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Hegel and/in/on Translation

V *Is It Possible to Speak About a Hegelian Theory of Translation?
On Hegel's Übersetzungsbegriff and Some Paradigmatic Practices
of Translation*

Saša Hrnjez and Elena Nardelli

1. On Translation: Theoretical Perspectives

1 *The Untranslatable in Translation. A Hegelian Dialectic*

Angelica Nuzzo

19 *Das Fremde in der Sprache: Hegel e la sfida dell'estraneo*

Silvia Pieroni

37 *L'Übersetzen comme articulation interne du système encyclopédique.
Hegel et Novalis en perspective*

Guillaume Lejeune

55 *Critica della «regione pura». Übersetzung e rappresentazione in Hegel*

Gianluca Garelli

- 75 *La traduzione come forma. Hegel, Benjamin e il laboratorio romantico*
Michele Capasso
- 95 *L'attività del tradurre nella psicologia hegeliana:
trasformazione e liberazione del soggetto finito*
Alessandro Esposito
- 113 *Pure translation in Hegel's Phenomenology*
Michael Marder
- 129 *La filosofia come traduzione in Hegel*
Federico Orsini

2. Effects of Translation

- 147 *The Reception and Translation of Hegel in Japan*
Ayumi Takeshima
- 159 *Kojève's «Dialectique du maître et de l'esclave».
Notes on the Wirkungsgeschichte of a Traitorous Translation*
Mariana Teixeira
- 177 *A quoi ressemblerait une philosophie hégélienne de la traduction?
Réflexions à partir des traductions françaises de la Phénoménologie
de l'esprit*
Emmanuel Renault
- 203 *Translating Hegel's Aesthetics in France and Italy:
A Comparative Approach*
Francesca Iannelli and Alain Patrick Olivier

- 227 *Beispiel / By-Play in Hegel's Writings*
Jakub Mácha
- 243 *Some Dimensions of Translating or Writing about Hegel in Urdu*
Ashfaq Saleem Mirza

3. Hegel Translated

- 249 *In Conversation with Hegel: A Translator's Story*
George di Giovanni
- 261 *Hacerse lenguas de «Hegel»*
Félix Duque
- 275 *Hegel en Grec*
Georges Faraklas
- 291 *Come si può tradurre la Scienza della logica?*
Paolo Giuspoli
- 303 *Translating Hegel into Slovenian*
Zdravko Kobe
- 317 *Translating Hegel's Logic. Absolute Negativity and the Crisis of Philosophy as an Institution*
Marcin Pańków

Discussion

333 *Unlikely Bedfellows? On a recent rapprochement between Hegel and Wittgenstein*

Guido Tana

Book Reviews

347 C. Canullo, *Il chiasmo della traduzione. Metafora e verità*,
(Angela Monica Recupero)

352 R. Morani, *Rileggere Hegel. Tempo, soggetto, negatività, dialettica*,
(Giulia La Rocca)

358 M. Quante, *Antropologia pragmatista. Padova Lectures*,
(Elena Alessiato)

366 D. Charlston, *Translation and Hegel's Philosophy: A Transformative, Socio-narrative Approach to A.V. Miller's Cold-War Retranslations*
(Ruth Abou Rached)

DISCUSSION

UNLIKELY BEDFELLOWS? ON A RECENT RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN HEGEL AND WITTGENSTEIN

by Guido Tana*

To bring together two philosophical figures, contemporary or historical, some kind of common ground is usually presupposed. Be it a recent debate in which the thinkers have taken opposite stands, or the historical development of an idea or philosophical school from one to the other, these kinds of comparative considerations command scholars' attention when an appropriate dialectical framework functioning as a backdrop for the encounter is at least in place. A rather different endeavor is to establish such an interpretive and philosophical framework; the task appears daunting when such an attempt has never undertaken before due to the selected figures belonging to entirely different conceptions of what philosophy should consist of. This is the case under scrutiny in this critical notice.

