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Hegel
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Hegel and/in/on Translation

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TRANSLATING HEGEL'S *LOGIC.*
ABSOLUTE NEGATIVITY AND THE CRISIS OF PHILOSOPHY AS AN INSTITUTION

by Marcin Pańków[*]

Abstract. *The following text is a report on the experience of translating Hegel's* Logic *and represents a reflection on the uniqueness of this experience. I discuss the historical context of Hegel's project putting emphasis on the crisis of philosophy as an institution in the early Romantic era. I try to show how Hegel's program from 1807 can be treated as a strategy for solving this crisis in the field of confrontation between the idea of scientific philosophy and the new idea of the aesthetic absolute. I will put forward the hypothesis that in the field of this confrontation Hegel should be translated as a modern writer. In the next step, I try to show how this strategy manifests itself in the specific features of Hegel's discourse in relation to the absolute negativity. Finally, I discuss some characteristic translational difficulties related to the terms from* Science of Logic*, with a particular emphasis on the central problem of semantic game of the categories of reflection and shine.*

Keywords: *Absolute negativity; Aesthetics; Irony; Romanticism; Shine; Reflection*

> Whenever I think of humour, I think of the philosopher Hegel; I got some of his books out of the library so that I'd be a match for you philosophically. […] He had such a good sense of humour that he couldn't even conceive of something like order, for example, without disorder. […] With him, concepts were always seated rather unsteadily on the fence, which seems lovely at first, until the fence collapses.
> I once read his book *Science of Logic* when I had rheumatism and couldn't move. It's one of the great humoristic works of world literature. It talks about the life of concepts, those

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slippery, unstable, irresponsible existences; the way they insult each other and draw their knives on each other and then sit down to dinner together as if nothing had happened. They appear in couples, so to speak – each is married to its opposite and they conduct their business as a couple: that is to say they sign contracts as a couple, bring lawsuits as a couple, carry out raids and break-ins as a couple, write books and give sworn statements as a couple; and a completely discordant, quarrelsome couple at that! […] The greatest rabble-rousers regard themselves as the disciples of the greatest champion of the state. Incidentally, the fact that they have a sense of humour says something for them. I've never met a humourless person who understood Hegel's dialectic[1].

Translating Hegel is challenging for at least three reasons which, in various ways, express the radical character of his thought. First, his conceptual extremity is striking. Hegel probably went farthest in speculation. He aspired to glimpse the realm of «truth unveiled, truth as it is in and for itself» – a project of almost theological ambitions. For this purpose, he created a conceptual system characterised by an exceptional degree of abstraction and subtle complexity[2]. Second, in historical terms, Hegel's era was unique insofar as it saw an unprecedented, deep identity crisis reaching the institution of philosophy itself, its foundations and forms of expression – not to mention that the field of philosophical topics had already fractured. Third, Hegel was the first to identify this crisis in the famous remark about philosophy as its own time apprehended

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[1] B. Brecht, *Bertolt Brecht's Refugee Conversations*, trans. by R. Fursland, ed. by T. Kuhn, London, Methuen Drama, 2020, pp. 62-63.

[2] G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. and ed. by G. di Giovanni, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 29. «Dieses Reich ist die Wahrheit, wie sie ohne Hülle an und für sich selbst ist. Man kann sich deswegen ausdrücken, daß dieser Inhalt die Darstellung Gottes ist, wie er in seinem ewigen Wesen vor der Erschaffung der Natur und eines endlichen Geistes ist» (G.W.F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, Band I, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1986, p. 44).

in thoughts[3]. He was both the last metaphysician and the first 'post-metaphysical' thinker in contemporary terms since he initiated the modern ontology of historicity.

Certainly, Hegel was not a megalomaniac and he realized that the formula of apprehending time in thoughts also applied to him. His writing strategy, style and categories – developed in the first decade of the nineteenth century – were from the very beginning practical forms of self-determination created in the face of the crisis of philosophy as an institution. Hegel would follow the imperative to seek real knowledge, taking a firm position on this complex subject, especially in debates about adequate forms of philosophical expression, which had never been as important as in Plato's time.

