

Derrida sive Hegel — Dash to the Absolute!¹

Abstract

The last page of the Phenomenology of Spirit ends with one curious, minute, and seemingly trivial syntactical mark [omitted in the Miller translation] and a poetic citation: the dash (—) and a catachrestic (mis)quotation from Schiller’s Die Freundschaft (1782). Derrida sive Hegel — Dash to the Absolute! explores reading the PhS through a rhetorical and tropological lens from the perspective of the dash. Its wager is that the dash [Gedankenstrich] is the speculative syntactical (re)mark par excellence in Hegel’s conceptual system. I turn to Derrida’s early account of the Hegelian economy to find the conceptual resources needed to read with and against the PhS in order to critically analyze the speculative metaphors that buttress the Abgeschlossenheit. From this perspective, the movement of Hegelian dialectics are captured by the turns and re-turns of the labour of the negative only if they are troped (sic), figured, and disfigured in a tropological economy. I argue that Hegel’s ‘dash to the absolute’ reveals ontological ambiguities and locate a potential site of these ambiguities in the (non)trope catachresis that operates in the background of Hegel’s system.

Keywords: Hegel-Derrida, speculative proposition, the dash, sarcophagy, catachresis

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“Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος” (John 1:1)
—Emphatic Diaglott

“Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.”
—Samuel Beckett (*Worstward Ho*, 1983)

¹ I owe the inspiration for this title partially to Rebecca Comay and Frank Ruda’s forthcoming book *The Dash: Vicissitudes of Absolute Knowing* (in preparation; with MIT-Press). The subsequent textual analysis of the dash [Gedankenstrich] in relation to Hegel is indebted to Comay and Ruda’s lectures on 11 May 2013 at a conference entitled ‘The Actuality of the Absolute: Hegel, Our Untimely Contemporary’ at The Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities

Introduction

On 14 November 1831, an anemic Hegel is upon his imminent death bed — the previous night he had been vomiting ‘gall’ (a combination of stomach juices and blood) — and as the day wore on, he could not urinate and began to hiccup wildly. At 3:00 P.M he started to have chest pains; he complained of a shortness of breath and was laid on his side to alleviate his gastrointestinal pain. At 5:00 P.M, Hegel was pronounced dead from cholera.² The *glas* of Hegel’s death had sounded like Hayden’s sudden *fortissimo* chord in Symphony No. 94 II. Andante in G major (*The Surprise Symphony*). The end of a grandiose metaphysical era was solemnly coming to a close and an aging Schelling could finally receive the attention he adamantly deserved. But, alas, post-Hegelian idealism yielded to philosophies of practice of Schelling’s disappointed students; among them Engels, Kierkegaard, and Bakunin. In a certain sense, the specter of Hegel still looms over our so called ‘post-metaphysical’ age and his revenant prompts us to ask: to what extent are we Hegelians today? Derrida in his 1967 *annus mirabilis* calls Hegel ‘the last philosopher of the Book and the first philosopher of writing’ (Derrida [1967] 1976: 35, henceforth *OG*). In what follows, I would like to trace the strategic role *deconstruction* plays within Hegel’s conceptual architectonics and explore the proximity Derrida’s interventions encounter within Hegel’s system. In other words, at what point does *différance* [un]touch *Aufhebung*? And what are the effects of this ‘touch that does not quite [absolutely] touch’ in the textual economy of these two differential tropes?

My wager is that the rhetorical, or more specifically the ‘tropological’ elements of Hegel’s speculative proposition (with its semantic and syntactical properties) is a skeleton key that unlocks the hidden ambiguities buttressing his speculative architectonics. In many respects, *reading* Hegel rhetorically allows for a more nuanced reading that goes beyond the platitudes, caricatures, and exaggerations of Hegel’s system and chiasmatically situate *rhetoric* (or *the tropological*) at the heart of dialectics. More precisely put, the movement of Hegelian dialectics are captured by the turns and re-turns of the labour of the negative only if they are troped (*sic*), figured, and disfigured in a tropological economy, hence Hegel’s inveterate use of figurative language to capture the discursive failures of Spirit’s *Bildung* — a moment he disavows when he claims that Absolute spirit sublates

² Terry Pinkard (2000) writes: ‘The cause of death was, however, almost certainly not cholera; Hegel did not have the diarrhea, the swelling, or any of the other symptoms characteristic of the disease. Most likely, Hegel died of a chronic ailment from which he had suffered for some time, perhaps even since 1827 (when he had been stricken ill in Paris), and most likely this was some kind of upper gastrointestinal disease’ (659).

poetry into the prose of thought thinking itself viz. νοήσεως νόησις. The rhetorical analysis of this essay, both in its semantic and syntactical grammaticality, hangs from the perspective of a curious, minute, and seemingly trivial syntactical (re)mark at the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1806, henceforth *PhS*) and the beginning of the *Science of Logic* (henceforth *SL*): the dash [Gedankenstrich].

In what follows, I would like to turn to one essay by Derrida and three texts by Hegel in order to explore the proximity that the ‘Derrida-Hegel’ coupling play in the history of 20th century philosophical presentation. On the one hand, Derrida’s unorthodox reading of Hegel provides the general line of argumentation and experimentation behind an explicit tropological interpretation of Hegel’s speculative propositions. I will turn to ‘*From a Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve*’ (Derrida 1982, henceforth *HR*). On the other hand, Hegel’s statements on language are indicative of the intimate link language and Absolute Spirit share as the latter discovers itself through a historical process of edification and richer thought determinations. I turn to three important works: 1) the Additions (*Zusätze*) of the *Encyclopedia of Logic* or *Lesser Logic* (henceforth *EL*); 2) the ‘stuttering’ beginning(s) of the *SL* and its dash e.g. ‘*Being, pure being — without further determination*’ (59) [omitted in the Wallace translation]; and 3a) the final part of the *PhS* i.e. the self-externalization [Entäußerung] of Absolute Knowledge followed by 3b) the dash after ‘nur’ [omitted in the Miller translation], and finally, 3c) the (mis)quotation of Schiller’s *Die Freundschaft* (1782).

