

Contingency, Pure Contingency— Without Any Further Determination: Modal Categories in Hegelian Logic

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Abstract: Beginning during G. W. F. Hegel's own lifetime, two interlinked unsympathetic portraits of Hegel take shape and become enduring refrains in his critics' complaints. According to the first of these, the Hegelian philosophical system posits a foundational teleological necessity that rigidly determines the constitution of both natural and human realities. The second critical portrayal of Hegel charges him with an ideologically pernicious Panglossianism dressing up a miserably conservative/reactionary status quo as the highest possible sociohistorical realization of Reason itself. Taken together, these two connected criticisms amount to treating Hegelian Wissenschaft as a post-Kantian version of Leibniz's theosophy, with the former, purportedly like the latter, appealing to a necessary teleology supposedly guaranteeing the actualization of "the best of all possible worlds."

From the late-period F. W. J. Schelling and Rudolf Haym through today, countless voices past and present have repeated these anti-Hegelian allegations. The goal of the paper, simply stated, is to discredit thoroughly both of these pictures of Hegel's philosophy. These two entwined lines of criticism ultimately rest upon the imputation to Hegel of a certain arrangement of modal categories in which possibility has priority over actuality, and necessity dictates the transition from the possible to the actual. Through a close reading of Hegel's core doctrine of modal categories as definitively delineated in his mature Logic, the author shows that the depiction of Hegel as a neo-Leibnizian is an intellectually bankrupt, one-hundred-eighty-degree inversion of the truth.

ONE of several stock stories about G.W.F. Hegel's philosophy is that it privileges the modality of necessity to such an excessive extent as to engage in what would be tantamount to a lamentable and/or laughable post-Kantian regression, within the traditions of German philosophy, to pre-Kantian Leibnizianism. That is to say, from this kind of all-too-common perspective, Hegel, like G.W. Leibniz before him, elaborates a theodicy (however secularly disguised or not) according to which reality, in its categorial and conceptual determinations via the metaphysically real God-like mega-Mind of "the Absolute Idea," necessarily is exactly as it is and cannot be otherwise. Purportedly like Leibniz's divinity, the Hegelian Absolute's sufficient reason(s) make it such that there is no space whatsoever left open for anomaly, arbitrariness, caprice, contingency, difference, facticity, irrationality, meaninglessness, randomness, and the like.

Of course, near the start of his philosophical career in the early 1800s, Hegel (in his Jena period prior and leading up to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*) already encountered objections along these very lines to German idealism overall from the pen of W.T. Krug, an otherwise trifling writing instrument made (in)famous thanks exclusively to Hegel's stinging responses to Krug's critical challenges.¹ And, before Hegel's corpse was

1. G.W.F. Hegel, "How the Ordinary Human Understanding Takes Philosophy (as Displayed in the Works of Mr. Krug)", *Miscellaneous Writings of G.W.F. Hegel*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 229, 231, 233. G.W.F. Hegel, "On the Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy, Exposition of its Different Modifications and Comparison of the Latest Form with the Ancient One", *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*, ed. and trans. George Di Giovanni and H.S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000), 330. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 27-28. G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature: Part Two of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), §250, 23. G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume Three* (New York: The Humanities Press, 1955), 511-512.

even cold, the later F.W.J. Schelling, faithfully executing his state-ordained duty by his Prussian summoners to “stamp out the dragon seed of Hegelianism” while occupying the philosophical chair at the University of Berlin vacated by his former friend’s death, initiates what subsequently become commonplace refrains amongst subsequent critics of Hegelian philosophy: Hegel’s System is centered on the Logic alone; The machinery of this absolute idealist apparatus dissolves the real into the logical; Hegelian “negative philosophy” (to be opposed by a Christian “positive philosophy”) entirely excludes and is powerless to account for the extra-logical real, especially in terms of an undeducible factual “thatness” evading the grasp of any deducible categorial “whatness,” a contingent givenness unassimilable by mediated necessity.²

I will show below, among other things, that this Schellingian dance on Hegel’s grave, the first of many such performances, does not have a leg or even *terra firma* upon which to stand (let alone move gracefully). Hegel’s modal doctrine in the Logic combined with his more-than-logical Philosophy of the Real — Schelling and all those who reduce Hegel’s philosophy to the Logic on its own fail to recognize that the System is the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* in its entirety (within which *Logik* is only one part, along with *Naturphilosophie* and *Geistesphilosophie*)³ — is a rebuttal in advance (a refutation from the crypt, as it were) of Schelling’s opportunistic attacks upon him. Additionally, as Klaus Düsing perspicaciously observes, the late Schelling presupposes without supporting arguments a modal doctrine in his positive-philosophical critique (with its notion of factual thatness) of Hegel’s allegedly Logic-centric negative philosophy.⁴

Hegelian *Logik*, by contrast, posits with supporting arguments precisely such a doctrine. I want now to elaborate an extended, detailed exegesis of Hegel’s handling of the contingent, especially in the variants of his mature *Logik*. I will deviate from chronology in what follows, focusing first on the *Encyclopedia Logic* and then turning to the *Science of Logic*.

The modalities of actuality, possibility, necessity, and contingency are addressed by Hegel at the close of “The Doctrine of Essence,” itself bring-

2. F.W.J. Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 134-163. F.W.J. Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 118, 128-135, 137, 139, 145-147, 149-151, 155, 159-161, 202-205, 211.
3. Adrian Johnston, “Where to Start?: Robert Pippin, Slavoj Žižek, and the True Beginning(s) of Hegel’s System,” *Crisis and Critique*, special issue: “Critique Today”, ed. Agon Hamza and Frank Ruda, vol. 1, no. 3, 2014, 371-418.
4. Klaus Düsing, *Das Problem der Subjektivität in Hegels Logik, Hegel-Studien*, Beiheft 15 (Bonn: Bouvier, 1976), 341-342.

ing the entirety of the “Objective Logic” (i.e., “The Doctrine of Being” [*Die Lehre vom Sein*] plus “The Doctrine of Essence” [*Die Lehre vom Wesen*]) to an end in transitioning into the “Subjective Logic” formed by the third book of the Logic, namely, “The Doctrine of the Concept” (*Die Lehre vom Begriff*). To understand Hegel’s modal doctrine requires beginning where Hegel himself begins in this doctrine, namely, with the logical-categorical determination/moment of “*Wirklichkeit*.” Of course, *Wirklichkeit* (actuality) is a particularly (in)famous Hegelian term specifically because of the appearance it makes in the renowned/notorious preface to *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Therein, as is all too well known, Hegel declares, in the form of what has come to be known as the “*Doppelsatz*,” that, “What is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational” (*Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich; und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig*).⁵ Countless critics past and present (starting with Rudolf Haym⁶) indicting this Hegel for being an apologetic mouthpiece for the conservative Prussia of Friedrich Wilhelm III latch onto this one-liner as “Exhibit A” for their indictment. But, in so doing, they ignore the precise technical sense of “*wirklich*” and thereby carelessly trample over Hegel’s strict distinction between, on the one hand, *Wirklichkeit* and, on the other hand, *Dasein/Existenz* (being-there/existence). In §6 of the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel directly refutes those accusing him of pronouncing a Leibnizian/Panglossian-style benediction over everything that happens to be the case in his given *status quo* as necessitated and justified by a theodicy of an omniscient and omnipotent *Weltgeist*. For this Hegel, much of what happens to be the case in his given *status quo* merely is there or exists, but is not fully real *qua* actual *als wirklich*. Such mere beings-there/existences would include, for the Berlin-era Hegel, what he construes as the futile, doomed Germanic reaction against the ultimately irresistible progressive currents represented by the French Revolution and Napoleon, the Emperor embodying and epitomizing Hegel’s notion of history *überhaupt* as inexorably surging toward ever-greater realizations of human freedom. In this instance, actuality *als Wirklichkeit* and, hence, rationality (*Vernünftigkeit*) resides on the side of revolution rather than reaction—revolu-

5. G.W.F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse: Mit Hegels eigenhändigen Notizen und den mündlichen Zusätzen, Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, 7, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 24. G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 20.

