
*Memory: Language as
the Material of Thought*

SIGNIFICATION AND LANGUAGE

At the level of sign-making imagination we have sign making only in its genesis. The immediate cry welling up from within, the grunt that only later comes to be attached to an object or situation—these are better illustrations of sign-making imagination than the more complex activities of highly trained language users. “The name is initially a *single* transient production, and the connection of the representation as something inner with the intuition as something external, is itself *external*” (§460, my tr.).

In the section on memory we watch this attempt of spirit to indicate and embody itself gain objectivity and independence, become stable and meaningful, and then get left behind by spirit as something still too external, atomistic, and passive to properly express spirit’s nature as spirit then transcends symbols and signs to realize itself as pure thought. The word is itself something intuited, something perceived; consequently it too is subject to the generalizing activity of representation which gives rise to signs in the first place. But the recollection of a word is not the same as the recollection of the sound constituting the word, for sounds can at best be tokens of words—and even so one can hear a sound as a sound yet not hear it as a word, if, for instance, one does not know the language. So the recollection of a word is no longer the recollection of a mere intuition but the recollection of a significant intuition, one that already embeds within it a prior recollecting. To clarify this

difference, let us look more closely at Hegel's conception of the signification relation before we turn to the paragraphs on memory.

The theory of meaning plays a central role in contemporary epistemology and metaphysics, so we find ourselves naturally putting great weight on the theory of meaning when we turn to the examination of a past philosophy. But to some extent the emphasis on the theory of meaning can be misleading; as crucial a role as pre-twentieth-century philosophy may have accorded language, language was not thought to be the key to resolving most epistemological and metaphysical problems.¹ Hegel was still under the influence of the (by then old) new way of ideas, according to which the primary explanandum was our *understanding* of the world, not our ability to speak correctly about it. It was taken for granted that language's connection with the world is quite indirect; words are signs or marks for ideas and gain meaning or reference to objects only because their immediate significations are ideas, mental acts, that have antecedent connection with the objects. Locke insists on this understanding of signification and claims that to try to make words signify something other than the ideas of the speaker "would be to make them signs of nothing, sounds without significance" (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, bk III, pt. 2, sect. 2)

It is within this tradition that Hegel is working. When Hegel says, for instance, that a word signifies a representation, he clearly does not mean that all we can talk about is our representations. Hegel is concerned here to understand the role language plays in the economy of the individual spirit as a being that comprehends his world.

For Locke language plays no essential role in the constitution of experience or knowledge; language opens up experience in that through language we have access to the experience of others, but our basic experience of the world is not affected by language or the lack of it. According to Locke, language's role is the communication of thoughts to another, which is only a supplement to the ideational process, not an essential part of it. In Hegel's theory, on the contrary, language is essentially involved in the process of thinking.

1. Ian Hacking argues that Locke, Arnauld, and others working within the new way of ideas had no theory of meaning as we presently understand the term, and that to expect them to deal with our problems leads to misunderstanding and disappointment; see *Why Does Language Matter to Philosophy?*.

Hegel does not believe that one could have a full, rich cognitive life without language; indeed, language is a necessary presupposition and concomitant of thought, according to Hegel, and is therefore not a mere adjunct that conveniently allows us to communicate with others. Language plays a necessary role in the development of the richness and complexity of our mental life; it is essential for spirit's ability to instantiate reason.

Whereas Locke tends to think of the ideas words signify as images, Hegel by no means thinks of the representations signified by words as particular images. Locke, of course, founders when confronted with words like "or," "every," or "when," for it seems impossible to come up with an image they could signify. Hegel, on the other hand, has told us that the signified representations are abilities to generate images either on the occasion of external causal affection or freely, that is, determined from within. Locke talks as if the ideas are images of objects; for Hegel the representations are generals that find their being in and subsume mental individuals, namely, intuitions. He acknowledges that "the formal factor in language is, however, the work of the understanding, which informs it with its categories, and it is this logical instinct that gives rise to what is grammatical" (§459). The understanding, we shall see, is concerned with the universal articulation of experience, and the logical operators or grammatical words in a language signify, not images of objects, but the ability to structure images and representations in general in a certain way and to recognize that structure in our experience. Bluntly put, "and" signifies the ability to conjoin images and representations and the (same) ability to experience a conjunction of items as a conjunction. This is why the grammatical, structural principles of the understanding and reason must already be at work in intuition, even though they only "come to consciousness" in the higher, still more reflective stages of the Psychology.