The subject of the crisis of philosophy as an institution recurs in Hegel's texts. When his language was crystallizing around 1807 it was already clear that this crisis would not be limited any longer to certain specific theses or achievements, especially in the mainstream, which until then was dominated by epistemological issues. Serious problems arose in this field already in the days of Hume and Kant, but in Hegel's time the crisis would become widespread. The practical position of philosophizing in general was called into question, along with its possible identity, authority, and appropriate forms of building up authority. The very convention of philosophical writing was undermined[4].

A new factor came to play an important role in this situation. Already in the last decade of eighteenth century, when Hegel was an adolescent, the status of 'the aesthetic' changed radically. Owing first to Kant and Schiller, and later to the Frankfurt School, *das*

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[3] Id., *Philosophy of Right*, trans. by S.W. Dyde, Kitchener, Batoche Books, 2001, p. 19.

[4] Hegel diagnoses all aspects of this crisis – in terms of both content (metaphysics) and form (convention) – in the *Preface* to *System of Sciences* (1807). However, it continues to act as a central theme in his subsequent significant prefaces – to *Logic* (1812) and to *Philosophy of Right* (1820) – where he uses a phrase introduced first in *Logic* – «sonderbarer Schauspiel» – to describe the current state of philosophy (e.g. in *Logic* he discusses the dissolution of the departments of metaphysics in France, comparing academic institutions to brothels in a footnote, etc.).

Ästhetische has risen to the rank of an autonomous dimension. Before, at the level of writing practice, its role was limited to securing a canon of 'elegance' (from poetry to scientific theory and military reports). Romanticism changed this in literature, but the discourse of philosophy turned out to be so closely related that the dominant cognitive imperatives in this field would cease to be a matter of pure content as opposed to style, which was understood simply as a mode of matching content to an appropriate form (classically-minded, Hegel still seemed to consider this to be obligatory in art). When the idea of the aesthetic absolute came into focus, *das Ästhetische* as such has proven to be the privileged medium of cognitive activity (from Schiller to Rancière, or from Schelling and the Schlegel brothers to Adorno). Hegel's contemporaries already regarded it to be the key to truth (as 'aesthetic experience' and later *intellektuelle Anschaunng*).

Hegel developed his original language in direct reference to this. On the one hand, his discourse was a strategy of solving the crisis by criticizing *Schulphilosophie*, which was perceived as burdened with outdated formalities and conventions, as well as ill-adapted to new cultural needs, which would not be satisfied by *Popularphilosophie* as well. On the other hand, he did not identify with Romanticism and would cling to Fichte's idea of *Wissenschaft*. Therefore, he would criticise Romanticism, casting it as an opponent and pushing the ball down its field. This alone can explain the allusiveness of his discourse, his rhetorical tactic developed to overcome various complications, the many shades of humour and irony, and the games he would play with the reader, as seen already in the first sentences of *Phenomenology*. Hegel's discourse can be viewed as a manifestation of the tendency formed as an attempt to combine a new style of criticising Romanticism with the pathos of *Wissenschaft*, understood in Fichtean fashion, or with *Weltphilosophie* in the Kantian sense. As a result, the new style offered a polemical game involving contradictory tendencies: the pragmatism of the 'work of the concept' and the speculative idealism of the mystical 'totality'.

