

***Phantasie* in Language Formation?: Imagination in Hegel's "Psychology"**

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Abstract: In the "Psychology" and both the 1827–8 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit* and the 1830 *Encyclopedia*, Hegel speaks of an imagination which, in all its formations (*Gestaltungen*), forms part of the spirit's dialectical unfolding from intuition (perception) to language (signification). I argue that Hegel's conception of imagination in the "Psychology" is clouded by ambiguity. This ambiguity consists, on the one hand, in his recognition of the signifying power of the *Zeichen machende Phantasie* (sign-making imagination) in making objective through linguistic signs, the universal representations formed by the imagination's increasing power of reworking the materials in its possession—and, on the other hand, in his relegating of this power of imagination to *Gedächtnis* (memory), or to sign-recollecting memory. In demonstrating that an ambiguity has figured in the "Psychology," I seek to prove that Hegel conceives of an imagination which, when further developed, will yield to a species of imagination central to language-formation and thinking

Keywords: imagination, ambiguity, *Zeichen machende Phantasie*, memory

The concept of imagination occupies an ambiguous role in the western metaphysical tradition. Imagination is, as Plato and Aristotle will have it, a mediation between the appearance and *eidos*, between the senses and reason. Imagination is thus both essential to, but must be distinguished from, the activity of logos and reason. In being accorded such a role, it is treated as an agency to be availed of and jettisoned simultaneously. This move is propelled by the desire to ensure that imagination will not impinge upon the activity of reason. As such, against the backdrop of the western metaphysical tradition, I seek to demonstrate in this project that Hegel's conception of imagination in the "Psychology" in both the 1827–8 *Lectures on*

*the Philosophy of Spirit*¹ and the 1830 *Philosophy of Mind*² is also characterized in terms of a mediation between perception and signification and is thus not without an ambiguous evaluation. An ambiguity consists in it being neither perception nor signification, neither presentation nor thought. Put differently, while imagination has been distinguished from both intuition and thought, the same distinction has amounted to imagination's identity being split or torn between it being neither intuition nor thought (or language).

But why devote special attention to the section "Psychology" of the 1830 *Encyclopedia*? The short answer is that, and as attested to by Bates,³ although the concept of imagination can already be apprehended in Hegel's earlier works, it is in the *Encyclopedia* that Hegel is able to provide a systematic and detailed treatment of the imagination in its various moments and to assign to it a more important role relative to the role it has assumed in Hegel's earlier texts.

I argue that an ambiguity obfuscating Hegel's account of imagination is to be seen, on the one hand, in his act of recognizing the signifying power of *Zeichen machende Phantasie*.⁴ This signifying power functions and manifests itself in making objective through linguistic signs, the subjective or inward universal representation formed by imagination's increasing power of reworking the materials in its possession. Hence, insofar as *ZmP* engages actively in making objective or outward what is otherwise the spirit or mind's inward content, there seems to be a role for *ZmP* in the advent of language, and such, I argue, constitutes Hegel's positive valuation or legitimation of imagination. On the other hand, as Hegel's account demonstrates, the *ZmP* is left behind no sooner than Hegel has coined the notion, whereupon he assigns the production or reproduction of the sign to *Gedächtnis*, or specifically to a sign-recollecting memory. Hence, *Gedächtnis* will come to usurp *ZmP*'s function in language formation as is manifested in Hegel's articulation of the spirit's progression from *ZmP* to memory, thus, Hegel's delegitimation or negative valuation of imagination. Therefore, no sooner is imagination granted a role in language, in its advent, that it is excised from language as constituted, and operative in the to-and-fro of communicative discourse. Furthermore, I argue that the ambiguity in Hegel's

¹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827–8*, trans. by Robert R. Williams (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). Hereafter, the 1827–8 *Lectures*.

² Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, trans. by W. Wallace and A.V. Miller, revised by Michael Inwood (1830; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). Hereafter, *Encyclopedia*. References to the revised 2010 edition.

³ See Jennifer Ann Bates, *Hegel's Theory of Imagination* (New York: State University of New York, 2004).

⁴ Sign-making imagination. This will be referred to hereafter as *ZmP*.

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conception of imagination is a result of it assuming a dynamically evolving mediational role in intelligence of subjective spirit's evolution from mere perception to the advent of language, or imagination in all its phases as dynamically progressing from perception to language.⁵ Hegel, as Kearney maintains, "sublated the formative (*bildende*) and projective (*entwerfende*) powers of imagining into a more inclusive concept such as *Geist*."⁶

In what follows, I provide a rapid sketch of the progression of *Geist* (spirit) in the movement of *Aufheben*⁷ from intuition (*Anschauung*) to language/thought. It must be noted that in between intuition and language or thought, there are several moments constitutive of the spirit's development which Hegel groups under the notion of *Vorstellung* or representation, namely, *Erinnerung* and imagination. It can be said further that for Hegel, imagination in all its forms or shapes, be it *Einbildungskraft* or *Phantasie*, is *Vorstellung* through and through.

