

SUMMARY OF THE FIRST TWO CHAPTERS OF HEGEL'S *PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT*

by

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Sense-certainty is the consciousness that Truth (what is/being) lies in particular external objects. For example, considering that the mountain is true, the tree is true, and so on. But truth is not immediate. Truth is necessarily mediated, i.e. a result, implying that it is *arrived at*.

Thus, if a crime is claimed against someone before a judge, the judge does not accept it immediately as true. The truth of the claim has to be established, arrived at, through due process of presenting evidence, circumstances and arguments. The naïve realist accepts the evidence of his/her senses as true, as does the empirical scientist, but is unaware of the fact that there is process involved in making that determination.

Thoughtful analysis of the role that consciousness plays in such determination, however, leads to the conclusion that the universal representation that belongs to consciousness is the truth or being of sense-certainty and not the particular. This is called perception or perceptual consciousness. Thus whilst the particular object is maintained as object of consciousness, its essential truth is considered to be the universal that belongs to consciousness (i.e., what is mine or in me).

This situation in which the essence (truth) of an object is a universal, is that of an object perceived in the form of its universal properties, or an object that manifests itself as its properties. Thus, for example, sugar is perceived as white, crystalline, sweet, etc. Its properties are all universals, because white refers universally to many things, crystalline can refer to many different objects other than sugar, etc. Yet these properties are held to belong to one particular thing that, yet, it cannot be identified as sugar without those universal properties. Therefore, they are essential to its truth as being sugar.

The very idea of properties implies that they are the properties *of* something, so the object is implicitly preserved in the idea of “properties.” The idea of properties implies plurality or manifoldness, and since many-ness implies difference, the properties are determinate. As determinate the properties negate or exclude each other, and each is therefore a One.

The properties as One’s also exclude the object *of* which they are the properties, and likewise the object as a One excludes its properties. An object that is a One with properties is called a Thing.

To reiterate the previous conclusion, the particular object, apprehended as a One, is nonetheless essentially universal for perceptual consciousness. In spite of this, consciousness takes the object to be the essential truth and, in order to preserve that truth, considers its apprehension (the *consciousness* of the object) to be false or unessential. But perceptual consciousness knows only the various properties, and not the object itself.

The properties, as various or different from one another, are themselves sensuous universals, i.e. have being or truth in themselves. Therefore consciousness now takes what is object to it (the sensuous universals) as having sensuous being and thereby ceases to be perception and is led back to sense-certainty. This, however, is sense-certainty that is *arrived at*, unlike the immediacy of sense-certainty we started with. It is a *return* to sense-certainty, and, as such, mediation is implied.

A *return* to sense-certainty means that the object that is apprehended, necessarily includes an intermediating stage, thus the Truth of the object in its immediacy is now altered by this implicit mediation. This intermediate is consciousness’ knowledge of its own responsibility for what it is perceiving as an object. This will ultimately lead to the understanding of the object in its purity.

Consciousness oscillates between considering the Oneness of the Thing as due to itself, with the Manyness of the properties attributed to its object, or the Manyness of the properties as due to itself and the Oneness arising from the object. The Thing is then considered as having two distinct aspects: (1) the way the thing exhibits or manifests itself *to consciousness*, and (2) the way the thing is *in itself*—reflected out of the way it presents itself to consciousness. This presents the appearance of having two things: (1) the object in and for itself—having its own existence, and (2) the object as it is for consciousness.

What is *for itself* implies that it is *not* for another. What is *for* another implies *not* being for itself. Yet, how can one object have these two contradictory aspects?

To be *for itself* implies relation, and relation implies mediation or negation. Thus *for itself* is the negation of itself as immediacy or

the supersession of its immediacy. To be *for another* likewise implies the supersession of the immediacy of a thing. Therefore for—itself is essentially the same as for-another—the two can coexist without contradiction since they are identical in essence, i.e. essentially a (synthetic) unity. In this way the Thing in-and-for-itself, as having its own being, is overcome just as the immediacy of being in sense-certainty was previously overcome.

The immediacy of being in sense-certainty was overcome by universality (perception) yet this universality was afflicted by sensuousness, viz. the object was still there as *object* while its being or truth was taken up (superseded) by consciousness. Likewise the Thing is simultaneously a One (particular) as well as a manifold of properties or “free matters” (universal)—thus it is a distinct, specific Thing and is also that which is determined only in relation to other Things.

