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LANGUAGE, MECHANICAL MEMORY, AND THE SPECULATIVE SENTENCE IN
HEGEL

by

PETER NENNIG

Under the Direction of Sebastian Rand, PhD

ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I examine the relation between the account of mechanical memory in Hegel's *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* and the speculative sentence in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Both accounts involve a transition to speculative thinking, a kind of thinking that is free from given images and representations. By discussing them together I hope to illuminate how speculative thinking functions for Hegel and why it is important. Specifically, I try to show how what Hegel calls mechanical memory can shed light on Hegel's more familiar notion of the speculative sentence. I also draw out implications of language and mechanical memory for what Hegel calls speculative thinking.

INDEX WORDS: Hegel, language, mechanical memory, speculative sentence

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mom, Shirley, who has been a source of encouragement and inspiration to me.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel appears to offer a compact guide to reading the assertions made in speculative philosophy, especially his own. He identifies something he calls the “speculative proposition” or “speculative sentence” [*spekulative Satz*] and tells his readers how such a sentence should be understood.¹ The implication is that Hegel’s own claims are such sentences and so should be understood in the way he indicates. Given the difficulty of reading Hegel’s texts, it is not surprising that his remarks on the speculative sentence have been the object of much discussion in the secondary literature. There have been many interpretations of the speculative sentence, but scholars have paid little attention to the relationship between Hegel’s account of mechanical memory and his understanding of how the speculative sentence functions. One reason for this lack of attention perhaps may be that mechanical memory falls within the psychology section of Hegel’s *Encyclopedia*,² which has not received as much scholarly attention as the *Phenomenology* until recently. However, there are at least two reasons why we may want to use Hegel’s account of mechanical memory in the *Encyclopedia* to clarify the nature and function of the speculative sentence in the *Phenomenology*. First, mechanical memory is pivotal in the process of language acquisition in an individual mind. Using mechanical memory in language acquisition leads to conceptual thinking, and understanding how language is acquired sheds some light on how the speculative sentence, and, more broadly, speculative thinking, is supposed to function. Second, mechanical memory enables the mind, in what we might call a negative sense, to become self-determining,

¹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), paras. 58-66, pp. 35-41.

² G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind being Part Three of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. Michael Inwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), §§440-82, pp. 165-215.

and the speculative sentence can explain how speculative thinking incorporates self-determination.

Given these reasons, we have cause to be interested in how mechanical memory relates to the speculative sentence and how it can help elucidate this transition to speculative thinking. Specifically, it investigates how the mechanical nature of language, that of memorizing names in external relation to one another, can lead to speculative thinking, which is characterized by an internal movement such as that found in the speculative sentence.

2 Background: Hegel's Philosophical Psychology

2.1 Hegel's Philosophical Psychology

When thinking philosophically about language, many problems and issues arise, such as: What are words and sentences? How can they refer to or mean something other than what they are? How can we communicate and understand one another using language? Language appears to be a very fluid and plastic medium, one which allows the meanings of words and sentences to be changed while still allowing for the communication and understanding of meaning by those individuals who speak or write in a given language. There are many different languages, such as English, German, and French, and each one has its own lexicon and grammatical rules. As Chomsky has argued, a language's lexicon and grammar, while being finite in both its number of words and grammatical rules, offers an infinite number of expressions.³ This infinitely generative character of language appears to make it an ideal medium for expressing philosophical claims and arguments. If we can identify where our language goes wrong, such as when it is unclear or ambiguous or does not map onto what we take the world to be like, then it appears that language has the capacity to be altered using its own linguistic resources. Problems, however, arise with this notion of language. One such problem is whether or not language can actually reshape itself to better get at the correct way of theorizing about the world.

A further problem arises as to whether the way of theorizing remains merely representational thinking rather than another kind of knowing which Hegel emphasizes is crucial for thought.⁴ This other kind of knowing is conceptual knowing. What distinction Hegel is making between representational and conceptual thinking, and why does he make this

³ Noam Chomsky, "The Dewey Lectures 2013: What Kind of Creatures are We?" *The Journal of Philosophy* 110, no. 12 (December 2013).

⁴ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* paras. 58-66, pp. 35-41; Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §§465-468, pp.202-6.

distinction? Representational thinking can be identified with the reflective understanding that schematizes experience into fixed categories. Hegel has Kant as a target of criticism when he brings up reflective understanding and speculative reason.⁵ This distinction between the reflective nature of understanding and the speculative nature of reason is crucial for understanding Hegel's criticism of Kant's transcendental idealism and Hegel's own account of speculative philosophy.⁶ For our purposes, representational thinking is an activity of reflective understanding, while conceptual thinking is an activity of speculative reason.

Hegel points out that reflective understanding presupposes a distinction between the thinking in question and the content of that thinking.⁷ In other words, the thinking of the reflective understanding is one that involves necessarily concepts which are distinct from given contents of intuition. As Kant famously asserts, "Thoughts without concepts are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind."⁸ Each is necessary for the other but each is fixedly separate from the other. Concept and intuition are united under a third term, the schema, which Hegel thinks remains a problem since it does not explain how concept and intuition are united.⁹ Hegel writes that this introduction of the schema as a third term "can be multiplied to infinity" since the conceptual form would always be different from the intuitional content, where "one never learns what the thing itself is, nor what the one or the other is."¹⁰ This treatment of concept and intuition by the understanding is characteristic of, and what I mean when I refer to,

⁵ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* par. 50, pp. 29-30; Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, Remark to §415, pp. 144-5, Remark to §420, p. 149, Remark to §444, p. 171, and *Zusatz* to §467, pp. 204-5.

⁶ For a helpful account of the difference between reflection and speculation, see Donald Verene "Hegel's Preface: Reflection vs. Speculation" in *Hegel's Absolute: an introduction to reading the Phenomenology of spirit* (Albany, SUNY Press, 2012).

⁷ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* par. 50, pp. 29-30; Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, Remark to §415, pp. 144-5, Remark to §420, p. 149, Remark to §444, p. 171, and *Zusatz* to §467, pp. 204-5.

⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A235–36; B294–9, pp. 338-41.

⁹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* par. 50, pp. 29-30

¹⁰ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* par. 50, pp. 29-30

representational thinking. That is, there is always a difference between the form of thinking and the content of thinking.