Dynamic Imagination: Series of Genetic-Dialectical Mediations between Intuition (*Anschauung*) and Thought (*Gedächtnis*)

Let it be said at the outset that for Hegel, imagination changes and evolves dynamically and makes modifications to the mind in its progression (*Fortschreiten*), and, thus, is not a stagnant entity as when it is deemed a faculty, as is the case for Kant with his empirical and transcendental faculties of imagination. Hence, in the shape of imagination, the spirit gradually assumes autonomy over the materials, objects, or images it has in its

⁵ Few important points ought to be noted here. With a view to demonstrating further the thesis I put forth in this Chapter, I avail of Jacques Derrida's invaluable commentary on Hegel's *ZmP* in "The Pit and Pyramid: Introduction to Hegel's Semiology" in *Margins of Philosophy*. See Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982). As Derrida informs us, Hegel's account of *ZmP* will be fundamentally related to sign, speech, and writing. I owe as well to Mark Raftery-Skehan's Ph.D. dissertation, titled "Deconstructing Hegel's Sign-making Imagination: Derrida and the Textual Imagination," particularly Part Two, Chapter Four, where Raftery-Skehan deals with Hegel's treatment of imagination, more particularly Hegel's treatment of *ZmP* and its ambiguous role in language formation. (See Mark Raftery-Skehan, "Deconstructing Hegel's Sign-making Imagination: Derrida and the Textual Imagination" [Ph.D. Dissertation: Trinity College Dublin, 2012].) Reference to the chapters of the works of these two thinkers will therefore be made throughout the course of my demonstration.

⁶ Richard Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining: Modern and Postmodern* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), 137.

⁷ *Aufheben* or *Aufhebung*. In English, this means *raising up*, *cancellation*, *negation*, *sublimation*, *supersession*, *sublation* (sublated or *aufgehoben*), and *superseding* all other developments of intelligence or history to a higher form of development with which *Geist* serves as the *telos*, that is, "knowing itself as *Geist* (Spirit, Mind)." See Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1992).

possession, an autonomy that will be made manifest in its activity of reworking and/or modifying these materials.⁸ In this progression, imagination undergoes a series of mediations at crucial junctures that allows the spirit or mind to make vital leaps in its own development, from intuition to the interiorized image, to a network of images that can be spontaneously recollected and that will form the basis for the abstraction of universals, all the way to creating arbitrary symbols and eventually, to the linguistic signs that are the dawn of thought. A brief articulation, however, regarding the spirit's progression from intuition to thought suffices to establish here that Hegel's conception of imagination assumes the form of a series of mediations between intuition and language.

In the form of intuition, the mind senses ("feels") the immediate materials in its environment and fixes its attention on these materials. The mind then stores images in the "nocturnal pit."⁹ As *erinnerte* (interiorized), the images are available as such to the mind, and with the mind's gradually increasing familiarity with these interiorized images, it determines them, such that the spirit can now spontaneously summon images without being triggered by the intuition in the *here* and *now*. And such is how the mind progresses from intuition to *Erinnerung* to imagination. At first, these images have all their original determinations. They are tied to the spatio-temporal moments of their original perception, the context, that is, the "when" and the "where" I originally intuited the object or objects. As such, the rose I intuited "yesterday in the garden" becomes one rose among others I have intuited.

In the shape of imagination (*Einbildungskraft* and *Phantasie*), the spirit assumes three distinct yet necessarily and increasingly successive and vitally interconnected or interrelated moments. Hegel assigns the name *Reproduktive Einbildungskraft* to the simple activity of willfully summoning images without the need to trigger the image through an intuitable content. When images are freed from their local determinations—from intuition or perception—they become the images that imagination can now begin to work with as they relate to one another, which opens the possibility of the symbol and the sign. Associative imagination then—the second moment of imagination—relates these images detached from their local determinations and forms universal representations. And the moment imagination deploys meanings through the aid of intuitable content serving as symbols and signs, it is *Phantasie*, i.e.,

⁸ Here, Hegel deals with the subjective spirit, a phase in the development of spirit that moves from mere intuition to the advent of language. It is with the contributions that imagination, in a variety of evolving forms, to this progression that I am concerned with. Cf. §458 of the 1827–8 *Lectures* and the *Encyclopedia* where Hegel articulates the spirit's increasing willfulness in exteriorizing meaning (universal representation) through symbols and more importantly through signs. Cf. Hegel, *Encyclopedia, Zusatz* to §445.

⁹ Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, 187.

symbolizing and signifying.¹⁰ A clear distinction ought to be drawn between these two forms of *Phantasie*. On the one hand, the symbol-making phantasy deploys or deposits meaning to an intuitable content that “corresponds to the determinate content of the universal to be imaged,”¹¹ as in the case of the “eagle symbolizing strength.” On the other hand, the *ZmP* exteriorizes meaning through an intuitable content wholly different from the signified, such as that of the “flag signifying a country.” Here, we must note that Hegel does not talk yet about linguistic signs. The “flag” (and “cockades” and “gravestones” or “tombstones”) is not a linguistic sign. But Hegel uses it because the flag and the meaning it contains, that is, “the country that it signifies” have nothing to do with each other, such that the sign-signified relation is completely arbitrary.

Hence, *ZmP* is superior to symbolizing phantasy insofar as in it, the “intelligence is completely arbitrary and displays a freer willfulness and mastery in the use of intuition than in symbolizing.”¹² The latter is precisely so because the symbol must bear an intrinsic relation to what it symbolizes even if they do not have a necessary connection, and thus, a “lion” can just as well symbolize “strength.” The linguistic sign, however, is freed from all such intrinsic connections.

