

Hegel and Recent Analytic Metaphysics

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After a sustained period in which the enterprise of metaphysics was negatively regarded, metaphysical topics have for some time been back in favour with analytic philosophers. The highpoint of analytic philosophy's *anti*-metaphysical period had been in the 1930s and 40s when the logical positivists used a *verificationist* criterion for meaningfulness (a claim is meaningful only if it can be either empirically verified or disconfirmed) to dismiss traditional "metaphysical" discourse as meaningless. However, the verificationist criterion soon came to be regarded as self-defeating: clearly it was not *itself* capable of empirical verification or disconfirmation. Another turn taken by analytic philosophy around the same time would continue this anti-metaphysical impulse without relying upon the positivists' self-refuting principle, "ordinary language" philosophers shifting the criteria for meaningfulness more to the "ordinary" uses of language. While in comparison to the 30s and 40s, the very early years of analytic philosophy had seemed comparatively "metaphysical", the *seeds* for the ultimate rejection of metaphysics are not difficult to discern there.¹

While in no sense opposed to the project of metaphysics *per se*, the attitudes of expressed by Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore at the turn of the twentieth century had been opposed a particular *type* of metaphysics—broadly the type of "British idealism" influential in the last decades of the 19th century. Nevertheless, the *more general* anti-metaphysical orientation that was to develop latter might be seen as deriving from the weapons that had been employed by Russell in his war against the idealists—weapons supplied by the new *logic* stemming from work of Gottlob Frege on the logical foundations of mathematics.

With the development of the new approach, logic had come to be perceived as "formal" or "mathematical" in ways contrasting with the traditional Aristotelian-based conception of logic that had survived for over two millennia. Frege's project of seeking in logic a *foundation* for mathematics—in particular, a foundation for number theory—did not *reduce* logic to mathematics: any *reduction* here was conceived as going in the opposite direction. Nevertheless, this logicist project demanded that logic be conceived of in such a way as to enable the assimilation of mathematical truths to logical ones. Importantly, the truths of mathematics are thought of as "eternal" ones, unlike everyday "truths" about a changeable world. While Aristotle had thought of the truth or falsity of propositions as changing with time—the statement that someone is sitting is true *while* he is sitting but *becomes* false when he stands ("Categories" in Aristotle 1984, ch 5, 4a22–5)—in the new context propositions came to be conceived as true or false *simpliciter*, or true or false "eternally". Thus a sentence such as "Socrates is sitting" came to be seen as incomplete—a shortened form of "Socrates is

sitting *at* such and such a time” which remains true or false *with* the passage of time. Next, the mathematically conceived logical formulae meant that logic itself came to be conceived in an essentially “extensionalist” way and so dissociable from relations thought to be essentially mental or psychological.

At least since the time of the Port Royal logicians, what was “comprehended” in a concept had been distinguished from the range of *objects* to which that concept applied— Sir William Hamilton having rendered the French distinction as that between the “intension” and the “extension” of a concept. The notion of the comprehensible *content* of a concept suggests something psychological, but if the relation *between* concepts could be understood in terms of the relations among the respective “extensions” of those concepts—an approach encouraged by the emergence of set theory—then the domain of logic could be conceived independently of the domain of the mental. Suggestions of this had already been present in Leibniz’s project of a “calculus” for thought applied to a type of universal language or “characteristic”, but Leibniz had nevertheless conceived such extensionally understood relations as *internal* to an overall *intensional* interpretation of the logical domain—logical contents ultimately being understood as related to the mind of God. By the nineteenth century, however, a more uniformly extensionalistic approach to logic was suggested by George Boole (Bar-Am 2008). This development came to fruition in the new logic employed by Russell in his attack on the idealists.

All in all, the rapid progress in logic made in first half of the twentieth century seemed to support Russell’s dismissal of the earlier idealism, a metaphysics he thought to be wedded to the categories of traditional logic. By the 1950s, however, this historical movement hit an obstacle, and with this, a serious challenge to the anti-metaphilosophical and anti-*idealist* flavour of analytic philosophy appeared. This obstacle was provided by the return of an ancient form of logic, alethic modal logic—the logic of necessary and possible truths—that when conceived as *intensional* seemed in many ways closer to logic as envisaged by *Hegel* than to logic as envisaged by Russell. Ironically, the attempt to preserve the *extensionalist* assumptions about logic of Russell and the positivists within the new *modal* context issued in a metaphysical position many found *so* counter-intuitive that it could be considered as a type of *reductio* of the project to reconcile modal logic with the thesis of extensionality. This was the so-called “modal realism” of David Lewis that was commonly received with the famous “incredulous stare” (D. Lewis 1973, 86). The ensuing discussion over the possibility of acknowledging the reality of modal notions of possibility and necessity has been an important vehicle for the return of “metaphysics” in analytic philosophy, but while this has seen a resurgence of interest in *Aristotelian* metaphysics (e.g., Tahko 2012), any consideration of the consequences the new situation holds for Hegel’s philosophy has been largely ignored.