6. Rudolf Haym, “Preußen und die Rechtsphilosophie (1857): Hegel und seine Zeit,” *Materialien zu Hegels Rechtsphilosophie*, ed. Manfred Riedel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), 365-394.

tionary rationality is “the rose in the cross of the present”⁷ of a reactionary *Dasein/Existenz*—with reaction straining in vain against “the inner pulse” (*inneren Puls*) incarnated in and by revolution.⁸ Hegel’s 1820s dictum “What is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational” is anything but an older, comfortably established man’s cynical or craven repudiation of the progressive/revolutionary passions of his restless, volatile younger years. This one-liner’s author remains the same person who faithfully toasted Bastille Day year after year, including publicly, and with audacity, in mixed company during the height of Prussian conservative repression.

But, as Hegel’s own defense of himself in the *Encyclopedia Logic* against the criticisms triggered by his proclamation regarding the rational and the actual in the preface to *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* indicates, his definitive determinations of the category of *Wirklichkeit* are to be found within the framework of the *Logik* (rather than within branches of *Realphilosophie*, such as *Rechtsphilosophie* or *Geschichtsphilosophie*). In the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel opens the section on “Actuality” by stating, with its very first sentence, that, “Actuality is the unity (*Einheit*), become immediate, of essence (*Wesens*) and existence (*Existenz*), or of what is inner and what is outer.”⁹ The entire prior two thirds of “The Doctrine of Essence” is structured around what fundamentally amounts to a two-worlds metaphysics. This Doctrine’s first two sections on, one, “Essence as Reflection Within Itself” (“*Das Wesen als Reflexion in ihm selbst*,” *Science of Logic*) or “Essence as Ground of Existence” (“*Das Wesen als Grund der Existenz*,” *Encyclopedia Logic*) and, two, “Appearance” (*Die Erscheinung*) both unfold variations on the basic theme of the distinction between, on one side, supersensible essential ground and, on another side, sensible apparent existence. To cut the long story of the entirety of “The Doctrine of Essence” very short, this second of the three divisions of the *Logic* culminates with *Wirklichkeit* as the sublation of the closely interrelated families of dichotomies structuring the prior moments

7. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 22.

8. G.W.F. Hegel, “Hegel to Niethammer: Jena, October 13, 1806,” *Hegel: The Letters* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 114. G.W.F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften, Erster Teil: Die Wissenschaft der Logik mit den mündlichen Zusätzen, Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, 8, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), §6, 47-49. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), §9, 33; §6, 29-30. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, 24-28. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 20-23. G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover, 1956), 17-19, 63-64, 446-447.

9. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften, Erster Teil*, §142, 279; Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §142, 213.

of the *Wesenslehre*.¹⁰ That is to say, the “unity” (*Einheit*) Hegel speaks of in the just-quoted opening sentence of §142 of the *Encyclopedia Logic* is specifically a dialectical-speculative *Aufhebung* of the “two worlds” (as ground-versus-existence, essence-versus-appearance, inner-versus-outer, and similar variations on this theme) at stake in the first two-thirds of “The Doctrine of Essence.”¹¹

One of many consequences of actuality’s sublation of the oppositions making possible any and every two-worlds metaphysics is the dialectical going under of what Hegel sees as perhaps the most sophisticated and formidable version of such a metaphysics, namely, Immanuel Kant’s critical-transcendental framework as subjectively idealist in Hegel’s precise sense of “subjective idealism” (as distinct from “objective” and “absolute” idealisms). The “Addition” (*Zusatz*) to §142 of the *Encyclopedia Logic* emphatically links *Wirklichkeit* to absolute idealism in terms of this idealism’s anti-subjectivist realism, namely, its non/post-Kantian insistence that objective (*qua* extra/more-than-subjective) reality *an sich* is, prior to and independently of knowing subjectivity, always-already formed, structured, etc. in and of itself.¹² Given Kant’s omnipresent shadow looming over an ambivalently post-Kantian Hegel, this point is crucial. Kant, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, treats the topic of modalities (i.e., as per Kant’s “Table of Categories,” the pairs possibility/impossibility, existence/non-existence, and necessity/contingency) under the heading of his subjectively idealist “Transcendental Analytic.”¹³ By contrast, Hegel, in his mature *Logik*, narrates the modalities as emerging out of an actuality that itself involves, among other things, an absolute idealist sublation of anti-realist transcendental idealism (and all other two-worlds metaphysics along with it). This means that, for Hegel, modalities are not just subjectively ideal categories, as they are for Kant, but also objectively real ones. In other words, *contra* Kant and inverting a famous line from the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, subject (here, the categories of modality as subjectively ideal) must be thought, through a thinking responding to the compelling force of the movement of Hegelian Logic up through the culmination of the *Wesenslehre* in *Wirklichkeit*, also as substance (here, the categories of modality as objectively real in addition to subjectively ideal).¹⁴

10. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §141, 213.

11. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §143, 215. G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on Logic: Berlin, 1831* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 155-156.

12. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §142, 214.

13. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A80/B106, 212.

14. Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 172-173.

In the “Addition” to §143 of the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel stipulates that, “of course, it is not just what is immediately there (*unmittelbar Daseiende*) that should be understood as actual (*das Wirkliche*)”¹⁵ (incidentally, this clarification regarding a strict distinction between *Dasein* and *Wirklichkeit* buttresses the above-mentioned non/anti-conservative interpretation of “What is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational”). Earlier, in Hegel’s Nuremberg lectures on the “Philosophical Encyclopedia” for advanced *Gymnasium* students, the category of determinate being-there (i.e., *Dasein* as immediate existence [*Existenz*]) already is deployed in connection with actuality—“The Actual itself is the unity of its possibility and its existence (*Daseins*).”¹⁶ In this quotation from Hegel’s Nuremberg texts, the pairing of the category of being-there/existence (*Dasein/Existenz*) with the category of possibility arguably suggests that the former, like the latter, also is a modal category (or, at least, has a modal valence) in this precise context. Put differently, *Dasein*, in being an ingredient in *Wirklichkeit* distinct from that of possibility, is or represents a modality distinct from that of possibility itself. In yet other words, if being-there/existence is distinguished from possibility-as-a-modality, then this seems to suggest that being-there/existence is or instantiates a modal category.

