

Aristotelian Master and Stoic Slave: From epistemic assimilation to cognitive transformation

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Introduction: Philosophy, freedom and the Greeks

It is no secret that Hegel's history of philosophy is decidedly Eurocentric. "Philosophy proper commences in the West. It is in the West that this freedom of self-consciousness first comes forth" (VGP 18:121/1:99).¹ This is so because there is a direct link between "free, philosophical thought," and *practical* freedom; philosophy only appears "where and in as far as free institutions are formed... Therefore philosophy first begins in the Greek world" (VGP 18:117/1: 95–6). This identification of the start of philosophy with the appearance of freedom in the social world encounters an immediate problem given that, as Hegel clearly acknowledges, Greek society was "free" only in the limited sense of a freedom available to *some*. Indeed, not only was the Greek polis a slave-holding society, this condition of slavery was, as presented by Hegel, not contingently related to the birth of philosophy. The free philosophy of the some could be secured only by the unfreedom of others. But here the relevant contrast was with the world of Oriental despotism: The freedom of *some* was of course an increase in freedom when compared to the limitation of freedom to *one*—the despot. Nevertheless, from the standpoint of Hegel's own time, the Greek polis was clearly as *unfree* as it was free, and we might expect this to be reflected internally

¹ Initial volume and page numbers are to Hegel's *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*. Corresponding volume and page numbers to the three-volume Haldane and Simpson translation follow.

within Greek philosophy itself. Philosophy is, we know, “its time raised to thought” and we might expect the paradigmatic philosophy of the polis to reflect a dynamic such that the condition of unfreedom of some is somehow internal to it. In this essay I want to pursue this question from the perspective of what is perhaps the most well-known text of Hegel, the short “master-slave dialectic” from the *Phenomenology of Spirit’s* Chapter 4.

For a large part of the 20th century, the “master-slave dialectic” had for many come to play the role of cipher for understanding diverse aspects of Hegel’s overall philosophy, and probably more than the work of any other single interpreter, the reading of Hegel given by Alexandre Kojève in the 1930s (Kojève 1969) has provided a popular picture meant to represent Hegel’s account of the human condition and of the general movement of history towards universal freedom driven by a supposedly essential human desire, the desire for recognition. But the spirit of such a quasi-anthropological reading, with its Marxist and Heideggerian overtones, sits uneasily with Hegel’s description of “every philosophy” as “essentially idealism” or at least as having “idealism for its principle,” and here I want to examine some well-known features of the parable when it is transposed into another, more idealist, key—one operative within an historical account of philosophy itself.

In *Phenomenology of Spirit*, chapter 4, the immediate successor to the dialectic of master and slave dialectic is the figure of the Stoic, and as a philosophical outlook, Stoicism, as Hegel presents it, had attempted to unify many of the general features of the earlier outlooks characteristic of both master and dependent slave. The aim of the Stoic was, like that of the former master, to be free, but the freedom aimed at had been conceived of as *indifferent* to whether the Stoic’s actual existence was that *of* a master *or* a slave, freedom being conceived as indifferent to whether one is “on the throne or in chains.” But this indifference to the question of *actual* social status expresses a general *unfree* existence. Thus, as “a universal form of the World-Spirit, Stoicism could only appear on the scene of a time of universal fear and bondage.” While originating in Greece, Stoicism had given expression to the social life of Rome—a condition

in which freedom once more had effectively retracted to the freedom of *the one*. Here, however, I want to focus on one particular parallel between the Stoic and the slave: The Stoic, I suggest, *works*, but this work is not carried out on objects *like* those worked upon by the slave. The Stoic's is more a type of "spiritual" work—a work that we might think of as directed at the objects of *thought* rather than the actual objects themselves. It is the need for, and nature of this work, that I want to explore in relation to another conception of philosophical existence, one that regards philosophical knowledge as acquired in a relation to the world that is more like that of the master. This is a conception that thinks of philosophy as a type of passive apprehending rather than working—a conception, I suggest, supplied by Aristotle. But while the objects of the Stoic's "spiritual" labour will not be those of the slave, they will nevertheless also be seen to have a *material* dimension.

The Aristotelian conception of the philosopher might be understood as providing a philosophical analogue of the master's attitude in the sense that while the master had linked independence to *liberation* from work and material existence, and so with a concern for the provision of desire-satisfying *things*, Aristotle had linked cognitive independence to the achievement of knowledge, understood as the result of a type of cognitive apprehension of the essences of the substances populating the world. And just as the original master was, paradoxically, shown to be *dependent* on the slave's labour, might it not be the case that the Aristotelian, then, like the original master, in his drive to incorporate such *essences* might be found to be ultimately dependent on the cognitive labour of another *overtly* dependent agent? Hegel does, I suggest, treat the Stoic as a fundamentally *working* or *transforming* subject rather than epistemically *appropriating* one, although this self-comprehension was not be available to the Stoics themselves. The Stoic had renounced the actual world and the Stoic's action was not oriented to the transformation of actual things, like the slave. Rather, it was primarily directed to the transformation of *representations*, an activity that Hegel describes as "reflection" and "analysis." This is an activity still directed to worldly items, but they are predominantly *linguistic* ones.

