

THE LIMITS OF LANGUAGE IN ARISTOTLE AND HEGEL

I. LANGUAGE AND LOGIC IN ARISTOTLE AND THE STOIC TRADITION

“The effect of a lecture depends upon the habits of the listener; because we expect the language to which we are accustomed, and anything beyond this seems not to be on the same level, but somewhat strange and unintelligible on account of its unfamiliarity; for it is the familiar that is intelligible” (Aristotle, *Meta.* II, 994b–995a). Thus Aristotle in *Metaphysics* II. Compare Hegel in the *Phenomenology (PhG)*: “What is generally familiar is not, just because it is familiar, therefore cognized” (Preface).

These two statements may seem to contradict one another, but they do not. Both Aristotle and Hegel (*Enz.* §410) take habit (*hexis* or *Gewohnheit*) or ‘second nature’ to be the key to theory as well as *praxis* in the human world. But we may get out of the habit of taking habit seriously. That is Hegel’s point in the *PhG*, where he attempts to come to terms with the millennial propensity, which I shall call ‘Stoic,’ to supplant ‘second natures’ with putative ‘first natures.’ The example of this I shall focus upon in this paper pertains to language. To exemplify how language is presupposed prior to *philosophical interpretation*, consider the following supposedly neutral characterization of the point of departure for a philosophy of language by Jerrold Katz, chosen almost arbitrarily from the contemporary literature:

Roughly, linguistic communication consists in the production of some external, publicly observable, acoustic phenomenon whose phonetic and syntactic structure encodes a speaker’s inner, private thoughts or ideas and the decoding of the phonetic and syntactic structure exhibited in such a physical phenomenon by other speakers in the form of an inner, private experience of the same thoughts or ideas. (Jerrold J. Katz, *The Philosophy of Language*, New York, 1966, 98.)

This presupposed linguistic frame of reference, with its fundamental distinction between an ‘inner language’ and an ‘outer language,’ was established by the Stoics in the 3rd century BC and has gone virtually unchallenged in the meanwhile, despite the ‘private language’ controversy in the last century. Hegel was arguably the first to come to terms with the issue, as I shall try to show. For Aristotle the question did not exist. Hegel’s objective in the *PhG* was to get us back to the position of Aristotle with regard to language.

Aristotle’s Greek did not have a word that will directly translate ‘language’ as it has come to be used in the modern world. Of course ‘*logos*’ is a tolerable analog, which is often translated ‘language.’ But the term has many other connotations, some of which have led moderns to translate ‘*logos*’ as ‘word,’ ‘logic,’ ‘discourse,’ and ‘theory.’ Aristotle was the first philosopher, and arguably the only one until Hegel, to develop an adequate theory of ‘theorizing,’ what he called ‘*theorein*’ (and Hegel reconstructed as ‘*Spekulation*’).¹

¹ I develop this theme in “[Words and Things in Aristotle and Hegel: ‘το ον λεγεται πολλαχως](#),” *The Philosophical Forum*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 2, Summer 2002, 125ff.

I certainly do not wish to downplay the importance of what Aristotle accomplished in his treatment of *logos*. In one word, he literally invented the discipline which, since the Stoics, has been called ‘logic’: the treatment of language as a formal discipline. The key to this, as Jan Łukasiewicz has made plain, was his insight into the nature of the linguistic ‘variable.’² Well before Viète’s invention of the numerical variable, which founded the mathematical discipline of algebra in the 16th century, Aristotle grasped the significance of a variable that would accommodate linguistic substitution instances. Since the principal ‘logical’ operation performed on variables in Aristotelian ‘logic’ is the predication (*kategorēsthai*) by one term of another (*ti kata tinos*), it was natural for him to limit the range of linguistic substitution instances to terms. In the 3rd century BC Chrysippus exploited the Aristotelian notion of a variable for sentences, called ‘*Sätze*’ in Frege’s 19th century reinvention of Stoic logic, and ‘propositions’ in Russell and Whitehead’s *Principia Mathematica*. But whether employed in reference to terms, as in Aristotle’s syllogistic, or propositions, as in Stoic and Fregean propositional calculi, the Aristotelian notion of a linguistic variable, however misunderstood at various hands, has remained intact. And, over the millennia, no functionable linguistic variables have been concocted other than terms and propositions.

I wish to argue that the main impediment to a theoretical reading of Aristotle (and of Hegel as well) has been the conflation of logic and theory³ first performed by the Stoics; reinforced by Frege, Russell, and 20th century ‘analytical philosophy’; and surreptitiously reimposed on readings of Aristotle. This will require us to consider the difference between the use of two kinds of linguistic variables: term and propositional. My argument is that a logic based on propositional variables, like that of the Stoics, invites the conflation of logic and theory, whereas a syllogistic logic based on term variables, like the Aristotelian, *need not*—despite the fact that the predominant reconstructions of Aristotelian logic have made the conflation as well. To see this we will have to consider for a moment the precise nature of the logical operations made on variables in term and propositional logics respectively.

First, term logic or syllogistic. Here the principal difference among variables is extensionality. Aristotle observed that when B is predicated of A, B has an extension wider than or at least equal to that of A. This was seen to follow from the very operation of predication, for, apart from extensionality, terms, as variables, have no referents. Their minimal determinacy derives exclusively from their place in a logical function, here predication. It is by virtue of this insight into the nature of a linguistic variable that we can regard Aristotle as the founder or inventor of logic. This is also the reason why Aristotle, in the *Prior Analytics*, where he explains the nature of syllogistic inference, never

² Jan Łukasiewicz, *Aristotle’s Syllogistic from the Standpoint of Modern Formal Logic*, Oxford: OUP, 1951. See 7ff. on ‘variables.’

³ My reading of Aristotle, as the philosopher who systematically distinguishes between theory and logic, is admittedly at variance with the dominant contemporary reading, perhaps best epitomized by Jonathan Barnes, in “Aristotle’s Theory of Demonstration,” *Phronesis*, 14 (1969), 123–152 (revised and reprinted in Barnes, Schofield, & Sorabji, eds., *Articles on Aristotle*, London: Duckworth, 1975, Vol. I, 65–87) and in *Aristotle*, Oxford: OUP, 1982. My interpretation has largely been stimulated by Hegel (*passim*), Eric Weil, “La place de la logique dans la pensée aristotélicienne,” *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 56 (1951), 283–315 (English tr. by J. & J. Barnes in *Articles on Aristotle*, Vol. I, 88–112), Wolfgang Wieland, in *Die aristotelische Physik*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962, and David R. Lachterman, in various unpublished essays.

makes use of natural terms with pre-established degrees of extensionality but rather always uses Greek letters, alpha, beta, etc. that have no pre-given extensionality. As soon as we grasp this basic feature of the syllogistic it is clear that the traditional paradigm for explaining the syllogism is systematically misleading: “All men are mortal/Socrates is a man/therefore Socrates is mortal.” The errors compounded in this famous example are legion, but the most basic error consists in making us believe that the force of inference derives from the extra-logical degrees of extensionality in the natural-language terms ‘mortality,’ ‘humanity,’ and, what is not even a category because a proper name, ‘Socrates.’ (It is truly astonishing that Bertrand Russell, in his explication of the Aristotelian syllogistic, also uses this notorious example.⁴)

By contrast, Aristotle’s paradigm for the most basic form of syllogistic inference (which the medieval tradition called ‘Barbara’) could not be more transparent: “If B is predicated of A and C is predicated of B, then C is predicated of A.” Here we can see that the conclusion, ‘C is predicated of A,’ follows by simple transitivity from the conjoint hypotheses ‘B is predicated of A’ and ‘C is predicated of B.’ Here the degrees of extensionality by which the inference is drawn are all intra-logically, not extra-logically, determined. It is the mark of logic, as the formal treatment of language, that all determinacies are intra-logically established. (As Günther Patzig, *Die aristotelische Syllogistik*, 1959, has shown, much of the *Prior Analytics* consists in techniques for transforming, or ‘perfecting,’ more obscure syllogisms into the ‘Barbara’ form, where the inference is transparent.)