Before proceeding further, a radically anti-Leibnizian upshot to Hegel’s Logic at this specific stage of its unfolding must be appreciated. Only after the logical genesis of actuality towards the end of “The Doctrine of Essence” does the particular category of the modality of possibility explicitly arise—and, with it, the general (meta-)category of modality overall (i.e., any and every modality). That is to say, for Hegel, actuality precedes any and every possibility. By sharp contrast, in Leibniz’s theosophical metaphysics with its Christian theodicy—this aspect of Leibnizianism resurfaces in multiple secular (dis)guises within the twentieth-century Anglo-American Analytic philosophical tradition—possibility precedes actuality (with a benevolent, omniscient, omnipotent, and perfect God selecting amongst an infinitude of possible worlds before actualizing, through the act of creation, the one-and-only, opti-

15. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften, Erster Teil*, §143, 283. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §143, 216–217.

16. G.W.F. Hegel, “Texte zur Philosophischen Propädeutik: Philosophische Enzyklopädie für die Oberklasse,” *Nürnberger Schriften, Werke in zwanzig Bänden, 4: Nürnberger und Heidelberger Schriften, 1808–1817*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), §48, 20. G.W.F. Hegel, “The Philosophical Encyclopedia [For the Higher Class],” *The Philosophical Propaedeutic*, ed. Michael George and Andrew Vincent (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), §48, 133.

mally-good “best of all possible worlds”). Hence, Hegel, already from within the pure conceptual abstractness of his logical apparatus, announces a principled, categorical opposition to the spiritualist idealism of Leibniz’s ontologically prioritized metaphysical/virtual reality of possibilities purportedly pre-existing anything and everything actual.

Hegel’s anti-Leibnizian prioritizing of actuality over possibility noted, the identification of *Wirklichkeit* as a dialectical-speculative, sublational (*als Aufhebung*) synthesis (“unity” [*Einheit*]) of “immediate thereness” or “existence” and possibility still requires further exegetical unpacking here. Something being actual automatically entails it also already being possible too. In this sense, were this something impossible, it simply would not be. However, the peculiarity of this sort of possibility as invoked by Hegel at this stage of the Logic is that it is not a possibility preceding and preexisting the being-there/existence of the actuality for which it is the very possibility. Instead, the given actuality generates simultaneously both its own possibility as well as its being-there/existence. In other words, *Möglichkeit* and *Dasein/Existenz* are contemporaneously co-emergent from *Wirklichkeit* as their shared ground. The first main paragraph of §147 of the *Encyclopedia Logic* corroborates this reading.¹⁷

At this point, two things are to be appreciated. First, as just explained, actuality logically (i.e., dialectically-speculatively) gives rise out of itself to the jointly-arising pair of possibility and being-there/existence—and, in so doing, initially introduces modality *tout court* into the movement of Hegelian *Logik* (modality here begins with the being-there of an actuality that, as really existing, is at the same time really possible). Second, if the determination/moment that introduces modality into the Logic is being-there/existence *qua* possible, then the modality of contingency surfaces before that of necessity. Therefore, the contingent definitely appears to enjoy a certain priority over the necessary in Hegelian thinking (with the *Science of Logic* furnishing confirmation of my interpretive reasoning here¹⁸).

Indeed, Hegel discusses contingency before necessity, emphasizing the former in §145 and the latter in §147 of the *Encyclopedia Logic*. The *Zusatz* to §145 states that:

...contingency... does deserve its due in the world of objects (*gegenständlichen Welt*). This holds first for nature, on the surface of which contingency has free rein, so to speak. This free play should be recognised as such, without the pretension (sometimes erroneously ascribed to philosophy) of finding something in it that could only be

17. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §147, 220-221.

18. G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), 545.

so and not otherwise (*nicht anders sein Können*). Similarly... the contingent also asserts itself in the world of spirit, since will contains the contingent within itself in the shape of freedom of choice, though only as a sublated moment. In regard to the spirit and its activity, we also have to be careful that we are not misled by the well-meant striving of rational cognition into trying to show that phenomena that have the character of contingency are necessary, or, as people tend to say, into ‘constructing them a priori.’ For example, although language is the body of thinking, as it were, still chance indisputably plays a decisive role in it, and the same is true with regard to the configurations of law, art, etc. It is quite correct to say that the task of science and, more precisely, of philosophy, consists generally in coming to know the necessity that is hidden under the semblance of contingency; but this must not be understood to mean that contingency pertains only to our subjective views and that it must therefore be set aside totally if we wish to attain the truth. Scientific endeavors which one-sidedly push in this direction will not escape the justified reproach of being an empty game and a strained pedantry.¹⁹

Throughout this quotation, starting with its very first sentence, Hegel thrusts to the fore the objectively real status of the modality of contingency in his logical framework—and this by sharp implicit contrast with its subjectively ideal status in Kantian critical transcendentalism. One of Hegel’s central assertions here, at least as much against Baruch Spinoza and Leibniz as *contra* Kant, is that the contingent is far from always symptomatic merely of epistemological ignorance (i.e., the knowing subject’s failure to grasp a concealed underlying necessity in objective being *an sich*). Sometimes, this seeming ignorance is, in fact, direct ontological insight (i.e., the knowing subject’s success, whether appreciated by this subject or not, at grasping the actual absence of necessity within objective being *an sich*). Relatedly, Hegel warns that the far-from-unproductive, not-always-unjustified rationalist tendency/drive to search for real necessity hidden behind or beneath apparent contingency, if left lop-sidedly unchecked by not giving to the contingent its countervailing metaphysical due, inevitably results in “an empty game and a strained pedantry.”

To begin with, I again would suggest that Leibniz exemplifies such a teller of these risible rationalist just-so stories (indeed famously lampooned by Voltaire). Within Leibniz’s theodicy of the purported “best of all possible worlds,” each and every seeming contingency is nothing more than an index of finite human knowers’ lack of full understand-

19. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften, Erster Teil*, §145, 286-287. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §145, 219.

ing of God-the-creator's sufficient reasons for things being exactly so and not otherwise. In Leibnizian Christian-theosophical philosophy, the combination of the laws of classical, bivalent logic with the principle of sufficient reason guarantees that everything in creation necessarily and with certainty is precisely as it is, with no "illogical" or "irrational" breathing room for any really existent contingencies whatsoever.