If one were to identify with reference to two philosophers some of the main occasions of incompatibility that have demarcated the Analytic/Continental divide in 20th Century philosophy, it is arguable that this choice might befall two thinkers such as Hegel and Wittgenstein. Going by the general conception of what differentiates the two main threads of western philosophy, these two thinkers are ordinarily understood to embody some of the main tenets that defined and constituted the two outlooks, representing opposite and sometimes mutually unintelligible stances on philosophy. To borrow an apt figure of speech, Hegel and Wittgenstein appear to be a rather uncontentious example of two unlikely bedfellows. In this *sensus communis*, Hegel incarnates the systematic, metaphysically-minted conception of philosophy aiming for an ultimate standpoint on everything that could

* University of Edinburgh

be an item of thought, accounting for everything that can and will be intelligibly grasped. In contrast, much of what is considered Wittgenstein's outlook is seen as determined by an attack against those philosophical temptations that would make us abandon our ordinary linguistic endeavors, going as far as dissolving philosophy into everyday life. These ideas live on more in the minds of those unfamiliar with either, rather than in the actual texts and philosophical efforts of both. But their distance on what philosophy is and should be – and the lack of any influence, overt or covert, of both on each other even only as a possible foil – has long been considered enough to reject any kind of rapprochement between the two, except as examples of two opposite ends of a wide meta-philosophical spectrum.

However, things might not be so dire. Rapprochements between selected strands of analytic and continental philosophy hasn't been an uncommon sight since the days in which Richard Rorty declared analytic philosophy to have exhausted its propulsive thrust¹, mainly due to the internal critiques of the tradition provided by figures such as Quine and Sellars. Wittgenstein's thought has acted as a major focal point of such enterprises, due to possessing more than superficial commonalities with various currents in twentieth century continental philosophy. As highlighted by Georg Henrik von Wright – a student of Wittgenstein himself – one can easily observe the «alienation of [Wittgenstein's] influence from the typical logico-analytic philosophy, and an affiliation of it to thinking in the traditions of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and even Hegelianism»². It is fair to assert that while the first two traditions have

¹ In his central work *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1979.

² G. von Wright, *Wittgenstein in Relation to his Times*, in *Wittgenstein and his Times*, ed. by B. McGuinness, Oxford, Blackwell, 1982, p. 108. This alienation is reflected in the adverse fortunes that Wittgenstein's thought has enjoyed in core analytic scholarship ever since the return to metaphysics heralded by philosophers such as David Malet Armstrong in the 60s, and currently attested by the explicit enmity towards Wittgenstein in pre-eminent analytic philosophers such as Timothy Williamson. On this subject see the two volumes by P. Tripodi, *Dimenticare Wittgenstein. Una vicenda della filosofia analitica*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2008, and *Analytic Philosophy and the Later Wittgensteinian Tradition*, London, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2020.

been dutifully investigated in their convergences and divergences with Wittgenstein, the towering edifice of Hegel's thought has only commanded piece-meal attention in this realm. This is what a conference held in Dresden in June 2017³ has attempted to fix in a systematic manner for the first time, by explicitly going against this established and widespread grain. The conference, aptly titled 'Hegel and Wittgenstein. Reevaluation of Difference', was explicitly aimed at ushering the progression from a current Kantian awareness of analytic philosophy to a properly Hegelian phase⁴. To choose Wittgenstein as the analytic figure through which this progression is to be accomplished is telling of the so far relinquished philosophical opportunities that this encounter can deliver. This first attempt has led to a further workshop held in Prague in June 2019⁵, where the volume constituted from the contributions given in Dresden has been presented. Going by the same title as the conference, the collection, published by De Gruyter in the '*On Wittgenstein*' series, represents the first collective attempt to shed light in a systematic manner on the two thinkers considered together⁶.

The volume contains the revised and elaborated contributions of the conference – whose presentations are available on-line⁷ –, together with 6 additional pieces written exclusively for this collection, and should be understood as the completion of the first phase of this innovative philosophical attempt. The goal of what follows is to attest on which

³ Held at the Technische Universität Dresden, and organized by Jakub Mácha, Alexander Berg, Louisa Frintert, Marco Kleber, and Alexander Romahn.

