

Hegel and Analytic Philosophy

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ABSTRACT: This paper analyzes important elements in the reception of Hegel's philosophy in the present. In order to reach this goal we discuss how analytic philosophy receives Hegel's philosophy. For that purpose, we reconstruct the reception of analytic philosophy in the face of Hegel, especially from those authors who were central in this movement of reception and distance of his philosophy, namely, Bertrand Russell, Frege and Wittgenstein. Another central point of this paper is to review the book of Paul Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought*, in comparison with the reception of Hegel, developed here by analytic philosophy. Finally, we show how a dialogue can be productive of these apparently opposing currents.

KEYWORDS: Critique; Analytic philosophy; Hegel; Reception.

ARTICLE HISTORY: Received: 10-march-2019 | Accepted: 8-july-2019.

§1. Paul Redding's thoughtful and thought-provoking book *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought* is a paradigm of the sort of philosophy Hegel described as "its time, captured in thought." It is at once impressively and usefully learned, and philosophically insightful and suggestive. Redding's strategy is to tunnel from two directions. On the one hand, he has interesting things to say about what elements in the analytic tradition make it ripe for a Hegelian turn. On the other, he lays out some features of Hegel's views that are particularly amenable to appropriation by that tradition. I think one probably learns more from this book about Hegel than one does about analytic philosophy. But that does not keep Redding from putting himself in a position to draw some more general conclusions.



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ANALYSIS | Vol. 23, N° 2 (2019), pp. 1-20
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.3333049

ARTICULO

Redding is good on the origin myth that Bertrand Russell concocted, which locates the wellsprings of the analytic movement in a principled recoil from what the British Idealists made of Hegel. As Russell presents things, Hegel merely brings out explicitly what was all along implicit in the traditional subject-predicate term-logic: a thorough-going ontological holism. Redding quotes Russell from his 1914 *Our Knowledge of the External World*:

Now the traditional logic holds that every proposition ascribes a predicate to a subject, and from this it easily follows that there can be only one subject, the Absolute, for if there were two, the proposition that there were two would not ascribe a predicate to either.¹

It seems a bit much to object to traditional term-logic for not being atomistic enough.

After all, it is *relations* that it had the most trouble expressing. In any case, since traditional logicians were accustomed to treating, say, *being a twin* as a property, they would not have balked at *not being lonely* (in the sense of being the only subject). To be fair, when Russell was in full propaganda mode for the new logic he was quite capable of blaming subject-predicate logic for the oppression of women, famine in China, and the First World War. Be that as it may, Russell lines up the choice between the old logic, which he sees Hegel (or at least his followers, especially Bradley) as having brought to its logical metaphysical conclusion, and the new quantificational logic with the choice between ontological monism and pluralism: as he memorably put it, between seeing the universe as a bowl of jelly and seeing it as a bucket of shot.²

¹ London: Allen and Unwin, p. 48. Henceforth *APRHT*.

² [Some have suggested that the text is garbled on this point, and that the original referred not to ontological but to deep political, and perhaps ultimately affective differences between the sensibilities of Bradley (author of *My Station and Its Duties*) and Russell (author of *Why I Am Not a Christian*), one viewing the smug, placid, late-Victorian world as a bowl of jolly and the other as a bucket of shit.]

On such an understanding, semantic, logical, and metaphysical atomism is an, indeed *the*, essential, founding principle of analytic philosophy. Now I think, as Redding does, that Hegel *was*, indeed, a semantic, logical, and metaphysical holist. If that is right, then on the line that Russell was pushing, bringing Hegel back into the analytic conversation would require jettisoning its beating heart: first-order quantificational predicate logic. But I do *not* think that Hegel was driven to holism because the logic he and Kant inherited was a term-logic. If anything that fact made it more difficult for him to find coherent ways to express his holism. And Russell's atomistic insistence on starting with *objects*, and building up first *propositions* and then *inferential relations* among propositions follows the very same order of logical and semantic explanation that was enshrined in the traditional logic's progression from a basic doctrine of *concepts* (singular and general), to a doctrine of *judgments* (classified according to the kinds of classification or predication they involve, to a doctrine of *syllogisms* (classified according to the kinds of classifications their component judgments involve). In this regard, it was Russell who was the reactionary.

