

## Hegel's Idealism as Modal Actualism

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This paper will be in two parts. In the first part, I examine a context within which we are able to see two successive steps in a path *via* which themes central to Hegelian idealism were able to return within twentieth-century analytic philosophy. These were steps within the path *via* which *modal* issues returned as central to philosophy, an event precipitated by developments within modal logic. In the second part I'll be suggesting that a helpful way of thinking of Hegel's idealist metaphysics is to see it as aligned with a position within the current metaphysical debate sparked by these developments in modal logic—the position of *modal actualism*.

### 1. Hegelian influences in the return of modal logic in 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the early days of analytic philosophy Bertrand Russell dismissed Hegel from serious consideration for having a metaphysics based on fundamental logical errors. For example, in the critique that Russell offered in *Our Knowledge of the External World* he criticized Hegel for having accepted the traditional subject-predicate conception of the proposition. With only one-placed predicates, he claimed, he had no way of theorizing *relations* between individual objects. Ultimately, all predicates had to be referred back to one big subject, “the Absolute” (Russell 1914, 48).

Russell believed that the revolution in logic originating from the work of Frege in the late nineteenth century had entirely displaced the traditional Aristotelian logic to which Hegel and others were uncritically attached. Importantly the new logic allowed for judgments with *many-placed* predicates, provided a new form into which the subject–predicate judgments of Aristotelian logic could be translated. With this the metaphysical notions that typically *accompanied* those Aristotelian logical forms could be abandoned. For example, Russell construed Aristotle's universally quantified affirmative judgments as having the underlying form of *conditionals*, such that the elimination of sortal terms in subject place in the earlier judgments freed metaphysics from the commitment to secondary substances or kinds. However, even in these early years of analysis, the picture of the new logic with which Russell was dismissing Hegel was *itself* coming in for criticism *from an Hegelian direction*. This criticism would lead to the development of modern *modal* logic. The initial steps here were taken, only two years after the publication of the first volume of *Principia Mathematica* (Whitehead and Russell 1910), by C. I. Lewis, when he published the first of a string of criticisms of the concept of “material implication” at the heart of Russell's new logic (Lewis 1912, 1913, 1914). Towards the end of the decade Lewis's criticism had expanded into an attempt to construct a different system of

logic—a specifically *modal* logic—that would give expression to the “strict implication” that he opposed to Russell’s *material* implication (Lewis 1918).<sup>1</sup>

Lewis himself did not have Russell’s antipathy to the idealist movement and did not think of modern symbolic logic itself as incompatible with the metaphysics of idealism. In fact, Lewis had been deeply influenced by his former teacher, the American “absolute idealist”, Josiah Royce, and had derived much of his logical formalizations from him.<sup>2</sup> As is explicit in “Logic and Pragmatism” (Lewis 1930), in which he reviews his earlier work in logic, Lewis was very conscious of the alignment of the type of *intensionalist* logic with which he worked with the type of idealism embraced by Royce.

Modal logic underwent further revolutionary developments in the 1950s and 60s with the creation of quantified modal *predicate logic* and so-called “possible-world semantics”. While some have regarded this as amounting to an eventual triumph of an *extensional* approach over C. I. Lewis’s *intensional* approach, the extensional interpretation of quantified modal logic nevertheless became regarded by others as tied to unacceptable metaphysical consequences. One contemporary expression of the *intensionalist* approach is the “actualist” critique of David Lewis’s “possiblist” interpretation of modality.

From the 1930s onwards, so-called model theory had been developed to provide a *semantics* for formal (non-modal) languages. Essentially, a model was a mathematical device for assigning semantic interpretations to propositions, each model assigning a *truth value* to each proposition in a class of propositions, and specifying a domain of objects over which the logical quantifiers used in the logic could “range”. But extending this semantics to modal logic, along the lines proposed by Saul Kripke (1959, 1963), was to generate many puzzles.

