

Hegel, Aristotle and the Conception of Free Agency

Paul Redding

Introduction

In his recent book *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*, Robert Pippin locates Hegel in relation to more standard modern approaches to practical philosophy. Hegel is, “much more like than unlike many other modern philosophers” in that for him, the central problem of practical philosophy “concerns the condition taken ... as necessary for ... freedom”.¹ With his anti-libertarian, anti-voluntarist tendencies, Hegel is, according to Pippin “in some sense (minimally) a compatibilist”,² but he takes as the appropriate concept for thinking about my relation to my action that it “expresses” myself, not that I am simply counted among its *causes*.³ The crucial thing about the various deeds and projects I undertake is that they are experienced *as my own*,⁴ and this requires that I stand within “a certain sort of self-relation and a certain sort of relation to others”.⁵ Thus, if freedom on the expressivist model is a matter of being “*bei sich*”—“at one with oneself”, as Terry Pinkard expresses it⁶—then Hegel’s distinctive claim is that one can only be “*bei sich in anderen*”—one can only be at one with oneself when one is *in* some appropriate relation *to others*.

These complex relations of self to self and self to others are relations of what Hegel refers to as “*Anerkennung*”—recognition—and constitute what he talks about as spirit or “*Geist*”. Seen in this way this notion does not commit Hegel to any bizarre ontology: *Geist*, says Pippin, “is not a thing (neither material nor immaterial)”.⁷ Rather, the notion “*Geist*” is meant to capture the idea that humans in their thinking and acting are subject to rational norms. *Geist* is, therefore, a network of relationships among individuals who hold themselves and others to these norms. While this notion of spirit ultimately derives from Kant’s conception of freedom as self-legislation, in Hegel it finds expression in ways similar to that found in the approaches of Wilfrid Sellars and Robert Brandom who ground human intentionality and reason in socially

¹ Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 11.

² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³ Thus Pippin claims that Hegel “does not understand being free to be an individual’s possession of a causal power to initiate action by an act of will in some way independent of antecedent causal conditions.” *Ibid.*, p. 186. And in a footnote added to this sentence: “Being free does not involve the possession of such a capacity and in fact, does not involve any special sort of causality at all.”

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁶ Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Naturalism: Mind, Nature, and the Final Ends of Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), ch. 2, section C.

⁷ Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, p. 34.

normative “language games” involving the asking for and giving of reasons.⁸ Hegel, says Pippin “understands practical reason as a kind of interchange of attempts at justification among persons each of whose actions affects what others would otherwise be able to do, and all this for a community at a time”.⁹

But by this thesis of the necessary *social conditions* of freedom, this modern post-Kantian Hegel is, somewhat paradoxically, led back to the paradigmatically “pre-modern” philosopher, Aristotle, since for Hegel the social norms constituting spirit “arise out of and are always aspects of already ongoing ways of life, attachments, institutions and dependencies”.¹⁰ Nevertheless, while Aristotle provides a “role model in accounting for the nature of human activities and practices”,¹¹ we cannot look to Aristotle for help with understanding the nature of freedom itself. Pippin’s Hegel is fundamentally *Fichtean* in affirming that I cannot be free if I deny that status to others; and *Sellarsian* in equating the “‘republic’ of rational beings” with the *maximal* embracing community of those with whom I can potentially enter into meaningful discourse, and so, with whom I can enter into reciprocal practices of reason giving.¹² Rationality and freedom could not gain a secure foothold in the life of a community in which certain others—slaves, for example—were systematically excluded from the scope of those *to whom I potentially owe justifications*. Separating freedom from the ancient world in this way, Pippin twice quotes Hegel from the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* to the effect that Aristotle and other Greeks “did not have the idea of an actually free will. ... The idea came into the world through Christianity”.¹³

One may readily appreciate Pippin’s many achievements in drawing Hegel’s philosophy into line with an array of other modern approaches, in rendering his often obscure texts within a more contemporary philosophical idiom and, especially, in freeing Hegel’s notion of *Geist* from the sorts of questionable pre-modern ontological commitments with which it is traditionally associated. Nevertheless, aspects of Hegel’s approach to freedom and agency seem to go missing in Pippin’s account. Pippin’s account seems to picture two relatively separable conditions of free agency,

⁸ This, then, is the key to understanding actions as both free and expressive. “Actions both disclose what an agent takes herself to be doing” says Pippin, “and manifest some implied normative claim to entitlement so to act.” *Ibid.*, p. 152.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12n10.

¹² Wilfrid Sellars, “Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man”, in *Science, Perception, and Reality* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 40.

