the good case, perception is the source of the knowledge that I am perceiving, and so the source of the knowledge that I have truth-guaranteeing grounds.

¹⁴ This criticism has been developed most thoroughly by Sebastian Rödl (cf. 2007: 135-45, 2018: 84-93). Of course, my paragraph of text is not enough to establish that the disjunctivist is right in response to someone like Williamson; much more would need to be said. But it is interesting, and to my mind telling, that in the debate as it has so far played out, Williamson and his defenders have (to my knowledge) never addressed the threat posed by Kantian skepticism. As a result, that side of the dispute has at the very least not adequately addressed the disjunctivist's objections. For an instructive example of what the debate looks like when you miss this, cf. Littlejohn 2019, and note especially his understanding of "normative standing" in his interpretation of McDowell.

Together, the Disjunctivist's Insight and the Disjunctivist's Dogma make up the Core Disjunctivist Claim.¹⁵

The argument of this section, if it establishes anything, only establishes the Disjunctivist's Insight. It does nothing to corroborate the Disjunctivist's Dogma. In the next section, I will argue that Hegel has a powerful objection to the Disjunctivist's Dogma, and in the following section I will support that objection against several responses that disjunctivists might make on behalf of their dogma. The result of those sections will be that we must reject the Disjunctivist's Dogma and, with it, the Core Disjunctivist Claim. We have to find a non-disjunctivist explanation of the knowledge expressed in the Disjunctivist's Insight.

§3 The Hegelian Response to Disjunctivism

Hegel argues that the capacity to perceive cannot be the source of our knowledge that we perceive P when we perceive P. As such, he provides an argument against the Disjunctivist's Dogma.

To respect the Disjunctivist's Insight, one needs to explain how we can know that perception provides truth-guaranteeing grounds. To unpack Hegel's argument, it will help to draw out what one might describe as the world-facing side of this: to claim that perception provides truth-guaranteeing grounds is, in part, to claim that the perceivable can exist. More formally, where P is a possible object of perception, and where "object" refers to worldly correlates of complements of that-clauses (facts), then P can be the case. The world, that is, might be such that P. This would not be so if the nature of things in the world made those things in principle inaccessible to perception: in Hegel's terms, in that case there would be "an

¹⁵ There are two versions of both the Disjunctivist's Insight and the Disjunctivist's Dogma, depending on whether one wants to say that in perceiving I must know that I am perceiving or merely that in perceiving I must be in a position to know that I am perceiving: cf. [footnote 4](#).

unknown *thinghood-in-itself*... ascribed to the object *behind* the cognition.”¹⁶ In that case, as we might put it, our capacity to perceive would not conform to the world, nor the world to it: they would, as I shall say, be alien to each other. It is unlikely that Hegel has these examples in mind, but such a scenario might arise if the nature of the world was such that only numbers existed, or if the world were not spatiotemporal. In those cases, while there may even be some kind of systematic correlation between what we seem to perceive and what is the case, the capacity to perceive could not provide truth-guaranteeing grounds. Whenever we claim to know on the basis of perception, we either presuppose or know that such scenarios do not obtain.

That the disjunctivist is claiming that the perceivable can exist has not gotten much (any) attention, perhaps because it is taken to be obvious that the perceivable can exist. Nevertheless, Hegel’s argument will dispute the disjunctivist’s entitlement to the claim that the perceivable can exist, and thereby to the claim that perception provides truth-guaranteeing grounds.

Hegel’s argument naturally breaks down into three steps. First, the claim that the perceivable can exist is synthetic, and so in need of justification. Second, no act of perceiving that P, or perceptually representing P, can provide that justification. Third, my capacity to perceive cannot itself provide that justification. The conclusion is that the Disjunctivist’s Dogma is false: I cannot know that my grounds for P are truth-guaranteeing through perception.