Hegel was aware of being part of a breakthrough – one that Heine compared to the French Revolution. At the same time, he ought to be regarded as witness to and midwife of the crisis in

philosophy, which would only deepen in the twentieth century. In short, Hegel *should be translated as a modern writer.*

1. *Translating absolute negativity*

Hegel's modern writing strategy manifests on many levels, ranging from minor issues to some of the most important aspects of his thought. As is easy to notice, although he often employs abstract terminology, in prefaces and introductions to his works he disregards rigid definitions and instead draws attention to the problem of convention and style. Hegel cared greatly for his style, despite often being quite cryptic, whether in the precise and lucid *Introduction* to *Phenomenology*, or in the slightly confusing and overwhelming *Preface* to *Phenomenology* as well as in central parts of *Logic*, where he turns poetic and mysterious to an unprecedented degree. In both of these works he returns *ad hoc* to the semi-formulated theory of philosophical expression revolving around the issue of the productivity of negation and the 'speculative sentence'. The form of philosophical expression is extensively discussed in many passages in prefaces and introductions to *Phenomenology* and *Logic* – works that also variously touch upon the crisis of philosophical writing conventions.

An important question related to translation seems to be contained in Hegel's remark that philosophy «stands in no need of special terminology; true, some words are to be taken from foreign languages; yet, through use these have already acquired citizenship in it and an affected purism would be all the more out of place where everything depends on meaning the most»[5]. These words can be interpreted in many ways, but they certainly concern the benefits of using a *natural* language, specifically praising its semiotic plasticity and allusiveness. This passage also expresses Hegel's opposition to the copying of deductive patterns from exact sciences *à la* Spinoza. Fichte still followed this model, which manifested in rigid or even military-style lack of ambiguity of the *Wissenschaftslehre* discourse. In a further comment on the expendability of «affected

[5] Id., *Science of Logic*, pp. 12-13.

purism […] where everything depends on meaning the most» (*wo es am entschiedensten auf die Sache ankommt*) Hegel adds yet another element, complaining about the lack of freedom in the current, rule-bound philosophical style as well as its inability to showcase artistry and finesse.

This does not change the fact that in the nineteenth century Hegel undoubtedly parted with the view, formulated in the first system program, that the future of philosophy would lie in *Dichtung*[6]. The above remark rather proves that he approached the matter quite pragmatically, recognizing the affinity between philosophy and literature, though without relinquishing the former's claim to autonomy and scientific status. This approach would be reflected in the balance between dialectics, seen as the art of thinking in terms of alternatives, and the tendency to comprehend dialectics systematically.

From the perspective of a translator, the main problem consists in the fact that Hegel would associate the truthfulness of this method with absolute negativity and thus with irony. Formerly perceived as poetic or literary, irony has paradoxically gained the status of something 'innermost' and 'objective' in Hegel's methodology. This view is present in his criticism of Kant's theory of *Urteilskraft* in the first chapter of the *Logic of Essence*[7]. The entire theory of reflection developed in the *Logic of Essence* can be interpreted as an attempt to move beyond the Kantian position.

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[6] See *Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus.* According to researchers, it was written by Hegel, at least physically.

[7] «Now the negativity just considered constitutes the *turning point* of the movement of the concept. It is the *simple point of the negative self-reference*, the innermost source of all activity, of living and spiritual self-movement […]. The *second* negative at which we have arrived, the negative of the negative, is this sublating of contradiction, and it too, just like contradiction, is *not an act of external reflection*; for it is on the contrary the *innermost*, *objective moment* of the life of spirit by virtue of which a *subject* is a *person* is *free*» (Hegel, *Science of Logic*, pp. 745-746). See also C. Iber, *Hegels dialektische Methode nach dem Schlußkapitel der Logik und ihre subjektivitätstheoretischen Implikationen*, in Id., *Subjektivität, Vernunft und ihre Kritik. Prager Vorlesungen über den deutschen Idealismus*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1999, pp. 175-191.