I hope to interpret Hegel’s speculative proposition and emphasize the tropological economy of its semantic and syntactical grammaticality structured around in one syntactical mark (the dash) and a trope that signals Spirit’s self-externalization and ultimate reconciliation [Versöhnung] with Absolute Knowledge: *catachresis* (κατάχρησις)³. To anticipate the argument, catachresis captures the ‘inadequation’ (*σι*) that the different shapes of Spirit experiences. It is not so much about the ‘failures’ of Spirit but its non-coincidental experiences that inaugurate the different shapes of consciousness in relation to the norms that govern its self-knowledge as it develops historically. However, instead of treating catachresis as a homogenous and unidimensional trope, or master trope, I propose that it comes in three disparate modalities that are speculatively united under one improper figure of inadequation. More precisely, the three modalities are speculatively (dis)joined in

³ Patricia Parker’s distinction between metaphor and catachresis is helpful: ‘Metaphor is “a transfer or substitution employed when a proper term *already exists* (my emphasis) and is displaced by a term transferred from another place not its own” and catachresis ‘is a transfer of terms from one place to another employed when no proper word exists’ (Bender 60). In a nutshell, catachresis is a misuse of metaphor.

a tropological topology (*sic*) illustrated by picturing a dark surrealist spiraling staircase winding away from a luminescent base. The speculative and complex topological helix structure coil upwards away from an absent center that is constantly supplemented. In effect, it is *l'esprit de l'escalier* — that literal winding wit (*Witz*) whose metaphorical response is always already belated (Nancy 2002). Although the focus is on Hegel, I would like to make a ‘call-to-arms’ to readers of Derrida and argue that catachresis is the most important deconstructive (non)trope; a trope that is within the tropological economy of language but also a trope which stands outside holding open any semblance of closure; or more aptly put, the trope that acutely describes Derrida’s textual practice — or interventions — in his attempts to thematize the, non-coincidence and destabilizing effects that philosophical binaries incorporate into their conceptual systems e.g. the inside/outside, sensible/intelligible, concept/thing etc.

Hegel *sive* Derrida: (almost) Absolutely Proximal

At what point does Derrida touch Hegel? And is this an Austenian marriage plot or a Radcliffean Gothic romance? If deconstruction is an act of love, and if metaphor is at the heart of rhetoric, then catachresis is its broken heart.⁴ Derrida ‘deconstructs’ texts he loves not to destroy them but to show the profound respect he has for the metaphysical tradition. As the title of this paper suggests, the speculative conjunction ‘*Derrida sive Hegel*’, captures the almost absolute proximity Derrida shares with Hegel. In Latin, *sive* is usually translated as ‘or’ but it is rather misleading to say that the contrast creates two disparate subjects; *vel*, also meaning ‘or,’ would be more appropriate in the case of the former since *vel* functions as a **disjunctive** between subjects; *sive*, on the other hand, is a **subdisjunctive subjunctive** where if things are the same but only different in name then *sive* would be the more appropriate grammatical form e.g. Ἡρακλῆς *sive* Hercules.⁵ In the context of this paper, *sive* functions to highlight that things indeed may not be different between Derrida and Hegel and only contrasted in the names (implying, of course, that Derrida is a Hegelian philosopher); but also that things *may also be different*. In sum, the speculative grammar allows for this paradoxical *sive* to hold together Hegel and Derrida in a tense differential constellation. Simply put,

⁴ ‘Deconstruction is love. That would be the final aphorism here, but only on condition that it could never be mine — or Jacques Derrida’s either.’ (Royle 139-140) The context of this ‘authorized’ unpublished remark is an ICA seminar in London in 1985, where Derrida responds to Jacqueline Rose: [Deconstruction is love].

⁵ See *Gymnasium, sive symbola critica* (1830) by Alexander Crombie pp 191. In a note, he clarifies that *sive* is indeed used as a disjunctive also for things but that the ‘admonition is essential to perspicuity’ in using *sive* as a disjunctive for names when things themselves are not different.

Derrida and Hegel may be different in *name* but *things* may not be as different as they seem.⁶ In an apt (and frequently referenced quotation) Derrida writes:

Différance (at a point of almost absolute proximity to Hegel, as I have emphasized, I think, in the lecture and elsewhere: everything what is most decisive, is played out, here, in what Husserl called ‘subtle nuances,’ or Marx ‘micrology’) must sign the point at which one breaks with the system of *Aufhebung* and with speculative dialectics. Since this conflictuality of *différance* — which can be called contradiction only if one demarcates it by means of a long work on Hegel's concept of contradiction—can never be totally resolved, it marks its effects in what I call the text in general, in a text which is not reduced to a book or a library, and which can never be governed by a referent in the classical sense, that is, by a thing or by a transcendental signified that would regulate its movement. (Derrida 1981: 44, henceforth *P*)

The ‘*différance-Aufhebung*’ (a seemingly mutually exclusive juxtaposition) can be read as a speculative trope that interminably contaminates itself in an economy of absolute expenditure i.e. *Aufhebung* expends what it does not have in order to nourish itself out of its own products. I will come to this point below in order to situate it with Absolute Knowing's kenosis at the Calvary and Hegel's sarcophagy of Schiller. Derrida's main argument with/against Hegel is that the latter determines difference as contradiction [Widerspruch], the motor which drives Spirit's *Aufhebung* forward into a final dialectical synthesis of reconciliation with Absolute Knowing. Difference as contradiction, in the Kenosis scene, is then, as determined by Hegel, interiorized — or digested [*verdauen*] — only to be forgotten in amnesic *Er-Innerung*.⁷ The absolute presence Spirit has with itself (in speculation) creates a processional holy communion where its journey is compressed into a small morsel of Absolute Knowing. In effect, Absolute Knowing is the moment where Spirit understands *retrospectively* the contradictions of its journey and is specularly reconciled into absolute unity with itself. In more theological terms, the ontological difference which exist between finitude and the infinite — between *Ἀνθρώπος* and *λόγος* — is reconciled into a spiritual communion where Man understands God, and vice-versa; but more importantly, where God (the *λόγος*) understands *itself* through finitude. To anticipate, although Hegel's wager seeks to resolve Spirit into Absolute Knowing by ‘closing the circle’ into absolute presence, or complete self-adequation, Derrida remains

⁶ Michel Foucault's introductory lecture and homage to the then recently deceased Jean Hyppolite at the Collège de France on December 2, 1970 captures the ‘generalized anti-Hegelianism,’ to use Deleuze's succinct phrase, for the French philosophical context (Deleuze 1994: xix). Foucault comments: ‘But truly to escape Hegel involves an exact appreciation of the price we have to pay to detach ourselves from him. It assumes that we are aware of the extent to which Hegel, insidiously perhaps, is close to us; it implies a knowledge, in that it permits us to think against Hegel, of that which remains Hegelian. We have to determine the extent to which he stands, motionless, waiting for us’ (Foucault 1989: 235).

