

Language and Idealism: Community as the Foundation of Language

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Chapter 1: The Origin of Hegel's Dialectic

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Philosophy pays considerable attention to language, focusing on its autonomy and public nature. Language is also considered the cornerstone of the critique of idealism.

According to R. Coward and J. Ellis, "because all the practices that make up a social totality take place in language, it becomes possible to consider language as the place in which the social individual is constructed". (Coward and Ellis 1977, p. 1) The development and widespread acceptance of synchronic linguistics have led to the scientific analysis and demystification of human beings. We need not depend on the idealistic concept of "human essence" anymore, and being "human" can be analyzed as a materialistic, socially constituted process.

This type of understanding of idealism is commonplace, wherein it is regarded as the notion that "essence precedes being." Bourgeois humanism is the foundation of the idea that "essence precedes existence," which Sartre explains clearly in his lecture (Sartre 2007, p. 21), stating that humanity "is indeed a project that has a subjective existence, rather unlike that of a patch of moss, a spreading fungus, or a cauliflower." (Sartre 2007, p. 23)

Thus, Sartre criticizes bourgeois humanism, similar to how Marx identified and criticized it in his Sixth Thesis on Feuerbach:

Feuerbach resolves the essence of religion into the essence of man. But the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations.

Feuerbach, who does not enter upon a criticism of this real essence, is hence obliged:

1. To abstract from the historical process and to define the religious sentiment [Genüt] regarded by itself, and to presuppose an abstract—isolated—human

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individual.

2. The essence, therefore, can be regarded only as “species,” as an inner mute generality which unites many individuals in a natural way. (Marx 1976, pp. 7–8)

Bourgeois humanism, which also attracted Feuerbach, regards abstract human nature as imminent in individuals and inevitably deduces the dualism of subject—object. Marx’s First Thesis on Feuerbach (Marx 1976, p. 6) exposes this point.

Wittgenstein also attempted to criticize traditional philosophy based on language analysis. In his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (Wittgenstein 1922), he states that language can map individual contents in the world on the grounds of shared logic between language and the world. He argued that cognitive subjectivity falls outside of this logic, and therefore, cannot be discussed in principle. By clearly defining the limits of language, he thought he had found the ultimate solution to conventional philosophical problems.

In Wittgenstein’s later works (such as in *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein 2009) and *The Blue and Brown Books* (Wittgenstein 1965)), this idea was developed into the theory of language games that emphasized the public nature of language. For example, humans express the “pain” that they feel through language; however, because this expression is in public, objective, and uses social language, it never actually expresses the “pain” that is felt. Rather, it serves to play certain social games in order to seek sympathy, help, and understanding, and the “pain” derives its meaning from this language game.

In this way, he denied the existence of substance which supports the attributes of entities. There are no congenital attributes of entities, rather they are drawn from society through the medium of language. We depend on language games not only for displaying appropriate behavior in society but also for our existence within it. Thus, idealism, and Hegel as its representative, have often been the subject of criticism in contemporary philosophy.

Discussions on the autonomy and public nature of language began with Hegel, Herder, and others. (Cf. Hacking 2002, Ch. 8) In fact, Hegel was not a philosopher of the era of concepts, but one with a new view of language who appeared at the end of 18th century as a transitional figure from the era of concepts to the era of meaning. Thus, the criticism of stale conceptualism does not apply to him. In fact, as an advocate of the public nature of language, he seemed to have anticipated modern philosophy.

Hegel’s idealism (Cf. Ohta 2023) states that language externalizes the ego, internalizes the sensory object, recognizes the self in the sensory object, and integrates the two. The function and existence of language as a mediator is justified owing to the association of language with the essence of human beings and human society: arguments that rely on the public nature of language.

Hegel is often regarded as a typical idealist philosopher based on his method of argumentation and use of terminology, but he was a pioneer in addressing modern issues, such as the public nature of language; I would like to explore the relevance of his arguments to contemporary philosophy of language.

In what follows, I discuss the formation process of Hegel's dialectic in Chapter 1, and importance of language in Hegel's dialectic, and in Chapter 2, the affinity between contemporary philosophy and Hegel, using Wittgenstein as an example.

Chapter 1: The Origin of Hegel's Dialectic

Section 1: The Split of Human Life

The starting point of Hegel's ideological development was the division of human life, which is evident in Christianity. Hegel found Christianity to be a private religion aimed at the moral perfection of every person. However, it is assumed that humans cannot make themselves morally perfect by themselves. Humans must go through the detour of Christianity if they seek to achieve happiness despite their moral ineptitude. However, Hegel argued that the necessity of such a detour makes Christianity an inhumane religion. This detour presumes that human nature is degenerate, and that humans are not virtuous. Therefore, Christianity is a religion of disdain for humanity.

