

LOGIC AND ETHICS—HEGEL’S LOGIC OF ACTION*

LÓGICA E ÉTICA — A LÓGICA DA AÇÃO DE HEGEL

Angelica Nuzzo**

RESUMO: Este artigo apresenta a lógica dialética-especulativa de Hegel como o movimento prático original e constitutivo da autodeterminação do pensamento. Ao mesmo tempo que essa leitura implica uma tese fundamental acerca da concepção hegeliana de pensamento lógico, conduz também a uma consideração mais ampla da natureza expressa da esfera prática e de sua tematização filosófica. Este último ponto se faz crucial quando em jogo está a “verdade” em sua validade complexa — uma vez que a verdade é central não apenas para o pensamento lógico e para o conhecimento mas também para nossas ações humanas encarnadas, mundanas e históricas. À luz dessa questão, o presente artigo examina as implicações da convergência entre verdade e liberdade na lógica de Hegel.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Hegel, Ética, Lógica, Verdade, Ação

ABSTRACT: This essay presents Hegel’s dialectic-speculative Logic as the originally and constitutively practical movement of thinking’s self-determination. While this reading implies a fundamental thesis concerning Hegel’s conception of logical thinking, it is also conducive to a broader consideration of the nature of the practical sphere writ large and its philosophical thematization. This latter point is crucial when at stake is “truth” in its complex validity—truth being central not only to logical thinking and knowing but also to our embodied, worldly, historical human action. In light of this issue, the essay examines the implications of the convergence of truth and freedom in Hegel’s Logic.

KEYWORDS: Hegel, Ethics, Logic, Truth, Action

1. Introduction

The issue of the status of Hegel’s logic within the history of the discipline as well as the issue of the peculiarity of the form and content of Hegel’s logic *as a logic* have been debated time and again in the vast literature on this first, foundational part of Hegel’s philosophical system.¹ Many and wide-ranging have been the answers interpreters have attempted for these questions—among them, to name just a few recurring ones, the proposal of viewing Hegel’s logic as a reprise of (dogmatic) metaphysics and ontology after Kant’s critique or, on the opposite front, as a continuation and correction of Kant’s own critical project in the direction of a new metaphysics; the insistence on framing Hegel’s logic in terms of a new speculative

* Artigo convidado.

** Professora de Filosofia no Brooklyn College and Graduate Center, City University of New York. E-mail: anuzzo@brooklyn.cuny.edu.

¹ See as a significant recent example Ficara (2021).



dialectic different from Plato's and Kant's, somehow 'idealistic' and, on Marx's suggestion, turned on its head and in need of being rooted, yet again, in the material world, or, alternatively, a dialectic that anticipates and inspires important contemporary logical positions such as dialetheism and paraconsistent logics (Ficara 2021; Priest 1989); or, finally, the theological reading that takes as its guiding thread Hegel's own claim that the logic presents God's mind and essence "before the creation of the world and a finite spirit" (TW 5, 44). In addition, since Hegel's logic cannot be severed from the whole of his philosophical system, the place that it occupies within this system requires the interpreter to address the further question of the function that the logic plays in relation to and within the *Realphilosophie*, hence the question of the relationship between the pure logical determinations and the more concrete forms of nature and spirit taken in their progressive systematic development. Indeed, since early on, interpreters have asked whether the logical determinations are perhaps, despite Hegel's insistence to the contrary, forms that result from an abstraction from the real world and that need, circularly, to be applied yet again to the world in order to be meaningful (starting with TRENDELENBURG 1870). At stake, quite generally, is the question of the real or concrete validity of the logical forms as such.

In the framework of these two general issues, while not much attention has been paid to date to the possible practical dimension of Hegel's logic taken in its own right (i.e., without considering its presence in the practical philosophy), its relevance for the articulation of the forms of spirit—and, in particular, of objective spirit—has been the topic of increasing interest for the interpreters. With regard to the practical sphere, at stake is often the explicit and programmatic way in which the *Philosophy of Right* harkens back to the logic (R§2 Remark, TW 7, 32, for example) in order to develop the objective reality of spirit in the spheres of right, morality, and ethical life (i.e., social, institutional, economic and political activity) but also in world history (NUZZO 1990; recently, Nuzzo 2017). This succession can be taken as articulating Hegel's broad view of the practical life of spirit and, correspondingly, of its philosophical thematization in a practical philosophy. Although categories belonging to the 'practical' broadly construed appear at different levels in the development of the logic—from the *Sollen* of the "bad infinite" in the Logic of Being through mechanical forms of social organization in the Mechanism of the Logic of the Concept to the Idea of the Good in the logic's final culmination—interpreters have generally had difficulty in justifying their presence in a logic (in particular in relation to the history of the logical discipline). And when these forms are