⁴ While the influence of Kantian philosophy on current analytic scholarship can sometimes be less than noticeable concerning its actual bearing on debates – a bearing that isn't felt in an equal manner in all of its subfields –, the meta-philosophical reflections on analytic methodology and purpose has incorporated Kantian insights ever since Peter Strawson's work in the 60s rehabilitated Kantianism as a viable option in the tradition. For the Hegelian subterranean movements within analytic philosophy see the paragraph on Jakub Mácha's introductory essay in the volume.

⁵ Together with a further conference in Tokyo scheduled for April 2020 and currently postponed due to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

⁶ J. Mácha and A. Berg (eds.), *Wittgenstein and Hegel. Reevaluation of Difference*, Berlin-Boston, De Gruyter, 2019, pp. XVII-427. Quotations in the text without further qualification refer to this volume.

⁷ At: wittgensteinhegel2017.weebly.com.

interpretive lines has this analysis been carried out, and to what extent it helps clarifying the thought of both philosophers in providing for their meaningful employment in contemporary philosophical debates, ultimately suggesting some potential lines of further development on this score. Due to the depth and length of the volume, a selection has been made on which contributions to present, in accordance with the central philosophical threads that the collection embodies.

The contributions collected stem from a variety of established philosophers whose specialization engages with the thought of either of the two figures here brought together, and it is quite aware of how weird to some ears this whole enterprise might sound. However, as the introduction written by Jakub Mácha makes clear, this encounter does not happen in a vacuum. Even though this is the first instance of a collection explicitly dealing with both Hegel and Wittgenstein⁸, signs of a possible common ground have been developing – although in a rather subterranean and slow-paced guise – for a while now. Some of these very first attempts belong to decades where the two opposite philosophical camps hardly acknowledged one another: John N. Findlay⁹ first proposed an interpretation of Hegel with strong Wittgensteinian influences, and these footsteps were to be followed to decades later in Charles Taylor reading of both as providing a common transcendental strategy concerning sensible certainty and experience¹⁰ – as reminded in this collection by Thomas Rentsch (p. 52). For a full-fledged comparison one would only need a few years after with the speculative and daring attempt made by David Lamb¹¹, of bringing them together on a unified anti-Cartesian stance. However, all of these attempts did not indicate a path beyond themselves concerning what could or should be obtained

⁸ The only precursor to my knowledge is a volume of the series *Wittgenstein-Studien*, which covered some of the ground explored here, see J. Padilla-Galvez, (ed.) *Idealismus und Sprachanalytische Philosophie*, «Wittgenstein-Studien», Band 13, Berlin, Peter Lang, 2007.

⁹ J. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination*, London, Allen&Unwin, 1958.

¹⁰ C. Taylor, *The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology*, in *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by A. MacIntyre, New York, Anchor Books, 1972, pp. 151-188; Id., *Hegel*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975.

¹¹ D. Lamb, *Language and Perception in Hegel and Wittgenstein*, New York, St.Martin's Press, 1979.

from using either thinker to illuminate the other. For this to occur the return of Hegelian Thought in Analytic Philosophy – to quote a crucial book by Paul Redding¹² – had to be set in motion, and its roots are to be found in two main strands, occurring almost at the same time. The first is the so-called ‘Rise of the non-Metaphysical Hegel’¹³ with the works of Robert Pippin¹⁴ and Terry Pinkard¹⁵, whose post-Kantian and social interpretation of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* – foreshadowed in Europe by readings such as those presented by Klaus Hartmann¹⁶ and Beatrice Longuenesse¹⁷ concerning the Logic – have had an extremely extensive influence for Hegel’s newfound fortunes in the Anglophone sphere. This non-metaphysical reading is to be considered together with the coeval first substantial attempt of understanding Hegel’s *Science of Logic* as an (analytic) theory of meaning by Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer¹⁸. The second is the contemporary employment of Hegelian and Wittgensteinian elements – to different and various degrees – of two of the most important theoretical works of the end of the 20th Century, namely Robert Brandom’s *Making It Explicit* and John McDowell’s *Mind and World* – both published in 1994 and strongly influenced by Wilfrid Sellars, whose concept of the *Myth of the Given* appropriated fundamental insights from both the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and Wittgenstein’s later writings.