In the following sections I want to explore the question of Hegel's philosophy in relation to the new metaphysical context of analytic philosophy along two related lines. The first explores a hidden role played by lingering commitments to Hegelian forms of thought *in the revival of modal logic* itself, the second, the possibilities for new ways of understanding the nature of Hegelian idealism against the background of the array of metaphysical positions that have developed in analytic philosophy in the wake of the challenge to extensionalism posed by modal logic.

1. The Hidden Role of Hegel in the Development of Modal Logic in 20th century

1.1 Hegel, Royce, Russell and C. I. Lewis

Russell had believed that the revolution in logic originating from the work of Frege had dispensed not only with traditional Aristotelian logic but also to the traditional forms of metaphysics linked to it. Russell was surely right in assuming that Aristotle had thought of his logic as implying a distinct metaphysics. In his classification of judgments, in *De Interpretatione* Chapter 7, Aristotle starts with the claim that “of actual things some are universal, others particular” (“De Interpretatione” in Aristotle 1984, 17a38). Of the *former*, statements can be made either universally (17b3), in which case there will be a contrary, or non-universally (17b6–8), in which case there will be no contrary. The important point for us is that for Aristotle both universally *and* particularly quantified affirmative statements are to be understood as being *about* universals. Both “all men are mortal” and “some men are mortal” say something *about* the genus “man”.

Building on Frege, however, Russell uncoupled Aristotle's universally quantified affirmative judgments from this metaphysics of kinds. For Russell, such judgments were no longer *about* kinds; they were simply general judgments about the world itself expressed in conditional form. All As are B effectively says that if one finds an instance of *property A*, it will be accompanied by an instance of *property B*. In one fell swoop, the elimination of “kind terms”—those terms in the subject position of a sentence specifying the essential nature of that which is designated—eliminated the “kinds” to which those terms had previously been *mistakenly* thought to refer. The elimination of kinds thus undercut the distinction between necessary and contingent properties, and the new logic had little concern for traditional modal judgments of necessity and possibility.

Crucially, Russell in many places portrayed Hegel as naively held hostage to the Aristotelian approach to *both* logic and metaphysics, criticizing him for having accepted the traditional “subject-predicate” conception of the proposition (e.g., Russell 1914, 48). Limited to a logic of one-placed predicates, Hegel, he claimed, had no way of theorizing *relations* between individual objects, with the consequence that ultimately all predicates had to be referred back to one big subject, “the Absolute”—a consequence of Hegel's approach that had been made explicit in the work of Bradley.

However, this extensionally conceived account of judgment upon which Russell based this criticism of Hegel was soon itself to be criticized on logical grounds, and this would lead to the revival of a type of modal logic—the *propositional* modal logic of the American Clarence Irving Lewis. Indeed, in this counter-thrust against Russell’s extensionalism it is not difficult to see the spectre of Hegel.

Within a few years of the publication of the first volume of Whitehead’s and Russell’s *Principia Mathematica*, C. I. Lewis published the first of a string of articles critical of Russell’s conception of “material implication” that was based on his extensionalist reduction of the form of Aristotelian judgments (C. I. Lewis 1912, 1914, 1918). Russell’s elimination of Aristotle’s modal distinctions between the properties possessed *necessarily* by an instance of a kind and those possessed *contingently*, Lewis complained, left him incapable of conveying the idea of the necessity implicit in the logical conception of valid *inference*. Lewis then set about developing a formal logic with modal propositional operators (“it is necessary that ...” and “it is possible that ...”) to capture this necessity, and opposed his “strict implication” to Russell’s “material implication”.

Lewis’s logical move in fact had a clear Hegelian genealogy. First, Lewis had been deeply influenced by his teacher, the American “absolute idealist”, Josiah Royce, from whom he had derived much of his logical formalizations used for his systems of modal logic (C. I. Lewis 1918, vi). Lewis was to make clear the link to idealism of his own *intensional* approach to modal logic in an essay of 1930, describing his own logic as a mathematical, or “logistical”, development of the type of intensional logic that had been typical of “continental” thinkers since the time of Leibniz (*ibid.*, 33). In contrast to Russell’s attempt to reduce the intensional to the extensional, Lewis claimed that “the intensional implication relation (or “strict implication” as I called it)” was the more inclusive: “when the extensional relations are introduced by definition, it includes the calculus of propositions, as previously developed, as a sub-system” (*ibid.*, 36).

Further, while Lewis may not have been aware (although his teacher Royce would surely have been), his criticism of Russell effectively repeated the general features of Hegel’s criticism of Leibniz’s logic in Book 3 of his *Science of Logic*. Hegel had been well aware of the nature of Leibniz’s extensionalistically conceived project of a “universal characteristic” and its link to an algebraically based “calculus”. As a student at Tübingen he had been taught the logic of Gottfried Ploucquet, a staunch supporter of Leibniz’s project of a universal characteristic (Pozzo 2010), and in his treatment of syllogisms in the “subjective logic” of Book 3, Hegel argues that the form of the “mathematical syllogism” pursued by Leibniz and Ploucquet actually *undermines* the very inferential relations that this syllogism is meant to formalize (Hegel 2010, 602–8/XII 104–10; Redding 2014). The logical basis of Hegel’s attack is foreshadowed in his earlier general comments on the logical structure of judgment.