not considered as alien and incongruous diversions in the immanent logical development, they are viewed as a sort of dispensable exemplification or anticipation of more concrete (indeed, *realphilosophisch*) positions to come rather than as strictly logical (or, indeed, logical-practical) categories or determinations displaying an intrinsic and necessary practical validity within the logical process as such.

In my 2018 book *Approaching Hegel's Logic, Obliquely: Melville, Molière, Beckett*, I have proposed, for the first time, a novel reading of Hegel's logic that presents it both as a "logic of action" and as the development of the "logical action" performed by pure thinking. With these two interconnected claims, I have maintained and drawn to the center the constitutive and multifaceted *practical* nature of Hegel's logic, i.e., ultimately, of his theory of thinking. In its very *raison d'être*, so my most general thesis, Hegel's dialectic-speculative logic is already—and originally—a practical disciple. One does not have to wait for its alleged successive 'application' to or implementation by the concrete forms of spirit in order for the logical categories to acquire a practical meaning; one does not need to suspect some kind of hidden presupposed 'abstraction' from more developed actual practices. This reading of the logic allowed me, among other things, to revisit in unprecedented ways both the issue of the status of the logic and its determinations, and the issue of its relation to the philosophy of nature and spirit. But conversely, this reading is also conducive to a broader consideration of the nature of the practical sphere writ large and its philosophical thematization. A reflection on this latter point, I submit, is crucial when at stake is "truth" in its complex validity—truth being central not only to logical thinking and knowing as such but also to our embodied, worldly, historical human action. It is with this latter issue in view that I shall now develop the following considerations. The task at hand is now to preliminarily frame this issue.

Presently, I do not want to (and I cannot) repeat the complex argument that underlies my 2018 book. My task, instead, is to push my thesis a step further by disclosing some new directions of inquiry. At the center is the issue of clarifying the meaning of the 'practical' at stake in Hegel's logic of action and in the logical action displayed therein, but also its relation to the 'practical' that characterizes more complex forms of collective and organized spiritual activity. More generally, at stake is the relation between logic and ethics broadly construed. Accordingly, I begin by offering a few general reflections on the alleged disciplinary separation (and perhaps, opposition) of logic and practical philosophy—on the presuppositions on which such a separation rests as well as on the implications that such a separation has for both logic

and ethics. On this basis, some novel distinctive features of Hegel's dialectic-speculative logic will emerge. I then proceed to sum up the different respects in which I propose viewing Hegel's logic as a fundamentally and originally practical discipline. Finally, I shall briefly turn to the first outline of a more pointed reflection on the relationship between truth and the practical realm of thinking's activity, i.e., on the connection between logical and practical truth.

2. *Logic and the Sphere of the Practical*

In the framework of Aristotle's well-known and historically influential distinction, the realm of theory and that of practice (this latter, famously, encompassing the two distinct realms of *praxis* and *poiesis*) or, more specifically, the disciplines of logic and the theoretical sciences on the one hand, and ethics, politics, and poetics on the other, are separated on the basis of the different type of objects they thematize. The type of objects, in turn, dictates the different methods guiding the philosophical approach to them. While logic as a theoretical and formal discipline deals with a necessary object that warrants and demands strict demonstration,² the realm of the practical, Aristotle warns, is not the object of an exact science. The empirical contingencies and uncertainty of opinion constitutively built into all practical matters—in ethics and politics as well as in the arts and crafts, notices Aristotle—require the philosophical method to take the uncertainty of experience into account. On this basis, the practical sciences cannot aim at exact proof even when dealing with rational principles—this latter being the proper topic of the ethical inquiry (*Nic. Ethics*, I, iii, 1-4). Accordingly, even though practical reasoning and deliberation do follow logic (syllogism, for one thing), what constitutes the specifically 'practical' nature of such reasoning is given by the material and empirical context in which practical thinking is embedded, not by a peculiar logic proper to it (PRICE 2008).³

In the *Poetics*, in another highly influential passage, Aristotle draws the famous distinction that pitches poetry against history with regard to their scientific or properly "philosophical" character. The claim is that poetry is "more philosophical and more elevated" than history because the former does not relate "actual events" as the latter allegedly does, but rather "the kind of things that might occur," and relates them "in terms of probability or

² As well known, Aristotle does not have a specific designation for "logic" as a whole nor did he write a single overarching treatise with that title. Logic encompasses two types of reasoning and argumentation, namely, demonstrations and dialectical arguments.