Aristotle: Perceiving as consuming forms

In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* Hegel rejects the commonplace contrasting of Plato and Aristotle as representatives of antithetical extremes of idealism and realism, or rationalism and empiricism (VGP 19:133/2:118–9). Aristotle had *developed* Plato's *speculative* philosophy: he had been a follower who took dialectic beyond the limitations found there and who, like the later Neo-Platonists, made the divine "*noesis noeseos noesis*," thought thinking itself, central to his metaphysics. A crucial part of Aristotle's surpassing of Plato for Hegel was the central role played by his concept of "change." While Plato had focused on the "affirmative principle" concerning the idea's abstract self-identity, Aristotle had made explicit this hidden moment of negativity and *change* (VGP 19:155/2:140).

Nevertheless, the commonplace construal of the essentially speculative Aristotle as a type of empiricist, interested primarily in "natural history" was, for Hegel, not entirely wrong: although Aristotle "finds himself at the highest standpoint ... he has always the appearance of making ordinary conception [*Vorstellungen*] his starting point" (VGP 19:165/2:150). His divine conception of substance seems thus overlaid and ultimately compromised by a static conception of individual substantial forms presentable in sensuous experience and devoid of movement and self-negation. While Aristotle's thought was universal in *scope* (VGP 19:132/2:117), his presentation was for the most part by means of a succession of unconnected independently conceived areas "empirically selected and placed together in such a way that each part is independently recognized as a determinate conception, without being taken into the connecting movement of science" (VGP 19:133/2:118). Considered *as* an empiricist he was certainly "a thinking one;" but while Aristotle "presses further into the speculative nature of the object," he does so in such a way that the latter "remains in its concrete determination" which he "seldom leads ... back to abstract thought-determinations" (VGP 19:148/2:134).

It could be considered that one expression of this “empiricist” limitation of Aristotle’s speculative thought is Aristotle’s account of perception and *epagoge*, commonly translated as “induction,” especially as presented in *Posterior Analytics* (Aristotle, 1993), Book Beta, ch. 19.² There, Aristotle states that all animals have perception, but in some percepts are retained in the soul, allowing those animals to have a new type of knowledge grounded in this retention. It is here that he introduces his celebrated image of a group of soldiers in a rout in the course of a battle. A common stand comes to be made, first by one soldier making a stand, then another, then the next, and so on, until they come to make a stand as a whole and achieve “a position of strength.” The retreating individual soldiers represent the flow of individual percepts in time, and when the stream of percepts comes to make *its* collective stand in this way “there is a primitive universal in the soul” writes Aristotle, “for although you perceive particulars, perception is of universals,—e.g. of man, not of Callias the man.”

One might here pause to wonder how while *particulars* are perceived, perception can, nevertheless, be *of universals*. In the section *Psychology* in the *Encyclopaedia Philosophy of Spirit*, Hegel, in the context of a criticism of the modern empiricist conception of perceptual experience notes that “the abstraction that occurs in the representing activity by which *universal representations* are produced ... is frequently expressed as a *superimposition* of many *similar* images upon one another” (EG §455 remark). Here we might extend the “superimposition” picture he has in mind to Aristotle’s analogy of the collective “making of a stand” by the retreating soldiers. However, Hegel goes on, “if this *superimposing* is not to be entirely a matter of *chance*, with no trace of a concept, a *force of attraction* between similar images must be assumed, or something of the sort, which at the same time would be the negative power of

² As has been pointed out (McKirahan 1983, 1), while the word “induction” “comes from the Latin rendering of Aristotle’s word *epagoge* ... modern conceptions of induction bear a relation, frequently only a distant one, to Aristotle’s *epagoge*” and “it would be fundamentally wrong to assume that Aristotle’s notion is the same as any modern notion of induction.” See also Hamlyn 1976.

rubbing off their remaining unlikeness against each other. This force is in fact intelligence itself, the self-identical I which by its recollection immediately gives the images universality, and *subsumes* the individual intuition under the already internalized image" (EG §455 remark). That is, for Hegel the formation of a suitable abstract universal could not be accounted for by anything like the sensations or percepts coming to "make a stand." Not only is conceptual *activity* involved, but also something like Kant's "I think." What is needed to supplement the empiricist account is some idea of the subject's active involvement in the transformation of a specific concrete representation into a general abstract one. A similar criticism of the modern empiricist account of concept formation is suggested when Hegel discusses the process of "analysis" and more generally, "the analytic method" in the *Encyclopaedia Logic* and *Science of Logic*.