The "degeneracy of humanity" suggests that "the virtue of publicness" disappears, and that human interest concentrates mostly on private things. Private possessions come first because it is the dominance of assets (property) that made humans private and changed the nature of humanity. Hegel regarded the individualization of the human spirit as the objective foundation of Christianity, which started at the time of the Roman Empire. "The open, welcome reception of the Christian religion accompanied the disappearance of public virtue among the Romans and diminishing dignity [. . . *der offene, willkommene Empfang der christlichen Religion zu den Zeiten der verschwundenen öffentlichen Tugend der Römer, und der sinkenden äußern Größe*]" (Hegel, 1907, S. 71)

Along with the loss of human freedom, the eternal and the absolute are driven to the other world, which is beyond human reach. Thus, humans cannot achieve happiness in this world, but only in Heaven. God became an objective being alienated from humans, and humanity was forced to obey God as an infinite object. The objectification of God and the enslavement of humanity are thus intertwined.

Although the security of the soul and property of all citizens became the most important earthly concern and community freedom was eroded by self-interest, Christianity, as a private religion, attempts to recover the lost freedom and the natural state of humanity in "the Kingdom of God," which lies beyond the secular world. Therefore, Christianity scorns the various antagonisms created by private property and attempts to revive the communal nature of humanity in the Kingdom of God. This

idealistic attempt to revive communal nature cannot avert the contradiction between real relations in the secular world.

Later, Hegel criticized his own critical methodology through which he had examined the real world from the perspective of the world as it should be. However, he also criticized the uncritical methodology of describing experience and fact itself. What was important, to Hegel, was to consider the necessity of what really is and make it a critical springboard for creating a new reality.

Hegel finally realized the historical necessity of modern civil society. He understood civil society as the system of property and rights and concentrated on investigating the fate of modern society in order to determine the historical necessity and inner principle of this development. This is clearly seen in his articles during his Jena period, such as *On the Scientific Ways of Treating Natural Law* [*Über die wissenschaftlichen Behandlungsarten des Naturrechts*] (1802) and *System of Ethical Life* [*System der Sittlichkeit*] (1803).

Hegel defined modern European culture after Descartes as a reflective culture characterized by conflicts of dualistic concepts. According to Hegel, such a culture, characterized by divisions, reached its peak in his time. In the preface to *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel described the historical emergence of the dualistic cultural situation in three steps:

- 1) Formerly, they [men] had adorned a vast wealth of thought and imagery. The meaning of all that hung on the thread of light by which it was linked to Heaven. Instead of dwelling on this world's presence, men looked beyond it, following this thread, to an other-worldly presence, so to speak. (Hegel, 1977b, p. 5)

- 2) The eye of the Spirit had to be forcibly turned and held fast to the things of this world; and it has taken a long time before the lucidity . . . could . . . make . . . attention to what has been called 'experience,' an interesting and valid enterprise. (Hegel, 1977b, p. 5)

- 3) Now, we seem to need just the opposite: sense is so strongly rooted in earthly things that it requires just as much force to raise it. The Spirit shows itself as so impoverished that, like a wanderer in the desert craving a mere mouthful of water, it seems to crave for its refreshment only the bare feeling of the divine. (Hegel, 1977b, p. 5)

Here, there is a conflict between romanticism and enlightenment. Enlightenment takes earthly, experiential, and finite things as the absolute, seeks truth in them, and pushes divine and infinite things out of human cognition. In contrast, romanticism transcends

the realm of the unclean experiential world to grasp divine and infinite things through intuition or inspiration. However, enlightenment and romanticism presuppose each other as both assume the divided nature of reflective culture. Hegel felt it was his responsibility to overcome this situation.

According to Hegel, the peak of the reflective or divided culture was the eve of the re-establishment of the totality of culture.

Section 2: Overcoming the Split of Human Life and Critique of Kant

To solve this problem, Hegel thought that we must discover the logic of mediation that unifies the finite and the infinite, the logic that does not exclude the finite but accepts it in itself and sublates it.

For Kant, on whom Hegel originally relied, the role of reason is to place a finite prescription, which understanding establishes as the absolute, in contrast with another finite definition. To recognize that “reason” here is not the ability to perceive the infinite, but rather the ability to explain the finiteness of what understanding prescribes, and then distinguish between the finite and the infinite by “placing the true infinite outside of its domain [das wahre Unendliche außerhalb ihres Umkreises zu setzen].” (Hegel 1907, S. 348)

As “reason” in the Kantian sense is only given the role of “the critical reason [die kritische Vernunft]” (Kant 1998, p. 371 [A 270=B 326]), his postulate necessarily establishes the synthesis of the finite and the infinite beyond the reason.

For the true synthesis of the finite and infinite to be possible, critical reason must sublimate itself and rise to the speculative reason that makes the synthesis of the finite and infinite possible. Hegel realized this through the critical examination of Kant’s reflective philosophy.

In asking, “How is it possible to make an a priori comprehensive judgment?” Kant questioned the possibility of the basis for establishing metaphysics as a science. He pursued it within his own cognition and took a passive attitude of “criticism of cognitive ability” from beginning to end. Consequently, the comprehensive metaphysical (rational) recognition of the finite and infinite is denied. However, according to Hegel, the “authentic Idea of Reason” (Hegel 1977a, p. 69) is hidden in the possibility of a priori synthetic judgment.

According to Kant, universal cognition is possible by associating diverse representations provided by intuitive forms of time and space with categories. This is the power of imagination, and the schema is its product.

Because the cognition of objects is established by the fact that the imagination is the mediator between sensibility and understanding, the imagination must, on the one hand, be of the same form as sensibility and, at the same time, be of the same form as understanding.