2. Darstellung

Therefore, the problem with translating Hegel turns out to revolve around *kritische Darstellung* (*des Bewußtseins*, *des Denkens*). Two imperatives converge in this central figure of Hegel's (self)expression: the scientific (accuracy, focus on thought and logic, etc.) and the literary (dramatic tension, pace, perspective, plasticity, relevance). *Darstellung* would be no longer a formal way of giving thought an elegant form. The literary quality itself interferes with the message, altering the strategies of presenting and binding content. It becomes a mode of constructing a theoretical object. In this respect, Hegel's dialectic sealed the fate of older metaphysics characterised by the early modern Cartesian pattern of purely logical, 'uninvolved' objectification. Since Hegel, the discourse of philosophy has entered a new era dominated by a discursive convention – critical, local, indirect – that is characteristic of contemporary post-metaphysical writing under the banner of *critical theory*.

This may be the reason why the *Preface* to *Phenomenology* discusses the objectively conceptual role of rhythm in meaningful expression or its purely material accents, later addressed by Freud and the structuralists. Hegel makes it clear to any of his future translators that, in his case, the purely material dimension of meaning (*signifiant*) is more sensitive than – for example – in classics such as Marx or Rousseau. In their case, the overtones of dialectical paradoxes depend on skilful translation of sentence structures. In the case of Hegel, however, it becomes necessary to engage in a semantic game that would allow these paradoxes to resound[8].

Hegel appreciated and eagerly imitated all sorts of approaches and solutions. He would practice this with great commitment, even if he did not fully identify with his sources, which resembles the use of free indirect speech in prose. Following the example offered by Theunissen in *Sein und Schein*, German researchers demonstrated in various ways that Hegel's discourse achieves a certain «unity of the exposition and critique»[9]. It oscillates between *das betrachtende*

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[8] See the fourth part of the *Preface* to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

[9] M. Theunissen, *Sein und Schein. Die kritische Funktion der Hegelschen Logik*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1980, p. 85ff.

Denken and *das betrachtete Denken*. The goal would be to capture the often subtle ways of establishing distance between these modalities[10]. This difference has been indicated by Bertolt Brecht (see the motto to this article), and was even signalled earlier by Ludwig Feuerbach in a passage that serves as a motto to Theunissen's book[11]. In both *Phenomenology* and *Logic* Hegel deploys various discourses and announces his purposes only indirectly.

3. *The experience of translating Hegel*

It can be argued that similar issues determine the success of philosophical translation, even more so than in any another case. However, knowledge about them does not help to formulate beneficial rules. The only such rule would probably posit readiness to confront non-schematic lines of reasoning, which in Hegel's case sometimes fork and then surprisingly converge. It is also impossible to create a reliable 'scientific dictionary' serving as a basis for translating Hegel's conceptual categories, or constituting a matrix that would guarantee success in optimal conditions, i.e. ensuring proper understanding in the target language. Nevertheless, proper translation of dialectic transitions requires envisioning the cognitive effects achieved in them.

In answer to one of the questions posed in this volume, in the Polish context the tradition of Hegel's translation appears mechanical and lacking in awareness of the literary nature of his discourse as understood in his time. The Polish approach would excessively emphasise Kant's 'scientific' style, as if Hegel's terms were keys to

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[10] Ivi, pp. 85-86. See also C. Iber, *Metaphysik absoluter Relationalität. Eine Studie zu den beiden ersten Kapiteln von Hegels Wesenslogik*, Berlin, de Gruyter, 1990; A. Schubert, *Der Strukturgedanke in Hegels ,Wissenschaft der Logik'*, Königstein im Taunus, Hain, 1985.

[11] «Aber ist denn so nicht die *Logik* wieder eine *Phänomenologie*? Das Sein nur der phänomenologische Anfang? Befinden wir uns nicht auch innerhalb der *Logik* in einem Zwiespalt zwischen Schein und Wahrheit?» (L. Feuerbach, *Sämmtliche Werke*, Band II, Leipzig, Otto Wigand, 1846, p. 204).

some transcendental phenomena; the result of this is a language that can appear stiff and abstract.