§3.1 The Claim that the Perceivable Can Exist Needs Justification

First, the claim that the perceivable can exist is synthetic, and so in need of justification. That a claim is synthetic means that its opposite contains no contradiction. And the claim that nothing perceivable can exist does not seem to involve any contradiction. Perception, after all, is

¹⁶ Hegel 6.499-500/12.200-201. For this quote, and the ones that follow, Hegel is not talking just about perception but about all cognitive capacities in which what is to be known is existentially independent of the knowledge of it.

just a capacity of a finite rational creature – how could there be a contradiction in the claim that the world, by its nature, is alien to it? Moreover, it is easy to conjure up worlds which, by their nature, are alien to the capacity to perceive: a world of numbers, a non-spatiotemporal world, a world of spirits, a world of totally causally isolated objects, etc. If that was the nature of the world, then the perceivable could not exist. This suggests that there is no contradiction contained in the claim that nothing perceivable can exist. And that means we need some reason for thinking that the perceivable can exist.

According to Hegel, the possibility that the world is alien to our capacity to perceive arises because in perceptually representing that P, I (at best) know that P but I do not know why P is the case. I know that the tree exists because I see it. But the tree does not exist because I see it, and my seeing it does not give me knowledge of what caused the tree to exist. I might know why the tree exists through further acts of perception, but those acts will in turn have different objects, and those acts will not provide knowledge of why their objects are the case. In general, there is no act of perception which gives us knowledge of why what that very act perceives is so. For Hegel, the fact that perceiving that P does not give me knowledge of why P is the case is an upshot of the fact that, in perception, the object that I perceive must be given to me: perception has “a content the foundation of which *is given*.”¹⁷ Where what I know is given to me, my knowledge that it exists does not bring with it knowledge of that which brings it about.¹⁸ So, perceiving that P provides me with a truth-guaranteeing ground for the claim that P, but it does not provide me with an answer to the question of “Why P?” This feature of perception, Hegel thinks, opens up a question: how do I know that the causal order of the world is such as to

¹⁷ Hegel 6.499-500/12.200-201.

¹⁸ This would not be the case where the knowledge in question is productive, as in (Hegel thinks) practical knowledge. When my knowledge is productive of its object, then knowledge that P is inseparable from knowledge of why P. I know that I should avoid hitting him with my car. Why? Because I know that is immoral. I could not know that I should avoid hitting him unless I knew why. Cf. his discussion of the good at 6.541-2/12.231-2.

produce Ps that can be perceived? The first step in Hegel's argument is just that this question is a genuine one.

A more concrete scenario will help focus our discussion. The scenario has its origin in Kant. It seems to be possible, that the variety of what would be available to us through perception might be so great that we could no longer be said to perceive what would otherwise be available to us through perception. For instance, it is possible that the motion of the planets were accompanied by further changes: every segment of the motion of Jupiter might be accompanied by a change in its size, shape, color, density, gravitational pull on its moons, number of its moons, amount of radiation emitted. This list can be extended, in principle, indefinitely. Moreover, we might further envision that the motion of Mars (etc.) produces an equally long list of changes in Jupiter. We can make the changes as variegated as we want. At some point of complication, it seems that we will no longer be able to perceive Jupiter. And if we make all changes similarly complex, we will no longer be able to perceive anything. The world will still be causally ordered – the imagined scenario is not one of primordial chaos – but that order will not yield objects that are perceivable by us.¹⁹ This scenario seems to be possible. And without having grounds for concluding that it is not actual, we cannot know that the perceivable can exist. Let us call such a scenario, following Kant, the scenario of “Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity” (cf. Kant 20:209). The logically fundamental feature of such a scenario is that the nature of the world – the “empirical laws” and “natural forms” that explain worldly things and

¹⁹ Kant, it seems, never went so far as to cast in doubt that objects in the so-variegated world would be perceivable – he is instead worried that we could form no explanatorily significant empirical concepts of such objects (cf., e.g., AA 20: 213). But if we suppose the world to be sufficiently variegated that we can form no explanatorily significant empirical concepts, then for a given thing like Jupiter we would have no notion of the sorts of regularities it could be subject to, nor of the accidents it could have, nor of the changes it might or might not undergo. At that point it is unclear what it would be to perceive something, especially if we follow the disjunctivists and take perception to have as its object something worldly (and not a mere appearance). We must have some grasp, however implicit, of the kind of thing it is, if we are to perceive it.

their antics – might be alien to our capacity to perceive those things and their antics (Kant 20:209). In short, as I will put it,

Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity: the causal order of the world does not yield objects (worldly complements of that-clauses, facts) that are capable of being perceived.²⁰

To know that the perceivable can exist, we must have sufficient reason to reject Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity.