Kant seeks the synthetic action of such imaginative power in “productive imagination.” (Kant 1998, p. 240 [A 123]) Productive imagination is “an a priori condition of the possibility of all composition of the manifold in a cognition” (Kant 1998, p. 238 [A 118]), and “the faculty for representing an object even without its presence in intuition”. (Kant 1998, p. 256 [B 151]) This productive imagination is the synergistic action that mediates understanding and sensibility; it is simultaneously sensibility and the spontaneous action of understanding.

According to Kant, the syntheses of productive imagination must be based on the unity of “the pure apperception”. (Kant 1998, p. 246 [B 132]) The pure apperception is the representation of “I think” that accompanies all representations, that is, “self-consciousness” (Kant 1998, p. 247 [B 132]), and only under the identity of such self-consciousness is recognition of an object possible.

Hegel sees that “the Idea of Reason occurs in the Deduction of the Categories as the original unity of the one and the manifold”. (Hegel 1977a, p. 82) This idea is already manifested in productive imagination. Hegel highly appreciates Kant’s achievement in laying “the beginning of the Idea of Reason” (Hegel 1977a, p. 79) in productive imagination. In addition, “the original synthetic unity of apperception is recognized also as the principle of the figurative synthesis”. (Hegel 1977a, p. 69)

Thus, Hegel recognized, in the unity of apperception, the culmination of a priori deduction, the principle of true idealism as the absolute identity of opposites, i.e., the identity of the subject and object. (Cf. Hegel 1977c, pp. 80–81)

The essence of Hegel’s interpretation of Kant, which sees in the unity of apperception the primordial identity of the opposites of thought and being, and subject and object, is the primordial ego, which is the capacity for such an absolute identity, and that which accompanies all representations. This is distinct from the empirical ego. The primordial ego is the source that synthesizes diverse things, and because it is none other than the primordial comprehensive unity, it is not simply subjective; on the contrary, it is the point from which the subjective and objective are first separated. Hegel believed that this must be:

The first pure cognition of understanding, therefore, on which the rest of its use is grounded, and that is at the same time also entirely independent from all conditions of sensible intuition, is the principle of the original synthetic unity of apperception. (Kant 1998, p. 249 [B 137])

Rather, the productive imagination must be recognized as what is primary and original, as that out of which the subjective ego and objective world first sunder themselves into the necessarily bipartite appearance and product, and as the sole in itself. (Hegel 1977a, p. 73)

According to Hegel, reason itself, which appears in the primordial unity of apperception, is the primordial mediator that enables the existence of the subject and object; after the distinction is made between the subject and object, it causes both to manifest externally. It is not an intermediary that connects the two. Therefore, pure apperception, which unifies various things into one common self-consciousness, is not merely a subjective function, but is true existence itself.

Chapter 2: Hegel's Dialectics and Language

Section 1: Position of Intermediary

For Hegel, the infinite, or the Absolute, is not beyond the finite and the empirical. If the infinite is beyond the finite and opposes it, then the infinite is reduced to the finite because it is limited and constrained by the finite. The infinite, therefore, is not merely beyond the finite, but must contain the finite within itself. (vgl. Hegel 1970a, 122 [§45 Zusatz])

Consequently, the Absolute (the infinite) can reveal itself only through phenomena (the finite). Rather than placing phenomena outside things in themselves (the infinite), as Kant did, making phenomena the medium for the perception of the Absolute (the infinite) is the logical conclusion.

Thus, the idea of reason as the primordial unity of the ego and existence is torn apart by reflection in Kant's eyes. Further, the opposition between the subject and the object, the phenomenon and the thing itself, the finite and the infinite, are fixed, and thus, cognitions are limited to phenomena (finite things).

The problem is how to restore unity that has been torn apart by reflection or understanding in accordance with the rules of thought that understanding produces.

Understanding is the discriminating faculty of thought that determines various phenomena. As such, understanding is anchored in phenomena. The understanding, on the other hand, has in itself the source of the thoughts it produces. Considering the rules of reasoning of the understanding according to themselves—in Hegelian terms, immediately and against itself—and through their negation, rise to the primordial unity of the ego (reason). However, this route must be made clear.

Understanding is the subjective faculty of thought that distinguishes and defines and is the subject itself that unifies the diversity of phenomena in the ego. Hegel emphasizes that “the activity of dissolution is the power and work of the Understanding, the most astonishing and mightiest of powers, or rather the absolute power”. (Hegel 1977b, p. 18) It is proof of the enormous power of the understanding or ego that the conceptual distinctions produced by understanding become the foothold for further development.

As Hegel says, the subject gives existence to the determinateness that “in its own element supersedes abstract immediacy, that is, the immediacy which barely is, and thus,

is authentic substance”. (Hegel 1977b, p. 19) The subject has a double meaning in defining (determining) the action of understanding. It is the work of mediation that unifies things under the ego.

Mediation is nothing beyond self-moving self-sameness, or is reflection into the self, the moment of the ‘I’ which is for itself pure negativity or, when reduced to its pure abstraction, simple becoming. The mediation, that is ‘I’, or becoming in general, on account of its simple nature, is just immediacy in the process of becoming and is the immediate itself. (Hegel 1977b, p. 11)

In this way, instead of absolutizing the empirical and the finite, we grasp the empirical and the finite as phenomena of the infinite and the absolute. We are therefore constructing the infinite, the whole, which must be logicalized.

