

The Logic of Language Change

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We live within spaces of possibilities with varying degrees of normativity: social rules and expectations, linguistic grammars, artistic genres, conceptual systems, place norms, scientific methods, and the like. They all change. I would like to explore some issues that arise as part of a larger investigation about how sets of possibilities and normative structures are established, extended, and changed. Here I want to talk about how the kinds of transitions Hegel studies might relate to empirical changes in language systems.¹

Language Changes

There are many types of language change. There are, for instance, large slow changes such as the loss of Germanic noun declensions in English.² Pervasive as such changes are, they do not alter the kind of social meaning and norms Hegel is concerned about.³ Also, these pervasive changes happen at a much slower pace than social and conceptual change.

There are quicker and more socially substantive changes of syntax and grammatical rules, for instance variations in the French use of *vous/tu*, or new politeness levels in Japanese verbs. These may or may not be involved in the kinds of changes Hegel wants to discuss. Hegel is concerned about changes that can show up less in a language's grammatical machinery than in its basic categories and social norms. Such changes may come in new theories (for instance, about atoms, or about God), or in new social practices (Roman legal personality, altered gender roles), or in the development of new virtues and values (Stoic indifference, Christian humility).

There are also those self-conscious and quick changes that occur when a poet or thinker creates new metaphors that cross-breed language areas and alter the truth value of sentences. (John is a lion; Juliet is the sun, she would burn you if you come too close; philosophy is an illness, and so on).

Hegel, for his part, discusses sequences of dialectical moves. There are the transitions in the logic, as pure notions develop into one another in different ways, without temporal reference.

There are the transitions among shapes of consciousness and spirit discussed in the *Phenomenology*, which are temporally embodied, but do not seem to be mutually exclusive. Different shapes are able to coexist, as in the Enlightenment and Culture descriptions, and one shape, such as Master/Slave, might recur within different historical periods. Then there are the transitions involving the overall stages of historical development in society, and in art, religion, and philosophy, which are more exclusive and sequential. How do such Hegelian transitions relate to empirical language systems and their changes?

Language Systems

In what sense might we speak of language as a system? Among the bewildering array of notions of systematicity,⁴ I have employed one straightforward notion derived from logic and common in recent analytic philosophy. In this view a language system is a network of normatively licensed connections among sentences. Asserting sentence A makes it admissible (or necessary, or forbidden) to assert sentence B. The network of connections can be described in terms of the usual relations of formal logic, but with the addition of a set of material inferences that give the content of concepts and so codify connections other than those of formal logic.⁵ Still other norms (what Wilfrid Sellars called "language entry" and "language exit" rules) connect sentences to observations and actions. The system can also include the kind of connections that Austin and Grice discuss, where it is not the content said so much as its relation to the situation of its utterance that licenses further sentences.

A language system, in this sense, is not just a set of historical connections between actual utterances or inscriptions. It includes the norms that license both the actual connections and other possible ones. The relation between the norms and the empirical instances can be described as a type/token relation. An example might be "If sentence of type A affirms the presence of properties P, and sentence of type B affirms the presence of properties Q, then the utterance of a token of type A licenses the utterance of a token of type B."⁶

For the moment put aside the issue whether language is to be seen as a single huge

interlocking system or as a bundle of smaller and somewhat independent systems. Opposed to idea of language as a large holistic network there are Wittgensteinian and deconstructive reactions that see language as an agglomeration of smaller more or less independent language games. I will have more to say about this at the end of this essay.

In such a system, a word or a concept is what it does. As in chess the bishop is defined as the piece that can move in a certain way within the framework of the game, so in a language system a word or concept is a piece that allows certain moves of affirmation and inference. Through these relations concepts reach out in many directions. These sprawling connections of concepts in a language system contrast with the tight coupling of Hegel's dialectical concepts.⁷

This notion of language system can, at best, codify a synchronic slice of a natural language's history. But this limitation means that watching changes in sentence connections might provide a way of seeing the transitions Hegel discusses.

Language systems, then, are here taken as inferential networks, after the manner of Sellars and Quine and, more recently, Robert Brandom.⁸ My claim will be that Hegel's dialectical transitions and sequences are not the same as the (formal and material) inferential linkages in such systems, and yet Hegel's transitions are embodied in the contingencies of those systems and their changes.

Hegelian Transitions and Language System Changes

In a language system concepts are interdefined by the relations among them (for instance the net of inferences connecting obligation and permission, or individual and ownership, or Bossie's being a cow to Bossie not being a pig or dog). A concept's identity and meaning depend on the connections it licenses. Those connections reach widely, touching all the various sentences whose assertibility might be affected by the assertion of a particular proposition. Individuality is connected not just with ownership but with political, ethical, artistic, legal, and ontological ranges of propositions, among others. Bossie's being a cow connects to biological, economic, poetic, and other sorts of propositions.