Let us now consider the basic inferences of propositional, originally Stoic but more famously Fregean, logic.⁵ Here the linguistic variables are not terms but sentences, statements, or propositions. A proposition consists minimally of two terms, one predicated of the other. Since predication is presupposed of the minimal units in propositional logic, the basic logical operation cannot be, as in syllogistic, predication. The basic contrast in Stoic logic is, as they said, between ‘simple’ and ‘non-simple’ or, in the now more familiar terms, between ‘atomic’ and ‘molecular’ propositions. As the names suggest, an atomic proposition is singular and uncompounded whereas a molecular proposition is a combination of atomic or other molecular propositions. The principle of Stoic logic is that there are just three logical operations by which molecular propositions are formed. These are: ‘conjunction,’ ‘disjunction,’ and ‘if/then conditionality.’ The Stoic convention for indicating an atomic proposition used the phrases ‘the first,’ ‘the second,’ ‘the third,’ and the like. In 20th century propositional logic, articulated by Russell and Whitehead in ignorance of its Stoic predecessor, but with constant reference to Frege, the convention has been to use letters of the alphabet beginning with ‘p’ to indicate the atomic propositions which the Stoics called ‘the first,’ ‘the second,’ etc. Since ‘p, q, r, ...’ are shorter than the Stoic conventions, and since the language of *Principia Mathematica*, called PM-ese, on the model of ‘Chinese,’ has become well known, I will here speak PM-ese.

If the key logical determinacy of a term variable in the syllogistic is extensionality, that for propositional variables is ‘truth’ and ‘falsity.’ It will be evident, as it was to Aristotle (*De Int.* 17a5–6), that a term per se can be neither true nor false. But when one term is predicated of another

⁴ Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1945, 196–202.

⁵ On the Stoic original of propositional logic see Benson Mates, *Stoic Logic*, Berkeley: U of California Press, 1953. Mates credits a 1927 article in Polish by Jan Łukasiewicz for the first modern reconstruction of Stoic logic.

to form a proposition, the result can be true or false. As Frege has asserted most clearly, in “Über Sinn und Bedeutung” (1892), the *Bedeutung* or ‘logical meaning’ of a proposition, atomic or molecular, is its truth-value, either ‘the True’ or ‘the False.’ Thus any proposition may be designated true or false and the decisive determinacy of a propositional variable is truth and falsity. In the economical language PM-ese, these are shortened to T and F. Now, the whole point of propositional logic is to spell out techniques whereby the ‘truth value,’ T or F, of a molecular proposition can be determined solely on the basis (or is a ‘function’) of the respective truth values of its constituent atomic propositions. These techniques are called ‘truth tables.’ Each logical operation—conjunction, disjunction, and conditionality—is said to have a distinctive array of truth values for its resultant molecular propositions based upon the truth values of the atomic propositions operated upon. So, if the logical operation is conjunction, ‘p & q,’ there will be four possible truth values of the resultant molecular proposition:

p	q	p&q
T	T	T
T	F	F
F	T	F
F	F	F

The other two-place truth functions are the logical counterparts of ‘or,’ \vee , and ‘if/then,’ \supset . But it must be stressed that the symbols for logical operations, &, \vee , and \supset are not ‘translations’ of the natural language terms ‘and,’ ‘or’ and ‘if/then.’ For they function only upon propositional *variables* to determine the truth-values of resultant molecular propositions, given the truth-values of the component atomic propositions, whereas their natural language counterparts are multifunctional and systematically ambiguous. Here is the truth table for the non-exclusive ‘or,’ corresponding with the Latin word ‘vel,’ \vee :

p	q	p \vee q
T	T	T
T	F	T
F	T	T
F	F	F

Finally, the truth-functional counterpart of ‘if/then’ is symbolized by \supset . It is particularly important that this symbol be interpreted strictly in accordance with the following truth table, or truth-functionally, for the Stoics vacillated on the question, and the Stoic tradition, with the exception of Hobbes, had to await David Hume for a clear discrimination between ‘causal connection’ and ‘logical inference’:

p	q	$p \supset q$
T	T	T
T	F	F
F	T	T
F	F	T

The third molecular truth value for conditionality (sometimes called ‘material implication’ but more accurately ‘Philonic implication’) has been controversial. But such controversy has only arisen when, beginning with Diodorus Cronus (d. 284 BC), whom the Stoics largely followed, $p \supset q$ is not interpreted truth-functionally but on the basis of ‘if/then’ statements in a natural language. The main point is that logical items, whether terms or propositions, are variables whose determinacies are intralogically determined extensions or truth-values rather than sentences in a natural language.

The main difference between term and propositional variables is that the latter can be and often are understood mentalistically. Indeed, the Stoics explicitly asserted that propositions are ‘*axiomata*’ and that ‘*axiomata*’ are incorporeals. At first blush this may seem surprising since the physics of the Stoics was unabashedly corporealist or, as this is sometimes unaristotelianly put, ‘materialistic.’ But, for reasons we will explore later, the Stoics drew a firm line of demarcation between two spheres of language or *logos*. The one they called ‘outer language’ or ‘*logos proforikos*’; the other they called ‘inner language’ or ‘*logos endiathetos*.’⁶ The *logos proforikos* may also be called ‘uttered speech,’ which takes the form of articulate sounds audible to the ear and written sentences visible to the eye. These are obviously corporeals. The *logos endiathetos* is sometimes called ‘utterable speech’ or ‘meanings’ that may or may not be expressed. For the Stoic tradition it is ‘inner language’ or the *logos endiathetos* which is the paradigmatic realm of incorporeals. We must pay special heed to the Stoic contention that it is only within the realm of inner speech that logical inference can be performed. In the Stoic tradition Hobbes is the pre-Kantian philosopher most attentive to the fact that ‘demonstrative arguments’ are only to be had in the realm of ‘mental discourse,’ beyond which all arguments are ‘conjectural.’