The analytic method, Hegel tells us in the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, "consists in dissolving [*aufzulösen*] the given concrete dimension, individuating its differences, and giving them the form of *abstract universality*; or in leaving the concrete dimension as the *ground* and, through abstraction from the particularities that seem inessential, extracting a concrete universal, the *genus* or the force and the law" (EL, §227). More specifically, in discussing the analytic method, he notes that it is first engages with an object that "has for it the shape of an isolated individual [*Gestalt der Vereinzelung*]" that it tries, in analysis, to trace "back to a universal". This is the standpoint of Locke and those other empiricists who analyse "the given, concrete objects into their abstract elements and then consider the latter in isolation" (EL, §227, add). Here he repeats earlier comments on empiricism, where he noted that because perception is "always of something singular [*Einzelnes*] and transitory," while knowledge "seeks the universal, that which abides", empiricism must utilize analysis to go from perception to experience and from there to thought. The *error* of empiricism here consists in its non-cognisance of its own analytic activity: while it "transforms [*verwandelt*] the concrete into something abstract" "it believes that it leaves [its objects] as they are" (EL, § 38 add).

To the extent that Aristotle assumes a passive account of experience, like the modern empiricist, his account will have to be supplemented by one that stresses the active, transformative dimension of the process. But Aristotle's consuming model of experience differs from that of the modern empiricist in as much as it has it that *forms* are consumed. "The concept" is involved in the process from the start, and this is a feature of Aristotle's account that Hegel will exploit in giving an account of the *logic* of the process that sees contents of perception, that can be understood as about specific objects such as Callias, be transformed into intentional states directed at *universals*. We need to look at the elements of Aristotle's logic on which Hegel will build.

According to the logical taxonomy of judgments in Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* (Aristotle 1963), a sentence with a proper name such as "Callias is sitting" expresses a singular judgment, in contrast with which there exist two different forms of general judgments, *particular judgments* such as "Some men are sitting" and *universal judgments* such as "All men are sitting." General judgments in both their particular and universal forms are, it would seem, *about* the universals: both "Some men are sitting" and "All men are sitting" say something about the genus "man," and they do so by saying something about all or some men (Whitaker 1996, 89). However, the subject of a *particular judgment* can be narrowed down to a single instance, as in "some man" or "this man." In *this* sense, we can have a judgment relating to some specific man, such as Callias, while being *about* the universal that Callias instantiates, as long as the noun phrase is taken indefinitely and as not referring to some particular man. These distinctions will be exploited by Hegel in his account of judgment in the *Science of Logic*, which will provide the framework for liberating Aristotle's truly speculative philosophy from the misleading "empiricist" presentation in which it is found.

Hegel and the transformative path of Aristotle's *epagoge*

Hegel provides an explicit account of the difference between concrete *de re* and abstract *de dicto* judgment contents in his treatment of judgment in Book Three of *Science of Logic*. There he makes an initial distinction between two types of judgment, “judgments of *Dasein* [determinate existence]” and “judgments of reflection” (WL 6:311–26/557–68 and 6:326–35/568–75).³ While in the former predication is to be understood in terms of the *inherence* of the predicate *in* the subject (WL 6:311/557), in the latter it is to be understood as the *subsumption* of the subject *under* the predicate (WL 6:328/570). The judgment of *Dasein*, he tells us, has as its “first pure expression” the logical form “*the singular is universal.*” But Hegel notes that “every judgment is in principle also an abstract judgment” (WL 6:312/558), the implication seeming to be that in making a judgment of *Dasein* such as “the rose is red” one simultaneously commits oneself to a higher-order judgment about the *categories* exemplified by the elements in the judgment. Thus to assert that “the rose is red” is to implicitly assert the abstract proposition “the singular is universal,” which is meant to *identify* these two determinations of conceptuality—an idea rooted in the ultimate *unity* of the “moments” of conceptuality in “the Concept” itself.

This has profound implications for Hegel’s subsequent analyses of the logical form of the judgment. Thus, while according to the general form of the judgment, the universal predicate expresses something ideal and *imperishable*, such as redness, and the subject something concrete and *perishable*, such as a rose, the asserted identity of the determinations occupying subject and predicate places made in the judgment implies that the predicate must itself be, like the subject, perishable and the subject, like the predicate, imperishable. We might say that while, *qua* universal, *redness* is (as something *ideal*) imperishable, in the perceptual judgment itself it becomes a *determinate shade of red*—the particular

³ Here, first volume and page numbers to Hegel’s *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*. Following page numbers refer to the English translation by di Giovanni, which is occasionally modified. I have given a fuller account of Hegel’s treatment of judgment and syllogism along these lines in Redding 2014.

colour of *this rose*—and so becomes something *perishable*, capable of fading, for example. The universal has *resolved itself*, says Hegel, into something *singular*. This is a circumstance that is expressed by a proposition that is the converse of the “first pure expression” and expressed by the proposition “the universal is singular,” judgment just being “this *resolution* of the universal, the *development* of the negativity which, implicitly, it already is” (WL 6:313–4/559).