By having words that signify our mental activities or abilities, we can invoke those abilities without having to use them. Language performs the immensely useful (indeed, necessary) task of distilling the complex abilities of mind into simple form; a general representation, "however rich a content it may include, is still for the mind simple in the name." I may have, for instance, the general representation of a democracy, which means having the ability to recognize a democracy and the ability to generate images on my own of

situations that count as democratic.² Democracy is a general notion, and for me to have an actual thought of democracy it must be embodied in something singular, such as images. But if our images were always as complex as the phenomenon in question, it would be very difficult for our finite, limited minds to do much thinking at all. Rather than thinking about democracy by the complex *use* of my ability to intuit and imagine one, I think about a democracy through the *mention* of this ability in the simple use of a word. The connection between the word and the general representation is immediate; the word, as it were, goes proxy for the representation: "With the name lion we need neither the intuition of such an animal, nor even the image; rather, the name, in that we understand it, is the imageless, simple representation. We think in names" (§462, my tr.).

The fact that words allow one, if not totally to dispense with intuition and the sensible, at least to minimize the direct involvement of complex sensate constructions in the higher mental activities of man, is also important to Hegel, for this is yet another stage in the progressive sublation of sensation. The particularities of sensation become less and less important. It is certainly impossible for a congenitally blind man to possess a direct image of red, but he can acquire the use of the word "red" and thus an indirect ability to recognize cases of red, not on the basis of direct perception, but on the basis of descriptions, meter readings, and so forth. Thus Hegel, unlike a severe empiricist, need not deny a representation of red to a well-educated blind man. The empiricist tends to think that the ability to recognize red directly is essential to the representation of redness, but for Hegel the former ability is not essential to representing redness, to being able to reason correctly about redness. The sensation of red is something subjective, itself noncognitive, and it gives us only the nonconceptual occasion for forming the representation of red.

This analysis leaves some problems. Clearly the abilities that, on my account, constitute the representation of red can be quite different for a blind man and a sighted man; by what right do we call them representations of the same thing, and how is intersubjective communication between the two possible, given that the representations invoked by the word "red" could be disparate? We have

2. There is no reason to think that the images generated must be static, or of individual objects; an image of a democracy might be a montage of images of actions—people voting, an assembly convening, etc.

been treating having a representation of red as basically having the ability to recognize red things in a wide range of actual and possible circumstances. But the ability to recognize something cannot be simply the ability to attach a label, for that is what we are trying to explain. It rather comes down to an ability to generate in image an appropriate similarity class of situations and an ability to respond appropriately in other ways. The blind and the sighted man can agree, by and large, on which situations count as similar in this respect even if their criteria, their ways of telling, are different. There may be some minor divergence due to the vagueness of the term "red," but we do not need exact correspondence. Large-scale intersubjective agreement is sufficient at our present level.

The most important aspect of language, however, is that the complex abilities of spirit to generate images and recognize things can now be replaced by the relatively simpler ability to use words. Words are simpler elements standing for complexes, and to that extent they are something like abbreviations. They are of course more, for the intuitions that are words themselves go through the process of recollection, and the representative powers of spirit reflect on themselves, creating still higher levels.³ This first reflection occurs at the lowest level of memory, to the examination of which we now turn.

THE STAGES OF MEMORY

The section on memory is subdivided into three subsections: they are, roughly speaking, (a) recollective or name-retaining memory, (b) reproductive or imaginative memory, and (c) mechanical memory, which is, so to speak, memory memorized.

Recollective Memory

Recollective memory is the analysis of the activity of understanding words at the level of recollection₃. "Making that connection,

3. There may be interesting analogies between the way words function in Hegel's theory and the way function names operate in a computer language such as LISP. If a large number of complex functions are defined in the computer language, an extremely complex program can be expressed very simply and elegantly, because each function is itself very complex. Furthermore, in LISP there is no distinction between program and data; everything is a function.

which the sign is, its own, intelligence raises the single connection to a universal, that is enduring connection, through this recollection, in which name and meaning are objectively combined for it, and makes the intuition, which the name initially is, to a representation, so that the content, the meaning, and the sign are identified, are one representation" (§461, my tr.).