Additionally, and still apropos the passage from §145 quoted above, I also would maintain that there is a secular, as well as theistic (i.e., Leibnizian), epitomization of the contingency-denying rationalism derided by Hegel as predictably eventuating in absurd rationalizations: a modern, natural scientific *Weltanschauung* in which nature and all things natural/naturalizable (including living beings generally and even human beings specifically) can and should be reduced to structures and dynamics governed by laws *qua* deterministic causal rules imposing an iron-clad, inviolable necessity on all entities and events. Hegel, in the preceding quotation from §145 remaining under discussion here, sees fit to mention nature first when insisting upon certain contingencies as in fact being objectively real, with his motif of "the weakness of nature" (*die Ohnmacht der Natur*) palpably in the background. The necessitarian worldview of the natural sciences and scientists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (this worldview lingers on in the early-twenty-first century too) is parodied as bringing about its own ridiculous self-wrought ruin in the section on "Observing Reason" in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, culminating as this section does with the preposterous, comical pseudo-explanations of Franz Josef Gall's phrenology (with its attempts to eliminate such phenomena as "will" *qua* "freedom of choice" [§145] in favor of dumb bumps on lifeless bones). These phrenological pseudo-explanations are this naturalistic worldview's immanently generated *reductio ad absurdum*. According to Hegel's 1807 narrative, the scientific *Weltanschauung* taking form in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries begins to run into troubles with contingency particularly when it shifts its attention to the organic and human realms over and above physics and chemistry²⁰ (incidentally, I have addressed both Hegel's *Ohnmacht der Natur* and phenomenological figure/shape of "Observing Reason" at length in other contexts²¹).

20. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 145-210.

21. Adrian Johnston, "The Weakness of Nature: Hegel, Freud, Lacan, and Negativity Materialized," *Hegel and the Infinite: Religion, Politics, and Dialectic*, ed. Slavoj Žižek, Clayton Crockett, and Creston Davis (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 159-179. Adrian Johnston, "Second Natures in Dappled Worlds: John McDowell, Nancy Cartwright, and Hegelian-Lacanian Materialism," *Umbra(a): The Worst*, ed. Matthew Rigilano and Kyle Fetter (Buffalo: State

Furthermore, Hegel, particularly in the 1831 “Preface to the Second Edition” of the *Science of Logic*,²² insists that thinking, including that of the most purely logical sort, is inextricably intertwined with natural language(s) (as he also elaborates in the accounts of the linguistically mediated and facilitated emergence of distinctively human intelligence in various versions of his *Philosophie des Geistes*, itself a part of *Realphilosophie* rather than *Logik* alone).²³ As seen from the previous block quotation, Hegel, in §145 of the *Encyclopedia Logic*, makes reference to this language-bound character of cognition. His point in this passage is that thinking, in thinking either itself (as in *Logic*) or anything else (as in the *Philosophy of the Real*), cannot avoid the contingent insofar as all natural languages without exception are shot through with myriad contingencies (as, one, the more-than-linguistic histories impacting etymologies, as, two, what Saussurian structural linguistics later designates under the heading “the arbitrariness of the signifier,” and so on). A simple syllogism is enough to encapsulate Hegel’s argument here: First, human sapience is made possible by and always operates within natural language(s); Second, all natural languages are riddled with contingencies; Therefore, cognitive intelligence cannot avoid entanglement with and working through incarnations of the modality of contingency.

University of New York at Buffalo, 2011), 71-91. Adrian Johnston, “The Voiding of Weak Nature: The Transcendental Materialist Kernels of Hegel’s *Naturphilosophie*,” *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, vol. 33, no. 1, Spring 2012, 103-157. Adrian Johnston, “An Interview with Adrian Johnston on Transcendental Materialism [with Peter Gratton],” *Society and Space*, October 2013, <http://societyandspace.com/2013/10/07/interview-with-adrian-johnston-on-transcendental-materialism/>. Adrian Johnston, “Transcendentalism in Hegel’s Wake: A Reply to Timothy M. Hackett and Benjamin Berger,” *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy*, no. 26, Fall 2014, 204-237. Adrian Johnston, “Confession of a Weak Reductionist: Responses to Some Recent Criticisms of My Materialism,” *Neuroscience and Critique*, ed. Jan De Vos and Ed Pluth (New York: Routledge, 2015), 141-170. Adrian Johnston, *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism, Volume Two: A Weak Nature Alone* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2017), forthcoming.

22. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 31-33.

23. G.W.F. Hegel, “First Philosophy of Spirit (being Part III of the ‘System of Speculative Philosophy’ of 1803/4)”, *System of Ethical Life (1802/3) and First Philosophy of Spirit (Part III of the System of Speculative Philosophy 1803/4)*, ed. and trans. H.S. Harris and T.M. Knox (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), 221-223. G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophie des Geistes, Jenaer Systementwürfe III: Naturphilosophie und Philosophie des Geistes*, ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1987), 176-178. G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind: Part Three of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), §459, 214, 218; §461, 219; §462, 220-221. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 62.

Before turning attention to §147 of the *Encyclopedia Logic*, I want to highlight that, in §145 as quoted above, Hegel renders the modality of necessity as “could only be so and not otherwise (*nicht anders sein Können*).” Although this is a quite conventional way of defining the necessary, Hegel’s recourse to it soon will prove to be important with the benefit of subsequent hindsight below. For now, suffice it to note that Hegelian necessity, as introduced at this exact moment in the *Logic*, is determined as no more and no less than the impossibility of any additional “otherwise” (*anders sein*).

The time has come to parse a portion of §147 of the *Encyclopedia Logic*. While the main body of §147 portrays actuality as simultaneously realizing in and through itself the co-emergent pair of possibility and being-there/existence—I explained *Wirklichkeit* along these very lines a short while ago—its “Addition” goes into more detail as regards necessity. Therein, Hegel declares:

The process of necessity (*Der Prozeß der Notwendigkeit*) begins with the existence of dispersed circumstances (*der Existenz zerstreuter Umstände*) that seem to have no concern with one another and no inward coherence. These circumstances are an immediate actuality (*eine unmittelbare Wirklichkeit*) that collapses inwardly; and from this negation a new actuality (*eine neue Wirklichkeit*) emerges. We have here a content that has a dual character within it in respect to its form: first, as the content of the matter (*Inhalt der Sache*) that is at issue, and secondly, as the content of the dispersed circumstances (*Inhalt der zerstreuter Umstände*) that appear to be something positive, and initially assert themselves as such. Because of its inward nullity, this content is inverted into its negative, and so becomes the content of the matter. As conditions, the immediate circumstances go under, but at the same time they are also preserved as the content of the matter (*Die unmittelbaren Umstände gehen als Bedingungen zugrunde, werden aber auch zugleich als Inhalt der Sache erhalten*).²⁴

To cut to the chase and go directly to the crucial upshot of this passage without further ado, this quotation contains the thesis that necessity itself (i.e., the “process of necessity”) originally arises out of contingency. In other words, there is an *Ur*-contingency preceding and at the root of the necessary. Conversely but correlatively (and contrary to so many ridiculous, flagrant bastardizations of Hegel), there is no transcendent, metaphysically real *Ur*-necessity, a divinely supernatural cosmic Idea

24. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften, Erster Teil*, §147, 289. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §147, 221.

or world Spirit, imposing in a top-down fashion the Platonic-style *teloi* of a preordained theodicy upon the being-there of really existing actuality. Instead, any and every necessity and/or teleology is a delayed effect and belated outcome of a primordially neither necessary nor teleological *Wirklichkeit qua* just-happening-to-exist possibility. Alternately, the only *Ur*-necessity recognized by Hegelian Logic is the necessity of *Ur*-contingency as a modal category with logical priority *vis-à-vis* the modal category of necessity. As Stanley Rosen expresses this sense of the necessity of contingency, “contingency itself, namely, as a category, is not itself contingent.”²⁵ To this should be added Georg Lukács’s observation that, “in Hegel the annulment of contingency takes place on the assumption that it cannot be annulled.”²⁶

