Hegel on Reality as a Modal Notion

Summary

In his analysis of reality as a modal notion, Hegel realises that in any act of reference to what we might call the objective world we reach beyond merely present experience and explain *appearances* by *causal powers* of more or less 'substantial' *things* that transcend, as such, mere 'presence': In contrast to merely subjective, heavily perspectival, appearances, real objects cannot be immediate referents of individual perception but belong, together with their dispositional properties, to a somewhat 'deeper' level of discourse or thinking. They have to be analysed by a peculiar '*Logic of Essence*'. The resulting insight into the *idealism* of our modal concepts of 'forces' and 'causes' leads to the further insight that in the cultural history of science *we* develop (hopefully in a reasonable way) *our* normative system of *distinctions* and *default inferences* that are generically posited as *conceptual* determinants of the very objects we talk about in 'empirical' judgments and informative acts. When talking about 'real states of affairs', we always already use some of these transcendentally presupposed conceptual norms.

1. An orienting map for Hegel's meta-logical reflections

The following is not only a proposal for how to interpret what Hegel says about reality and possibility, but also an attempt to show that the resulting thoughts are appropriate to the topic[1]. This gives them a philosophical actuality far beyond a mere reconstruction of Hegel's philosophy. In precisely this sense it is a *de-re*-reading of Hegel together with some of his background, for example Aristotle and Leibniz, Kant and Fichte. In order to capture and guide the audience's interest in the topic, I unfortunately cannot just follow Hegel's own 'phenomenological' approach that wants to lead us on a 'natural path' through long and twisted arguments. I rather begin with the end, i.e. with the results of the whole argumentation.[2]

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[1] ... needless to say that all this holds according to my judgments and commitments.

[2] At the end of the *Logic of Essence*, Hegel regrets himself that it was impossible to begin the investigation with 'the Notion' or 'the Concept'. Cf. *Hegel's Logic* (transl. William Wallace, Oxford 1975), p. 222 = Enc. § 159: "When, as now, the notion is called the truth of Being and Essence, we must expect to be asked, why we do not begin with the notion? The answer is that, where knowledge by thought is our aim ... truth, when it forms the beginning, must rest on mere assertion." The overall task was to show that a thorough analysis of *Being* 'leads to' *Essence* and a thorough analysis of *Essence* 'leads to' *the Notion, the Concept* and *the Idea*. In these steps, it seems as if Hegel aspired to present a kind of 'proof' of *his doctrine* of "*Absolute Idealism*". But what kind of 'doctrine' is this? And what kind of 'proof' is given for it?

The first and most important point is that Hegel's insights stand in deep contrast to a 'Hume-an' or, how I would like to call it, 'flat' picture of possible empirical truths. This leading idea of (logical) empiricism was later made ingeniously explicit in Wittgenstein's '*Tractatus*': 'Tracta-rian' possibilities are truth-functionally composed on the basis of logically elementary propo-sitions. The truth of any such basic proposition is, according to the principal model, 'immedia-tely' controlled by perceptions.[3] Only logically complex sentences that are non-trivially true, if they are true, are informative or 'meaningful'.[4] They somehow quantify over space, time and 'colours' (or '*Gestalts*').[5] The so-called 'possible worlds' of modal logic in contemporary ana-lytical philosophy are, accordingly, *maximal consistent sets* of such '*tractarian possibilities*' – with the result that they are no *worlds of objective things* in which there could be *forces and causes* at all. Since this is so, formal modal logic misses our real practice of talking about real possibilities and objective reality.

An additional problem is this: There is no other contact to the 'real objective world' than by declaring that some possibility can be accepted as 'reality'. As a result, there is no 'trans-dialogical' truth which we could appeal to.[6] In contrast to this insight into the 'absolute role' of performative attitudes in speech acts, dogmatic scientism and naturalism defend a free-floa-ting 'idea' of truth as if it were a *property of propositions* (or even of sentences) in abstraction from any practice of *evaluating claims* that say that this or that possibility is a reality. The result is an outdated 'ontological' position that still remains captured by some naïve 'correspondence theory of truth'. Richard Rorty has again and again attacked this image of 'true knowledge' as a 'mirror of nature'. It is nothing but transcendent metaphysics and, as such, not intelligible at all, at least if we open our critical eyes to the very concepts that are presupposed in any such version of 'belief-philosophy'.

As a critical reader of Kant and empiricist scepticism (Hume), Hegel realises that in any act of reference to the objective world we explain *perceptual appearances* by *causal forces* of *things*. And he sees that things, when viewed as *the causes of our perceiving them*, are, as such, *no immediate objects of individual perception*. If we think this over, we should be able to understand that and why the real objects in the real world are already situated on a 'dee-per' logical level than any object of direct or immediate perception. This does not mean, as empiricism holds, that we 'really' perceive only 'sense data'. It means, instead, that the rela-tion between the objects we perceive and our perceiving them is a *logical* or, to be more precise, a *conceptual relation*. If we want to read this relation as 'causal' we still have to un-derstand the *logical status* of this peculiar form of causality – since it presupposes a

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[3] More precisely, we will have to distinguish between a 'tractarian' level of logically complex sentences about pos-sible appearances (or 'singular empirical cases') and an 'essentialist' level of generic forms or norms of conceptual truths and inferences.
[4] Like logically complex sentences about natural numbers, their truth is most often not decidable here and now.
[5] Wittgenstein speaks about „*Raum Zeit und Färbigkeit*" as "*Formen der Gegenstände*".
[6] In a sense, this is the core insight of Robert Brandom's philosophy of language and truth.

(hopefully non-transcendent or non-metaphysical) understanding of '*dispositional properties*' which we never arrive at in (logical) empiricism.

Hegel's basic insight is here this: When we talk about *substantial* things as causes of perception we are already talking in an *ideal* mode of speech. This is so because there are (as *Heraclitus* already had seen, followed by *Parmenides* and *Plato*) no absolutely time-general 'things' in the 'empirical' world at all. Every thing *changes in time* and has 'its' time of identity and existence. Only abstract forms can be 'eternal'. As a result, the only 'substances' that do not change or disappear at all belong to a system of *ideal 'entities'* and ideal, *mathematical*, truth. The 'real' substantive things in the real world are, instead, substances of middle range, so to speak. Their dispositional properties of middle range are expressed by *'generic' truths*. The structure of a system of generic truths and their applications is the topic of Hegel's '*Logic of Essence*'. Such a system contains middle-ranged generic objects as the typical life of a member of a certain species of animals or the typical behaviour of volcanos, just to name two examples. The generic objects belong to a level of objects which Hegel marks by the label 'as such' or 'in itself' ('*an sich*'), their appearances to a level of objects labelled 'for itself' ('*für sich*') and properly explained experience to a level lablled 'in and for itself' ('*an und für sich*').