The sound is originally a single spontaneous production of spirit which expresses or signifies spirit's representation. But, by recollecting the sound with its connection to the representation, spirit constructs a standing connection; the word as significant is now present within spirit as an abstractly preserved image that is called forth by the appropriately related intuitions. Once again, the "abstractly preserved image" is nothing more than the ability to recognize and appropriately respond to a word given the appropriate intuition. But already at this level the connection between the sign and what it signifies has become objective: "The primary thing here is that we retain the meaning of names—that we become able, with the linguistic sign, to recollect the representations objectively linked to them" (§461, *Zusatz*, my tr.). Note that Hegel is not saying here that, on hearing a word, an image of something to which the word applies comes into our heads, but rather that at this stage knowing the meaning of a word does mean that one has the ability to generate such images; the word signifies the ability, not the images. This is what is most important for Hegel, for insofar as the word goes proxy for the representation, in order for us to have an actual mental presentation of the content of a general representation we need no longer invoke the imagistic abilities involved in it. We can dispense with all actual images, for, if necessary, we can construct or generate the necessary images given the words. Things are now presented to us through words. The connection between sign and signified is now fully objective [*Objektiv*] because, having been generalized through the activity of recollection, it no longer depends on the whim or immediate urge of an individual subjective spirit.

Reproductive Memory

Insofar as the process of full appropriation of verbal signs has been accomplished, the stage of reproductive memory has been reached: "The name is the subject matter [*Sache*], as it is present in

the realm of representation and has validity. The *reproductive* memory, with neither intuition nor image, possesses and recognizes the subject matter in the name, and with the subject matter the name" (§462, my tr.). A content of representation can be either an individual spatiotemporal thing or an abstractum such as justice; in either case, for actual representation there must be a determinate individual presented to mind that acts as the vehicle or embodiment of the content.⁴ In the lower stages of representation we must re-present the thing itself, which makes the representation of abstracta (contents peculiar to spirit itself) impossible. At a higher level we can substitute a symbol for the thing itself, and finally an arbitrary sign serves as the representation of the thing and the content of the mental act is embodied in a foreign matter. Insofar as we recollect this matter as a sign, we create an ability that embeds another, for the recollection of the sign is an ability to represent the connection between sign and signified, which last is itself an ability.

We can set out the parallelism between stages of representation and stages of memory as follows. We have analyzed the recollection of a lion as the ability to re-present the lion, as knowing how to construct the lion from sensate material and how to respond to such intuitions. The recollection of "lion" is the ability to re-present "lion" *as a sign*—that is, to construct "lion" in its relation to the ability to represent lions. In reproductive imagination we achieve a general representation of lion, the ability to re-present not just a lion, or a class of similar-looking lions, but lions in general—that is, to construct lions from sensate material. The reproductive memory of "lion" is the ability to represent "lion"s,—that is, to construct "lion"s from our sensate material. In recollective memory we are still re-presenting word tokens, and in reproductive memory, I believe, we move up to the re-presentation of word types. Again there are embedded abilities in reproductive memory, for the re-presentation of "lion"s as signs involves the implicit reference to what they signify, itself an ability. But the embedded ability need exist only implicitly—to represent "lion" as a meaningful sign, I need not actually exercise the ability it signifies; and an unexercised

4. Spatiotemporal "individuals" are almost as much general things for Hegel as, for instance, properties such as redness; individuals have properties in common, and properties have individuals in common; which way one slices the pie is a matter of indifference.

ability, having nothing actually embodying it, remains a mere potency and thus is not realized in any mental act at the time.

Thus through our use of words we have eliminated the need for intuitions and images of the things we represent. The things we represent exist for us in the names themselves: "As the existence of the content within intelligence, the name is intelligence's internal self-externality, and as the intuition brought forth from intelligence, the recollection of the name is at the same time the externalization in which intelligence posits itself within its own self" (§462). This passage, so confusing in its statement, is explicated in the following passage from the *Zusatz*:

Although the spoken word vanishes in time, and time therefore displays itself in the words as an abstract or merely destructive negativity, the truly concrete negativity of the linguistic sign is intelligence, since it is through intelligence that it is changed from an externality into an internality, and preserved in this altered form. It is thus that words become a determinate being animated by thought. This determinate being is absolutely necessary to our thoughts. We only know of our thoughts, only have thoughts which are determinate and actual, when we give them the general form of objectivity, of being different from our inwardness, i.e., the shape of externality—and moreover of an externality which at the same time bears the stamp of supreme inwardness. (§462, *Zusatz*)