What logically comes first and, hence, has a certain categorial precedence in Hegel’s philosophy is the being-there (*Dasein*) of (an) actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) which, as existing, is also at the same time possible (*möglich*). And, a merely possible existence would amount to a contingency. Thus, a given actuality *qua* contingent is the factual ground, the baseless base, of an always-after-the-fact necessity (the *Science of Logic* directly ties existence to facticity as itself groundless [*Grundlose*],²⁷ to an anti-Leibnizian, post-Kantian *ohne Warum*). That is to say, for Hegel, necessity is, in its very logical essence as a metaphysical category, invariably the result of a movement of becoming, with this kinetic trajectory (i.e., “the content of the matter”) within which necessity takes shape pushing off from an initially contingent set of conditions—namely, “the existence of dispersed circumstances that seem to have no concern with one another and no inward coherence,” “circumstances” that “are an immediate actuality that collapses inwardly.”

Some of the exact wording in the above quotation from §147 should be highlighted. Arguably, the word “*Existenz*” in “the existence of dispersed circumstances” is used here by Hegel in its precise technical sense (i.e., as equivalent to determinate being-there [*Dasein*]). Likewise, when he depicts these same circumstances as “an immediate actuality,” this resonates with the phrase “immediately there (*unmittelbar Daseiende*)” as employed in §143 to designate one of the two co-emergent modal

25. Stanley Rosen, *The Idea of Hegel’s Science of Logic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 375.

26. Georg Lukács, *The Young Hegel: Studies in the Relations between Dialectics and Economics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976), 394.

27. G.W.F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik II: Erster Teil, Die objektive Logik, Zweites Buch; Zweiter Teil, Die subjektive Logik, Werke in zwanzig Bänden, 6*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969), 123. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 478.

dimensions of actuality (along with the modality of possibility). Both of these terminological details further reinforce the interpretive thesis (one advanced by Slavoj Žižek, among others²⁸) regarding the primacy of contingency over necessity within Hegelian Logic itself. Finally, at the end of the previously-quoted passage from §147, Hegel indicates that (*Ur-*)contingency gets sublated, but never negated altogether, by the subsequent resultant necessity to which it gives rise (such contingencies “go under, but at the same time they are also preserved”).²⁹ Put differently, everything necessary bears upon itself a navel-like mark of its contingent origin, of its origin as contingent (i.e., as a prior actuality [*Wirklichkeit*] *qua* both existent and possible). Consistent with the immediately preceding, Žižek, in *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism*, remarks, “The key problem is... that of the umbilical cord connecting a formal-transcendental structure to its contingent historical content: how is the Real of history inscribed into a structure?”³⁰

In connection with Žižek’s mention of the topic of history, perhaps the best corroborative instantiation of the just-summarized Hegelian logic of modality in the more-than-logical *Realphilosophie* is to be found in the *Philosophy of History*. Specifically, the last stretch of this text’s introduction, a section entitled “Geographical Basis of History,”³¹ indicates that, for Hegel, the grand arc of human history in its complex, extended entirety arises out of the grounds of actual, factual/factual contingencies, such as the geographical dispersal of different populations and, relatedly, the variations of climate, resources, etc. available to these scattered groups. Prior to everyone from Marx to Jared Diamond—Georgi Plekhanov, among others, holds up the “Geographical Basis of History” as evidence of Hegel’s historical materialist leanings *avant la lettre*³²—Hegel already argues that whatever necessities eventually come to hold sway and be retroactively discernible across sequences of human history, these necessities ultimately, when all is said and done, are secondary results, products of a becoming-necessary, emerging out of primary contingencies *qua* “the existence of dispersed circumstances” as “immediate actuality” (§147) (in this case, dispersed ge-

28. Adrian Johnston, “Absolutely Contingent: Slavoj Žižek and the Hegelian Contingency of Necessity,” *Rethinking German Idealism*, ed. Joseph Carew and Sean McGrath (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 215-245.

29. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 603.

30. Slavoj Žižek, *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2014), 101.

31. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 79-102.

32. Georgi V. Plekhanov, *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*, ed. James S. Allen (New York: International, 1969), 49.

ographical circumstances and the variables these circumstances bring with them). Moreover, anachronously invoking the Ernst Haeckel of “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny,” the becoming-necessary of the contingent in phylogenetic collective history is mirrored, in Hegel’s philosophy, by the same dynamic in ontogenetic individual history, as illustrated by the Faust-inspired figure of “Pleasure and Necessity” in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (a *Gestalt* springing phoenix-like from the phrenological skull of “Observing Reason”).³³

At this juncture, I want to put forward an argument gathering together what I have traced thus far in terms of the intertwined threads from the *Encyclopedia Logic* (an argument I will further substantiate subsequently in connection with the *Science of Logic*). This line of thought might best be introduced through reference to another set of moments in the “Addition” to §143. This *Zusatz* opens with Hegel forcefully inverting the common misperception according to which possibility is greater than and enjoys priority over actuality:

The notion of possibility appears initially to be the richer and more comprehensive determination, and actuality, in contrast, as the poorer and more restricted one. So we say, ‘Everything is possible, but not everything that is possible is on that account actual too.’ But, in fact, i.e., in thought, actuality is what is more comprehensive, because, being the concrete thought (*konkrete Gedanke*), it contains possibility within itself as an abstract moment (*abstraktes Moment*). We find this accepted in our ordinary consciousness, too: for when we speak of the possible, as distinct from the actual, we call it ‘merely’ possible (*nur Mögliches*).³⁴

He continues with the following paragraph:

It is usually said that possibility consists generally in thinkability (*Denkbarkeit*). But thinking is here understood to mean just the apprehending of a content in the form of abstract identity (*abstrakten Identität*). Now, since any content can be brought into this form, providing only that it is separated from the relations in which it stands, even the most absurd and nonsensical suppositions can be considered possible. It is possible that the moon will fall on the earth this evening, for the moon is a body separate from the earth and therefore can fall downward just as easily as a stone that has been flung into the air; it is possible that the Sultan may become Pope, for he is a human being, and as such he can become a convert to Christianity, and then a priest,

33. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 217-221.

34. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften, Erster Teil*, §143, 282-283. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §143, 216.

and so on. Now in all this talk of possibilities it is especially the principle of a 'grounding' (*das Denkgesetz vom Grunde*) that is applied... according to this principle, anything for which a ground (or reason) (*Grund*) can be specified is possible. The more uneducated (*ungebildeter*) a person is, the less he knows about the determinate relations in which the objects that he is considering stand and the more inclined he tends to be to indulge in all manner of empty possibilities (*leeren Möglichkeiten*); we see this, for example, with so-called pub politicians (*Kannengißern*) in the political domain.³⁵

There is much to be unpacked in these two quoted paragraphs. To begin with, Hegel herein deploys a distinction between, on the one hand, the "concrete thought" of actuality and, on the other hand, "empty possibilities." *Wirklichkeit* and the concrete thinking of it contain within themselves non-empty possibilities, namely, those possibilities that are made concretely possible by an already-there (as *Dasein*) actuality endowed with the ontological weight of *Existenz*. Such *Wirklichkeit* internally harbors these non-empty possibilities as its own possibilities, as the multiple potential future actualities with real chances (i.e., non-null probabilities) to be actualized in the *à venir* out of the previously actualized. This actuality therefore is a presence embodying not only the/its past and present, but also the/its future specifically in the form of this actual present's own immanently self-generated possibilities as its corresponding not-yets. Actuality's presence shelters within itself its own future as its auto-produced "abstract moment." To go even further, what makes a given actuality the very actuality that it indeed is in the present is, in no small part, what it has the potential to become in the future. All of this is buttressed with a characteristically Hegelian appeal to the (contingent) conventions of "ordinary language" ("We find this accepted in our ordinary consciousness, too: for when we speak of the possible, as distinct from the actual, we call it 'merely' possible").

However, with Hegel's mention of "abstract identity"—he here means nothing other than the law of identity ($A = A$), the recto whose verso is the law of non-contradiction ($A \neq \neg A$), as the load-bearing pillar of classical, bivalent logic—it is clear that he associates the emptily possible with mere logical possibility alone. Once again, through his references both to the law of identity as well as to the principle of sufficient reason ("the principle of a 'grounding'"), Hegel evidently is taking yet more swipes at Leibniz. But, as was seen above in connection with the *Zusatz* to §145 of the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel's handling of mo-

35. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften, Erster Teil*, §143, 283. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §143, 216.

dalities has critical consequences for certain secular scientific targets in addition to monotheistic religious ones. To be precise, I suspect, given Hegel's chosen examples, that some of his mockery of the bare thinkability of logical-but-empty possibilities is scorn being heaped upon the empiricist David Hume and the latter's confronting of the sciences with the problem of induction. Hegel, for a number of reasons, has a somewhat low estimation of Hume's philosophy,³⁶ a philosophy inspiring such Hegel-disliked developments in the late-eighteenth/early-nineteenth-century German-speaking intellectual milieu as Kantian critical-epistemological anti-realism and the neo-Humean skepticism of such contemporaries as Salomon Maimon and G.E. Schulze.

Whether as the immeasurable vastness of the metaphysical reality of countless possible worlds *à la* the Leibnizian theodicy, the indefinite number of unpredictable future patterns of observed entities and events *à la* the Humean problem of induction, the wild, free-wheeling socio-political hypotheses and predictions of drunk and uninformed barflies (i.e., "so-called pub politicians"), or whatever other imaginative playing upon the basic skeletal structure of logical possibility in its untempered purity (i.e., unconstrained by any considerations regarding probability)—all instantiations of the merely logically possible count, from Hegel's perspective, as just so many empty possibilities. Their emptiness is due to an emptying from the possible, whether through inadvertent ignorance or intentional neglect, of the possible's determinate contents endowed to it exclusively by virtue of it arising from the concreteness of established actuality. This *Wirklichkeit*, as the extant ground of its corresponding non-empty possibilities, renders a certain number of possibilities, a quantity far short of the incalculably large number of logical possibilities, actually possible (with the latter being those "abstract moments" "contained within" [§143] the concreteness of the actual as the latter's "ownmost" possibilities, to resort to a bit of Heideggerian jargon). In other words, the limited number of possibilities projected from and tethered to a given actuality are non-empty thanks to their anchoring in and expression of the actual potentials and probabilities of a really existent, already-there *Wirklichkeit*. The excessive surplus of the greater number of formal-logical possibilities over and above the significantly lesser number of these concretely real possibilities amounts to the arid, boring

36. G.W.F. Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), 69, 154. Hegel, "On the Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy, Exposition of its Different Modifications and Comparison of the Latest Form with the Ancient One," 311-362. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §38, 77-79; §39, 80. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume Three*, 369-375. Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 26-30.

expanse of empty, fantastical possibilities never-to-pass. Like the undisciplined, untrained mind of the inebriated “pub politician”—this is the pathetic, pitiable figure to which all intoxicated speculators foolishly betting upon the unreal prospects of formal-logical possibility alone reduce (whether they be Leibnizians, Humeans, Meillassouxians, or whoever else)—the boundless, sprawling space of the logically possible beyond the confines of the really possible is vacuous and unformed (*ungebildeter*). Both are equally worthy of disregard and dismissal in Hegel’s eyes.

Earlier, and in connection specifically with the “Addition” to §145 of the *Encyclopedia Logic*, I placed a spotlight on Hegel’s rendition of necessity as “could only be so and not otherwise (*nicht anders sein Können*).” Now, with me having just spent some time on the actuality-possibility link as elaborated in the *Zusatz* to §143, the significance of the modality of necessity as per §145 can be properly explained and appreciated. Given the ground I already have covered here apropos the Hegelian logical doctrine of the modalities, it can be said that *Wirklichkeit* embodies the modality of contingency. It also can be said that such logically-modally primary contingency is the concrete being-there (*Da-sein*) out of which grow all real, actual possibilities (as opposed to the superfluous, frivolous limitlessness of empty formal-logical possibilities by themselves). On this basis, Hegelian necessity, as a modality *qua* logical category, can and should be comprehended as nothing other than the internally differentiated unity formed by the modal ensemble of the actual-*qua*-contingent and this actuality’s correlative actual possibilities. Beyond this pairing of existent (*als Existenz*) contingency and the concretely possible corresponding to and sheltering within it, nothing else or more is possible. That is to say, although there is the wiggle room of the “otherwise” (*anders sein*) within concrete actuality for its multiple accompanying possibilities as non-empty/real—and, for Hegel, each and every present actuality is itself the actualization of one among several possibilities generated by a past actuality—the proliferation of mere logical possibilities in excess of actuality’s own possibilities cannot really (come to) be. Put differently, outside the modal pair of contingent actuality and its correlative actual possibilities, “it cannot be otherwise,” namely, no other, additional possibilities are really possible. Therefore, if the necessary is the modality of “cannot be otherwise,” then, as is done in Hegel’s *Logic*, necessity can be equated with the set constituted by the combination of *Wirklichkeit* with its own possibilities. In terms of modal categories, *Notwendigkeit* is the produced logical outcome resulting from the prior dialectical-speculative synthesis of *Zufälligkeit* (as incarnated by *Wirklichkeit*) and an accompanying *Möglichkeit*.

The moment finally has arrived for examining the modal categories as they feature in Hegel's *Science of Logic*. My focus in what follows will be on "The Doctrine of Essence," "Section Three: Actuality," "Chapter 2: Actuality." This specific chapter is divided into three main sub-sections: "A. Contingency, or Formal Actuality, Possibility, and Necessity" (*Zufälligkeit oder formelle Wirklichkeit, Möglichkeit und Notwendigkeit*); "B. Relative Necessity, or Real Actuality, Possibility, and Necessity" (*Relative Notwendigkeit oder reale Wirklichkeit, Möglichkeit und Notwendigkeit*); and, "C. Absolute Necessity" (*Absolute Notwendigkeit*). On the basis of the table of contents alone, one readily can see that, for Hegel, contingency precedes necessity, with the "absolute" version of the latter being a late outcome/result (rather than eternally preexistent Alpha, Beginning, Origin, etc.) of the dialectical-speculative dynamics of *reale Wirklichkeit*, itself arising out of *Zufälligkeit*.