There Hegel distinguishes an *Urteil* (judgment), with its clear *intensional* meaning, from a *Satz*, by which he clearly mean something like an *extensionally* considered material sentence via which some piece of information about empirically related features of the world can be conveyed. Thus treated as a juxtaposition of two *names*—“what is said of a singular subject is itself only something singular” (Hegel 2010, 553/XII 55)—Hegel’s “*Satz*” looks something like what Wittgenstein in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was later to call a “*Satz*”—that is, a *Satz*-sign [*Satzzeichen*] considered “in its projective relation to the world” (Wittgenstein 1922, 3.12). However, for Hegel the *Satz* considered in such a simple way is itself neither true nor false, but simply *correct* (*richtig*) or *incorrect* (*unrichtig*), and as the capacity for being *true or false* is the mark of a judgment, a *Satz*, considered in this way, is clearly *not a judgment*.² Rather, for a *Satz* to *count* as a judgment, an *Urteil*, it must be understood in the context of its use within a larger piece of inferential reasoning: A *Satz* about Aristotle’s age at the year of his death, for example, would count as a judgment “only if one of the circumstances, say, the date of death or the age of the philosopher, came into doubt” (Hegel 2010, 553/XII: 55–6). It is in relation to *this* function that the judgment must contain universals, the clear suggestion being that we must be able to think of a predicate such as “happening in the fourth year of the 115th Olympiad”, as not simply “naming” some particular interval of time but as expressing an *abstract* universal capable of being true of (Hegel will say, “subsuming”) *diverse* events, and so allowing it to mediate evidentiary relations among judgments.

Such details from Hegel’s subjective logic show him in a different light to that in which he is portrayed in Russell’s account. Rather than a naïve advocate of traditional Aristotelian logic, Hegel seems to treat Aristotle’s syllogistic as leading dialectically to its contrary—Leibniz’s self-destructive mathematically tractable universal characteristic (Redding 2014). While any alternative *post-Leibnizian* logic is no more than gestured at, Hegel’s logic is clearly not envisaged as a return to the Aristotelian position from which formal logic had started. While extensionalism is clearly rejected, something closer to Lewis’s *mediated* intensionalist position seems implied, the Leibnizian *contrary* to Aristotelian logic must be preserved and negated (*aufgehoben*) *within* the classical syllogistic.

From his earliest criticisms of Russell, C. I. Lewis had proceeded to develop his systems of propositional modal logic, the fruits of which were contained in the 1932 work co-authored with C. H. Langford, *Symbolic Logic*. Constrained within the framework of Lewis’s somewhat awkward systems, S1 to S5, modal logic remained something of a logical by-water until the 1950s and 60s when it underwent a revolution with the extension to modal logic of the type of semantics that had developed for non-modal logic after Russell. This led to the creation of *quantified* modal *predicate* logic and so-called “possible-world semantics”. Considered as a development *internal* to the program of formal logic, these developments have been

regarded as amounting to an eventual triumph of the *extensional* approach of Russell over C. I. Lewis's early intensionalist revolt. From a broader philosophical perspective, however, this evaluation is far from settled.

Saul Kripke is usually credited as the first theorist to work out a way of cleanly extending the type of semantic program Alfred Tarski had developed for the earlier *non-modal* logic to Lewisian systems of propositional modal logic (Kripke 1959 and 1963). In using Tarski's mathematical 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. 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* actually exist. What sense then is one to make of the idea of "quantifying" over domains of non-existent entities? At this point David Lewis famously bit the bullet, defending the extensionalist program by treating thoughts about merely possible objects as being made true or false by objects existing in *alternate possible worlds*—that is, concrete worlds considered as just as "real" as the *actual* world (D. Lewis 1986). Many found the metaphysical costs of this solution simply too high, and one response has been to relocate an extensionalist "possible-worlds" approach within an enframing *intensional* interpretation of modal logic in the manner originally suggested by C. I. Lewis and, one might add, Hegel. One early advocate of such a position was the New Zealander, Arthur Prior, whose own work on *tense* logic in the 1950s had provided an initial model for Kripke's development of modal semantics (Copeland 2002 and 2008). Here too, I suggest, we can discern the hidden hand of Hegel—not directly, but *via* the influence of Prior's teacher, John N. Findlay.