But the early analytic tradition did not speak with just this one, Russellian, voice. Redding reminds us that the first step on the holistic road to Hegel was taken already by Kant, who broke with the traditional order of semantic and logical explanation by insisting on the primacy of judgment. He understood particular and general representations, intuitions and concepts, only in terms of the functional role they played in judgment. (I think that is because judgments are the minimal units of *responsibility*, so that the primacy of judgment should be understood as an immediate consequence of the *normative turn* Kant had given philosophy of mind and semantics—but that is a story for another occasion.³) Frege took up this Kantian idea, in the form of his “context principle”: only in the context of a sentence do names have reference. Wittgenstein, early and late, sees sentences as playing some such distinguished role, first as the minimal unit of sense, and later as the minimal

³ Literally. I tell it in my Woodbridge lectures: *Animating Ideas of Idealism: A Semantic Sonata in Kant and Hegel*, is the first part of my *Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas*.

linguistic unit that can be used to make a move in a language-game. In other important figures, such as Carnap and C.I. Lewis, the empiricist-atomist current of thought, which had motivated Russell, coexisted and blended with serious neo-Kantian influences, even where those did not take the form of treating propositional contents as primary in the order of semantic explanation. Redding credits this Kant-Frege-Wittgenstein strand in analytic philosophy with opening up the space within which an eventual rapprochement with Hegel might take place.

I think he is right about that. But I also think that continuing the story beyond the early history of the analytic movement on which Redding focuses helps round out the story. For the Kantian promotion of judgment to pride of logico-semantic place is only the first step away from the atomism of the traditional order of explanation towards full Hegelian holism. Hegel didn't just start in the middle of the traditional order, with judgment rather than concept; he fully turned it on its head, not only understanding objects and concepts in terms of judgments, but understanding judgments in terms of their role in inference. And just as some philosophers who played central roles in the analytic tradition followed Kant, others took the further holist step down that road that Hegel had pioneered. Indeed, all these strands of thought were represented already in the classical American pragmatist tradition: not only the empiricist-atomist line (think of James's radical monism), but also the Kantian (Peirce) and even the Hegelian (Dewey, and Peirce as well). Quine, heir to both this tradition (via his teacher, C. I. Lewis, himself the student of James and the Hegelian Josiah Royce) and the logistical-analytic one, in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," took the minimal unit of meaning to be, not the proposition, but what he called "the whole theory": everything one believed, and all the inferential connections linking them to each other and to other believables. Davidson deepened and developed this thought, and explored its consequences for a number of topics of central concern to the analytic tradition. To those coming of philosophical age during this period, the influence of this line of thought could seem so pervasive that someone like Jerry Fodor could, with some justification, see his

reassertion of semantic atomism as swimming against the dominant tide of the times.

In this connection it is interesting to recall the considerations that impelled Quine to endorse this holist move. His slogan was “Meaning is what essence becomes, when it is detached from the thing, and attached to the word.” This dictum expresses the translation of ontological issues into a semantic key that was the hallmark of the linguistic turn. Quine rejected essences because he rejected as ultimately unintelligible everything expressed by the vocabulary of alethic modality. (In another fine phrase, he dismissed modal logic as at best “engendering an illusion of understanding.”) He did so on two grounds. First of all was the residual empiricism that remained even after he had rejected the “two dogmas of empiricism.” As far as modality went, he thought that “the Humean condition is the human condition.” Second was the fact that the new logic, in the post-Fregean, pre-Kripkean, Russellian stage of development that Quine perfected, did not have the expressive resources to deal semantically with modality. For these reasons, Quine had to reject the distinction between internal and external relations: those that are essential to the identity of a thing and those that are merely accidental to it. (In a Bradleyan example: the relation between the rungs and the rails of a ladder are internal to it, while its relation to the wall it is leaning against is external.) Since one of the empiricist dogmas Quine was rejecting was its semantic atomism, he could not follow Russell (and the *Tractatus*) in responding to his rejection of the distinction by, in effect, treating *all* relations as external. The result was his recoil to a thoroughgoing semantic holism, in which all their inferential relations are treated as constitutive of the meaning of sentences and (so) the terms and predicates they contain—as all being, in effect, internal relations. Attempting to evade what Whitehead called the “fallacy of lost contrast,” and in keeping with his Russellian logic, he construed those inferential relations extensionally, as not being modally robust, in the sense of counterfactual-supporting, but even so, semantic holism had been let loose in the land.