¹² P. Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

¹³ See on this S. Lumdsen, *The Rise of the Non-Metaphysical Hegel*, «Philosophy Compass», III (1), 2008, pp. 51-65, and T. Pinkard, *What is the non-metaphysical Reading of Hegel?*, «Hegel Bulletin», XVII (2), n. 34, 1996, pp. 13-20.

¹⁴ R. Pippin, *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989.

¹⁵ T. Pinkard, *Hegel’s Phenomenology. The Sociality of Reason*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

¹⁶ K. Hartmann, *Hegel: a Non-Metaphysical Reading*, in *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by A. MacIntyre, New York, Anchor Books, 1972, pp. 101-124.

¹⁷ B. Longuenesse, *Hegel et la Critique de la Métaphysique*, Paris, Vrin, 1981.

¹⁸ P. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels Analytische Philosophie: Die Wissenschaft der Logik als kritische Theorie der Bedeutung*, Paderborn, Schöningh, 1992, an analysis which had been anticipated by Diego Marconi’s unpublished PhD thesis on Hegel’s dialectic written at Pittsburgh under Nicholas Rescher, and which has seen some continuations in the Italian philosophical scene in F. Berto, *Che cos’è la dialettica hegeliana? Un’interpretazione analitica del metodo*, Padova, Il Poligrafo, 2005.

Given this situation, an explicit attempt of comparison between the two as proposed in this collection is indeed something much needed. In the attempts carried out so far in bringing Hegel and Wittgenstein out of their ordinary interpretive shells, the task has sometimes been developed in trying to reduce one thinker to one of the aspects of the other one. More specifically, while for Hegel the reading has portrayed him quite close to contemporary varieties of (linguistic) pragmatism¹⁹, in Wittgenstein's case it has been attempted to bring his thought – both early and late – close to concerns properly belonging to transcendental idealism²⁰. One of the first commendable results of this collection is that it completely eschews such reductionisms. Many commentators on the return of Hegelian thought in analytic philosophy have criticized the portrayal of Hegel's philosophy in such endeavors, likening him to a kind of 'Hegel-Light'²¹, and this is certainly something that does not befall this collection in the least. Both philosophers are subjected to each other's scrutiny, in order to highlight convergences as well as differences. The structure of the book is a pristine representation of the philosophical

¹⁹ See on this D. Emundts, *Idealism and Pragmatism: the Inheritance of Hegel's Concept of Experience*, in *The Impact of Idealism*, ed. by K. Ameriks, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 347-372; Id., *Hegel as a Pragmatist*, «British Journal for the History of Philosophy», XXIII (4), 2015, pp. 611-631; R. Brandom, *Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel's Idealism*, «European Journal of Philosophy», VII (2), 1999, pp. 164-189; and R. Stern, *Hegel's Pragmatism*, in Id. *Hegelian Metaphysics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009.

²⁰ Mostly of the Kantian variety, see on this B. Williams, *Wittgenstein and Idealism*, «Royal Supplement of Philosophy», VII, 1973, pp. 76-95; J. Lear and B. Stroud, *The Disappearing We*, «Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society», LVIII, 1984, pp. 219-258; M. Forster, *Wittgenstein and the Arbitrariness of Grammar*, Princeton (NJ), Princeton University Press, 2004; K. Westphal, *Kant, Wittgenstein, and Transcendental Chaos*, «Philosophical Investigations», XXVIII (4), 2005, pp. 303-323. See I. Dilman, *Wittgenstein's Copernican Revolution. The Question of Linguistic Idealism*, London, Palgrave-MacMillan, 2002 for an analysis of such attempts.

²¹ With philosophers such as Tom Rockmore, Frederick Beiser, and Rolf-Peter Horstmann in the first line of this resistance. It is telling that such a revolt in bringing together Hegelian aspects with Wittgensteinian insights has not really occurred in the analytic camp, albeit this might be ascribed to the current all-time low influence of Wittgenstein's thought in core analytic meta-philosophy, especially visible in anti-Wittgensteinian works such as Timothy Williamson's *The Philosophy of Philosophy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.

rigor which characterizes this comparative attempt. The sections which subdivide the essays focus respectively on reaching divergences between the two from apparent point of contact, and on convergences surprisingly found where differences were to expected. On this ground, further investigations develop thereafter the possibility of illuminating either perspective from the insights of the other. The result is that no charges of misrepresentation of Hegel or Wittgenstein's thought can be levied to the collection as a whole, given the wide variety of analyses and standpoints which contribute in delivering for the first time a consistent assessment of the possible common ground, and of where significant differences remain between the two.