In relation to classical non-modal logic, to talk of a “domain” of objects to which universal and existential quantifiers apply was relatively unproblematic. One just had to select some domain of *actual objects*. But in using such models in relation to quantified *modal* logic, Kripke had invoked Leibniz’s idea of “possible worlds” for the purpose of making sense of truth conditions for necessary and possible propositions. Following Leibniz, one can think of a proposition that is necessarily true as one that is true in *all possible worlds*, and one that is possibly true as one that is true in *some possible worlds* (Kripke 1959, 2). But *possible* worlds can contain things that *might have*, but do not, exist. At this point David Lewis bit the bullet and treated thoughts about non-actual possible objects as made true or false by things existing in *alternate possible worlds*, concrete worlds that must be considered as just as real as

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<sup>1</sup> Russell’s account of implication, he argued, had failed to capture the *necessity* implicit in the notion of implication itself. While *qua* material implication, “*p* implies *q*” was construed as equivalent to the fact of it’s *not being the case* that *p* and *not q* ( $\sim(p \cdot \sim q)$ ), Lewis would define *strict implication* as the *impossibility* of *p* and *not q*. But this then required a system of *propositional modal* logic with which the logic of necessary and possible propositions could be made clear.

<sup>2</sup> “Much that is best in this book” he had written in the preface of *Systems of Symbolic Logic* of 1918, “is due to him” (Lewis 1918, vi).

the *actual* world.<sup>3</sup> Many found the metaphysical costs of this “possibilist” solution as just too high, and one response was to relocate an extensionalist “possible-worlds” approach within an enframing *intensional* interpretation of modal logic. Such a position was favoured by the New Zealander, Arthur Prior, whose own work on *tense* logic had provided an initial model for Kripke, and with Prior’s work, I suggest, a second Hegelian source of modern modal logic was introduced.

Prior had been drawn to the topic of *tense* by a paper published by his former teacher in New Zealand, John Findlay (Findlay 1941), whom he later nominated as the “founding father of modern tense logic” (Prior 1967, 1). Findlay had been strongly influenced by Hegel (Findlay 1985) and, like Royce, had attempted to reconcile the spirit of Hegel’s logic with the development of modern symbolic logic (Findlay 1942 and 1955). In his founding work on tense logic (Prior 1967), Prior points to a claim made by Findlay in a paper in 1941 that “our conventions with regard to tenses are so well worked out that we have practically the materials in them for a formal calculus”, which he mentions “should have been included in the modern development of modal logics” (Findlay 1941, p. 233). But if “all is so desirably definite”, Findlay adds, “what room is there for puzzles and perplexities” of the sort that he had been under discussion in his paper? Findlay then points to the source of the problem, “a certain aspiration which all our language to some extent fulfils, and which we are at times inclined to follow to unreasonable lengths. We desire to have in our language only those kinds of statement that are *not* dependent, as regards their truth or falsity, on any circumstance in which the statement happens to be made”. While he notes that “we do *in part* say things which may be passed from man to man, or place to place, or time to time, without a change in their truth-value” it is clear that he thinks that we should not take *the results* produced by this activity as providing the *underlying logical form* of our language, in the manner of Russell and his followers.

Prior died in 1969, and so before much of the debates sparked by David Lewis. However, Prior had *an answer* to one of the defences Lewis offered to his critics, an answer in the spirit of Findlay. Lewis had argued that it was just as irrational to deny the reality of non-actual possible worlds as it was to deny the reality of times other than the present (Lewis 1973, 86). We don’t think of the world of ancient Rome, for example, as unreal simply because it doesn’t exist *now*, and we shouldn’t think of the worlds of un-actualized possibilities as unreal, simply because they are not *actual*.

Findlay’s allusion to sentences, the truth or falsity of which is dependent on the circumstances of their utterance, brings out the parallels between modal and tensed sentences on which Lewis relied, but interprets it in a different way. A sentence such as “It’s raining *now*” can, of course, as Hegel had pointed out in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel 1977, §95), be true at one point in time but false at another. In contrast, “It’s raining at 3.35 pm on the 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2015”, if true at that time, will remain true regardless of *when* it is stated. The analogy between tense logic and

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<sup>3</sup> The actual world, David Lewis argued, is only actual for the individuals in it. For individuals in other possible worlds, *their* world is the actual world. To think of our world as somehow metaphysically privileged, he argued, is like thinking of one’s *temporal* location, one’s “now”, as a metaphysically privileged *time*. We should regard *other possible worlds* and their occupants as no more mysterious and no less real than we do *other times and their occupants* (Lewis 1973, 86).

modal logic was based on the idea of treating different possible worlds as akin to different times. Just as *tensed* sentences can be converted to ones tenselessly stating some proposition's truth *at* a certain time *t*, so too can *modal* sentences be indexed to, or considered true *at*, *possible worlds* that are similarly objectively conceived.