Thought is general; its form and its content are general, and it is mere appearance that we can *think* the individual. But the general cannot exist without the individual; if something general is to be one of an "indefinite multitude of existents as reflected-into-themselves, which at the same time are correlative, and form a world of reciprocal dependence and of infinite interconnection between grounds and consequents" (§123), it must individualize itself and become a determinate one among many. The general contents of theoretical spirit are most adequately individualized and given a determinate being through words, for, since words are the free production of spirit, unlike intuition and even images, they are immediately presented to mind as imbued and informed with spirituality. Words have a thoroughly mundane existence as sounds, but what they are—words—is essentially the expression of the spiritual. Without such an expression spirit would remain unarticu-

lated generality. Implicit in this view is the thesis that the individuation and identity criteria for words give us the individuation and identity criteria for thoughts, and thus, although they are not the same as words (words are in a language, for instance, whereas representations and thoughts are not), our only access to the thoughts we have is through and in words. Further discussion of this difficult topic must await our examination of thought itself in Chapters 11 and 12.

Thought and reason are essentially systematic; insofar as language considered at the level of memory has not yet attained the level of thought, and thus is not yet systematized, the individual signs are not systematically joined but simply follow one another in our heads as we experience the world and respond to it verbally. In intuition or representation we “run through series of” (§462) words internally with no particular connection between them. The move to names within grammatical structures rather than lists depends on language use being informed with thought. In the grammatical structures available in language we can do more than simply name our representations; we have the ability to think about them, to reflect on their relations and internal structure. The representations this reflection gives rise to are themselves capable of being named.

Mechanical Memory

The reproductive memory itself does no more than set the foundations for the complex activity of language use. The next stage, what Hegel calls mechanical memory, presents us with a rather surprising move in which spirit, which in the previous few stages of its activity had been trying to express itself ever more fully, now divorces itself from its product, the words, rendering them senseless. This is the last stage of representative spirit and the transition to thought itself.

Hegel’s concept of mechanical memory poses many problems for us, for on Hegel’s own admission, “to grasp the placing and significance of memory and to comprehend its organic connection with thought in the systematization of intelligence, is one of the hitherto wholly unconsidered and in fact one of the most difficult points in the doctrine of spirit” (§464). Mechanical memory is crucial in Hegel’s account, for it constitutes the point of transition from repre-

sentation to thought—even though it seems itself to be the antithesis of thinking.

Briefly and bluntly put, in mechanical memory, spirit is once again divided into a multiplicity of simple elements that “appear as something found” (§463) on the one hand and as a purely abstract container holding them together on the other. We have seen similar stages earlier in spirit’s progress, for instance at the stages of feeling and habit. But as we shall see, there are significant differences, for the elements at this point are of a radically different nature.

Hegel’s manner of speaking about this stage is fairly confusing. He talks of subjectivity here being the “universal space” of “senseless words” and spends a disproportionate amount of time unfolding the analogy to rote memorization, which analogy I find not particularly illuminating unless one already understands his interpretation of memory sufficiently well to see why it serves as the example. The interpretation Hegel has in mind may be briefly put as follows. In reproductive memory an important new wrinkle enters the picture of mind Hegel has been sketching: mind explicitly presents itself to itself insofar as in the general representation of a word the link between the sign and the signified is represented, for in order to do this, the signified, which is itself a general representation, something subjective that needs an objectivity in order to achieve actuality, must itself be at least implicitly represented. Thus the general representation lion is included implicitly in the general representation ‘lion’. But this latter general representation can itself be named, signified—as indeed we have done with the word “lion.” Any representative ability of mind can be named. We have already seen that names come to replace images and intuitions. If we take the process of naming to its extreme and abstract from the necessarily ongoing intuitions and representations in the mind, what is left? “At the same time however, this taking up [of the heart of the matter in the word] also has the further significance of intelligence making a matter [*Sache*] of itself, so that subjectivity, in that it is different from the matter, becomes something that is quite empty.—The spiritless reservoir of words that constitutes *mechanical memory*” (§462, *Zusatz*).