§3.2 The Justification Cannot Come from an Act of the Capacity to Perceive

What the disjunctivist needs, then, are reasons to reject Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity. Such reasons might be based in perception: after all, I do perceive that Jupiter moves. The second step in Hegel's argument is that no such reason suffices. Perception can only serve as my reason for dismissing Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity if I have reason to claim that perception provides reasons for belief. And perception only provides reason for belief if the perceivable can exist, which is only true if Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity is not the case. Hence, on pain of circularity, perception cannot provide my grounds for the claim that the perceivable can exist.

One could reject the second step of Hegel's argument by accepting some version of reliabilism: perception can provide me with grounds for the claim that the perceivable can exist so long as it is in fact the case that perception is reliable. For, if perception is reliable, then the perceivable can exist. And, on this position, I can rely on perception without knowing that it is

²⁰ Hegel nowhere considers the scenario Kant is worried about explicitly. In his argument, he simply insists on the general point that what he calls "theoretical cognition," his Kant-derived label for all forms of cognition that rely on being given their objects, is unable to account for how it is able to know the world. He remains at this very general level in part because of lessons he took from Fichte about Kant's scenario: cf. the helpful discussion by Karen Ng in her 2020: chapters 2 and 3, and consider Hegel's response to Fichte in his early *Differenzschrift* at 2.63-5. (I acknowledge that much more would have to be said than I can say here to show that my argument tracks Hegel's on this point.)

reliable. But this option is not available to the disjunctivist: for her, my grounds, and their epistemic quality, must be available to me to serve as my grounds, on pain of Kantian skepticism.

One might also try to reject the second step of Hegel's argument through the following argument: I perceive that P. I could not perceive that P if Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity. So, we have sufficient reason to reject Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity. After all, if Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity, then I would not be able to perceive that P. More strongly, I could not even perceptually represent P if Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity: if the world were too complicated for me to perceive, then I would not be able to perceptually represent anything, and in place of such perceptual representations there would be apparent blooming, buzzing confusion (something "less than a dream," in the words of Kant). But I certainly can perceptually represent P – not even the Cartesian skeptic denies that. So, we have reason to reject Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity.

In fact, this argument only shows that we need some reason to reject Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity if we are to make sense of the fact that we perceptually represent P. It purports to show that we have some reason to reject Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity, namely that we perceptually represent P. If Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity obtains, then (by the argument from the previous paragraph) we cannot perceptually represent P. And if we cannot perceptually represent P, then no act of perceptual representation can supply us with a reason to reject Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity. To think that our reason for rejecting Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity could be an act of perceptual representation is just to fall into a vicious circle: we can only know that such an act is possible, if we have some antecedent reason to reject Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity. (If this argument is not yet convincing, reflect on this:

Perhaps things would appear perceptible, regardless of whether they are. For my capacity to perceive might impose an artificial order on what is presented to it. How can I know that it does not? Surely not through an act of perceptual representation.)

The response mistakenly assumes that we have already entitled ourselves to the fact that we perceptually represent P: that is, like the typical response to disjunctivism considered in §2, it assumes that Kantian skepticism is off the table. And of course we do perceptually represent P – the fact that we do is not in question. What is in question is whether the view of perception under consideration can make sense of that fact. And the point of the second step in Hegel’s argument is that the view cannot make sense of that fact through appealing to an act of the capacity to perceptually represent P – an act the possibility of which is itself put into question by Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity.