Prior was an early representative of the *actualist* standpoint critical of the "possibilism" manifested in David Lewis's pluralist approach to possible worlds, the actualist denying the reality of possible worlds *beyond* the actual one. For the *modal* actualist, therefore, possibility must be thought of as somehow *internal* to the actual world.<sup>4</sup> Thus in the recent version of actualism found in the work of Robert Stalnaker, for example, mere possibilities are treated *abstracta*, rather than alternate concrete worlds: in the fashion of C. I. Lewis, they are as *maximal consistent sets of propositions*—propositions that are themselves conceived as unrealised abstract *properties* of the world (Stalnaker 2012). David Lewis's employment of the parallel between time and modality thus might be seen as involving two linked moves: first, he extends the idea of contextual location *within* the actual world to the idea of treating the actual world *itself* as a particular context by portraying it as belonging to an array of alternative possible worlds. Next, in relation to time he assumes that the now-centred contextuality of representations about events expressed in tensed sentences can be definitively overcome by translation into an "objective" form, in which one quantifies over *points in time*. But Prior had rejected Lewis's way of thinking of the *temporal* vehicle of the analogy. Like Findlay, Prior was suspicious of the desire to try to speak in ways that purported to involve *complete* independence from temporal context, because he saw this as involving an illegitimate appeal to "Platonic" entities such as instants of time.

The metaphysical differences separating Findlay and Prior from David Lewis might be clarified by appealing to the way modal logic is discussed in a more recent textbook by Blackburn, di Rijke and Venema (2001). There the authors commence with "three slogans" about the nature of modal languages: they "are simple yet expressive languages for talking *about* relational structures", they "provide an internal logical perspective on relational structures", and they "are not isolated formal systems but are related to other branches of mathematical logic, among which is the 'classical' language of the type of first-order quantified predicate logic of Frege and Russell" (Blackburn, di Rijke and Venema 2001, xi–xiii). Here the traditional alethic modalities of necessity and possibility are not prioritized but treated as particular instances of a more general concept of modality invoking context-dependence. As we have noted, the formalization of modal semantics had been made on the basis of the analogy of sentences true *at a time* with those true *at a world*, both other "modalities" such as deontic and doxastic ones had been suggested in earlier approaches, and Findlay may taken as representing a rival approach to the logic of modality to the form that was to become dominant in twentieth-century analytic philosophy. Significantly, Findlay had done his PhD thesis on the Austrian "object theorist" Alexis Meinong, for whom *possible* objects were one type of the "inexistent" intentional objects that he investigated. Moreover, Findlay's thesis had been supervised by a former student of Meinong, Ernst Mally, who had transposed distinctions that Meinong had treated as ontological ones into distinctions between

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<sup>4</sup> One could be, like the positivists, an *amodal* actualist by be skeptical of the meaningfulness of modal talk.

forms of predication, and on the basis of this had devoted a book in 1926 to a “*deontik Logik*” of “ought” statements. Findlay had grasped parallels here between the type of primarily intensional modal logic of intentional states and Hegel’s logic. Contrary to the tradition developing from Russell through Tarski and Carnap to the modern tradition of possible world semantics, Findlay had come from a tradition that had approached modality in terms of objects that were fundamentally present to minds.