Reflective philosophy starts from the finite things that have been absolutized, that is, phenomena and experiences, and paves the way to the totality and the infinite (absolute) through the negation of the absolute way of being, in other words, “the construction of the Absolute in consciousness”. (Hegel 1977c, p. 88) Here, Hegel seeks to find the method of true philosophy.

The natural consciousness of human beings, living in a culture of reflection, regards experiential and sensible things as the only true things and makes them the basis of their own habitation. In *Faith and Knowledge*, Hegel disparagingly refers to the culture of reflection as a culture of common sense because it does not raise any doubts about empirical things and phenomena. (Cf. Hegel 1977a, p. 64) The task of phenomenology is not to criticize the natural consciousness of living human beings in a high-level way, but to describe it by linking criticism and understanding with natural and common-sense consciousness.

As is well known in phenomenology, there is a gap between what is “for our own consciousness,” that we are experiencing, and what is for us who grasp the experience of consciousness from the heights of philosophical knowledge (absolute knowledge). A distinction is made that renders it possible to develop a phenomenological narrative.

This is also the case in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where the distinction and confrontation between the consciousness itself, which is convinced that its own knowledge is true, and our knowledge, which sees through the untruth of this consciousness, plays the role of turning the stage. Thus, what natural consciousness has assumed to be true and certain knowledge becomes the exact opposite. While repeating this tragedy (self-denial), consciousness gradually approaches the knowledge of the truth. It is also a meeting wherein the deepening self-denial of consciousness simultaneously rises to the truth.

Section 2: Function of Language

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel proceeds from the most direct consciousness—

the consciousness of sense—through various other forms of consciousness, finally arriving at absolute knowledge.

First, sense-certainty takes as its premise the schema that the “I” knows directly and immediately an “object,” and that this object is independent of the “I”:

One of the terms is posited in sense-certainty in the form of a simple, immediate being, or as the essence, the *object*; the other, however, is posited as what is unessential and mediated, something which in sense-certainty is not *in itself* but through [the mediation of] an other, the “I,” a *knowing* which knows the object only because the *object* is, while the knowing may either be or not be. But the object *is*: it is what is true, or it is the essence. It is, regardless of whether it is known or not; and it remains, even if it is not known, whereas there is no knowledge if the object is not there. (Hegel, 1977b, p. 59)

Sense-consciousness believes that it grasps the object in front of it. However, when it uses language to express its belief, it expresses only “the universal” despite its intention to express the concrete objects before it. The direct and individual object defined by the word “this” is not the immediate object, but the universal that is mediated by other instances of “this.”

For example, “this desk” is by “this bookshelf,” in front of “this chair,” and in “this room,” and so on. “This desk” is perceived as “this desk” only through the mediation of many other instances of “this,” and without this mediation, the perception of “this desk” will be corrupted. Language plays a central role in this development. The word “this” points out the individual object before the subject and, at the same time, signifies the various other objects that can be denoted by “this,” which put “this object” in a universal relationship. The “this” grasped by sense-consciousness is a mediating process that develops from the preconception of the direct perception of the object through the mediation of various other instances of “this” to the universal “this”:

It is as a universal too that we *utter* what the sensuous [content] is. What we say is: “This,” i.e., the *universal* This; or, “it is,” i.e., *Being in general*. Of course, we do not *envisage* the universal This or Being in general, but we *utter* the universal; in other words, we do not strictly say what in this sense-certainty we *mean* to say. But language, as we see, is the more truthful; in it, we ourselves directly refute what we *mean* to say, and since the universal is the true [content] of sense-certainty and language expresses this true [content] alone, it is just not possible for us ever to say, or express in words, a sensuous being that we *mean*. (Hegel, 1977b, p. 60)

The development of objects from the individual to the universal does not originate from

the nature of objects but is the result of the intellectual activity of the “I.” The “I” is not obedient to objects, as sense-consciousness at first thinks it to be:

The object, which was supposed to be the essential element in sense-certainty, is now the unessential element; for the universal which the object has come to be is no longer what the object was supposed essentially to be for sense-certainty. On the contrary, the certainty is now to be found in the opposite element, viz. in knowing, which previously was the unessential element. Its truth is in the object as *my* object, or in its being mine [*Meinen*]; it is, because *I* know it. Sense-certainty, then, though indeed expelled from the object, is not yet thereby overcome, but only driven back into the “I.” (Hegel, 1977b, p. 61)

Therefore, both natural consciousness—that is, sense-consciousness, which is thought to be obedient to objects—along with the objects that are independent and immediate beings, are negated. The objects appear now as dependent on and mediated by the “I,” and the “I” appears as the truth of objects and what makes them objects in the first place. Sense-certainty, which is also reflective consciousness, once believed that the “I” and objects were mutually independent and conflicting; now, however, it perceives them both as mediated and universal, and the “I” develops as the truth of objects. The object of sense-certainty becomes universal in general, and thus becomes the object of perception.