In order to see that all this really has something to do with Hegel's texts, there are, however, two main problems to solve. The first concerns his nominalised style in which he seems, at least for an innocent reader, to use "Being" and "Nothing", "Essence" and "Appearance", "Possibility" and "Necessity" in a kind of mysterious talk about transcendent powers behind our backs. The impression is that he wants to prove in a kind of 'dialectical deduction' that they 'exist' and have some 'speculative properties'. In order to get rid of this misleading reading of Hegel's (admittedly difficult form of) writing, it may already help to view the labels above, just like the labels "the Absolute", "the Notion" and "the Idea", as 'title-words' for 'logical categories' and read his ominous 'speculative sentences' as 'title sentences' or headlines that tell us something most general about the 'category' named or labelled or overwritten by the categorical title word.

The topic of Hegel's logic is in fact a system of 'logical categories'. Such categories must be understood in the wide sense of the Greek word, namely as *logical forms* or *logical modes of speech or thinking*.[7] This means, for example, that the title-word "Being" stands for the 'normal' mode of speech or rather, for a 'natural' attitude' of *simple reference.* According to this attitude we think that we can immediately or directly 'refer' to objects by names, to properties or qualities by predicates, to propositions or states of affairs by sentences, and to

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[7] Of course, in a longer treatise it would be important to give a general answer in some detail to the question what a logical category is and what it logically means to make such categories the 'object' of speculative or categorical sentences.

facts by true sentences. In his *Logic of Being* Hegel tries to *dissolve the inner contradiction* of this 'naïve' attitude, especially with respect to (pure) quantities, i.e. to mathematical concepts like sets and numbers, geometrical forms and infinitesimal or infinite magnitudes.[8]

I cannot develop the arguments Hegel proposes in the *Logic of Being* in any detail. We must be content with the claim that they are generally concerned with the different logical usages of noun phrases and verb phrases in sentences and speech acts, i.e. with the question how names refer, to which entity ('object' or *Gegenstand*) g a naming act refers and about which domain G of such entities we quantify about when a noun phrase is a quantifier. The last question depends directly on the difference between finite resp. infinite predicate negation P^c resp. P^∞ with respect to the relevant domain G and a given verb-phrase P defined in G. *Not* to be prime is, for example, a finite or determinate negation of a predicate for *numbers* but not for '*caesars*'. I.e. for kings or other men to be prime is an infinite or non-determinate negation, as Leibniz and Kant had already seen.[9] A domain G of a quantifier can and must in fact be understood as a union of a G-predicate P and its determinate negation or normal complementary P^c. Since this is so, Frege's quantificational logic is rightly called "predicate logic": It analyses nothing but the system of (negated or non-negated) logically complex determinate G-predicates $x\varepsilon P = x\varepsilon\lambda_y A(y)$ which are truth-functionally defined in G on the ground of some system of logically elementary G-predicates or basic distinctions *in G*. Only on such a ground can we recursively define the use of logically complex sentence-forms like "not-p", "p and q" (or "if p then q" or "not-p or q"), and "for all x: A(x)".

When we now turn our focus more to Hegel's *Logic of Essence*, it is important to see that the 'speculative' sentences of this part of Hegel's *Science of Logic* (in all of its versions) belong to a '*meta-meta-level*' analysis of *reflective* and *evaluative* judgments *about judgments*. The topics of evaluative meta-level judgments of reflection can be, for example, judgments of other persons. The easiest example may be this: I say that what you say is *true* and, by saying this, I *endorse* what you say. When I say that this or that *really* is the case, I also emphatically *undertake* the corresponding commitments[10] – as Robert Brandom has shown in the tradition of Wilfrid Sellars and Richard Rorty.

The task now is, of course, to understand how some of the most disturbing title-sentences of the *Logic of Essence* are to be read, as, for example, the following:

"What is possible is also impossible";

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[8] When we talk about abstract objects like sets and numbers in mathematics we already presuppose some practical mastery of the constitution of proof- and truth-conditions of corresponding sentences.

[9] It was therefore a really bad idea of Frege to try to define a concept of number as a sortal in a universe of all discourse and to evaluate a sentence like "Caesar is no number" as true.

[10] It is an already much more complicated situation when I say that you or they *know that p*. Wittgenstein had noticed furthermore, as Hegel before him, that it is a hybrid case when I myself want to make an evaluative judgment about my own possible judgments, for example when I say with some kind of emphasis that *I know* that p and think that I am talking in such a 'Cartesian' situation somehow mysteriously about 'myself'.

or:

"Reality (Wirklichkeit) is (essentially) a possibility";

or the most contested of Hegel's logical oracles:

"What is real is reasonable and what is reasonable is real".

At first sight, all these sentences sound wrong, even self-contradictory. It seems wrong, for example, to declare that anything possible is also impossible. And, in fact, Hegel is much too sloppy here. For he does not want to say that, if it is possible that p, it is also *not possible* that p. This would lead to the nonsensical claim that nothing is possible. Nor does Hegel want to say that, if p is possible, non-p is also possible. This would mean that any p is *contingent*.[11]

But there are deeper problems than mere sloppiness. If we do not want to reject Hegel's speculative sentences outright – even though most readers are inclined do so and not without some seemingly good reasons – we might compare them with Frege's explanation of the categorical difference between a 1st-order conceptual property or function F(x) and a 2nd-order object, expressed by a name-like designation:

"The concept 'horse' is no concept".

Frege knows, of course, that this sentence sounds strange. He knows also that his explication of the difference between concepts or functions as 'unsaturated' on the one hand and names or definite descriptions as 'saturated' on the other is merely metaphorical (or analogical).[12] This is so because they refer to performative forms (*Vollzugsformen*) that have to be mastered and are, as such, no 'objects' at all. In the case of concepts we have to master the correct use of 'unsaturated' or 'open' sentence-forms A(x) like "x is a horse". In the case of Fregean senses, we have to master the use of definite descriptions. In the case of talking about senses, functions, properties or concepts, we have to master certain techniques of nominalisation and abstraction and the use these name-like expressions in oblique contexts or in contexts of 2nd-order properties.

In any case, Frege's metaphorical explanations give us, as he himself says, 'hints' for how to read his talk, on a semantic level, as referring to the different functional or categorical roles of corresponding *expressions* in sentences or judgments. We must learn, it now seems, the proper reading of Frege's categorical sentences just as, for that matter, of Wittgenstein's 'elucidations' or Hegel's 'speculative' sentences.

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[11] The definition of contingency is, of course: p is contingent if p is possible and non-p is also possible.

[12] In fact, many logical distinctions can be made explicit only by using such 'syntactical metaphors'. Eric Stenius has helpfully coined the word in his interpretation of Wittgenstein's 'speculative' sentences, as Hans Julius Schneider has shown. Cf. Eric Stenius, *Wittgenstein's Tractatus. A Critical Exposition of its Main Lines of Thought*. Oxford 1960, and Hans Julius Schneider, *Phantasie und Kalkül* , Frankfurt 1992.