1.2 Hegel, Findlay and Prior

While Russell's original diagnosis of the logic and metaphysics of Hegel may be still widely accepted among analytic philosophers in general, it has for decades been challenged as an accurate portrayal by Hegel scholars. One of the first of these was John N. Findlay (1903–1987) who was later to play an indirect but important role in the developments of modal logic in the 1950s. Findlay had arrived at Oxford in 1924 after completing an undergraduate degree in his native South Africa, and while already committed to Hegel's philosophy, he found little of interest in "the last breathings of Oxford idealism" (Findlay 1985, 16). A philosopher of diverse interests,³ Findlay was to combine his early interest in Hegel with interests not only in other "continental" philosophers like Brentano, Husserl and Meinong, but also with the new logic emanating from Cambridge. Contrary to *both* Russell and the Oxford idealists, he saw no incompatibility between the new logic and the underlying spirit of Hegel's philosophy, criticizing portrayals of him as violating "essential logical principles" (Findlay 1958, 19). In fact, Findlay believed that the developing *history* of the new logic through the first half of the twentieth century instantiated Hegel's

“dialectic”, Russell’s one-sided extensionalist construal of logic provoking a series of contradictory consequences. Thus early in his career, he published in *Mind* an article generalizing Gödel’s theorem from mathematics to discursive reasoning more generally (Findlay 1942). Perhaps understandably for a young aspiring philosopher in that analytic context, there is no mention there of Hegel, but later he was to point out that he had regarded Gödel’s theorem as a “beautiful and excellent example” of Hegel’s dialectic (Findlay 1963, 221). Hegel’s logic, he thought corresponded to “the sort of informal, non-formalizable passages of comment and discussion in a book like *Principia Mathematica*, rather than its systematic text” (ibid., 219). The theme of the problematic relation between a formalized “characteristic” or “concept-script” and the non-formal language used to talk about it is apparent here,⁴ as is the late Wittgensteinian rejection of the possibility of reducing the latter to the former. It was Hegel’s engagements with this type of relation that made his thinking so relevant to twentieth-century analytic philosophy.

After Oxford, Findlay, as a teacher of logic, had immersed himself in *Principia Mathematica* as well as works by Carnap and others. It was also during this time that he came under the influence of Wittgenstein, later describing himself as having been “pushed by Wittgenstein’s influence in directions that he [Wittgenstein] would not have sanctioned, but which coincided in part with my own original Hegelianism” (Findlay 1985, 32). As with the Gödel piece, little in the way of overt reference to Hegel is to be found in his publications from this period, although in retrospect clear Hegelian themes are apparent in many, especially the article, “Time: A Treatment of Some Puzzles”, originally published in 1941, which would eventually have an influence on developments in modal logic. The vehicle of this influence was a student of Findlay’s from the late 1930s, Arthur Prior.

Findlay’s peripatetic early career had led to him spending a time at the University of Graz, where he obtained a PhD supervised by the Meinongian, Ernst Mally, and a decade (1934–44) at Otago University in Dunedin, New Zealand, where he would stimulate Prior’s interest in logic. It would be Prior’s later work on the logic of tenses that would influence the young Kripke in his efforts to extend modern quantified predicate logic to modal logic (Copeland 2008, section 2.1). The paradigm judgments treated by *Principia Mathematica*, being mathematical ones, are ones that, if true, are to be regarded as “eternally” or *tenselessly* true, and Prior had been drawn to the logic of *tensed* statements, the truth or falsity of which are relative to the time of their utterance, by Prior’s 1941 paper.⁵ On the basis of a few brief passages from this paper, Prior would nominate his former teacher as the “founding father” (Prior 1967, 1) of tense logic. Secondary scholarship has been generally silent on Findlay’s Hegelianism, and some have played down the depth of Findlay’s influence, despite Prior’s claim. For example, Øhrstrøm and Hasle (1995, 171) downplay the role of Findlay’s “not very elaborated” comments, but this ignores any influence Findlay had exerted as Prior’s former undergraduate teacher and master’s supervisor, to which

Prior testified in his first book, *The Logical Basis of Ethics*. There he had acknowledged his debt to Findlay for “almost all that I know of either Logic or Ethics” (Prior 1949, xi).

The parallels between the logical treatments of the modalities of time and truth are reasonably straightforward (Copeland 2002 and 2008). Kripke was to extend the idea of quantification over a domain of actual objects to a domain of possible worlds in a way that temporal logic talked of quantification over *times*. As noted, in the modern context, “Socrates sits” came to be treated as shorthand for “Socrates sits *at t_i*”, for the reasons that had been apparent to Hegel who, in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, had exemplified with the sentence “Now is night” (Hegel 1977, §95). What kind of *truth*, Hegel asked, becomes stale with time? That there are two different ways of conceiving of temporal relations—tensed and untensed—had been clearly stated in earlier work by John McTaggart (1908), an Hegelian of the British persuasion to which Findlay was opposed and one target of the 1941 article. In talking about an event happening *yesterday*, I can describe it *as* happening “yesterday” or I can designate that day with a *date*. In the former mode (McTaggart’s “A series”) but not the latter (his “B series”), the truth or falsity of the statement will depend on *when* it is made.

In the context of examining various “puzzles” about the passing of time, such as McTaggart’s conclusion that time does not exist, Findlay notes that it is built into the semantic rules of our language that regularities hold within McTaggart’s A series to give it its own logic. Here, “we have practically the materials in them for a formal calculus” (Findlay 1941, 233), and, in a note adds that this “calculus of tenses should have been included in the modern development of modal logics” (*ibid.* 233 note 17).⁶

Findlay acknowledges that getting beyond the contextuality of the tense system is clearly important for achieving objectivity in time determinations for particular utterances, however he alludes to “a certain aspiration which all our language to some extent fulfils, *and which we are at times inclined to follow to unreasonable lengths* [emphasis added]. 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” (Findlay 1941, 233). This aspiration is what leads to attempts to *reduce* McTaggart’s A series to the “eternal” determinations of the B series. But, consistent with his “late Wittgensteinian” resistance to treating the encompassing informal *language* as reducible to the formal concept-script, Findlay clearly signals his resistance here to reduction of the tensed system to the untensed one.