Zeichen machende Phantasie: **Language and the Objectifying Power of Geist**

Phantasie (phantasy) exteriorizes in the objective material intuitable elements, in the sign and in the symbol or artwork, the universal representations interiorized (*erinnerte*) within the mind as a result of imagination’s activity of abstracting the common and canceling out the differences between images. However, Hegel treats *Phantasie* as a higher and more developed form of imagination as opposed to reproductive or associative *Einbildungskraft*. Whereas *Einbildungskraft* refers to the lower form of imagination where intelligence summons, reproduces, combines, recombines, and arranges images, *Phantasie* not only reproduces, combines, recombines, arranges images, and forms universal representations, but it also *assigns meanings* to intuitable contents. Put differently, imagination is *Einbildungskraft* insofar as it is reproductive, and it is *Phantasie* insofar as it is productive.

Provided for by the universals and universal representations formed by the associative imagination, the spirit in the shape of symbol and sign-

¹⁰ Cf. §458 of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit* 1827-8 and of the *Encyclopaedia* 1830.

¹¹ Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, 193.

¹² *Ibid.*, 194.

making phantasy expresses *in concreto* the universal representations formed through imagination's labor of abstraction. As Hegel writes in §457: "Fantasy brings the inner content to the image and to intuition, and this is expressed by saying that it determines the content as *being*."¹³ Hence, *Phantasie* is, as Hegel puts it in §455 of the *Encyclopedia*, "the midpoint in which the universal and being, one's own and being-found, the inner and the outer, are completely welded into one."¹⁴ In symbolizing and signifying, the spirit or mind draws *sponte sua* from its own content, the universal representations formed by imagination's association of the interiorized (*erinnerte*) images. Universal representations are subjective inasmuch as they are interior or the inward content of the mind, and thus, have no intersubjective or objective manifestation. In the sign, being a *found* intuitable content, universal representations which have been abstracted from the network of images acquire an objective reality or existence. Hence, in *ZmP*, the spirit acquires greater freedom in spontaneously making exterior the interior content of the spirit such that "[I]t is in this *Phantasie*," as Bates has it in *Hegel's Theory of Imagination*, "and not in any level prior to it, that language and community (Spirit) are actually born."¹⁵

Hence, as Derrida affirms in *Margins of Philosophy*, *ZmP* incarnates meaning (*Bedeutung*) in the word, as in the case of the spoken word, as an objectively existing intuitable form. The spoken and the written word will come to establish a vital relation "between an inside and an outside."¹⁶ In other words, the spoken and the written word will establish a relation between an inward content, a universal representation which, by the operation of the *ZmP* is deposited in an intuitable content, i.e., something objective. By this activity of signification or exteriorization, an objective existence of the universal representation or meaning in the form of speech acquires the status of being raised up (*aufgehoben*). As Derrida puts it: "speech is par excellence that which confers existence, presence (*Dasein*), upon the interior representation, making the concept (the signified) exist."¹⁷ Hence, the same activity of speech, Derrida maintains, is a "promotion of presence" that is, the universal representation, the meaning or the soul is *lifted up* (*aufgehoben*) to a higher and more developed shape of existence in an objective

¹³ Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, 193.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 192.

¹⁵ Bates, *Hegel's Theory of Imagination*, xi. See also page 36 where Bates, alluding to Hegel's *Geistesphilosophie* 1803-1804, develops further the contention she makes in the Preface regarding the imagination.

¹⁶ Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 90. For an astute reading of this activity of imagination in Hegel's *Encyclopedia*, see Catherine Kellogg, "The Three Hegels: Kojève, Hyppolite, and Derrida on Hegel's Philosophy of Language," in *Hegel and Language*, ed. by Jere O'Neill Surber (New York: State University of New York Press), 2006.

¹⁷ Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 90.

form. Thus, meaning can be present in an objective form to a speaker and to others alike. This again demonstrates that the intuition used as sign does not mean by virtue of its intrinsic intuitable content, as in the case of an image or a picture, but has, as it were, an alien soul implanted or deposited into it. In this case, as is made manifest in all cases of signification (be it symbolizing or signifying), the intuitable content of the sign is negated and raised up, that is, sublated. As Derrida writes: “the content of the sensory intuition (the signifier) must erase itself, must vanish before *Bedeutung*, before the signified ideality, all the while conserving itself and conserving *Bedeutung*.”¹⁸ Hence, language is “a product of intelligence for manifesting its representations in an external medium.”¹⁹ Thus, *ZmP*’s vital labor of inventing the sign assumes a pivotal role in the spirit’s transition from its subjective form to its objective shape, a transition that Derrida further describes as the “way out of itself [...] the obligatory route of a return to itself.”²⁰ In other words, in *ZmP*, the inward universal representation has now been *exteriorized* through the sign. And in the same process of signification or exteriorization, the spirit appropriates to itself the same progression it acquires in the sign. Hence the way out of itself, is simultaneously the return to itself, as Derrida puts it in *Margins*.

It must be added that as Hegel insists, it is not only that the internal or inward meaning is exteriorized and thus is made objective in the form of uttered or spoken word, but the spoken word itself as well or the sign as such, is also simultaneously made inward by virtue of that self-same signifying activity or process. Hence, as Hegel writes: “[O]nly the *articulated sound*, the *word*, is such an internal externality.”²¹ But this, however, does not mean that the external existence of the thought or the word does not bear an inward content, rather it is precisely because it is made external that it bears with it the “stamp of the highest *inwardness*.”²²

In making objective its rather subjective or inward content in the linguistic sign or more particularly, in spoken language, and rendering its meaning or universal representation communicable, the *ZmP* shows forth that it is vitally engaged in language formation. As Mark Raftery-Skehan writes in his dissertation,²³ “*Zeichen machende Phantasie* produces the objective linguistic sign that brings about thought in the form of the subjective

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁹ Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, 195. Derrida notes that Hegel, in the “Psychology,” does not venture to investigate or concentrate on language, although the latter’s presentation shows a kind of an outline (or “lineaments”) on language. See Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 90.