Hegelian dialectical moves, on the other hand, offer tight interconstitution by opposition and contradiction among logical categories, and among the moments within shapes of consciousness and spirit. Dialectical dependencies, transitions, and sequences have a strict order of self-determination and so stand in tighter connections than do concepts in loose-limbed language systems.

This contrast depends on describing empirical concepts as having widely spread inferential connections. But what if the empirical concept of, say, "individual" is really a family of tight concepts each bound an area such as law, politics, worship, art? If the Hegelian concept were embodied in the whole family, the contrast would still stand. But what if the Hegelian concept were embodied in only one of the tight empirical concepts? But then which one would it be? And how would its influence radiate to the others in the family? If it had no influence on them, then this supposed Hegelian-empirical concept would be irrelevant to other empirical concepts, which defeats the point of the logic. Yet any mechanism of influence would anoint a privileged empirical area of language, which seems unrealistic.

Furthermore, all Hegel's logical concepts are of the whole -- definitions of the Absolute -- and that whole becomes more complex and mediated as the logic moves from Being through the categories of essence to the Absolute Idea. More moments are explicitly posited in more complex relationships, but this growth is not the same as moving around among nodes in a network that is fully determined from the beginning. The same is true of shapes of consciousness and stages of spirit. They are internally articulated wholes rather than single nodes in a network, and the moves among their moments and the transitions to new shapes and stages are more like redeterminations of the whole than moves within an already determinate whole. So Hegel's logical self-determinations and transitions are not a privileged subset of the inferential moves within a single language system. It would be fairer to say that they have something to do with movement between language systems.

A logical concept can be embodied in the net of connections in a language system. It can

also show up in certain special propositions within or about the system, as I suggest later. A dialectical transition, on the other hand, does not appear in propositions, even ones reporting tensions and contradictions. Rather it is embodied in the change or reconfiguration of the whole language system.

Still, we cannot too quickly identify dialectical transitions with changes in language systems. A language system changes when new pieces are added to the game, or the rules are revised. The pieces and rules can be altered in most any direction at most any time. But Hegelian dialectical transitions have a strict order of self-generation.⁹ Their nested structure of self-becoming is not the same as the ad hoc ways a language system can be modified.

Because in a language system a concept gets its meaning from its connections, and those connections extend more widely than the strict couplings of the dialectic, and because the system is open to ad hoc additions, the system provides ways for users to maneuver around dialectical tensions. Inconsistencies or contradictions in a language system do not automatically lead to changes; they can be encapsulated and dealt with pragmatically as the system continues to function. Recall the ways in which set theory after Russell's paradox continued to be used, and was stimulated to redevelop itself. Or consider for example the logical move leading from the notion of being-for-itself to the notion of indefinitely many such units. It is possible to stay with only the first concept even though it opens the move to the other. The invitation can be ignored or resisted or condemned, as is proved by the continued existence of many systems of philosophy whose basic concepts Hegel claims have been superceded.

Furthermore, it seems clear that *not all* changes in language systems embody Hegelian transitions. For instance, the introduction of metaphors such as "Juliet is the sun" alter sentence connections but need not embody large transitions of spirit or logic. On the other hand, some new metaphors or new poems do carry major religious or moral changes. A new theory in physics or biology might change many sentence connections within physics and some in ordinary language, but still be within the same shape of consciousness or stage of spirit. But

some changes in science are part of major revolutions. A new virtue, such as "coolness" might cause new connections among sentences to develop, without altering a people's basic categories about individuality or their shape of consciousness. Yet other new virtues, for instance those introduced in the shift from pagan to Christian religion, embody new stages of spirit. So not all changes of language system embody Hegelian transitions. But some do.

On the other hand, *all* Hegelian transitions *will* involve changes in language system.¹⁰ There must be some changes in sentence connections and in the texture of behavior, which is derivatively linguistic. If there were no changes in language, the Hegelian transitions would have no actuality. Hegel claims that language is the *Dasein* of spirit. Indeed, Hegel says, "To each abstract moment of science corresponds a shape of manifest spirit as such. Just as spirit in its existence (*daseiende Geist*) is not richer than science, so too it is not poorer either in content." (PG §805)

It is important to remember that those language system changes that do embody Hegelian transitions need not be total. They might leave large tracts of language untouched. The transition from monarchy to civil society does not alter the way we talk about bath tubs, or the rules of chess, or advice on the care of rose bushes. In Greek after the new notion of individuality that appears with the Sophists and Socrates many new things could be said and new questions could be asked, yet many old connections remained unchanged.

There is no easy way to identify those language system changes that embody Hegelian transitions merely by looking at the language systems. We can't, for instance, just count the number of sentence connections changed, since even very minor inferential changes could affect a potential infinity of sentences.

We might try to apply Quine's metaphor of the great net, whose more central areas (such as logic, math, physics) are connected to many other areas while the peripheries are more local in their connections. Changes in those central areas would be the equivalent of Hegelian transitions. But consider that many changes in Greek physics and logic do not embody a Hegelian transition

even though they are in the central area, while, on the other hand, the change from torn to conscience language in the Culture section of the *Phenomenology* does embody a Hegelian transition even though it is not in the central area.