The response to the second step in Hegel’s argument does reveal something important, which is that the possibility of Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity is a skeptical threat of a Kantian variety: it threatens our capacity to perceptually represent the world, whether truly or falsely. And Hegel is aware of this: as he puts it, on a view according to which perception is the source of our knowledge that things are perceptible “no rational being can even consider itself to be in *possession of a representation* of something.”²¹ That is, he thinks that the result of being unable to reject Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity is Kantian skepticism. So, we need some reason to reject Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity on pain of Kantian skepticism. And that reason cannot come from an act of perceiving that P or an act of perceptually representing that P.

²¹ RSP 2.254/4.225. This quote comes from Hegel’s early essay on skepticism, and it is a response to Schulze. My use of the quote assumes that Schulze is a kind of common sense realist about perception and a skeptic about philosophy, such that the common sense position that perception is a capacity for knowledge can stand alone, without the support of any philosophical considerations grounded in reason or some other cognitive capacity. This interpretation of Schulze is contested; for a defense of this view of Schulze and of Hegel’s response to it, cf. Bowman 2003: 120-9, 152; for the (more common view) that Schulze is (understood by Hegel to be) a Cartesian skeptic about perception, cf. Forster 1989: 13-4, 188-9; Bristow 2007: 107-10, 141-2.

Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity is disturbing precisely insofar as it calls into question the intelligibility of those acts.

§3.3 The Justification Cannot Come from the Capacity to Perceive

The third step in Hegel's argument is meant to show that we cannot justify the claim that the perceivable can exist from the capacity to perceive. I cannot know something about the world I (putatively) perceive just by articulating the nature of my capacity to perceive. I might be able to know the form of my capacity to perceive from such reflections, and so know what it *means* to claim that the perceivable can exist. But knowledge of the form of my capacity to perceive does not by itself provide knowledge that the world is any particular way. One could arrive at knowledge of the world through reflecting on the nature of one's capacity to perceive if one had knowledge of the connection between the capacity to perceive and the world. But knowledge of that connection requires a ground, a ground that cannot be found simply from reflecting on the content of the claim that the perceivable can exist, or the content of any other claim one might make about the capacity to perceive solely on the basis of reflecting on its nature.

Couldn't the disjunctivist just insist that, by definition, perception is factive, and known to be such *a priori*? But the disjunctivist cannot simply stipulate that we have *a priori* knowledge that perception is factive: that has to unfold from, or at least be consistent with, the conception of perception that disjunctivism articulates. And while it is true that the disjunctivist intends to arrive at such a conception of perception, Hegel's argument is directed at her attempt to do so. He argues that to know that perception is factive requires knowing something about the relation between perception and the world: namely, that the perceivable can exist. And we cannot know that simply from the definition of perception.

Knowledge that perception provides truth-guaranteeing grounds presupposes that the perceivable can exist. That the perceivable can exist is a synthetic claim, and so stands in need of justification. In particular, we must have justification for rejecting Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity. Our justification for that claim cannot come from perception: it can come neither from an act of the capacity to perceive, nor from the capacity to perceive itself. So, perception cannot be the source of our knowledge that perception provides truth-guaranteeing grounds. It follows that the disjunctivist strategy for explaining the knowledge contained in the Disjunctivist's Insight fails: we must reject the Disjunctivist's Dogma. Disjunctivism does not explain how we can know that the perceivable can exist and so does not explain how we can know that perception provides truth-guaranteeing grounds.

§4

Having explained Hegel's argument, in this section I consider and respond to further objections that are suggested by the writings of various disjunctivists. I first consider the objection, inspired by McDowell, that Hegel's argument misses the point of disjunctivism, by illegitimately raising the standard of what counts as an adequate response to skepticism. I then consider the objection, inspired by Pritchard, that Hegel's argument misses that one can justify the claim that the perceivable can exist by appealing to our capacity to reflect (as opposed to our capacity to perceive). And I finally consider the objection, inspired by Kern, that one can save the Disjunctivist's Dogma by being a formal idealist, such that being (or one form of it) is defined in terms of being perceivable. The responses to each of the objections bolster Hegel's original argument, and shed further light on the scope of Hegel's objection to disjunctivism, and

thereby indirectly illuminate what we must look for in an adequate explanation of the knowledge contained in the Disjunctivist's Insight.