A response in the spirit of *Russell* to the relation of the A series to the B series was implicit in his own original *non-modal* interpretations of the implicitly *modal* categorial statements of Aristotle. In the way these issues would come to be discussed

post-*Principia*, Russell's own tenseless "classical" language would be considered a "metalanguage" for the specification of the true meaning of tensed or other modal sentences. But Findlay's opposition to this reduction as a general solution would be followed by Prior who, rather than see the system of tenseless languages as the metalanguage declared: "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). In short, as a philosophical *interpreter* of the development of modal logics, Prior's position would be *overtly* Findlayian and, I suggest, thereby *indirectly* Hegelian. The intensional cannot be reduced to the extensional—this general principle applying across the different modalities, but neither can the extensional be reduced to the *intentional*. That there was a distinct "dialectical" relation here was what Findlay had taken from Hegel, and the relevance of this philosophical orientation can, I suggest, be discerned in Prior's first book, *The Logical Basis of Ethics*. Besides *logic*, Prior had claimed to have learned *almost all he knew* in ethics from Findlay.

Findlay's brief comments about modal logic in the 1941 paper suggest an interest in and familiarity with this developing field. Ernst Mally, Findlay's earlier supervisor in Graz, had, in the 1920, published the first work on "deontic" logic as a variety of modal logic (Mally 1926). Findlay also had spent part of a sabbatical of 1938–9 at University of Chicago where he reports having seen "a great deal of Professor Carnap", and having attended his "valuable course on the logical syntax of language" (Findlay 1985, 28). Carnap's book *Logische Syntax der Sprache*, appearing in 1934, with an English translation in 1937, had included a brief discussion of modal logic and Carnap had gone on to struggle with a type of Tarskian semantics for modal logic in the 1940s. It would not be surprising then if such issues were aired in his course in 1938. We have noted Findlay's attraction to these issues as manifesting Hegel's dialectic. Later, in accounting for his interest in Carnap's work, he was to describe himself as not having "capitulated to the new way of words" but as committed to the belief that "the best way to counter it was to understand it internally", noting that "the same issues which troubled traditional ontology and epistemology, and the alternative strategies for dealing with them, would recur in the new medium" (Findlay 1985, 28). His attitude to the history of the new logic was thereby that of an *Hegelian*, as he understood the term.

Prior apparently first read his former teacher's 1941 article only in the 1950s, but we might see the ground for any later influence on these lines as having been laid down in the 1930s and 40s in relation to an area of common concern: ethics. This was a topic to which Findlay had devoted much of his free time during his New Zealand stay (Findlay 1958b, 57), an effort that would bear fruit in his 1961 book, *Values and Intentions*, in relation to which he described his "greatest and most positive debts" as being owed to Kant and Hegel (Findlay 1961, 17). Findlay's book was motivated by the aspiration to rescue "ethics" from the discipline of "metaethics" that had

developed in analytic philosophy, and while broadly written from a “phenomenological” perspective it contains another significant reference to modal logic. After mentioning the temporal determinations discussed in the 1941 paper, he then invokes a wider array of modal concepts, including the “rudimentary ‘mays’, ‘musts’, ‘woulds’, ‘coulds’ and ‘likelies’” (Findlay 1961, 65). Although the work of Ernst Mally, his former supervisor is not mentioned, there is a clear connection to the emerging tradition of “deontic logic”. As with the domain of *tense*, Findlay denies that the “meta” perspective—here *metaethics*—is sufficient for understanding and evaluating the determinations of the judgments taken to be *objects* of the metaperspective—here first-order *ethical* judgments. Drawing on phenomenological senses of “intention”, Findlay’s approach suggests an assimilation of the “intentional” (with a “*i*”) of psychology to the “intensional” (with an “*s*”) of logic.⁷

Read in the light of Prior’s *later* more explicit interest in modal logic, it is easy to see in his first book, *Logic and the Basis of Ethics*, an interest in just these sorts of modal, mind-related themes Findlay investigates at length in *Values and Intentions*. There Prior is largely concerned with the eighteenth and nineteenth century history of the type of critique of naturalism in ethics that is summed up in Moore’s “naturalistic fallacy”, the impossibility of deriving ethical consequences from non-ethical premises. But he is *also* critical of the limits of this anti-naturalistic turn, and finds in Sidgwick’s critical appropriation of Kant’s distinction between “hypothetical” and “categorical” imperatives important principles concerning the way that practical action must nevertheless rely on *knowledge* of the situation in which action is to occur.⁸ Prior’s small book does not link these to issues in modal logic. Apart from Mally’s little-known work, such a link would be made by G. H. von Wright (von Wright 1951) only *after* the publication of *Logic and the Basis of Ethics*.