A brief digression. I just used the expression ‘the Stoic tradition.’ As we usually do the history of philosophy, a ‘tradition’ is a sequence within which one thinker is ‘influenced’ or somehow affected by a predecessor. In the case of the Stoic tradition this can be systematically misleading. For some of the foremost expositors of the ‘position’ first articulated by the Stoics reconstructed their position with no knowledge of its source and hence with no ‘influence’ in the ordinary sense of the term. As to the critical Stoic bifurcation of language into the *logos endiathetos* and the *logos proforikos*, we find a profound reworking of this position in Hobbes’ contrast between ‘mental discourse’ and ‘verbal discourse,’ in Kant’s distinction between what is ‘transcendentally ideal’ and what is ‘empirically real’ and in the fundamental distinction of 20th century analytic philosophy between ‘meaning’ and ‘saying,’ elegantly captured in Stanley Cavell’s celebrated question: “Must we mean what we say?” Now there

⁶ Cf. Max Mühl, “Der λογος ενδιαθετος und προφορικος von der älteren Stoa bis zur Synode von Sirmium 351,” *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, 7 (1962), 7–56.

is small evidence of any influence of the Stoics upon Hobbes or of Hobbes upon Kant (I shall leave aside the vexed question of Kant's 'influence' on analytic philosophy). The point here is that there are some basic 'positions' that are, in the words of Hans Blumenberg,⁷ 'occupied' and 'reoccupied' over the course of time, without any need of 'influence.'

To resume, the Aristotelian syllogistic and Stoic-Fregean-propositional logic are both logics properly so-called because they both observe, in their better formulations, the defining characteristic of a logic: that it consist in perspicuous and algorithmic operations performed on variables, term and propositional, respectively. One of the chief differences between them is that the objects of Stoic logic, propositions, are bearers of truth or falsity and may as such be affirmed or denied. The agency of such affirmation and denial the Stoics called the '*hegemonikon*' (the 'ruling part' of the soul), what has come to be called 'mind.' Indeed, it may be said that the very idea of mind or consciousness—absent in classical Greek philosophy (as Charles Kahn has shown⁸)—was *invented* by the Stoics,⁹ in part for this purpose (we shall consider another purpose later). Aristotle had no need for anything like mind or consciousness to explicate his syllogistic (though subsequent interpreters have anachronistically imposed Stoically mental notions upon his thought). Since mind or consciousness are among the most deeply problematic and ambiguous, albeit deeply presupposed, notions in philosophy and psychology since Chrysippus, it can come as no surprise that Frege (like F.H. Bradley and Husserl) was so concerned to ward off what he called 'psychologism' and what others have called 'anthropologism.' But more important than the assertability of propositions, something like mind or consciousness is vital to Stoic logic because, having distinguished between inner and outer language to establish the inner locus of logical inference, the agency for performing logical operations had to be placed there as well. The temptation to hypostatize (or 'psychologize') this agency has been great and usually unresisted.¹⁰

Let me conclude this part of the paper by stating some of the basic contraries that have emerged in the Stoic tradition. The first opposition is between A) a formal language of precise truth-functional operations performed on propositional variables and defining inferential validity with respect to these variables and B) natural languages that are inherently imprecise, and properly so, because they embed a wide array of 'speech acts' that make the languages, from a *logical* point of view, 'overdetermined' ('*überbestimmt*' in the sense of Wittgenstein's *Logische Untersuchungen*). The pervasive tendency in the Stoic tradition has been to portray natural languages as if they captured inferential validity in the logical sense of the word. A recent example of this tendency has been Robert Brandom, who exploits the notion of 'material inference' as stated in an early essay by our common mentor, Wilfrid Sellars, to make the case that the performatory aspects of a natural language can add up to

⁷ Hans Blumenberg, *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1966.

⁸ See, e.g., Charles Kahn, "Sensation and Consciousness in Aristotle's Psychology," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 48 (1966), 41–81 (reprinted in Barnes, Schofield, & Sorabji, eds., *Articles on Aristotle*, Vol. IV, Duckworth, 1979), and "Aristotle versus Descartes on the Concept of the Mental," forthcoming in the *Festschrift for R. Sorabji*.

⁹ I ventured the thesis that mind was a Stoic invention in various lectures at universities and an APA conference in the 1980's, e.g., "[Minding our Language](#)," *The Philosophical Forum*, XLIX (2018), 449ff.

¹⁰ Hence, or so I maintain, the Stoic invention of another aspect of mentality, 'familiar' to us but not therefore cognized, as Hegel and Bruno Snell have shown, by the world of pre-Hellenistic Greece: the will. Since Kant it has been possible to refer to this agency as an 'uncaused causality,' which, within the Stoic tradition, is apt.

something like inferential validity. He acknowledges that ‘material inferences’ “are not logically valid inferences. But logical vocabulary, subjunctive conditionals, can be used to express these material inferential relations. Without such vocabulary, the inferences can still be endorsed. With it, those content-generating inferential endorsements can be made explicit as the content of a claim or propositional endorsement.”¹¹ Brandom’s inferentialism is subtle in comparison with Russell’s: “Logic is concerned with the real world just as truly as zoology, though with its more abstract and general features.”¹²

The second opposition in the Stoic tradition is that between ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ language, *logos endiathetos* and *logos proforikos*, ‘mental discourse’ and ‘verbal discourse,’ ‘transcendental’ language and ‘empirical’ language. This will be the focus of the second part of the paper. Here let me mention that the issue has been simply avoided by most members of the Stoic tradition. Prominent exceptions have been Kant and Frege. Let us briefly consider Frege, whose *Begriffsschrift*, or ‘concept notation,’ of 1879, is perhaps the most sustained effort to deal with the problem. Frege recognizes that the vocabulary of propositional logic can only be expressed in the realm of ‘outer’ language or verbal discourse. The task he sets himself, the task of a *Begriffsschrift*, is so to use verbal discourse that it restricts reference to mental or (acknowledging Kant) transcendental discourse.

The third opposition is an intensified version of the second. It stresses, with Chrysippus, Chomsky, and Katz, that ‘inner’ language involves, in Chomsky’s phrase, “a distinctively human semiotic.” This contrasts with Aristotle’s view that language (*qua dialekton*) is simply one of the biological characteristics of *anthropos* (*Hist. An.* IV, 9, 536b1–2) or that man has vocal organs capable of producing speech (*qua logos*, *De Part. An.* II, 16, 659b35ff.), or that language (*qua logos*) makes man *capable* of participation in an association (*koinonia*) like a household (*oikos*) or a city (*polis*) in which, by luck, he just might be habituated to full humanity (*Politics* I, 2, 1253a7ff.). Since the Stoics, language has come to be the mark of the human, and not merely biologically. For generative linguists in the Chomsky school, the mark of this is that humans are said to be competent to generate an infinite number of intelligible sentences. Such a notion was unknown to Aristotle, for whom human excellence (*arete*) was characteristic of a small number of human animals lucky enough to be habituated in *paideia*. This will also prove to be an important theme in what follows.

II. STOICISM AS AN HISTORICAL PHENOMENON

As an historical phenomenon Stoicism took shape with the invention of the Form of consciousness. As Hegel observes in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, we must turn to Sextus Empiricus for an historical grasp of Stoicism. The immediate historical context is the Hellenistic world in the aftermath of the *polis*. That world, for which the beautiful Ethical Life (*Sittlichkeit*) of the *polis* was ‘no longer’ (*nicht mehr* in the parlance of the *PbG* V, b), was an age of anxiety, an age that possessed

¹¹ Robert Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1994, 103–104.