¹³ G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, (Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1969), vol. 10, p. 301, quoted in Pippin, *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy*, pp. 94 and 135. Further references to Hegel’s *Werke* will be given by volume and page number added in parentheses after references to English translations.

an expressive-recognitive one, in which what is at issue is my capacity to recognize my action as my own, and the rationality condition, in which what is at issue is my capacity *qua rational agent* to recognize my action as the action of a rational agent—as being able to respond to challenge in the “space of reasons”. Because in the Greek polis, certain individuals are institutionally excluded from the role of those to whom I potentially owe reasons or justifications, freedom could not gain a proper foothold there, and had to await the historical process in which the appropriate institutions had become fashioned. With the development of these appropriate institutions, there seems nothing to stop the freedom through reason that was grasped as an *abstract concept* in Greek life from becoming *actual*.

But there is another familiar theme running through Hegel’s account of modernity which cuts across this linearly progressivist picture. It is one that is familiar from, but not restricted to, Schelling and other of Hegel’s romantic contemporaries, and later thinkers like Nietzsche and Heidegger. One aspect of this theme might be summed up in a worry expressed by Bernard Williams concerning the nature of practical reason—the worry that “reflection might destroy knowledge”.¹⁴ Thus in a thought experiment involving the introduction of reflective questioning into a “hyper-traditional society”, Williams suggests that “a certain kind of knowledge with regard to particular situations, which used to guide them round their social world and helped to form it is no longer available to them.”¹⁵ While this worry about the nature of reflective questioning does not, of course, have the same consequences for Hegel as it does for Williams or for the various romantic and post-romantic thinkers mentioned earlier, its presence in Hegel does suggest that the expressive-recognitive condition and the rationality condition may not fit together in modernity in as unproblematic a way as Pippin’s narrative seems to suggest.

The downplaying of *this side* of Hegel’s historical account within Pippin’s reading is, I believe, linked to his relative inattention towards the role that distinctively Aristotelian *logical* categories play in Hegel’s philosophy—categories that go missing in the generally anti-Aristotelian ways of thinking about rationality and its logic dominant within the modern philosophy within which Pippin wants to locate Hegel. In the following I approach this by situating Hegel in relation to an ancient debate in which logical considerations get directly bound up with opposing conceptions of agency and freedom. This is the debate between Aristotle and his followers on the one hand, and the Stoics, on the other. Understanding Hegel’s position in relation to that debate might thereby shed some light on his conception of the nature of agency and freedom in modern life.

¹⁴ Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (London: Fontana Press, 1985), p. 167.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Aristotle and the Logic of Agency

Hegel is, I suggest, acutely aware of some of the consequences that the generally *reflective* forms of thinking can have for our capacity *for* agency, a capacity that finds its immediate form in what he called the “finite teleological standpoint”.¹⁶ As thinkers as diverse as Martin Heidegger and Wilfrid Sellars were later to stress, there seems something about the way that Aristotle had conceived of things or “*pragmata*” that gives them a type of immediate salience for goal-directed human activities.¹⁷ That Hegel too connected the categories of Aristotelian thought and agency is, I suggest, shown by the parallelism between his treatment of the object of “perception” in Chapter 2, of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the object worked upon by the slave in the master and slave section of Chapter 4.¹⁸

The perceptual object of the *Phenomenology*’s Chapter 2—the thing with many properties—has replaced the immediate object of “sense certainty” of Chapter 1, and Hegel focuses upon a number of its distinctive features. First, it must be grasped *as a universal*, an instance of some genus or thing-kind, a “this-such”, in contrast to the purported raw “this” of sense-certainty. But Hegel’s perceivable thing is not, I suggest, to be simply identified with a “this-such”, but with a this-such as modified in some particular way by some accidental property—“this-such’s *being thus and so*”. It is this structure that is necessary such that the “truth” of the thing can be “taken”, as Hegel makes clear with the German term for perception, “*Wahrnehmen*”.

Aristotle was wedded to a concept of truth as correspondence, and so, we might say, the structure of the truth-maker, the *pragma* that the truth is about, had to be isomorphic with that of the truth-bearer, the thought or expressed judgment about it, making the “thing” that *makes* the belief true somehow *judgment like*. It is because Aristotle worked with a logic of terms that the structure of *pragmata* can seem to conform to his logic of claims about those *pragmata*. Just as a perceptual judgment

¹⁶ G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature: 3 volumes*, ed. and trans. M. J. Petry (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970), vol. 1, § 245. (9:13)

¹⁷ Thus Heidegger writes, “The Greeks had an appropriate term for ‘Things’ [*Dinge*]: *πράγματα* —that is to say, that which one has to do with in one’s concerned dealings (*πραξις*).” Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), pp. 96-7. Similarly, Wilfrid Sellars noted that “the ‘root metaphor’ of the Aristotelian system is the making of artifacts by skilled craftsmen who understand the purpose their products are to serve.” Wilfrid Sellars, “Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*: An Interpretation”, in Wilfrid Sellars, *Philosophical Perspectives: History of Philosophy* (Atascadero: Ridgeview, 1979), p. 77.