This maintaining of a difference between the form and content of thinking is problematic since thinking can never take its own concepts as an object in itself but only as a given intuited content. In other words, when we try to use our concepts to think about and validate the concepts themselves, we run into a vicious circularity which prevents the understanding from being able to validate its own concepts. The distinction-making, reflective character of the understanding prevents thinking from being able to validate itself because it must maintain a distinction between thinking qua conceptual and thinking qua intuition, begging the question as to why the thinking is valid in the first place.

However, Hegel does not think that this representational thinking of the understanding is the whole picture.¹¹ He thinks that pure conceptual thinking, instead of merely representational thinking, is possible. Conceptual thinking is identified as speculative reasoning which can develop concepts themselves without needing to appeal to any content of intuition outside of the concepts for its determination. The scope of this paper will not focus overly much on concepts and conceptual development themselves. However, I have included it along with the account of reflective understanding so that we can see the general problem Hegel is responding to in his works, as well as see his more or less positive account of what thinking is and how it can get us to an unconditioned, self-determining, and theorizing cognition capable of getting at the truth.

To see how Hegel articulates this problem and his proposed solution, it is important to locate his arguments within his philosophical system. There are three parts to his main

¹¹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* paras. 58-66, pp. 35-41; Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §§465-468, pp. 202-206.

systematic work, the *Encyclopedia*.¹² The first part focuses on logic, the second on nature, and the third, with which we are mostly concerned, focuses on mind. It is important to note that, in dealing with this third part on mind, we must presume all the arguments put forth in the earlier two parts. A philosophical investigation of mind presupposes a philosophy of nature which, in turn, presupposes logic. Whereas logic is concerned with thinking itself, and nature is concerned with philosophical issues related to the natural sciences and the natural world, Hegel's philosophy of mind deals with how thinking is concretely embodied in the world. Hegel divides this investigation into three parts: Subjective Mind, Objective Mind, and Absolute Mind. The latter concerns social and political life and so is not our concern here. The former includes Hegel's philosophical psychology and how thinking arises in actual subjects. It is in this part that Hegel shows how individual subjects can acquire language and use language to think. Hegel makes a distinction here between representational thinking and conceptual thinking.

Hegel focuses on providing a philosophical psychology which can account for the transition from representational thinking to conceptual thinking in a way that must involve language as the medium for both of these kinds of thinking.¹³ However, the crucial difference between representational and conceptual thinking is that representational thinking involves characteristically some sort of imagistic element or some ultimate reference to something outside of thinking provided by experience. In conceptual thinking, what is crucial is that the concept be an imageless one which allows for the immanent development of synthetic a priori thinking.

How does Hegel attempt to show language's relation to thinking and how might language allow for a transition from representational to conceptual thinking? Hegel provides an

¹² Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*; Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature being Part Two of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1830); Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind being Part Three of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1830).

¹³ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §§451-468, pp. 184-206.

explanation for how an individual mind acquires language.¹⁴ The mind is confronted with immediate intuitions which it internalizes, then, with a sufficient number of similar intuitions, it can produce representations. These imagistic representations can then be turned into semiotic representations, in which a linguistic sign unites a sound or mark with some representational meaning. The mind can then memorize the linguistic signs, or words, themselves without the need to refer to the representational or imagistic meaning. The words we use can, as Hegel claims, signify all by themselves. This activity of mind, which Hegel argues is necessary for words to come to signify in this way, is called mechanical memory. Hence, if language is the medium for conceptual thinking and conceptual thinking needs to be imageless and devoid of representational meaning, then there needs to be an activity of mind which can divest words of their representational meaning. This activity is mechanical memory and will be the main subject of this paper.

By investigating this activity, we will get a better idea of how representational thinking and the language in which it is thought presuppose conceptual thinking, and how this conceptual thinking is possible through conditions implicit in language. The purpose of this paper is not to show exactly how conceptual thinking arises and works. Rather, there are two main ideas of Hegel's which will be tied eventually together. The first idea is how language can divest the given, representational sense of its words, while maintaining the existence of the external words themselves as merely isolated words devoid of any sense of or relation to any internal representational meaning. Hegel calls these words divested of representational meaning *names as such*.¹⁵ The ability for an individual mind to divest words of their given meaning while keeping the word itself is a necessary condition for overcoming representational thinking and establishing

¹⁴ Hegel *Philosophy of Mind*, §§445-468, pp. 173-206.

¹⁵ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §463, p. 201.

conceptual thinking of the individual psychological subject. This understanding of the activity of mechanical memory will then be used to look at the second idea of Hegel's doctrine of the speculative sentence to try to get a clearer idea of what it is and how he thinks it should function.

Before moving to the details of Hegel's arguments on these points, it is important to understand why we should care about being able to think conceptually rather than representationally. As philosophers, we are interested in the truth and how to determine it. The main method for attaining truth is through the activity of thinking. Since our thinking is done using language, we should investigate how language shows the objective validity of our thinking. For if it cannot, all truth would be relative to whatever forms of experience or representational thinking our linguistic community happens to possess. If we could not validate our thinking as being objective, all thinking would be relative, contingent, particular, and subjective instead of absolute, necessary, universal, and objective. Given that philosophy is trying to get at absolute, not relative, truth, we ought to be concerned with whether our thinking can show its own objective validity, which, as we have seen, depends on investigating language.

In the next section, I will provide Hegel's account of the acquisition of language up to his account of mechanical memory. The secondary literature on these sections of Hegel's work is scarce, but I have chosen to focus on three recent works which provide extensive commentary on the sections on language in Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind*.

Jim Vernon claims to offer an unorthodox interpretation of Hegel's account of language in general because he is attempting to develop a theory of language consistent with Hegel's texts. Vernon's book-length treatment draws on Hegel's *Science of Logic*, *Philosophy of Mind*, and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Vernon's emphasis is on developing a consistent philosophy of

language immanent to Hegel's system. Ultimately his goal to show the deduction of a universal logical grammar.

Richard Dien Winfield has written extensively on the whole of Hegel's system. He has many papers and books that focus on Hegel and his philosophy of mind. Winfield claims to be developing Hegel's arguments and filling them in where more detail may be needed. For instance, Winfield provides a detailed account of grammatical relations and the development of a universal grammar that draws on what little Hegel says about grammar. Winfield interprets Hegel as trying to develop a theory of mind that can be a synthetic a priori thinking. To show how this thinking is possible, Winfield provides arguments for how language is not merely a determining condition for thought—relegating thinking to merely representational thinking—but that language has within it the enabling conditions for the mind to become a conceptual thinking.