This development demonstrated a dynamic that I think is active in our own time, and that Russell and Moore had already warned against. For the fighting faith they crafted for the new analytic movement did not define its creed just by rejection of Hegel. They understood the idealist rot they fought against as having set in already with Kant. They suspected that one could not open the pearly gates of analytic respectability far enough to let Kant slip through, and then close them quickly enough to keep Hegel out. Both Quine's example and some of the contemporary developments Redding rehearses suggest they might turn out to have been right. In this connection I think it is instructive to recall just how recently it is that Kant has re-entered the analytic canon. Russell's and Moore's strictures by and large held until they were loosened in the late '60s by Strawson and Bennett's work on and use of Kant's theoretical philosophy, and Rawls's Kantian work in practical philosophy (especially his 1970 *Theory of Justice*). Since then we have had several academic generations of first-rate analytic work on Kant. And now, as day follows night, we see the first stirrings of what Redding calls "the return of Hegelian thought" in analytic circles. My guess is that Hegel is just too interesting a reader of Kant to be struck off the rolls of the readable once Kant himself has moved to center stage (elbowing empiricism into the wings). Wilfrid Sellars once said that he hoped that an effect of his work would be to begin to move analytic philosophy from its Humean to its Kantian phase. And Rorty has characterized my work, and that of John McDowell, as potentially helping to begin to move it from its incipient Kantian to its inevitable Hegelian phase. This is the development Redding is characterizing and assisting. (The Marxists always claimed that one should push what is falling.) Wittgenstein is an interesting case in point for such a transition. For if we think about the pride of place given to propositional content in the former, and the social theory of the normativity characteristic of intentionality in the latter, we can see the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* as a neo-kantian, without Kant's residual empiricism, and the Wittgenstein of the *Investigations* as a neo-hegelian, without Hegel's revived rationalism.

There is another Kantian, anti-empiricist, ultimately anti-atomistic theme running through recent analytic philosophy that Redding does not discuss. It, too, I think will eventually support a renewed appreciation of Hegelian ideas. This is the axial role *modality* should be understood to play in semantics, logic, and metaphysics. One of the driving motors of Kant's recoil from empiricism is his realization that the framework of empirical description—the commitments, practices, abilities, and procedures that form the necessary practical background within the horizon of which alone it is possible to engage in the cognitive theoretical activity of describing how things empirically are—essentially involves elements expressible in words that are *not* descriptions, that do *not* perform the function of describing how things are at the ground level. These include what is made explicit as statements of *laws*, using alethic modal concepts to relate the concepts applied in descriptions. As Sellars put the point:

It is only because the expressions in terms of which we describe objects, even such basic expressions as words for the perceptible characteristics of molar objects, locate these objects in a space of implications, that they describe at all, rather than merely label.⁴

And the implications that articulate that “space of reasons” are modally robust, counterfactual-supporting ones. It was appreciation of this Kantian point that led the American neo-Kantian C.I. Lewis to apply the methods of the new logic to develop *modal* logics (indeed, he did so essentially contemporaneously with *Principia Mathematica*). Sellars draws the conclusion, which Quine had not, that the “whole theories” that Quine saw as the minimal “unit of meaning” were theories that included *laws*. He summed this lesson up in the title of one of his less readable essays “Concepts as Involving Laws, and Inconceivable without Them.”⁵

⁴ Pp. 306-307 (§107) in: Wilfrid Sellars: “Counterfactuals, Dispositions, and Causal Modalities” In *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Volume II: Concepts, Theories, and the Mind-Body Problem*, ed. Herbert Feigl, Michael Scriven, and Grover Maxwell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), p.225-308.

⁵ Sellars, W. (1948) “Concepts as Involving Laws, and Inconceivable Without Them.”