¹⁸ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), Jon Stewart comments on the parallelism between the role of objects in the Perception chapter and in the context of the “Lordship and Bondage” section of Chapter 4. Jon Stewart, *The Unity of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999), p. 108, and 138–40.

will be about a particular this-such modified by some accident, so the judgment itself will have the structure of subject and monadic predicate terms, the former standing for the thing *qua* member of some genus, the latter for a property it instantiates. We should note that this distinctly Aristotelian structure carries an important *modal* dimension, such that for some pragma “this A’s being B”, the A referred to is *necessarily* an A but only *contingently* B. This A, then, *could be* non-B: this man is sitting, but he *could be* standing. And this has implications for our practical relations to *pragmata* since what is contingent is a candidate for alteration. Just as the perceived object can be regarded as an enduring, re-identifiable substance that persists through changes in its accidental properties, so an object worked upon can be thought of as persisting though changes of *its* properties, only now the changes involved are ones that are brought about by some intentional transforming activity—in the *Phenomenology*’s chapter 4, the productive activity of the slave.¹⁹

Along with its modal peculiarities, Aristotle’s conception of judgment also codifies a distinctive form of *temporality*. While in modern thought we think of the propositional content of a judgment, if true, as *eternally* true, this is not Aristotle’s view: “‘He sits’ may, for instance, be true” says Aristotle, but “if he rises, it then becomes false”.²⁰ In contemporary thought, the bare assertion “this man is sitting” would be strictly understood as *incomplete* and as short for “this man sitting at time t1”—*that* proposition remaining true when the man later stands. But for Aristotle, the

¹⁹ It is through the work of the slave, Hegel says, that “the negative relation to the object becomes the *form* of the object; it becomes something that *is persisting* because it is precisely for the laborer himself that the object has self-sufficiency”. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), § 195 (3:153–4). Logically, Aristotle thinks of negation as operating at two different levels. At the upper level, in the speech act of denying, negation is attached to the copula to signify that thing and property are separated from each other rather than conjoined. But negation also holds, and perhaps more primordially, between particular predicates and their contraries, in the way that the property *sitting* negates or excludes the contrary property *standing* such that my denial that Socrates is standing implies is his in some determinate non-standing state—sitting, lying down or whatever. And as, for Aristotle, the structure of the judgment shadows the structure of the pragma, we will be tempted to think of negation as it functions in assertions and denials as shadowing something that is fundamentally *done* to the pragma. In Hegel’s story, we might think of the slave as negating the *rawness* of a fish, for example, in cooking it, and the master as negating the entire pragma, the cooked fish, by eating it. See my “The Role of Work within the Processes of Recognition in Hegel’s Idealism”, in Nicholas H. Smith and Jean-Philippe Deranty (eds) *New Philosophies of Labour: Work and the Social Bond* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), pp. 41–62.

²⁰ Aristotle, *Categories*, in *Categories, On Interpretation, Prior Analytics*, trans. H. P. Cooke and Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938), 4a17-23. See also Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, in Hugh Tredennick (trans.), *Loeb Classical Library, Aristotle XVII–XVIII* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), 1051b8-18.

belief is complete as it is, and *changes truth value* with time.²¹ And connected with this, as Arthur Prior, pointed out, the *default* tense in Aristotle's system is the *actual*, not the "timeless" present, so that Aristotle conceives of the future and the past asymmetrically *from the perspective of* the present. This too has important practical consequences, as expressed in the well-known example from *de Interpretatione*, chapter 9 concerning tomorrow's sea battle.²² Aristotle suggests that a statement such as, "there will be a sea-battle tomorrow", is, when considered *today*, *neither true nor false*, and that it will only *become true or false tomorrow* depending upon whether the sea-battle occurs. And to preserve the indeterminacy of the future, Aristotle was willing to deny a logical principle that would be dear to the Stoics, the principle of bivalence that states that every judgment must be either true or false.²³ Thus, while Aristotle denied the principle of bivalence *so as* to avoid what he took to be its fatalistic consequences, the Stoic logician Chrysippus would *affirm* bivalence in the course of arguing *for* a causally deterministic universe. We might think then that the transition from Aristotelian to Chrysippian thought here would have important consequences for conceptions of agency. And so it did.

Susan Bobzien has traced how Aristotle's idea of the indeterminacy of the future became elaborated and, in some cases, distorted into forms of voluntaristic libertarianism, by later Peripatetics in their efforts to oppose the causally deterministic worldview affirmed by the Stoics.²⁴ In Book 3 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle had linked the actions that are "*eph' hemin*"—that is, actions that "depend on" us and about which we can deliberate—with the modality of possibility.²⁵ "By 'possible' things I mean things that might be brought about by our own efforts."²⁶ But Aristotle

²¹ This seems to be the basis of the puzzling feature of Aristotelian *pragma* that, in contrast to modern "states of affairs" or "facts", that they can actually *be* false. See, for example, Paolo Crivelli, *Aristotle on Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 4.