2. On the difference between Being and Essence

However, in order to understand the overall thought of Hegel's logic and his methodical plan and procedure, the reader still needs some more orientation to find his way through this almost outrageous text, in which the author seems to jump without sufficient motivations from logical titles to seemingly metaphysical entities like God, Spirit, and (Self)Consciousness.[13] Even though Hegel himself gives some hints, they certainly are not sufficient for an average reader. And before we even could start to criticise Hegel's aspirations, we first should know something more about the difference between the levels of *Being* and *Essence*, between *Appearance* and its (essential) *Ground* (or '*eidetic cause*') and, as we shall see, between mere *Actuality* in the sense of just being there and (real, objective) *Reality* or *Existence* in the sense of an appropriate explanation of what we empirically perceive as being there.

In his *Logic of Being*, Hegel begins with a critical destruction or 'dialectical' de-construction of 'the naïve approach to reality'. He must begin in such a way in order to avoid all the '*isms*' or 'positions' of mere 'belief philosophy'. 'Belief philosophy' starts with some 'confession' or 'enrolment' into a 'school', for example into the school of 'naturalists' or 'idealists', 'internalists' or 'externalists', 'Cartesians', 'Lockeans', 'Humeans', 'Kantians', or 'Fichteans'. In fact, Fichte had claimed that it was a matter of what kind of person one is whether one accepts the transcendental primacy of thinking or thought, action or will over the empirically given – or not. Hence, for 'Fichteans', as later for *William James* and *American Pragmatism* altogether, it appears as a matter *of will* to view the world first and foremost under the perspective of an *actor* rather than a *spectator* (as *Lewis White Beck* nicely reconstructs Kant's 'dualism'). Hegel tries, instead, to show that this primacy is not at all a matter of *decision* or *Weltanschauung* but a matter of *intelligence and logical reasoning*. He wants to show that the 'naturalist' stance towards object level talk about things and 'matters' in the world is just *self-contradicting*. This is so because the naïve stance of 'naturalism' – which may include here the 'materialist' or 'scientist' belief that *physics is the measure of all things, that they exist or that they do not exist – presupposes* a complex constitution of generic truth (*allgemeine Wahrheit*) as a condition of explaining singular experience by 'essential' powers of real objects. Though Kant has opened the door to it, this fact is forgotten or denied in almost all following 'schools', 'systems', or 'philosophical doctrines', including the empiricist belief in immediate perception of how things are.

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[13] I cannot deal with all these topics here in detail. In order to understand what Hegel says about Reality (*Wirklichkeit*) as a modal notion in contrast to Actuality (*Dasein* or mere '*Realität*'), we must, however, place his considerations into the context of his general enterprise. The following examples show how difficult this can be: Despite all its merits, J.N. Findlay's book, *Hegel. A Re-examination,* Oxford 1958, sufficiently shows that 'philological' approaches to Hegel's texts regularly lead us astray. This is so because any use of Hegelian jargon in 'verbal translations' or 'paraphrases' is not helpful. We can comprehend Hegelian thought only when we *re*phrase the leading thoughts in our own words. *Charles Taylor's* ground-breaking book on Hegel more or less totally ignores (or misunderstands) the *logical* arguments; the same holds for virtually all the works of French writers on Hegel, not only those heavily influenced by *Alexandre Kojève* and his 'bebop interpretations'.

Hegel's most crucial insight now is this: If we reduce logic to merely *formal* logic we cannot analyse the constitution of the *basic domains* and *elementary sentences* which enable us to talk about *physical bodies* and *chemical matter*, about *living bodies* or *thinking humans*, abstract object like *numbers and sets*, perceptible gestalts and colours, or about non-perceptible *forces* and *possibilities*.

As we have already seen, in the definitions of complex predicates by Fregean predicate logic we must already presuppose the domains G and the elementary sentences and truth conditions in G as well-defined. Today, we usually underestimate this problem since we externalise it into a so-called model-theory, without realizing that these models are only mathematical, i.e. set-theoretical structures. Sometimes we label them by fancy names. In formal modal logics, for example, authors like David Lewis talk about 'sets' of 'possible worlds' and about 'nearness relations' and 'trans-world-lines'. Almost no-one seems to see how unclear the whole picture is: Any such 'world' is *nothing but a structured set* (as one should have learned in the context of Montague-grammar). It can, as such, be used to define formal truths for appropriately interpreted formulas ('sentences'), as we know from merely mathematical model-theory. But then, any set of possible worlds is nothing but a structured set of structured sets in a system of purely mathematical set theory. The label "possible world" is nothing but a reminder that we *want to use* such a mathematical structure as a formal analogy or metaphor (formal model) in order to make some logical features of our non-mathematical talk about possibilities and necessities or contingencies explicit.

There certainly is some feeling of success when we arrive at nice schemes of deductions in axiomatic modal logic by interpreting nested modal operators and their inferential content as quantifications over sets of possible worlds (or in so called forcing trees, as they were developed by *Beth*, *Kripke* and *Cohen* as model-theoretical interpretation for intuitionistic quantifications and the modal calculus S4). But all this is by far *not enough.* Therefore, we better should check if, or how far, we *can succeed* on this road, by this method.

Hegel asks a similar question. Of course, he could not have referred to a developed mathematical model of possible worlds and he does not even refer openly back to Leibniz. But the principal problem was already clear, namely in the context of the analysis of the term and concept of (physical) forces. *Force* obviously is a *modal* category. As other non-formal *modalities*, for example, necessity and contingency, reality, cause and ground, it is a topic of a non-formal *Logic of Essence*.

It is indeed enlightening to compare the situation of possible world semantics with Hegel's criticism of a merely mathematical definition *of force* in the framework of a mathematical calculus or in systems of differential equations. Such a definition is by far not enough to understand what we do when we talk about forces and 'explain' the movements of bodies

with reference to effective forces, thereby using the corresponding mathematical functions. In the same vein, the merely mathematical model of quantified modal logic does not tell us anything about the real constitution of possibilities and necessities.

What could a 'possible world' or 'the' system of 'all' possible worlds be *outside* mere mathematics? What is it that is represented metaphorically by models of possible worlds? Is it really enough to say that a possible world is a maximal consistent set of 'descriptive', i.e. 'tractarian', sentences? The very notion of maximal consistency already presupposes a purely mathematical domain G; only there can we define the logically complex truth conditions in the schematic or syntactic way as it was developed by Frege.

There are, of course, widespread prejudices connected with the very words "*essence*" and "*essential*": As a kind of conditioned reflex, contemporary philosophers want to be 'anti-essentialists' and prefer to cancel not only the words "essence" and "essential", but sometimes also the word "cause" (Russell) or "force" (Cassirer) and replace them by a more formal term like "function". But precisely this avoidance of difficult terms makes critical analysis impossible: The result is a *retreat* into merely 'exact' but, precisely as such not rigorous philosophy.[14] The only remaining disputes are those between different scholastic positions of belief philosophy – which explains the new revival of formal metaphysics in our days. Beyond this, subjective intuitions are proposed as allegedly immediate justifications of formalist metaphors or mathematical analogies that are misleadingly called 'structural models'. It remains unclear what they are models *of*.