In my own practice, I have relied on the potential inherent in the natural language rather than on any predefined patterns. I would assume that in certain dense passages Hegel plays more intensively with the different meanings of the dialectically developed conceptual pair, which should be reflected in translation. Still, it remains true that in the case of Hegel it is difficult to orient oneself in the current situation of *Darstellung*, i.e. to identify the protagonists, who are not always the eponymous characters such as *der Grund* and *das Begründete*, *Wesen* and *Schein*, *Tugend* and *Weltlauf*, *Lust* and *Notwendigkeit*. Therefore, I would often adopt the strategy of terminological differentiation, although when translating parts of *Logic* for a broader outline of perspectives I would sometimes do the opposite, unifying meanings within the framework of an overarching terminological matrix. In this sense, translating *Logic* required striking a balance between differentiation and unification.

Moreover, I was guided by certain more specific criteria, which can be displayed in accounts of terminologically controversial situations, which can perhaps resonate with other translators. Some of the issues that eventually prompted the publishers at WN PWN to critically edit the 1960s translation include the following six problem areas[12].

3.1. *Identität* and *Anderssein*

I revised the older, literal translation of *Identität* as 'identyczność' – a term that in Polish means the external identity of features (for example of tree leaves, which are never really identical, as Leibniz famously pointed out). I replaced it with 'tożsamość' in the sense of 'internal identity', which is better rooted in social sciences, psychology, and other discourses connected with the notion of the self. This was essentially a way of eliminating a misunderstanding.

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[12] G.W.F. Hegel, *Nauka logiki*, trans. by A. Landman, PWN, vol. I, 1967; vol. II 1968. Id., *Nauka logiki*, trans. by A. Landman, introduced, collated, and edited by M. Pańków, WN PWN vol. I-II, 2011.

The old translation of *Anderssein* disseminated a vague and misleading equivalent of the English term 'other-being': 'innobyt'. This word, probably not used by anyone in Polish today, was replaced with 'otherness' ('inność') or 'being 'other'' depending on the context.

Further, I changed the translation of other problematic terms used in *Logic*: 'Grund', 'Setzen', 'Voraussetzen', and 'Gleichheit'. Finally, I edited translations of expressions related to 'Schein' and 'Reflexion'. In particular, 'Gesetztsein', 'Gleichheit' and 'Scheinen' required additional clarification.

3.2. *Setzen – Voraussetzen*

This problem proved insoluble. I would almost always translate *Setzen* and *Voraussetzen* as 'ustanawianie', 'ustanawiać' (to set; to posit; to establish) and 'zakładanie', 'zakładać' (to assume; to suppose; to establish). In translation it is important to create ample field for the game of meanings contrasting these two terms in a temporal perspective (assumption is retrospective, while positing involves reconstructing the concept or some state of affairs). However, I preferred to follow the already well-established Polish translation of *Gesetztsein* as 'założoność', which has become a part of the Polish philosophical language. Introducing a neologism like 'ustanowioność' ('establishment', or 'positedness' – the latter term used in the English translation) did not bode well for the future, because in Polish it simply sounds clumsy and difficult. 'Being established/posited' ('bycie czymś ustanowionym') is not that abstract after all, and it contains a clear reference to being 'something'. Thus, I admit defeat in the face of this problem: in Polish, *Gesetztsein* was detached from *Setzen*, which I indicate in the footnotes and in the preface.

3.3. *Gleichheit – Ungleichheit*

A separate problem was the translation of *Gleichheit* and *Gleichheit mit sich*. Hegel associates this term with external identity, in accordance with its German meaning. In its general sense, however, this term does not seem to have a Polish equivalent. The

earlier, literal translation narrowed it to 'equality' ('równość'), which (especially in the translation of *Gleichheit mit sich*) has only a vague and purely metaphorical meaning in Polish, appearing to be quite unproductive in the context of *Logic*. I would usually employ a general term instead – 'identity' or 'identity with itself' ('tożsamość'), unifying its use with that of the term *Identität*. The Polish word 'równość' works well in mathematical contexts, making no changes necessary. Sometimes I would translate *Gleichheit* as 'identyczność' (in the sense of identity of features, but not numerical identity), and *gleich* as 'the same' ('to samo').