Before delving into presenting some relevant instances of the investigations here contained, it must be remarked as particularly noteworthy the essay by Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer aptly placed at the beginning of the book, which does not focus overtly on either Wittgenstein or Hegel, but sets the boundaries for the conceptual space in which such a comparison will be played out. Stekeler-Weithofer delivers one of the most compelling critiques of the meta-philosophical stance behind the traditional analytic approach, which has impeded an integration of Hegelian Idealism in its core programs. More specifically, the ideal picture of language within the Fregean standpoint coupled with the empiricism expressed as a variety of physical atomism, permeate the thread that characterizes analytic philosophy going through Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, Carnap's *Aufbau*, Neurath's physicalism and Quine's naturalism (pp. 26-27). Together with further elements such as an overtly narrow picture of logic, and a reliance on empirical propositions conceived as akin to *Konstatierungen* of sense-data, this points towards the roots of Analytic philosophy being constituted by a kind of metaphysical empiricism, which the analytic canon itself crucially overlooks. This metaphysics leads to an attempt of describing general truths via «quantified sentences in sortal classes of objects», clashing with the Hegelian insight that generic truth is instead fundamentally conceptual (p. 30), and highlighting a kind of dogmatism in the approach that views «natural, i.e., physical, sciences and not our life experience that form the ontological measure of being and truth» (p. 33). This covert metaphysics aims at attaining a kind of *View from Nowhere* or *sideways-on view* – following Thomas Nagel and John McDowell's famous definitions – which concerns a domain of merely *external objects* – conceived

materialistically –, while also rendering unintelligible the reasons behind the transcendental turn informing German Idealism, whose defining character is to bring to the forefront the way objectivity is constituted «in contrast to the triviality that any cognitive access to the world via perception, apperception, or thinking, runs first through ‘my world’» (p. 43). Stekeler-Weithofer’s analysis is historical only concerning its subject matter, but in fact it manages to propose a convincing diagnosis of what is missing in a certain picture of philosophy, establishing at the same time a sensible reason as to why reflections such as those contained in Hegel’s philosophy – and Heidegger’s which is the unsung hero of this essay – have to be engaged with in a systematic manner.

On the diagnostic side, this essay is to be read together with the more properly historiographical analysis provided by Alexander Berg, which is however in the second-to-last section of the book. Berg tackles the usually casted-aside question of whether Hegelian Idealism might have had an actual influence in shaping Wittgenstein’s thought. Wittgenstein’s remarks on Hegel are usually limited to the famous observation reported by Maurice Drury which lends the collection its title: «Hegel seems to me to be always wanting to say that things which look different are really the same. Whereas my interest is in showing that things which look the same are really different»²². Many would take this to be a reason to quickly dismiss the question; however, Berg analyzes how Hegelian philosophy exerted an indirect influence on both the early and the later Wittgenstein, acting as a backdrop of the philosophical environment Wittgenstein found himself in at Cambridge. Russell’s rejection of Hegel’s *Logik* – famously condensed in Russell’s accusation that Hegel had confused the *is* of predication with the *is* of identity – had likely a distinct influence on Wittgenstein’s thought before the *Tractatus*, which is reflected in Wittgenstein’s observations at proposition 3.323 on the word ‘is’ appearing as a copula, as equality, and as expression of existence, which contributed to the linguistic confusions behind much of philosophy (p. 355). If this influence is only a contrastive one, more interesting are Berg’s considerations of how Cambridge Hegelianism might have shaped to a higher extent Wittgenstein’s later reflections in the *Philosophical Investigations*, due to Wittgenstein’s colleague Charlie

²² M. O’Connor Drury, *Conversation with Wittgenstein*, in *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, ed. by R. Rhees, Oxford, Blackwell, 1981, pp. 112-189, p. 157.