²² As Prior expresses it, "Instead of statements being true and false *at* different times, we have predicates being timeless true or false *of* different times." Arthur N. Prior, *Time and Modality: Being the John Locke Lectures for 1955-6 delivered in the University of Oxford* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 25. According to Prior, the idea of timelessly true or false propositions only started to become the dominant view in the nineteenth century, and it wasn't until the turn of the twentieth century that it became the *standard* view within both *traditional* approaches to logic with Keynes, Venn and Johnson and the new logic championed by Russell (*ibid.*, p. 116).

²³ This indeterminist conception of *future* as opposed to past states of affairs was to become an object of debate between later Peripatetics, who affirmed a type of libertarian indeterminism about the future, and the Stoics who defended causal determinism and a type of compatibilism.

²⁴ Susanne Bobzien "The Inadvertent Conception and Late Birth of the Free-Will Problem" *Phronesis*, 43 (1998), pp. 133-175.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

²⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. and intro. Christopher Rowe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1112b 26-30.

also claims in that work that if an action is possible, then so too is its contrary. If virtue is in our power, then so too is vice.²⁷ It was this notion that was later given a libertarian gloss by Alexander of Aphrodisias with the idea that regardless of either external constraint or internal psychological factors, rational beings are always free to choose to do otherwise.²⁸ While Alexander's was an anachronistic reading of Aristotle's position, it nevertheless captured something of what is sometimes described as Aristotle's "two-sided potestative" account of the modality of actions which are "up to us", an aspect of Aristotle's account that importantly separates it from that of the Stoics.

When, in *Nichomachean Ethics* Aristotle links the capacity for virtue with the capacity for vice he seems to suggest that it is because the exercise of virtue will involve some kind of instrumental dimension.²⁹ "Now the exercise of the virtues is concerned with means. Therefore virtue also is in our own power, and so too vice."³⁰ This allusion to instrumental activity seems significant, as his most systematic treatment of two-sided possibility, found in *Metaphysics* Bk IX, is in the context of a discussion of the powers exercised in *productive* arts such as house-building or medicine.³¹ Every rational potency, says Aristotle, "admits equally of contrary results, but irrational potencies admit of one result only. E.g., heat can only produce heat, but medical science can produce disease and health".³²

Once more, what emerges here is a link between human action and a categorical structure in which contrary determinations hold as the possible determinations of a substance that is an instance of a genus—but now the idea is expressed in terms of the idea of a double-sided potency possessed by the agent whose actions are capable of producing one state of affairs *or* its contrary. And from

²⁷ "Now the exercise of the virtues is concerned with means. Therefore virtue also is in our own power, and so too vice." Ibid., 1113b 6-8.

²⁸ Bobzien, "The Inadvertent Conception and Late Birth of the Free-Will Problem", pp. 138–9.

²⁹ This dimension of Aristotle's ethics has recently been stressed in Tom Angier, *Technē in Aristotle's Ethics: Crafting the Moral Life*, (London: Continuum, 2010).

³⁰ Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1113b 6-8.

³¹ Here I am largely following the presentation in Jonathan Beere, *Doing and Being: An Interpretation of Aristotle's Metaphysics Theta* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

³² Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1046b. Bobzien says that "But Aristotle's concept of what depends us (sic) does not entail indeterminism. ... In none of the passages does Aristotle give a philosophical definition of that which depends on us; nor is he concerned with fate or causal determinism; and certainly there is no mention of freedom to act or choose otherwise, circumstances and agent being the same." Bobzien, "The Inadvertent Conception and Late Birth of the Free-Will Problem", p. 144. Nevertheless, Aristotle *does* seem to have been arguing against future determinism in other contexts, especially *Metaphysics* Theta, where he is opposed to Megarian conceptions of determinism.

Aristotle's point of view, the Stoic's causally deterministic world cannot accommodate such possibilities since the Stoic treats human actions as on a par with causally determined events, and "irrational potencies admit of one result only. E.g., heat can only produce heat". The standard Stoic answer to the question of how we could be held responsible for actions in a deterministic world had indeed been a recognizable form of compatibilism, not unlike that of Hobbes or Hume. An action could be said to have been dependent on me if it was a product of my nature—my desires, beliefs and so on—rather than being solely dependent on external circumstance. In this system, "what makes an agent morally responsible is that the agent, and not something else causes the action".³³ Thus in the Stoic deterministic world there can be no place for Aristotle's two-sided conception of possibility. There, the contrary of any actual action must be held to be *impossible*.

Aristotelian and Stoic Logics

These metaphysical aspects of Stoicism are in keeping with the conception of logic they employed. The Stoics are now generally regarded as having made significant advances in logic in developing propositional logic as opposed to Aristotle's term-based syllogistic. It is often said that it wasn't until the dominance of Aristotelian logic was broken at the end of the nineteenth century that these advances could be appreciated.³⁴ When to this fact is added Hegel's generally dismissive attitude towards the project of formalizing logic, it might seem unlikely that Hegel would be sensitive to these issues, but his description of the Stoics in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* suggest otherwise.³⁵

The Stoics, says Hegel, "developed *formal logic* because they had made thinking their principle",³⁶ and he represents this as a definite advance over the approach of Aristotle.³⁷ For the Stoics, he notes, logic is "logic in the sense that it

³³ Bobzien, "The Inadvertent Conception and Late Birth of the Free-Will Problem", p. 143.