In the dialectics of *Gleichheit* and *Ungleichheit* as moments of indifferent difference and external identity (*Science of essence*), the only sensible solution was to introduce the awkward terms 'bycie tym samym' and 'niebycie tym samym' ('being the same' and 'not being the same'). A strategy similar to the one adopted in the case of 'likeness' and 'unlikeness' in the English translation accentuates the exteriority of identity.

3.4. *Schluss* and *Grund*

In older Polish translations of Hegel, *Schluss* would be associated with the technical term 'sylogizm' ('syllogism'), which became the object of mockery in the 1990s, just like the triad of thesis, antithesis and synthesis (the stereotype being that Hegel believed that reality behaves like a logical syllogism). We agreed with the publishers to replace this translation with 'reasoning' ('wnioskowanie', which contains also a moment of *conclusio*). Hegel plays with the terms *Schluss* or *Schliessen* and hardly uses *Syllogismus*. The expression *syllogistisch* appears only several times in *Logic* in discussion of «painstaking study of syllogistic formulas» and «syllogistic wisdom» disregarded for its «unworthiness».[13] He refers to the conclusions of the *Verstand* of traditional metaphysics, contrasting them with his theory of rational (*vernünftige*) reasoning. The Polish expression 'wyciągać wnioski' ('to draw conclusions') has the same meaning as *schliessen* or *Schlüsse ziehen*; thus, 'wnioskowanie' seemed to be the most appropriate choice.

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[13] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p. 605.

As with *Anderssein* and *Gleichheit*, context-dependent translation was also employed in the case of 'ground and reason' (*Grund*). I preserved the 'ground/basis and reason' ('podstawa i racja') as the main terms, following the translation of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* by Marek J. Siemek.[14] On closer inspection, it turned out that the 'archaic' strategy adopted in translations of Heidegger's texts (focusing on earth and ground: 'podłoże' and 'grunt' in Polish) would not work in the case of Hegel. Furthermore, it seemed better to play with newer, logical and abstract meanings because *Grund* sometimes acquires the sense of *Begründung* as a process of discursive foundation and does not have to point to any specific entity. When outlining new perspectives, I would usually use the Polish equivalent of 'ground and reason' ('podstawa i racja' – connected with the Latin *ratio*). In the dialectics of this concept, I usually use the terms 'podstawa' (in the sense of ground, background or basis), 'racja' ('reason', *ratio*), sometimes 'uzasadnienie' (*Begründung*, 'foundation', 'justification'), or mix them.

3.5. *Seyn*

The word *Seyn* does not play such a significant role in Hegel as in Heidegger. Of course, *Logic* analyses the interesting etymology of *Seyn* and *gewesen*, taking into account that being «has passed over, not passes over» into nothing.[15] In translation, however, I did not adopt a strongly unifying strategy. Polish has two words for *Seyn* – 'byt' and 'bycie' (previous translators have probably rightly reserved the Polish word 'istnienie' for *Dasein*, foreshadowing the term 'existence' introduced in the second book of *Logic*). 'Byt' appears to be better established in the ontological context (e.g. in translations of Parmenides or classical literature). In colloquial language, however, its meaning becomes more substantial (at best, at the level of an abstraction like 'social being'). In turn, 'bycie' entered philosophical circulation thanks to the Polish reception of

[14] J.B. Fichte, *Teoria Wiedzy*, trans. By M.J. Siemek, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1996.

[15] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, pp. 60, 337.

Heidegger from the 1970s to the 1990s. A substantial form of the infinitive 'to be' in an indefinite and abstract sense, it nevertheless suggests in Polish an association with duration, for example. Since Hegel himself indicates that *Seyn* should be understood in the sense of 'is', I tried to pursue this Heideggerian path, but this usually proved difficult for stylistic reasons. Sometimes it seemed better to leave the older translation ('byt'), even if it suggested some other entity.