§4.1 The Proper Standard

The first response I would like to consider to Hegel's argument is directed at no specific step in the argument, but rather at what the argument seems to assume disjunctivism is meant to do. McDowell, (in)famously, has claimed that a disjunctivist only needs to show that she can ignore the skeptic in an intellectually responsible manner – she need not refute the skeptic. And one might argue on behalf of McDowell against Hegel that Hegel's argument in §3 assumes that disjunctivism is meant to refute skepticism, and so raises the standard for responses to skepticism beyond what the disjunctivist would accept.

To assess this response, we first have to get clearer on the standard that disjunctivism is to be held to when responding to Cartesian skepticism. As McDowell puts it, a sufficient response to Cartesian skepticism will show that “we *can* make sense of the idea of direct perceptual access to objective facts about the environment” (2009a: 228). That is, Cartesian skepticism is only worth taking seriously insofar as it threatens our grasp of the possibility of such direct perceptual access. The sheer possibility of a Cartesian skeptical scenario – of a demon systematically deceiving us – is not worth taking seriously, for McDowell, except insofar as it threatens our grasp of the possibility of direct perceptual access.

Hegel's argument does not consist in raising this standard. According to this standard, the disjunctivist has to make sense of, or reveal to be possible, our “direct perceptual access to objective facts.” According to the argument the disjunctivist herself advances, that turns out to mean that one must make sense of the Disjunctivist's Insight: the fact that in the good case, I

know that I am perceiving that P, and so know that I have truth-guaranteeing grounds that P. To make sense of that, or to reveal it to be so much as possible, requires offering an account of how we can have the knowledge the Insight expresses. Without such an account, the disjunctivist has not made sense of the idea of direct perceptual access to objective facts by the very standard the disjunctivist herself has set. And Hegel's argument shows that the disjunctivist's explanation of how we can have the knowledge contained in the Insight does not work. Hence, Hegel's argument does not raise the standard the disjunctivist sets for what a successful response to Cartesian skepticism looks like.

§4.2 Reflective Accessibility

The second response I would like to consider consists in exploring a different source of the knowledge that perception provides truth-guaranteeing grounds. Hegel's argument, as I have stated it, targets the Disjunctivist's Dogma, the claim that the source of our knowledge that perception provides truth-guaranteeing grounds is perception. If there were some other source, then Hegel's argument would be incomplete, as it does not eliminate that possible source of the knowledge that the perceivable can exist. But at least one prominent disjunctivist seems to reject the Dogma.

The Pritchardian disjunctivist thinks I know that I have truth-guaranteeing grounds that P not through perceiving that P, but through exercising my capacity to reflect on what is available to me in perception (Pritchard 2012: 14; for similar formulations, cf. Millar 2008 and Cunningham 2016). So, it seems, we have a version of disjunctivism that is not committed to the Dogma. Someone who defends this version of disjunctivism, then, might respond to Hegel's argument by invoking the capacity to reflect as that which grounds the claim that the perceivable

can exist. That the perceivable can exist is, the Pritchardian might say, reflectively accessible to me.

Pritchard's version of disjunctivism has given rise to a significant objection, known in the literature as the "access problem." If I know that I am perceiving that P through reflection, then, through a further act of reflection that perception is factive, I can conclude that P. So, I know that P, an empirical claim, through reflection, hence I know it *a priori*. That is of course absurd.²² Importantly, the problem only arises if disjunctivism is understood to involve the view that I know that I am perceiving through exercising the non-perceptual capacity to reflect, or the view that what McDowell identifies as two aspects of one capacity are in fact two acts of different capacities. For the access problem arises only if I can exercise the capacity to reflect independently of exercising the capacity to perceive. And once the two capacities are separated in this way, it is unclear how to tie them back together such that the capacity to reflect only gives us the kind of knowledge we want.²³

I believe that the access problem objection to Pritchardian disjunctivism is a sufficient reason to reject this formulation of disjunctivism, and so his response to Hegel's challenge. But there are important lessons we can learn by considering whether Pritchard's formulation of disjunctivism genuinely departs from the Disjunctivist Dogma. As a first step in indicating that it does not, I want to show that Hegel's argument also applies to Pritchardian disjunctivism. To see this, contrast the role of reflection in the Pritchardian view's general account, and the role it would have to play to respond to Hegel's worry. One of the standard worries raised about

²² For helpful treatments of the access problem, cf. Boulton 2017 and Ranalli 2019.