Hegel’s strange analysis needs considerable unpacking, but the idea of the subject of the judgment becoming universal and the predicate becoming singular is at basis, I think, a simple one. Treating the normally universal predicate as a *singular* term can be understood as resulting from simply *reversing* subject and predicate terms in the judgment in a manner suggested in the early days of analytic philosophy by Frank Ramsey. Ramsey, in an effort to undermine the metaphysical significance of the traditional subject–predicate relation, had pointed out that “Socrates is wise” and “Wisdom is a characteristic of Socrates” are equivalent. “If the centre of our interest is Socrates we say ‘Socrates is wise,’ if we are discussing wisdom we may say ‘wisdom is a characteristic of Socrates’; but whichever we say we mean the same thing” (Ramsey 1925, 404). In Ramsey’s example, reversing the subject–predicate order of the judgment was a way of effectively converting a judgment *about* a specific concrete thing (Socrates) into one about something general (wisdom), but Hegel generalizes this type of move. In Hegel’s example, the first “resolved” form of the “positive” judgment of existence thus can be understood as having a form something like “*this red colour* (the new subject) belongs to (predication as inherence) *this rose* (the new predicate).” But as other specific properties of the rose, its shape, its colour, etc., can also be said to belong to it, *the rose* as that which the various properties inhere, must now be considered to have the *generality* typical of a predicate. It has become a universal—in fact, a *concrete* universal.

With this idea of reversing subject and predicate terms Hegel now has a device that can be reiterated in order to generate a series of increasingly complex judgment forms. Thus, we can expect a further form of the judgment of existence to be generated out of the “resolution” of the new universal (the rose

as that *concrete universal* in which the properties inhere) into a new singular item, restoring the original subject–predicate order. Conversely, the particular *colour* of the rose once more becomes signified by a colour term understood as a *general* term and that plays the role of predicate. This is brought out in the judgment’s *negative form*. When one says, for example, “the rose is *not* red,” negation here will, Hegel points out, only be taken as applying to the *determinateness* of the general predicate. The denial is not taken to imply that the rose is not *coloured*: “From the side of this universal sphere, the judgment is still positive.” Rather, “it is ... assumed that it has a color, though another color” (WL 6:322/565). If a rose *is* red then it is *not* yellow, *not* pink, *not* blue and so on, and if it is *not* red, it is *either* yellow *or* pink *or* blue, and so on. We can say that even if it is red, *had it* not been red, then it would have been yellow, or pink, or blue, etc. The judgment is now a matter of saying something *about* the rose, not its property, and so the noun phrase “the rose” is once again to play the role of subject, and “red” having reverted to a general term that is true of *all* shades of red, not just the colour of *this particular rose*, has once again become a universal.

The judgment about the particular rose is now set up to be transformed into one with a quite different logical form, that of a “reflective” judgment in which the predicate is said to *subsume* the subject, rather than *inhere within* it. The distinction between an “inhering” predicate and a “subsuming” one can now be understood in terms of a distinction that had emerged in the 17th century: that between the judgment understood *intensionally* on the one hand and *extensionally* on the other. Leibniz had thought of judgments in a fundamentally intensional way: to say that humans were animals, say, was to say that the concept <animal> was contained within, or inhered within, the concept <human>. But Leibniz also thought that such a judgment could be understood as saying something about the *extensions* of the terms: as saying that the class of humans was contained in the class of animals. Thus he thought that the judgment could be transformed into a shape that reflected this extensional reading, and much as Russell was to do later, he translated universal categorical judgments as “hypotheticals.” “All humans are animals” could be expressed as “If something is

a human, it is an animal.” This latter form will be effectively what Hegel tries to capture with the idea of a “reflective” judgment.

In the negative form of the judgment of existence, the subject term had become (concretely) universal—the rose as that in which various properties could inhere. I suggest that Hegel thinks of this term in the way that Aristotle had thought of as the subject term of a “particular judgment.” First, the term contains a universal term “rose” which is needed to determine the implicit universal “colour” that is implicit in the predicate “red.” This ensures that the term “red” is taken as belonging to an array of alternative contraries appropriate to that genus.⁴ The second feature of the term concerns the semantic ambiguity of noun phrases like “some rose” or “a rose.” The logic taught at Tübingen had it that such phrases were ambiguous (Aner 1905, 19-20).⁵ While they could be meant in *de re* manner to refer to some *particular or specific rose* that the speaker has in mind, they could also be used in a logical sense to refer to some “indefinite” or *non-specific* rose. This latter is the reading intended when “some rose” or “some roses” is used as an explicitly quantified noun phrase that stands in opposition to “all roses” or “no roses” in the subject place in the judgment. Read in the former way the sentence expressed a “*de re*,” *intensionally* construed judgment of existence, read in the latter way, it expresses a “*de dicto*” *extensionally* construed judgment of reflection. Once more, the reflective judgment is meant to be understood as being *about* the universal, “red,” as that under which some roses or all roses will be said to be “subsumed.”