A holism that emphasizes the semantogenic character of alethic modal relations of necessitation and preclusion brings us much closer to Hegel than even Quine had gotten. For at the center of Hegel's innovations is a non-psychological conception of the conceptual, according to which to be a *modal* realist about the objective world (the world as it is independent of its relation to any activities or processes of thinking) is thereby to be a *conceptual* realist about it. On this way of thinking about the conceptual, to take it that there really are laws of nature, that it is objectively *necessary* that pure copper melt at 1084° C., and *impossible* for a mass to be accelerated without being subjected to some force, is to see that objective world as already in conceptual shape, and hence graspable as such. For Hegel understands what is conceptual as whatever stands in relations of what he calls "determinate negation" and "mediation"—by which he means material incompatibility and material consequence. For there to be some determinate way the world is just is for it to be articulated into states of affairs—objects possessing properties and standing in relations—that include and exclude each other in modally robust ways. Grasping those conceptual structures in thought is conforming one's practice of amplifying and criticizing one's commitments to those objective relations: embracing the inferential consequences of the commitments one acknowledges, and rejecting commitments that are incompatible with them.

The same sort of consideration that convinces us that we will not succeed in building up an understanding of facts and states of affairs (stables, claimables, judgeables) from one of objects (and properties and relations thought of as a kind of thing), but must rather seek to understand objects and properties and relations in terms of the contribution they make to facts and states of affairs, should be deployed as well to convince us that facts and states of affairs cannot be made intelligible except in the light of the modally robust, counterfactual-supporting ("lawlike") material consequential and incompatibility relations they stand in to one another and which articulate their propositional contents. To take that step is to embark on one path that leads from Kant to Hegel. For it is to move from the order of semantic and

ontological explanation that takes *judgment*, the understanding, as primary, to embrace the metaconception that takes *inference*, reason as primary. In Hegel's adaptation of Kant's terminology, that is to move from the framework of *Verstand* to that of *Vernunft*.⁶

The modal revolution that has taken place in analytic philosophy in the last half-century amounts to a decisive repudiation of the hostility to modality that resulted from the unfortunate consonance on this point of both of the intellectual inspirations of logical empiricism. I take it to have developed through three phases so far: Kripke's seminal development of possible worlds semantics for the whole range of C.I. Lewis's modal logics, the employment of that apparatus to provide intensional semantics for a host of non-logical expressions, and the sequelae of Kripke's treatment of proper names in "Naming and Necessity." The last of these, deepened and extended to apply to other sorts of expressions such as natural kind terms, indexicals, and demonstratives, has been associated with the severing of physical-causal and conceptual modalities from metaphysical ones, and the pursuit of semantics in terms of the latter rather than the former. That is, it has carried with it the rejection of the association of modality and conceptual articulation that both Quine and Sellars had taken for granted (the former as a reason to do without both, the latter in embracing them). But that rejection is crucially predicated on a *psychological* conception of the conceptual: one that understands concepts in the first instance in terms of our grip on them, rather than, as Kant had taught, in terms of their normative bindingness on us. We have yet to achieve a reconciliation and synthesis of the Kripke-Kaplan-Stalnaker-Lewis (David) approach to modality with the Kant-Hegel-Sellars one—but perhaps someday we shall.⁷

⁶ Cf. *APRHT* p. 137.

⁷ I take some initial steps towards one way of doing this in the last three chapters of *Between Saying and Doing*. Although the point is not developed there, as Jaroslav Peregrin has shown, the incompatibility semantics that is introduced there can in large part be translated into possible world semantics, by trading minimal incoherent sets of sentences for maximal coherent ones.

§2. One of Redding's aims in this book is to emphasize the importance not only of Kant's, but of Aristotle's influence on Hegel. In this connection, he can celebrate McDowell's approach. He does so in two fine chapters on Aristotle, Hegel, and McDowell on phronesis and the "dynamics of evaluative reason." I won't say anything in detail about this discussion, keeping my focus here (and not only here) rather on theoretical semantic, logical, and metaphysical issues than on those arising in practical philosophy. A principal manifestation of his concern to follow Hegel in keeping Aristotle in view is that a thread running throughout Redding's book concerns the significance of Hegel's working within the ultimately Aristotelian tradition of *term* logic, rather than the modern context he calls (somewhat misleadingly) "propositional logic." In my remarks so far, I have concentrated on the perspective on Hegel and analytic philosophy that results when one regards them from the point of view of the tension between Hegel's holism and Russell's atomism and nominalism. (Nominalism is what atomism becomes, when it is detached from the world and attached to the word.) But Redding thinks that some of the lessons I extract from my reading of Hegel are distorted by being situated in the framework of twentieth century logical categories, rather than the traditional term-logical categories Hegel adapts to his distinctive expressive purposes.