The task of rigorous philosophy (of science and knowledge) consists, instead, in providing critical explications of the forms and norms of reasonable thinking *and* the notion of '*participation*', of Plato's *methexis*. The leading question is: in which sense can we understand mathematical and other metaphorical models (for example the diverse models of chemistry) as descriptions of an 'underlying structure' of the '*real world*'? How can we 'explain' apparent phenomena by relating them to such an underlying structure? We could call any underlying structure an "essence" and any 'explanation' of an actual phenomenon or appearance that relates it to an underlying structure an 'essential' explanation. Then the analysis of the mode of existence and any access to the underlying structures and to the relation between them and 'corresponding appearances' obviously belong to a '*Logic of Essence*'.[15]

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[14] The greatest danger to misread Hegel or Kant, for that matter, is reading their texts as talking about some idealist world behind the scene of experience. Such a reading attributes to these authors precisely what they fight against. This misunderstanding gets especially prominent when a reader sticks to his own, perhaps 'empiricist' prejudices about 'essences' (or, for that matter, about 'the absolute', 'God'). According to these prejudices, we better stop talking about essences at all. They are said to be 'metaphysical' entities behind the scene of experience about which we cannot know anything. The attitude of avoiding these crucial categories is, however, similar to the idea that we could avoid difficulties by not talking about them.

[15] The fact that knowledge about internal properties of pure, perhaps already mathematical, structures belong into a domain of (perhaps somehow essential) possible models is already realised by Aristotle (Meteor. 17,

The 'dialectical contradiction' which Hegel wants us to take notice of, and account for, in this context is precisely this: what explains our perception causally is, as such, something that is *not perceived*. It is, as such, i.e. by some logical ground, *not even immediately or directly perceivable*. This fact shows up in all claims of 'fallibilism' which hold that we can never be sure what we perceive. At the same time, the object that explains perception should be exactly the object which is 'really perceived'; i.e. we should 'know' that it is there on the basis of our 'real' (or rather: 'actual') perception.

Thus we arrive at the following dialectical contradiction: We want to explain our sensations and perceptions (from the time of Locke to modern cognitive science) by something that we allegedly do not (directly) perceive. But if it is not directly perceivable, it must be so on logical grounds. That this is really the case can be quite nicely seen when it comes to the notion of *force* and *mere possibility*. For we would need very sharp eyes, as Lewis Carroll would have said, to 'see' a 'force' doing this or that or to 'see' a merely possible thing or event. We cannot 'see' functions or rules or laws either. We cannot even see 'relations' as such. We have access to relations and functions only via *corresponding sentences*, as Frege has made unmistakably clear in the meantime. But already for Plato it was absolutely clear that the semantic or inferential forms or ideas of our representation of the world cannot be *direct objects of perception*. By combining these insights of Plato and Aristotle with those of Kant, Hegel shows that the relevant 'forms' are virtually always *forms of performances* (*Vollzugsformen*), for example *forms of determining a non-subjective object of perception and explaining the perception by the object*.

In other words, the basis of any knowledge about forms is *practical knowledge*, *knowing-how to reproduce and recognise forms*. As such, practical knowledge about forms is a '*rational' faculty*, an *'ability'*, a *'competence'*. Such abilities can and must show up in their actualizations. But what is *merely actual* often does not show sufficiently that it is a result of a generic faculty. This is obviously so in the case of an action, which, in principle, always could be as well the result of an accidental behaviour or occurrence. But also in cases of 'natural' processes – without intervening human actions – we need good experienced judgment in order to understand them as consequences or effects of some *real* generic power or force together with what has *really* happened earlier. I.e. the attribution of a real generical 'power' in a causal explanation of some actual appearance already presupposes at least a differentiation between what is merely contingently actual and what can be explained as an actualization of some concrete dispositional force, power or 'generic possibility'.

344a5-7): „Concerning those things that cannot be perceived by the senses, we already did enough with our means of reflective reason when we only dealt with mere possibilities". It should be by now beyond any doubt that we have to distinguish the level of more or less immediately perceivable objects (here and now, in actuality) and what we refer to when we 'explain' them as appearances by what is *really there* (and not just here and now), i.e. by a possibility that is judged *to be real*.

Obviously, we now must distinguish between possibilities on at least two levels. The first is 'flat' possibility which remains restricted to the category of Appearances. It is expressed by merely 'tractarian' propositions about merely 'empirical' states of affairs. The second is the level of things and powers by which we explain what the real grounds or causes for this or that appearance was or is.

In both cases we evaluate possibilities when we say that something is really the case. However, in the case of appearances we remain in the domain of what is actual, what is there – here and now, and what we have access to by more or less direct perception and in present actions. When we talk about causes, we logically separate the ground from the grounded, the ideal and generic cause from the real or rather actual effect. Here, cause and effect obviously cannot be only flat empirical events, as the Humean picture presupposes. Causes as essential grounds are rather situated on a different 'onto-logical' level of 'essences', whereas the 'effects' better belong to the level of actual 'appearances'. The grounds as real reasons for actions or real causes for appearances 'show up', as it were, in their actualizations, in the appearances. Insofar, the causes are 'proven' by their effects, even though *we say* that they *produce* the effect.

The Leibnizian principle of sufficient reason now appears as a kind of mere tautology. It says that according to our form of representing and explaining apparent and actual events as regular 'effects' on the ground of generic causes (or reasons, when it comes to actions) we can in any singular case of an actual event look for a 'sufficient' ground in the generic level of talking about essential descriptions of *what* happened and explanations of *why* it happened. These grounds or causes are not only preceding *events* – as the 'flat' picture (down to Donald Davidson) wants to have it. According to this Humean or 'tractarian' picture, any sequence of (a fortiori: logically independent) events would be contingent anyway – and the only 'necessities' which exist according to it are 'logical tautologies'. These are expressed by sentences like, for example, 'if p&q then p', by which we can make logically true inferences explicit. Only therefore Wittgenstein can declare that any belief in a causal nexus (that goes beyond merely formal logical necessities) is ('the') superstition. The only thing to do is now 'pragmatically' calculating with *probabilities* by which he might 'predict' more or less stable relative frequencies of certain 'flat events'. But such events are no well defined objects at all. They are at most *clusters of possible perceptions.*

Obviously, Hegel's approach to logic and conceptual analysis is much wider than that of the Fregean and tractarian tradition. His notion of the conceptual is much more complex. What he stenographically calls "the concept" is 'the' ideal system of generically reliable default inferences, logically situated on the level of 'essences' that still have to be applied to appearances on the ground if good experiences but free judgments. In fact, what I would like to call a materially conceptual 'truth' (or norm of inference) is not always 'universally' true in

the sense of merely schematic quantification. Any application of generic truths to a specific singular case needs a kind of filter of good judgment. Just because Kant's *Third Critique* had addressed the importance of such judgments, Hegel praises the book in the highest: Here the author really develops speculative thinking, i.e. logical analysis.

A result of this is that we have to distinguish between *quantificational universality* in an already well-established domain G (in which Fregean predicates are defined) and *genericity*. It is to the honour of American Pragmatism that John Dewey had already realised the importance of this distinction also.

3. Free acts of acknowledgment

In judging that p is 'possibly true', we presuppose already corresponding truth- or fulfilment-conditions. More precisely, to understand a possible or real statement p is to know under which conditions we would evaluate the claim that p as well-justified from the speaker's standpoint – and perhaps as true from our standpoint.