Jere Surber main contention is that a philosophy of language would clash with Hegel's idea of system. On his view, Hegel deliberately chose to develop his system rather than to write a philosophy of language independent of the system. His interpretation goes against Vernon's view that Hegel has a coherent and systematic philosophy of language, which may cause problems for developing a psychological account of the mind that is capable of conceptual thinking. However, his analysis of language acquisition is much in line with both Vernon and Winfield.

2.2 Literature Review

Hegel's general view of language acquisition starts with intuition, in which mind is related to an immediate external content or object. The mind can then internalize immediately the given external intuitions as images.¹⁶ As Surber notes, intuition is non-discursive, pre-

¹⁶ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §§446-50, pp. 176-84.

conceptual, and pre-linguistic, and thus far we are only dealing with images.¹⁷ Intuition is related immediately to the object it takes to be related to it. The subject can posit within itself part of the initial intuition with which it was related immediately. The mind can abstract away from the intuition, producing what Surber calls a sensuous content or image. At this point, the image is internal, not external, to the subject's space and time.¹⁸ The image is still singular and sensible, but the image is nonetheless a possession of the subject. As an example, Surber notes that the subject can express voluntarily their internal image by drawing it or using gestures.

According to Hegel, since mind can extract different images from intuition and recollect those images, it may recollect similar images and make a subjective connection between them to create a more formal, abstract representation. This ability represents reproductive imagination, according to Hegel. The representation is an abstract universal because mind produces it by associating similar images with one another and then abstracting away to include only the general, common feature of all the images.¹⁹ Surber says these abstract universals can be expressed by drawing a general picture, for example, a picture of a generic cat that does not refer to any particular cat.²⁰ Surber notes that these abstract universals are similar to Lockean ideas.²¹ Winfield both stresses that there is a problem which arises with the abstract universal, namely, that the mind acquires the content of each image in some original intuition, and it remains connected with, even at the abstract level, the sensible.²² This is problematic since the image is

¹⁷ Jere O'Neil Surber, "Hegel's Philosophy of Language: The Unwritten Volume." *A companion to Hegel*, Eds. Stephen Houlgate and Michael Bauer (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. 254.

¹⁸ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §452, p. 186.

¹⁹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §§452-54, pp. 186-8.

²⁰ Surber, *Hegel's Philosophy of Language: The Unwritten Volume*, p. 255.

²¹ Surber, *Hegel's Philosophy of Language: The Unwritten Volume*, p. 255.

²² Richard Dien Winfield, *The Intelligent Mind: On the Genesis and Constitution of Discursive Thought* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 49.

tied to what is other or given in intuition, making it is unsatisfactory as the content of a concept, which, as Winfield points out, needs to be imageless.²³

From reproductive imagination, Hegel moves next to describing the process of prefiguring language, which he calls sign-making fantasy.²⁴ Winfield helpfully calls this process semiotic representation,²⁵ wherein mind first develops a symbolizing activity through its use of images.²⁶ According to Hegel, the mind may produce and possess general representations within itself and connect them to other general representations which share some imagistic content, just as it connects similar images together to create a more general image representation.²⁷ That content does not have to be pictorial in character, but nonetheless it should share some related content. For example, a lion can symbolize royalty because lions are the ruling predator of the savannah. Surber highlights how the symbolizing activity of mind provides a second sense for a symbol through the productive pairing of the recollected image with another image or representation.²⁸ This notion of second sense is essential for the development of signs because it shows that the mind can relate its recollected images with other intuitions external to it.

Likewise, a general representation can be a sign, which Hegel differentiates from the symbol.²⁹ Whereas the symbol requires some similar content in terms of its and its meaning's configuration, the sign for Hegel needs no such similarity in terms of its configuration.³⁰ That is, there is an arbitrary connection to what the sign relates in semiotic imagination. The sign relates some sensible factor of intuition which it recognizes as its own product (such as the word "lion")

²³ Winfield, *The Intelligent Mind: On the Genesis and Constitution of Discursive Thought*, p. 85

²⁴ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, § 457, p. 192-3.

²⁵ Winfield, *The Intelligent Mind: On the Genesis and Constitution of Discursive Thought*, pp. 78-98.

²⁶ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §457, p. 192-3.

²⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §457, p. 192-3.

²⁸ Surber, *Hegel's Philosophy of Language: The Unwritten Volume*, p. 256

²⁹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §458 and Remark..

³⁰ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §458 and Remark.

to an inner meaning that is a general representation (such as a representation or empirical concept of a lion). Moreover, it must be a general representation and not merely a singular image or the sign would not be repeatable, nor could one recall and communicate it in similar contexts. Surber and Vernon highlight the relation of this conception of the sign with later structuralist accounts,³¹ especially with Saussure's notion of the arbitrariness of the sign.³² Far from being problematic for language, the arbitrariness of the sign is what allows words to be such a free vehicle for expression since the meanings of words are not bound to resemble the words they signify.

Through this signifying activity of the mind, the mind must also recognize that it has produced this association between intuitable factor (the word "lion") and general representations (the representation of a lion). However, a problem arises since the general representation relies on ties to sensible contents drawn from intuition. This problem is similar to the problem of how representational thinking finds its content distinct from the thinking that is cognizing that content. Nonetheless, one's mind achieves a sort of freedom, as Winfield puts it,³³ since the meaning (being the general representation) does not resemble its configuration with that of the intuitable factor signifying it. Thus, at least one side of the sign relation is self-produced by the mind. Winfield argues that this lack of resemblance between word and meaning leads to a negative freedom in mechanical memory.³⁴ It is a negative freedom since the intuitable factor (the word) has no imagistic connection with what it signifies (the representational meaning).³⁵

³¹ Surber, *Hegel's Philosophy of Language: The Unwritten Volume*, p. 256; Winfield, *The Intelligent Mind: On the Genesis and Constitution of Discursive Thought* pp. 64, 78, 84.

³² Ferdinand De Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. 65-78.

³³ Winfield, *The Intelligent Mind: On the Genesis and Constitution of Discursive Thought*, p. 97.

³⁴ Winfield, *The Intelligent Mind: On the Genesis and Constitution of Discursive Thought*, p. 102.

³⁵ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §460, p. 198.