So, determining which language changes reflect Hegelian transitions demands some independent access to the Hegelian movements. This is surely what Hegel would say, given his emphasis upon systematic constructions in pure thought.

The *Dasein* of Spirit

In effect we are asking what Hegel means when he says that language is the *Dasein* of spirit. This claim occurs in the *Phenomenology*.¹¹ In his discussion of Conscience Hegel says, “We see language as the existence (*Dasein*) of Spirit. Language is self-consciousness existing for others, self-consciousness which as such is immediately present, and as this self-consciousness is universal.” (PG §652)¹²

Here, as in his philosophy of spirit, Hegel can seem to be claiming that language is a secondary externalization of some already complete inner meaning. However, Hegel says that there is no finished internal meaning to take up external clothing. In good dialectical fashion it is the externalization that accomplishes the successful internalization of definite content.

We only know our thoughts, only have definite actual thoughts, when we give them the form of objectivity, of a being distinct from our inwardness, and therefore the shape of externality, and of an externality, too, that at the same time bears the stamp of the highest inwardness. The articulated sound, the word, is such an inward externality. . . . the word gives to thoughts their highest and truest existence. (EG §462z)¹³

So the sense in which language is the *Dasein* of spirit is not so far from the logical notion of *Dasein* as determinate being. It is in language that thoughts become determinate for us.

In his discussion of the role of habits in the formation of selfhood, Hegel shows that he is not describing some pure self-presence that then externalizes itself.

Thinking, too, however free and active in its own pure element it becomes, no less requires habit and familiarity . . . by which it is the property of my single self where I can freely and in all directions range. It is through this habit that I come to realize my existence as a thinking being. (EG §410)¹⁴

My self and my meaning are not purely mine at any one instant. The self gains its *Existenz* through habitual actions that cannot be fully self-present acts. Now, language systems and their regularities are examples of such habits. A language system is not a set of pure self-transparent self-conscious instants of rule obedience but rather a set of habits. These become self-conscious when avowed, or when used to evaluate another's linguistic performance, or sometimes when the habits change.

These considerations clarify Hegel's view of the relation between my empirical thoughts and my empirical language. They show that Hegel is not treating language as the externalization of some already definite inner meaning. But these considerations do not yet clarify the relation of empirical language to the Hegelian logical categories and shapes of consciousness themselves, which are not simply my empirical thoughts.

Hegelian unities such as categories and shapes of consciousness and their transitions seem to be more pervasive, on a higher level than empirical language systems (or on a deeper level, if you prefer that spatial metaphor).¹⁵

It is well known how Hegel makes explicit claims about the way in which the stages of spirit's development (in history, in philosophy, in religion) correlate with his logical transitions. So if we are looking for a way to understand the relation between empirical language changes and Hegelian transitions, we might think in terms of levels. Perhaps Hegelian transitions should be thought of as happening on a higher level that provides form and guidance for changes on a lower level. Just as a language system includes connections among particular sentences but also general rules about sentence types, so we might see Hegel's stages, shapes, and categories as yet

higher level rules that govern the lower level rules that in turn govern the sentence connections in language systems. The higher level rules would themselves come in levels: there would be shapes of consciousness that guide language system rules, then stages of spirit that guide shapes of consciousness, then logical categories as guides for the stages of spirit, and finally the absolute idea as the guide for the sequence of logical categories.

Though it may seem appealing, this levels reading goes badly astray. There are two related defects, the idea of influence flowing from level to level, and the interpretation of Hegel's categories as rules governing instances.

The levels reading suggests that as sets of language rules and empirical connections develop, the logic guides their development, or gives it form. But terms such as "giving form" and "guide," like "levels," are deceptive. The metaphor of levels suggests that each level could be a process complete on its own, though guided by a higher level. But there is no self-enclosed meta-level guiding or forming.¹⁶ There is no cause and effect relation here. Language is the *Dasein* of spirit, not an *effect* of spirit.¹⁷

We don't go *from* the Hegelian transitions *to* the language changes. We might rather say that the language system changes occur *in* the space of the Hegelian transitions.¹⁸ What Hegel is talking about is not a higher process that does something to a lower process, or that produces or influences a product on a lower level. For Hegel there is only one process, and it has no product. The process of self-determination, self-division, self-return is and presents only itself. What is grasped in the logic is not a recipe for producing something else, but the form and the motion of its own self-grasping. Thought thinking itself.¹⁹

The manifestation of itself to itself is therefore itself the content of spirit and not, as it were, only a form externally added to the content; consequently spirit, by its manifestation, does not manifest a content different from its form, but manifests its form which expresses the entire content of spirit, namely, its self-manifestation. (EG §383z)

Nor is this process studied from some separate meta-point-of-view. When independent access to its necessities becomes available they may be studied in a formal way -- but that formal study is itself a moment in the process, not a separate meta-process.²⁰ Hegel refuses to take sides in the oppositions of form and content, or structure and process. The absolute idea does not deliver a separable structure of process. Nor does it show off a process that reworks structures. The overall process of determination is the process of becoming-for-itself becoming for-itself in its shape and moments. Its determinations are not its products; they are its being.