³ The story here is clearly much longer and complicated. This simplification, however, should suffice to my present purposes.

necessity.” It follows that “poetry relates more of the universal,” while “history relates particulars” (*Poetics*, IX, 1451a35-1451b). What Aristotle herein considers the peculiar object of poetry is the overarching story or the “plot” (*mythos*) that being “mimesis of action” (*praxis*) is the topic of epic poems as well as tragedy. Poetry’s universality is connected with its embrace of the possible over the restricted realm of the historically real. Ultimately, however, it is connected with the capacity to enlarge the realm of the actual which becomes the realm of that which the activity of *poiesis* might possibly create.

In the opening of the 1785 *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant appeals to the systematic division of philosophy in the three sciences of “physics, ethics, and logic” dominating “Ancient Greek Philosophy” (a specifically Stoic division, to wit) in order to place his own practical philosophy—and moral theory in particular—within the broader circle of the discipline. Kant considers this division by and large uncontroversial, “perfectly suitable to the nature of the matter,” and accordingly does not deem it in need of any emendation (*Groundwork*, AA 4, 387). Thus, repeating the long-accepted view, Kant sets logic apart from both physics and ethics as a purely “formal” discipline (i.e., on the ground of its making abstraction from objects). Thereby he contrasts logic’s formality to the materiality (i.e., the content determination) of the latter two disciplines, which are specifically determined by the particularity of their respective objects, namely, nature and freedom. The truly momentous separation, however, is for Kant the one that sets (the laws of) nature apart from (the laws of) freedom—physics from ethics, the metaphysics of nature apart from the metaphysics of morals. While logic cannot have an empirical part (this is, properly and obviously, a defining feature of logic), physics and ethics have both an empirical and a pure a priori part.⁴ It seems, then, that in the case of logic the issue is straightforward and uncontroversial: logic is purely formal and entirely a priori; it obviously displays no empirical part and no materiality; it is pure theory seemingly unrelated to the domain of practice or ethics.

However, moving from general or formal logic to Kant’s own “transcendental logic,” things get a bit more complicated. Unlike general logic, transcendental logic does not make abstraction from objects as such. For, it is a logic of the *cognition* of objects, i.e., it is, this time, a “particular” logic or the logic of a particular use of the understanding in thinking of or rather knowing a particular kind of objects, namely, objects of possible experience. Transcendental

⁴ In this case as well, the only point that interests me in this complex topic is the disciplinary separation of logic and ethics.

logic is the topic of the second division of the “Doctrine of Elements” of the 1781/87 *Critique of Pure Reason* (KrV B81/A57; Nuzzo 2016a) next to the “transcendental aesthetic,” which is its first part. Now, with regard to *this* logic (insofar as it works together with the transcendental aesthetic), Kant advances a general and crucial—indeed a grounding—reason for the separation of logic and ethics (or, more pointedly, of knowledge and “faith”). On his view, there is a fundamentally practical (and, specifically, moral) reason or rather, “interest” (in the strong sense Kant attributes to the term: AA 5, 119f.) for keeping reason’s speculative and practical cognition and their respective objective domains separated from each other. Famously, the argument is, in short, that only under the condition of showing the necessary limitation of knowledge to appearances or to objects of possible experience, freedom, hence morality, is at all possible (see KrV BXX-XXX). In other words, freedom is not an object of theoretical (or rather, speculative) cognition. Thus, it is the interest of the practical or, ultimately, the idea of freedom that grounds and orients the necessity of limiting reason’s theoretical (or rather, speculative) claim. Now, to prove this limiting claim is the task of the first *Critique* in the articulation of transcendental aesthetic and transcendental logic. The Transcendental Dialectic draws the further implication from that general thesis: (transcendental) logic governs our cognition (hence truth) within the realm of appearances or within the world of nature, not our knowledge of things in themselves—not noumena and the realm of the supersensible. Installed in this latter realm, the sphere of the practical follows an utterly different paradigm than our scientific knowledge of nature.