Vernon points out that, in memorizing a word, the mind internalizes the synthesis between the word as external intuition and its internal meaning.³⁶ Hegel distinguishes this activity of memory, which involves words, from the related activity of recollection, which involves not words, but images.³⁷ Recollection involves internalizing images derived from intuition rather than the process memory uses to memorize a sign, which is imageless even though its meaning is imagistic. By internalizing words, the mind first begins to possess a storehouse of words. Vernon and Winfield label this kind of memory as name-retentive memory.³⁸ Through its internalization of words, the mind creates a permanent synthesis between word and meaning. The word itself, rather than intuition or subjective imagination, becomes the object for intelligence, an object that intelligence has produced itself. This ability is what Vernon and Winfield call reproductive memory.

³⁶ Jim Vernon *Hegel's Philosophy of Language* (New York: Continuum, 2007), p. 69.

³⁷ Hegel on recollection §§452-54; Hegel on memory §§461-64.

³⁸ Vernon, *Hegel's Philosophy of Language*, p. 74; Winfield, *The Intelligent Mind: On the Genesis and Constitution of Discursive Thought*, p. 100.

3 Mechanical Memory and the Speculative Sentence

3.1 Hegel on Mechanical Memory

Hegel introduces memory as an activity immediately prior to thinking, emphasizing its importance in transitioning from a representational mode of thinking to a conceptual mode.³⁹ He even implies a connection between memory and thinking through their etymological similarities in German: memory (*Gedächtnis*) and thought (*Gedanke*).⁴⁰ Hegel's aim in placing memory systematically before thinking is to show how the process of memory, and, in particular, what he calls 'mechanical memory,' enables the individual mind to move from an image-based representational mode of cognition to conceptual cognition. For Hegel, mechanical memory describes that activity of the mind which memorizes words without reference to their meaning; the mind associates words in any way, regardless of their representational meaning. This section considers, in greater detail, what Hegel means by mechanical memory.

Hegel begins his discussion of mechanical memory by saying, "In so far as the interconnection of names lies in the meaning, the connection of the meaning with their being as names is still a synthesis, and in this its externality the intelligence has not simply returned into itself."⁴¹ Here, Hegel refers to ideas in previous paragraphs in which he discusses the connection of the name (or word) with its meaning. A name is something the mind can internalize or memorize as that which refers to something else, namely, its meaning. The name acts as a sign that relates some sensible factor—the name 'lion,' for instance—to a representational meaning, such as the representation of the empirical concept of a lion. Hegel notes that this relation of name and meaning is still only one of synthesis because, in his words, 'being as name' is

³⁹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §464, pp. 201-2.

⁴⁰ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, Remark to §464, p. 202.

⁴¹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §463, p. 201.

externally conjoined with the representational meaning. Thus, when someone thinks or utters a word, the word does not express an intrinsic connection to a meaning but rather a representational meaning extrinsic to the word. This idea leads Hegel to say that the mind as intelligence has “not simply returned into itself” because there remains an external connection between words and their meanings.

However, Hegel then says:

But intelligence is the universal; the simple truth of its particular self-externalization, and the appropriation that it carries out, is the sublation of that distinction between meaning and name. This supreme recollection of representing is the supreme self-externalization of intelligence, in which it posits itself as the being, as the universal space of names as such, i.e. of senseless words. Ego, which is this abstract being, is, as subjectivity, at the same time the power over the various names, the empty *bond* which establishes within itself series of them and keeps them in stable order.⁴²

Hegel, moving away from the name, focuses on intelligence as that which unites or holds the name together.⁴³ Intelligence is characterized as “the universal space of names as such” and the “empty bond” that holds “within itself series” of names together as “senseless words” in “stable order.” In simple terms, the mind as intelligence can think or utter words without any connection (or synthesis) with their respective representational meanings by memorizing them mechanically. In fact, intelligence can memorize words without referencing their sense of representational meaning, making names senseless words. This disconnecting of name and meaning is what Hegel means when he says that intelligence carries out the “sublation of that distinction between meaning and name.”⁴⁴ Intelligence removes the immediate connection between name and meaning while preserving the name itself as a senseless word. Thus, by

⁴² Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §463, p. 201.

⁴³ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §463, p. 201.

⁴⁴ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §463, p. 201.

removing the immediate connection to meaning, intelligence can separate the name's relation to the external influence of representational meaning.⁴⁵

We see, then, at the end of this section, how Hegel characterizes this process of separating a name from its representational meaning as one of mechanical memory. In Hegel's words, "[s]o far as [names as senseless words] just *are*, and intelligence within itself is here itself this being of theirs, intelligence is this power as *entirely abstract subjectivity*, —memory, which, on account of the complete externality in which the members of such series stand to one another, and which is itself this externality, albeit subjective externality, is called *mechanical*."⁴⁶ Hegel identifies mechanical memory with intelligence as "entirely abstract subjectivity" since intelligence holds together mechanically the senseless words in its own subjective sphere. In other words, intelligence connects senseless words together solely through its own activity and in a manner which is external to the words themselves. This external relating of intelligence is what makes the activity of memorizing mechanical. Each term is memorized by rote, so that the activity of connecting words remains external to the words themselves. The words and their mechanical relations occur entirely within intelligence's own activity, without referring to or signifying an external representational meaning; that is, intelligence is the universal process which connects actively senseless words through its own unifying activity, a process which remains external to the words themselves and does not determine their intrinsic meaning. However, as Winfield says, "[m]echanically memorized names still have meaning, but now, through rote memorization's indifference to it, they are set to signify wholly by themselves in and through intelligence."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Hegel discusses sublation in his *Science of Logic* 21.94, pp. 81-2.

⁴⁶ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §463, p. 201. At the end of this section, Hegel cites §195 on mechanism from his own *Encyclopedia Logic*.

⁴⁷ Winfield, *The Intelligent Mind: On the Genesis and Constitution of Discursive Thought*, p. 100.

To summarize, then, intelligence can memorize names in any order, regardless of their representational meaning. The process of mechanical memory divests names of their representational meaning, leaving them as senseless words. Intelligence then takes these words wholly within itself, acting as the universal space of words which collects particular words together in an external way; that is, intelligence, as the universal process of holding the senseless words together, is external to the words themselves. Their meaning is now determined not by a given representational meaning, but produced and determined by the mind itself.