3.6 *Schein – Reflexion*

Just like *Seyn* plays a key role in Heidegger, Hegel attaches great importance to terms such as 'reflection' and 'shining' or 'shine'. This is probably the most interesting semantic aspect faced by translators of *Logic*. I eliminated the complex Polish rendering of *das Scheinen seiner in sich selbst* ('reflection within') as 'refleksyjne kierowanie się ku sobie' (*Reflexion-in-sich*) which was perhaps modelled on an early French translation (*l'essence comme reflexion en soi-même*). If the verb *das Scheinen* was used in the original text instead of *Reflexion-in-sich*, I would shorten the Polish phrase 'refleksyjne kierowanie się ku' to 'przeświecanie', focusing more on meaning than on the imagery associated with mirroring. Following the example of the newer Polish translation of *The Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline*, I removed most cases of rendering *Scheinen* in Polish as 'refleksja'[16]. As in the English translation (which uses 'shining'), I translated *Scheinen* or *scheinen* most often as 'przeświecać' or 'przeświecanie' – terms related to light and perspective – because they have an abstract meaning as well, just like the idiomatic German expression *zum Vorschein kommen*.

At certain important moments, however, I would translate both *Schein* and *Scheinen* as 'pozór', which in Polish is closer to 'seeming' (*Täuschung* or illusion); also, just as French *apparance*, it is not as ambiguous as *Schein*. It is this play of meanings (the already reflective *Schein* and the still more reflective *Scheinen*) that Hegel references in the above-mentioned passage about 'affected purism'

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[16] Id., *Encyklopedia nauk filozoficznych*, trans. by Ś.F. Nowicki, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwa Naukowe, 1990.

and the lack of need for separate terminology in philosophy. «Es kann dem Denken eine Freude gewähren», writes Hegel, if contradictory meanings are found in the same word. In fact, contradictory meanings serve to express the decisive metaphysical solutions introduced at the end of *Objective Logic*, in the transition from the sphere of essence to the realm of concept. In its negative sense, *Schein* (as *Anschein*, 'pure seeming') may ironically refer to *Scheinen*, as in the expression *Schein der Macht* ('pozór mocy', 'shine of power'), which emerges in the context of Spinozian substance in the introduction to the third book of *Logic*. The substance is then established as the 'mere shining' of a higher power, the power of the concept (even if Hegel does not attach the suffix -*en* to *Schein*)[17].

However, another tendency can be identified in the second book of *Logic*, especially in the preliminary theses contained in the chapter on absolute relation (*das absolute Verhältnis*). In this context, the negative meaning of *Schein* (as pure illusion) dominates over *Schein* as *Scheinen*. In the exposition of absolute necessity Hegel demonstrates the primacy of outsidedness and strangeness over the reflective interiority of difference[18]. At the sites of absolute

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[17] Id., *Science of Logic*, p. 510.

[18] «But this *contingency* is rather absolute necessity; it is the *essence* of those free, inherently necessary actualities. This essence is *averse to light*, because there is no *reflective shining* in these actualities, no reflex – because they are grounded purely in *themselves*, are shaped for themselves, manifest themselves only to themselves – because they are only being. – But their *essence* will break forth in them and will reveal what *it* is and what *they* are. The *simplicity* of their being, their resting just on themselves, is absolute negativity; it is the *freedom* of their reflectionless immediacy. This negative breaks forth in them because being, through this same negativity which is its essence, is self-contradiction; it will break forth against this being in the form of being, hence as the negation of those actualities, a negation *absolutely different* from their being; it will break forth as their nothing, as an *otherness* which is just as free towards them as their being is free. – Yet this negative was not to be missed in them. In their self-based shape they are indifferent to *form*, are a content and consequently *different* actualities and a *determinate* content. This content is the *mark* that necessity impressed upon them by letting them go free as absolutely actual – for in its *determination* it is an absolute turning back into itself. It is the mark to which necessity appeals as witness to its right, and, overcome by it, the actualities now perish. This manifestation of what determinateness is in its truth, that it is negative self-reference, is a *blind* collapse

relation, different actualities «subsist absolutely, but do so in such a way that their subsisting is one subsistence, and the difference only the reflective shine of the movement of exposition, and this reflective shine is the absolute itself»[19].