Prior was to die in 1969, and so before the bulk of the debate sparked by David Lewis’s thesis of the reality of non-actual possible worlds. However, the general features of Prior’s philosophical thought about modal issues were clear. He was clearly opposed to the interpretation by David Lewis, which prioritises “althetic modality”, and at the time of his death was working on a book with obvious *Findlayian* themes to be entitled *Worlds, Times and Selves*.⁹ Prior had *an answer* to one of the defences David Lewis was to offer to his critics, an answer in the spirit of Findlay. Lewis would argue 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 (D. 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*. But Prior had already 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 and other “ego-reflexive”

factors, and did this because of metaphysical consequences involving what he thought to be an illegitimate appeal to “Platonic” entities such as instants of time.

Thus Prior can be regarded as an early exemplar of the *actualist* standpoints critical of David Lewis’s pluralist realism about possible worlds. The modal actualist denies the reality of possible worlds *beyond* the actual one, but nevertheless wants to treat the modalities of possibility and necessity as meaningful. Possibility must therefore be thought of as somehow *internal* to the actual world,¹⁰ a position argued for more recently by Robert Stalnaker, for example, for whom “merely” possible worlds are *abstracta*, not alternate concrete worlds—they are non-realized states or properties of *the actual world*. Thus, after the fashion of C. I. Lewis, they can be identified with *maximal consistent sets of propositions* (Stalnaker 2012). This is a way of thinking of modality that accords with what I have called “mediated intensionalism”, an early paradigm of which, I suggest, can be found in Hegel. While Prior himself seems to have had no interest in Hegel or familiarity with German idealism, his views on time and modality nevertheless show many features analogous to those features of Hegel’s philosophy reflected in Findlay’s approach. In the final section I return to Hegel to suggest that his commitment to “absolute idealism” may be understood as just the type of commitment to a conception of actuality *mediated* by possibility forged by Findlay and Prior.

2. Hegel’s Idealism as Mediated Actualism

Modern modal actualists such as Prior or 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. 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).¹¹ Hegel’s version of actuality, I suggest, may be understood as an *actualist* one in contrast to the opposing “possibilist” version found in Leibniz. For Hegel, actuality *just is* reality; it is not *one* possible world within a plurality of alternate possible worlds. 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.

Hegel’s outlook can be conveniently approached in the theological register. In his theory of Spirit (*Geist*), the divine mind is effectively distributed over an historically developing dynamic entanglement of human minds. In Leibniz’s scheme, any finite

individual monad (mind) occupies a perspectival outlook onto the world and is capable of moving closer to an aperspectival one (the God's-eye view) by a type of platonic movement that takes it, in a stepwise manner, from more to less perspectival forms of knowing.¹² Leibniz describes these transitions as going from relatively clear but confused ideas to clear and more 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, and this "ascent" thus depends on the possibility of the iteration of the reflective move from an intensional content to an extensional one. But what of Hegel?

I have appealed to those passages in Book 3 of Hegel's *Science of Logic* where he contests the reducibility of the syllogistic as intensionally conceived to extensionalist universal characteristic of Leibniz (Hegel 2010, 602–7/XII 104–10). But while Hegel, like C. I. Lewis, Findlay and Prior, had been critical of this project understood as some global attempt to render judgments into an entirely extensional form (Hegel 2010, 550–555/XII 53–8), he, like those others, nevertheless treats this type of translation from the modal to the non-modal that, following Leibniz he calls "reflection", as playing a crucial role in the progress of thought. But 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 that of a transcendently located (that is, an actually *non*-located) mind—God's "view from nowhere". Findlay too was critical of the idea of the iterability of such reflective steps (Findlay 1961, 68), and similarly for Hegel, reflection does not as take thought further from the actual, but deeper into it, its cycles revealing connections that had not been apparent to superficial experience. In *this* sense Hegel is a "realist" about essences, 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". One way of thinking of the cognitive finitude involved in this is like that of Kant, but this is not Hegel's way. The "view from nowhere" is an inappropriate metaphor, not because we, *qua finite* beings are unable to access it, but because to think of the divine mind in such a way is categorically ill-conceived (Redding 2012).

A single example from Hegel's account of judgment will hopefully suffice to demonstrate the non-linear "circular" progress involved. Hegel's first judgment form, the broadly Aristotelian "judgment of determinate existence [*Urteil des Daseins*]" (also called a "qualitative" judgment or a judgment of "inherence") evolves through a string of subforms, starting with the "positive judgment". Hegel repeats the idea that the subject and predicate of the *Satz* are at first *names*, and notes that they "receive their actual determination only as the judgment runs its course" (Hegel 2010, 557/XII 60).