⁷ ‘This Becoming presents a slow-moving succession of Spirits, a gallery of images, each of which, endowed with all the riches of Spirit, moves thus slowly just because the Self has to penetrate and digest [*verdauen*] this entire wealth of its substance’ (PhS § 808)

critical of this self-determined move. In this paper, catachresis functions as a concept-metaphor that insists on the non-closure or interminable inadequation of spirit to its own self-adequation.

Différance, on the other hand, points to the interminable difference, deferral, and spacing which occurs when trying to thematize the very condition of bridging the gap between thought and being into the unity of absolute difference as identity. In other words, *différ(a)nce* points to the violent imposition the λόγος, through its very utterance, has in neutralizing chaotic and endless particularity — that sound and fury which reverberates through any system of signification — into a domesticated self-enclosed identity. Hegel's *Aufhebung* as *Wider-spruch* is the *sine qua non* of this neutralized ontological domesticity. *Différance* points to the moment of the *Spruch* (the verdict, saying, dictum) which speaks *against* [*Wider*] itself. In sum, the bi-furcation [Entzweiung] of the Absolute, through its movement of assimilating difference into a reconciliatory identity of identity and non-identity, is interrupted by this remainder of particularity (*a*) which destructures the conceptual system altogether. Hegel, on my reading, attempted to suture this ontological fissure throughout his philosophical career but, it is my wager that, Hegel saw what he did not want to see and that he blinded himself in Sophoclean fashion *even at the level of the syntactical*. But before exploring the speculative semantics and syntax of Hegel's text and entering into the labyrinthine architectonics of his philosophical corpus — lest we lose our argumentative thread— I would like to detour into the philosophical and rhetorical potential of catachresis. I will develop catachresis as the trope which captures and, in general, (de)structures the restricted and general economy of signs Derrida proposed in his readings of the philosophical tradition, especially Hegelian contradiction. I hope to show that catachresis is the deconstructive (non)trope *par excellence*; a trope that is within the tropological economy of signs but also the trope that undermines itself but simultaneously domesticates signification *qua* its own impossibility. In more general terms, pharmakon, hymen, supplement, *différance*, dissemination, the post-card, metaphoricity, exergue, us-ure, among others figures, are instances of catachresis.

Catachresis: Modalities of Use and Abuse?

While an exhaustive account of the rhetorical tradition is beyond the scope of this essay, I would like to draw some resources from the spring of rhetoric in order to keenly understand Derrida's claim that:

I have always tried to expose the way in which philosophy is literary, not so much because it is *metaphor* but because it is *catachresis*. The term *metaphor* generally implies a relation to an original ‘property’ of meaning, a ‘proper’ sense to which it indirectly or equivocally refers, whereas *catachresis* is a violent production of meaning, an abuse which refers to no anterior or proper norm. The founding concepts of metaphysics— *logos*, *eidōs*, *theoria*, etc. are instances of *catachresis* rather than metaphors, as I attempted to demonstrate in “White Mythology” (Kearney 2004:153)

Catachresis has appeared *en passant* across the vast literature of rhetorical theory from the ancients (e.g. Quintilian and Cicero) to the moderns (e.g. Dumarsais and Fontanier). Occasionally, catachresis is included as a trope in ancient rhetorical manuals; other times it is even denied the status as a trope. To make matters more complex, even by the time of Quintilian, there were systematic problems or ‘interminable disputes’ when it came to the classification of tropes and schemas.⁸ From the outset, the rhetorical tradition, in attempting to domesticate tropes as figures of speech and thought, has been plagued by a systematic *classificatory aporia*. Drawing parallels and working in tandem with the philosophical tradition — a coupling between the sophist and the philosopher which has become constitutive of the philosophy ever since Plato — I propose that there are three operations to catachresis which I label: *Catachresis One*, *Catachresis Two*, and *Catachresis Three*.⁹ In what follows, I will shed light on this methodological distinction and incorporate it into Derrida’s intervention into Hegelian speculative philosophy. My hope is to show that even the most minute of expressions and idioms hold a treasure-trove of speculative philosophical power that closely align with Hegel’s remarks on language in the *EL*, *PhS* and *SL*.

To begin with, *Catachresis One* names objects that are unnamed by a transposition of terms from one lexical domain to another. Cicero in *De Oratore* calls this an *inopiae causa* or a lack of proper expression caused by the empirical limitation of language. Prosopopoeic expressions like: *The foot of a mountain, the arms of a chair, the legs of a table, a computer mouse, the eye of a storm, the wings of an airplane, the head of a cabbage, to surf the net, black holes*, are examples of figurative terms occupying a literal referent. How else would we refer to the poles that hold up a square or rectangular surface used for a variety of purposes i.e. a table? Does not Catachresis One in this instance, as Andrej Warminski would have it, not only peoples (*sic*) the landscape, defaces, and dismember it but also produce mutants and monsters?¹⁰ In semiotic terms, the signified does not yet have a signifier; it is only with the operation

⁸ For a detailed commentary on the problems with classification Skinner (1996) and Fahnestock (1999)

⁹ For a more detailed exposition of *Catachresis One*, *Catachresis Two*, and *Catachresis Three* see *Beyond Cognitive Metaphor Theory: Perspectives on Literary Metaphor* (2011).