Shine turns out to be the absolute itself. This constitutes the central thesis of *Logic*. Žižek regards this as a «vertiginous reversal»: the moment when something supposedly relational or subjective turns out to be the very core of inert substantiality[20]. *Apparance* turns out to be something absolute in its falseness or opacity, and it is in this sense that the absolute relation appears as «the reflective shining posited as reflective shining (*das Scheinen, das als Schein gesetzt ist*), the sides of this relation, because they are as shine, are totalities»[21].

At this point, translating *Schein* as 'reflective shining' does not seem to be a fortunate choice. In fact, it is established as non-reflective – absolute – in the sense discussed in the previous chapter. Thus, the basic paradox of Hegel's *Logic* and dialectics in general is introduced (and at this moment Brecht's «fence collapses»). *Schein* as *Täuschung* (*apparance*, 'pure seeming', and so on) turns out to be synonymous with 'absolute actuality' even though it remains false and non-reflective. The English translation of the 'absolute relation' effaces the new semblance by adopting the term 'reflective shining'. In this way, however, it anticipates the conceptual situation which will only be introduced by the larger dialectic of its three

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into otherness; *in the sphere of immediate existence*, the *shining* or the *reflection* that breaks out in it is a becoming, a transition of *being* into *nothing*. But, conversely, being is equally essence, and *becoming* is *reflection* or a *shining*. Thus the externality is its inwardness; their connection is one of absolute identity; and the *transition* of the actual into the possible, of being into nothing, is a *self-rejoining*; contingency is absolute necessity; it is itself the presupposing of that first absolute actuality» (ivi, p. 488).

[19] Ivi, p. 489. «Sie ist Verhältnis, weil sie Unterscheiden ist, dessen Momente selbst ihre ganze Totalität sind, die also absolut *bestehen*, so daß dies aber nur *ein* Bestehen und der Unterschied nur der *Schein* des Auslegens und dieser das Absolute selbst ist».

[20] S. Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment. Six Essays on Women and Causality*, London, Verso, 1994, p. 37.

[21] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p. 488.

forms (involving also substantiality and causality). This makes it difficult to note that this is where we reach the final frontier of rationalization – the Hegelian notion of the 'absolute'. The falsehood of the difference between the two actualities proves impassable. Instead of talking about *Übergehen* ('transition') or *Scheinen/Reflexion*, Hegel himself uses the special term *Hervorbrechen* ('forthbreaking') (in this context only) in order to indicate the 'previous' dynamic[22].

In my view, the Hegelian concept of freedom implies the recognition of the ultimate limit of rationalization. It resonates with what Hegel argues in the last passages of *Objective Logic* where he still discusses different 'sites' or actualities[23]. At this crucial moment, which consists in the exposition of absolute necessity, one must reduce the reflective meanings associated with *Schein*. Then, in the third book, the tendency reverses – as a result, not only *Scheinen* but sometimes also *Schein* seem to be rendered more successfully as 'reflective shining'.

[22] See footnote 18.

[23] «Necessity does not come to be *freedom* by vanishing but in that its still only *inner* identity is *manifested*, and this manifestation is the identical movement immanent to the different sides, the immanent reflection of shine as shine. – Conversely, *contingency* thereby comes to be *freedom* at the same time, for the sides of necessity, which have the shape of independent, free actualities that do not reflectively shine into each other, *are now posited as an identity*, so that now these totalities of immanent reflection, in their differences, *also shine as identical*, in other words, they are also posited as only one and the same reflection» (ivi, p. 604).