According to Hegel, the development of consciousness from sense to perception to understanding is simultaneously the upward movement from the individual to the universal through the mediation of prescription, and the downward movement from the abstract universal to the individual. In addition, the movement of the conceptual determination of objects is the movement of the “I” (consciousness), and in Hegel, there is the subject—concept—mediation relationship from which the “I” as absolute spirit emerges.

As Hegel says, “language expresses only the universal [*die Sprache ausdrückt nur Allgemeines*]”. (Hegel 1970a, S. 74 [§20]) However, as we investigate later, the universality of language asserted by Hegel is not an abstract fixed property that excludes the individual. Rather, it includes the individual in itself, develops itself, ultimately expresses its contents completely, and acquires true universality. Therefore, language could be called the subject that “generates itself, going forth from, and returning to, itself”. (Hegel 1977b, p. 40)

What is said immediately is “intuition [*Anschauung*]”, which for Hegel is only a contentless name and “the fixed point of rest”. (Hegel 1977b, p. 40) The intuition or the immediate overcomes its abstractness through self-development and ultimately expresses its contents, becoming concrete and universal. Hegel says, “only in the end of the proposition does the empty beginning become actual knowledge”. (Hegel 1977b, pp. 12–13)

The intuition believes that it grasps the object concretely; however, it becomes “empty words [*das leere Wort*]” (Hegel 1977b, p. 234), which have no contents and prescriptions if expressed in language. Language sublates the immediacy of intuition and provides the content. Therefore, we could say that, following Parain, “[i]f we left it there, we might believe that language quite simply lets the content of this intuition get lost. In contrast, it (language) will work to restore it.

Language and thought are the negation of intuition (the immediate) and mediation. If labor is “desire held in check” (Hegel 1977b, p. 118), then language could be “intuition held in check.” Both language and labor are equally the result of the separation and sublation of the human from the immediate.

Grasping the Absolute, not through the mediation of language but by the immediate, relies on the unspeakable [*das Unsagbare, das Unaussprechliche*]. It contains the Absolute in the individual and sensuous, and gives up cognition of the Universal.

According to Hegel, to make feeling and intuition the absolute foundation and to rely on the unspeakable carry the same meaning; it is to negate the Universality of the human and should be dismissed as “the untrue, the irrational”. (Hegel 1977b, p. 66) If the human despises language as “the supreme gifts of man” and depends on the sensuous and unspeakable, then one will give oneself “to the devil and must perish” (Hegel 1977b, p. 218), as Mephistopheles predicted.

Therefore, Hegel believes that, if the human denies communality (the human substance) with others and retains that the sensuous equals the individual, it would “underfoot the roots of humanity”. (Hegel 1977a, p. 43) Language sublates the individuality of the sensuous and makes the universal within it manifest.

Language externalizes self-consciousness and internalizes the sensuous. Language gives universality to existence through the “annihilation of the sensuous world in its immediate existence [*Ertötung der sinnlichen Welt in ihrem unmittelbaren Dasein*]”. (Hegel 1970b, S. 52) The sensuous must be sublated in language and become the universal self-consciousness because the universal exists in the sensuous, and language brings the universal to the surface. A being speaks about its subsistence by means of language. For language to express universal subsistence, thought must also function. As explained above, language and thought are intimately related.

In this sense, language must represent the existence of thought. Thought can express itself only in language, and language can be true language only through thought; the two are inseparable in this way. We can sublata the individuality of the sensuous and place it in the element of universality only through language as “the body of thought.” Language gauges the universal in the sensuous.

Section 3: Wittgenstein's Attempt: The Relationship Between Ordinary Language and the World

Faced with the divided state of the world in the early modern era, Hegel aimed to overcome it by bridging the individual/mundane and the universal/transcendent. To this end, he tried to develop Kant's epistemology ontologically, inspired by Fichte. Hegel establishes the method of connecting the individual ego to the universal as a dialectic, and tries to depict the ego as an interdependent system from the empirical ego to absolute knowledge and as a linguistic mediation. As the basis for this argument, Hegel argued that language is fundamental to human beings and public. The unity between the human community and language is evident, and what is not expressed in language should be considered negatively.

This argument is regarded by Ian Hacking as the beginning of the debate on the public nature of language. He points out that there was a shift to a public view of language in the early 1800s. Hacking finds a residue of idealism in Hegel, but the latter's manner of grasping at the self distinguishes his work from traditional idealism in that it finds the activity of the self in objects rather than the realization of ideas; this further elucidates the system and interdependence of the self as an external relationship, although Hegel's method of expanding the ego and absorbing everything into the ego can be considered ideological.

Wittgenstein demonstrated the conditions for what can be correctly expressed in language (i.e., the limits of language). For Wittgenstein, the ego-subject cannot be properly expressed through language, and he tried to prove its impossibility by truncating the existence of the ego.

Wittgenstein understands language as a map of reality in his *Tractatus* (Wittgenstein 1922). According to him, the mapping relationship is established wherein the world and language share a logical form; however, there is no proof of this sharing because it is necessary to remain outside the world in order to capture logical forms. However, we cannot prove the existence of the logical form within language.

Most of *Tractatus* is concerned with the nature of language and its relationship to the world, which had been Wittgenstein's primary philosophical interest throughout his life. The central doctrine conveys the well-known picture theory of meaning. According to this theory, language comprises propositions that depict the world. Propositions are perceptible expressions of thoughts that are the logical images of facts.