We certainly have a mess of names left—but what else? Any actual ability of mind to represent either intuitions, images, or names is itself named and replaced by the name. Yet we cannot say

that all we have left is a large collection of names, for undoubtedly spirit itself is not identical with these names, these externalizations of itself, its products; yet it is nothing in particular over against them, for otherwise it would have been particularized in a name and replaced. Still, something must be left to account for the coexistence and occurrence of series of names. "The I, which is the abstract being, is, as subjectivity, at the same time the power of the different names, the empty bond that fixes series of them in itself and keeps them in stable order" (§463, my tr.). Another way to put this is to point out that none of the particular representative abilities of spirit exhaust spirit. The particular abilities of spirit can be named insofar as they are particular—"intelligence is however the universal, the simple truth of its particular externalizations" (§463). There can be no real name for spirit because naming particularizes, and spirit can never be reduced to a particular.

This account of the nominalization of subjectivity explains Hegel's talk of subjectivity as a space of or abstract power over words, but we still need to see how it is that words have become "meaningless" at this stage. This is particularly important, for, just as words have become meaningless in mechanical memory, Hegel claims that thought itself "no longer has a meaning" (§464). It seems at best incongruous to attribute meaninglessness to thought, so we must understand just what is involved in the denial of meaning to thought.

Having a meaning is, according to Hegel, a relational characteristic of intuitions; an intuition has meaning when it stands in the signifying relation to a general representation, which is then its meaning. But given this state of affairs, we can ask several revealing questions. What are the relations between these various products of intelligence, the words? And second, if we carry through the "nominalization" of spirit discussed above, what is left of this notion of meaning?

The answer to our first question is that the only relations that exist between words at this stage are accidental juxtapositions as spirit runs through them in series in reaction to its internal and external environment. That there are only accidental relations between any words here can be demonstrated as follows. Each general representation is different from every other, even though it is not clear just what the criteria of individuation are. Still, each general representa-

tion receives a name, which is its simple presentation to mind. That must mean that, qua name, no name admits of analysis; it is the simple presentation of a general representation. The general representation of a male sibling receives, for instance, the name "brother." But as this is its *simple* presentation to mind, it is not itself capable of analysis, and neither does subjective spirit have the conceptual tools at this stage to perform any acts of analysis. Thus in our minimal verbal reactions to our environment it may well be the case that "brother" always occurs together with "male" and "sibling" as we survey our world, but there is at this level insufficient structure for spirit to construct the assertion that brothers are male siblings. Our words at this stage are linked in parallel with the representations they express, and the representations still retain priority. In the second edition of the *Encyclopedia* (1827) this point is made adequately clear in a paragraph Hegel later replaced with the present §463: "There is a general multiplicity of words, and insofar as they are as such mutually contingent, there is nothing but ego and this multiplicity" (PSS, vol. 3, p. 207). To the extent that we do not yet have a language *system*, the words are meaningless (in our sense), since any kind of definition, either explicit or implicit, is impossible.

In answer to our second question, if the nominalization of spirit is carried through, then the general representations have lost distinct actuality, for they are abilities to generate images, abilities that, with the dominance of words, have become otiose. These image-generating abilities remain actual, then, only insofar as they are themselves represented in the general representation of the word that signifies them. But insofar as the word replaces the images that are the actualization of the general representation it signifies, the word replaces the general representation itself and makes it unnecessary. The word thus becomes meaningless, since it has now lost that toward which it bore the meaning relation. Clearly this never occurs so baldly in the human, for, even while we are verbalizing, we are also intuiting, recollecting, imagining, and thus invoking the abilities to image. But the point is that these activities are separable from the verbal activities we have been investigating. They are surely the presuppositions for verbal abilities in that without them verbal abilities would be impossible to acquire, but once those

abilities have been acquired we can “dispense” with the lower abilities on which they are built, except insofar as the lower abilities actually constitute a part of the higher. Once we have an appropriate stock of words, we no longer need images. But then to the extent that our imagistic abilities have been rendered otiose and superfluous, the words that name those abilities have become meaningless. Becoming meaningless thus means becoming independent of the original imagistic base, and such meaninglessness becomes more and more prominent, particularly as linguistic sophistication increases and, as an activity of thought, new words are gained through definition in terms of already familiar words. In philosophy in particular it is important to divorce the words one uses from the shallow imagistic bases that may still cling to some of them, for in those abstract reaches images only confuse the matter, introducing contingent elements into a necessary discipline.