²⁰ Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 74.

²¹ Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, 200.

²² *Ibid.*, 200.

²³ Raftery-Skehan, “Deconstructing Hegel’s Sign-Making Imagination,” 131.

expression of an objective, communicable content.”²⁴ This objectifying power of the *ZmP* in the advent of language being a key moment in the progression of the mind, paves the way for the spirit’s further developments in the formation of political organizations and institutions, the first form of art (the first fine art form), and so on and so forth. In other words, in demonstrating the spirit’s dynamic evolution or progression from it being subjective to it being objective or it expressing itself in objective form, Hegel claims that *ZmP* forms language in its nascent shape, in the shape of spoken language. Furthermore, by the same movement of the *Aufheben*, the *ZmP* contains and sublates in it all those various shapes or moments the spirit has traversed thus far, or at least those moments the spirit has sublated and raised up (*aufgehoben*) to itself prior to *Gedächtnis*. More particularly those earlier moments of *Geist* which come immediately prior to *Gedächtnis*, namely, the imagination that reproduces images, relates images, and creates universal representations, and the imagination that symbolizes and signifies. In line with the immediately preceding point, Derrida maintains that all the contradictions that the dialectics of the *Aufheben* seeks to resolve come to be housed within the sign and its conception. It must be noted that, for Hegel, the arbitrariness of the sign-signified relation extends beyond the bounds of linguistic signs. Hence, the objectifying power of *ZmP* which implicates imagination in language formation may be understood further if we return from the preceding articulation to the claim Hegel makes regarding the complete arbitrariness of the sign-signified relation evident in non-linguistic signs.

I must note that even when I restrict my inquiry to *ZmP* and exclude symbol-making phantasy for the purpose of the argument I demonstrate here, I must recognize that the first example Hegel provides of *ZmP*’s labor of signification are not yet linguistic signs. Among the first examples that Hegel gives are “Cockades,” “flags”, and “gravestones.”²⁵ These non-linguistic signs demonstrate that the spirit in *ZmP* acquires a higher degree of freedom in terms of exteriorizing meanings. More importantly, the complete arbitrariness of the sign-signified relation evident in non-linguistic signs will come to operate fundamentally as well in linguistic signs. Hence, insofar as the sign and the signified have nothing to do with each other, one must *learn* the meaning that the sign in the form of spoken word signifies.²⁶ The latter is also definitely the case in written language. The sign, as in the case of the spoken or uttered word, assumes “the essential determination of

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ See Hegel, *Encyclopedia, Zusatz* to §457.

²⁶ See Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, 194.

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occurring only as sublated.”²⁷ In other words, similar to non-linguistic signs, the spoken word means something other to itself, such that it does not merely present itself as intuition or as its own intuitable content.²⁸ And because the spoken word or the sign as what is an ideal medium given to its own sublation does not yet possess the kind of existence written language has, it dissipates that very moment it is uttered. As Inwood puts it: “[I]f the intuition is temporal rather than spatial [...] it disappears as soon as it has served its purpose.”²⁹ Hence, the spoken word assumes the status of being a “physicalized time,” as Hegel calls it, until eventually language becomes structured or established and given a temporal existence in its written form. Thus, speech unfolds in time and that the temporality of the material inscription is different to that of the spoken word. The latter is precisely so, as Hegel informs us in his remarks to §459 of the *Encyclopedia* insofar as the spoken word being the original language, does not yet possess a spatial existence which the written form of language has, the latter being a further or later development of language.

Hegel’s Historicization of Imagination

The gradual dialectical progression of spirit in the shape of imagination indicates Hegel’s historicization of imagination, a historicization that implicates *ZmP* in language formation. As Raftery-Skehan writes: “[I]t is Hegel’s historicization of imagination—his dialectical rendering of its distinct moments and of the contributions it makes to the mind and representation’s development—that creates the conditions conducive to him taking the unorthodox step of attributing to *Phantasie* the creation of the nonmotivated sign.”³⁰

Hence, as against the static, immutable faculty-psychology of the empiricists and Kant, Hegel’s historicization of imagination as a dynamically evolving agency prepares the seedbed, so to speak, from which imagination in the shape of the *ZmP* functions in sign-creation or language formation. And as the ultimate moment in the dialectical evolution of imagination, *ZmP* accumulates in it the collective moments the spirit has traversed through in its dynamic evolution. Put differently, it is only through the progressive setting in place of universal abstractions formed from the network of *erinnerte* images, and from the fact of having elements of intuitable content that can

²⁷ Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, 194.

²⁸ See Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, §458 and the *Zusatz* to §462.

²⁹ Michael Inwood, *A Commentary on Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2013), 497.

³⁰ Raftery-Skehan, “Deconstructing Hegel’s Sign-making Imagination,” 133.

serve as the body of signs, that *ZmP* can bring language into being. Imagination in its different, successive moments operates with a different set of materials or forms of intuitable contents available to it, hence its own evolution and the role it plays in the evolution of the representing and signifying mind.