In the analysis of the judgment of *reflection* Hegel works through its three differently quantified forms of singular, particular and universal judgments. The

⁴ It may literally true to say that “the *number* two is not red,” but *that* does not imply that the number two is thereby “either pink, or yellow, or white,” and so on. Numbers are the kinds of things that can be odd or even, but not red or yellow.

⁵ The textbook used in Hegel’s logic classes has recently been republished as Ploucquet 2006.

form of universality in the last, he notes, is the “external universality of reflection.” It is the “all of all the *singulars* in which the singular remains unchanged.” It is, writes Hegel, the type of universality found in *polynomial equations*. Clearly the references here are to Leibniz and his attempted *mathematization* of logic that renders judgments as equations, a topic that Hegel knew about from the logic taught at Tübingen and with which he will deal in the discussion of the syllogism. But Hegel argues that the capacity to strip those things that thought is purportedly about to the status of singulars (or what are commonly referred to as “bare particulars” deprived of all their determining qualities) gives an illusory sense of “allness.” Bare particulars are meant to be subsumed under a concept, but if they truly have no properties “the collected singularity cannot combine to form a unity” (WL 6:332/573). This means that “the empirical allness thus *remains a task*; it is an *ought* which, as such cannot be represented in the form of being.” In any case of actual reasoning about a collection of things there must be something intrinsic to those things that had allowed them to turn up in the collection in the first place. “ ‘All humans’ expresses, *first*, the *species* ‘human’; *second*, this species in its singularization” (WL 6:332–3/573). With this we again see the reversal of subject and predicate terms. The reflective form of the judgment was about the subsuming universal, and the things to which it applied were conceived as merely instantiating that universal. But they must have had other properties in common that allowed them to be collected together in the first place, properties that are definitive of the “secondary substance,” say “the human as such” that now becomes the overt subject of the judgment. In this way the reflective judgment transitions into the “judgment of necessity.”

Hegel, with his developmental taxonomy of judgments, now has a way of explaining Aristotle’s claim that while *particulars* are perceived, perception can be said to be nevertheless *of universals*. In, say, “Callias is sitting,” something is being said of Callias. Transformed into “Sitting is a property of Callias,” the term “Callias” has become a type of universal term, because other properties also can be said to belong to Callias. This is now made explicit by replacing the singular

term “Callias” with an equivalent “particular term” such as “some human”: to know that Callias is sitting is to know he is *not standing*, and thereby it is know that Callias is an instance of the kind of thing for whom sitting or standing are possible alternative states. But while “this human” or “some human” had been introduced as an alternative way of referring specifically to Callias, this term can be alternatively understood as the subject of a “particularly quantified” general judgment of “reflection” that in turn can be understood as a judgment *about* the *kind*, “human as such.” The original perceptual judgment about *Callias* has become a judgment *about* a universal, the genus “human being.”

We can now see that Aristotle’s epistemically assimilative relation to the world needs to be matched by a kind of intellectual labour, and this labour, I suggest, in Hegel’s picture is to be found in kind of activity carried out *by the Stoic*. In particular, the Stoic’s labour will be the labour of “reflection,” the activity at the heart of “analysis.” In short, it is *reflection* that transforms the concrete into the abstract, judgments of *Dasein* into judgments of reflection. But what is the nature of this activity that is said to “dissolve” the given concrete contents of perceptual judgments of *Dasein*? I suggest that there is an at least implicit answer lurking in Hegel here—while the actual slave worked on *things*, transforming them in ways that made them usable, the Stoic works on *material representations*, transforming *them* in ways that make them cognitively useable. But while this enabled the Stoic to overcome a problem within classical speculative philosophy, it was done at the expense of introducing philosophy into its *dogmatic* phase, dogmatism being “a way of thinking, whether in ordinary knowing or in the study of philosophy” governed by “the opinion that the True consists in a proposition which is a fixed result, or which is immediately known”; such “truths” are in fact “different from the nature of philosophical truths” (PhG, § 40). The Stoics, I suggest, were central to an event that Hegel has in mind in the *Science of Logic* when he described the post-speculative period as one in which “the *reflecting* understanding seized hold of philosophy” (WL 5:38/25).

The Ambiguous position of the Stoics in the history of philosophy

Hegel is explicit in his evaluation of the Stoics as lesser philosophers than the giants of Greek speculation, Plato and Aristotle; the transition from speculative to dogmatic philosophy is a decline. Stoicism commences the second period of Greek philosophy, starting with the Stoic and Epicurean “Dogmatism” and ending in Skepticism. This dogmatic approach is marked by a drive for systematicity achieved by the consistent application of some abstractly universal principle to all particular cases, as found, for example, in the Stoic notion of the *criterion*. The rigidity implicit in this formal process, however, makes dogmatism “a philosophizing of the understanding, in which Plato’s and Aristotle’s speculative greatness is no longer present” (VGP 19:250/2:232). Nevertheless, there is clearly also a positive side to this event in which “the understanding seized hold of philosophy,” ending its speculative phase: “there is something deeper lying at the foundation of this turn which knowledge takes, and appears as a loss and a retrograde step, something on which the elevation of reason to the loftier spirit of modern philosophy in fact rests” (WL 5:38–9/25–6). Hegel is clear that one area of thought in which Stoics went *beyond* Aristotle was *formal logic*.