3.5 The applied, thought, propositional sign is the thought.

4 The thought is the significant proposition.

4.001 The totality of the proposition is the language. (Wittgenstein 1922, p. 61)

Propositions and thoughts are images in a literal sense. Ordinary English sentences do

not look much like pictures because language disguises thought beyond recognition.

4.002 Man possesses the capacity to construct languages in which every sense can be expressed, without having an idea how and what each word means—just as one speaks without knowing how the single sounds are produced.

Colloquial language is a part of the human organism and is not less complicated than it.

From it, it is humanly impossible to gather immediately the logic of language.

Language disguises thought; from the external form of the clothes, one cannot infer the form of the thoughts they conceal, because the external form of clothes is constructed with quite another object than to let the form of the body be recognized.

The silent adjustments required to understand colloquial language are extremely complicated. (Wittgenstein 1922, pp. 61, 63)

4.011 At first glance, the proposition—say, as it stands printed on paper, does not seem to be a picture of the reality that it treats. However, neither does the musical score appear at first sight to be a picture of a musical piece nor does our phonetic spelling (letters) seem to be a picture of our spoken language. However, these symbolisms prove to be pictures—even in the ordinary sense of the word—of what they represent. (Wittgenstein 1922, pp. 63, 65)

According to *Tractatus*, any picture must have something in common with what it depicts, even if the depiction is incorrect or inaccurate. Wittgenstein refers to this irreducible shared minimum as the “logical form.” Generally, propositions do not have a common spatial form with the situation they depict; however, any proposition must have a logical form in common with what it depicts. This shared form is the reason why propositions can truly be called images.

2.18 What every picture of whatever form must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it at all—rightly or falsely—is the logical form, that is, the form of reality.

2.181 If the form of representation is the logical form, then the picture is called a logical picture.

2.182 Every picture is also a logical picture. (On the other hand, for example, not every picture is spatial.) (Wittgenstein 1922, p. 41)

Ordinary language conceals the logical form of thought for many reasons. First, several words may signify complex objects. All propositions are analyzed into an ultimate proposition, that is, an elementary proposition that focuses on the inarticulate structure of propositions. There appears to be no end to this further rewriting or analysis of the

proposition until we reach symbols that denote entirely non-complex objects. Thus, a fully analyzed proposition will consist of an enormously long combination of atomic propositions, each of which will contain names of simple objects that are related to each other in ways that will depict, truly or falsely, the relations between the objects they represent.

According to this theory, an important connection between language and the world is made in the correlation between the ultimate elements of thought and the simple atoms that constitute the world. Wittgenstein did not reveal how the correlation between the thought-elements and world-atoms is established. Much of the *Tractatus* is devoted to demonstrating, with the aid of various logical techniques, how propositions of many different kinds can be analyzed into atomic pictures and their combinations.

In Wittgenstein's later work, there are shifts from the purely logical ideal language to diverse everyday language, from the "atomic" units of language such as "elemental propositions" and "nominals" to the unified connection of the whole language. There is also a shift from the language that "maps" the world to the language that is used in the living world.

However, he is not trying to eliminate the function of the language of "mapping." Rather than regard this function as the only essential way to use language, he acknowledges that it is just one of the functions of language and looks for sites where various other language functions are active. This site is the concrete form of human life filled with language. In the case of man, life is immediately linguistic. In addition, language does not function independently from life.

Wittgenstein provides two examples of simple situations in language life. The first is the case of having someone take a piece of paper with "five red apples" written on it and go to a merchant. The second is that the architect calls the names of stone materials like "pedestals," "pillars," "beams," and so on, and orders his disciples to hitch these materials one by one, each in the manner appropriate for it.

In both cases, language certainly works; five apples are bought according to the language written on the paper, and stones are delivered appropriately according to the language spoken. However, are these language functions accomplished solely by relying on the function of words to name (map) objects by themselves? Putting aside the word "apple," what kind of object do the words "red" and "five" refer to (map)? As Wittgenstein puts it:

what is the meaning of the word "five"? —No such thing was in question here, only how the word "five" is used. (Wittgenstein 2009, p. 6e [§ 1])

In other words, whereas the object to be mapped was the meaning of the word in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, in *Philosophical Investigations* the meaning of the word

was sought in how the word was used.

Even in the second case, which seems to emphasize the naming (mapping) function of language, the decisive point is not the correspondence between each “base stone” and the actual thing called “base stone,” but in what situation the word is uttered. In other words, the use of words as naming (mapping) is integrated with the interactions of behaviors, such as gestures, tone of voice, and facial expressions, between the architect and his apprentice at the construction site. It is not an automatic correspondence between terms and objects (things) through logic, as was said in “Thoughts on Logical Philosophy.” In *Philosophical Investigations*, the naming that is associated with this behavior is called the “ostensive instruction of the word” and refers to the most basic and important use of the word, although not necessarily the only and essential use of the word. Thus, Wittgenstein proposed a new linguistic view peculiar to the late period:

We can also think of the whole process of using words in (2) as one of those games by means of which children learn their native language. I will call these games “language-games” and will sometimes speak of a primitive language as a language-game. And the processes of naming the stones and of repeating words after someone might also be called language-games. Think of certain uses that are made of words in games like ring-a-ring-a-roses. I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the activities into which it is woven, a “language-game”. (Wittgenstein 2009, p. 8e [§ 7])

A “language game” is a process of learning language from the beginning and participating in a language life that is already public and regularly conducted, and simultaneously, a wide range of language life that is formed in this way. Whatever the content of each rule, there is no “language game” unless there is some type of rule. These rules are serving this function because they are public.