Thus Findlay’s and Prior’s attitude to the issue of the translatability between modal and non-modal languages was clear. Just as C. I. Lewis had conceived of intensional logic as inclusive of a calculus of propositions, Findlay and Prior opted for the same understanding of the new versions of both tense and modal logic. Thus Prior had written: “It is not that modal logic or tense logic is an artificially truncated uniform monadic first-order predicate calculus; the latter, rather is an artificially expanded modal logic or tense logic” (Prior 1969, 246). To my knowledge, Prior himself had no interest in Hegel or German idealism, although he does refer to phenomenological authors to which Findlay had appealed. But Prior’s views on temporal and alethic modalities, I believe, show many features analogous to features of Hegel’s philosophy that had been reflected in Findlay’s approach.

## 2. Hegel and Contemporary Modal Actualism

Modern modal actualists, such as Prior or, more recently, Robert Stalnaker, insist that possibility must be considered as somehow *internal* to the *actual* world—in Stalnaker’s work, for example, as *abstracta* or unrealized *properties* of the actual world (Stalnaker 2012). Hegel’s account of the category “actuality [*Wirklichkeit*]”, found in his two logical works, *The Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia Logic*, suggests an analogous attitude to actuality. For example, in the *Encyclopedia Logic* he describes possibility as “the reflection-into-itself which, as in contrast with the concrete unity of the actual, is taken and made an abstract and unessential essentiality”. “Possibility” he goes on “is what is essential to reality, but in such a way that it is at the same time only a possibility” (Hegel 1991, § 143).<sup>5</sup> Hegel’s version of actuality, I suggest, may be understood as an *actualist* one in contrast to the opposing “possibilist” version found in Leibniz. Actuality just is reality; it is not *one* possible world within a plurality of alternate possibilities that just happens to be actual because it is the one *we* find ourselves within. But it is also to be understood as affirming the *reality* of possibility, in contrast to Spinoza’s *necessitarian* form of actualism. His *absolute idealism*, I suggest, attempts to avoid *both* Spinozist and Leibnizian alternatives.

David Lewis’s thesis of the plurality of worlds has an at least superficial resemblance to that of Leibniz, but an obvious distinction between Lewis’s use of possible worlds and the approach of Leibniz consists in the fact while Lewis employed this thesis in the service of a form of physicalism, for Leibniz it was central to his Christian *theism*.<sup>6</sup> This is related to the fact that while for Lewis, possible

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<sup>5</sup> An excellent account of this chapter is to be found in Ng 2009.

<sup>6</sup> There are other important differences between Leibniz’s and the modern approach, including that Leibniz had lacked the idea of differential “accessibility relations” relating worlds. Different *senses* of necessity—logical, real and so on—can

worlds are conceived extensionally (although not limited to the spatio-temporal realm of the *actual* world), Leibniz's were ultimately *intensional*, existing in, or in some relation to, the mind of God.<sup>7</sup> Hegel had retained Leibniz's enframing intensional interpretation, but in contrast to Leibniz's other-worldly "Platonist" conception, Hegel's has a more *this-worldly* "Aristotelian" flavour.<sup>8</sup>

While in Leibniz's monadology, each monad had been conceived as composed of representations and appetitions by which that monad could represent the entire universe from its own distinctive "point of view" (Leibniz 1998a, §9), with the totality of those points of view ultimately unified in the mind of the omniscient transcendent God, Hegel had, in his theory of Spirit (*Geist*), effectively distributed this divine mind over an historically developing dynamic entanglement of *human* minds. In Leibniz's scheme, any finite individual monad is capable of moving closer to the mind of God by a type of platonic ascent that takes it, in a stepwise manner, from *more* to *less contextualized* or *perspectival forms of knowing*, described as transitions made from relatively clear but *confused* ideas to clear and *distinct* ones (Leibniz 1998a, §24). Leibniz had conceived such steps on the model of translations taking one from Aristotelian categorical judgments understood from an *intentional* point of view to judgments given the form of conditionals and understood extensionally.<sup>9</sup> That is, his idea of translations among forms of judgment were broadly along the lines of translations between modal and classical languages as conceived by Blackburn, di Rijke and Venema. But what of Hegel?