¹² B. Russell, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (1919), as cited in G. Patzig, *Sprache und Logik*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970, 9. I would venture to say that ‘inferentialism,’ mild or strong, is the mark of the ‘Stoic tradition’ in philosophy, the foundation of the ‘opposition of consciousness’ which Hegel attempted to overcome in the *PbG*. Note Hegel’s observation in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* that Aristotle never attempted to impose his inferentialist syllogistic on any of his ‘theoretical’ studies of the real world, including, pace Russell, zoology.

the written legacy of the Hellenic world together with the awareness that that world was hopelessly lost. But rather than romantically pining—recall Schiller’s words, exquisitely set to music by Schubert: “*Schöne Welt, wo bist du?*” (“Beautiful world, where are you?”)—or engaging in the millennial games of ‘*polis* envy,’ all of which presuppose the Stoic Form of consciousness, the Stoics addressed the problem head on and constructed a frame of reference that has endured for more than two thousand years and includes Andronicus of Rhodes, who, in 1st century BC Rome, edited the canonical albeit Stoic edition of the *Corpus Aristotelicum* and the Stoicizing Aristotle interpretations of Alexander of Aphrodisias, Plotinus, and Proclus.

The Stoic problem was that the Hellenic or *politian* Greeks had, in Bruno Snell’s fine phrase, achieved a ‘discovery of the human spirit’ (*die Entdeckung des Geistes*¹³), and, as Werner Jaeger has persuasively argued (*Paideia*, Vol. I), that this discovery was captured in writing during the fifth and fourth centuries BC. These writings make clear that human beings first discovered the spiritual beauty of human life *qua* human as the result of a program of ‘upbringing’¹⁴ whose result, for the first time in history, was a class of human beings (admittedly only adult male citizens of a *polis*) whose happiness (*eudaimonia*) was the object of the exercise. These citizens were habituated for happiness, not by study,¹⁵ but by participation in the domestic rituals of the household (*oikos*) and the public rites of the *polis*. By these means men could be habituated to a life of virtue capable of a relatively complete life, a life of happiness. As the ultimate phase of this development, Aristotle was able to articulate the consummatory mode of the happy life, available only to a very few lucky citizens, as the satisfaction of the desire to comprehend, the sheer pleasure of seeing (in Wilfrid Sellars’ phrase) “how the world hangs together in the broadest possible sense,” how every individual thing is a part of the whole by an activity that points, *pros hen*, to its own perfection (*Meta.* IV, 1). This seeing is what Aristotle called ‘theorizing’ and what Hegel would later call ‘speculation.’ [The activity of individuals qua individuals \(tode ti\)](#) Aristotle called ‘*energeia*.’ As Alfredo Ferrarin has said,¹⁶ *energeia* is the rubric under which Hegel’s Aristotelianism is best understood. But he, like Aryeh Kosman,¹⁷ does not seem to have fully appreciated the difficulty of grasping *energeia* independently of the Form of consciousness. Historically, and therefore also inadequately, we may catch sight of the emergence of that Form by considering the brief dialogue depicted by Sextus Empiricus (*Adv. Math.* VIII, 275–277) between a Stoic and a Sceptic. The topic of discussion is how to identify the human spirit. It was not a topic that had arisen for the

¹³ *Die Entdeckung des Geistes*, misleadingly translated into English as *The Discovery of the Mind*.

¹⁴ The word ‘education’ has become too intellectual, too Stoic, to translate ‘*paideia*.’

¹⁵ Study is the distinctively trans-Alpine or Germanic path to ‘virtue’ or, better, to morality, to *Kultur*, as opposed to the ‘quasi-*paideia*’ that the French call ‘*civilisation*,’ still cultivated on the shores of the Mediterranean and evident whenever one sits down to table. No one has drawn the contrast more sharply than Kant in his “Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht,” Siebenter Satz: “Wir sind im hohen Grade durch Kunst und Wissenschaft kultiviert. Wir sind zivilisiert, bis zum Überlästigen, zu allerlei gesellschaftlicher Artigkeit und Anständigkeit. Aber, uns für schon moralisiert zu halten, daran fehlt noch sehr viel. Denn die Idee der Moralität gehört noch zur Kultur; der Gebrauch dieser Idee aber, welcher nur auf das Sittenähnliche in der Ehrliche und der äußeren Anständigkeit hinausläuft, macht bloß die Zivilisierung aus.” For further development of the contrast ‘civilisation’/‘Kultur,’ see the various writings of Norbert Elias.

¹⁶ A. Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle*, Cambridge: CUP, 2001, 7 *et passim*.

¹⁷ L.A. Kosman’s many articles on Aristotle are to me among the best of 20th century scholarship and I am, despite this deep disagreement, very indebted to him. But in personal communications he has said that he takes the structure of *energeia* to be implicitly that of Kant’s *Selbstbewußtsein*. That, alas, is a view widely shared.

politai Greeks who first discovered the human spirit. For them ‘spirituality’ did not attach to any given species of animal, not even to the species *anthropos*. In the world of the *polis* the potentiality for human spirituality was only realized by a very few men: those who had had the good fortune of being brought up and habituated by *paideia* in a good *polis*. With the demise of the *polis*, that intra-species identity was no longer possible. It appears from Sextus’ dialogue that the Stoics (he calls them ‘the dogmatists’) had at first tried to extend the *politai* notion of human spirituality to all members of that animal species who speak. But they were apparently met by the sceptical objection that that definition could not exclude certain birds like parrots. Sextus then has his Stoic rejoin the argument thus:

- (1) They [the Stoic dogmatists] say that it is not uttered speech [*logos proforikos*] but internal speech [*logos endiatbetos*] by which man differs from non-rational animals, for crows and parrots and jays utter articulate sounds. (2) Nor is it by the merely simple impression that he differs (for they too receive impressions), but by impressions produced by inference and combination. (3) This amounts to his possessing the conception of ‘following’ and directly grasping, on account of ‘following,’ the idea of a sign. For sign is itself of the kind ‘If this, then that.’ (4) Therefore the existence of signs follows from man’s nature and constitution.¹⁸

This monumental and ground-breaking distinction, between ‘uttered speech’ and ‘internal speech,’ so essential for propositional logic, marks the advent of a way of speaking and thinking that will become ‘second nature’ for philosophy in the West, sedimented and echoed, for example in Hobbes’ distinction between ‘verbal discourse’ and ‘mental discourse’ and in the contrast of ‘saying’ and ‘meaning’ that became *de rigueur* in 20th century analytical philosophy.

I will attempt to indicate the *aporia* of the Stoic position and the two principal strategies to evade the Stoic impasse. There is no more eloquent articulation of the Stoic *aporia* than the Introduction to the *PbG*, but let me state categorically, with considerable help from Hegel’s *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, that the key Stoic move, the bifurcation of language (*logos*) into mental and verbal discourse, postulates a dividing line that cannot be crossed without falling into theoretical perdition. Explicitly or implicitly, the Stoic position assumes that the ‘inner’ language, mental discourse, or ‘meaning,’ is the realm of truth, the only realm in which logical inferences can be performed and consequently, as Hobbes saw most clearly, the only realm in which demonstrative science can be had. With this assumption, anything external to the mind could only be known if it were covered by what Sellars called an ‘inference ticket.’ Some early Stoics claimed to have such an inference ticket in the form of a ‘cataleptic impression’ which truly represents in the mind or ‘inner *logos*’ what exists outside the mind. This, they claimed, was the ‘criterion’ of truth. It did not take much wit to discover that knowledge-claims based upon such a putative criterion involve reasoning in a vicious circle, an infinite regress. In Sextus’ words:

¹⁸ Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* 8.275–276 = *SVF* 2.223, partial translation by A. Long & D. Sedley in *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 1, Cambridge: CUP, 1987, 317–318.