Dunbar Broad. Broad's reflections on Hegelian philosophy being based fundamentally on *Wortspiele* – linguistic puns, intended in a non-derogatory sense – were object of Wittgenstein's analysis, as he must have been familiar with Broad's *Elements of Philosophy*. Broad's philosophical output is also the source of a sometimes overlooked second remark on Hegelian philosophy by Wittgenstein, in which he deems the dialectical method a sound way in which one should do work in philosophy, together with the proviso of clearing away ambiguities in language²³. Berg suggests that Wittgenstein's concept of *Sprachspiele* might have been substantially informed by Broad's contention that Hegelian dialectic is akin to playing a game (p. 359).

On the actual comparison between the philosophies of Hegel and Wittgenstein, well-placed at the beginning of the first sub-section of the book after the introductions, is Thomas Rentsch's attempt at proposing three key items on which a convergence of the two can be developed and established. In this brief essay Rentsch fittingly identifies some of the main topics that will be developed in the rest of the collection. Firstly, both philosophers focus on the elementary propositional structure through which our engagement with things can be grasped, i.e. as a kind of deictic act through which meaning is constituted. Secondly, they both endorse a kind of transcendental pragmatic which views the concrete human activity in language as establishing what can be understood and known by agents – enshrined in Wittgenstein's dictum that the meaning of a word is its use in language. Lastly, they both rejected an internal, privileged conception of meaning, endorsing an intersubjective picture, with Hegel anticipating both Wittgenstein's criticism of private language and his concept of Forms of Life. These theses are not only moments of convergence for Rentsch, but they are in fact constitutive of Hegel's philosophical project and of Wittgenstein's therapeutical stance (p. 56). This programmatic rendition is to be paired with Valentina Balestracci's essay, which builds upon David Lamb's first attempts at a convergence, to include Wittgenstein's treatment of tautology and contradiction in the *Tractatus*.

After Rentsch brief but insightful contribution, which crystallizes the answer to the question as to why one should bring Wittgenstein and

²³ L. Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge 1930-1932*, ed. by D. Lee, Oxford, Blackwell, 1980, p. 74.

Hegel together, the collection is developed mostly along two main lines, which I will focus on for the rest of this analysis. The first focuses on one of the already explored areas of convergence between the two thinkers, i.e. the status of norms together with their meaning and intersubjective authority. This is one of the main topics that Robert Brandom has developed for years, going so far as identifying in Wittgenstein the main heir of the Hegelian line which views normative intentionality as rational, social, and implicit in practice²⁴. Two essays on this are placed in the section «From Identity to Difference». Herbert Hrachovec focuses on Wittgenstein's analysis of criteria and standards – through the famous example of the standard meter – and Hegel's overall argumentative structure in the *Phenomenology* to argue that both Hegel and Wittgenstein construe their stage about standards as being a confrontation between forms of knowledge (p. 74) and that they both are interested in observing «how knowledge makes its appearance» via the interplay of criteria, judgments, and our normative activity in concrete situations of applications of a *Maßstab* (p. 80). While Hrachovec ultimately finds more common ground than expected, he highlights the main difference between the two as consisting in an opposite stance vis-à-vis ordinary language and common sense. As Hrachovec is however sharp to identify, even this difference might not be a definitive one, considering Wittgenstein's subtle relationship to common-sense in general. Jonathan Shaheen's essay adopts instead an anti-Brandonian stance in rejecting the convergence of the two thinkers on matters of normativity. For Shaheen, the social, intersubjective element in Wittgenstein is fundamentally inconsequential, and Hegel's dialectic has no necessary use for it. Shaheen's essay is one of the most interesting of the collection, due to its going *against* one of the few established areas of contact between the two philosophers. However, his reading leaves ground to be resisted: his analysis of Wittgenstein relies on an individualistic conception of mental experience – based on past dispositions and attitudes – that few Wittgensteinian scholars would consider sound, and on this reading he also grounds the rather quick

²⁴ See R. Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust. A Semantic Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology*, Cambridge (MA), Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019 p. 639, and A Nuzzo, *Vagueness and Meaning Variance in Hegel's Logic*, in *Hegel and the Analytic Tradition*, ed. by A. Nuzzo, London-New York, Continuum, 2010, pp. 61-82, p. 64.