3.2 Hegel on the Speculative Sentence

By turning to the *Phenomenology's* Preface, we can see where Hegel discusses the name and the role it plays in the speculative sentence. Hegel notes that names, such as “the Divine,” “the Absolute,” or “the Eternal,” each “do not contain what is expressed in them” but must be related to other names which provide meaningful content.⁴⁸ Most simply, such meaning can come in the form of the judgment “S is P,” in which a subject has something which predicates it. When we take the subject on its own without relating it to any predicate, we would have to say, as Hegel writes, that it is “a meaningless sound, a mere name.”⁴⁹ That is, the name on its own is merely a sound and only becomes what it is through the mediation of another name acting as a predicate. For example, the name “God” on its own tells us nothing about “God” – by itself the word is a meaningless sound. Only the predicate, as Hegel writes, “says *what God is*, gives Him content and meaning.”⁵⁰ The meaning of “God,” but also the existence or determinate being [*Dasein*] of God, only becomes apparent at the end of the sentence and so only “in the end of the

⁴⁸ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 20, p. 11.

⁴⁹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 23, p. 12.

⁵⁰ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 23, p. 12.

sentence does the empty beginning become actual knowledge.”⁵¹ Only after we determine “God” through predicates can we say that we actually know something meaningful about God. But here it is still somewhat ambiguous how the subject is to be conceived. To better understand what Hegel means here, we will first turn to how he thinks the ordinary way of conceiving a subject is deficient in terms of conceptual thinking.

Hegel identifies the ordinary way of conceiving the subject-predicate relation as judgment with argumentation, in which the subject acts as an empty substance which has predicates attached to it from the outside. The judgment is a fundamental tool of argumentation, and he disparages it for its emptiness and lack of rigor. In argumentation, it is a matter of accident and contingency whether some predicate is attached to a subject, and it cannot be established that subject and predicate should be identified with any necessity. It is notable here that Hegel discusses the subject as the subject of the judgment as well as the subject of self-consciousness. That is, he is playing on the word subject to signify how the subject of self-consciousness and the subject of the judgment have a similar constitution. This constitution consists of relating either the subject of self-consciousness to its object or the subject of the judgment to its predicates. In either case, the subject conceived of as a substance is fixed and passive in such a manner that “the content is related as Accident and Predicate,” and the subject thus “constitutes the basis to which the content is attached and upon which the movement runs back and forth.”⁵² This relation of substance to accident is one presupposed by traditional metaphysics, and this way of forming the subject-predicate relation is presupposed by traditional logic. Therefore, any critique Hegel gives of judgment will have implications for language and thinking as well as for our understanding of substance and self-consciousness.

⁵¹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para 23, pp. 12-3.

⁵² Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 60, p. 37.

Hegel wishes to critique this traditional conception of the subject as substance and show how it cannot lead to conceptual thinking and self-determination. If we grasp the subject as a substance, we confine the subject to always requiring externally given content. In other words, the subject as substance will always have external content by which it is determined; the subject cannot, in this way, ever produce content of its own. Always being determined by externally given content and never generating content from itself means that the self is not self-determining. If, at first, the subject is taken to be substance, and therefore primary to the accidents which predicate it, it appears that the subject must be the source of its determination. However, when we understand what being a substance entails, the subject as substance is seen to depend on external content. The subject as substance is merely an empty subject until it has predicates attached to it, and so it is not the source of its determinations. Likewise, the predicates are accidents and therefore are contingent and indifferent both to other predicates and to the subject itself. This contingency and indifference precludes the subject from being self-determining, relegating the subject to only being able to deal with its own contingently given content. Thus, any conception of the subject as substance determined by external predicates is dependent on them and cannot be considered self-determining. But then how does Hegel want to conceive of the subject and its relation to predicates?

Instead of this general nature of the judgment which sees the subject as a substance, Hegel proposes what he calls the speculative sentence, in which the subject is active and not a fixed substance. The manner in which Hegel distinguishes between argumentation and speculative [*begreifende*] thinking is crucial to understanding the speculative sentence. As we saw, argumentation conceives of the subject of a judgment, as well as the subject of self-consciousness, as an empty substance which takes on accidents, or predicates. Speculative

thinking differs from argumentation because it considers the movement between subject and predicate with no fixed distinction between them. As Hegel writes, the "solid ground which argumentation has in the passive Subject is therefore shaken, and only this movement itself becomes the object."⁵³ Taking this movement as its object, the subject considers the predicate essential. The predicate gives the subject determinate being [*Dasein*] which is needed for the subject to be meaningful at all. Hegel infers that "the content is, in fact, no longer a Predicate of the Subject, but is the Substance, the essence and the Notion [*Begriff*]."⁵⁴ Through this movement of subject into predicate and taking the predicate to be the essence of the subject, Hegel says that the ordinary subject-predicate form of judgment suffers a "counterthrust" when starting "from the Subject as though this were a permanent ground." Doing so results in finding that "the Predicate is really the Substance" or what is essential and that "the Subject has passed over into the Predicate, and, by this very fact, has been sublated."⁵⁵

What does Hegel mean when he says that subject has been sublated? The answer becomes clearer when we consider that sublation involves both canceling and preserving. The subject, at first, cancels its original being as a mere substance which takes on accidental and contingent predicates. This grammatical subject is a fixed passive substance – there is no thinking movement between itself and its predicates. Rather, the fixed grammatical subject can only have predicates accidentally attached to it in an external manner. While the speculative sentence preserves this grammatical subject, the latter's importance as the primary subject of the sentence is overtaken by a different subject: that of the subject of self-consciousness. The subject as substance is shown to be empty without its predicates, and the predicates are empty unless

⁵³ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 60, p. 37.

⁵⁴ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 60, p. 37.

⁵⁵ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 60, p. 37.

given content from representation. For this reason, there is only the movement between these two indeterminate positions. This movement or passing over of subject into predicate is the only thing which is determinate, and it becomes the object not for the grammatical subject, but for the subject of self-consciousness. This explanation shows how the subject is preserved in the speculative sentence. The sense of subject shifts through a canceling of the grammatical subject as primary to the subject of self-consciousness as primary. This understandably cancels the grammatical subject and preserves it as the subject of self-consciousness which can take as its object the movement of subject into predicate. As Hegel writes, the grammatical "Subject is replaced by the knowing 'I' itself, which links the Predicates with the Subject holding them."⁵⁶ But what does Hegel mean here by movement, and how does it relate to the thinking subject of self-consciousness?