Is what we call “following a rule” something that it would be possible for only one person, only once in a lifetime, to do? And this is, of course, a gloss on the grammar of the expression “to follow a rule”.

It is not possible that there should have been only one occasion on which only one person followed a rule. It is not possible that there should have been only one occasion on which a report was made, an order given or understood, and so on. To follow a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are customs (usages, institutions). (Wittgenstein 2009, p. 87e [§ 199])

The “language game” is none other than our game, even from the point of view that it is formed from public life. To understand a word is to become a participant in the game by

surrendering to the rules of the “language game” to which it belongs. Thus,

That’s why ‘following a rule’ is a practice. And to think one is following a rule is not to follow a rule. And that’s why it’s not possible to follow a rule ‘privately’; otherwise, thinking one was following a rule would be the same thing as following it. (Wittgenstein 2009, pp. 87e, 88e [§ 202])

But is it also conceivable that there be a language in which a person could write down or give voice to his inner experiences his feelings, moods, and so on for his own use? — Well, can’t we do so in our ordinary language? But that is not what I mean. The words of this language are to refer to what only the speaker can know and to his immediate private sensations. So, another person cannot understand the language. (vgl. Wittgenstein 2009, p. 95e [§ 243])

Let us remember that there are certain criteria in a man’s behavior for his not understanding a word: that it means nothing to him, that he can do nothing with it. And criteria for his “thinking he understands,” attaching some meaning to the word, but not the right one. And lastly, criteria for his understanding the word correctly. In the second case, one might speak of a subjective understanding. And sounds which no one else understands but which I ‘appear to understand’ might be called a “private language”. (Wittgenstein 2009, p. 101e [§ 269])

Wittgenstein defines “private language” in this way. However, because this type of word is “private,” it cannot be established as a “language game” that is public and habitual. In other words, from the later perspective of language, “private language” is not really a language. Further, since human life is immediately a linguistic life, Wittgenstein’s argument ultimately speaks to the point that there is no “I” expressed in a “private language.”

Wittgenstein also criticizes mental processes in *The Blue Book*. According to Wittgenstein, mental processes are required based on superficial characteristics of linguistic expression:

When words in our ordinary language have prima facie analogous grammars, we are inclined to try to interpret them analogously; i.e., we try to make the analogy hold throughout. (Wittgenstein 1965, p. 7)

The actual philosophical problem is the confusion that arises from the superficial similarity of expressions as true similarity. Therefore, the proper way to deal with philosophical problems is not to solve them head-on, but to correct the habit of thinking

that creates a relationship of similarity between different expressions of language, and to expose and eliminate the quasi-nature of the problems themselves.

By forcibly organizing the practical forms of language usage in terms of similarity, philosophers omit the character of their plethora of usages and instead produce difficulties that are otherwise avoidable.

The questions “What is length?”, “What is meaning?”, “What is the number one?” etc., produce in us a mental cramp. We feel that we can’t point to anything in reply to them and yet ought to point to something. (Wittgenstein 1965, p. 1)

A philosophical solution to such difficulties is a mental process, such as understanding and meaning, which inevitably are intertwined in the use of words.

It seems that there are certain definite mental processes bound up with the working of language, processes through which alone language can function. I mean the processes of understanding and meaning. (Wittgenstein 1965, p. 3)

Assuming mental processes leads to the idea that what is essential is not language but meaning. This is because linguistic symbols are physical entities, such as letters and sounds, and it seems that they cannot “mean anything” by themselves. Thus, mental processes have become the essential source of meaning in language.

In addition, the mental processes constitute part of what we generally call “thought.” Of course, it is natural to assume thoughts alongside various physical activities. For example, when you are ordered to pick up a banjo from among various musical instruments, thinking about (imagining) the “banjo” and thinking (interpreting) which instrument is the banjo are essential for the execution of the order. Both seem to be understandable as non-verbal processes. It is the mental process (thinking) that is in direct contact with the place (the world) where the actual action takes place, and language is necessary only when communicating a series of actions to someone else.

Because language is not essential to thought, the question is what exactly are the mental processes that constitute thought. Wittgenstein attempted to eliminate this question. In doing so, what we should pay attention to is not the problem itself, but rather the process of its establishment and the confusion surrounding the understanding of the expressions of the language that is the source of the problem.

The process of problem formation is that we allow some explanatory power for the mental process. If so, as long as we can put out an explanatory diagram that does not mention this, there will be no problem.