Rules and Embodiments

Yet if there is only one process, there still seem to be two aspects or phases or *some things*. In some sense the Hegelian transitions seem higher and controlling. This is why it is tempting to read them as rules governing particular instances. I suggest that we read them instead as embodied in the contingent particularities of language systems. Consider this question: "Surely it is not necessary within the one process of self-manifestation that Latin verbs come at the end of sentences, or that the torn shape of consciousness of Rameau's nephew be expressed in rules for the connections of this and that particular types of French sentences?"

This should remind us of other questions, such as "Surely it is not necessary within the self-development of spirit that spiders have eight legs?" We know how Hegel answers those questions, by an appeal to a necessary contingency in the embodiment of necessary features. Hegel thinks that mobility can be understood as a necessary property of the animal organism when the category of life from the logic is developed in the externality of space and time (see E §350-52). But this or that organism's particular mode of mobility is contingent. That it uses legs as opposed to wings or treads is contingent, that there are eight legs is contingent, as is the particular history of the legs on this individual spider.

Similarly we might say that it is in and through this "body" of language that the torn shape of consciousness has its *Dasein*, but that it is contingent that the torn consciousness is expressed in these particular sentence types linked with those others. Just as there would be no

spider without the contingent history that presented it with eight legs, there would be no torn consciousness, and no self-presentation of spirit, without the contingent details of language history. So there is the torn shape of consciousness with the necessary relations among its moments, which are embodied in such and such contingent social activities and communications, which are expressed in such and such particular language system details, which are found in the individual statements of Rameau's nephew on a particular occasion.

The Hegelian categories and shapes are not members or roles within a language system except as incarnated in sets of looser-limbed connections. The contingencies are such that there is no way to isolate this or that inferential move and say that it represents the entirety of the Hegelian unity involved. The category and its constitutive others are embodied in connections none of which have the strict necessity of the dialectical transitions. There is no pure presence of the dialectical categories within the empirical language system.

Similarly, changes in language systems can embody transitions among Hegelian categories and shapes, again with contingencies all through. For Hegel a transition between two stages of spirit's historical development, say from Greece to Rome, happens through and in a mass of historical details and motivations none of which present the transition in its purity.

At first glance, this might seem to reaffirm the idea that the relation of Hegelian categories and transitions to empirical language systems is a higher version of the relation of general rules to particular instances. But this is not so. The relation of the pure category or the pure transition to the language system or to its changes is not the relation of a rule governing instances. If you want to think of the logical category as a rule, then you must think that the rule, too, is embodied in the language system. It is embodied in the inferential relations -- in the system, not in one chosen essential relation.

It is through such embodiment that the one process of self-manifestation exists. It has no Platonic being as a purely logical self-development. The logic is an abstraction from the full concreteness of the process. Indeed there are several different kinds of abstraction at work.

Because they do not consider the particularities of their embodiment, the Hegelian categories and shapes and their transitions are more abstract than the detailed sentence connections and rules in a language system. On the other hand, language systems as inferential nets are in a different way more abstract than the Hegelian categories and transitions, because the language system description disengages inferential and connective structure from the concrete process of its actualization and life.²¹

Embodiments and Explanations

We need to look more closely at the term *embodiment*. Is this a Platonic dualism of logical souls piloting linguistic bodies? No, and we have to avoid cause-effect terms; there is no relation here between two separate entities. At the other extreme, are the logical categories merely epiphenomena of empirical causes and processes that go their own way?

An option between these extremes would be to say that the dialectical determinations are, in Aristotelian terms, formal causes. They make something be the kind of thing it is. In a way this is right, but there are serious problems. If the dialectical determinations were formal causes they would presuppose a related material cause. In the case of language systems, this matter would be words and propositions. But if there are formal causes organizing that linguistic matter, they are the local grammar and language system, and not directly the dialectical concepts and transitions.

The local language system is the *Dasein* of the logical categories, not their effect. Nor will any of the standard dualities that get criticized in the logic correctly describe this relation. The relation is somewhat like that between the logic and the *Realphilosophie*, but in a fuller sense it is the relation between the whole system and empirical items. This involves a relation between Hegel's systematic account and other accounts of the being and becoming of language systems.

Consider again the analogy with animal bodies. The number of legs an animal has is not just a brute fact; it is a *product* of evolutionary processes in nature. Those processes may have

contingent initial conditions, and be full of random events, but there are lineages to be traced and stories to be told within them, stories about causation and function.