Redding is certainly right to remind us to be vigilant about implicit hermeneutic assumptions that might stem from forgetting about the very different logical setting Hegel was working in in the first third of the nineteenth century. He is surely also right, as was already pointed out, that this difference mattered a great deal to the terms in which Russell (especially) drew the bright border line (which he exhorted us to defend) between Hegelian thought (even, and perhaps especially, in its late nineteenth century Bradleyan form) and the nascent analytic movement in philosophy. For the term "analytic philosophy" has, among its many senses, a narrow one in which its characteristic core commitment is to working out how the "new logic" that triggered the movement at the dawn of the twentieth century opens up new approaches to central concepts, issues, and accounts of traditional philosophical concern. This project and its master idea tie together

Frege, Russell, Carnap, the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, Ramsey, Ayer, and C.I. Lewis, in the first half of the century, and such figures as Quine, Sellars, Davidson, Hempel, Putnam, Dummett, Geach and David Lewis in the second half. This narrow characterization would not, I think, count in even Moore, nor the later Wittgenstein. Peirce would be included, but not James or Dewey. This restrictive criterion of demarcation would validate common usage by excluding Heidegger, Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty, not to mention Rorty. But it would diverge from that usage in excluding also such figures as Rawls, Nagel, Searle, Stroud, and Fodor—though not Strawson, Kaplan, Burge, Stalnaker, and Friedman. I have signed on to this expedition (explicitly in *Between Saying and Doing*, and implicitly in *Making It Explicit*), but McDowell (in *Mind and World*) is not even a fellow-traveler. It is, then, a *very* narrow criterion.

But is Redding right to see the difference between Hegel's term logic and our logic as engendering a substantial tension at the heart of the project of integrating Hegel's ideas into the analytic conversation? I do not think so. A principal test case, to which he devotes the penultimate chapter of the book, concerns negation and contradiction. The master-concept of Hegel's logic, semantics, and metaphysics is *determinate negation*.⁸ It is modal concept. We have to understand it (we are told in the *Perception* chapter of the *Phenomenology*) in terms of the difference between two kinds of difference: *mere* or indifferent [gleichgültige] difference and *exclusive* [ausschließende] difference. **Square** and **red** are *different* properties in the first sense, while

⁸ *Mediation* is also a key concept, but is clearly subordinated to *determinate negation*. 'Mediation' is a matter of standing in *inferential* relations. Indeed, the term itself derives from the role the middle term in a syllogism performs in licensing the move from major and minor premises to the conclusion in a syllogism. It is also clear, I think, that the inferential relations Hegel has in mind are thought of as modally robust inferences of the sort that would be expressed by counterfactual conditionals. Although Hegel nowhere makes this point, I think the connection is secured by the fact that such inferences can be defined in terms of material incompatibilities (determinate negations). For p entails q (Pa entails Qa) in a modally strong sense in case everything incompatible with q is incompatible with p . Thus "Pedro is a donkey" entails "Pedro is a mammal", because everything incompatible with being a mammal is incompatible with being a donkey (but not *vice versa*).

square and **circular** are different in the modally oomphier second sense: they are *incompatible*. It is *impossible* (an alethic modal matter) for one and the same plane figure to exhibit both. We can say that **circular** is a (not ‘the’) determinate negation of **square**. *Determinate* negation is to be distinguished not only from mere (compatible) difference, but also from what Hegel calls ‘*formal*’ or ‘*abstract*’ negation: **not-square**. As Redding notes, determinate negations are Aristotelian *contraries*, while formal negations are Aristotelian *contradictories*.