dismissal of Brandom's Hegel, appealing to an internal tribunal of experience concerning our engagement with reality, which however neglects Hegel's focus on mutual recognition for personal attitudes to constitute a legitimate moment of the constitution of self-consciousness. Two more essays are on this score, both displaying more agreement with a convergence on normative matters between Hegel and Wittgenstein. Valentin Pluder's take is characterized by focusing on the *Philosophy of Right* in order to grasp Hegel's concept of institution. A common solution to the rule-following problem is the identified in both Hegel and Wittgenstein by focusing on how the immanent normative practices we engage with – shaped by our training and habits – establish and constitute the rational constraints that exert a kind of bindingness on how we understand rules, without raising them to empty abstract principles or axioms. Finally, Vojtěch Kolman proposes a reading in close connection to both Kripke's understanding of the rule-following paradox, together with Hegel's actual development from the figure of Desire – intended as a moment of essentially private rule-following²⁵ – up to the master/slave dialectic. Of relevance here is the understanding of the imbalanced authoritative relationship presented by Hegel as close in structure to the interaction between teacher and pupil that Wittgenstein investigates in the paragraphs up to the rule-following problem in the *Investigations*. Of great importance is how Kolman connects this reading to a bona fide epistemological argument concerning the clash between a private grasp of normativity and the intersubjective stage where knowledge assumes the character of a mixed deontic status, in the vein proposed by Brandom.

The other main thread of the collection is possibly the most innovative aspect to be found within these essays. Many contributions elaborate on the links, affinities, differences between Hegel's *Science of Logic* and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. Such a connection hasn't had so far an actual proving ground, given the distance these two perspectives are usually understood to inhabit, as Paul Redding observes (p. 163). Redding advises on a possible convergence by exploiting the Kantian and post-Kantian traits that recent interpretations of both Hegel and

²⁵ Following therefore D. Landy, *Hegel's Account of Rule-Following*, «Inquiry», LI (2), 2008, pp. 169-192, and R. Brandom, *The Structure of Desire and Recognition*, «Philosophy and Social Criticism», XXXIII (1), 2007, pp. 127-150, in this reading, although the former goes unmentioned.

Wittgenstein have established – including the so called *resolute* reading of Wittgenstein’s early philosophy. To argue for this parallel, the positivist picture of the *Tractatus* has to be left behind, by endorsing a picture of *Elementarsätze*, influenced by Anscombe, which ends up strikingly similar to Hegel’s concept of *Satz*, in their both concerning how sign-sentences, by being depictions of states of affairs (*Sachverhalte*), possess a projective relation to the world (p. 166-168). Hegel’s reflections and Wittgenstein’s tractarian stance both concern the presence of singular terms in the logical construction of language. Herein also lies their difference, as Wittgenstein maintains a prominent role for *names* in the linguistic ontology of the *Tractatus*. Hegel’s rejection of this independent role of names is interpreted by Redding as providing a *prima facie* plausible parallel with Wittgenstein’s path towards his later thought, which resonates with viewing the *Investigations* as a proto-Hegelian critique to the Kantianism of the *Tractatus*. On the same thread of re-approaching the early Wittgenstein with the mature Hegel we also find Max Ingolf’s piece «Hegel and Wittgenstein on Identities and Contradiction», and especially Ermylos Plevrakis’ Hegelian reading of the *Tractatus*. Plevrakis analyzes the ontology of the *Tractatus* through the lenses of the Hegelian affinity for the *general propositional form* that informs the description of propositions of any language (p. 292, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* [henceforth TLP] 4.5). By proposing an identity of essence and substance – following the therapeutic readings of Michael Quante concerning Hegel and Jim Conant concerning Wittgenstein – Plevrakis identifies Wittgenstein’s outcome in the *Tractatus* as consisting in establishing the *sole logical constant*. This is the N-operation introduced at TLP 5.501-5.51 which constitutes the joint negation of all propositions, representing both that which language cannot express, as well as the very essence of every proposition, the form «according to which propositions are constructed» (p. 296, TLP 5.511). Plevrakis ultimately equates Wittgenstein’s sole logical constant with Hegel’s *Begriff*, the concept which permeates every other concepts as it constitutes the very essence of grasping a thought as such (p. 305). The thread between the *Tractatus* and the *Science of Logic* includes in addition a reading which goes beyond mere identifications of convergence between the two: Gaetano Chiurazzi highlights how an internal tension within the *Tractatus*, the one between the analytic concept of the simple object and the synthetic one of the connection between these simple objects in a proposition, can be

adequately managed via Hegel's *Logic*, by treating it as if it were an instance of Kant's second antinomy.