So too in language, which sentences connect to which other sentences is not just a brute fact but the product of host of different processes. There are histories of the way language drifts through changes in pronunciations, acquires or loses grammatical features, alters the meaning of many words, and ends up with its particular verbal and written signs. These could explain why Rameau's nephew pronounces French the way he does, and why French no longer has noun inflections, and why the word *honneur* has picked up its particular connotations.²² Other histories could explain, perhaps based on religious traditions and feudal relationships, just why the torn language of Rameau's nephew gets embodied in the particular set of French sentence types that it does. Still other histories could illuminate why Rameau's nephew and his friend utter the particular sentence tokens that they do on a Monday afternoon.

For the animal, natural selection is a coming together of many separate causal processes. The logical category of life contributes no additional causal influence. Nonetheless, through natural selection a being emerges that is of that sort, a being embodying the category of life.

For the language system, linguistic change is a coming together of many separate causal processes. The logical category of, say, substance contributes no additional causal influence. Nonetheless, through linguistic change a language system emerges that is of that sort, one embodying the category of substance.²³

With both the animal body and the language system, the logical category for its kind of being has dialectical relations to other logical categories. Those relations do not provide any additional causal factors. But they do indicate tendencies and tensions that open possibilities for change in the actual item.²⁴

For a language system the situation is more complex than for an animal because the language system is self-referential in a strong sense. It can describe and prescribe for itself, and

be the object of self-instituted changes and corrections in its structures. It is in this self-reflection that the logical categories come to a more explicit expression.

Recall that for both Plato and Aristotle the empirical concepts that describe the qualities and relations of things are related to one another in a tree-like hierarchy. But there are other concepts outside and beyond the tree of genera and species. Aristotle insists that "being" is not a genus. Plato talks about forms such as being, sameness, unity, and difference that affect every other form directly and not through hierarchical descent. These became what the medievals called "transcendental concepts" because their application does not depend on the tree of genera and species. They touch directly every element of the system. They are ancestors of the Kantian transcendental and the Hegelian logical categories. Such concepts are not normally involved in direct predication; they show up as modifiers and modalities, and in the use of the copula. But they can also be predicated in very general rule-like statements about being, sameness, unity, possibility, and the like -- what Stephan Körner once described as "transcategorical principles" -- such as "If x is a being it is unified (or, is an actualized potential, or, is a monad, etc.)."²⁵

It is in these sorts of statements and in the tensions that might emerge within and among them that the Hegelian logical determinations come closest to appearing nakedly within a language system. Yet even here the dialectical determinations are not identical with these statements or rules. Tensions in transcategorical statements can be worked around just as can other tensions within a language system. So even such statements do not give the purity of the logical concepts and their necessary dialectical developments.²⁶

We can ask what the dialectical concept or transition adds to the empirical details and rules of the language system. We might take a clue from Hegel's discussion of traditional logic. The mediations and self-determinations described in the speculative treatment of the judgment and syllogism in the doctrine of the Concept do not provide all the details of formal logic even as it existed in Hegel's day. Hegel is not giving a deduction (in Kant's *quid juris* sense) of the formal logical patterns. He is rather showing what he takes to be the logical (in his sense)

mediations embodied in those patterns, though the whole movement cannot be embodied in any single formal pattern or linear concatenation of those patterns. The result is not to justify or vindicate the traditional syllogistic forms – which can be shown to be valid on their own – but to indicate a wider process of self-manifesting reason that is embodied in those forms. Analogous points apply to the relation of dialectical determinations to the patterns of linguistic grammar and the inferential patterns of linguistic systems.

But are not the logical concepts given a pure presentation in the language system of the logic itself? I would argue, to the contrary, that the language of the logical presentation is not a single language system, but rather a meta-discussion of a sequence of transcategorical principles that can be embodied in or expanded into language systems. The logical meta-discussion itself does not stay with one fixed vocabulary but changes its descriptive terms as the logic moves along. For instance the notion of mediation grows more complex as the three parts of the logic progress. There is, though, a final vocabulary that describes the logical method in the absolute idea. This might be read as specifying a restricted language system, but nothing is *said* in this system except its description of its own movements. And it describes movements that, when they are carried out, are performed according to versions of its methodological notions that are either less determinate (in the earlier sections of the logic) or more determinate (in the various spheres of the *Realphilosophie*). So even in the most self-transparent part of Hegel's account we are dealing not with a single language system but with movement among many related systems, and those movements are not describable by a single univocal set of inference rules. So there is no one final empirical language system being presented.

The Unities of Language

There are a number of criticisms that could be raised against the Hegelian scheme that I have been describing, and I am sympathetic with some of them.²⁷ Most of these criticisms are, though, really about more general issues, such as the necessity and purity of the logical sequence. I would like to raise here an issue more closely tied to the question of language systems.

As I pointed out earlier, there is much that can be said about why a language system might have the particular set of sentence connections that it does. The externality and mutual independence of these various stories, though, recall the issue postponed earlier, namely, whether language is one monolithic net of inferences and sentence connections, or a bundle of smaller networks or language games. This issue showed up when we considered the way language systems can maneuver around internal tensions and contradictions. It appeared again when we noticed that not all sentence connections alter when a new scientific theory or new moral concept is introduced.