It may come as a surprise, then, that, transcendently, the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) organizes its account of the practical use of reason, hence the account of the noumenal realm of freedom, according to the same logical table of categories thematized by transcendental logic (and inherited, in turn, from traditional formal logic). The table of logical categories now yields a “table of the categories of freedom” (KpV AA 5, 66). Herein, Kant explains, “categories” are not theoretical, universal concepts of objects given in intuition but rather “determinations of a free will” (to which no empirical intuition can possibly correspond). In the practical sphere, then, categories are not *logical* concepts for the cognition of objects but “*praktische Elementarbegriffe*” for reason’s free action (KpV AA 5, 65f.). As in Aristotle’s case, then, for Kant logic somehow informs the realm of action although logic (and the logic governing the practical sphere) is not itself by any means ‘practical’. However, on the basis of the programmatic thesis from the preface to the first *Critique* (in the second edition 1787:

namely, the thesis limiting theoretical knowledge in order to make room for “faith”), a stronger claim can be made. It may well be argued that at the root of the *cognitive* function of transcendental logic (in contrast to merely formal logic) lays a genuine practical motivation or, indeed, an overriding practical interest. This is certainly not the same as to claim that (transcendental) logic has an original practical validity. It does disclose, though, a crucial connection at least at the meta-philosophical level within Kant's thought—the connection ultimately responsible for the “primacy (*Primat*)” of the practical (quite in the sense that *Primat*, is generally, the “prerogative of one [term] to be the first determining ground of the connection with all the rest” and, more narrowly, in the sense of “the prerogative of the interest of one [term] insofar as the interest of the others is subordinated to it”: KpV AA 5, 119ff.; see Willascheck 2010).

The relevance of this general constellation to Kant's philosophy can be probed, indirectly, by referring to the influential §§76-77 of the 1790 *Critique of the Power of Judgment*—a text to which Kant's immediate followers do not tire to repeatedly appeal. In these sections, Kant brings to the fore the peculiarity of our human discursive understanding (and of our human cognitive faculty more broadly) by contrasting it to the counterfactual case of an understanding that would, instead, be intuitive (KU §76, AA 5, 403). This latter, to be sure, would follow a different ‘logic’ than the transcendental logic (*cum* aesthetic) to which our cognitive faculty is instead bound — a logic in which the relationship between the universal and the particular, the possible and the actual, the necessary and the contingent is utterly other than the one binding our human cognitive faculty. In short,⁵ at this crucial juncture in the third *Critique* (i.e., in the solution of the dialectical antinomy of the teleological power of judgment) Kant brings back to the peculiarity of our human *discursive* understanding (namely, to the need for a separate intuition to provide the object for the understanding's concept) crucial dichotomies such as the separation between theoretical and practical reason, the modal distinctions between possibility and actuality, contingency and necessity, and the separation between the descriptive level of actuality (and actual action) and the normativity of the moral obligation (*Sein* and *Sollen*) (KU §76, AA 5, 401ff.). For an understanding to which the irreducibility of concept and intuition (hence discursivity) did not apply, the act of thinking would be *ipso facto* generative of the existence of the thought object. Accordingly, for such an understanding, the act of thinking-knowing would be identical with the very act of doing or,

⁵ This is the only point that interests me here, for a come extensive analysis of this text, see Nuzzo 2009.

more properly, of making and creating the thought-known object in its reality. Thereby the separation between theory and practice is overcome and all the modal distinctions become irrelevant (whatever is thought is actual by the very act of being thought). Possibility and actuality entirely overlap. Necessity triumphs. Ultimately, this means that the transcendental separation between nature and freedom, which Kant establishes beginning with the first *Critique* is also obliterated (KU §76, AA 5, 403f.). Clearly, such a non-discursive understanding lands us in the predicament against which Kant develops the thesis of transcendental idealism. On this thesis rests the programmatic claim of the first *Critique* limiting knowledge in order to make possible faith and morality more generally (KrV BXXX). In fact, that non-discursive (non-human) understanding knows no limit (and is, accordingly, beyond the scope of transcendental philosophy as such). Theory and practice converge in the self-actualizing activity of its thinking.