¹⁰ ‘Catachresis peoples the landscape with monsters and mutants. It generously gives mountains “faces,” even “backs” and “feet” but in doing so it not only does *not* give them eyes, nose, or a mouth, necks, torsos, or limbs, but also positively *deprives* them of such takes them away, defaces and dismembers mountains” but generously “humanizes”

of transposing a signifier from one lexical domain to another that the signified acquires 'value' (a Nietzschean point Derrida makes in the section *Exergue* in *White Mythology*) that allows for it to circulate in a lexical, or more precisely, tropological economy. In other words, it fills in the gaps of the empirical limitation of language since there are more objects in the world than signifiers. Catachresis One is a useful and practical figure in that it allows a language a certain autonomy to name 'the new' and literal through figural and tropological means. However, Catachresis One ought to be distinguished, as Quintilian rightly does, from metaphor. For Quintilian, metaphor transposes one new term to *something that already has a name* e.g. A is B or Achilles is a lion. Quintilian writes that catachresis (*abusio*) refers to the operation when an old term is applied to something that does *not yet* have its own name and, more often than not, the signified is brought into the lexical field explicitly through a figurative nomination. As it is reiterated through repeated use, it becomes effaced into a literal term which only a figurative term can name. In a certain sense, it is a violent, abusive, and improper imposition of the signifier upon the signified especially if the domains of lexical comparison are far apart. The figurative ruins of these dead metaphors abound in colloquial speech, yet they remain very much alive through their repeated circulation, *even if* the figurative origins have been forgotten (Derrida 1982). Catachresis One is a small figure limited in semantic scope to the nominal expressions of ordinary speech and poetic language.

Catachresis Two is the recognition and self-reflexive use of the figurative status of the signified under nomination (catachresis one) and a deliberate misuse, abuse, violent imposition, illogical comparison, far-fetched association, incongruity, conflict, and discordance between two lexical elements in the economy of circulating tropes (Chrzanowska-Kluczevska 2013a). It is a meta-figure and as George Puttenham in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589) called 'plain abuse.' Catachresis Two relies on synesthetic effects, malapropisms, absurdity and juxtapositions of disparate lexical elements to create the joyful or monstrous experience of poetic language. Masters of Catachresis Two in English literature are Shakespeare and Milton e.g. "to take *arms* against a *sea* of troubles" (Hamlet III, i) or "*Blind mouths!* That scarce themselves know how to hold" (Lycidas 119-120). Catachresis Two abounds from the English metaphysical poets Donne and Marvell to Breton and Surrealism to

cabbages and lettuces by giving them "heads" but deprives them of a face, body, and limbs: in giving the cabbage a head, it beheads it' (Warminski 1987: lx).

Edward Lear and Dylan Thomas (*ibid*). In sum, it is the deliberate meta-discursive use of figurative language to create new aesthetic effects.¹¹

Catachresis Three is the modality that marks the limits of signification where the self-reflexive mode constitutes its own conditions of (im)possibility. In turn, it captures, or re-marks, the excess that is produced from systems of signification trying to suture themselves into a homogenous and coherent totality. In semiotic terms, it marks the radical undecidability between the signifier and the signified. As new signified(s) come into the horizon of discourse, Catachresis Three frames the ‘what is thinkable,’ the conditions of constitution, the discourse of the outside radical Other, and the primacy of the signifier over the signified. This is the species of catachresis that many deconstructive critics have employed in their respective disciplines a la de Man (1979), Gasché (1986), Spivak (1993), and Laclau (2014), among others. Incidentally, the general picture claims that catachresis is entrenched in an undecidable field of tropological classification; it is a trope which is neither inside the classificatory system nor outside of it; it is a trope which differentiates itself into three functions which constitute a radical undecidability at the very heart of signification; it is the mark of metaphoricity *as such*, or more aptly put, ‘catachresis=rhetoricity=the very possibility of [signification]’ (Laclau 2014: 146). Differentiating these different modalities allows for a more precise description of the operative logics mobilized by deconstructive critics and their relation to the philosophical tradition.

With these conceptual tools in mind, I would now like to enter into Hegel’s labyrinthine Pit/Pyramid with our Ariadne figure: Derrida. In doing so, I will explore a few questions in *crescendo* fashion: Why does Hegel end the last page of the *PhS* and ‘begin’ the *SL* with a dash? Why does he end with a mangled quotation from *a poet*? Does Hegel’s corpus begin to consume itself and, by extension, cannibalize its other *viz*, the poet? And how does catachresis, as the trope that (de)structures the tropological economy of Hegel’s corpus, reveal the sematic and syntactical rhetoricity of its own ambiguities (Butler 2012; Comay 2013)?

Hegel, —Language, and The Pit/Pyramid

¹¹ J. Hillis Miller brilliantly links up catachresis and Kant analysis of the imagination [Einbildungskraft] (2005: 64).

Hegel's theory of language and the sign is incredibly rich, complex and an integral part of his conceptual system. I would like to turn to his account of language in the *PhS*, the *SL*, the *EL*. The *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences Vol. III: The Philosophy of Spirit* (henceforth *PS*) is a crucial hint that situates the pit/pyramid metaphor that structures Derrida's deconstructive analysis in *HR*.

Hegel remarks that 'only a philosophical exposition [philosophische Exposition] that rigidly excludes (strenge . . . ausschlöÙe) the usual way of relating the parts of a proposition could achieve the goal of plasticity [würde es erreichen, plastisch zu sein] (PhS §63-64, quoted in Malabou 2005). Hegel is interested in displacing the traditional scholastic predicate logic of philosophical thinking for a more plastic or speculative model in order to discover the relation 'Subject as substance' (in the *PhS*) has to pure thought-determinations [Denkbestimmungen] in the *SL*.¹² He does this in order to develop a new way, and ultimately the most appropriate *Wissenschaftliche* exposition, in which philosophy can properly become systematic. More precisely put, Hegel writes:

The forms of thought are first set out [*berausgesetzt*] and stored [*niedergelegt*] in human language, and one can hardly be reminded often enough nowadays that thought is what differentiates the human being from the beast. In everything that the human being has interiorized, in everything that in some way or other has become for him a representation, in whatever he has made his own, there has language penetrated, and everything that he transforms into language and expresses in it contains a category, whether concealed, mixed, or well defined. (*SL* 12)

Accordingly, the Herderian inspired idea that language and thought are mutually determining drives Hegel's speculative philosophy, in that, in order to reveal the sedimentations of thought-determinations *qua* pure being, a de-sedimentation has to occur in the very ether of language (Forster 2011). In this context, I hope to connect the semantic and syntactical properties of grammar, logic, and rhetoric in a tropological economy organized around catachresis as a 'counterpart to dialectic[s]' (Aristotle 2018: 3). For Hegel, grammar, dialectics, and logic are intimately connected albeit his pejorative dismissal of sophistic rhetoric. Hegel is correct to dismiss sophistic rhetoric as sloppy thinking or sheer abuse (catachresis two). But, rhetoric, in the sense of capturing the movement of dialectics by concentrating on the semantic-lexical and syntactical properties of grammar (catachresis three), is closer to what Hegel has in mind in exploring the determinations of thought as sedimented in language. To ground his point, Hegel writes:

¹² For an excellent exposition of Hegel's theory of language (and his subsequent terse vacillations to Herder's central thesis of thought being dependent on language) see Michael Forster ch. 5 'Hegel on Language' in *German Philosophy of Language* (2011).