As such, through its dynamic activity of negating, sublating, containing, and or preserving its previous shapes or moments, the seed of what comes to be language or thought has been dynamically evolving as well, until it eventually becomes what it is in its nascent stage in *ZmP*. Although by way of an analogy, Hegel spells out the same point as regards the *seed* bearing all the (virtual) possibility of becoming a fully-grown tree in §453 of the 1830 *Encyclopedia*. Hegel recounts: “the universal requirement to conceive the concept as concrete, as we conceive e.g. the seed as *affirmatively* containing, in virtual possibility, all the *determinacies* that come into existence only in the development of the tree.”³¹ Hence, as Hegel notes in §458, the spirit that has been raised up in the form of *ZmP*, bears or conceives the seed, like that of a pregnant woman that is about to give birth, what will come to be the spirit in the shape of language or thought. And by its exteriorizing or signifying power, *ZmP* incarnates or gives birth to spoken language. Hence, it can be inferred that the *ZmP* is the parent (*parens*), as it were, of language.³²

Let me round out what I have demonstrated thus far. For Hegel, imagination in all its formations and by its increasing power to take hold of materials in its possession (or stored in that “dark-night-pit”), actively and dynamically reworks these materials. Hence, imagination progresses from one shape to another within the new context of images, universal representations, symbols, and signs generated by imagination in its various moments. Clearly, from the preceding articulations, imagination belongs to the realm of *Vorstellung* which Hegel consistently and negatively contrasts with the domain of thought. And undeniably as well, the *ZmP* assumes a

³¹ Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, 187. An analogy has definitely a number of “pitfalls” in that it could not thoroughly explain why such and such is the case. Thus, here it must be pointed out that, while this is the case as regards the development of the (oak) tree, and that this may resonate to some extent with spirit’s progression, this is not “totally” the case as regards the progression of spirit. The spirit, having gone through exteriorizing itself, comes back to itself, and thus re-appropriates the progress it accumulates from its being thrown to “otherness.” As Hegel maintains, the (oak) tree is not like *Geist*. For while the seed gradually develops into a tree, it does not re-appropriate the same progression to itself, rather, it takes on a new shape, in the form of the seed, which is contained in the fruit of the tree]. (See Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, §379. Cf. Inwood, *Commentary on Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind*, 484–485, particularly Inwood’s remark number 3, i.e., “difference between seed and mind/spirit,” where Inwood writes: “whereas one acorn is much like another, the intelligence develops, continually absorbing new materials and consigning it to, and occasionally retrieving it from, the nocturnal pit.”)

³² See Bates, *Hegel’s Theory of Imagination*, xiii.

pivotal role in language, but this role, as we shall soon see, will be left out when the *ZmP* is consigned to a past moment once language has been brought into being such that the role of reproducing the sign or word is being assigned to *Gedächtnis*.

The latter point, I conjecture, is owing in part to the overall dynamic movement of spirit evident in Hegel's philosophical system—a movement which is also fundamentally manifest in the progression of spirit in the "Psychology." Furthermore, *Gedächtnis*' usurping of *ZmP*'s role in language may be owing in part to the precaution Hegel takes to safeguard philosophy from the *supposed* contaminating force or power of imagination as he warns us in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*. It must be said further that the concept of *ZmP* is only briefly invoked by Hegel, no sooner mentioned than dropped in favor of *Gedächtnis*. These two conjectures will therefore occupy our inquiry and exposition in the following sections.

***Zeichen machende Phantasie* Excised: The Birth of Language**

What does Hegel's negative evaluation of imagination consist of? We may respond to this question by spelling out three important points. The first one concerns Hegel's act of consigning *ZmP* to a *past* moment once language is brought about, thereby implying no dynamic innovation or involvement of imagination to occur within the history and life of signs or of language. The second point revolves around the obvious fact that *ZmP* is never mentioned after Hegel's articulation of language in its nascent form and in the formation of written language. The third reason directs us back to the movement of *Aufheben* which is fundamentally operative not only in the progression of spirit in the "Psychology," but in the spirit's progression from it being subjective to being objective to being absolute. Throughout the course of expositing or elaborating these three reasons, I shall treat reasons one and two jointly yet distinguish them from each other simultaneously. The reason for this move is that, while it may be possible that Hegel's *silence* on the possibility for *ZmP* to take on a role in the life of language or thought may have been a corollary to his subjugating of *ZmP* to the merely reproductive operation of a sign-memory, these two reasons are, nonetheless, distinct from each other. The former refers to Hegel's affirmation of the very movement of *Aufheben* itself which is fundamentally at play in his recounting of the

life of spirit, while the latter points to his act of relegating *ZmP*'s role to memory.