For the proof always requires a criterion to confirm it, and the criterion also a proof to demonstrate its truth; and neither can a proof be sound without the previous existence of a true criterion nor can the criterion be true without the previous confirmation of the proof.¹⁹

Most philosophers in the world of language held that claims to know mentally (inwardly) what lies beyond the mind were either (a) dogmatic and properly to be regarded as mere conjectures, e.g., Sextus, Hobbes, Hume, the later Wittgenstein, or (b) guaranteed by the benevolent intermediation of God the Creator, e.g., Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Leibniz. Kant was the first in the Stoic tradition to return to the original (pre-creationalist) Stoic teaching that sensible objects in the mind or consciousness derive their whole and part character from ‘logical’ operations (e.g., intra-propositional ‘predication’ or inter-propositional ‘connection’) performed in the realm of the inner *logos* or mind.

The proto-Kantian form of Stoicism is not as well known as it deserves to be. Hence I will quote the best formulation of it known to me (it is from Sextus, *Adv. Math.* IX, 352–353 = *SVF* II, 80):

... the dogmatists [sc., the Stoics] are accustomed to say that what is external, underlying [*hypokeimenon*], and sensible [*aistheton*] is neither a whole nor a part, but it is we who add the predicate ‘whole’ or ‘part’ to it. For ‘whole’ is a term of relation, since a whole is considered such with reference to the parts. And ‘parts’ are also relative, for they are considered parts with reference to the whole. But relations obtain in our ‘consciousness’ [*symmnemoneusei* = literally, ‘concurrent recollection’], and our consciousness is in us. Accordingly, the whole and the part are in us, and what is external, underlying, and sensible is neither a whole nor a part, but it is a thing of which we predicate our consciousness [or recollection].²⁰

I do not wish to suggest that Kant had any knowledge of the above passage from Sextus. I do want to say that Kant’s basic ‘position’ (in the sense of Blumenberg) can be seen to be Stoic if we understand Stoicism in light of this sophisticated constructivism rather than in terms of the crude doctrine of the cataleptic impression as the criterion of truth. Indeed Kant, especially in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, represents the most complete rearticulation of the Stoic position, the Form of consciousness, since Chrysippus, the 3rd century BC Stoic who best formulated this position.

It is well-known that the *PbG* includes a brief segment in chapter IV entitled “Stoicism” and that Hegel there acknowledges that the term he has chosen corresponds with a phase in the history of spirit (*PbG* 152). Many have observed that the *PbG* develops its arguments without reference to the historical figures to which its arguments might seem to be directed. Some, like the English translator Baillie, have attempted to make good this ‘deficit’ by providing explicit references to these historical figures. Many Hegel scholars have attempted to read the *PbG* as a strangely palimpsestic ‘philosophy of history,’ and much effort has been spent trying to figure out the strange ‘historical’ transitions and

¹⁹ Sextus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*; cf. Hegel, *Lect. Hist. Phil. II*, tr. Haldane & Simson, 358.

²⁰ Translation by J.L. Saunders, ed., *Greek and Roman Philosophy after Aristotle*, New York: Free Press, 67, with emendations and emphases.

to determine how many times the *PbG* recapitulates human history. But Hegel's lack of references do not constitute an oversight, for the topic of the *PbG* is not history.

The Stoic identification of human spirituality with a distinctively human semiotic is what facilitated a Habermasianly 'emancipatory' movement in human affairs. Perhaps its most decisive incarnation has been by means of the Christian notion that all persons are equal in the eyes of God and that all human subjects are equally free to act. Nietzsche famously proclaimed that Christianity was 'Platonism for the people'; with greater justice we might say that Christianity became, especially in the hands of that great Tarsus-trained Stoic, St. Paul, 'Stoicism for the masses.'

Hegel and others have fully appreciated what I have called the 'emancipatory' moment of Stoicism. The story he tells in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*²¹ would be quite unintelligible without it. It is the vital element for the second step in the celebrated progression of worlds from (A) One is Free, to (B) Some are Free, to (C) All are Free. What sets Hegel apart is his insight into the fact that this story, for all its world-historical importance in the liberation of slaves and, more recently, for example, women, is only a story, a '*mythos*'—that history *qua* history is unsusceptible of philosophical comprehension. He did not need a Karl Löwith to tell him that any attempt at a 'science of history' would require a 'secularization of the Judeo-Christian eschatology,'²² or the adaptation of what Hilary Putnam has called a 'God's-eye view.'

Hegel's argument in the *PbG* is proto-systematic, and he knew that an historical argument could not have this character. Historical considerations can never rise above the level of imaginative reenactments, reconstructions of ways of being in the world that necessarily function within the Form of consciousness and can never rise above that Form. Hence his treatment of the Form of consciousness in the *PbG* is performed without names, without reference to Chrysippus or Kant. I have mentioned the Stoics only to provide a heuristic for transforming his problematic from the narrow confines of 'German Idealism' to the more adequate domain of post-Aristotelian thought and thus to the Form of consciousness per se.

III. THE FORM OF CONSCIOUSNESS AS STOIC

Unlike Hobbes, Kant, and analytic philosophy, each of which presupposed and worked within the Stoic bifurcation of language, Hegel, in the Introduction to the *PbG*, gave us our first diagnosis of it in 2,000 years. The topic of the *PbG* is the problematic Form of consciousness which emerged from the Stoics' treatment of language. It is, to my knowledge, the first and only book to address this problem coherently. Since I have given accounts of Hegel's procedure in the *PbG* in numerous places,²³ my treatment of it here can be condensed.

²¹ Edited by his son, Professor of History Karl Hegel, these lectures came, alas, to epitomize Hegel in Germany and elsewhere from the 1840's, to the neglect of his published writings.

²² Cf. K. Dove, "[Hegel and the Secularization Hypothesis](#)," in Joseph J. O'Malley *et al.*, eds., *The Legacy of Hegel*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973, 144ff.

²³ E.g., Dove: *Toward an Interpretation of Hegel's Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1967; "Die Epoché der *Phänomenologie des Geistes*," in Hans-Georg Gadamer, ed., *Stuttgarter Hegel-Tage*, Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1974, 605ff.; "[Logik und Recht bei Hegel](#)," *Neue Hefte für Philosophie*, XVII, 1979, 89ff.; "[Hegel's 'Deduction of the Concept](#)

We all tend to believe that we have objective knowledge. And, to Hegel, we are right so to believe. Our problem is that we try to formulate the rightness of our belief within a frame of reference, the Form of consciousness, that distinguishes between what is ‘for us’ and what is ‘in itself.’ Consciousness distinguishes from itself a factor to which it also attempts to relate itself. What consciousness distinguishes from itself is said to be ‘for it.’ Such formulations are easily shown to involve a dogmatism, namely, that we can distinguish an ‘in itself’ within our field of conscious knowledge. What is ‘for it’ cannot, *ex hypothesi*, be presumed ‘in itself’ or objectively known without a ‘scandalous’ belief in divine revelation, which typifies medieval thought, or a naïve belief in the extra-philosophical efficacy of ‘the sciences,’ a neo-medievalism that has marked much philosophy since the 17th century. The unmasking of this dogmatism is called scepticism. It is brought about by showing, by various time-tested means (tropes), that every putative ‘in itself’ or criterion for bridging the gap between what is ‘for consciousness’ and what is ‘in itself’ is actually a matter of ‘for-itself-ness’ or irredeemably ‘perspectival’ (as Nietzsche put it). Scepticism might, à la Wittgenstein, claim that its results are therapeutic by ridding us of our ‘pathological’ belief in objective ‘Truth’ (Rorty is just around the corner). But without a romantic, ironic, or existential commitment to ‘the courage to be’ in the face of absurdity, such a cure is less sustaining than the disease it addresses. Let us call such scepticism ‘formal.’ It can always achieve its objective, the delegitimation of a truth-claim, but its results are purely negative and indeterminate.