Much more important is that in a language the categories should be expressed as substantives and verbs, and thus be stamped into objective form. In this respect, the German language has many advantages [*vieler Vorzüge*] over other modern languages, for many of its words also have the further peculiarity of carrying, not just different meanings, but opposite ones, and in this one cannot fail to recognize the language's speculative spirit. It can delight thought to come across [*stoßen*] such words, and to discover in naive form, already in the lexicon as one word of opposite meanings, that union of opposites which is the result of speculation but to the understanding is nonsensical. (SL 12)

For Hegel, the German language has a philosophical dexterity in that contronyms (*Aufhebung*, *Sinn*, *Urteil* [*etymologically false*], *Meinen*, *Sein/ge-Wesen*, *Zufall*, among others) preserve a polysemic and polyphonic content that supersede the sedimented nature of fixed thought-determinations a la Scholastic and Critical philosophy. Is Hegel, however, a linguistic purist and philosophical apologist for the German language? Far from it. In a letter to Peter van Ghert dated 16 December 1809, with a potential lectureship in the Netherlands looming, Hegel wrote:

As for the language in which lectures at Dutch universities are usually delivered, at least in the beginning this would have to be Latin. If custom permitted a departure from this, I would soon seek to express myself in the language of the country. For I hold it essential to the genuine mastery of a science for one to do it in one's mother tongue. (Hegel 1984: 539-540)¹³

For Hegel, all natural languages have a speculative content and no language reserves the right to hold fast to the Absolute, although like Luther (who made the Bible speak German), Hegel was adamant about making philosophy speak the language of the Teutons. Hegel's methodological speculative philosophy is similar to a polyglot who pays close attention to the nuances of language in order to feel, listen, observe, digest, perform, identify, and give life to the linguistic nature of Spirit and its absolute communion with Absolute Knowing. Furthermore, Hegel writes:

On the other hand, he who has mastered a language and is also acquainted with other languages with which to compare it, to such is given the capacity to feel in the grammar of the language the spirit and culture of a people; the same rules and forms now have an enriched, living value. In the medium of the language, he can recognize the expression of spirit as spirit, and this is logic. (SL 36)

The 'capacity to feel in the grammar' of a language — to imbibe in its sematic-lexical and syntactical richness — is to commune with the Absolute in a ritualistic rehearsal of Spirit's journey as it takes on more nourishing thought-determinations in procession to the final scene of absolute Holy communion. But is this scene as solemn and holy as it may seem? Or is it more like one of Goya's Black paintings *Saturno devorando a un hijo* (1819-1823)? Deeply immersed and trained in Scholastic

¹³ Quoted in *The Future of Hegel* (2005) by Catherine Malabou. In a certain sense, her questions 'Can we (read) with Hegel?' or 'How to re-read (with) Hegel?' drives the spirit of this essay as an act of (re)reading Hegel rhetorically and paying attention to the nuances of his texts e.g. its supplementary, oral, and polylexical-polysyntactical style.

philosophy, it goes without say that Hegel cherished the Trivium (grammar, logic, and rhetoric), or literally ‘the place where three roads meet’ [*tri-via*]. For Hegel, we can without much hesitation, deduce that the trivium is analogous to the Holy trinity where the triadic structure at the end of the *PhS* is speculatively united in a procession of Spirit’s self-externalization *qua* inwardizing or recollection [*Er-Innerung*]. Hegel in the *EL* mentions that language is the medium in which Spirit knows itself as Spirit i.e. Absolute Knowing. Hegel speaks in the *Zusätze* that:

We usually suppose that the Absolute must lie far beyond; but it is precisely what is wholly present, what we, as thinkers, always carry with us and employ, even though we have no express consciousness of it. It is in language that these thought-determinations are primarily deposited. Hence, the instruction in grammar that is imparted to children has the useful role of making them unconsciously attentive to distinctions that occur in thinking. (EL 59)

The verbal delivery of the *Zusätze* closely intertwines the written with the spoken. It is an additional linguistic supplement which adds to the text as it takes away the presence of the speaker. The Absolute is ‘wholly present’ in every speech act and utterance. More keenly — and this is where we start to move into Derridean territory — it is within language that Spirit is able to look back upon itself, to turn *into* itself effectively articulating its absolute presence to itself. It is the performative power of speech that inaugurates this act of [self]creation, or at least, the process by which Spirit can mediate its relation to Absolute Knowing. In short, it is a tracing back to the divine performative utterance of Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος. Hegel writes:

It is the power of speech, as that which performs what has to be performed. For it is the real existence of the pure self as self; in speech, self-consciousness, qua independent separate individuality, comes as such into existence, so that it exists for others. (PhS §508)

Spirit tropes (τροπος, lit. *to turn*) itself, or turns in on itself, in order to discover the richness its spiritual education (*Bildung*) has accumulated. In language — speech, grammar, and rhetoric — Spirit can capture, or digest, the gallery of images it re-collects through the temporal structure of its journey; but only to annul time altogether into the realm of pure thought-determinations, or the domain of the *SL*.¹⁴ ‘Self-consciousness enriches itself till it has wrested from consciousness the entire substance and has absorbed into itself the entire structure of the essentialities of substance’ (PhS § 801). Spirit has digested and absorbed what it has encountered on its journey and finally, in kenotic fashion, it secretes its own leftovers in order to act *as if* it has learned nothing — only to recollect