3.3 Mechanical Memory and the Speculative Sentence

To better understand how to answer this question, it is useful to return to the discussion of mechanical memory in the *Encyclopedia*. As we saw there, mechanical memory relates names in a fixed external manner, and it only deals with itself – it is self-knowing without depending on externalities. For this reason, the mind is on its way to becoming self-determining, having overcome dependence on experience. However, the form is still deficient because it relates content externally. As Hegel writes, it is “unnecessary to clothe the content in an external [logical] formalism,” and he claims that “the content is in its very nature the transition into such formalism, but a formalism which ceases to be external, since the form is the innate development

⁵⁶ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 60, p. 37.

of the concrete content itself.”⁵⁷ Treating subject and predicate externally becomes problematic in a judgment in which the mind takes the subject to be a substance because it treats subject and predicate formally only without taking into consideration the particular content which is externally related. How, then, can names which are related externally as in judgment develop into a speculative sentence involving internal movement which develops out of the content itself?

By memorizing names without their representational meaning, the mind leaves itself with only its own products, those products being names and relations of names. Therefore, mechanical memory paves the way for thinking and self-determination. However, on its own, it does not constitute thinking, since it provides none of the necessary movement which the speculative sentence requires. Memorization is not the same as thinking. For instance, one cannot merely memorize all of the correct logical relations and be said to be thinking of them, just like one cannot simply memorize mathematical proofs or a poem and claim to know how they work internally. Memorization implies a merely external and mechanical relation, but thinking will have to take up the content itself and develop it in an internal way.

Since mechanical memory places names in external relation to one another, how can an internal movement characteristic of thinking develop? Mechanical memory appears to be in the same place as the fixed, substantial grammatical subject of the ordinary judgment. It relates fixed determinate names to other fixed determinate names externally and irrespective of content. Mind or subject here are simply what holds the names together, relating and unifying them. If this is the case, though, then the mind does not merely hold the names fixed; rather, implicit in its unifying activity is the production of a movement from one name to another, using and negating

⁵⁷ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 56, p. 34-5.

simultaneously the names in memory by relating them to other names. This is necessary for names to cease being merely empty names—just meaningless sounds or marks—and acquire conceptually determined meanings. This act of using a name, but also negating it, to express its meaning is an internal activity of the mind. The mind does not merely hold names in external relation to one another but, through its meaning-producing activity, relates names in a way which preserves and negates them simultaneously. The question remains as to how this actually plays out in the speculative sentence.

One might seek a solution to this question by investigating an example from Hegel in his discussion of the speculative sentence: "God is being."⁵⁸ By thinking of this sentence speculatively, we can see that "God" cannot merely be the subject as substance that has "being" as a predicate. Rather, being is the essence of God in the sense that being is inherently constitutive of the concept of God. This is not to relate being to God as an accidental predicate or property but to show that being is both immanent and necessary to the very concept of God. One might then ask: what does being inherent to the initial subject mean for the predicate of the sentence? Hegel's answer involves a fundamental reconceptualization of the relationship between subject and predicate in that the predicate is also a subject; this is because, in the speculative sentence, the predicate is the essence of the subject, and one might express the predicate as "the being or essence which exhausts the nature of the Subject," resulting in thinking being able to determine the "Subject immediately in the Predicate."⁵⁹ The subject term does not externally signify the predicate as if it were separate from it, but, instead, requires the predicate for the expression of its essential (and necessary) nature. So, in the judgment "God is being," the predicate being is determined to be the essence of the concept God. Instead of being externally

⁵⁸ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 62, pp. 38-39.

⁵⁹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 62, pp. 38-39.

related, the subject and predicate have a necessary dependency on one another; the only way in which to understand them is in the movement of one into the other.

For this reason, once the subject moves into the predicate, a new judgment must be provided in order for us to determine what “being” is since it would just be a meaningless name without its relation to other names. Thus, a single sentence cannot give a full account of the subject because as soon as the subject finds itself in the predicate, the predicate itself becomes a subject which needs a further determination with which to express its essence. Since each name requires others for its determination, we can understand the meaning of concepts only after we have gone through and understood Hegel’s whole system. This is a reason why he says “The True is the Whole.”⁶⁰ Hegel articulates the beginning of this development and an account of all the essential logical relations which make up the whole in the *Science of Logic*, which is beyond the scope of this paper. What is most important for our purposes is understanding that the speculative sentence is a way of expressing a subject's essence through another. It is also a recognition of the fundamental way in which their relation is composed of a necessary dependence in order for this expression to emerge. Thus, the speculative sentence expresses an identity-in-difference of names which shows the necessary identity of subject and predicate while also preserving the conceptual difference between them.

The subject of self-consciousness is what grounds ultimately this expression of essence. The subject of self-consciousness, through its thinking, can relate terms and put them in conceptually determinate relationships by distinguishing between the concepts in question and unifying them in a logically necessary development. It pursues such unification by following out how each concept determines the other and gains its meaning only through the other. Rather

⁶⁰ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 20, p. 11.

than conducting external determinations, the subject as self-consciousness traces the dialectical movement from subject into predicate, thereby determining the former to be the essence of the latter. The movement is the subject's own activity, and the linguistic factors it deals with are its own self-productions. Therefore, the subject of self-consciousness is this very dialectical movement of subject into predicate. As in mechanical memory, the names are the mind's own productions, and the relations of those names come from the mind's own process of unifying its names. Similarly, the subject as self-consciousness, instead of keeping names unified externally, unifies its content internally using movement or transition into other names. The subject deals only with itself, determining itself in a way that does not depend on anything other than its own conceptual determining activity. Therefore, the subject as self-consciousness when thinking through the speculative sentence is self-determining. This activity we can call speculative thinking. This leaves one to consider what self-determination means specifically in terms of speculative thinking.

Speculative thinking involves self-consciousness, making the subject of self-consciousness crucial to an understanding of the speculative sentence and Hegel's philosophy as a whole. Self-consciousness needs to involve a difference or opposition to be said to be consciousness at all, but, to be self-consciousness, the difference must be an internal difference or one that is self-differentiating. In other words, in self-consciousness, the self goes about distinguishing itself from itself, but it also unifies differences. This has implications in terms of language and the speculative sentence. We have seen that mind deals with its own productions, and, in the judgment, we have a subject distinguished from a predicate. In the form of representation, the judgment would appear simply as "S is P," in which the subject is taken to be a substance. This is the case wherever one can plug a subject and predicate into the judgment

independent of the form. That is, there is an enduring opposition between the form of the judgment and the content to which it relates. Nevertheless, speculative thinking takes hold of and can relate to the content internally, determining conceptually the correct logical relations of words. This process turns words into concepts. In the speculative sentence, then, we can see that conceptual determination is just pure self-consciousness thinking through its own internal and self-differentiated content. No appeal to any given content or form of representation is needed. In other words, the opposition between thinking and what is thought about dissolves into a thinking of thinking, or a thinking of only itself and nothing other than thinking. Thus, the speculative sentence typifies this movement of the subject of self-consciousness which deals with only thinking of its own thinking.