Hegel notices that such scepticism’s negative arguments all function within and, indeed, presuppose for their efficacy, the “*Gegensatz des Bewußtseins*” (the “opposition of consciousness”).²⁴ I take this opposition to be between ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ language, between ‘mental discourse’ and ‘verbal discourse.’ Moreover, there is no operation, no trope, indeed, there is no Sextian list of tropes by which the Form of consciousness may be brought to heel. *Ex hypothesi*, all would be performed within the opposition of consciousness and thus leave that Form intact. The aim of Hegel’s *PbG* was, by eliminating the Stoic bifurcation of language, to rewin access to Aristotelian modes of thought in the modern world, which he then displayed in *Die Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*. Alas, this magnificent accomplishment has been kept from view by the persistent propensity, only recently challenged,²⁵ to read the *PbG* and Hegel’s philosophy in general as a completion of the Kantian

[of Science.](#)” in Robert S. Cohen and Marx Wartofsky, eds., *Hegel and the Sciences*, Vol. 64 of *Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1984, 271ff.; “[Phenomenology and Systematic Philosophy](#),” in Merold Westphal, ed., *Method and Speculation in Hegel’s Phenomenology*, Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1982, 27ff. (republished in L.S. Stepelevich, ed., *Selected Essays on G.W.F. Hegel*, Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1993); “[Hegel’s Phenomenological Method](#),” *The Review of Metaphysics*, XXIII, 1970, 615ff. (republished in (1) Warren E. Steinkraus, ed., *New Studies in Hegel’s Philosophy*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971, 34ff., (2) Robert Stern, ed., *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit and Logic*, London: Routledge, 1993 (Vol. III of *G.W.F. Hegel: Critical Assessments*, a survey of two centuries of Hegel scholarship in four volumes), and (3) Jon Stewart, ed., *The Phenomenology of Spirit Reader: Critical and Interpretive Essays*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1997, 52ff.); “Words and Things in Aristotle and Hegel,” *The Philosophical Forum*, XXXIII (2002), 125ff.

²⁴ “Aber die Befreiung von dem Gegensatz des Bewußtseins, welche die Wissenschaft muß voraussetzen können” *Wissenschaft der Logik (WdL)*, Vol. I, ed. Lasson, 1934, 32). “Der Begriff der reinen Wissenschaft und seine Deduktion wird in gegenwärtiger Abhandlung also insofern vorausgesetzt, als die Phänomenologie des Geistes nichts anderes als die Deduktion desselben ist” (*WdL*, I, 30). Cf. Dove, “Hegel’s ‘Deduction of the Concept of Science.’”

²⁵ See, for example, Alfredo Ferrarin: *Hegel interprete di Aristotele*, Pisa: ETS, 1990; *Hegel and Aristotle*, and the article mentioned in footnote 1.

project,²⁶ as Fichte and Schelling understood their projects. This propensity to read Hegel himself as a philosopher within the Stoic ‘tradition,’ especially as articulated by Kant, is systematically misleading. What we may call ‘Hegel’s original insight’²⁷ was that Kant, who regarded the traditional appeal to divine intermediation as a ‘*Skandalon*’ (scandal),²⁸ represented a rewinning of the original Stoic ‘position,’ the Form of consciousness, whereby the Stoic project might be subject to a *reductio ad absurdum*. The *PbG* is that *reductio*. The project of the *PbG*, as unequivocally stated in the *WdL*, is overcoming the Form of consciousness, the ‘opposition of consciousness,’ and thereby rewinning speculative thought that will enable an encyclopedic fulfillment of the Aristotelian project in the modern world.

Instead of a formal scepticism that functions within the opposition of consciousness, there is need for what Hegel calls a “*sich vollbringende Skeptizismus*” (*PbG* 67), a “thoroughgoing scepticism,” which is ‘Hegel’s phenomenological method.’ The key to a ‘thoroughgoing scepticism’ is the discovery that consciousness is not merely the domain of constructive activity, as in Chrysippus and Kant, but is itself a construct. Thinkers in the Stoic tradition tacitly assume that the distinction between what is taken to be ‘in itself,’ even if it is taken to be an unknowable *Ding an sich*, and what is taken to be ‘for consciousness,’ is a ‘given.’ In the words of Sellars, Hegel shows that such ‘givenness’ is ‘a myth.’ It is a condition for all ‘consciousness talk’ (Sellars’ phrase) that a subject distinguish between its ‘inner’ and its ‘outer,’ between ‘time’ and ‘space,’ between ‘spontaneity’ and ‘receptivity.’ But the very notions of an ‘outer,’ of ‘space,’ of ‘receptivity’—of ‘the given’ as such—are all ‘mythical,’ they are all constructs of consciousness whereby consciousness itself is constructed. It will not do, however, simply to assert their ‘mythical’ status. That would amount to no more than one damn assertion next to another. If the very framework for ‘the myth of the given’ is to be subjected to a thoroughgoing scepticism, that framework cannot be posited by the sceptic, else scepticism could be no more than formal.²⁹

There is a distinction in the *PbG* between the *dative* and *accusative* dimensions, between what is *for* consciousness and what is *to* consciousness, between what is *für das Bewußtsein* and what is *dem Bewußtsein*,³⁰ a distinction systematically maintained by Hegel throughout the *PbG* but one that has been noticed by few German scholars and preserved by no translation into any language known to me³¹ (except mine³²). The distinction is first explicitly introduced in §12 of the Introduction:

²⁶ For the best of which see Robert Pippin, *Hegel’s Idealism*, Cambridge: CUP, 1989.

²⁷ Cf. Dieter Henrich, “Fichtes ursprüngliche Einsicht,” in Dieter Henrich and Hans Wagner, eds., *Subjektivität und Metaphysik: Festschrift für Wolfgang Cramer*, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1966, 188–232.

²⁸ Scandal or no—and Kant was right, it was a scandal—this was the device, divine and more recently ‘scientific’ (especially since Newton, mechanical physics) intermediation, by which the Stoic Form of consciousness was kept alive for more than two millennia. Hence the project of the *PbG*.

²⁹ I am afraid that Robert Brandom has remained imprisoned by the Form of consciousness in his, admittedly brilliant, *Making It Explicit*.

³⁰ The distinction was first spelled out in “Phenomenology and Systematic Philosophy” (1982), cited above.

³¹ The most recent (2000, Milano: Bompiani) Italian translation by Vincenzo Cicero sometimes adopts the expedient of rendering the dative dimension, ‘*dem Bewußtsein*,’ as ‘*agli occhi della coscienza*.’