The positive judgment provides the first step on this course. It shows the surprising logical structure of having a universal subject term and a singular predicate term (Hegel 2010, 560/XII 62), a structure that will distinguish it from the opposed *judgments of reflection* (also called quantitative judgments and judgments of subsumption) that will show the more conventional singular subject / general predicate form. The *Urteil des Daseins* is clearly relevant to the idea of the judgment expressing some phenomenally rich perceptual content, as with the idea of the singularity of the predicate, such as “red” in “the rose is red”,¹³ Hegel clearly intends that the singular predicate acts in a name-like manner, and so akin to a Kantian “intuition”, so as to pick out the specific redness “inhering” in some specific rose—the specific rose’s specific way of *being red*.¹⁴

But this positive judgment is, Hegel says, “not true” and “has its truth in the negative judgment” (Hegel 2010, 562/XII 64), and it is this use of negation that introduces a new degree of logical complexity. When such a judgment is contested, for example, with the counter-claim “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.¹⁵ Rather, “it is ... assumed that it has a color, though another color” (Hegel 2010, 565/XII 68). If a rose is red then it is *not* yellow, pink, blue ..., and if it is *not* red, it is *either* yellow or pink or blue ..., manifesting amongst these predicates the structure of what Hegel calls “determinate negation”. 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*.

These resulting judgments of reflection are, in turn, not fully fledged judgments, but rather are “more in the nature of *Sätze*” (Hegel 2010, 581/XII 84). The “subsumptive” and quantitative aspects of reflective judgments anticipate another, more developed version of the original qualitative 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. “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 more complex 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, as Hegel writes with an allusion to the Aristotelian doctrine, “an obscure intimation of the universality of the *concept* as it exists in and for itself” (Hegel 2010, 573/XII 75). 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”: “Instead of ‘all humans’”, Hegel notes, “we now have to say ‘the human being’” (Hegel 2010, 574/XII 76) Thus the judgment of reflection transitions into the “judgment of necessity” in which “the universality is determined as genus and species ... Now the categorical judgment has for predicate such a universality as in it the subject possesses its immanent nature” (Hegel 2010, 575/XII 78). In the following “judgment of the concept”, the “inferentialist” dimension of Hegel’s conception of judgment (Brandom 1994) becomes explicit, as a judgment such as “the house is good” is shown to contain an implicit inference or syllogism, “the house, as so and so constituted, is good” (Hegel 2010, 585/XII 87).

In place then of Leibniz’s platonic ascent to judgments conceived as made from 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/syllogism (this A, as so and so constituted, 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 that is, nevertheless, still available to a type of evaluating form of perception. For this, the evaluative nature of the categorical judgment requires that the universal value be once again instantiated in an *individual item*—some particular house (Redding 2007, ch 6). Concomitantly, we are to understand the intensionality of this final form of judgment (and the *intentionality* of this type of experience) as somehow mediated by possibility of the quantitative judgments of reflection that precede it. When one moves to this subsequent higher level, and makes a perceptually based evaluative judgment about this house, one makes explicit the qualities that separate it from houses constituted in some different manner, qualities to which one had reacted initially the type of *feeling* relevant to evaluative judgments like aesthetic and moral ones.

Clearly these are logical considerations that go well beyond any crude adherence to the subject–predicate paradigm of traditional logic as found in Russell’s picture of Hegel. Moreover, neither does Hegel’s account absorb the individual into a conception of the world understood *as a single substance*. Hegel may regard the “quantitative” judgments of reflection as “obscure intimations” of judgments about kinds, but they are more than this, as this mediating step of the dialectic corresponds to an ontological point about the relation of a kind to its individual members—Hegel’s “Leibnizian” point that he insists upon in opposition to Spinoza’s ontological holism. As Hegel puts it, “ ‘All humans’ expresses, first, the species ‘human’; second,

this species in its singularization, but in such a way that the singulars are at the same time expanded to the universality of the species” (Hegel 2010, 573/XII 75–6).

The parallel between Hegel’s way of conceiving of judgment structure and that of the stances of mediated intensionalist within recent possible-world semantics is, I suggest, quite systematic. Hegel thinks of a judgment, an *Urteil*, as involving a type of primordial 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 within the “space of possibility” demarcating a subspace representing those worlds in which it the proposition is true from the space representing those in which it is false (Stalnaker 2012, ch. 5). Such a primordial division 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. As in Findlay’s neo-Hegelian account, sometimes the subject, as an essentially contextualized “intentional” agent, 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. But the *totality* of a subject’s belief states cannot, as Stalnaker argues, be entirely divested of modal or contextualized judgments, or, using another terminology, indexical or self-locating ones (Stalnaker 2008, ch. 3).

I have tried to convey some of the evidence that I see as pointing towards Hegel’s logic as a form of mediated intensionalism and his *metaphysics* as a form of modal actualism. As Hegel makes clear, his idea of the actual includes possibility as 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” (Hegel 1991, § 143). But abstracta such as propositions are, along with Aristotelian essences, of course, ontologically contentious entities, and there is a strong tendency to treat them platonistically as other-worldly entities, and thus incompatible with Hegel’s this-worldly actualism. However, again there is the suggestion of a non-transcendentist interpretation of abstracta in the pragmatist dimension to Stalnaker’s account, that would seem to suit Hegel. On Stalnaker’s account, for example, possible worlds are treated as sets of propositions—that is, abstract entities (sets), the members of which (propositions) are also abstract. As this second kind of abstracta, propositions are to be understood as abstract 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 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.