Herein one could remark that for an intuitive understanding of the kind Kant negatively adumbrates in these sections of the third *Critique* the separation of logic and ethics (and physics) would not hold. One could also suggest that such an understanding would not know the Aristotelian conflict between poetry and history—the two would actually converge (but would also be utterly deprived of contingency along with unactualized possibility).⁶ Such an understanding's knowing is *ipso facto* a poietic making—it is the act of giving actuality to whatever it thinks of. Importantly, however, its action is not held up to the obligation of a *Sollen*—*Sein* and *Sollen*, in turn, converge. *Poiesis* unfolds following a different order than that of moral obligation and values. In sum, while the activity of such a non-discursive understanding is indeed the practical activity that in knowing makes its own objects real, it is not practical in the strict Kantian sense of “moral.” For, since there is no “ought to” (and no freedom) guiding its doing as a moral obligation, this thinking's action is more akin to Aristotle's *poiesis* rather than to moral *praxis*. It is “art,” as it were.

While in the Kantian framework the predicament of the intuitive understanding amounts to an outright denial of the possibility of (human) freedom, the suggestion should be contemplated that precisely this predicament foregrounds the need for a new and different conception of freedom itself—no longer as causality (namely, causality “from freedom”), no longer as noumenal activity separated from nature. This is precisely the suggestion that many

⁶ Hence, one could argue, such an intuitive understanding would properly know no history (quite in the Leibnizian sense that distinguishes eternal truths and truths of facts only for the human understanding).

post-Kantians embrace by taking up but also deviating from Kant's transcendentalism. In this regard, Hegel offers the most radical alternative to Kant's doctrine of the moral-practical sphere. In viewing freedom as the concept's self-actualization Hegel proposes a non-moralistic conception of freedom that is originally grounded in the logical structures of the dialectic-speculative *Begriff*. In the structure of the concept, freedom and truth converge.

Let me proceed, now, to develop this latter suggestion thereby presenting some of the crucial features of Hegel's logic on the backdrop of Aristotle's and Kant's positions outlined above. Despite their sketchiness, the previous remarks may suffice to orient our approach to the relation between Hegel's dialectic-speculative logic and the practical sphere in his philosophical system as a whole.

3. Hegel's Logic of Action: *Ars Logica*

The program of Hegel's dialectic-speculative logic can be described as the immanent presentation of the process in and through which pure discursive thinking engages in the *activity* of thinking. Logical thinking is for Hegel fundamentally *discursive* (and conceptual) and such discursivity is the basis of the ongoing logical *process* in which thinking's activity unfolds. By contrast, intuition in its punctuality excludes the discreteness of a developmental process as such. Summing up this point by using Hegel's own image, one can claim that intuition consumes itself in the punctuality of the instant—in the way of the famous Schellingian “shot from a pistol” (TW 3, 31). The logical activity is discursive thinking's most proper and original action—it is, directly, that which constitutes thinking in its proper *being* and in its overarching dynamic *actuality*. Thinking's actuality is acting—*Wirklichkeit* is *Wirken*. In the progressive unfolding of this activity, thinking first constitutes and institutes itself in its identity. For, properly, there is no thinking—no thinking being or substantial subject, no mental faculty or disposition, *res cogitans* or ‘I think’—before and outside of the action of thinking, before and outside of the sequence of actions that thinking itself is (Nuzzo 2016b). It is the activity of thinking that first constitutes and institutes the thinking subject—not the other way around. Thinking is its own action and nothing besides or beyond such an action. Thus, one can repeat in this regard what Hegel claims regarding the “living god” and even more “absolute spirit”: thinking “can be known only in and through its *action (Tun)*” (TW 6, 404). In Hegel's logic, action is the protagonist; the action entirely constitutes the agent. Accordingly, the logic is a process without (substantial, transcendental, phenomenological) subject; it is the development

of the original pure action without an acting agent. The agent is, rather, the result of the completion of the logical action in its overall development. Now this development viewed in its completion (which is the perspective of the “absolute method” that concludes the logic) is a necessary development. Caught in its unfolding, however, the logical process integrates within itself contingency and possibility—the paths not taken by dialectic-speculative thinking but attempted by the one-sided understanding, which is itself a “moment” of the unfolding “*Logisches*” (Enz. §§79-82).