Robert Brandom has shown that and why any approach to semantics which *only* looks at 'speaker-independent' truth conditions of sentences (as merely syntactical forms) is much too narrow-minded. It neglects the dialectics of evaluating the subjective reasons of a responsible speaker from our, albeit also fallible, perspective of hearers and evaluators. The fallibility of any of us results from the fact, however, that the inferential impact of what a speaker says usually *conceptually surpasses* what can be controlled by his subjective, hence perspectival, (perceptive) 'knowledge'. This is so at least in all cases of world-related in-formation. Wittgenstein is right to stress that any such information is, if it is meaningful, not just 'conceptually' true. A contrast to this is, for example, a case in which I show you a thing or event and just remind you that it is called N.N. But Wittgenstein is wrong to assume that empirically informative utterances are just logically complex in the sense that they talk about *many* or *some* 'coloured' space-time-points, as we could say as short as ironically. Essen-tially the same holds for all clone-versions of the *Tractatus* in *post-Carnapian* philosophy.[16]

Moreover, Bernard Williams *Truth and Truthfulness* (Oxford 2002) nicely shows that we have to distinguish between the subjective conditions of mere *sincerity* (which excludes that the speaker lies consciously) and accuracy (which excludes a kind of negligence). Accuracy is the attitude of a responsible speaker. It presupposes a disciplined faculty of giving reasons that can be accepted as sufficient *from the standpoint of the speaker S* who claims that p. But the 'generic' or 'essential' conditions of truth (at least most often) *surpass* accuracy. This is the reason why *my* evaluation of S's claim as 'true' can go beyond S's accuracy.

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[16] It is quite unclear, by the way, what it could mean in an empiricist setting to quantify over space-time-points, if we do not want to stay in a purely mathematical structure. Any reference to a real 'place' in the world always already presupposes some (possible) observer, moved bodies and clocks.

Moreover, my undertaking the claim is always a new (speech) act. Of course, my acknowledgment (and, for that matter, any 'scorekeeping' in Brandom's sense) can also be false or erroneous: it can be inaccurate even in cases of subjective sincerity, for example when I do not control my own reasons critically enough. All in all, 'objective' truth turns, at least in many cases, into a merely *regulative idea* which stand in a certain relation to more 'civil' normative conditions of *sufficient reliability of what we say* – which we try to fulfil as speakers, hopefully with sufficient accuracy. Its result is, in turn, evaluated by others.[17]

4. Reality as evaluated Possibility

Only humans have access to possibilities. To be human even means to have the faculty of thinking, i.e. to have access to non-present possibilities. The title-sentence

"reality is a possibility"

says, accordingly, that we should distinguish between what is merely actually sensed or per-ceived (here and now) by singular individuals, such that it can be a reliable or a deceptive appearance of what there really is, on the one hand, and what can count as (objectively, hence at least trans-subjectively) real ("*wirklich*") on the other. We never perceive what is real without modal, hence conceptual, mediation. That is, we never have access to objective reality by mere sensation (*Empfindung*) or sense-perception, not even to the realities of our own bodily existence. This does not mean, however, that the actuality of, say, my headaches is questioned. Nor does it mean that we do not perceive with sufficient certainty that there is, for example, a chair in front of us. The only point is this: Talking about an objective thing like a chair already presupposes that we can expect that some possible things can be done with the object, e.g. that we can sit on it – which we cannot do if it is only a painted chair. Access to reality thus always requires a differentiation between *mere* or '*seeming*' appearances and how some specific reality *shows itself*, as we are inclined to say. This very fact gives the considerations of Hegel *Logic of Essence* its importance and depth.

All this can be nicely shown at concrete cases, as, for example, when we look at a hilarious French mock-documentary on Stanley Kubrick and the race to the moon. In this film, Alexander Haig, Henry Kissinger, Donald Rumsfeld, some real CIA-grands and the widow of Kubrick tell the story that the 'scenes' that show Neil Armstrong's first steps on the moon were filmed by Kubrick in a studio on earth – in order to get some appropriate propaganda

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[17] There is no access to non-present possibilities (*dunameis*) other than by 'thinking'. This means that the under-standing of possibilities already presupposes conceptual competence, i.e. the competence to produce or understand verbal or pictorial re-presentations of what is not here or does not exist now but could be here or can exist there and then. This observation leads from the *Logic of Essence* to the *Logic of the Notion.* We can understand the argumentative steps in Hegel's Logic therefore in this way: We do not know what we talk about on the level of *Being* if we do not already use the categories made explicit in the *Logic of Essence*. And we cannot understand these categories if we do not already master the inferential and dialogical structures that define the conceptual or semantic content of our speech acts and sentences.

material for TV. Obviously, we have to evaluate at least the following three possibilities: what was shown in TV was the real thing (1), what was shown in TV was produced in a studio but the crew was *really* on the moon (2), or the whole business was a hoax (3). In such an evaluation, we (should) accept something as 'real' ('*wirklich*') if, but only if, we have 'sufficient reasons' or '*satisfying grounds*' for declaring that the possibility expressed in a judgment is no *mere* possibility but, as we say, *reality*. In fact we say that something is *really* so and so, when we undertake such a reality claim and deny that it is a mere possibility. Hegel's most notorious phrase articulates precisely this fact:

"what is real is reasonable and what is reasonable is real".

The formula does not only mean, as Hegel himself sometimes says, that what is reasonable eventually comes (or, even more defensively: 'should come') into being. It rather says some-thing about the logical status of reality claims. The basic insight is that reality claims are (almost) *never* immediate, that is, that we (almost) *never* 'immediately see' or 'sense' or 'perceive' *what is real*. This is so because what we count as real is (almost) never inde-pendent from sentences or propositions with *trans-personal inferential impact and truth con-ditions* that are constituted in such a way that they *systematically surpass the domain in which we can evaluate truth merely subjectively by 'mere perception' or 'mere intuition'*. This logical fact and nothing else is the reason why any non-tautological empirical truth is fallible. In other words, we always *have to judge if a possibility-judgment can be viewed as telling us what really exists*.

This is the reason why Hegel can also claim that he has 'neutralised' scepticism by incorporating the problems that it articulates.[18] He thus refutes transcendent dogmatism or 'rationalism' as well as transcendent scepticism or the subjectivism in Humean 'empiricism': The traditionally transcendent diagnosis and the traditional solutions are misleading because they do not see that the alleged 'transcendence' of the truth conditions of informative pro-positions about the world is nothing but a consequence of the fact that there is *no* subjective perspective of a singular person that could provide her with the possibility of *establishing the truth of an informative empirical claim without any possible doubt*.