Language does not have such a tight systematic unity that a change in one place forces changes everywhere else. Some of its flexibility comes from that looseness of internal connection among areas, and the ease of adding new elements and new relations. Some language games are related *externally* to one another. Of course, local language games get commented on and reinterpreted by other language games. But the totality of language games is more like a society of people talking about each other than like a vast machine with all its parts interlocking in order. There is interaction, but also an externality among the different parts that is foreign to Hegel's dialectical unities.

If the social embodiment of language is a motley of such parts, its overall togetherness needs to be properly conceived. Here Hegel may have problems with some of his higher unities. The diversity of language games and the way that they can change or not independently of one another may undercut the unity of his larger civilizational stages of spirit. Hegel's logic could still give an appropriate description of the moments of concrete self-presentation in language and spirit. But some of the unities that Hegel finds corresponding to aspects of the logical structure should be suspect.

Hegel was aware of the contemporary mixture of different stages of spirit and shapes of consciousness in his own society. This is clear from his writings about the social and political situation in Germany, and from his attempts to urge the Prussian government toward a more

modern shape. However, Hegel conceptualized his situation as living at the slow death of one era and the difficult birth of another new social whole. He still thinks those wholes as teleological totalities.

While Hegel is open to the dispersed *spatial* coexistence of natural structures and events that embody very different dialectical categories, he totalizes *temporal* stages, at least within single civilizations.²⁸ For him the variety of language games, and an era's politics, philosophy, religion, society, culture, and art all get shoehorned into one contemporary stage of spirit. Considering the separate histories and the external relations among language games, we could become suspicious of his large totalizing unities such as particular national spirits and overall stages of spirit. Hegel's logical categories and repeatable shapes of consciousness might be enough to provide insight into the processes of self-manifestation, and their togetherness in actual language's *Dasein* might be different than Hegel imagined.²⁹

Notes

1. Hegel's works are quoted (with occasional modifications in the translations) from editions indicated by the following abbreviations:

E. *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, references by paragraph. German text: *Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften* (1830) (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1959). English texts, EG, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, translated by W. Wallace and A. V. Miller (London: Oxford, 1971), and EL, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, translated by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991).

PG. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, references by paragraph, using the Miller numbering. German text: Hegel, G. W. F., *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. (Hamburg: Meiner, 1952). English text: *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by Arnold Miller. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

WL: *Wissenschaft der Logik*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, vols. 11, 12, 21 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, various years)

SL. *The Science of Logic*, translated by A. V. Miller (New York, Humanities Press, 1969).

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2. For another example, consider the way that proto-Indo-European differentiated into Latin and German that put verbs at the end of sentences, English and Spanish that put verbs between subject and object, and Irish and Breton that put verbs at the beginning of sentences.

3. Grammatical changes may indirectly affect concepts and norms by altering what aspects of situations speakers are required to notice and emphasize, or by making some things easier and other things harder to say.

4. In philosophy we are familiar with Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza, Hegel, the Neokantians, the Logical Positivists, and so on, with their different notions of what counts as a system in thought or language. In linguistics there are ways of organizing grammatical systems around Latin and Greek paradigms, the combinatoric way Sanskrit grammar was codified, recent Chomskian and other generative grammars, Montague grammars, and many others. In logic there are specifications of formal systems, with accompanying syntactic and semantical rules, model theories, and so on. Then there are structuralist systems, language a la Foucault as discourse and power strategies, Deleuzian abstract machines, and recent theories of self-organizing adaptive systems of which language would be a part.

5. Examples of material inference would be "This is green, so it is colored," "Maine is north of Boston, so Boston is south of Maine." The notion of material inferences is most familiar from Sellars, though it has a long history in rationalist philosophers from Plato through Leibniz and Frege. See Robert Brandom, *Making It Explicit* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 94-111.

6. It might seem that discussing sentence connections overlooks those changes that come with the introduction of new *words*, and Hegel's transitions often involve the introduction of new

words, or of social unities and mediations that create new words. But the net of sentence connections is sensitive to word change. Redefinition of old words changes patterns of sentence connection (for instance, consider the changes wrought by Spinoza's notion of substance or by postmodern redefinitions of irony). Introduction of new words brings new sentences into the mix (for instance, sentences containing the word *email*). New words can also alter older connections even for sentences not containing the new words (for instance, the introduction of Christian virtue words might alter the connections among sentences discussing personal identity and social honor, even though none of those sentences mentioned the words *humility* or *charity*).

7. There are issues about the relation of words and concepts as differential features of propositions, and about whether amid the multitude of connections these have in a language system, some could be taken as more essential than the others. Hegel could be read as proposing such an essentialism, but I think that the embodiment of dialectical concepts in empirical language inference rules is not so direct and one-to-one.