²³ Kaft 2015 comes very close to saying this, in his criticism of Pritchard's formulation of disjunctivism: cf. Kaft 2015: 327-30. But because he takes the appeal to reflective access to be definitive of the second disjunctivist claim about the good case, he fails to draw the conclusion that a disjunctivist should just claim that perceiving that P (as opposed to reflecting on one's perceiving that P) is the ground for knowing that one perceives that P. Lockhart 2018 makes essentially the same point against Pritchard's understanding of disjunctivism, not in terms of a discussion of reflective accessibility but rather in terms of our self-conscious possession of the capacity to perceive (cf. Lockhart 2018: 23-8).

disjunctivism in general is: how we can know that we perceive when we do? The Pritchardian says: we know that we perceive that P by reflection (on the act of perception itself). Perhaps that answer is sufficient for responding to this standard worry (though, again, I have my doubts). But the Hegelian worry is quite different. His worry is: how do I know that what I perceptually represent *can* be the case?

The envisioned Pritchardian answer to that question is that I know that perceivable things can exist through exercising my capacity to reflect. But how does reflection provide that knowledge? The capacity to reflect must reflect on something. For the Pritchardian, what I reflect on is what is available to me through the exercise of my capacity to perceive. But, as we saw above in discussing the second step in Hegel's argument, my act of perceiving cannot provide evidence, even reflectively accessible evidence, for the claim that the perceivable can exist, since any evidence it provides depends upon prior knowledge that the perceivable can exist. The act of reflection can at most tell me that, if the perceivable can exist, then this act is an act of perception, and so provides factive grounds for belief. Hence, it must presuppose that the perceivable can exist. This shows that the Pritchardian is in fact committed to the Disjunctivist's Dogma, that perception is the source of the knowledge that we perceive. The Pritchardian just adds that in addition to perception we need to invoke a further capacity as well.

Further, one can construct a line of reasoning about the capacity to reflect that is exactly parallel to the line of reasoning directed against the capacity to perceive from the prior section. The capacity to reflect is supposed to yield knowledge that the perceivable can exist. But our grounds for any claims about the world made on the basis of reflection will, by reasoning parallel to the reasoning in the previous section, have to presuppose that R (the possible object of reflection) can be the case. It raises parallel possibilities to those that I originally raised about the

capacity to perceive: perhaps the world is alien to our capacity to reflect. Indeed, the world might be sufficiently complicated that nothing in it is available to our reflection.²⁴ Hence, we need some reason to think that the world is not alien to the capacity to reflect, some reason to think that “the reflectable” can exist. And it should already be obvious that the capacity to reflect cannot itself provide that reason.

Initially, it seemed that Pritchard’s appeal to reflection constitutes an alternative formulation of disjunctivism that does without the Disjunctivist’s Dogma. But we can now see that that is just a misleading appearance: the capacity to reflect only gives us knowledge of what perception makes available to us, and so ultimately on Pritchard’s view perception itself still plays the fundamental role in explaining how we can have knowledge that we are perceiving, and so know that we have truth-guaranteeing grounds.

Moreover, we have also seen that Hegel’s argument would apply to any appeal to the capacity to reflect, even an appeal on which one reflected on something other than what is made available through perception. And that in turn suggests that the target of Hegel’s response is not just the Dogma, but something wider. Hegel’s objection targets any view that attempts to explain the knowledge contained in the Disjunctivist’s Insight by appealing to a capacity for which some variant of Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity arises. In the conclusion, I’ll turn to say something about what Hegel thought an explanation would have to look like to avoid raising a variant of the scenario.