³⁴ Thus Łukasiewicz, writing in the 1930s, could claim that the "fundamental difference between the logic of propositions and the logic of terms was unknown to any of the older historians of logic". Jan Łukasiewicz, "On the history of the logic of proposition" (1934), in Storrs McCall (ed.), *Polish Logic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 67.

³⁵ In the "Preface to the second edition" of the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant had famously claimed that logic since the time of Aristotle and up to the present "has been unable to take a single step forward, and therefore seems to all appearance to be finished and complete". Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), B viii.

³⁶ G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), vol. 2, p. 255 (19:273).

³⁷ Logic "is no longer as with Aristotle, at least in regard to the categories, undecided as to whether the forms of the understanding are not at the same time the

expresses the activity of the understanding as conscious understanding; it is no longer as with Aristotle, at least in regard to the categories, undecided as to whether the forms of the understanding are not at the same time the realities of things; for the forms of thought are set forth as such for themselves”.³⁸ While Aristotle seemed to think of perception as involving the mind’s internalization of the *form of the pragma itself*, the Stoics, with their notions of incorporeal *sayables* “*leckta*” and *assertibles* “*axiomata*”, clearly thought of perceptual contents as in some way *propositional*. When Hegel says that for the Stoics, “the truth of the object itself is contained in the fact that this objective corresponds to thought, and not the thought to the objective”,³⁹ and that for them the criterion of truth is “consequently only the principle of contradiction”,⁴⁰ he seems to be suggesting that any belief will be true for the Stoics to the extent that it can be made consistent with—can be brought into *non-contradictory relations with*—other beliefs.⁴¹ We might say that from this point of view, all perceptual beliefs will fallible and will be taken to be true to the extent that they *survive challenges* within the space of reasons.

That Hegel was receptive to the significant differences between approaches to cognition that can be expressed within term and propositional logics respectively is, I believe, backed up by his treatment of judgment in Book 3 of the *Science of Logic*. In the opening pages he contrasts two approaches to the structure of judgment: a term-first approach in which subject and predicate are “considered complete, each on its own account, apart from the other”,⁴² and an approach in which subject and predicate

realities of things”. Ibid (19:274).

³⁸ *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. Haldane and Simson, vol. II, p. 255 (19:273–4). While Hegel attributes to Aristotle the idea of “thought thinking itself”, it seems that it is only with this Stoics that this becomes explicit or self-conscious.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 252 (19:271).

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 254 (19:273).

⁴¹ These comments signal an appreciation of the propositionally based logical features of Stoic thought. Aristotle is chided for conceiving of the contents of thought too empirically, that is, on the model of objects presented *perceptually*. However, the Stoics have moved beyond the outlook of “perception” as Hegel had characterized it in Chapter 2 or the *Phenomenology of Spirit* to that of “the understanding” treated in Chapter 3. Indeed, Hegel’s account seems generally in line with contemporary attitudes to the Stoics. Thus Julia Annas comments on the degree to which the Stoics conceive of the contents of perception in logico-linguistic ways: “from Chrysippus onward what was found most striking about the theory was the extent to which it analyzed perception in terms of the reception of content and its articulation in linguistic form”. Julia E. Annas, *Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 74-5. For the Stoics, “There are no perceptions which do not involve conceptualization and thinking”, a feature she thinks of as distinctively *Kantian*. Ibid. p. 78.

⁴² G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller ((London: Allen and Unwin, 1969), p. 625 (6:304).

terms receive their determination “in the judgment first”.⁴³ Clearly the former reflects the approach of term logics like that of Aristotle, while the latter seems to allude to the approach in which the components of the judgment are treated in terms of their contribution to the propositional content—distinctively, their contribution to its truth.⁴⁴ For Hegel, the structure of objects cannot be considered separately from the structure of judgments about them, and so differing conceptions of judgment structure must go together with differing conceptions of objecthood. While the object of Aristotelian judgment is an instance of a thing-kind made determinate by contingent properties, this characterization will not hold for the object of judgment considered from the latter perspective. Now the subject of the judgment considered in isolation from the predicate becomes what Hegel describes as “the thing without qualities [*das Ding ohne Eigenschaften*] ... an empty indeterminate ground ... the Notion enclosed within itself, which only receives a differentiation and determinateness in the predicate”.⁴⁵ The idea of the objects presented within the structure of propositional logics as “without qualities”, and so qualities that could serve as action-guiding ones in Williams’s sense, appears also in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*. “The substance of the world *can* only determine a form and not any material properties. ... Roughly speaking” Wittgenstein goes on, “objects are colourless”.⁴⁶ But we don’t need to see Hegel as anticipating Wittgenstein to have appreciated this point, as he was well aware of Leibniz’s treatment of the judgment in which *both* subject and predicate

⁴³ Ibid., p. 627 (6:306).