All these aspects when taken together express the full essential nature of the Thing (universal), whilst the Thing in itself still remains as an existence for another (particular). It is only when the being-for-itself of the Thing is understood as identical to its being for another that the sensuous otherness is overcome and one reaches the original synthetic unity of the Concept (*G. Begriff*) which contains all the different yet inseparable moments of essentiality, unessentiality, particularity, universality, distinction, and relatedness.

In other words, the Thing is simply of the nature of the Understanding that constitutes it, and in which all the conflicting moments are unified. This is the Unconditioned, because the Thing as a sensuous other, or thing-in-itself, is overcome by the recognition of the identity of being-for-itself and being-for-another, i.e. both are the same mediated immediacies.

Common sense or consciousness as perception thinks it is dealing with substantial things that have their own being, when in fact thought, or the activity of consciousness, is at work and present in each and every moment. Without recognizing this presence of thought in its experiences, consciousness becomes dominated by that which is abstracted from itself, as having a being on its own, and does not realize that the things which appear to be outside and beyond itself are its own essence, intimately integrated with it.



Immanuel Kant

It is in this way that perceptual consciousness fails to arrive at the Truth of Things (since it does not acknowledge the constitutive role of consciousness) and is rather left to reveal its own untruth (since it thereby deals

only with abstractions). This may also be considered a reference to Kant’s philosophy that Hegel criticized as being only at the level of perceptual consciousness.