The Stoics, writes Hegel, “brought formal logic to great perfection” because they had made “abstract thought the principle” (VGP 19:273/2:254). We must remember that for Hegel formal logic is not *scientific* or *philosophical* [*wissenschaftlich*] logic. Formal logic is an expression of the *understanding* or *intellect* [*Verstand*], which Hegel consistently contrasts negatively with “reason” [*Vernunft*], and formal logic stands to properly *wissenschaftlich* logic in an analogous way. Formal logic is treated as an attempt to give *mathematical* (not conceptual) representation to thought, and it is thus as essentially a branch of mathematics rather than philosophy. Hegel’s treatment of the “mathematical” fourth-figure syllogism in the “Subjective Logic” (WL 6:371–80/602–8) shows him to be well acquainted with the algebraic logic as introduced by Leibniz and practiced by Gottfried Ploucquet, the authority on logic at Tübingen when Hegel was a student there.

Stoic logic was, Hegel writes, “logic in the sense that it expresses the activity of the understanding as conscious understanding; it is no longer as with Aristotle, at least in regard to the categories, *undecided* as to whether the forms of the understanding are not at the same time the realities of things; for the forms of thought are set forth as such for themselves” (VGP 19:273–4/2:255, emphasis added). That is, the Stoics were able in a way to make *forms of thought* their explicit object, even though their treatment of it was not a properly philosophical one. In contrast, the suggestion seems to be that Aristotle was unable to individuate forms of thought *as* forms of thought because those thoughts could not be sufficiently abstracted from the “realities of things” they were about. Hegel’s view of the limitations of Aristotelian thought alluded to here seem to resonate with the problems implicit in the classically “representationalist” account of language that Tyler Burge (1993) traces back to Aristotle’s *On Interpretation* (Aristotle 1963, 1, 16a4–7).

On the traditional account that Burge ascribes to Aristotle, external representations, such as words or, say, pictures, will count as representations because they are understood as giving expression to some kind of representational “content” or inner mental concept. A word “chair” will thus be thought to refer to worldly *chairs* only in an indirect sense because they are taken as giving expression to the mind’s concept that *itself* refers to those entities. On the traditional view, external representations such as words will be *imperfect* representations because they have properties *besides* representational ones. For example, the word type “chair” rhymes with the word “pear” although chairs and pears may have nothing particularly distinctive in common. In contrast, the concepts that the external expressions are meant to express have *only* representational properties, making them *intrinsically* representational (Burge 1993, 310). It is at this point that the problem Hegel refers to comes into focus: if concepts have no *non*-representational properties—no properties unrelated to the properties of the objects they represent—how can they be individuated *as* thoughts? For this they would need to be considered in abstraction from the objects they represent, but this would seem to deprive them of *any* individuating properties. We have seen Hegel’s criticism of the idea that a

thought could somehow result from the “superimposition” of remembered images: some process of extracting *likenesses* from the images would need to be accompanied by “the negative power of rubbing off their remaining unlikenesses” (EG, §455 remark). It now seems that the problem is a deeper one: were the *particular* unlikenesses rubbed off, would there be anything left to consider?

The process that Hegel had alluded to as the “rubbing off” of unlikenesses that is required by the formation of universals in thought is just another way of alluding to the process of “analysis” in which the concrete and particular is “dissolved” away in the formation of universals. What we see looming here, then, are problems for the Aristotelian “traditional” conception of thought content, and the need for some abstractive conception of the formation of thought. The Stoics, it would seem, had been able to make some progress here beyond Aristotle. They were able to separate abstract thought from the concrete objects thought is about so as to make thought available *for* thought itself. It is true that they could only do this by restricting thought to the level of the understanding and so abandoning “speculative” reason, but the suggestion seems clear that this was a *necessary* step that reason had to go through if it is to get beyond the impasse of classically speculative thought.

A key to the puzzle of how the Stoics might have been able to abstract thought from its objects may be suggested in the debate between Peripatetic and Stoic logicians over the proper object of logical inquiry. For Aristotle’s followers, as for Aristotle himself, logic was taken to be about *thought itself*, and language was considered an extrinsic medium for the imperfect expression of thought. For the Stoics, in contrast, thought was itself considered more a form of internal speech, with thought contents understood as abstract or incorporeal (*asomaton*) *sayables* (*lecta*) or *assertibles* (*axiomata*). The linguistic focus of the Stoics allowed them to construct sentences that broke the rules of their contemporary Greek in order to display logical form—for example, to place negation at the beginning of the sentence to express the idea that it negates the *complete* sentence and not just an element of the sentence (Bobzien 2003, 90–91). Hegel thus alludes to the significant feature of Stoic logic that it was “in part a grammar

and a rhetoric" (VGP 19:276/2:257), and indeed, the science of linguistics has been seen as originating in the Stoics (Halliday 2003, 112).