In a fitting fashion, Jakub Mácha's own contribution, positioned before the concluding essay, attempts to tie up the two main threads that we identified here. Mácha starts from Wittgenstein's use of examples as *paradigms* within the problem of rule-following and interprets them as concrete universals, more specifically as a praxis embedded within a specific social and historical context (p. 384). This clearly Hegelian take on the application of normative items is then developed by appeal to Hegel's dictum that *Alles ist ein Schluß*. This central Hegelian tenet establishes the unity of a universal with singularity via the mediating role of the particular, by means of which the transition from subjectivity to objectivity is obtained, as the actuality of the individual is elevated into universality through the medium of its particularity²⁶ (p. 395). The outcome is that one can understand how normativity functions by understanding it as a praxis which implements a universal class while being related to the individual elements of this class. The collection is then closed by the only contribution in German, by Wilhelm Lütterfelds, recently passed away, and one of the main proponents of a common ground between Hegel and Wittgenstein on the score of the latter's philosophy being a kind of linguistic idealism. The same goal is pursued here, with the addition that Lütterfelds' contribution is one of the few which makes use of Wittgenstein's epistemological reflections in *On Certainty*.

To conclude this assessment, this collection is the first systematic collective attempt in establishing a background on which future engagement on the topics of idealism and language can be played out, and it should serve as the benchmark for future endeavors on the topic. That this is indeed something possible is reflected in the fact that this collection itself is not exhaustive, and does not aim to be. Some further potential convergences or common terrain for analysis do not enjoy as much space as the two main threads that we identified here. Among these topics we find Pyrrhonian skepticism, held by Hegel as the free aspect of philosophy and to which Wittgenstein's reflections in *On Certainty* have

²⁶ See G.W.F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline. Part I: The Science of Logic*, trans. and ed. by K. Brinkmann and D. Dahlstrom, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, § 181 Z, p. 254.

increasingly been linked to. The affinities between Wittgenstein's *Lebensformen* and Hegel's concept of *Reich der Sittlichkeit* are briefly touched upon in Pluder's essay, but do not appear in Terry Pinkard's essay whose aims revolve nevertheless around this very topic. An investigation on this conceptual similarity ought to easily lead to a comparison with John McDowell's concept of *second nature*, given the presence of both Hegelian and Wittgensteinian roots in his account. Following again the thread of the so-called *Pittsburgh School*, the coeval publication of Robert Brandom's long awaited semantic interpretation of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, should certainly foster renewed contributions on how Hegel and Wittgenstein relate on matters pertaining to language, experience, and meaning. On epistemological grounds there is definite ground for further investigations on how both Wittgenstein and Hegel approach and try to solve the Problem of the Criterion, and of their shared criticism of naïve realist conceptions of knowledge, which could open the path to an assessment of how the Sellarsian Myth of the Given is handled in both thinkers. Finally, the recent developments in standpoint epistemology might benefit from a shared Wittgensteinian-Hegelian outlook, given the importance in both of the intersubjective and epistemic practice of meaning. However, none of this should be intended as a criticism of the collection. It only attests to the richness belonging to the terrain of the analysis here presented, and gives ground for the possibility of continuing this pursuit, in the hope that themes and concerns of German Idealism might feature more prominently in those philosophical discourses where Wittgenstein still holds prominent sway. To end on a personal note, had this book been available to who's writing a few years ago during the writing of a master's thesis precisely upon Hegel and Wittgenstein's affinities concerning knowledge and meaning, that work would not have seen so much of its content preoccupied with trying to establish contact between the two, and its rationale would have fared substantially better. Herein lies the hope and the belief that this collection will substantially help further inquiries down this avenue.

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