³² G.W.F. Hegel, “The [Introduction](#) to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*” (translator), in Martin Heidegger, *Hegel’s Concept of Experience*, New York: Harper & Row, 1970, 7ff. *et passim* (reissued, PB, 1990); G.W.F. Hegel, “[Sense Certainty](#),”

Es ist in ihm eines *für ein* anderes, oder es hat überhaupt die Bestimmtheit des Moments des Wissens *an ihm*; zugleich ist ihm dies andere nicht nur *für es*, sondern auch außer dieser Beziehung oder *an sich*: das Moment der Wahrheit (*PbG* 71, italics added).

What formal scepticism unmasks is that every moment of truth, every putative ‘in itself,’ can be reduced to a ‘for itself.’ All versions of scepticism are variations upon this theme. Hegel’s original insight is that any such unmasking is at the same time a hiding of the fact that an ‘in itself’ reduced to a ‘for itself’ is itself a hidden ‘in itself,’ namely a *for* itself (accusative) *to* (dative) consciousness. Within the Form of consciousness, this transition is invisible, both *to* sceptical as well as *to* dogmatic consciousness. The *conditio sine qua non* for the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is this structure of consciousness, this distinction which constitutes consciousness, and the hiddenness of the emergence of a new ‘in itself’ unthematized by the consciousness in question. Hegel’s way of indicating the result of such a hidden transition is to say that the new ‘in itself’ is *to* rather than *for* consciousness. Of course this would be a mere playing with words if the distinction were not rooted in the very Form of consciousness.

It is clear that a thoroughgoing scepticism cannot, like formal scepticism, be performed upon a single *Gestalt*, or shape. As a *Gestalt* of consciousness Stoicism can be no more than one in a series of *Gestalten*, a *Gestalt* whose inner dynamic can only generate a successor *Gestalt*, indeed, the *Gestalt* called ‘Scepticism.’ In each *Gestalt* consciousness posits the opposition of ‘in itself’ and ‘for itself’ by which it is consciousness and then undergoes, not as consciousness per se but as a determinate consciousness, a determinate negation to which it is susceptible *qua* consciousness, which yields a sequence of such determinate shapes of consciousness. The distinguishing characteristic of my interpretation is that I take the Form of consciousness to be even more Stoic than that *Gestalt* explicitly so-called. In the *PbG* the Form of consciousness is shown to undergo a sequence of immanent or autonomously constituted transformations from *Gestalt* to *Gestalt*, with a beginning, middle, and end—like an Aristotelianly conceived ‘plot’—and, again like an Aristotelian tragedy, without any confusion with history,³³ so that a ‘Science of the experience of consciousness’ (Hegel’s first title for the *PbG*) is constituted by the very nature of our subject matter.

I have stressed that the Form of consciousness is most adequately grasped as Stoic, not to introject another historical dimension into a reading of the *PbG* but to provide a heuristic for becoming a member of the now-celebrated ‘phenomenological we,’³⁴ for whom the ‘opposition of consciousness’ is a linguistic construct, the name of the barrier that has constricted all thinkers, and especially interpreters of Aristotle, for over two thousand years.³⁵ To play the role of this ‘we,’ we must be able to doubt the viability of the Form of consciousness per se. Such doubt cannot eliminate this Form, but, if exercised sustainedly, it can keep us from surreptitiously interrupting the immanent

from *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Chapter I (1807)” (translator), *The Philosophical Forum*, XXXII (2001); G.W.F. Hegel, “*The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Chapter VIII, [Absolute Knowing](#)” (translator), *The Philosophical Forum*, XXXII (2001).

³³ Aristotle, *Poetics* 9.

³⁴ Noted in “Hegel’s Phenomenological Method” (1970), cited above.

³⁵ Alas, all Aristotle interpreters, save Hegel, have surreptitiously inserted the Form of consciousness into their readings of “*l maestro di color che sanno*” (Dante, *Inferno* IV, 131).

development from *Gestalt* to *Gestalt* or from intervening in the process by dragging in references to history or ‘well known’ philosophical positions. Our task is to consider one such sceptical refutation and hidden transition after another.

It might be possible for such a sequence to shape itself autonomously and perhaps even arrive at a *Gestalt* of consciousness for which any putative ‘in itself’ would be seen as merely ‘for it.’³⁶ Such a state of affairs could not properly be called a *Gestalt* of consciousness for, as we have seen, consciousness requires for its very nature a distinction between an ‘in itself’ and a ‘for itself’ dimension. If such a state could be arrived at we might call it a knower ‘absolved’ of the Form of consciousness or engaged in ‘absolute knowing.’ It might be argued that such a knower would be, for the first time since the advent of the opposition of consciousness in post-Aristotelian thought, prepared to think speculatively, to theorize à la Aristotle, for whom the opposition of consciousness did not exist.

IV. THE ABSOLUTION FROM THE ‘OPPOSITION OF CONSCIOUSNESS’: ‘ABSOLUTE KNOWING’ (*PbG* VIII)

The title of the last chapter of the *PbG* has proved to be problematic for many readers. It has seemed to suggest a knowing *of* the absolute (‘God,’ ‘the infinite,’ ... etc.) from the standpoint of consciousness. But such knowing would be out of keeping with a book that has announced its path as a ‘thoroughgoing scepticism.’ To avoid this difficulty we must remind ourselves that the word ‘absolute,’ like many others, takes its sense by way of contrast with *its* other: ‘relative.’ The various *Gestalten* of the ‘opposition of consciousness’ all involve a contrast between what is relative, *for* consciousness, and what is absolute albeit unthematized, *to* consciousness. In *PbG* VIII this contrast, which constitutes the source of the movement of consciousness throughout, is eliminated and never used again in the system of philosophy, the encyclopedia, that follows. Let us conclude this consideration of the *PbG* as a rewinning of Aristotelian modes of thought in the modern world with a reconstruction of its elimination of the contrast absolute/relative in the last chapter of the *PbG*: “Absolute Knowing.”³⁷

Emerging from “Revealed Religion” (*PbG* VII, c), the ‘phenomenological we’ considers an object for consciousness that is its most exalted, most complete yet: Spiritual Essence (*das geistige Wesen*), the pictured counterpart of what is to it absolute. But the subject of this knowledge is still consciousness and it still distinguishes its object as an other for it with an in-itself to it of which it is implicitly certain. This last stand of consciousness is clearly stated in the opening lines of *PbG* VIII: “In Revealed Religion Spirit has not yet overcome its consciousness as such” (*PF* 407). Up to this point the *PbG* has been concerned with the ‘movement (*Bewegung* or *kinesis*) of consciousness’—the alienation or externalization of the thing, the alienation of itself as thing, and “the reappropriation of this alienation and objectness (*Gegenständlichkeit*).” In the movement of consciousness we will now consider, “consciousness is the totality of its stages” (*PF* 407). Its terminus is the elimination of ‘the

³⁶ The absolution from the ‘opposition of consciousness,’ from the dialectic of the dative and accusative, is what Hegel calls ‘absolute knowledge’ and sets forth in *PbG* VIII: a ‘thoroughgoing’ phenomenological ‘reduction,’ exceeding Husserl by far.