¹⁴ ‘This Becoming presents a slow-moving succession of Spirits, a gallery of images, each of which, endowed with all the riches of Spirit, moves thus slowly just because the Self has to penetrate and digest [verdauen] this entire wealth of its substance’ (PhS § 808)

from its own resources.¹⁵ The digestive metaphor is very suggestive: in a certain sense, Hegel is determined to present all the conceptual resources of Spirit as nourishing to the point where all the products are completely and efficiently metabolized in Absolute self-coincidence. Does Spirit really have all the conceptual resources needed to come to absolute knowledge purely from its own experience? How can Spirit recollect from the resources it does not have since it must ultimately *borrow* from elsewhere? Is there a remainder that resists incorporation to Spirit's self-externalization from its own resources? The (mis)quotation of Schiller and the dash at the end of the *PhS* sheds light on the ambiguity found in the conceptual metabolites of Spirit's development and maturity in the *Abgeschlossenheit*.

'Hegel— Schiller: Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Eating'

Does Hegel eat Schiller?¹⁶ There is an ambiguity in signing off with a poet and at the same time (mis)quoting him, effectively ripping apart his oeuvre and catachrestically citing from amnesic memory the dashed hopes of a generation. The stakes in this case are political: Schiller dies in 1805 ending the era of political transformation in Germany by aesthetic education; Napoleon is at the door of Jena surreptitiously working his way through Europe; and the politics of Terror are on the shadowy horizon waiting exportation from France (Comay 2013). And Hegel is hastily finishing the *PhS* in the midst of political turmoil. Does Hegel perform the final religious rites of over poetry, or picture-thinking, in order to sublimate and absorb *Vorstellung* into the prose of pure thinking? Or does it mark Hegel's anemic systematic recursion to the poet of *Vorstellung*? Has poetry not been fully metabolized in Spirit's journey through Religion or is it the bone in the throat that will not go away as Absolute Knowledge invades the grave of the poet and saprophytically eats his flesh; or perhaps more perniciously the putrescence of the system *in toto*? In more succinct words, is the very condition of Absolute Knowledge predicated upon the sacrifice of Spirit's *Vorstellung* and the poet's sarcophagic incorporation? And if this indeed is the case, does Absolute Knowledge then begin to eat its own resources whose metabolites have not yet been completely absorbed, digested, and

¹⁵ 'In the immediacy of this new existence the Spirit has to start afresh to bring itself to maturity *as if* [emphasis added], for it, all that preceded were lost and it had learned nothing from the experience of the earlier Spirits. But recollection, the inwardizing, of that experience, has preserved it and is the inner being, and in fact the higher form of the substance. So although this Spirit starts afresh and apparently from its own resources to bring itself to maturity, it is none the less on a higher level that it starts' (PhS § 808).

¹⁶ See Comay (2013) for a brilliant analysis of Hegel and Schiller's problematic relationship and a more detailed analysis of the Hegel/Schiller ending to the *PhS*.

incorporated? Does Absolute Spirit borrow what it does not have in a sarcologophatic economy?¹⁷ I proceed now to a close textual and comparative analysis between Hegel and Schiller.¹⁸ Furthermore, the textual ambiguities at the closing of the *PbS* make its semantic and syntactical effects known.

To begin with, there are three notable semantic differences and one syntactical irregularity in Hegel's (mis)quotation of Schiller's poem which, on my reading, mark Hegel's ambiguous relation to the unity between Spirit and Absolute Knowing in the *PbS* and, by extension, thought and being in the *SL*. Both end and 'begin' with a shared syntactical marker [—], which the English translations omit in a telling gesture. For instance, a) Hegel grammatically reconstructs an indicative expression into a counterfactual subjunctive e.g. 'Freundlos **war** der grosse' to 'ohne den er das leblose Einsame **wäre**.' b) Hegel changes the genitive of Schiller's poem to a demonstrative in 'Aus dem Kelch **des** ganzen Seelenreiches' to 'aus dem Kelche **dieses** Geisterreiches' and c) Hegel rewrites a definite article into a possessive pronoun 'Schäumt ihm — **die** Unendlichkeit' to 'schäumt ihm **seine** Unendlichkeit.' What (a) grammatically does is that it displaces the semantic *Mangel* between the Worldmaster and his creatures by putting it in the subjunctive mood (a doubtful and non-factual grammatical mood) making Schiller's verse hypothetically uncertain as it takes on a new meaning in the certainty of Hegel's text; (b) takes the genitive (passive) and transforms it into a demonstrative performative (active) in an action evocative of the Eucharist; and (c) grammatically binds infinity to the Worldmaster. In a nutshell, Hegel catachrestically re-writes Schiller's poem by reworking the semantic and syntactical content apropos the sarcophagy of a poet in absolute reconciliation in order to prepare Absolute Knowing's notional *Aufhebung* into pure thought determinations i.e. the domain of the *SL*. The Saturnalian scene is not a moment of excess characteristic of the Roman holiday, but a moment of lack where Saturn — or the Worldmaster — upon his Calvary, has exhausted his resources and must now turn to one of his poetic sons and consume his flesh in an act of filicide. *This [dieses]* is the set of conditions for the ultimate and immanent reconciliation between the Absolute and the finite; and Hegel's final syntactical suture is telling as he tries to salvage the intelligibility of his text but ultimately ends with a mangled syntax e.g. nur—. In other words, the syntactical marker '[—]' represents an ontological suture between the finite and the infinite sedimented grammatically and revealed rhetorically; it is an ambiguous mark that (re)marks

¹⁷ From *σάρξ* (flesh) and *φάγος* (eat or glutton). To my knowledge, this neologism appears for the first time in this essay. It represents the concept of 'eating-the-flesh-of-the-logos' analogous to the Eucharist but within a tropological economy whose absent center is retroactive posited in the form of circulating figures, or more generally, signs.

¹⁸ See appendix for the juxtaposition of Hegel and Schiller's text

speculatively the unification or diremption of thought and being, finite and infinite, concept and thing, etc. If *Aufhebung* is the semantic concept that drives determinate negation, then the dash is the speculative (re)mark *par excellence*.