4 Objections and Clarifications

One objection which could be raised is that, if conceptual thinking must cut off its tie to representation, then how does that conceptual thinking tell us anything about reality or the ‘real world.’ Another way to put this objection is that, if conceptual thinking is only about thinking itself, then how can conceptual thinking tell us anything about the world from which it has cut itself off. As we have seen already, the mind leaves itself with only its products and process of relating them through mechanical memory. Does not the divesting of representational meaning, which ties back to content given in intuition, cut off thinking from the content of the object? Do we not have two realms, one of objects and one of thinking?

To answer this objection, we must remember that the overall goal of Hegel’s philosophical psychology is to show how an individual mind can become self-determining. What self-determining does not mean in this theoretical context is that the mind can determine whatever it wants or desires to determine. Desires here are construed as depending on factors other than thinking or reason. In the case of the theoretical mind, self-determining does not mean that the individual mind can assume or presuppose some given representational content as true. For, if the mind makes such an assumption, all of its claims to knowledge or claims to valid thinking would be relative to those assumptions. This relative nature of thinking would bar the individual mind from being genuinely self-determining because the individual’s thinking would be dependent on assumptions which are not guaranteed to be valid. Hegel appears to be critiquing implicitly Descartes’ methodological doubt as a way to begin true theorizing. Just as Hegel is discussing an individual mind in this section of the *Encyclopedia*, Descartes is also concerned with his own mind. This strategy differs, for instance, from Socrates who uses discussion and dialogue with others as his method for finding the truth.

Descartes's method proceeds by insisting on "clear and distinct" ideas which cannot be doubted and are self-evident, which can then be used as the basis for arguments which are based on the "light of reason." That is, his method is similar to the method of deriving proofs in geometry, where self-evident axioms are assumed and then used to derive more complicated theorems. Based on his arguments in the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel cannot be satisfied with Descartes's method due to its assumption that "clear and distinct" ideas can validate themselves and show themselves to be true beyond doubt or with "perfect certainty." That is, Descartes assumes that there are ideas which are self-evidently and immediately certain. He also assumes that certainty is the criterion for truth, a claim that Hegel explicitly deals with in the *Phenomenology*.

What is wrong with certainty? Perhaps a better way to phrase this question would be: Why can we not assume any determinacy at the start? To claim that there are axioms or first principles which we can know with certainty assumes that there is at least one fundamental axiom which can be known through its immediate determinacy and nothing else. A problem arises when beginning with certainty (characterized here by immediate determinacy) since we begin either immediately with a determinacy without providing further justification—which means we must assume that determinate principle dogmatically—or with an offer of additional justification or another determinate reason why that first principle is the first—which undermines the initial first principle's primacy. The critical idea here is that we will either need to assert dogmatically and immediately some determinate principle as being primary and thus that all further claims will be relative to that beginning or admit that there is an infinite regress.

What does this discussion of Descartes have to do with self-determination? To steer the discussion back to the issue of self-determination, we can see that self-determination would not

be possible if certainty or the self-evidence of axioms were the criteria for truth. An idea being self-evident implies that the idea can be known to be true immediately on its own, without appeal to other determinate ideas. As the discussion above shows, however, any foundational determinate idea always begs the question as to why it is the first principle. Therefore, any thinking presupposing some determinate starting point would be relative to that determinacy and not validated by and through itself. However, if self-determination cannot arise from assumed self-certain axioms, how can it arise and how can mechanical memory enable the mind to become self-determining?

Hegel proposes that beginning with determinacy assumes too much and so we must begin with indeterminacy. We have seen how language and the activity of mechanical memory enable the mind to divest names of meaning, leaving them indeterminate regarding sense and ready for determination through their connections to other words. For an individual mind to properly think and be self-determining requires at least two things. First, the ability to erase or disconnect any representational senses of words (since any knowing or thinking based on these senses would be relative and not absolute knowing), allowing words to be indeterminate regarding their meaning. Second, the ability to determine what the proper conceptual meanings of words are, which can be shown through thinking through the correct logical relations which Hegel lays out in the *Science of Logic*.

For example, between and within different communities we have different senses of the word 'being.' Knowing the conceptual meaning of the word 'being' would not be possible for an individual mind at the psychological level unless it could disconnect its representational sense of 'being' and connect to its proper meaning through the process of mechanical memory. Next, the mind could begin to think through the correct connections. In this example, 'being' is where the

Science of Logic begins. This beginning is characterized as the indeterminate immediate. Due to this initial characterization of being as the indeterminate immediate, being immediately is nothing. Notice the relation between being and nothing is not one which is externally connected. Instead of an external connection, there is an immanent relation or, as Hegel says rather enigmatically, being and nothing are absolutely distinct yet inseparable. This way of conceiving of being (and of nothing) is one which does not refer to any particular community or individual's stipulated, given, or representational meaning of being. Instead, we obtain a conception of being that does not presuppose any representational sense. This lack of a representational sense allows for thinking of being itself without assuming determinacy. All other fundamental philosophical concepts are then to be derived in this immanent way from this initial characterization of being. At the psychological level, Hegel has shown that the individual mind is capable of divesting words of representational senses, which is a necessary activity if mind is to think conceptually. Although it is outside the scope of this paper to develop in more detail precisely how the argument turns in the *Science of Logic*, I hope to have offered at least a general idea of how the process should play out when we begin with indeterminate immediacy.

However, we may still ask how specifically mechanical memory enables the individual mind to be self-determining. With this question and the preceding discussion, we can turn back to the original objection, namely, how can conceptual thought cut itself off from representation and still tell us the truth about reality. Is it the case that words then only refer to themselves and can never refer back to the world? This view cannot be what Hegel means when he argues that mechanical memory helps to cut off representation. Instead, the claim is that, when representation constitutes the meaning of a particular word, that word is always burdened by a reference outside the word to a representation which determines its meaning. However, if this

determining relation holds, all words and their relations will be ultimately grounded in their given representational meaning. That is, the representational meanings of words can always be traced back to what is outside of thought, allowing representations to determine what and how thought thinks about the world. As Winfield points out, this relation to an external representational meaning determining a word produced by the mind itself prevents the individual mind from not only thinking conceptually, but also from being self-determining.⁶¹

Conceptual thinking would be lacking since it is a thinking which is only constituted by a thinking that thinks itself without a relation to representational meaning. The key is that conceptual thinking cannot refer to or mean a content which is representational. Instead, the meaning relation is one in which words are put in relation to other words. Yet, putting words in relation to other words is not sufficient, though it is necessary. It is not sufficient since the words we define can also be defined by a linguistic community. For example, I can look a word up in a dictionary to see how that word is defined. However, these definitions of words cannot be ultimately authoritative in the sense of each word's definition being universal and necessary. At best, we can claim that each word reflects their given representational meaning, which allows for individuals to think representationally but not conceptually. That is, merely defining words in terms of other words does not imply conceptual thinking.