It is often assumed that Leibniz's logical ideas had little influence until they were rediscovered in the later nineteenth century, but throughout the eighteenth century interest was shown, especially among mathematicians, in developing the Leibniz's application of algebra to syllogistic logic, and his *characteristica universalis* with its *rational calculus*. One of these developers of Leibniz's logic had been Gottfried Ploucquet, the logical authority at the Tübingen seminary when Hegel was a student there (Ploucquet 2006, Auer 1999).

In Book 3 of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, the so-called "Subjective Logic", we find Hegel reflecting about *formal* logic in ways meant to cohere with the approach to modality suggested in the final "Actuality" section of the Objective Logic of Book 2. Thus in his treatment of the syllogism Hegel reflects upon the attempts by Leibniz and Ploucquet to *reduce* the traditional syllogistic inference forms to mathematics (Hegel 2010, 602–7),<sup>10</sup> in a way that points to later attempts to reduce intensional

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be differentiated by use of the idea of different accessibility relations. Without this Leibniz really only has the idea of logical necessity.

<sup>7</sup> But, very crudely, strip away the mind of God in Leibniz's account and, I suggest, what is left is something like Lewis's realm of possible worlds. Without the overarching intensional (and intentional) framework provided by God's mind, the apparatus can be understood *extensionally*.

<sup>8</sup> This is reflected theologically in his "this-worldly" version of Christian trinitarianism. The other conception of modality he has to distinguish his views from in the "Actuality" chapter is thus Spinoza's necessitarianism.

<sup>9</sup> The distinction between intensional and extensional had been well-known from its usage in the Port Royal logic of Arnauld and Nicole.

<sup>10</sup> This occurs in the context of Hegel's discussion of the "fourth-figure" or

modal judgments to extensional non-modal ones. Hegel was clearly familiar with the types of logical devices employed by Leibniz for transforming modal judgments with traditional subject-predicate forms into non-modal extensional ones. In particular, he alludes to the Leibnizian technique for treating the subject terms of traditional judgment forms as themselves *predicates* (Hegel 2010, 602–3). In the new judgment form, both subject-predicate and predicate-predicate are conceived as applying to some “third”, *not mentioned* in the judgment’s surface grammar. This technique is similar to treating an “incomplete” Aristotelian judgment as itself closer to a propositional *function* needing to be predicated of something else, such as the specific time of its utterance in the conversion of tensed to tenseless sentences, to arrive at proposition with a stable truth-value.

Hegel, like C. I. Lewis, had been critical of this project understood as some global attempt to render judgments into an *entirely* extensional form (Hegel 2010, 550–555). Attempting to capture a judgment in an exclusively extensional way undermined the intensional relationships existing between parts of the judgments within a syllogism, parts that were responsible for the law-like nature of the inference involved—a result that can be perceived in the project of a *characteristica universalis*, pursued by Leibniz and Ploucquet (Hegel 2010, 607–8). *Nevertheless*, it is clear in Hegel’s conception of the dynamics of thought, that this type of translation from the modal to the non-modal, that he calls “reflection” plays a crucial role in thought’s progress. It is just that this movement cannot be considered as constituting a series of iterated reflections that take us further and further from our location in the actual and closer and closer to a transcendently located (that is, an actually *non-located*) mind—*God’s* mind with its “view from nowhere”. Rather, reflection does not as take thought further *from* the actual, but *deeper* into it, revealing connections that had not been apparent to superficial experience. And yet the individual knower never ceases to belong to the actual, nor ceases to view the world from a perspective within it. That is, the individual knower never achieves a “view from nowhere”, not because this “view” is available *only* to God, but rather because the idea of such a view, and even of the God that is considered as capable of it, is categorically ill-conceived.<sup>11</sup>

An example of how reflection should not be seen as simply going unidirectionally from modal to non-modal can be found in Hegel account of judgment (Hegel 2010, 550–87), the circular development of which clearly shows the ineliminability of modal considerations from knowledge. The first judgment form, the broadly Aristotelian judgment of “Dasein” or “existence”, evolves through a string of subforms, starting with the “positive judgment” which shows the surprising logical structure of having a *universal subject term* and a *singular predicate term* (Hegel 2010, 560), a structure that will distinguish *this* judgment form from the opposed subsumptive judgments of *reflection*, which will have show the more conventional *singular* subject and *general* predicate.