***Gedächtnis*: Hegel's Silence on *Zeichen machende Phantasie*, and Its Demise**

Hegel's act of relegating *ZmP*'s role in the formation of language to *Gedächtnis* (memory) is clearly spelled out in a remark he makes in §458 of *Encyclopedia* where he insists that sign-creating activity is fundamentally the work or function of memory or *Gedächtnis*. Hegel writes: "[T]he sign-creating activity may be specially named *productive* memory (the initial abstract Mnemosyne); since memory, which is in ordinary life is often confused with recollection (*Erinnerung*) and used synonymously with it, even with representation and imagination, has in general to do with signs only."³³ In a remark he makes in §464, Hegel once again insists that language has now become the work of memory. Hegel writes, thus: "[O]ur language already assigns memory (*Gedächtnis*), of which it has become a prejudice to speak contemptuously, the high position of immediate affinity with thought (*Gedanke*)."³⁴ Furthermore, albeit in another and in an earlier work, Hegel, particularly in §158 of his *Philosophical Propaedeutic*³⁵ speaks of or refers to language as primarily and ultimately the highest work of productive memory, there being no mention of the *ZmP* in this work. Hence, there will be no room for *ZmP* in language, at least once language has become a reality. Furthermore, in *Philosophical Propaedeutic* §160, Hegel categorically asserts that "the further development of language belongs to the power of universality, to the Understanding."³⁶ The preceding point, however, requires further expositing. For, if we set aside the fact that such a move is necessary insofar as the spirit is directed towards the full realization of its *telos*, a question may still be asked: why would language be the labor of *Gedächtnis* when clearly, *ZmP*, as demonstrated above and as Hegel himself articulates, is necessary to the creation or genesis of language, and language is itself an evolving and dynamic system?

³³ Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, 194.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 202.

³⁵ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophical Propaedeutic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

³⁶ Hegel, *Philosophical Propaedeutic*, 157. As Inwood notes, this work is Hegel's notes on his lectures to schoolboys given between the years 1809 and 1811. See Inwood, *Commentary on Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, 495–496. Here, in his *Philosophical Propaedeutic*, parallel to his discussion in the "Psychology" in the 1827–8 *Lectures* and the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel recognizes as well that productive memory is responsible for "language formation," both the "spoken" and the "written" form.

A brief elaboration as regards the German term *Gedächtnis* helps us here. As Inwood informs us, Hegel's assignation of the creation of signs to memory or memory is since "*Gedächtnis* and the verb *gedenken*, 'to remember', are etymologically close relatives of *denken*, 'to think' with its perfect participle, *gedacht* ('thought')." ³⁷ As Inwood further notes, Hegel considers *Gedächtnis* as close to thinking inasmuch as the latter is definitely moved away or detached from the sensory material. Hence, insofar as signs for Hegel are far detached from the actual intuition from which they are formed, throughout the course of the spirit's or intelligence's progression, signs become, as Inwood puts it, "an old intuition harnessed to a representation," ³⁸ then necessarily become the objects of *Gedächtnis*. Hence, the notion of memory or sign-memory is necessary to the extent that in signitive, linguistic acts there is obviously a work of reproduction in drawing upon signs that belong to a language and that have been assimilated by a speaker of a language. This will be the *mechanical other* that inhabits thought, as Hegel goes on to note. As Inwood remarks, "[S]ign-creation calls for inventiveness, but not for imagination, at least not for the type of imagination required for the creation of symbols, allegories, and metaphors. So[,] memory, or rather *Gedächtnis*, takes on the task of sign-creation." ³⁹ The latter point, however, calls for a brief remark. The thesis that *Gedächtnis* assumes the task of creating signs can be both affirmed and denied. Because, although the arbitrary assignation of intuitable content to meanings seems to be lacking precisely in the sort of creative intelligence with which imagination is identified, there is the creativity involved in realizing *a mode of signification* in which there is no intrinsic relation of sign to signified. A subtle and nuanced distinction must therefore be made, i.e., who or what comes up with the idea of linguistic signification, with the idea of pairing signs and signifieds, rather than each sign/signified pairing?

Furthermore, in the *Zusatz* to §462, Hegel informs us that thought invigorates or animates the word such that "words thus become a reality animated by thought." ⁴⁰ Hegel recounts that the mind in the activity of exteriorization through the use of the word "gives to thoughts their most worthy and genuine reality." ⁴¹ As such, the coming to life of the word(s) is primarily the labor of understanding and not that of the signifying phantasy. Thus, we see that in the sections immediately following Hegel's discussion of the signifying imagination, *Gedächtnis* completely sublates *ZmP* into itself. This is an act that, I argue, will be tantamount to Hegel's consigning of *ZmP*'s

³⁷ Inwood, *Commentary on Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, 496.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 496.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 496–497.

⁴⁰ Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, 200.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 200.

role in language formation to memory. The latter is necessarily so to the extent that in language use, for the most part, we *recall* signs and put them to work in our utterances. However, it must be pointed out that we cannot simply imagine language, upon its being created, as a monolithic immutable form. It is plausible that in the developments of meanings, forms of writing, genres, literature, etc., there appears to be an immense series of roles and moments for imagination.⁴² The latter point confronts the task of understanding how reproductive *Gedächtnis* operates alongside an imagination that accounts for the innovations in language. Kathleen Magnus' contention in *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit* is relevant here. Magnus writes, "although words gain their meaning by being designated as signs, several dimensions of meaning may be present with every word."⁴³ In other words, the possibility of (a) meaning(s) arising from a word suggests that there is a quintessential role for the imagination in meaning-creations, conceptual innovations, and whatnot.