In "A. Contingency, or Formal Actuality, Possibility, and Necessity," Hegel directly links the dialectical-speculative relations between actuality and possibility with those between contingency and necessity. Referring specifically to the "two determinations" of actuality and possibility (in which the latter is co-emergent with the being-there/existence of the former in its contingent, immediate givenness), Hegel states:

This *absolute unrest* of the *becoming* (*Diese absolute Unruhe des Werdens*) of these two determinations is *contingency* (*Zufälligkeit*). But just because each immediately turns into its opposite (*jede unmittelbar in die entgegengesetzte umschlägt*), equally in this other it simply *unites with itself* (*mit sich selbst zusammen*), and this identity (Identität) of both, of one in the other, is *necessity* (*Notwendigkeit*).³⁷

One could say that the determinations of *Wirklichkeit* and *Möglichkeit* are doubly contingent. First, as already observed here in connection with the *Encyclopedia Logic*, the actual itself fundamentally is a contingency as a merely possible being-there that also happens to exist. Second, no single one of the multiple real possibilities generated and contained within a given actuality is itself necessary *qua* destined or fated to be the one-and-only next actuality produced out of the current actuality as the latter's successor moment. Any one of the plurality of non-empty possibilities, as possible future actualities bound up with a present actuality, contingently could become the subsequently realized actuality.

As Hegel has it, *Wirklichkeit* and *Möglichkeit* are "opposites" *qua* complimentary pair of mutually entangled dialectical determinations.

37. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik II*, 206. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 545.

Additionally, they are enrichments of the logical category of Becoming (*Werden*). Of course, Becoming famously surfaces near the very beginning of the main body of the Logic, doing so precisely as the *Aufhebung* of the first two moments of “The Doctrine of Being,” namely, Being (*Sein*) and Nothing (*Nichts*).³⁸ The much later logical moment of “Actuality” near the conclusion of “The Doctrine of Essence” retroactively adds to Becoming modal determinations. In the quotation above, *Werden* acquires as characteristics the modalities of possibility, contingency, and necessity. What is more, this modally enriched Becoming (i.e., the “*absolute unrest of the becoming*” in the passage just quoted) is one involving the two determinations/moments of actuality and possibility. Therein, “each immediately turns into its opposite” insofar as, one, a current actuality becomes a subsequent actuality by transitioning into one of the actual possibilities it already harbors within itself and, two, possibilities ceaselessly transition into being actualities in and through the perpetual movement (i.e., “absolute unrest”) wherein posterior actualities continually take shape out of prior ones. In short, actuality passes over into possibility (with this possibility thereby becoming the new, next actuality) and possibility passes over into actuality (with this actuality producing in and through itself further possibilities). More succinctly stated still, the actual becomes the possible and *vice versa*. Even putting aside temporal connotations that always risk being problematic in relation to Hegel’s Logic in its strict logical abstractness, the categorial determinations of actuality and possibility structurally imply each other within the Hegelian framework. Any and every actuality is itself an actualization of a possibility; and, any and every possibility in Hegel’s precise sense (i.e., as real/non-empty *qua* more than simply a formal issue of mere, sheer logical possibility alone) is tethered to an extant actuality making this possibility an actual possibility. With Hegelian actuality and possibility conceptualized thusly, the one essentially and necessarily entails the other.

Lastly, as Hegel stipulates at the close of the preceding quotation, necessity is the “identity” (specifically as a dialectical-speculative unity via sublation) of actuality and possibility. That is to say, the necessary is the *Aufhebung*-attained identity-of-identity-and-difference between the actual and the possible. Necessity preserves the distinction between actuality and possibility while, at the same time, being nothing other than what results from the interminable restlessness of the passage of *Wirklichkeit* and *Möglichkeit* into each other (this passage being the immanent dialectics of the actual and the possible, their self-subversion as au-

38. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 82-108. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §86-88, 136-145.

to-sublation). But, as I already stressed apropos the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegelian *Notwendigkeit* is nothing more or other than this, namely, the contingency-ridden relations between actualities and their accompanying limited-but-open plethoras of possibilities. Along these precise lines, it bears repeating that necessity *à la* Hegel is, contrary to countless caricatures, anything but a metaphysically real predestination flawlessly manifesting itself as a unique, contingency-free fate or theodicy.

The title of the second sub-section of “Chapter 2: Actuality” of “Section Three: Actuality” of “The Doctrine of Essence” in the *Science of Logic* clearly contrasts with that of the preceding sub-section of this same chapter. Whereas sub-section “A” deals with “Contingency, or Formal Actuality, Possibility, and Necessity,” sub-section “B” deals instead with “Relative Necessity, or Real Actuality, Possibility, and Necessity.” Obviously, the “formally actual” as contingent now has become the “really actual” as “relatively necessary,” with the three logical categories of actuality, possibility, and necessity shifting from being “formal” to being “real.” As formal, the three dimensions of contingent actuality, possibility, and necessity are not really distinguished from each other. Sub-section “A,” as explained by me above, makes clear that contingent actuality and possibility ultimately are identical, with this identity being necessity itself. Minus the reality of any content, there is nothing to realize the formal differences between these modalities in sub-section “A.” But, now in sub-section “B,” the addition of the reality of content enables the implicit formal differences between modalities to become explicit real differences. With a really existent content, the actuality of this content as present can be seen to be distinct from any of its not-(yet-)present possibilities.³⁹

With an eye already to the third and final sub-section (“C. Absolute Necessity”) of “Chapter 2: Actuality,” a focus on necessity in sub-section “B” is an appropriate reflection of the dialectical-speculative transition, the very movement of *Wirklichkeit* itself, from contingency to absolute necessity. As regards real necessity, Hegel specifies that, “this necessity is... *relative*. For it has a *presupposition* from which it begins, it has its *starting point* in the *contingent*” (*Diese Notwendigkeit... ist... relative. Sie hat nämlich eine Voraussetzung, von der sie anfängt, sie hat an dem Zufälligen ihren Ausgangspunkt*).⁴⁰ Insofar as necessity is the result of the relationship between contingent actuality and the latter’s accompanying possibilities—the necessary presupposes the combination of the contingently actual and the actually possible—it is “relative” to *Wirklichkeit* as itself, at least initially, contingent.

39. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 546-547.

40. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik II*, 211. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 549.