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“mathematical” syllogism.

<sup>11</sup> It is a remnant of a religion that pictures God as an omniscient otherworldly single mind—a “father”—as found in the Old Testament. In contrast, in Hegel’s heavily conception of Trinitarian Christianity, which is both Aristotelian and neo-Platonist, the Father, *qua* “First Person of the Trinity”, has effectively shrunk to an extensionless point. That is, in his “actualist” theology, Hegel has no place for even the *idea* of a mind located at a transcendent “view from nowhere”.

Hegel's judgments of existence are, as the name suggests, *existential* judgments, but they are not so in the sense of those judgments of modern logic that are formalized with the existential quantifier. The judgment that we write as  $Ex (Fx)$ , is, on the modern reading, effectively a higher order judgment *about* the property "F", namely, it says that *that property* is instantiated. It is not a judgment *about* some *particular* existing thing, named by the subject term, that actually instantiates that property.<sup>12</sup> Hegel's judgments of *Dasein*, however, are existential in this latter sense, although they don't *assert* the existence of that thing. They are effectively "de re" judgments, assert of some particular thing that *it* has some particular property. Moreover, the property is a particular *property instance*, as is conveyed by describing the "red" of the rose in "the rose is red" as a singular term.<sup>13</sup> That is, Hegel clearly intends that the predicate term acts in a name-like manner so to pick out the *specific instance* of the property red, "inhering" in *this specific* rose—we might say *this specific* rose's *specific way* of being red.<sup>14</sup> Aristotle had seemed to assumed that in all judgments with subject–predicate form the subject existed, but Hegel's attitude to a *singular predicate* term has more in common with Kant's attitude to a similarly singular *intuition*. For Kant, that a representation possesses intuitive content had modal connotations, marking the *actuality* of that representational content. Hegel rejects the dichotomy of intuitions and concepts, but retains the idea that concepts have a "singular" moment, and with that

This first form is clearly relevant to the idea of the judgment expressing some *phenomenally rich* perceptual content.

But this positive judgment is, Hegel says, "not true" and "has its truth in the negative judgment" (Hegel 2010, 562), and it is this use of *negation* that introduces a new degree of logical complexity. When one says, for example, "the rose is *not* red", negation will only be taken as applying to the *determinateness* of the predicate, because one does *not* thereby imply that the rose is not *coloured*.<sup>15</sup> Rather, "it is ... assumed that it has a color, though another color" (Hegel 2010, 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

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<sup>12</sup> an approach that was widely thought to overcome problems surrounding existential judgments such as negative ones like "Santa Clause doesn't exist" which seems to presuppose an existing Santa Clause and then add the information that he *doesn't* exist. In the new approach, Santa Clause might be translated into a definite description, and then the assertion will be taken as saying that that complex predicate is not instantiated.

<sup>13</sup> Hegel switches between the examples "the rose is red" and "the rose is fragrant". For simplicity sake, I will keep to the former. No logical point hangs on the difference between examples.

<sup>14</sup> C.f., "'The rose is fragrant.' This fragrance is not some indeterminate fragrance or other, but the fragrance of the rose. The predicate is therefore *a singular*" (Hegel 2010, 560).

<sup>15</sup> "From the side of this universal sphere, the judgment is still positive" (Hegel 2010, 565).

yellow *or* pink *or* blue, and so on,<sup>16</sup> manifesting what Hegel calls “determinate negation” amongst those predicates. Thus the predicate “red” has gone from functioning in a quasi-name-like way of picking out some *individual* instance of redness to designating something like *an area* within a larger partitioned space of possible colours, an area *defined by* its borders, and that will, subsequently, potentially accommodate within it, a multiplicity of *shades of, or ways of being* red. With this it has become the appropriate type of predicate for a *reflective* judgment.