The Stoic's conceptual labour: Reflection as work on representations.

In the introductions to both *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Science of Logic* Hegel discusses the notion of reflection. While he often seems to have modern thinkers, and specifically Kant in mind, his comments clearly bear on the Stoics as well, thinkers he seems to treat as Kantians *avant la lettre* (Gourinat 2004, 537).⁶ In *Science of Logic* he thus describes reflection as referring "to an understanding that abstracts and therefore separates, that remains fixed in its separations ... In this self-renunciation of reason, the concept of truth is lost, is restricted to the knowledge of mere subjective truth, of mere appearances ... *knowledge* has lapsed into *opinion*" (WL 5:38/25).⁷ And yet, "the reflection already mentioned consists in *transcending* the concrete immediate, *in determining* and *parting* it." This combination of the mind's *activity* together with a lack of self-consciousness

⁶ Here I broadly follow Robert Pippin in his understanding of the role of "reflection" in Hegel as having strongly Kantian resonances (Pippin 1989). This approach has been criticized by Stephen Houlgate who claims that rather than being read as "an account of 'thought's reflective activity'," reflection has a primarily *ontological* significance for Hegel: "reflection is what being itself proves to be at a certain point in its logical development." (Houlgate 2011, 142) But the danger here is to assume a simply "subjective" picture of what "thought's reflective activity" might amount to. Hegel is clearly opposed to *that*: thinking must have a worldly presence for Hegel in a way analogous, say, to the activities of walking or dancing. But such an "ontological" conception of, say, dancing, is, of course, not incompatible with the activity of dancing as having an intentional, subjective dimension. The idea of reflection without reflecting agents seems as mysterious as the presence of dancing without dancers.

⁷ In the case of *Stoicism*, this conclusion is drawn by their opponents, the Skeptics. In the case of Kant, it was drawn by the Romantics.

of the activity itself is apparent in the Stoic conception of the criterion as the Stoics “did not quite know whether they should define conception as impression or alteration, or in some other way” (VGP 19:274/2:255).

The problem with the activity of reflection is that the reflective subject is typically not conscious *of* the role of its activity in determining its objects, and still accepts elements of the Aristotelian-empiricist view of the passivity of “impression.” To get beyond its own static and fixed determinations it must come to “*equally transcend its separating determinations and above all connect them*” and to do *this* it presumably needs to become self-conscious *of* its own activity. And what the self-conscious operations of reflection make clear is “the *necessary conflict* of the determinations of the understanding with themselves.”

When Hegel says that “the conflict of determinations breaks out precisely at the point of connection” of those determinations it has itself separated, he seems to have Kant clearly in mind. With the idea that the “reflective activity of connection belongs in itself to reason, and to rise above the determinations and attain insight into their discord is the great negative step on the way to the true concept of reason” (WL 5:39/26), Hegel is surely alluding to the antinomies that Kant sees emerge when reason is given a “constitutive” rather than merely “regulative” role. But it is this reflective fixing of thought determinations that unleashes the “conflict of determinations” driving the process of reason itself. It is only by means of the understanding and its reflective-analytic activity of isolating and fixing that there *can be* reason. It is thus that he describes, in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the “power and work of the understanding [*die Kraft und Arbeit des Verstandes*]” as “the most astonishing and mightiest of powers, or rather the absolute power” (PhG, § 32). Work [*Arbeit*] requires workers and, I suggest, in the post-speculative period of Greek philosophy the work of the understanding is represented, albeit unconsciously so, by the Stoics. The Stoics, it is often said, introduced the idea of spiritual exercises as working on “the self” (Hadot 1995, ch 3), and the means for this often involved linguistic technologies like the writing of diaries. Work on the self

seems to have involved work of another kind—the fashioning of linguistic representations of the self and its world.

It has often been pointed out that there are many question marks surrounding exactly how Hegel himself conceived of the relation of thought and language. He nowhere gives a systematic philosophical account of language, and different views of the relation of language to thought seem to be implied by passages from different parts from his own corpus (Surber 2012, 13; Vernon 2007). Michael Forster, in particular, has suggested that Hegel had radically changed his views on this topic at different parts of his career, and that these changes can be understood in terms of the degree to which he accepted or rejected Herder's idea of thought's being "dependent on and bounded by language" (Forster 2011, 148). For example, during his Jena years, and for the most part in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel essentially adopted some modified version of Herder's views, but later, according to Forster, he reverted to "a more conventional dualistic picture of the relation between words and meanings," a view that can be found, he thinks, within *Science of Logic* (Forster 2011, 148), while in the late 1820s, swinging back to the earlier Herderian view.

