

Syntaxing life and vitalising syntax: Wittgenstein, Hegel and the Naturphilosophie

{Differences between Hegel's and Wittgenstein's philosophical approaches as they relate to the analytic-continental split}

The rejection of Hegel's audacious speculative expenses as well as his pretention to close its system upon itself may be considered as a constitutive element of Austrian philosophy. As Kevin Mulligan's work have shown it, Austrian philosophy from Bolzano, Mach and the Brentanian tradition to Musil and Wittgenstein is characterised by two obsessions: clarity and exactness. I would like to add to this list one common theme regarding my thematic: the "economy" of energy. Wittgenstein is one of the greatest figures embodying this Austrian tendency which may explain his apparent detachment from the idealist tradition and its obscure formulas. My paper will firstly underline the importance to redraw the frame of the Austrian reception of German idealism in order to understand what may have led to a caricature of the "enemy" in the analytical tradition. In order to do so, I will contextualize the relationship between Prussia and the Austrian Empire as well as the different sociological and political issues both States were facing at that time, showing their direct impact on divergent methodologies. Secondly, if one follows Adorno's affirmation in *Three Studies on Hegel* that German Idealism was actually a collective movement rather than an individualised one, then confronting Wittgenstein to Hegel may also mean confronting him to certain common patterns of German Idealism's Program. More precisely, I will argue that it is precisely by following the thread of German *Naturphilosophie* that productive connections between Wittgenstein and Hegel might be founded. Hegel's "own" philosophy of Nature, mainly elaborated in the *Encyclopedia*, is profoundly indebted to his contemporary *Naturforscher* fellows and, among them, to Goethe, who had in return Hegel as a permanent support in his scientific controversies. It is well known that Wittgenstein's late *Remarks on colours* starts with an allusion to Goethe's *Farbenlehre* and its controversy with Newtonianism. It is by inheriting this linguistic, epistemological and ontological problem that Wittgenstein came up with his synoptical method. Although the relation between this method and Goethe's morphology has already been highlighted in a few papers, it has rarely been noticed that in order to create a "mathematics of colour" adapted to the phenomenon one wants to clarify and to order, Wittgenstein made a great use of the combinatorial analysis that the *Naturphilosophen* were very fond of, especially in the chemical field. This calculus helped them to understand life's inherent creativity with a "restricted budget" (Goethe). If romantic science was *syntaxazing* life, Wittgenstein, as I will argue, is *vitalising* the syntaxe. These two tendencies tend to coincide nowadays in cybernetics and modern genetic. The common denominator between organic matter and language's form of life is entropy, a concept that dominated the whole Austrian imaginary of the epoch. I will show that the Hegelian system, or the way it was understood at that time, is not compatible with such an imaginary and differs on that matter with the goethean Nature. This would explain why Goethe was seen as a more acceptable reference for the Austrian Philosophy, including Wittgenstein, and why, despite everything Wittgenstein and Hegel have more than a few elements in common.

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