But in turn, the “subsumptive” reflective judgment turns into another, more developed version of the judgment of *inherence*, such that we might come to think of properties of the rose more as dispositional properties belonging to the *genus* rather than simply qualitative properties that “inhere” in particular instances. We thus go from conceiving of the subject of the judgment as a singular isolated thing to the context of its connectedness to other things in the world.<sup>17</sup> “If we say, ‘This rose is red’, for example, we are considering the subject in its immediate singularity, without relation to anything else; while, on the other hand, in the judgment, ‘This plant is curative’, we are considering the subject (the plant) as standing in a relation to something else (the illness to be cured by the plant) in virtue of its predicate, curativeness” (Hegel 1991, § 174 addition). Such connections can be established only on the emergence of distinct *patterns* of association found in experience that allow us to make quantified claims such as “some plants are curative” or “all plants are edible”, the latter form constituting an “empirical universality” in which one can glimpse “an obscure intimation of the universality of the *concept* as it exists in and for itself” (Hegel 2010, 573). Thus the appearance of quantitative distinctions such as “some As are B” and “all As are C” will point to the idea of A’s *essential* properties, expressed in the form “The A *as such* is C”, which in turn will lead from the judgment of reflection to the *explicitly modal* “Judgment of Necessity” in which “the substance or nature of the subject” is contained in its predicate (Hegel 1991, §176 add. and § 177; also Hegel 2010, 574–5).

In place then of Leibniz’s platonic ascent to a transcendent God’s-eye point of view, Hegel’s presentation suggests a circular cognitive movement that goes from single qualitative judgments (this A is B) to reflective quantitative ones (some or all As are B) and from there returns to another type of individual judgment (The A *as such* is B) in which the subject is no longer conceived as a singular instance of perception, but as a type of “secondary substance” or concrete universal. Moreover, we are to understand the intensionality of this final form of judgment is somehow mediated by the quantitative judgments of reflection that precede it. To express Hegel’s simple examples in terms of the language of possible-worlds semantics, one might say that when one learns that *this* rose is red, one *eliminates* from one’s belief states certain other accessible doxastic possibilities, possibilities in which the rose is

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<sup>16</sup> Moreover, what counts as a determinable of any entity depends up what *sort* of entity it is. While numbers can be characterized as either odd or even, but *not* as either red, or blue, or yellow, or ..., roses can be characterised as either red, or blue, or yellow, or ..., but not as either odd or even. Aristotle’s hylomorphism is implicit here.

<sup>17</sup> Hegel’s example of such a *reflective* judgment that clearly involves a type of test akin to *metallurgist’s* test for gold—Leibniz’s way of conceiving of the reflective form of judgment.

yellow, white, pink, and so on. When one moves to the subsequent *higher* level, one is making a judgment about a *genus* or *kind* in which the substance's essential properties are now being distinguished from accidental ones, as when the *rationality of the human as such* is distinguished from, say, universal human *featherlessness*. This parallel between Hegel's way of conceiving of judgment structure and that of recent possible-world semantics is, I believe, quite systematic. Hegel thinks of a judgment, an *Urteil*, as involving a type of division, a *Teilung*, and from the perspective of possible world semantics, a proposition, *qua* intentional content of a linguistic assertion, is itself conceived as a division—a division in the “space of possibility” demarcating a subspace representing those worlds in which it the proposition is true from the space representing those worlds in which it is false (Stalnaker 2012, ch. 5). This allows the assertion to be understood as conveying information that allows a hearer to *eliminate* from their beliefs an array of possibilities incompatible with the content of what was communicated (Stalnaker 1999, 86–8). As in Findlay's neo-Hegelian account, sometimes the subject, as an essentially contextualized embedded modal knower, needs to put her beliefs in a form that can be conveyed to others who inhabit different contexts, and so she needs to abstract from her linguistic representations those features that tie them exclusively to some aspect of her context not shared by the interlocutor. For the temporal context, she can thus replace indexicals like her “now” or “next week” by phrases that specify the *actual times* intended. But the totality of one's belief states itself, as Stalnaker argues, cannot be entirely divested of modal or contextualized judgments, or, using another terminology, indexical or self-locating ones (Stalnaker 2008, ch. 3).<sup>18</sup>