⁴⁴ For Frege or Wittgenstein, for example, the priority of the proposition is signaled by the so-called “context principle” according to which “[t]he meaning of a word must be asked for in the context of a proposition, not in isolation”. G. Frege, “The Foundations of Arithmetic”, in Michael Beaney (ed.), *The Frege Reader*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 90 (see also, p. 108). Wittgenstein was to effectively repeat this claim with “[o]nly the proposition has sense; only in the nexus of a proposition has a name meaning”. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C. K. Ogden, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1922), paragraph. 3.3. It is this element of Hegel’s attitude to thought, for example, that has been taken up and developed by Robert Brandom in his post-Fregean “inferentialist” interpretation of Hegel, when he treats the meaning of subsentential parts of a judgment in terms of their contribution to the truth-value of the judgment and in turn treats the judgment as bearer of a truth value in terms of its contribution to the validity of some inference. But while any trace of term logic disappears in Brandom, Hegel himself seems to think of the two contrasting analyses of judgment structure as expressions of “thought determinations” of “being” and “essence”, both of which become “aufgehoben” into some more comprehensive understanding.

⁴⁵ Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, p. 628 (6:307). Term logics are generally thought as favouring an “intensional” interpretation, and proposition logics an “extensional” one, and indeed an “extensional” reading of the reflected conception of relation of subject and predicate is suggested when Hegel says that here, “the subject stands in relation to an externality, is open to the influence of other things and thereby becomes actively opposed to them”. Ibid., (6:308).

⁴⁶ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 2.0231, 2.0232.

terms came to be treated as *concepts* predicated of some *hidden third* that could no longer be thought of on the model of an instance of a kind.⁴⁷

If the Aristotelian *thing-kind instance* modified by changeable properties instantiated a conception of objecthood as salient for the transformative capacities of an agent, what, we might ask, does the replacement of *this* normative conception of objectivity with some “thing without qualities” signal for the *subjects* for whom such a conception of objectivity will be normative? This question was debated in the ancient world, although not in those terms, and Hegel was clearly aware of this debate and its relevance for modern times.

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Stoic Logic for Life

For Hegel, the adoption of the “reflective” attitude of the Stoics was crucial to any systematic articulation of the conceptual realm and the development of philosophical thought. While Hegel clearly rates the “speculative” approach of Plato and Aristotle higher than later periods of Greek philosophy, he nevertheless complains about the unsystematic nature of their thought,⁴⁸ and at the end of classical period of ancient philosophy there remained, he states, a need for “the whole extent of what is known [to] appear as one organization of the notion”. The schools of Stoicism and Epicureanism first addressed this need, and, in Hegel’s account, systematicity later flowered in the neo-Platonists.

At the heart of Stoic epistemology was the idea of the criterion or “cataleptic phantasy”, the possession of which allowed a rational agent to give or withhold *assent* to that presented in perception or, in relation to action, impulse. It was this doctrine of the criterion that, according to Hegel, allowed the Stoic to be concerned with both the unity of thought *and* the unity of the self, as the Stoic believed that freedom was achieved by “holding oneself in a pure harmony with oneself of a merely thinking nature”.⁴⁹ As we have seen, Hegel interpreted the Stoic criterion as the “the principle

⁴⁷ See Hegel’s comments on the “mathematical syllogism” and its development by Leibniz and Ploucquet in *Science of Logic*, pp. 679–86 (6:371–380). Within the mathematical syllogism, two determinations are deemed equal if they are equal to a *third* that “has absolutely no determination whatever as against its extremes”. *Ibid.*, p. 679 (6:371). The idea that the subject and predicate of a categorical judgment should be understood in terms of the identity of each term with some “*tertium commune*” had been taken by Leibniz from Johannes Raue (1610–79). See Mirella Capozzi and Gino Roncaglia, “Logic and Philosophy of Logic from Humanism to Kant”, in Leila Haaparanta (ed.) *The Development of Modern Logic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 94–5.

⁴⁸ The approaches of both Plato and Aristotle, he says, “are not in the form of a system” Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, p. 229 (19:246).