On this point, Redding says that

Hegel’s meaning is masked if one approaches his logical claims exclusively from a fundamentally propositionally-based approach to logic, and ignores the irreducible role Hegel attributes to aspects of Aristotelian *term* logic.⁹

The key point seems to be that

Term negation produces the *contrary* of the term negated, while *denying* rather than affirming a predicate of a subject produces a sentence that is *contradictory* to the affirmation.¹⁰

That is true, but it does not follow that term logic has some inherent advantage in expressing determinate, rather than formal, negations. After all, we can use classical formal negation to form the contradictories of predicates, too, as we did with **not-square** above. The important move is from *formal inconsistency* to *material incompatibility*. On the side of inference, this is the move to what Sellars calls “material” inferences: those underwritten by the content of the *non*-logical concepts they essentially involve. These are inferences such as “It is raining, so the streets will be wet,” or “Pittsburgh is to the West of Philadelphia, so Philadelphia is to the East of Pittsburgh.”

⁹ *APRHT* p. 204.

¹⁰ *APRHT* p. 207.

Material incompatibilities and consequences can be considered either for predicates (properties) or for sentences (states of affairs). The difference of logical categorial focus is orthogonal to the distinction between material incompatibility and formal inconsistency. So I do not see that the centrality of the concept of *determinate negation* to Hegel's enterprise gives us any reason to think that Hegel's meaning will be "masked" if we don't follow him in setting his claims in the framework of a term logic.

To be fair, Redding seems to concede some of this:

While Brandom's inferentialist reading of Hegel tends to work from within a uniformly *Fregean* approach to logic, there seems nothing substantial about his position that would not allow the considerations that have been appealed to here from being assimilated within the inferentialist project.¹¹

But then there is the bit where he takes it back. The passage continues:

Nevertheless, it would seem that from a strictly Hegelian position, Brandom's naturalistic *metaposition* would be regarded as working at the level of 'the Understanding' rather than 'Reason'.

I do not see that this characterization is warranted. What stands behind it, I think, is two claims. First, Fregean approaches to logic are Kantian in giving pride of logico-semantic categorial place to the level of *judgment*. That is characteristic of the Understanding (in both Kant's and Hegel's usages). Second, the Hegelian metaconceptual framework of Reason is articulated by *material* incompatibility and consequence relations. But Fregean logic concerns *formal* logical inconsistency and consequence. I accept those claims, more or less. But the conclusion that because I use Fregean apparatus I am not capturing what is distinctive of Hegel's framework of Vernunft does not follow from them. On the first point, I start with inference—and so, I would argue, does Frege, at least in his seminal *Begriffsschrift* of 1979. For there he

¹¹ *APRHT* p. 218.

introduces his topic, conceptual content [begrifflicher Inhalt] with the observation:

...there are two ways in which the content of two judgments may differ; it may, or it may not, be the case that all inferences that can be drawn from the first judgment when combined with certain other ones can always also be drawn from the second when combined with the same other judgments. The two propositions 'the Greeks defeated the Persians at Plataea' and 'the Persians were defeated by the Greeks at Plataea' differ in the former way; even if a slight difference of sense is discernible, the agreement in sense is preponderant. Now I call that part of the content that is the same in both the conceptual content. Only this has significance for our symbolic language [Begriffsschrift]... In my formalized language [BGS]...only that part of judgments which affects the possible inferences is taken into consideration. Whatever is needed for a correct ['richtig', usually misleadingly translated as 'valid'] inference is fully expressed; what is not needed is...not.¹²

Conceptual content is determined by inferential role. Further, since the point of introducing specifically *logical* vocabulary is for Frege to codify *antecedent* proprieties of inference that articulate the conceptual content of *non-logical* expressions, it is clear that the inferences he has in mind as articulating those contents is *material* inferences. At any rate, that is the understanding of Frege on the basis of which I am prepared to use some of his metaconceptual apparatus to explicate Hegel. This does not put Frege, or me, on the wrong (unHegelian) side of the fundamental Verstand/Vernunft divide.