This does not mean that no-one knows anything for sure. It rather means that the *quest for subjective certainty* is not relevant for 'civil' knowledge in the sense of playing the game of giving responsible information about the world as accurate as possible and of assessing such informative acts in a control games of asking for and giving reasons. Almost no such reason will be 'absolutely' sufficient in the sense that there can be no further doubt. On the

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[18] Hegel uses the phrase "sublation" or *Aufhebung* for such a logical analysis and speaks of a self-refutation or self-consummation of scepticism in this context.

other hand, there is a truth in Cartesian self-consciousness. It consists in the 'absolute' fact that any judgment is my or your judgment, the judgment of hopefully responsible persons.[19]

Now we can look back on Hegel's progress: The *Logic of Being* had been a deconstructive logical analysis of the naïve, naturalistic, point of view. It has shown that there is no 'immediate' talk about things and objects without presupposed norms and rules for what it means to make responsible claims or informative statements about them. Such statements are *prima facie* only possibly true. Insofar, we can understand the *Logic of Being*, all in all, as a destruction of any *transcendent Platonism*. We find such Platonism not only in theology and transcendent ('rationalistic') psychology, but also in scientism, i.e. in materialism and naturalism. The problem of Platonism is its '*reification*' (*Verdinglichung*) of logical forms or of linguistic representations and explanations (of things and processes). Most prominent are reifications of causality and our talk about forces (1), but also of abstract objects like numbers (2), of abstract truths like mathematical truths (3), of mere possibilities as in any not merely formal theory of possible worlds (4), of theoretical entities like alleged rules wired in the brain as a computing machine in cognitive biology (5), and of institutional forms of actions and practices in economics (6).

4. Identities in the category of Essence

The *Logic of Essence* is the enterprise of not avoiding, but analysing, the question how we explain appearances as appearances of some underlying reality. Therefore, it is clear that the following categories or modes of speech fall under the title of "Essence": Ground (*Grund*) and Appearance (*Erscheinung*) on the surface of perception and *Anschauung*, Reality (*Wirklichkeit*) and Contingency or accidental Actuality (Kant's '*realitas phaenomenon*'), *Possibility* and *Necessity*, *Cause* and *Effect*. All these categories, or modes of speaking, are used when we distinguish between how something *seems to be* and how it (allegedly really) *is* – or when we *explain* things or events in empirical actuality by their 'real causes'. With respect to the objects we talk about in such explanations the crucial questions concern their *Existence* and *Identity*.

A most important thing to notice is that *Identity* in the logical context of explaining appearances by reality is different from abstract identity and formal existence in the sense of using the '*mathematical*' identity sign "=". Moreover, *Existence* on this level is usually not fully expressible by the '*logical*' sign "$\exists x A(x)$".[20] This is so because the question if something

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[19] The quest for subjective certainty holds philosophical epistemology still in its grip and results in a wrong alternative between dogmatic belief-philosophy and scepticism which is, in the end, also mere – solipsism.

[20] Existential quantification of this sort already presupposes the constitution of an (abstract) realm of discourse. Such a domain G can only be given by telling us how to interpret the variables by turning them into (perhaps context- and situation dependent) G-'namings'. Such G-namings are not just names as configurational elements of a syntactically defined system of expressions but performative acts that fulfil conditions that allow us to view

exists includes the question if, what we talk about, is already situated in the proper domain of discourse.

What is the logical form, now, in which we talk about the *identity* of a thing, or the *existence* of a bodily object? And how do we explain the different, and changing, *properties* of an 'empirical' object?

The importance of the category of identity for this question (in the *Logic of Essence*) gets clear when we realise, first, that the trivial formulas a=a on the meta-level of signs or names and the corresponding formula 'everything is identical with itself' on the object-level of our talk about 'entities' of any sort whatsoever will never help us to understand what the identity of an object, thing or entity is. In order to understand this obvious but most crucial fact, we must realise that any interesting identity statement dialectically starts with *different* things, different names or different representations that are, for example, judged as 'referring to the same object'. Hegel has been the first logician in history to see that such a reference pre-supposes the constitution of a whole domain or 'realm' of objects. But he could see this only after Kant had provided the ground for it.

Such a constitution always depends on a whole system of still relevant differentiations or predicates and a corresponding system of domain-specifically irrelevant differences. The ir-relevant differences are called identities. Any identity or, on the level of expression, equality, therefore is, strange as it may sound, an irrelevant difference. Any inequality is a domain-specifically relevant difference.

Hegel had developed this insight already in his constitutional analysis of abstract objects like natural numbers and other pure magnitudes in the first part of his Logic, the logic of purely formal being: An expression like 5/6 'is', 'as a ratio', different from 10/12, but identical 'as a rational number'. Of course, today we would use quotation signs more extensively and say that "5/6" is a name-like expression of the same rational number as "10/12", but the two expressions do not refer to the same ratio. However, contemporary philosophy is a little too proud of this way of reflecting on the difference between sign and referent, use and quotation. This is the very reason why it overlooks the fact that in a constitutional analysis or, what comes up to the same 'speculative logic', we are not allowed yet to assume that we understand what the objects or object-level domains, in our example: the ratios and rational numbers, are. Our conceptual practice of making a difference between essential and inessential differences *constitutes* these 'entities' in their 'realms' or 'domains'.[21]

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the a representations of some G-'entity' (in the proper domain G). The proto-type case it turning a variable for natural resp. real numbers into a numeral resp. some determinate characterization of a real number.

[21] However, any decent mathematician already has practically known how 'abstraction' as a method of constituting new objects and predicates works – after Eudoxos has developed his astounding proportion theory, as it is nicely represented in Euclid's 5th book. This shows that we do not have to wait for Frege in order to know

The category of constitution of identities (in any object-level domain) belongs to the Logic of Essence, which is, as we can seen now, also the analysis of how to distinguish between essential and inessential differentiations or properties, including all kinds of differentiating relations and processes.[22]

As a result, 'Essence' is no 'ontic' or 'ontological', but a *logical category*. It is narrowly connected with the logical form of expressing the thought that something, some N, really or essentially in and for itself is a P or has, as such, the essential or generic property P – in contradiction to merely apparent properties, to seeming truth and, in the end, to merely contingent or accidental propositions. With respect to identity, we must also distinguish between superficial similarities and essential or relevant equality. Moreover, all judgments about necessities, hence possibilities, belong to the Logic of Essence in virtue of their form. This is so because the Logic of Essence has as its theme *reflective judgments.* These are judgments of modal evaluation in which we distinguish the status of a judgment as essential, insofar somehow necessary, or as accidental and empirical.

A judgment as such always expresses a mere possibility. A mere possibility, in turn, is, in a first analysis, nothing but the content of an arbitrary judgment which can be true or false, essentially right or essentially unreliable, contingently correct or empirically wrong. In precisely this sense Hegel says, as a kind of mnemotechnic oracle, that any mere possibility is, as such, also impossible. It means that 'mere propositions' p, especially those by which we 'want' to say something about the real world, have, as such, still the following status: it is still open to examine and to decide whether p or non-p is true or whether p or non-p is at least possible, impossible, or necessary.[23]

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practically what it means to turn an equivalence relation within an already well-established domain of discourse into an identity. It means that for the 'new' domain G of objects g a system S of new 'object level' properties or 'distinctions' A(x) is defined such that no property in S 'is finer' than G-equality. Another verbal expression for the same fact is the 'relativised' principle of Leibniz: if g=g' holds for a well-established object-level domain G and if A(x) is a relevant G-predicate defined for the G-objects g, then we can infer A(g) from A(g') and g=g' and A(g') from A(g) and g=g'. This is no 'ontic' claim but a logical principle for any well-constituted domain G of objects and properties.