I have tried to convey some of the evidence that I see as pointing towards Hegel's metaphysics as a form of *modal actualism*. As Hegel makes clear, his idea of the actual includes possibility a type of reflection existing *within* it: “Possibility is what is essential to reality, but in such a way that it is at the same time only a possibility” (EL, § 143). But *abstracta* such as propositions are, of course, ontologically contentious entities, and there is a strong tendency to treat them platonistically as other-worldly entities, something incompatible with Hegel's this-worldly actualism. However, again there is the suggestion of a non-transcendentalist interpretation of *abstracta* in the pragmatist dimension to Stalnaker's account, that would seem to suit Hegel. On Stalnaker's account, possible worlds can be treated as *sets of propositions*—that is, abstract entities (sets), the members of which (propositions) are also abstract. These second kind of abstracta and entities capable of truth and falsity, of standing in relations of compatibility or incompatibility, and of being objects of intentional attitudes. Accepted in abstraction from this consideration of this latter role, propositions would be Platonic entities, but as I understand him, Stalnaker's account of propositions is tied to the role they play in the activity of attributing intentional contents to others in the effort of giving meaning to the sentences that they utter and the actions they undertake. They are the means by which we go about conceiving how the world is *for* other subjects (Stalnaker 2007), and without the existence of such talking and acting subjects in the world, there would be no place for talk of *either* possibilities *or* propositions.

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<sup>18</sup> That is, the totality of one's belief states should not be conceived, as in Kant's notion of the “transcendental unity of apperception”, on the model of a consistent set of one's *reflective* judgments.

Hegel had conceived of spirit, *Geist*, as made up of the myriad ways in which individual subjects are caught up in acts of mutual recognition (*Anerkennung*)—acts in which subjects recognize and acknowledge other subjects *as* subjects and that are necessary for the constituting of self-conscious subjects *as* such. Self-consciousness, we are told, “exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only as something recognized or acknowledged [*anerkannt*]” (Hegel 1977, § 178). For an actualist, spirit must always be embodied in the natural world (the actual world being largely natural), but spirit as such is conceptually *irreducible* to the natural world. In something of the same way, we might say that for Stalnaker, the *recognition* of others *as* thinkers to whom we attribute propositional contents is presupposed by any *cognition* we have of them as intentional beings.<sup>19</sup>

To sum up, on *this* version of actualism, we are to think of minds and the propositions they entertain and act upon as mutually presupposing entities within the actual world, and so as on the same level. *Abstracta* like propositions, when understood non-Platonistically, presuppose the existence of subjects who speak meaningfully, just as those subjects understood as speaking meaningfully presuppose the propositions we use to make that meaning determinate. Neither propositions nor minds can be eliminated, in positivist fashion, from the actual, nor reduced to any naturalistically conceived entities. Thus this type of actualism entails a certain type of *idealism*—the idea of the *necessity* of the existence of the mind in the world—but this idealism is, I suggest, a somewhat metaphysically benign form of idealism.

On this reading, *idealism* asserts nothing more than the presence of the mind in the *actual* world, and this must be distinguished from the thesis of the necessary existence of the mind *per se*, or, the presence of mind in *all possible worlds*. Thus the claim that mind is necessarily in the actual world is able to be interpreted as a metaphysically trivial thesis. It is essentially David Lewis’s thesis of the *indexicality* of the actual world—the idea that the actual world is *our* world—without David Lewis’s commitment to the reality of *other concrete worlds* with *other subjects* for whom their worlds *are understood as* the actual world. There is something here akin to Descartes’ *cogito* argument, but without Descartes’ metaphysics. That the actual world contains the mind is surely a thesis that is hard to argue against *if* we concur with that part of Descartes’ argument that *arguing* is an activity of which only beings *with* minds are capable. With Hegel’s actualism, we get this part of Descartes’ argument unencumbered by the more metaphysically problematic other parts.

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<sup>19</sup> They don’t form part of the fabric of the universe conceived naturalistically, as we don’t typically attribute thoughts to beings *qua* natural beings. As *abstracta*, then, propositions or possibilities should be thought of as essentially mind-related notions. In Hegel’s terms, they are posits that have a place in the world in the context of our practice of reflecting on and explaining or making explicit the contents of the thoughts of other subjects, or of ourselves.

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