More explanations of Hegel's arguments would need to be given to see how conceptual thinking itself arises. However, it is important to note that the claim is not that mechanical memory is the same as conceptually thinking, but that it enables conceptual thinking. Mechanical memory is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for conceptual thinking. However, since it is a necessary condition, the mind requires the initial activity of disconnecting words from meaning

⁶¹ Winfield, *The Intelligent Mind: On the Genesis and Constitution of Discursive Thought*, p. 148.

in order to later make the correct, logical connections between words. Nevertheless, we still need to address how mechanical memory can enable the mind to self-determine in a way which does not cut us off entirely from reality and leave us in a sphere of thinking which is merely conceptual. That is, how can mechanical memory allow for conceptually thinking which is not divorced from the world but, instead, helps to clarify it and help us get at the truth?

The problem just stated arises because of the primary activity of mechanical memory, namely, divesting words of their representational meaning and leaving the mind with the words themselves. The mind unites the words (without representational meaning) within its own sphere of intelligence. Of what importance are the words without representational meaning, however, if they do not map onto what we usually mean by such words? Could one not use one word to mean another if one so chooses?

To answer the second question, Hegel would have to say that it is certainly possible for someone to rote memorize words in a way that does not track common usage. While this way of memorizing words is possible, it does not get at the importance of using an already existing or given language of a linguistic community, such as English, German, or French. Hegel references the importance and value of using an already existing language by pointing to how these languages already have the resources or conditions needed for conceptual thinking. That is, languages allow explicitly for representational thinking and enable implicitly conceptual thinking. There is no need to create or develop a philosophical language which is different from one's native language. Hegel sees how particular languages provide everyday, common words and expressions which most people use as a way to think representationally and express ideas to others through verbal or written language. Within the same language which provides resources for common everyday words and expressions, there are also crucial philosophical concepts, such

as 'being' and 'essence,' 'cause' and 'effect', and so on. Each of these terms have a common or everyday sense, that is, they have a representational meaning which provides different senses and connotations both within that language across its different participants and between different languages. Within English, for example, many different individuals can think and communicate using the word 'lion.' Yet individuals most likely have a slightly different sense of the word and different associations of that word with other representations. Each individual has their sense of the word due to their own historical experience with the word. This experience could be with individual images of lions they have encountered or how they have found the word used in different contexts. Similarly, the corresponding word for 'lion' in other languages, such as German or French, has different senses because of the word's associations with other words within that language.

While 'lion' is not a philosophical concept, we can apply the same reasoning to philosophical concepts to determine what their meaning is without referring to particular and contingent meanings found in a particular language. The takeaway from the discussion in the preceding paragraph is that no metalanguage is required to express philosophical concepts in Hegel's view. A given language can provide both the words and grammatical relations necessary for conceptual thinking. Yet we also have wondered why the concepts we have determined and used to think conceptually should map onto or track those words' common usages, that is, their representational meaning. After one has memorized words by rote, could one not determine the meaning of 'lion' to be whatever one wants?

Again, it is possible. One point in showing how a particular language itself provides the conditions for conceptual thinking, however, is to show that particular languages are plastic in the sense that the meanings of words can and do change over time. This change does not occur

because some external influence or a metalanguage determines specific changes. Language can change itself using its own linguistic tools, that of its lexicon and grammar. At the level of representation, a language can change the meanings of its words and expressions to better approximate truth claims about the world. However, the problem still arises, as we have seen, in that representational thinking cannot help but be heteronomous and not completely autonomous and self-determining. Hegel's aim is not to show that representational thinking is the height of our ability to think. Hegel's aim, instead, is to show how representational thinking can turn itself into conceptual thinking. Through conceptual thinking, the mind still uses language but in a way that overcomes any dependence on representation for its meaning. That is not to say that there is no reference to the world or reality and only a reference to thinking itself. We want to distinguish between words referring only to themselves in the correct logical relations (becoming concepts) and words' ostensive references to objects in the world outside of one's thinking of them. The former refers to a self-enclosed system of concepts which refer to and obtain their meaning from other concepts. The latter allows for the ostensive reference of those concepts to objects in the world. Thus, mechanical memory cuts its tie to representation in the former situation. Then, once the mind begins to think conceptually, it can refer outside itself to the world. When the mind does so, it does not require dependence on given representational meanings.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, mind can acquire language through a process leading to mechanical memory, allowing it to cut its tie to representation and leave itself with only its own self-produced determinations. Given this account, the speculative sentence relates names not as names to representational meanings but as names that are unified by the subject of self-consciousness identical with the subject. The speculative sentence shows how this is possible not by conceiving the subject as substance but as a movement expressing the essence of concepts. Through this movement, the subject of self-consciousness identifies itself in and as this movement, proving that it is the ground for any such expression of the essence of concepts. It is in this way that “everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as Substance, but equally as Subject.”⁶² This identification depends crucially on language but is not beholden to language as a determining condition of thought in which given linguistic meanings can determine what can be thought. This would reduce thinking to representational thinking which takes the subject to be a substance. Rather, language, partly through mechanical memory, enables the mind to think speculatively, free from images and representational meaning, providing the removal of any opposition of consciousness between knowing and object. As Hegel writes, “the living Substance is being which is in truth Subject, or, what is the same, is in truth actual only in so far as it is the movement of positing itself, or is the mediation of its self-othering with itself.”⁶³ Language enables the subject to exist in this way, and the speculative sentence illustrates this movement. While the speculative sentence can only hint at what is to

⁶² Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 17, pp. 9-10.

⁶³ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* para. 18, p. 10.

come in the *Science of Logic*, it sets the stage for how that work is to be read and how self-determination and thinking free of images and representation is possible.

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