[22] If we say that a property A(x) applies to g, we already presuppose object-level talk. If g and g' are identical, it sounds strange to say that the property applies to g' 'because it applies to g': Using two signs here suggests that we somehow talk about different things. And in fact we do, as Wittgenstein will later realise in his *Tractatus* as well, namely 'about' *different signs*. If we wanted to avoid the *obvious paradoxes* of such talk about identity as a kind of 'relation', we are forced to use *only one name for one object*. But this is no good idea. It corresponds to pre-Eudoxian proportion theory, where the identity of a certain expression is defined by the identity of its logos, which is a sequence of multiplicities that appear as the result of applying Euclid's algorithm in the search for the greatest common denominator in a 'ratio' A:B. Hegel's dialectical logic or logical dialectics understands these things much better than 'tractarian' logics: There is no entity without the constitution of an appropriate identity and no identity without a differentiation between essential and inessential differentiations or predicative distinctions.

[23] To say that everything is possible means that any semantically well formed sentence or proposition p must articulate a (generic) possibility. It must be of a form that we already can evaluate the 'possible truth' of p: We must know what *would* be the case if p were true. Or rather, we must know at least something about what could follow from p and what could be an argument for p. When Hegel says that everything is also impossible, he produces a rather unhappy expression for the fact that every world-related informative judgment can also be

A result is that we must distinguish between many different meanings of the word "possible". 'Mere' possibility just means that the sentence expressing it is meaningful. And this means that it is worthwhile to consider which performative mode we should adopt with respect to it or what kind of formal truth or untruth it may express. It can express, for example, a conceptual impossibility, a generic necessity or an empirical contingency.[24]

Hegel's next observation is that a proof of formal inner non-contradiction of a sentence or proposition p does not show much about possibility at all. It certainly is formally non-contradictory that no more that 17 angels can take place on a needle pin or that there are entities that can travel into the past. But it is nevertheless absolutely irrational to count in any way on such 'possibilities' or to debate about them.

6. Ground, Cause and Effect as categorical concepts

What do we do when we talk about generic 'grounds' and 'causes' of what actually happens or seems to happen? What is a ground for an appearance? How does such a ground relate to the practice of giving and asking for reasons? And how do we distinguish between causes and other grounds?

Causes are special grounds. Grounds are reasons to believe or to do something. If we give a ground for a fact, for example for the claim that Peter has murdered Paul, we evaluate the possibility that Peter has murdered Paul by explaining the death of Paul on the ground of what Peter has done to him. The obvious actual 'appearance' of Paul's death is in such a way 'explained' by reference to its 'cause', which is and must be, as such, an actualization of a generic cause and ground. If Paul just dies by sheer accident because Paul touches him (perhaps by a heart attack), Peter has not murdered him. But if we can repeatedly observe and produce a situation S which has always or in a stable frequency of cases S* as its consequence, and if S* is the death of the person involved and S is what Peter does to Paul, then Peter is a murderer.

To be a murderer is, as such, obviously no 'transcendent' fact, even though it is often difficult to *know* if our generic conditions really are fulfilled. In this sense, the category of 'ground' goes far beyond the category of describing appearances.

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false. Together the two sentences may also express something similar as Wittgenstein's sense-criterion for meaningful empirical propositions: They should neither be tautologies nor contradictions.

[24] On the level of the Logic of Being, Hegel deals only with noun phrases naming quantities and verb phrases expressing qualities or properties. As a result, the modal forms in which we reflect on the status of a proposition as true or false, as empirically true or generically true, as an expression of a mere possibility or as an expression of a scientific necessity are not yet in focus. On the other hand, any meaningful sentence S expresses as such a 'possibility'. For example, the last sentence of Fermat articulates in an a priori way a 'mathematical possibility'. For a long time we did not know if it is true or not. After we, i.e. the mathematical community, learned that the last theorem of Fermat is really true, the denial is shown as mathematically impossible. Before the proof, we had to count with each of the two possibilities.

The same holds in cases when we explain a certain effect by its causes and invest some generic knowledge about 'forces', for example gravitational forces. We then say that the mass of the sun and its gravitation is the causal ground for the fact that the planets keep their pace and do not fly off out of the solar system, as they would do if they would move 'inertially', without the gravitational force that we attach to the (mass of the) sun. Hegel realises that the talk about forces as in gravitation is always embedded into a holistic system of default movements and default explanations of more particular, though still general or generic, deviations (like 'accelerations'). The grounds or explanations always depend heavily on the ideal default case which is posited as the case of 'normal' movement. When, for example, Aristotle declares that the default movement of every thing is the striving to get its place of inertial rest, we only have to explain why something like an apple on a tree does *not* fall to the ground as long as the stem is strong enough to hold it. If the apple falls to the ground, nothing further is to be explained. This is so because the apple has, according to the generic setting of traditional physics, as its natural disposition to fall to the ground. In other words, what seems to be a 'teleological' explanation of the falling of the apple is, in fact, a 'causal' explanation in a certain setting of default movements. In its form, it is not really different from the ballistic explanation why a bullet or ball or planet flies as it flies. The only, even though crucial, difference is the new choice of the 'inertial place of rest', which is, in Newtonian physics, any non-accelerated straight line in space-time.[25] In other words, the 'forces' by which we 'explain causally' the actually observed 'accelerated' movements of balls and bullets, rockets and planets, depend on the *posited* default movements and additionally added *generic dispositions* that are somehow imposed on the relevant bodies. It is a kind of 'grand generic fact' that, when we abstract from friction and other forces, the 'quantity' of the force of gravitation in its effect on a sufficiently 'small' body (in terms of mass) is more or less only dependent on the mass of the 'large' body. Therefore, gravitational force can very effectively be mathematically correlated to the mass of 'the' relevant body, the sun for the planets or the earth for flying balls and rockets.

All in all, we arrive at a very powerful explanatory system in which we posit 'causal grounds' by which we can 'causally explain' repeatedly observed and observable movements of planets and in 'sublunar' ballistics. In precisely this sense, giving reasons and explaining events by causes must be seen as a complex practice.

Counterfactual possibilities or modally robust counterfactuals always depend on such grounds. Without keeping such a ground fixed it would not make sense to claim something like the following: if this would happen, then that would happen. The truth of any such claim, its reliability, is always determined by the so called '*Laws of Nature*'. But these laws are always posited as laws by us. Only as such they can function as generic grounds for explain-

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[25] At first, this space-time was considered to be Euclidean in its mathematical structure.

ing (possible or actual) singular events as caused by (or causal consequences of) other events, which then are addressed as possible or actual 'causes' of the caused 'effects'.