²⁴ The capacity to reflect that Pritchard draws on was originally meant (by, e.g., Chisholm) to explain such things as how I know that it seems to me that P or how I know that the color red appears to me. It might be thought that no skeptical worry arises here: it may seem incoherent to suppose that our seemings might be alien to our capacity to reflect on those seemings. This issue does not matter for our purposes, because the capacity that is meant to answer Hegel’s worry needs to be a capacity that yields knowledge of how things are, and not merely knowledge of how things seem.

§4.3 Formal Idealism

Hegel's objection centrally rests on the difficulty in explaining synthetic *a priori* knowledge of the world. As such, perhaps the most obvious response to his objection would be to consider some form of Kantian idealism. To take this approach would be to reject the third step in Hegel's argument. For, according to Kantian idealism, knowledge of the form of our perception does amount to knowledge of the world, and so does yield knowledge that the perceivable can exist. And, indeed, many prominent disjunctivists (McDowell, Kern) are explicitly indebted to Kant. And one of them (Kern) develops a Kant-inspired formal idealist response to the kind of worries that underlie Hegel's objection. I will first articulate Kern's formal idealist view and how it might be used to respond to Hegel's objection, before turning to explain why the response cannot work.

Formal idealism is the view, or really family of views, according to which to be is to be a possible object of one or more of our cognitive capacities. So, for instance, to be is to be thinkable; or to be is to be knowable; or to be is to be perceivable. Formal idealism, as a claim about the form or nature of worldly objects, should be sharply distinguished from what one might call material idealism. Material idealism is the view that being is understood in terms of being an *actual* object of cognitive capacities (or of one cognitive capacity). So, to be is to be thought, or known, or perceived. Berkeley is the most famous representative of material idealism. Formal idealism, like material idealism, understands being in terms of our cognitive capacities; but unlike material idealism it understands being as a possible object of one or more of those capacities. For our purposes, the version of formal idealism that matters is the view that to be, or at least one of way of being, is to be perceivable (cf. Kern 2017: 256, 271).

In explaining Hegel's objection, I noted that the claim that the perceivable can exist is a synthetic claim, such that there is no contradiction in the thought that the perceivable cannot exist. The formal idealist version of disjunctivism concedes this. But the formal idealist version argues that our capacity to perceive "constitutes" (Kern's term) a way of being.²⁵ That is, in addition to being a capacity by which we can be given objects in the world, the capacity to perceive is a capacity which constitutes or is responsible for the possibility of those objects that we can be given.

So, for the formal idealist disjunctivist, the capacity to perceive issues forth in two kinds of acts. By definition, and paradigmatically, it is exercised in perception, and claims known on its basis. And, for the formal idealist, it is exercised in an act that constitutes the form of that which it knows. This kind of act creates the possibility of its object, whereas perception receives or is given its object.

Importantly, the formal idealist disjunctivist does not claim that one can know, through the creative act, that there *actually* is anything perceivable. I cannot possibly know through the creative act that, for instance, there are cats, or storms, or anything else. But, intuitively at least, the capacity to perceive cannot be in act if there is nothing to perceive – or, more simply, if there is nothing to perceive, then the capacity to perceive can provide no knowledge. Since the creative act is meant to be an act of the capacity to perceive, it cannot yield knowledge of anything, and so cannot yield knowledge of the form of the world, unless we somehow know – in a logically separate act – that there is something to perceive. As we cannot know that there is something to perceive through the creative act, we must know it through a receptive act of the capacity to perceive. But that receptive act can provide knowledge that there is something to perceive only if the creative act provides knowledge of the form of the world. And the creative

²⁵ Kern 2017: 256

act provides knowledge of the form of the world only if the receptive act provides knowledge that there is something to perceive. This circle is vicious: the creative act cannot secure the connection to the world, as it is made possible by the very receptive acts it was supposed to make possible.²⁶

Returning to the skeptical scenario we have been considering: it seems to be possible that the world might be so variegated that it would be impossible for us to perceive it. The formal idealist disjunctivist tries to exclude this possibility by appealing to an act of the capacity to perceive which constitutes the form of the world, such that it can no longer be too variegated. But that form constituting act is only an act in which the form of the world is constituted if there is reason to exclude the possibility that the world is that variegated. The formal idealist requires antecedent reason to believe that objects in the world are not too variegated to be perceived. Such antecedent reason could only come through a receptive act, which is to say an act of perception. So, the objective validity of the form-constituting act is in turn dependent upon a prior act of perception; but that, of course, creates a vicious circle.