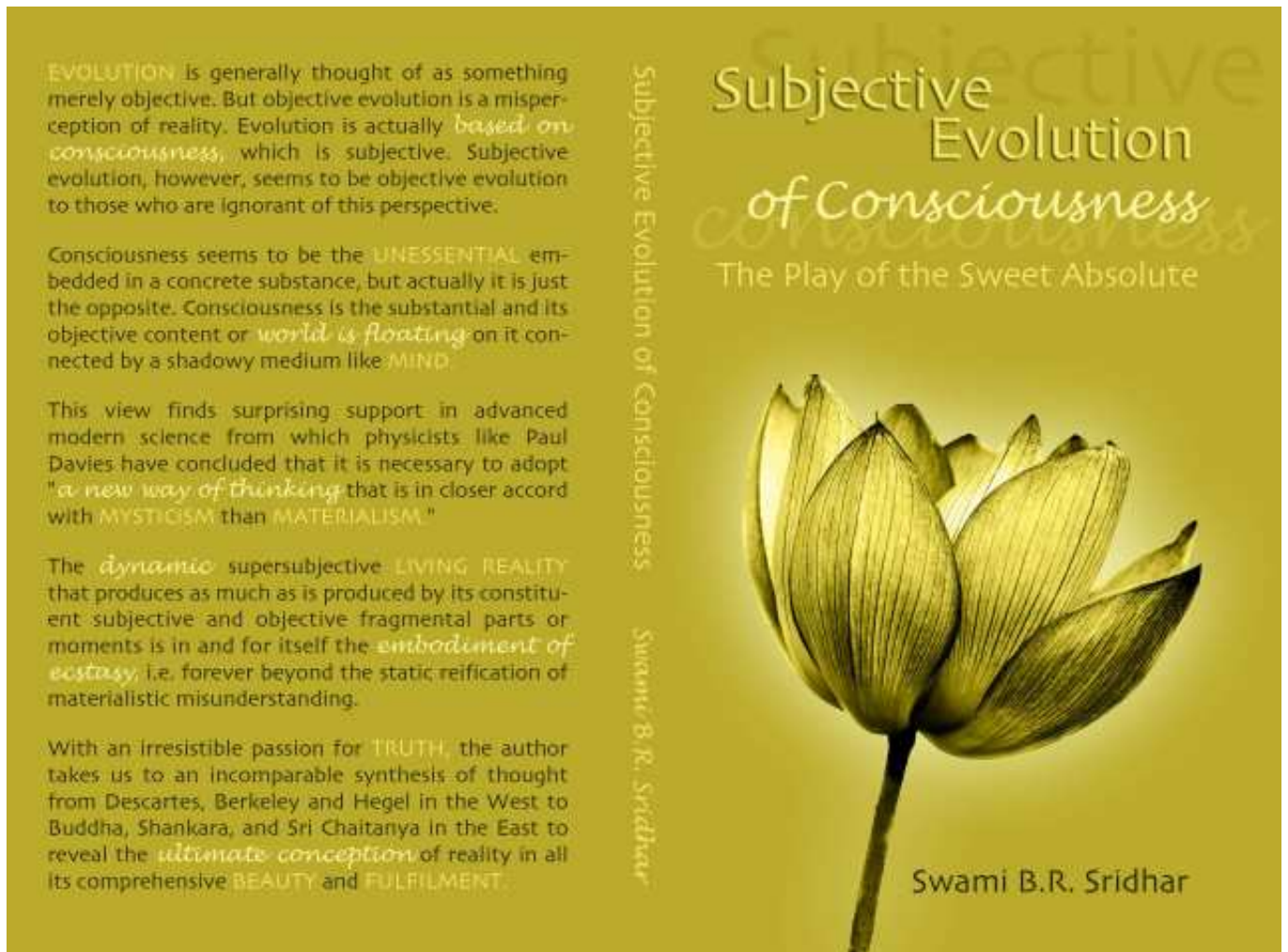
G. W. F. Hegel

The consciousness of Understanding deals with the aspects or “in-so-far-as” perspective of things. It does not deal with things in their contradictory wholeness. Rational consciousness, however, “knows” that it is dealing with wholes that are only abstractly divided for the sake of Understanding. It is the task of Reason to determine how to deal with wholes as wholes. Most importantly, the comprehension of the whole, even when that is attained, puts the

comprehending consciousness outside the whole that it is comprehending. This is therefore *not* the whole as it is in-and-for-itself. The whole must include the consciousness comprehending it as well as everything else, and it must have its own being beyond any finite conception of it, and, in fact, produce the finite conception of itself. It is perhaps one of the most significant achievements of Hegelian philosophy to be able to reach this goal—Reality in-and-for-itself and not only *for* consciousness. Another is that Hegel is able to expound a scientific system that deals with a substantial Reality that is essentially Subject, i.e. a Truth that is rationally conscious of itself—God. And finally, within his system he is able to deal with all the problems of philosophy in a consistently methodical way that proves to be both necessary and complete. All of this is the product and development of Reason, which is the integrating and differentiating substance of Reality that is essentially Subject—or we can say the Reason of God.

Divine Reason acts within all of creation, in which Man participates to some finite degree and, accordingly, is able to articulate that in the world. It is not so clear-cut as this, however, as the understanding would like it to be. The principle of the identity of identity and difference blurs the distinctions between God and Man so that, although the distinction is there, identity is also to be accounted for. It is this principle of simultaneous oneness and difference beyond understanding, and comprehensible only to what Hegel calls Speculative Reason that unlocks the door to the sphere of Spirit, or Absolute Knowledge. This is of course the broader perspective—the real science is in the details. Study of the *Phenomenology* is useful because it deals with the perspective of Reality from within consciousness and gradually leads to the comprehension of the *Concept* of which consciousness is only one aspect.

Subjective Evolution of Consciousness



Evolution is generally thought of as something merely objective. But objective evolution is a misperception of reality. Evolution is actually based on consciousness, which is subjective. Subjective evolution, however, seems to be objective evolution to those who are ignorant of this perspective.

Consciousness seems to be the unessential embedded in a concrete substance, but actually it is just the opposite. Consciousness is the substantial and its objective content or world is floating on it connected by a shadowy medium like mind. This view finds surprising support in advanced modern science from which physicists like Paul Davies have concluded that it is necessary to adopt "a new way of thinking that is in closer accord with mysticism than materialism."

The dynamic supersubjective living reality that produces as much as is produced by its constituent subjective and objective fragmental parts or moments is in and for itself the embodiment of ecstasy, i.e. forever beyond the static reification of materialistic misunderstanding. With an irresistible passion for truth, Srila Bhakti Raksak Sridhar Dev-Goswami Maharaja, the author of *Subjective Evolution of Consciousness* takes us to an incomparable synthesis of thought from Descartes, Berkeley and Hegel in the West to Buddha, Shankara, and Sri Chaitanya in the East to reveal the ultimate conception of reality in all its comprehensive beauty and fulfillment.

To obtain the book *Subjective Evolution of Consciousness* please contact us at:
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