The situation with *Science of Logic*, however, may be more complicated than this. In the preface to the edition of *Science of Logic*, Book One, published in 1812, and written after the completion of Book Two ("already in the presses") but prior to the writing of Book Three, Hegel notes that logic as what had been handed down "throughout a long inherited tradition" demands a "completely fresh start" (WL 5:16/9). In 1831, in a new preface written almost two decades after the first for the publication of the second edition, Hegel starts by reflecting on the imperfections of the work as originally published. He repeats the claim that logic requires a complete transformation from what had been inherited from the tradition, a "new undertaking, one that had to be started right from the beginning," but immediately softens this by noting that the existing work of logic "must be regarded as an extremely important fund, even a necessary condition, a presupposition to be gratefully acknowledged even though what it offers here

and there is only a bare thread, the dead bones of a skeleton thrown together in a disorderly heap” (WL 5:19/12).

This difference in attitude to the relevance of the *history of logic* might be thought to follow from a change in Hegel’s attitude to the relation of thought to *language*, as Hegel immediately goes on to raise the issue of language. Forms of thought, he writes, “are first set out and stored in human *language*,” which penetrates “everything the human being has interiorized, ... everything that in some way or other has become for him a representation” (WL 5:20/12).⁸ Might it not be the case then that the *work* of reflection and analysis should be understood as including a dimension in which the work occurs primarily *in* language and is work *on* language? A positive answer here is suggested in Hegel’s treatment of the relations between judgments of *Dasein* and judgments of reflection in Book Three of *Science of Logic* that we have reviewed above in relation to Hegel’s proffered solution to the puzzle of Aristotle’s account of *epogage*.⁹

There, as we have seen, Hegel alludes to the way in which concrete *de re* judgments can be *transformed* into abstract *de dicto* ones, and vice versa. Effectively the grammatical “S is P” form of the judgment permits reversals to take place with respect to which conceptual determination, singularity or

⁸ This idea of language as penetrating all representation is also explicit in his account of memory in the 1830 *Encyclopaedia* Philosophy of Subjective Spirit where the capacity to “dissolve” the reference to particular concrete objects, *contra* Aristotle, is presented as dependent on the linguistic capacity. Hegel thus points to the “necessity and connections” of the sign and language within “the system of the activity of intelligence” (EG, §458 r), and notes that “*speech*, and its system, *language*, give to sensations, intuitions, representations a second, higher reality than their immediate one” (EG, §459).

⁹ If this is the case, then *contra* Forster’s claim it might be said that Hegel’s turn away from the Aristotelian conception of concepts may have occurred in the process of writing Book Three itself, and so earlier than Forster suggests.

universality, plays the grammatical role of *subject*. Hegel's oscillation between these two judgment forms seems ultimately based upon Leibniz's tendency to freely translate between *de re* and *de dicto* forms, as when, in a manner anticipating Bertrand Russell's conception of "analysis" in the early twentieth century, he translated an intensionally understood categorical judgment into an extensionally understood "hypothetical" (or modern *conditional*) one. As Loemke has noted, for Leibniz's predicate-in-notion conception, "the relation between predicate and subject must be understood intensionally, not extensionally. Extensionally the relation would be reversed, and the subject included in the predicate. Leibniz recognized both points of view and even discussed the rules for conversion from one to the other, but his own metaphysics of harmony required the intensional interpretation" (Loemke 1976, 24).

In his discussion of judgment in the "Logic of the Concept" Hegel is explicit that the subject–predicate relation is primarily a *grammatical one* (WL 6:305/552–3). The actual *thought expressed* in the grammatical sentence, should not itself, it would seem, be thought of as having a subject–predicate structure; *its* structure is to be conceived of in terms of relations among the determinations of "the concept": universality, particularity and singularity (WL 6:274–301/530–49). It is this distinction between the structure of the thought expressed and the grammatical structure of the expressing utterance that then generates the taxonomy of judgment forms we have earlier observed.¹⁰ Hegel's sequence of iterated subject–predicate reversals might thus be seen as a type of work carried out on the material representations of thought taken in their "externality," that is, at the maximal point of their estrangement from the thought they are meant to express.

In the logical tradition, this dimension of logic itself was represented by successive attempts to "model" thought with forms of representation taken from

¹⁰ In short, each of the three conceptual determinations can be distributed over either of the subject or predicate places in the expressed sentence (Redding 2014).

mathematics, in case of Aristotle from geometry (Kneale and Kneale 1962, 6) and in the case of Leibniz, from algebra (Hailperin 2004). These models provided objects that the formal logician *worked on*. Hegel, of course, refused to identity the project of logic as “thought thinking itself” with formal logic, which he took to be a branch of mathematics. Nevertheless, I take the evidence assembled here to indicate that for Hegel, while such formal activity was not sufficient, it was nevertheless *necessary*, for the larger project. From the perspective of Hegel’s approach to the history of philosophy, and the history of logic itself, this might be regarded as the *truth* manifested in the life of the labouring slave, a truth needed to correct the dream of the master of a freedom achievable through a purely contemplative attitude to the world.

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