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, such “spirit” must always be embodied in the natural world (the actual world being largely natural), but it nevertheless 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.¹⁶

To sum up, on this version of actualism, inspired by the indirectly Hegelian approach of Arthur Prior, 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 existing on the same ontological level.¹⁷ Abstracta like propositions, when understood non-Platonistically, presuppose the existence of subjects who, speaking and acting in meaningful ways, express abstract mental contents, and presuppose other subjects who can understand such utterances and actions. Neither propositions nor minds can, in positivist fashion, be eliminated from or reduced to the actual world. Thus this type of mediated 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, of a metaphysically benign form.

3. Conclusion

On the reading suggested here, Hegel’s absolute idealism asserts nothing more than the presence of the mind in the *actual* world, when the actual world is conceived as containing possibility—a position I have labelled “mediated actualism”. But this position must be conceived in contrast to the thesis of the necessary existence of the mind *per se*, understood as the presence of mind in all possible worlds, clearly expressed in Leibniz. Understood in the latter way, Hegel’s metaphysics would indeed be a “luxuriant” one, although surely no more so than various versions of modal metaphysics on the contemporary market, such as those of David Lewis or Alvin Plantinga. But understood in the *former* way, the claim that mind is necessarily in the actual world is able to be interpreted as a relatively metaphysically modest thesis. It is essentially what David Lewis had tried to capture with the thesis of the “indexicality” of the actual world—the idea that the actual world *contains us*—but without Lewis’s commitment to the reality of other concrete worlds with *other* subjects (our “counterparts”) for whom their worlds are understood as actual.

The dialectic contained within the development of the logical doctrines that Russell had used to eliminate Hegel, a dialectic discerned by the work of the young Findlay, would seem to have brought the present debate in analytic metaphysics to a point at which the persisting exclusion of Hegel seems no more than an unjustified prejudice. After the widespread return to *Aristotle*, we might ask, why not a return to “the modern Aristotle”—Hegel?

¹ This is treated in more detail in Redding 2007.

² “It can also be mentioned in this context that a *sentence* [Satz] can indeed have a subject and predicate in a grammatical sense without however being a *judgment* [Urteil] for that. The latter requires that the predicate behave with respect to the subject in a relation of conceptual determination, hence as a universal with respect to a particular or singular.” (Hegel 2010, 552–3/XII 55). Second references here and elsewhere for this work are to the corresponding German pagination in Hegel’s *Gesammelte Werke*.

³ Besides his 1958 book on Hegel, Findlay wrote books on Meinong, Plato, Kant and Wittgenstein, and translated Husserl. In his later career he seemed to identify himself more as a type of Platonist or neo-Platonist.

⁴ I’ll avoid the “language” / “metalanguage” nomenclature as typically intensionalists do not consider symbolic systems such as Leibniz’s *characteristica universalis* or Frege’s *Begriffsschrift* as proper languages. Rather than a formal *language* I’ll refer to a “concept-script” but as not limited to Frege’s conception.

⁵ Although the paper first appeared in 1941, Prior seems not to have read it until the 1950s after its republication in a volume of work on advances in analytic philosophy (Flew 1951).

⁶ Of particular relevance of tense logic for Kripke was that it provided a clear sense of the differential “accessibility” of certain times (or “worlds”) from others. Thus from the point of view of the *present*, the *future* is accessible in ways in which the *past* is not. It was this issue of the differential accessibility between worlds that allowed Kripke to get beyond certain technical problems besetting the earlier attempts of Carnap to employ something like a “possible worlds” approach with the notion of “state descriptions”.

⁷ That the psychological intentional is a subspecies of the logical intensional was also advocated by Prior (1968).

⁸ The *limits* of Moore’s thesis of the naturalistic fallacy is also a central concern of Findlay (1961, 22). This is a theme that is prominent in Hegel’s critique of Kant, of which Findlay was clearly aware.

⁹ The volume of this name (Prior and Fine 1977) was essentially compiled after Prior’s death by Kit Fine, Prior’s former student, from Findlay’s notes and published essays.

¹⁰ Alternatively, one could be, like the positivists and Quine, an *amodal* actualist by being skeptical of the meaningfulness of modal talk.

¹¹ An excellent account of this chapter is to be found in Ng 2009.

¹² Of course this is only how it *looks*. In truth, the contents across such “windowless” monads are coordinated by God at creation.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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* [*ein einzelnes*]” (Hegel 2010, 560/XII 62). In this context, the concept *qua* singular gives it properties of a Kantian intuition.

¹⁵ “From the side of this universal sphere, the judgment is still positive” (Hegel 2010, 565/XII 68).

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ For Hegel, the “act upon” here is, of course, crucial. Actuality is for him a dynamic concept. Human agents in acting transform the world ways that are tied to the possibilities they act upon. But possibilities here being irreducible to what is grasped by any *particular* agent, the evolution of actuality with the realization of these possibilities obeys its own “objective” logic that is only retrospectively reconstructable.

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