Moreover, Derrida's remarks in *Margins* will help us understand the possibility of there being a role for *ZmP* in language formation and beyond, on the innovations required between the mere formation of signs and developed languages and their products. Hegel's *ZmP*, Derrida informs us, assumes a kind of a position whereby it is torn between or is in the tension between, opposites, a position which Derrida describes as follows: *ZmP* "is a *Mittelpunkt*: both a central point, a middle in the sense of element, of *milieu*, and also the medium point, the sight where opposites pass one into the other."⁴⁴ This role is crucial or vital to *ZmP* inasmuch as it opens up the possibility for the sign to function or "to extend its field infinitely."⁴⁵ Derrida's reading of Hegel here is relevant to understanding how *ZmP* can play a role in the creation and the development of language, both in its written and spoken form. Hegel, I believe, will have provided an account that articulates or hints at the possibility for *ZmP* to function in close coordination with memory, but as his account shows, such a possibility is subordinated to memory. As Derrida informs us, the reason for Hegel's subordination of *ZmP* to memory is the dialectic that governs the life of spirit itself, which, in this case, restricts or confines *ZmP* to the ambit of productive imagination or *Phantasie*. Is there a possibility for *ZmP* to work in close coordination with

⁴² Aristotle demonstrates this clearly in the *Poetics* when he argues for the supremacy of poetry over history. Derrida and Ricoeur likewise, will also maintain that imagination assumes a role in metaphor and in literary works, for that matter.

⁴³ Kathleen Dow Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), 99.

⁴⁴ Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 80.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 80.

memory in the formation of language? Such a question, I believe, requires looking into Hegel's account of *Gedächtnis*.

Hegel maintains that the mind in the form of *Gedächtnis* shows or exhibits the same movement displayed by the mind as *Vorstellung*.⁴⁶ It may be recalled that in representation, i.e., in *Erinnerung* (and imagination), the mind forms images, stores them in the nocturnal pit, and revives them the moment it encounters an intuition that showcases similarity with these images. Likewise, *Gedächtnis* retains names, recognizes that name as such or recognizes the intimate connection between the *name* and *the thing named*, and it mechanically produces or reproduces names such that the distinction between the word or sign and its meaning or soul dissipates. In other words, in mechanical memory the word or name is simply recalled spontaneously without one taking cognizance of the meaning of the word (as in rote memorization), hence it is *mechanical*. In this moment, as Houlgate maintains, "the mind as we know it in imagination and recollection—that is, the mind animated by meanings—disappears, and the mind becomes a simple, mindless, spiritless machine."⁴⁷

I surmise that the *ZmP* could have played a role in coordination with the reproductive memory. The possibility of recognizing the name and the *corresponding thing named as such* evinces a strikingly parallel work performed by *ZmP*. For, by bestowing meaning upon the sign, the *ZmP* recognizes the sign as such and such a specific sign. The word "dog" for instance, signifies an existing being or thing we may call "dog." There is no inherent connection whatsoever between the name "dog" and the "existing dog," but I am nonetheless signifying, and thus, recognizing that the term "dog" means this being, this existing being. The recognition of the name (i.e., dog) and thing named (i.e., this existing being) which is fundamentally operative in reproductive memory demonstrates a close coordination between reproductive memory and *ZmP*. In other words, the *ZmP*'s activity of exteriorizing meaning through linguistic sign(s) very much demonstrates what the reproductive memory does in recognizing the name in the thing named.

It can hardly be denied that when a language is attained, the speakers of such a language will possess a mechanical mindless memory that facilitates the rapid use and reception of signs that we witness in discourse. The crucial question for imagination, however, is whether imagination halts completely at this point in the life of language. Does it not, as it had before, re-engage with its new object, in the new product in certain ways? Does imagination

⁴⁶ See Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, §461.

⁴⁷ Stephen Houlgate, "Hegel, Derrida, and the Restricted Economy: The Case of Mechanical Memory," in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 34:1 (January 1996), 87.

operate in our using of the word or meaning in figurative uses, in semantic innovation, in the innovations by which we use language generatively (a language being a finite lexical system but capable of infinite possibilities of meaning), in generating fictional genres? Pure reproduction surely stands alongside a productive, creative imagination that comes to inhere not only in producing signs in the first instance, but in innovating with what is given to the user in a language, in conceptual innovation and reinvention, in metaphor, in lyrical language, and whatnot. However, Hegel, as it appears in *Encyclopedia*, has not developed this rapport, or has perhaps not even thought about this possibility.⁴⁸

Furthermore, Hegel may have inherited and thus shared the prominent view concerning the alleged contaminating powers of imagination to truth so prominent in the western metaphysical tradition. Thus, as his account of imagination in the “Psychology” presents, we see such a prejudice on his part in accounting for or in recognizing the possibility of imagination to be actively engaged in language formation. Early on in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*,⁴⁹ in the section on “poetry,” Hegel emphasizes this movement from the “prose of imagination” to the “prose of thought.” Here, I think, Hegel hints at the necessity to transcend imagination and move towards thought. He writes: “[Y]et, precisely, at this highest stage, art now transcends itself, in that it forsakes the element of a reconciled embodiment of the spirit in sensuous form and *passes over from the poetry of the imagination to the prose of thought.*”⁵⁰

The disappearance of the imagination that creates signs—both non-linguistic and linguistic—fortifies or establishes the fact that imagination is now relegated to a past moment, and henceforth constitutes itself as a particular layer on which other layers have been “superimposed,” consigned to the past by the spirit in a higher and more developed formation. Hence, the *ZmP* has now become one among other moments the spirit has negated, suppressed, and interiorized into itself. However, it must be clarified that the relegating of *ZmP* to a past moment with the advent of *Gedächtnis* is justified *only* to the extent that language becomes a relatively stable body of reproducible signs and meaning. A problem in this regard, however, persists.