So, Kern attempts to respond to Hegel's worries by appealing to a kind of creative act: specifically, an act which constitutes the form of that which it knows, such that a variant of Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity could no longer arise. The trouble is that the strategy cannot be made to work for the capacity to perceive itself: the capacity to perceive, as a capacity for receptive knowledge, is not the sort of capacity that can constitute the form of that which it

²⁶ One of Hegel's frequent complaints about formal idealism is that it amounts to no more than mere "assurance" that to be is to be for a cognizer, an assurance which formal idealism "can neither itself comprehend nor enable others to comprehend" (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, paragraph 234; consider also Hegel 2.307-8). My hope is to have explained why he thought that.

knows, at least not in a way that overcomes the skeptical threat of a world that is alien to the capacity.²⁷ Again, the source of the trouble is the Dogma.

Conclusion

The Disjunctivist's Insight is needed in order to avert the threat of Kantian skepticism. But the Disjunctivist's Dogma cannot be sustained. How, then, can we explain the knowledge contained in the Disjunctivist's Insight? More concretely, how can we rule out the possibility raised by Disturbingly Unbounded Diversity?

As noted in §3, Hegel thinks DUD, or something like it, will emerge wherever the form of knowledge under skeptical duress is receptive, or must be given its object. For a form of knowledge in which we must be given an object is a form of knowledge in which we know that P without thereby knowing why P is the case: the grounds for our knowledge that P is the case is its being given to us, while the grounds for P's being the case is not contained in its being given to us. The tree does not exist because I see it. And, wherever the knowledge that P is separable from the knowledge of why P, in knowing that P we will have to presuppose that the ground of why things are the case will yield objects that conform to our knowledge. So, to avoid the skeptical threat, we need to invoke a form of knowledge that provides not only knowledge that P but also, inseparably, knowledge of why P. Such knowledge could not be receptive.

Moreover, in discussing Kern's formal idealism, we saw the possibility that a form of knowledge might constitute the possibility of its object. We considered an argument to the

²⁷ In his early writings, Hegel describes this problem in terms of the "esotericism of philosophy," by which he meant that the knowledge that responded to the skeptical threat (which, for him, was philosophy) cannot consist in knowledge of the ordinary or everyday type: "Philosophy is, by its nature, something esoteric.... [P]hilosophy must indeed cognize the possibility that the people raise themselves to it, but it must not lower itself to the people" (2.182/4.124-5). I say more about this in my [NAME].

conclusion that this too is impossible where the knowledge in question is receptive. But that argument leaves it open that we might have a form of knowledge which does constitute the possibility of its object; it would just have to be a non-receptive form of knowledge.

We are all familiar with one non-receptive form of knowledge in which knowledge that P is inseparable from knowledge of why P: practical knowledge, at least on a traditional understanding of it. When I know that such-and-such is to be done, I know why it is to be done. And practical knowledge is not given what it knows; it is the cause of it.

It is obvious that we do not have practical knowledge that the grounds for what we know perceptually are such as produce perceivable objects. We are not the authors or creators of the explanatory principles of, or causal laws governing, things in the world. But we need a form of knowledge that is like practical knowledge in these respects: it must be non-receptive or creative and, in it, knowledge that P must be inseparable from knowledge of why P.

So, we need a non-practical form of knowledge that is not given what it knows, and so knows that the perceivable can exist and why it can: we need, to use Hegel's term, speculative knowledge. Without such a form of knowledge, we cannot respect the Disjunctivist's Insight, and so we lapse into Kantian skepticism, losing sight of how we can so much as perceptually represent the world. This form of knowledge is foreign to contemporary epistemology. Perhaps Hegel's most important contribution to philosophy was to realize that we need such a form of knowledge and, in his *Science of Logic*, to attempt to work out what it consisted of. It is time we try to recover his account of it.

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