Hegel eats Schiller in order to draw the funds for Spirit's recollection of itself but ultimately ends up consuming its own products. The infinite judgement, where high and low are brought together;¹⁹ spiritualized universality and corporeal particularity; Spirit and bone; organ of insemination and urination, etc. is helpful in elucidating the importance of imbibing the λόγος whose unity is speculatively (dis)joined in the mouth. Most strikingly, Hegel's re-marks in the Addition to the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences vol. II: Philosophy of Nature* (henceforth *ELN*):

Thus the mouth belongs to the particular system of sensibility for example, to the extent that it contains the tongue, which is the organ of taste, as a moment of the theoretical process. The mouth also has teeth, which are its extremities, their function being to seize upon what is out- side, and to grind it. The mouth is also the organ of the voice and of speech, and other related sensations such as that of thirst are also located there. Laughter, and kissing too, are also matters for the mouth. The mouth therefore unifies the expressions of many sensations. (*ELN* 128)

In the mouth, the dash makes its effects wholly known. The mouth speculatively combines the sacred and the profane; the semantic and syntactical. It contains the sacredness of voice and speech but also its stammering and stuttering; it is the opening of the alimentary canal — the beginning of digestion on the way to excretion. But it is also the place of joy, comedy, and conviviality. The speculative unity of the mouth is the *sine qua non* of Spirit's absolute communion with Absolute Knowing. And as suggested above, Spirit has to raid the grave of religious-poetic *Vorstellung*, embodied in the sarcophagy of Schiller's poem. In this way, Spirit can recollect the gallery of images it has accumulated in language, the semantic and syntactical grammaticality of its journey retrospectively speculating on the conceptual shapes and images it has amassed until it exhausts its own resources while returning to poetic *Vorstellung* and sustaining itself temporarily on the flesh of the poet. It is analogous to the Eucharist; the imbibing of unleavened bread (a common particularity) that represents the holy unity of partakers with the divine (a spiritual universal) and which, consequently, creates a spiritual community of believers (a concretized universal). However, the practice of sarcophagy is the system's own interminable and pernicious undoing; Absolute

¹⁹ 'The depth which Spirit brings forth from within-but only as far as its picture-thinking consciousness where it lets it remain-and the ignorance of this conscious- ness about what it really is saying, are the same conjunction of the high and the low which, in the living being, Nature naively expresses when it combines the organ of its highest fulfilment, the organ of generation, with the organ of urination' (PhS §346).

Knowing, by its own conceptual necessity, needs to raid the grave of the poet in order to sustain its recollection — only to forget the fact that it must then rely on its own products to sustain its absolute systematicity. The amnesia Spirit expediently adopts is integral to holy communion with the Absolute homologous to a believer who must hold fast to the creed that ‘this is the body of Christ’ while concurrently sustaining at a distance the cannibalistic constitution of the ritual. In a certain sense, the ironic distanciation is what nourishes Spirit’s relation to itself. Saturn *must* eat one of his sons so that he will not be overthrown; and Absolute Spirit must incorporate the poet so that the system can sustain itself and not fall into an abyssal romantic recursion (*Willkür*). But the ultimate irony of the Absolute is that, once the poet is eaten, it has to consume its own excrement; and this is the infinite jest of the tragic comedy of the *PbS*.

Conceivably, it is not Hegel who has the last bite and laugh but the saturnalian λόγος — the unassimilable element which resists total incorporation out of its own forfeiture; it is that divine element which keeps the hubris of finitude in check by re-checking [Gegenstoß] the vulner-ability of the body. Hegel, on his death bed, suffering from gastrointestinal pain, perhaps lived Absolute idealism through to the end, sacrificing his body and feeling the effects of being eaten from the inside; it was the Absolute’s revenge upon the body as it tried to erase the remainders of its own ground — a *choleric* rage which, by necessity, consumed any vestiges of corporeality in Eucharistic incorporation. But these are only speculative ruminations —.

Derrida: An ‘Economy without Reserve’

In 1968 at the College de France, in a seminar conducted by Jean Hyppolite on Hegel’s *Science of Logic*, Derrida presents ‘*The Pit and the Pyramid: Introduction into Hegel’s Semiology*.’ Derrida takes up the central question set forth by Hyppolite’s *Logique et existence* (1953): how to ‘bridge’ the gap between the sensible and the intelligible; thought and being; concept and object, etc. Derrida reframes the question within his own grammatological project in that the primacy of semiology takes precedence over mere logical exposition and turns to Hegel as a paradigmatic example of a system attempting to logically bridge or speculatively unite the sensible and intelligible. In a nutshell, Hegel’s theory of the sign is constituted by three moments of determinate negation (or the labour of the negative): Re-collection, Imagination, and Memory. For Hegel, as determinate negation sublates the contents of the immediate ‘thing,’ it becomes an image that is later deposited in a mine, or pit, which is then intuited and externalized — the pyramid. Derrida points to an ambiguity in Hegel’s theory of

the sign in that for the former, the latter treats the sign as the absolute coincidence of thought to thing. In other words, the pit and the pyramid are circular and this would mean that Memory, on Hegel's account, would just be rehearsing, in mechanical fashion, the deposits of a circle with philosophical *foresight* but this is precisely the *hindsight* of Hegel's system. Could this also be why Absolute Knowing must mechanically recite poetry from mangled memory? In what remains, I would like to turn to *HR* in order to ground the semantic and syntactical ambiguity inherent in Hegel's text captured by catachresis and the dash.