8. Brandom surrounds the inferential network with a Sellarsian penumbra of interlocking communal avowals and evaluations. These acts and statements could be called meta-language, in the sense that they are about linguistic practices and performances rather than directly about objects. This is a richer notion of meta-language than that emerging from formal logic. Brandom sees connections with Hegel's discussion in the *Phenomenology* about how the community comes to make explicit its own practices and internal mediations. See *Making it Explicit*, chapter 9, and page 716n35.

9. Emphasizing the order of self-generation helps dispel the mistaken impression that the Hegelian process is a Bradleyan block super-entity.

10. It is true that Hegel says that the propositional form is not adequate to express the whole truth, and he distrusts the argumentative style of doing philosophy by proving single propositions. But still, his dialectical process does work with propositions and the dialectic puts

them in new kinds of relations, where asserting A does lead to asserting B, though not by a standard argument, and without B being a self-sufficient "conclusion."

11. In the *Phenomenology* the word *Dasein* is used in many different senses. For instance, *Dasein* signifies externality as opposed to inwardness (PG §641, §756), space (§45), living or animal organic existence (§292), concrete *Wirklichkeit* as opposed to abstractions (§47), outward unfolding (§53), being for others (§327), the pure self (§671). In the usage relevant here *Dasein* emphasizes the historical and intersubjective actuality of language, through which spirit is out there and mutually recognized. For this usage, see PG §490, §521, §633, §666, §667, §770, §793.

12. The quotation in the text seems to be a phonocentric glorification of immediate presence, but this impression is softened by what follows in the passage ("It is the self that separates itself from itself, which as pure I = I becomes objective to itself, which in this objectivity equally preserves itself as this self, just as it coalesces directly with other selves and is their self-consciousness. It perceives itself just as it is perceived by others, and the perceiving is just existence (*Dasein*) which has become a self.") Also we should consider what Hegel says in the *Encyclopedia* about habit and mechanical memory and, in the logic, about presence and immediacy as the product of mediation.

13. "The name [Hegel gives *lion* as example: so he means general terms, not just proper names], as giving an existence to the content in intelligence, is the externality of intelligence to itself; and the inwardizing or recollection of the name . . . is at the same time a self-externalization to which intelligence reduces itself on its own ground. We *think* in names. (*Es ist in Nahmen, daß wir denken.*)" (EG §462)

14. Note that Hegel says the habitual self described in the text is not yet self-present ego. "This abstract realization of the soul in its corporeal vehicle is not yet the self—not the existence of the universal which is for the universal." (EG §409) But the positing of the subject as such is not the positing of some pure point of self-awareness. The *Existenz* of the I as the universal which is for

the universal is not a pure and separate act. It happens in and through the externalization-internalization of language, in and through the awareness of separations and movements. That awareness is in process, not in some isolated instant. The for-itselfness of spirit is the structural possibility of ongoing discursive awareness, which can occur in many modes, especially in art, religion, and philosophy, but in no mode is it a time-ceasing instant of pure transparency. The Hegelian process that is for itself does not cease to be a process. Even in the logic, the absolute idea is not a pure self-present instant of intuition; the self-presence of spirit in philosophy remains discursive.

15. A recent proponent of such pervasive transitions is Heidegger, who might prefer the depth metaphor, and who talks about transitions that he calls a new sending or word of being, revealed in philosophic or poetic saying. These are more than changes in sentence connection patterns. For instance, Heidegger claims that even though the translations of Greek philosophical terms into Latin tried to preserve the language system of the Greek terms a deeper change in the meaning of being was happening in and around those translations. The deep transitions open new spaces for new kinds of moves. What alters may not primarily be patterns of sentence inference, but rather the background, the import of words, and the self-understanding of the speakers. The use of new words with new resonances and etymologies will change the understanding of what is being said and lead to different sentence connections. But the Heideggerian transition does not consist in those sentence connection changes. Nor is the saying (*Sage*) of language that Heidegger investigates merely the factual introduction of a new term; though it may be embodied in a poetic or philosophic innovative word, the change is in the whole world, in what it means for an entity to be. Hegel would find Heidegger's kind of deep transition too close to an event springing from an irrational point source. But there are some similarities between Heidegger's transitions and Hegel's, in the way they affect whole worlds of thought and language. For Hegel these transitions have more necessity than Heidegger would allow, though Heidegger's history of being has its own odd unity and necessity.

16. Hegel would reject a description of any process that might "on its own" be some formless energy that needed an externally imposed form or guide to keep it in order. The logic is supposed to show that real indetermination or formlessness is, finally, impossible.

17. Basic determinations of thought are not products, neither of subjectivity, nor of god, nor of social legislation. They do not exist outside of the absolute, the process that is reality. They are the shape of that process, not its products, and because that process *is* self-presentation or self-exposition, there is no separation between its shape and its content.

18. Which space? In the space opened by a particular historical set of categories, or in the space of the overall process of and to the self-presentation of spirit? For Hegel, we cannot make such a distinction.