Furthermore, there is an important dimension along which it seems to me that Frege's logic offers a decisive advance over the term-logic Hegel was obliged to take as his starting-point, precisely in regard to the holistic top-down order of semantic explanation characteristic of Vernunft. For Frege's function-and-argument analysis is exactly the *decompositional* tool one needs to implement an explanatory strategy that moves from inference, through judgment, to terms and concepts, reversing the traditional term-logical strategy. It is the method of noting invariance under substitution,

¹² Frege, *Begriffsschrift*, section 3.

developed already by Bolzano. In the version I elaborate in Chapter Six of *Making It Explicit*, one treats two sentences as expressing the content just in case substituting one for the other as premise or conclusion of inferences never turns a materially good inference into a materially bad one. One then treats two predicates (say) as expressing the same concept in case substituting one for another never changes the content of sentences containing them. The result is a categorial framework intermediate between, but much more intricately structured than either jelly or shot. If we are interested in developing and thinking through the consequences of a shift from an empiricist atomism-nominalism, first to judgement-based *Verstand* and then to inference-based *Vernunft*, Frege's logic gives us far better expressive tools to do so than does the traditional logic. And it is certainly capable of expressing predicate-negation as well as sentential negation. Indeed, once again, it is just what is wanted to clarify the differences and relations between them.¹³

One crucial touchstone for the assessment of any account of Hegel's notion of *determinate negation* is what sense one is able to make of his friendliness to contradictions. Redding spend a good bit of his chapter on this topic patiently pointing out many reasons not to understand Hegel as embracing a position of the kind that has been worked out in detail in contemporary dialethism. This is a useful, if unexciting, enterprise, which I suppose Redding felt obliged as an Australian to walk through. I would have been glad, however, for a discussion that penetrated closer to the heart of this issue. I would encapsulate it in four claims:

1. The formal law of noncontradiction, forbidding simultaneous commitment to p and its negation $\sim p$, is correct as far as it goes, but

¹³ Danielle Macbeth's pathbreaking *Frege's Logic* [Harvard University Press, 2005] argues persuasively that one of its principal expressive advantages is its capacity to express the *modal* relations among concepts that must be tacked on as embarrassing afterthoughts to the Russell-Carnap-Tarski-Quine version of the new logic.

fails to capture more than an abstract shadow of the important phenomenon.

2. Material contradiction—finding oneself with materially incompatible commitments, commitments that are determinate negations of one another—is inevitable.
3. Such contradictions show that something is wrong: that one has made an error (or practical failure).
4. Nonetheless, material contradictions and the errors they indicate are the path of (not to) truth.

Formal negation is an abstraction from determinate negation, which is what really matters.¹⁴ The sense in which material incompatibility (one sense of ‘contradiction’) is fundamental to the objective world is that to be a *determinate* property or state of affairs is to contrast with (in the sense of modally excluding) other properties an object might have, or states of affairs that might obtain—that is, to stand in relations of determinate negation to other items of the same ontological category. “Omnis determinatio est negatio.” The sense in which material incompatibility is fundamental to our cognitive and practical activities is that there is, and can *in principle* be no set of determinate concepts such that *correct* application of them—following the norms for their use—will never lead to commitments that are incompatible according to those material conceptual norms.

Why not? I think Hegel has a radically new idea of what the conceptual inexhaustibility of sensuous immediacy consists in—one that is consonant with his new holistic *Vernunft* setting, rather than that of *Verstand* or of atomism. The tradition (Kant included) had understood the sense in which the immediate deliveries of our senses outrun what we can capture conceptually as a matter of its inexhaustibility by judgments. No matter how

¹⁴ If P is a property, $\neg P$ can be thought of as the minimal materially incompatible property of P: the one possession of which is entailed by every property materially incompatible with P. Thus **not-square** is entailed by **circular**, **triangular**, **hexagonal**, and so on.