³⁷ Based upon the translation I published in *The Philosophical Forum*, XXXII (2001), here cited as *PF*.

Form of consciousness,’ the cancellation of the contrast between what is to it and what is for consciousness.³⁸

This ultimate object of consciousness, Spiritual Essence, is constituted by the totality of the determinations that the ‘in-itself’ to consciousness has acquired by its sequence of inversions. Spiritual Essence will show itself to be based on the ultimate ‘in-itself’ to it by its inversion into Spiritual Unity (*die geistige Einheit*). To accomplish this articulation (as distinct from merely representing it, as in ch. VII, ‘Religion’), we must recollect the stages that brought us to the point where Spiritual Essence has become the in-itself for this ultimate *Gestalt* of consciousness. The inversion of Spiritual Essence requires that we grasp it in both the totality and the distinctiveness of its determinations—thus we must recollect these shapes. Taken together, these *Gestalten* can reveal the Form of consciousness rather than the merely particular shapes subject to immanent, albeit formal, scepticism along the way.

The recollection of previous *Gestalten*, contrasted with the ‘in-itself’ of ‘Religion,’ which was *to* consciousness, has brought us to the situation of absolute knowing, where the dative dimension is eliminated and the ‘opposition of consciousness’ is consequently overcome. Absolute knowing does not dispense with consciousness and its objects; it embraces them and suffuses them as moments, parts of *the whole*. If anything, absolute knowing renders the *Gestalten* of consciousness and their respective in-itself’s more comprehensible in that they can be seen *as parts* that are all *for* consciousness. The journey makes more sense once its destination is known. It is in the final section of *PbG* VIII, dealing with time, that the Aristotelian *telos* of the work as a whole becomes manifest.

Throughout the *PbG* there is a relentless impetus, the dialectic of the accusative and dative dimensions, driving the process from *Gestalt* to *Gestalt*. And the process is sequential, it is a series in which one *Gestalt* necessarily follows upon another by inversions of consciousness and with a *motion* that proceeds like time in the Aristotelian sense. But even the most cursory acquaintance with the transitions and the repetitions of historical epochs leave no doubt that what drives the experience of consciousness is not time. That it feels like time, that it behaves like time, is a clue to the *telos*, the potential, that moves consciousness.

The progression of *Gestalten* of consciousness in the *PbG* is for the Form of consciousness a linear journey, a movement, “an actuality that exists potentially in so far as it exists potentially” (Aristotle, *Physics* III, 1, 201a10). Consciousness is in motion (*kinesis*); speculation (*theorein*) is activity (*energeia*). At each stage consciousness retains an in-itself that is *to* it, believes it has completed its motion and reached its destination, gotten hold of its truth, reached its final standpoint—come to rest. But motion in the *PbG*, as in Aristotle’s *Physics*, is only the actualization of a potential *qua* potential. The end of one motion is only the beginning of the next. One foundation, one in-itself *to* consciousness, is reduced to an in-itself *for* consciousness only to reemerge as an in-itself *for* consciousness that is *to* consciousness a new foundation for a sequel *Gestalt*. Until consciousness reaches the stage where it becomes *activity* in absolute knowing it remains in restless perpetual motion.

³⁸ The dative/accusative contrast is never used in the *Encyclopedia*. It is ‘mentioned’ in the *Anmerkung* to *Enz.* §418, in Hegel’s ‘theory’ of consciousness.

Thus from within the standpoint of the consciousness afflicted with its opposition, its journey is a motion towards a termination that perpetually extends itself over time.

When we reach the standpoint of absolute knowing, the standpoint of science Aristotelianly conceived, of theoretical activity, it becomes clear that time is how the need to grasp the Concept appears to the subject afflicted with the opposition of consciousness. For absolute knowing there is a *telos* immanent in the process, the material and potential dimension is immanent in the *telos* throughout the process (Aristotle, *Meta.* IX, 1050b). This is what Aristotle called *energeia*, activity, which he contrasted with *kinesis*, motion. The *Gestalten* that instantiate the Form of consciousness undergo a process that is akin to *kinesis*, and is analogously incomplete and reiterative. As involving time, the sequence of *Gestalten* of consciousness is akin to history. But, unlike historical ‘stages,’ which are hopelessly ‘overdetermined,’ the *Gestalten* of consciousness are, like *kinesis* in Aristotle’s physics, susceptible of sequential development. That is the development traced in the *PhG*.

Let us conclude by considering my translation of two celebrated passages from the last chapter of the *PhG*:

Time is the Concept itself existing as something definite and representing itself to consciousness as empty intuition. That is the reason why Spirit necessarily appears in time, and it appears in time so long as it does not grasp its pure Concept, i.e., so long as it does not annihilate time. Time is pure Self externally intuited and not grasped by the Self; it is the merely intuited Concept. When this Concept does grasp itself, it eliminates its temporal form, comprehends intuiting, and is intuiting comprehended and comprehending.

Time accordingly appears as the fate and necessity of that Spirit which is not completed within itself. It appears as the necessity of enriching the participation which self-consciousness has in consciousness, the necessity of setting into motion the *immediacy of the In-itself* (the form in which substance is in consciousness) or, inversely, when the In-itself is taken as *something internal*, time appears as the necessity of realizing and revealing what is at first merely *internal*, i.e., of claiming the In-itself for Spirit’s self-certainty (*PF* 414, italics added).

In the Aristotelian sense the ‘in-itself’ represents the *telos*, the final cause, that impels the motion of consciousness to its goal. When viewed from the standpoint of absolute knowing, which becomes available to the ‘philosophical we’ by virtue of following the immanent and consummatory development of *Gestalten*, this process, as a *kinesis*, is grasped by us as pointing toward its own proper fulfillment, as an *energeia*—in which the stages do not dissipate like an ordinary *kinesis* but are grasped as immanent in their *telos*,³⁹ ‘Absolute Knowing.’ From the viewpoint of consciousness, for a *Gestalt* exemplifying the Form of consciousness, the processes that unfold are temporal; for the knower who has comprehended, by this journey, the Form of consciousness, the opposition of consciousness, the process in question is rendered timeless—eternal, like *energeia* itself.

³⁹ As at Aristotle, *Meta.* IX, 1050b.

Thus we are prepared for speculating that ‘circle of knowledge’ (Encyclopedia) that will end/begin with the following consideration:

And thinking in itself deals with that which is best in itself, and that which is thinking in the fullest sense with that which is best in the fullest sense. And thought thinks on itself because it shares the nature of what is thought; for it becomes what is thought in coming into contact with and thinking what it thinks so that thought and what is thought are the same. For that which is capable of considering what is thought, i.e., the essence, is thought. But it is active when it possesses this thought. Therefore the possession rather than the receptivity is the divine element which thought seems to contain, and the act of contemplation is what is most pleasant and best. If, then, God is always in that good state in which we sometimes are, this compels our wonder; and if in a better this compels it yet more. And God is in a better state. And life also belongs to God; for the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and God’s self-dependent actuality is life most good and eternal. We say therefore that God is a living being, eternal, most good, so that life and duration continuous and eternal belong to God; for this is God.⁴⁰

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⁴⁰ *Meta.* XII, 7, 1072b18–30, Ross tr., with emendations. Obviously, the God in question is pure *energeia*, not god the creator in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic sense.