⁴⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, p. 263 (19:283). Thus, while Hegel clearly values the “speculative” approach of Plato and Aristotle over later

of contradiction”—the principle concerning survival within the “space of reasons”. As Michel Gourinat has commented, Hegel here regiments his account of the Stoic doctrine “within a philosophical vocabulary prescribed by Kant” and that is in contradiction with the ancient texts.⁵⁰ But this is consistent with Hegel’s attitude to what he takes to be the Stoics *misunderstanding* of their own practice. They *are* implicit Kantians, but in their own eyes, regard themselves as types of empiricists—they understand their own criterion within the form of *Vorstellung*, rather than capture it in thought. Hegel’s self-consciously anachronistic reading of the Stoics makes the consequences of Stoic rationality even more pertinent for modern times, and the consequences of this conception of rationality are clear for him.⁵¹

The ‘inner freedom’ of this ‘self-contained subject’ comes, of course, at a price—the price of the problems that Hegel attributes to a one-sided conception of the subject as abstractly universal. This demand for unity for the self found in the Stoic that allows the focus on the systematicity or “harmony” of the individual’s theoretical and practical thought is, as we have seen, the expression of the *loss* of all action-salient content—content within which an agent might recognize him or herself as a being with the powers to bring about changes in the world. Such loss of concrete content Hegel signals with his repeated characterization of Stoic philosophy as “formal”. Stoicism thus came to flourish in imperial Rome, a context in which, the Stoic withdraws interest *from the surrounding concrete world* in order to work upon and bring unity to his or her own *self*, thus initiating an approach to philosophy *as “Bildung”* or, as we might say, culture and self-cultivation. “As a universal form of the World-Spirit, Stoicism could only appear on the scene in a time of universal fear and bondage, but also a time of a universal culture [*einer allgemeinen Bildung*] which had raised the shaping of character [*das Bilden*] to the level of thought”.⁵² Just as the

periods of Greek philosophy, he nevertheless complains about the unsystematic nature of their thought. At the end of classical period of ancient philosophy there remained a need for “the whole extent of what is known [to] appear as one organization of the notion” (ibid., p. 229 (19:247)), a need that was addressed only in the “second period” of ancient philosophy comprising the approaches of the “Stoics, Epicureans, New Academy, and Skeptics” (ibid., p. 231 (19:249)).

⁵⁰ C.f., Gourinat, “Hegel et le stoïcisme”, in G. Romeyer Dherbey and J.-B. Gourinat, *Les Stoïciens* (Paris: Vrin, 2004), p. 537. “In ignoring the connotations that Cicero had given to the meaning of ‘katalypsis’, and in interpreting *comprehensio* as *conceptus* and not *perceptio*, Hegel finds it ‘interesting’ that the Stoics ‘have expressed the truth as consisting in the object in as much that it is thought’. In this interpretation, the truth is not found in the correction of thought by the perception of the thing, but in the activity of spirit, which notes the adequation of its intuitions, which are representations of the thing, to its concepts, which come from its own spontaneity. Thus understood, Stoicism is already a Kantianism.” Ibid., p. 537.

⁵¹ For an extended treatment of the significance of Stoicism for Hegel, see Kenley Dove, “Logic and Theory in Aristotle, Stoicism, Hegel”, *The Philosophical Forum*, vol. 37 (2006), pp. 265–320.

⁵² Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §199 (3:157–8), translation modified.

Stoic's world corresponding to the Stoic's normative criterion is really a world of "things without qualities", the Stoic becomes the prototype of the modern *man* "*ohne Eigenschaften*"—a subject whose subjective life is held to the norm of a point-like subject who, in Wittgenstein's words "does not belong to the world but ... is a limit of the world".⁵³ This is a conception of subjectivity as the very negation of the "*Beisichsein*" we would find in the Greeks. But it is a negation that this immediate form of *Beisichsein* was somehow fated to go through, and this is a process full of hazards.

Pippin Once More

I have suggested that Pippin's account of Hegel's way of thinking about free action is largely silent on the threat to free action that Hegel sees as bound up with the type of reflective incorporation of practical intentions into the space of reason giving, and that this is consequential upon a tendency to ignore the relevance Hegel gives to Aristotelian forms of categorization. Specific effects of this, I believe, can be seen in peculiarities of Pippin's approach that have been criticized by others. I will finish by pointing to two of these: his characterization of Hegel's position in relation to standard compatibilist debates, and his tendency to dismiss considerations of causality in issues of free agency.

Pippin is surely right to dissociate Hegel from any suggestion of a libertarian or "voluntaristic" metaphysics with the implication of some type of immaterial noumenal subject with causal powers. Thus he separates Hegel from accounts of freedom that stress the capacity to do or choose to do otherwise. However, the idea of action as involving the capacity to do otherwise is not restricted to philosophies like that of Alexander, and opposing such a position is not tantamount to embracing compatibilism. While Alexander's was an anachronistic reading of Aristotle, it nevertheless, as we have seen, captured something of his "two-sided potestative" modal account of actions which are "up to us", an aspect of Aristotle's account that importantly separates it from that of the Stoics.