The issues that inform the process of Hegel's logic can be summed up, accordingly, in the following questions. What happens when thinking engages in the action of thinking purely? What kind of action is successively being performed? Since thinking is discursive and not intuitive the logic stages, minimally, a sustained action that unfolds in a complex process developing immanently through negativity and contradiction and constituting its identity *as action* precisely in the final unity of such process (the unity thematized, in the end, by the “absolute method”). But what is the action of logical thinking or the action that thinking itself most properly and originally is? At stake in the logic (in contrast with the philosophy of nature and spirit) is the action of thinking “in and for itself,” without a thinking subject and without a thought object. At stake is the pure action that is identical with pure thinking; action that is deprived of intentionality (or properly of the intentional object) and does not inhere in a substrate, a faculty, a separate and presupposed subject or agent, which determine in their constitution the kind of thinking taking place. At issue is the action of thinking *purely*, i.e., the action of thinking when at stake is not the intentional relation to an object but the immanent production and articulation—the performance and the enactment, as it were—of the very movement that institutes thinking for the first time. Importantly, however, there is no other way to answer these questions (hence to define what thinking's most proper action is) except by *performing* such action itself—directly, immanently, and completely. In other words, the nature of thinking's action escapes theory (definition and theorization but also essentialization). The only possible access to it is practical (i.e., ultimately, performative).

Thus, in the most general sense, the practical nature of Hegel's logic consists, I suggest, in its being the development of the *action* of pure thinking—the *Handlung* and *Tat* (and *Tathandlung*) that makes the agent; the action that is itself the very performance and enactment that first institutes the agent. It is important to underline that at this systematic stage (i.e., in the first, grounding sphere of the system), as thinking's acting is developed in its purely logical

unfolding, “action” is to be taken in its original and unqualified, i.e., absolute validity. In other words, the practical character of the logical action is neither specifically moral nor ethical nor political; it is neither instrumental nor technical nor even generically intentional. In a sense, however, it may take on all these qualifications at the same time (or potentially). For, the logic stages the possibility for action to acquire, concretely and successively, all these forms once the acting subject first emerges at the end of its development thereby producing the accompanying differentiation of thought objects. In the *Realphilosophie* (philosophy of nature and spirit), the logical action is then specifically enacted by determinate subjects with regard to determinate objects. In this regard, then, Aristotle's distinction between poetry and history can be usefully invoked to characterize thinking's logical action. The action staged by Hegel's first systematic sphere is, on this point, closer to the broad realm of poetic possibility than to the individuality of historical actuality.⁷

In taking up the activity of thinking—or, rather, thinking as original activity—as the central topic (or better, as the protagonist) of the logic, Hegel develops an important suggestion to be found already in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Herein, in the metaphysical deduction of the concepts of the understanding that occupies a central place in Kant's transcendental logic, at stake is the derivation of the categories from the logical functions of judgment. Kant draws attention to the fact that “concepts” rest on “functions.” Now a function is the “unity of the activity (*Handlung*) of ordering a manifold of representations under a common representation.” This *Handlung*, action or activity is judgment (KrV B93/A68, my emphasis). In other words, concepts as categories are brought back to and derived from that most original activity of discursive thinking, which is judging. Thus, Kant's complete table of categories is obtained or deduced from the original activity of judging.⁸ In other words, there is in Kant a clear awareness of the claim that Hegel will later draw to the center of his logic: logically, thinking is *Handlung*. Action comes first. The notion of the “spontaneity” belonging to the understanding in its unavoidable discursivity as well as the insight that synthesis is fundamentally (an) action only reinforces this view. And yet, on Hegel's account, Kant does not succeed in bringing this seminal view to bear on the internal, methodological construction of his transcendental logic.

⁷ Hegel's own image of God's mind before the creation of the world and a finite spirit points to the same constellation: all the possibles coexist in god's mind (the logic) before their actualization (in nature and spirit).

⁸ “The functions of the understanding are obtained once the functions of the unity of judgment are completely presented” (KrV B94/A69). Fichte is obviously the philosopher who will insist on the practical streak of Kant's philosophy. The meaning of the practical, however, is precisely what is at stake in the post-Kantian discussion. Here, however, I am still only referring to *logical* activity.