We are now finally in a position to understand why Hegel calls this stage mechanical memory and compares it so often to the phenomenon of rote memorization. Insofar as the imagistic abilities have been replaced by words, which, however, are not yet systematized by thought, the words are mere counters, series of which are produced by subjectivity with no necessary order or connection between them. This situation is similar to that of rote memorization, the perfect example of which for Hegel’s purposes is, not the actor recreating a character in a scene, but a schoolboy ticking off the words of a poem expressionlessly, neither understanding what is said nor even calling up the images the poet tries to evoke. The poem has been reduced to a mere series of words, and nothing at all is “going through the child’s head.”

The ability to retain by rote series of words the connectedness of which is devoid of understanding, or which by themselves are as senseless as a series of names might be, is therefore so truly remarkable on account of its being the essence of spirit to be with itself [*bei sich*], whereas here it is as it were inwardly externalized, its activity seeming to be a mechanism. Spirit is with itself only as the unity of subjectivity and objectivity however; and here in memory, after being initially external and so finding determinations in intuition, and recollecting and appropriating what is found in presentation [*Vorstellung*], it makes itself

inwardly into an externality as memory, so that what it has appropriated appears as something found. *Objectivity*, which is one of the moments of thought, is here posited within intelligence itself as a quality pertaining to it. (§463)

What we have in spirit at the level of mechanical memory is a reliable verbal responder, someone whose "language" skills are purely Skinnerian, untouched by the formal syntactic and semantic structures indigenous to real thought, someone whose references have roots but not fruits.

Hegel's account of mechanical memory is far from unproblematic. If words are, as I suggested earlier, our access to "general representations," then each person has a limited number of such general representations, and different people can have sets of general representations that diverge to a significant degree. But more important, if at this stage the structure of language is not present, what sense can we make of talking about words in any case? We are confronted with the modern dictum that words have meanings only in the context of a sentence, which seems to be precisely what Hegel is denying. There is of course ambiguity in Hegel's use of the word "meaning" and its meaning in the Fregean dictum. But even so, the problem still remains of differentiating between a word properly so called and other verbal signs such as the ejaculation "Ow!" With the machinery available to him here, it is unlikely that Hegel can make the distinction. Is this, however, a problem for him? Should he be able to make that distinction here? I see nothing in his task indicating that he should. With the machinery he has he can explain the fact that "Ow!" has a significance that is conventional but objective; the fact that it is a rather peculiar part of speech, one that does not enter normally into syntactic combination with other verbal signs to form sentences, is not yet in his purview. Hegel is setting up what he takes to be the foundation of highly sophisticated, thought-imbued, linguistic activity. The social practices necessary for such a sophisticated activity find their discussion elsewhere.⁵

In the process of replacing representations by words it is clear that, whatever level we are at, we can always go higher. But could

5. The best survey of the role of language in Hegel's philosophy that I know of is T. Bodammer, *Hegel's Deutung der Sprache*.

this process come to an end; could we reach a point at which there are only words, and no abilities? Clearly not; it is impossible for a mind to be a mechanical memory and nothing else and to still be a mind. But again this is not a problem for Hegel, for he takes mechanical memory to be, not a separable faculty of mind, nor a distinct stage in the growth of a thinker, but a form of activity that can be isolated within, but not separated from, the complex activities of a thinking being. One must pay careful attention to the task Hegel concerns himself with at each level of analysis; it is easy to think that he is trying to do more at each stage than he actually intends.

There is one major problem left: how does mechanical memory constitute the transition to thought? The full answer to this question requires the complete account of thought, which is the subject of Chapters 11 and 12, but we can point the way now. In thought spirit almost begins again from the beginning; as in feeling, subjectivity is the merely abstract and indeterminate unifying power that stands over against its material. But there is now a significant difference in the material. No longer mere sensations, the material of thought is loaded with implicit internal structure, for words are the material of thought. The paradigmatic activity of thought will be rational discourse, the systematization of words, although thought infects, informs, and affects every level of spiritual life.

Because its material is words, thought has broken away from any immediate dependence on intuition and sensuous experience. Furthermore, in its systematization of words, which we can view metaphorically as the construction of an ideal language, particular contingent truths are not what is sought, qua thought. Any particular unification of words, such as "The cat is on the mat," which is contingent, is a *representative* use of thought's structures; thought itself is concerned with necessary, systematic connections between words, and, insofar as it treats the words only with respect to their necessary connections, the words are raised to signs of concepts, not mere general representations.

Mechanical memory is the transition to thought because it represents the point at which thought can begin to realize itself as the pure activity of organizing and uniting words: "Reason now exists in the subject as its activity, and as such is *thought*" (§464).