⁴⁸ It is worth noting that Bates forcefully argues that there is a possibility for Hegel’s conception of the imagination to be engaged in conceptual innovations, (re-)creation of meanings, and whatnot after language is instituted. Key to understanding this role of imagination, Bates maintains, is the “inwardizing activity of the interpreting other” —the same inwardizing dynamic discernible in “recollection.” See Bates, *Hegel’s Theory of Imagination*, 96. But I would like to maintain, however, that nowhere is the imagination mentioned after Hegel has reached the moment of “memory” in *Encyclopedia*.

⁴⁹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art Vol. I*, trans. by T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 89. Italics is mine.

As I was mentioning above, in opposition to the stasis of the mechanical memory, there is apparent in the life and history of (a) language a great deal of innovation, which suggests *ZmP* to have had its own further moments, for there to be an imagination operative within language or after it has been instituted as a means of representation and signification. Hence, it may be deduced that Hegel simultaneously avails of and expunges imagination in language formation, hence, the ambiguity blurring his conception of imagination. This is analogous with the eikastic imagination that generates the conditions for the *logos* but is thereafter set aside. Inevitably, the *ZmP* is going to have a certain ambiguity by which language is at one point “not yet invented” and later, a point at which it has already been invented, a movement which is central to all Hegelian moments. This latter point may be further clarified when careful attention is directed to the overall movement of *Aufheben* governing Hegel’s recounting of the life of spirit.

Early on in *Phänomenologie des Geistes*,⁵¹ Hegel spells out the *telos* of spirit, that is, that of knowing itself as such, as *Geist*. Hence, necessarily so, insofar as the spirit progresses or gradually unfolds towards the realization of its *telos*, it follows that those various moments which lie at the vanguard of the spirit’s development recede into the past and are negated and sublated yet conserved and preserved. This implies the definite inclusion of the fateful effacement of imagination in favor of *Gedächtnis*.

Throughout the course of the progression of imagination in Hegel’s account of subjective spirit, imagination evolves and accumulates new powers, which it then exercises in reworking the materials it has produced and which have come to be in its possession. Particularly, and as I have shown above, this evolution is evident in imagination appearing in the form of being reproductive, to being associative, and to becoming phantasy, such that in this evolution, imagination simultaneously redetermines both its object and itself. As Raftery-Skehan writes: “Hegel’s dialectic of imagination suggests that its changing roles and functions transcend and usurp one another in terms of the sophistication of their products.”⁵² For Hegel, such a dialectical progression, therefore, necessitates that one shape or moment of spirit will soon be sublated into a higher and more developed shape, and thus, the effacement of imagination that creates signs and linguistic signs in the form of the spoken word. But since the effacement occurs alongside a new product

⁵¹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by Terry Pinkard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). This is Hegel’s introductory work to his overall philosophical system where he traces in detailed fashion the various moments constitutive of the spirit’s dialectical unfolding or becoming from it being “Logic” or “Idea” to exteriorizing itself into nature, to becoming a subjective spirit, to objective spirit, and to becoming absolute spirit culminating in philosophy or science.

⁵² Raftery-Skehan, “Deconstructing Hegel’s Sign-making Imagination,” 141.

(in the case of *ZmP*, that of “language”) it also occasions a new opportunity, a new moment in imagination—an imagination operative in language. I maintain that it is Hegel’s failure to consider this and determine language as entailing a mere mechanical reproduction that constitute the delegitimizing of imagination, and his toeing the line as regards philosophy tending to segregate imagination and thought.

Furthermore, it is an effacement which arguably preserves the effaced shape in the spirit’s new moment. It is not surprising then that from the moment when Hegel begins to deal with the name-retaining memory to reproductive memory to mechanical memory, the imagination that marks a promising role in language formation, will, like a word, dissipate as soon as its uttered. Imagination assumes the status of being a *past moment* negated and contained in and by *Gedächtnis* and lying buried and *dormant*, as it were, in the latter. And such is precisely the movement of *Aufheben* and *Verneinung* (negation) which govern not only the progression of spirit articulated in the “Psychology” but the overall progression of Hegel’s philosophical articulation and/or historicization of *Geist*.⁵³

Conclusion:

Hegel’s Verdict, the Fate of the *Zeichen machende Phantasie*

I have shown that Hegel’s conception of imagination as a dynamically evolving agency and as a series of dialectical mediations between intuition and language reiterates a common trend in the form of an *ambiguity* that is present in the treatments of imagination in the western metaphysical tradition.

It can be inferred that Hegel articulates a promising account of imagination in the shape of *ZmP*, that is, assuming a vital role in the formation of language. However, rather than allowing for an imagination that will set to work on the new product, on signs, and linguistic meanings and on signifying forms and genres of discourse, Hegel consigns the sign-creating imagination to oblivion. Imagination becomes a past moment that now only forms part of a chapter of the story of *Geist*’s dynamic unfolding towards its *telos*. Hence, it can be said further that imagination, be it “*Einbildungskraft*,” “phantasy,” “*Phantasie*,” and “*Zeichen machende Phantasie*,” undeniably functions as a bridge that as Kearney remarks in WI, like Wittgenstein’s ladder, will be set aside as soon as it serves its purpose. Such a treatment of

⁵³ As pointed out earlier, *Aufheben* is not only at work in Hegel’s “Psychology” but in the overall thrust of spirit. See “Pit and Pyramid: Introduction to Hegel’s Semiology” in Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 88–89.

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imagination, therefore, demonstrates what may be called, albeit only “partially,” the unfortunate fate of imagination in western philosophy or in western metaphysical tradition.

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