There is one way of avoiding at least partly the occult appearance of the processes of

thinking, and it is, to replace in these processes any working of the imagination by acts of looking at real objects. Thus, it may seem essential that, at least in certain cases, when I hear the word “red” with understanding, a red image should be before my mind’s eye. But why should I not substitute seeing a red bit of paper for imaging a red patch. (Wittgenstein 1965, p. 4)

The name “red” is common to apples, post boxes, etc., so it seems to refer to the very image of red that we have in our minds, which cannot be identified with such physical objects. However, the intervention of such mental processes is not even possible in some cases.

If, for instance, you were ordered to paint a particular shade of blue called “Prussian Blue,” you might have to use a table to lead you from the word “Prussian Blue” to a sample of the color, which would serve you as your copy. (Wittgenstein 1965, p. 4)

Thus, Wittgenstein attempted to separate thought from mental processes. He also attempted to redirect attention to the diversity of linguistic expression forms. It then becomes apparent that mental processes are only required as a result of confusion over the understanding of expressions in language, and such confusion is caused by the overestimation of the commonality of nouns. For example, some people try to assign referents to nouns such as “length” or “number 1” in the same way that “apples” have referents.

The idea that in order to get clear about the meaning of a general term one had to find the common element in all its applications has shackled philosophical investigation; for it has not only led to no result, but also made the philosopher dismiss as irrelevant the concrete cases, which alone could have helped him to understand the usage of the general term. (Wittgenstein 1965, pp. 19–20)

Acceptance of concrete cases means that we do not ask questions such as, “Why do we not find a common essence there?” By sparing the “why” question, we often come to an important fact for the first time. Philosophy generally begins with questioning, not just the question of essence, but sparing questions could avoid some philosophical problems.

Now think of the following use of language: I send someone shopping. I give him a slip of paper marked “five red apples”. He takes the slip to the shopkeeper, who opens the drawer marked “apples”; then he looks up the word “red” in a chart and finds a colour sample next to it; then he says the series of elementary number-words I assume that he knows them by heart up to the word “five”, and for each number-

word he takes an apple of the same colour as the sample out of the drawer. It is in this and similar ways that one operates with words. “But how does he know where and how he is to look up the word ‘red’ and what he is to do with the word ‘five’?” Well, I assume that he acts as I have described. Explanations come to an end somewhere. But what is the meaning of the word “five”? No such thing was in question here, only how the word “five” is used. (Wittgenstein 1965, pp. 16–17)

The clerk’s behavior is blatantly observable here, which leads us to the doctrine of meaning that a language fit for a particular use is meaningful.

When I think in words, I don’t have ‘meanings’ in my mind in addition to the verbal expressions; rather, language itself is the vehicle of thought. (Wittgenstein 2009, p. 113e [§329])

Here, the idea of the linguistic sign as a component of thought itself is proposed, rather than an extrapolation which is given to thought only after the transmission of facts. By doing so, the path to making the components of thinking into mental processes is cut off, and the problem of “what is a mental process?” does not arise.

I shall in the future again and again draw your attention to what I shall call language games. These are ways of using signs simpler than those in which we use the signs of our highly complicated everyday language. Language games are the forms of language with which a child begins to make use of words. The study of language games is the study of primitive forms of language or primitive languages. If we want to study the problems of truth and falsehood, of the agreement and disagreement of propositions with reality, of the nature of assertion, assumption, and question, we shall with great advantage look at primitive forms of language in which these forms of thinking appear without the confusing background of highly complicated processes of thought. When we look at such simple forms of language the mental mist which seems to enshroud our ordinary use of language disappears. (Wittgenstein 1965, p. 17)

Thus, the concept of language games was introduced. In other words, language games were introduced to omit the mental processes that we tend to assume when thinking about language. Only then can we “clearly survey the purpose and function of the words”. (Wittgenstein 2009, p. 7e [§ 5])

For Hegel, the public nature of language saves the self from the world of ideas, places it in the real world connections of language, and contributes to the self’s externalization, cultivation, and development to the absolute knowledge.

In contrast, Wittgenstein used the publicity of language as a means of proving the impossibility of the ego, and used it to deny the private ego and the inner world. Words or sentences get their meaning each time from their concrete situation and context (i.e., language game), and thinking that words and sentences have their own meaning independent of their original language game is an illusion and cause of philosophical confusion.

The two arguments surrounding the public nature of language have led to two extreme conclusions: the externalization of the ego and the denial of internality.

Conclusion: Marx's Criticism of Hegel

The public nature of language is a theme common to Hegel and Wittgenstein.

Hegel attempted to guarantee the existence of the self by creating a system of interdependence between the empirical self and absolute knowledge through language. The public nature of language is the basis for the reality of what can be expressed by it.

In Wittgenstein's work, the meaning of language is originally given by language games, and language itself does not have the power to guarantee reality. The reality of things expressed by language is themed from the mistaken idea of thinking about the essence of words that appear commonly in different language games. From the meaning of words that should be determined each time through language games, a perverse relationship arises in which words themselves have meanings.

A similar argument has already been seen in Marx's theory of the form of value, wherein the contingent relationship between the owner of the linen and the owner of the coat gives rise to the dominion of the coat over the linen, and this equivalent (coat) develops into money, which becomes the master of the world of commodities, a position that is entrenched in the capitalist mode of production. (Cf. Shibata 2021)

Wittgenstein's philosophy of language is crucial for understanding the relationship between Hegel and Marx.

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