7. Actual Appearance and Reality (Wirklichkeit)

In modern European languages, we have some difficulties to express some of the most important philosophical distinctions of the Latin and Greek tradition without confusions. The reasons are new inferential connotations attached to "actuality" in contradistinction to "*actualitas*" and even more so to "*energeia*". The German translation is '*Wirklichkeit*', which has, as such, the correct inferential ring, if we think of an actualised generic 'work', '*ergon*' or 'act' and the 'energetic process' in which a generic type shows itself in its 'real' appearance. However, in today's use of the word, "reality" is a better translation of '*energeia*' and '*Wirklichkeit*' than "actuality", at least if we want to keep the idea of a mere 'accidental empirical fact' out of the scope of what is real. Under the word actuality, we gather contingent and accidental events as well as what seems to you or me as a merely subjective appearance without objective or object-related reality. The word "objectivity" is not helpful, as it were, since it stands in a misleading contrast to subjectivity and has, because of that, ironically a subjecttive connotation as a mere attitude of the subject to what the subject believes to be real. It would, for example, be utter nonsense if Hegel had said

"what is actual is reasonable"

or

"what is reasonable is already actual."

As a remark about the inferential and evaluative roles of the words "real" and "reasonable", however, it points at least into the right direction if one says that the words "real" and "reality" belong, like "reasonable" and "reason" to the expressions in which we make reflective and meta-level evaluations of object-level judgments explicit – such that both words belong to the *Logic of Essence*. Moreover, they play a complementary role just as "identity" and "equality": We use "identity" when we talk on the object-level for exactly the same 'facts' as we use the word "being equal" on the reflective level. In the same vein, we use "real" in evaluations of object-level judgments just as we use "reasonable" in evaluations of corresponding object-level judgments. But equality precedes identity logically and methodologically. In the same sense, reason precedes reality. This is no transcendent idealistic thesis but a logical truth with respect to the very constitution of any identity or reality. It is a conceptual or a priori truth. Not to accept this fact is not a matter of opinion but a betrayal of ignorance.

8. Possibility and Necessity

There is no really individuated possibility. The only access we have to 'real' possibilities is via *generic descriptions*. That is, we can only 'describe' or 'represent' possibilities by sets of

general statements. This sounds wrong. For, we might assume that a description like "the same world as this one with the only exception that I am over there instead of here" makes clear sense. But such a description obviously does not identify a singular world. There are innumerably many possibilities how I could be over there instead of here; and there are innumerably many things that must be different from this world if I should be over there and not here. In short, it is unclear what philosophical authors talk about when they talk about singular, 'individual', possible worlds. The same holds, in the end, when they want to 'quantify' about them as we can quantify about numbers or sets.

Talking about possibilities is talking about possible 'generic moments' in actuality. Possibilities do not exist outside our reflections on them – just as the Greek Gods exist only as objects of our talk. Like these gods, possibilities are no subjects. They do not 'do' anything.

That this is the correct reading can be seen if we compare the oracular sentences explained with the following title sentences in Hegel's *Logic of the Notion*:

Everything is notion. Everything is syllogism.

Hegel obviously wants to say that we cannot refer to anything by words or images, deixis or otherwise, if we do not presuppose a corresponding system of generic differentiations and corresponding *generic* inferences on the level of essences that already count as *conceptual* even though they are 'material' default inferences.

Hegel's seemingly strange 'claim' that the notion is subject, not object, just means now that when we think and argue, speak and understand, we do not talk *about* concepts or notions but *use* them in a certain way.

In precisely this sense, 'the Idea' of a whole reasonable development of our systems of generic knowledge, which amounts to the same as a development of 'the Notion', i.e. the system of generic distinctions and inferences, is not a mere *dunamis* or utopian possibility but *energeia*, a really ongoing process at which we all take part if we care for knowledge and science.

Actual thinking is using 'the Notion', i.e. 'the' system of generic differentiations and inferences that makes rational or reasonable thinking possible – and 'defines' in a normative way what it means that an individual person actualises thought in the right way or not, i.e. thinks correctly or reasonably or not. Here, Hegel distinguishes in an interesting way three main types of syllogisms or inferential moves: qualitative subsumption (1; §183), reflective inference (or judgment) (2; § 190) and the "syllogism of necessity" (3; § 191).

I have tried to show here that and why 'necessity' is not just 'truth in all possible worlds'. Necessity is defined by universally reliable conceptual truths. Necessity defines the domain

of what has to be still reasonably accepted as possible, as an empirically meaningful, possibly informative or even true proposition. Generic necessity encodes the system of semantic inferences that we presuppose in any understanding of the content of an assertion. The content is its inferential power defined by conceptual necessity.

In other words, when we develop science, we develop the system of conceptual knowledge, the 'material' system of 'necessary inference' on the level of essences '*an sich*'. Merely singular, 'empirical' statements about, say, *this thing here and now* or about *that thing over there* – as they just appear to me or you – do not belong to science or *theoria* but to mere *historia*. Insofar, no scientific truth is 'empirical' in the Humean sense of being grounded on mere 'sense-experience'. Rather, we *posit* generic truths and conceptual inferences. We do this with the following leading idea in the background, even in cases when we do not fulfil the condition well enough: We select or develop '*the best possible*' system of *generic differentiations* and (hopefully generically reliable) default inferences. And we do this in such a way as to always leave space for 'empirical' possibilities and contingencies on the one side, good judgment on the other. Such judgment is always an additional necessary condition *for applying the generic laws of science*. No such application is schematic. Therefore, it is not just governed by schematic quantificational logic as we can use it only inside purely mathematical domains G.

All this means that it would be wrong to assume that there could be a system of necessary truths such that any singular empirical fact is already a necessary consequence of our system of conceptual or generic knowledge or truth. In other words, we *should* develop our system of conceptual truths in such a way that we leave, *with necessity*, space for free, contingent, possibilities, especially because it would be self-contradictory if we deliberately posited a system of 'laws' that deny that there are 'free' choices of deliberate actions, especially of speech acts. For, it is clear that our development of conceptual necessities is itself a result of free acts of proposal and acceptance, of making a law explicit and of controlling its 'generic truth' or 'reliability'.

As a result, we can and must be able to distinguish between which of the possibilities left open by our system of conceptual 'necessity' are merely contingently true or actualised, which are actualizations of generic grounds and which are not actual. In the domain of non-actualised possibilities we have to distinguish further between those which 'can really' happen in the sense that we better count with them when we plan our life and actions, and those which 'could' happen in principle and contingently but which we can nevertheless discard, as, for example, the possibility that the whole earth will be destroyed tomorrow. But how to distinguish here in detail goes far beyond the scope of this paper.

We can see now that Hegel defends the reality of the distinction between free actions and merely actual occurrences. Such occurrences can be contingent accidents or causally necessary effects of generically explained natural events. But any 'belief' in transcendent determinism or necessity does not correctly understand the modal concepts of possibility, necessity and actuality. It does not grasp the human-made difference between reality and appearance. Hence, any deterministic belief-philosophy of 'physicalist materialism' or 'biologist naturalism' with their contentions that there was, for any event, a hidden cause that produced the event with necessity according to some 'natural law', does not understand the real, free, constitution of any such laws and does not see that the development of our scientific knowledge enlarges, deepens or widens, the possibilities of free action and does not diminish it.