Hegel proceeds to posit that, “in point of fact real necessity is *in itself* also contingency... Real necessity... contains contingency” (*In der Tat ist... die reale Notwendigkeit an sich auch Zufälligkeit... Die reale Notwendigkeit enthält... die Zufälligkeit*).⁴¹ He soon adds that, “Here, therefore, the unity of necessity and contingency is present *in itself* or *in principle*; this unity is to be called *absolute actuality*” (An sich ist also hier die Einheit der Notwendigkeit und Zufälligkeit vorhanden; diese Einheit ist die absolute Wirklichkeit zu nennen).⁴² As I elucidated much earlier here apropos both §147 of the *Encyclopedia Logic* as well as the section on the “Geographical Basis of History” in the introduction to the *Philosophy of History*, contingency, as the *Ur-modality* of modalities, sets in motion the “*absolute unrest* of the *becoming*” in which actuality and possibility constantly pass over into each other. The contingent thereby self-sublates by immanently generating out of itself “*absolute actuality*” as necessary insofar as nothing other than this *absolute Wirklichkeit* is possible. Put differently, no possibilities for things being “otherwise” than this actuality beyond the non-empty, more-than-formal/logical possibilities already contained within *Wirklichkeit* are truly possible. This particular “cannot be otherwise” is Hegelian real necessity which, as an outcome/product of the interrelations between actuality and possibility primordially activated and launched by contingency, “contains contingency” as this necessity’s sublated but impossible-to-expunge-altogether basis, the groundless ground of its originary factual givenness ineliminably preserved in whatever *Aufhebung* it undergoes.

Hegel succinctly reiterates the immediately preceding at the very start of “C. Absolute Necessity,”⁴³ the sub-section bringing “Chapter 2: Actuality” to a close. He goes on to characterize absolute necessity thusly—“it is, *because* it is... it has only itself for ground and condition. It is the in-itself, but its in-itself is its immediacy, its possibility is its actuality. *It is, therefore, because it is*” (*es ist, weil es ist... es hat nur sich zum Grunde und Bedingung. Es ist Ansichsein, aber sein Ansichsein ist seine Unmittelbarkeit, seine Möglichkeit ist seine Wirklichkeit. — Es ist also, weil es ist*).⁴⁴ Hegel’s depiction of *absolute Notwendigkeit* here already suggests what is emphatically emphasized two paragraphs later, in the penultimate paragraph of sub-section “C”: With the absolute of necessity (or also the necessity of the Absolute), a dialectical-spec-

41. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik II*, 213. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 550.

42. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik II*, 213. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 550.

43. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 550.

44. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik II*, 215. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 552.

ulative “convergence of opposites” transpires in which *Ur*-contingency is *Ur*-necessity and *vice versa*. As that penultimate paragraph states:

... this *contingency* is... absolute necessity; it is the *essence* (Wesen) of those free, inherently necessary actualities (*freien, an sich notwendigen Wirklichkeiten*). This essence is *light-shy* (Lichtscheue), because there is in these actualities no *reflective movement* (Scheinen), no reflex, because they are grounded purely in themselves alone (*nur rein in sich gegründet*), are shaped for themselves (*für sich gestaltet sind*), and manifest themselves only to *themselves*, because they are only *being* (Sein)... contingency is absolute necessity, it is itself the presupposing of that first, absolute actuality (*sie selbst ist das Voraussetzen jener ersten absoluten Wirklichkeiten*).⁴⁵

So, not only is contingency the first of the modalities to be introduced in Hegel's Logic—it returns as (part of) the last of the modalities (i.e. absolute necessity) therein too. Thus, contingency is, in a certain sense, genuinely both the Alpha and the Omega of the modal categories of Hegelian *Logik*.

Any necessity (whether formal, real, and/or absolute) is a subsequent result arising from or supervening upon a prior contingency—specifically, a merely possible actuality just so happening also to enjoy being-there/existence. Such necessity sublates but, as is the well-known nature of Hegel's *Aufhebung*, does not negate entirely and without remainder this always-already-there contingency to which necessity remains tethered (as Hegel puts it in the previous quotation here, “absolute necessity... is itself the presupposing of that first, absolute actuality,” with this always-prior *absolute Wirklichkeit* incarnating ineliminable *Ur*-contingency). Furthermore, each and every necessity, even when “absolute”—this absoluteness can be construed as referring to primordial origins, unsurpassable horizons, absence of an otherwise, and/or lack of any Beyond/Outside—confronts thinking, when all is said and done, with a spade-turning “it is, because it is.” This tautology expresses the convergence of opposites in which this convergence, rather than being an equal, balanced synthesis between the opposed modalities of contingency and necessity, lop-sidedly favors contingency. “It is, because it is” articulates the ultimate contingency of necessity. Likewise, the Hegelian Absolute *überhaupt* (obviously invoked as part of the phrase “absolute necessity”), whatever else it might be, also is just such a coincidence of the apparently contradictory modal determinations of contingency and necessity.

45. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 553.

Finally, Hegel cautions that this dialectical-speculative identification of the absolutely necessary with the contingent is “light-shy.” He indicates that this has to do with the fact that absolute necessity, as absolute, is self-grounding (“necessary actualities... are grounded purely in themselves alone, are shaped for themselves, and manifest themselves only to *themselves*”). The notion of self-grounding is shrouded in obscurity precisely because of its dialectical ambiguity: on the one hand, the self-grounded is grounded insofar as it supplies itself with a ground; on the other hand, the self-grounded is groundless insofar as it rests on nothing beyond, behind, or beneath itself. In the Hegelian System, absolute necessity specifically and the Absolute generally, in their shared lack, given their absoluteness, of any Other or Externality, involve this ambiguous combination of being simultaneously with and without ground *qua* reason: “with why” (*mit Warum*) as auto-justifying and self-supporting (i.e., with a base of grounded necessity); but, at the same time, also “without why” (*ohne Warum*) as unjustified and unsupported (i.e., with a baselessness of groundless contingency).

Hopefully, my preceding reconstruction of Hegel’s logical doctrine of the modal categories has succeeded at making the privileging of contingency in Hegelian philosophy highly plausible and readily defensible. If nothing else, this reconstruction shifts the burden of proof squarely onto the shoulders of all those who would stubbornly cling to doubts about the centrality of the contingent in Hegel’s System, namely, those who would persist in portraying Hegel as a pre-Kantian wolf (or “Wolff” *à la* the Leibnizianism of Christian Wolff) in post-Kantian clothing (i.e., a theosopher of divine necessitation, a metaphysical realist about a transcendent destiny, and so on). For the black-and-white vision of the understanding (*Verstand*), with its congenital blindness to the colors of reason (*Vernunft*), the ambiguities of absoluteness are difficult, if not impossible, to discern (i.e., they are “light-shy”).⁴⁶ They really are there nonetheless. Here, the Hegelian circle closes, with the Absolute rejoining the “*Being, pure Being, without any further determination*” (*Sein, reines Sein, — ohne alle weiterer Bestimmung*)⁴⁷ of the very start of the System at the (apparent) beginning of the Logic. The Absolute of Being and/or the Being of the Absolute resultantly has turned out to be, in truth, *Contingency, pure Contingency* —without any further determination.

46. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 2. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 48. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, 5, 7-8; §81, 130-131; §82, 132-133.

47. G.W.F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik I: Erster Teil, Die objektive Logik, Erstes Buch, Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, 5, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969), 82. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 82.

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