19. The logic's the circular inherence of a movement in itself through its own self-determination and return to immediacy is, in Aristotle's terms, an *energeia* not an *entelekheia*.

20. "In this way, the method is not an external form, but the soul and the Concept of the content. It is distinct from the content only inasmuch as the moments of the Concept, each in itself, in its determinacy, reach the point where they appear as the totality of the Concept. Since this determinacy, or the content, leads itself back, along with the form, to the Idea, the latter presents itself as a systematic totality, which is only One Idea. Its particular moments are in-themselves this same [Idea]; and equally, through the dialectic of the Concept, they produce the simple being-for-self of the Idea. -- As a result the Science [of Logic] concludes by grasping the Concept of itself as the Concept of the pure Idea for which the Idea is." (EL §243)

21. There are at least four kinds of abstraction involved. There is the abstraction of a momentary inferential structure of the language system, the abstraction of a sequence of such momentary structures from the living process of language, the quite different abstraction of the form of the Hegelian process of self-manifestation from its contingent details, and yet another abstraction of this or that moment from the total Hegelian form of self-manifesting spirit.

22. Changes in grammar and pronunciation and the shifting meaning of words, as studied by linguists, do not seem to have any single unified explanation. Such changes proceed fairly randomly but irresistibly, though having a written language slows them down. See John McWhorter, *The Power of Babel* (New York: Holt, 2001), for a discussion of the processes of change in grammar, pronunciation, and the meaning of words, and the disjunction of these processes from cultural and philosophical currents. The kinds of slow changes he chronicles differ from the more sudden changes resulting from artistic, religious, ethical, or scientific innovations, or cultural revolutions.

23. Just as an animal is a particular kind of living being, so a language system organized around the category of substance is a particular kind of language system. As I argue below about syllogistic forms, grammar and syntax are themselves embodiments, not direct presences of logical ideas in their purity.

24. In this context we might recall Hegel's philosophy of history with its cunning of reason and its image of divine providence working through secondary causes without the need for any unnatural interventions.

25. See Stephan Körner, *Categorical Frameworks* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970). In "Coming Down from the Trees: Metaphysics and the History of Classification" (*Continental Philosophy Review*, vol. 35, no. 2, June 2002, 161-183), I suggest that historically such concepts and their principles brought polarities and directionalities to the "space" of "being" for empirical concepts and statements. The "end of metaphysics" might be seen as the abandonment of polarizing transcategorical principles and the flattening out of the space of appearance. Hegel plays an ambivalent role in this "end"; his logic both flattens the space of being and introduces an order of derivation.

26. Earlier I argued that a Hegelian concept is embodied in a wide inferential network, not in a single tight empirical concept. Now I am claiming that a Hegelian concept comes closest to being nakedly present in a language system through certain non-empirical principles. These

principles are not enunciated in the ordinary practice of the language system but can emerge in interpretations of language practices. Are such principles descriptions of very general properties of all beings, or are they reporting on linguistic rules, or avowing the community's linguistic practices? To settle this would require negotiating a thicket of issues relating semantic and alethic notions to the notion of being. Without argument I suggest that the principles turn out to be metalinguistic in the sense described in an earlier note.

27. A start on these criticisms can be found in my *Critique of Pure Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), and in several articles. See, for instance, "Hegel and Heidegger as Critics," *The Monist*, 1981, 481-499; "What is Open and What is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel?" *Philosophical Topics*, vol. 19, no. 2, Fall 1991, 29-50; "The Final Name of God: Hegel on Determinate Religion," *Hegel and the Tradition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 162-175; "Circulation and Constitution at the End of History," in *Endings: Questions of Memory in Hegel and Heidegger*, ed. by Rebecca Comay and John McCumber (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 57-76; "Modernity's Self-Justification," *The Owl of Minerva*, vol. 30, no. 2, Spring 1999, 253-276; "The Spirit of Gravity: Architecture and Externality in Hegel," in *Hegel and Aesthetics* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 83-96; "The Particular Logic of Modernity," *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*, numbers 41.42, 2000, 31-42.

28. The way Hegel spatially disperses frozen remnants of earlier temporal stages of spirit deserves more study. There is a question about what kind of cultural or spiritual space is holding these different stages in their non-dialectical relationship. Could such relationships exist within a single cultural assemblage?

29. There are many issues here to be explored. What would count as a test of Hegel's claims about large spiritual unities? Can those unities be saved by considering them as hermeneutic clues rather than explanatory essences? Can Hegel's notion of spirit's self-presentation handle the spatially mixed and temporally coincident diversity that have been always present, despite his

claims about large historical unities, and are especially strong in contemporary society and culture? Might there be something on the level of spirit that is akin to the role of space on the level of nature, a realm of externality that is not as totalizing as Hegel's temporal stages? How such a togetherness could become self-presented is an issue for discussions of Hegel, but also in many seemingly anti-Hegelian discussions today.