many true perceptual judgments we might make, there will always remain further truths that remain as yet unexpressed. Fully capturing what we sense in conceptually articulated judgments is an infinite task (in Fichte's sense), hence in principle uncompletable. This is an appeal to what Hegel called "bad infinity." The good infinity characteristic of Vernunft is different, and goes deeper. The tradition had never doubted the intelligibility of the notion of determinate concepts that were fully adequate to expressing judgments that were simply true. Hegel does. The conceptual inexhaustibility of sensuous immediacy shows itself precisely in the impossibility of *stably* capturing how things are using *any* set of determinate concepts. If we correctly apply any such set long enough, they will eventually show their inadequacy by leading us to embrace commitments that are material incompatible according to the lights of the norms implicit in those very concepts. At the core of Hegel's view is not only an epistemic, but a deep *semantic* fallibilism. As far as our determinate empirical and practical concepts are concerned, we are born in sin, and doomed to die in sin. (I think this aspect of Hegel's thought has not been much remarked upon because of a failure to keep two sets of books: one on his views of determinate empirical and practical concepts, the other on the *logical*, speculative, philosophical metaconcepts whose distinctive expressive job it is to make explicit what is going on when we apply the ground-level concepts. Hegel *does* think that there can be a stable, adequate battery of the latter.)¹⁵

So contradicting ourselves—endorsing materially incompatible commitments—is unavoidable. But it is still a kind of sin; there is something wrong with finding ourselves in such a state. For we are normatively obliged, when we do find ourselves with materially incompatible commitments, to remedy the situation: to groom our commitments, including the inferential ones that articulate the contents of our concepts, so as to eliminate the contradiction. We must make distinctions, refine our concepts, relinquish some judgments, so as to remove or repair the contradiction. That is why the

¹⁵ I have explored these ideas further in "Sketch of a Program for a Critical Reading of Hegel" [*Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus*, Vol 3, 2005, pp. 131-161].

same relations of determinate negation that articulate the determinate contents of our concepts are also the motor of *change* of our conceptually articulated commitments—both at the level of judgments and the level of inference, hence at the level of concepts themselves. Determinate (and determining) negation is what makes Vernunft *dynamic*. It is the source of conceptual *change*. Insofar as the merely formal law of noncontradiction expresses, however inadequately, the overarching normative obligation to *repair* material incompatibilities when they are encountered, it is correct—as far as it goes.

But we should not conclude from the fact that we are fated to discover the inadequacy and incorrectness of every set of determinate concepts we deploy that we are on a path of despair. On the contrary, the experience of error is the way of enlightenment. It is how we *improve* our understanding, craft *better* concepts-and-commitments, come to track more closely what really, objectively follows from what and excludes what, in the inferences and incompatibilities we subjectively endorse. This is the truth-*process*, the *path* of truth (“the movement of the life of truth”¹⁶). But we must give up the idea of truth as a *destination*, as a *state* or *property* that some time-slice of our commitments can have. “Truth is not a minted coin that can be given and pocketed ready-made.”¹⁷ “Truth is its own self-movement.”¹⁸ That static, stable conception belongs to the standpoint of Verstand, not of Vernunft. In a memorable characterization (admittedly something less than a definition), Hegel says:

Truth is a vast Bacchanalian revel, with not a soul sober; yet because each member collapses as soon as he drops out, the revel is just as much transparent and simple repose. Judged in the court of this movement, the single shapes of Spirit do not persist any more than determinate thoughts do.¹⁹

¹⁶ *Phenomenology*, Preface, paragraph 47.

¹⁷ *Phenomenology*, Preface, paragraph 39.

¹⁸ *Phenomenology*, Preface, paragraph 48.

¹⁹ *Phenomenology*, Preface, paragraph 47.

That every commitment is liable to being found to collide with another, and so to be rejected means that as this process, “truth includes the negative.”²⁰ This is *not* a coherence theory of truth—though there is a coherence theory of *meaning* in the background. For classical coherence theories of truth, like their rival, correspondence theories, share a commitment to truth as an achievable state or property (truth as “rigid, dead propositions”²¹). It is something much more radical and interesting. What matters is the process, not the product.

Redding’s fascinating book is an important progressive step in such a truth process. By identifying, refining, and reconciling various material incompatibilities between them (both real and merely rumored), it inaugurates a new phase in the ongoing conversation between analytic philosophy and Hegelian ideas—a conversation we can now clearly see was not closed off once and for all by the Manichean spin Russell gave to it a century ago.

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²⁰ *Phenomenology*, Preface, paragraph 48.

²¹ *Phenomenology*, Preface, paragraph 45.

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