Without being beholden to some pre-critical fixed metaphysical schema, the question of who—say Aristotle or Chrysippus—is right, in some abstract metaphysical sense of right, about, say, the determinacy or indeterminacy of future states of affairs, presumably drops away from Hegel's considerations. But this does not mean that the *practical* relevance of these competing ways of categorizing the self and its world similarly drop away from consideration. These are categories in terms of which intentional subjects are meant to recognize each other and themselves, and they are ones that thereby shape their intentional relations to the world. Crudely, we can contrast the Aristotelian categories as ones that schematize substances in such a way

⁵³ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 5.632.

that cognizers can understand them as amenable to transformation by powers that *they* possess, and that the Stoic categories as ones that *do not*.

Pippin portrays Hegel as a type of *casual* compatibilist who is “not much interested in establishing in detail that freedom as he understands it is compatible with universal causal determinism”.⁵⁴ I read these words as suggesting that *in fact*, freedom as Hegel understands it *is*, for Pippin “compatible with universal causal determinism”, but this, I think, gets the relation of Hegel to the compatibilist doctrine wrong. We might just as easily describe Hegel as an *incompatibilist*, not because he is committed to some metaphysical claim about noumenal causation, but in that he takes the action-guiding categories of Aristotelian thought to be incompatible with the ones of Stoic thought. And, moreover, it seems to me that he *is* committed to “establishing in detail” an account of how these differing categorical structures are to be *reconciled* as I take something like that to be the project pursued in Book 3 of the *Science of Logic*. And while such a project of reconciliation might suggest a type of higher-order “compatibilism”, this will be (if you will pardon the Hegelese) *a compatibilism of compatibilism and incompatibilism*. That is, it will be a type of “compatibilism” that insists upon giving distinct places to both sets of categories within the life of embodied, materially and culturally located subjects, and one that refuses to read “compatible with” as anything like “reducible to”. Grasping Hegel’s solution to the question of how to understand this reconciliation as possible, I suggest, will involve accounting for more of those exotic features of Hegel’s logical project—especially those to do with his take on contradiction—than would be involved in understanding him as the casual compatibilist that Pippin suggests.⁵⁵

Focusing on the role of differing categorial structures within Hegel also allows us to see more clearly the way that issues of expression and causation may be linked for him. Pippin has been criticized by a number of commentators for his dismissal of causal considerations from his expressivist approach to action: “Contrary to many compatibilists”, Pippin says of Hegel, “being free does not involve any sort of causality at all”.⁵⁶ But the notion of causality will be interpreted within the

⁵⁴ Pippin, *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy*, pp. 15–16. Hegel “does not worry at all about the ‘freedom of the will’ problem”. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵⁵ See my *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), ch. 7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 38. Elsewhere, Pippin’s claim is more tempered—for example, in the idea that for Hegel being free “does not involve any *special* sort of causality at all”. *Ibid.*, 186n7. This dismissal of considerations of self as cause from Hegel’s conception of freedom has come in for particular criticism. Thus Christopher Yeomans writes that “although both the retrospective element and the deemphasis of individual deliberation strike me as deep insights of Hegel’s account, this cannot be the whole story of free will. Without a causal element, we are missing half of the feedback loop that connects past and future actions, and claiming that my actions are *products* of my own will seems like a pun”. Christopher Yeomans, “Review of

Aristotelian and Stoic systems in different ways, and Pippin's way of expressing it seems to presuppose the Stoic way.

In Aristotle's account of productive action, the changes I bring about in the perceivable pragmata of my world *do* express my "two-sided potestative" capacities. Here causation and expression fit reasonably together neatly, as played out in the Aristotelian taxonomy of material, formal, efficient and final causes. But causation in the Stoic world will no longer mean something like the activation of a potency or the imposition of a form, and while the Stoic treatment of causality was not the same as the modern Humean "event" conception of causation, it was, with its linking of causality to the logic of the *conditional*, clearly headed in that direction. That is, in contrast to its Aristotelian counterpart, Stoic logic expressed a way of thinking about causality in which it became impossible to see how causal processes *could* express the self. Moreover, the compatibilist doctrine becomes an entirely theoretical response—Hegel would say "formal" response—to just this problem. Compatibilism gives us a story about how certain natural processes can be understood in an abstract way as aspects of ourselves, but it doesn't thereby allow us to *recognize ourselves* in those processes in a way that is significant for our practice. Hegel's response to this situation, I suggest, was not to hold to the abstract separation of the "expressive" and the "causal" or the "space of reasons" and "space of causes", but rather, to refuse to hypostatize the view of the world on which this separation was based—the Stoic view of the world. Hegel may indeed have been a "modernist" as Pippin stresses, but his was a modernism suspicious of the hegemony that Stoic thought had acquired in the modern period and tempered by the effort to preserve a place for "immediacy" within the increasingly mediated structures of modern life.

Hegel's Practical Philosophy", *Ethics*, Vol. 119, No. 4 (July 2009), p. 786. A similar criticism has been voiced by Hans-Herbert Kögler, in "Recognition and the Resurgence of Intentional Agency", *Inquiry*, 53 (2011), 450–469. Yeomans's criticism is developed in his, *Freedom and Reflection: Hegel and the Logic of Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).