For Derrida 'Hegel, through precipitation, blinded himself to that which he had laid bare under the rubric of negativity' (HR 259). The 'precipitation' that remain(s) is the ambiguity discussed above which Hegel tried to suture with the catachrestic incorporation of Schiller and the syntactical dash. The rhetoricity of the Hegelian text, as an interpretation of the ambiguities present in the *Abgeschlossenheit*, mark the limits of speculative logic. Derrida writes:

Since no logic governs, henceforth, the meaning of interpretation, because logic is an interpretation, Hegel's own interpretation can be reinterpreted — against him. [...] Reinterpretation is a simulated repetition of Hegelian Discourse. In the course of this repetition a barely perceptible displacement disjoints all the articulations and penetrates all the points welded together by the imitated discourse. A trembling spreads out which then makes the entire old shell crack. (HR 260)

Catachresis, the (non)trope which organizes the comedic sarcologophatic tropological economy, on my reading, is the 'barely perceptible displacement [metonymic metaphor][that] disjoints all the articulations' (*ibid*) of Hegel's texts. The play on words with articulation, as enunciation and corporeal unity, deepens the insight that Hegel's infinite judgment so adamantly tried to describe: the unity of the ideational with corporeal; the high with the low speculatively united in the mouth. In effect, it grounds the point the concept-metaphor *sarcologophagy* tries to elucidate: Absolute Knowing must eat the sign in order to paradoxically remove any traces of its corporality in an anamnestic remembering. Hegel was deeply aware of this impasse between body and soul, finite and infinite, thought and being, *etc.* that he committed himself to suturing the wounds of Spirit in an ontological operation syntactically united in the dash.

Derrida remarks that '[t]he blind spot of Hegelianism, *around* which can be organized the presentation of meaning, is the *point*, at which destruction, suppression, death, and sacrifice constitute so irreversible an expenditure and a negativity *without reserve* — that they can no longer be determined as negativity in a process or a system' (HR 259). The choice of '*around*' suggests a

topology of circulating tropes (or conceptual turns) which revolve around a single ‘*point*’ that is wholly ‘*without reserve*.’ On my reading, catachresis (in its three modalities) captures what Derrida is so keenly develops and interrogates in the Hegelian restricted economy. In this sense, Hegel’s speculative philosophy circulates in a restricted economy based around resources it invariably does not have and is stuck within its own circle like a Ouroboros. The disavowed ironic distancing is what sustains Absolute Knowing’s relation with its corporeality and, in quite comedic fashion, creates the conditions for retroactively reading the *PhS* not as a tragedy but as a farce (Butler 2012). On this theme, Derrida writes:

Absolute comicalness is the anguish experienced when confronted by expenditure on lost funds, by the absolute sacrifice of meaning: a sacrifice without return and without reserves. The notion of *Aufhebung* (the speculative concept par excellence, says Hegel, the concept whose untranslatable privilege is wielded by the German language laughable in that it signifies the *busying* of a discourse losing its breath as it reappropriates all negativity for itself, as it works the “putting at stake” into an *investment*, as it *amortizes* absolute expenditure; and as it gives meaning to death, thereby simultaneously blinding itself to the baselessness of the nonmeaning from which the basis of meaning is drawn, and in which this basis of meaning is exhausted. To be indifferent to the comedy of the *Aufhebung*, as was Hegel, is to blind oneself to the experience of the sacred, to the heed-less sacrifice of presence and meaning. (HR 258)

The tragicomedy that unfolds at the *Abgeschlossenheit* of the *PhS* has turned Spirit from Saturnalian filicide into a penniless insatiable glutton borrowing from material resources it does not have.²⁰ The *Aufhebung*, as the speculative sematic concept *par excellence*, kicks the can down the road so to speak; it ‘*amortizes*’ its debts by relying on the impossible resource of its post-mortum; but in a contradictory and self-undermining gesture, the *Aufhebung* cannot die, yet relies on the resources of its own death. From the Calvary foams the infinitude of Absolute Knowing’s ‘economy without reserve’ and in cannibalistic sacrifice the *PhS* closes. Hegel blinded himself in Sophoclean fashion with the syntactical dash in order to (dis)joint the ontological fissure between *Ἀνθρώπος* and *λόγος*.²¹ And Hegel, with his last breath and death on the horizon, must have thought about Louis — his bastard son.²¹

In nuce, I hope to have shown a small moment that the dash and catachresis have in the Hegelian economy à la Derrida and his unorthodox reading in *HR*. I contend that by focusing on the syntactical marks and the tropes (or conceptual movements) of the philosophical tradition e.g.

²⁰ Stretching the speculative concept-metaphor of ‘sarcologopathic economy’ we have all the constituent elements in Luke Chapter 7: ³⁴‘The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ ³⁵ But wisdom is proved right by all her children.’ (Luke 7:34-35). The corporeal Jesus; the incarnated *λόγος*; *Saturno* — speaks, eats, laughs, and is in the company of *νόμισμα* (money). And delectable children abound.

²¹ For a speculative account of Hegel and Louis’s life and the interminable effects it had on the latter see Krell (1997).

Hegel and the Absolute I have shown that even at the level of the syntactical a rich speculative content remains. In the spirit of Hegel, the speculative shows itself by revealing its own impossibilities and per Derrida I have tried to rearticulate Derrida's project in terms of *catachresis*. If the philosophical tradition has been so derisive of the rhetorical tradition it is because rhetoric is philosophy's other. The 'philosopher-sophist' couplet and trope is perhaps the very condition of possibility for dialectics proper i.e. without the use of language and it (re)turns we would not be able to capture the thought-determinations needed to 'properly' think, grasp, and wonder. It is through (mis)use or errancy, that truth makes its presence on the scene.

APPENDIX I:

Freundlos war der grosse
Weltenmeister,
Fühlte *Mangel* — darum schuf er
Geister,
Selge Spiegel *seiner* Seligkeit! —
Fand das höchste Wesen schon kein
gleiches,
Aus dem Kelch des ganzen
Seelenreiches
Schäumt *ihm* — die Unendlichkeit.

Friendless was the great World
Master
Felt a lack— thus he created spirits,
Blessed mirror of His bliss! —
Still found the highest being no
likeness
From out of the chalice of the whole
realm of the soul
Foams for Him—infinity

beide zusammen, die begriffne Geschichte,
bilden die Erinnerung und die Schädelstätte des
absoluten Geistes, die Wirklichkeit, Wahrheit
und Gewißheit seines Throns, ohne den er das
leblose Einsame wäre; nur—

aus dem Kelche dieses Geisterreiches schäumt
ihm seine Unendlichkeit.

the two together, comprehending history, form
alike the inwardizing and the Calvary of absolute
Spirit, the actuality, truth, and certainty of his
throne, without which he would be lifeless and
alone. Only [—]

from the chalice of this realm of spirits
foams forth for Him his own infinitude.

APPENDIX II: *Saturno devorando a un hijo* (1819-1823) by Francisco de Goya



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