For, the latter ultimately hinges on the only unmovable point of the 'I think', i.e., on the transcendental unity of apperception from which alone all thinking depends. By taking the 'I think' as overriding thinking's own original *Handlung*, Kant betrays his own insight. Pure action is thereby replaced by the unmoved, omnipresent agent. In sum, we can say that while Kant's transcendental logic derives the logical action (and its transcendental limitations) from the nature and the character of the presupposed (transcendental) agent (the I think), Hegel's dialectic-speculative logic obtains the nature of the agent as a result of the pure action that is performed throughout its complete development (see the "*Persönlichkeit*" that emerges in the last chapter of the logic as proper to the speculative concept: TW 6, 549).

Indeed, Hegel further criticizes Kant's transcendental logic insofar as it takes up, in his view with no necessity, the logical material already given to the understanding from without (already presupposed from formal logic). The consequence is that neither the dynamic connection between thinking and its concepts nor the immanent connection between the concepts and the objects to which they allegedly refer (in order to display "objective reality" and truth) is established. The categories remain fixed concepts, mechanically ordered in an inert "table" in wait to be applied by the thinking subject and meaningless without such application. On the other hand, a cumbersome "transcendental deduction" is additionally needed in order to prove the objective validity and truth of the understanding's concepts—their applicability, as it were (TW 6, 256). Furthermore, without recurs to the activity of a separate faculty of intuition the understanding's concepts remain famously "empty" and indeed meaningless. On Hegel's view, in Kant's logic thinking does not engage in the immanent activity within which its determinations are generated and truth, objective reality, and meaningfulness proved. For, thinking's determinations are already given (from formal logic, from a fixed table of categories); while the correspondent intuition is a necessary matter that thinking is unable to control, let alone provide out of itself. We get back to the same point. In the form of a fixed, "original" "I think", thinking is presupposed to the entire logic as condition of its possibility. The agent and its thinking "faculty" remain the seat and condition of all activity. The agent, not the action is the protagonist; and the agent (human thinking and human reason) determines all ensuing action (although it also requires a further justification for its action in the form of a "deduction"). In Hegel's dialectic-speculative logic, by contrast, pure *Handlung* as such takes the center stage. Such activity *is* itself thinking; it is that which thinking progressively becomes since such pure action is the activity of self-determination.

Another way of presenting the pure action staged by Hegel's logic is by taking as its protagonist the dialectic-speculative *Begriff*.⁹ The concept is for Hegel a *singulare tantum*. It is not a category; it is not one of the many concepts of the understanding or reason; one of a manifold of separate categories arranged in a fixed list or table. Rather, the concept is the name for the unfolding logical action. The term designates the unique point in which the movement of a self-determining action coalesces. The dialectic-speculative concept is the dynamic engine of the logical development in its progressive self-determination. Notice that in its uniqueness and individuality, as the universal "totality" that precedes and makes its parts possible, the dialectic-speculative concept takes on the logical structure of the whole of intuition (TW 6, 286). The concept is the organic and systematic totality that makes its parts (or rather its "moments") possible; it is not the mechanical aggregate that results from its component parts. Thus, each one of the "moments" of the concept is "as much the *entire concept* as *determinate concept* and as a *determination* of the concept" (TW 6, 273). While traditional formal logic allows for universal or particular concepts, Hegel's *Begriff* is the dialectical unity of the "moments" of universality, particularity, and individuality (TW 6, 273). In its universal-individual concreteness, the concept is already utterly "real" as it gives itself actuality in the process of realization to idea. The concept's reality is not the "external reality" conferred by a separate sensible intuition and in need of a separate intuition (TW 6, 286f.; 256 for Hegel's critique of Kant's transcendental deduction). The concept's reality is itself the product of the concept's most proper activity—its actuality is actualization. In this regard, one can argue that Hegel's dialectic-speculative concept acts in the way of Kant's counterfactual intuitive understanding. Its acting is creating—poietic self-production as the actuality of the rational. The concept is thereby the unity and convergence of theoretical and practical thinking. The act of knowing (or conceptually grasping) objects is the act that confers reality to such objects. Indeed, to put the point with Gianbattista Vico's famous *dictum*, for Hegel's concept just as for the creative understanding of §§76-77 of the third *Critique*: *verum et factum idem* (Nuzzo 2020). Importantly, again, the activity of making is an act of poietic creation; it is not the doing characterizing moral action. It may very well be that, in this way, Hegel's logic restores the discipline to the status of an *ars* in the proper sense of the term: *Ars logica* not so much in the technical-instrumental sense but rather in the genuinely poietic-poetic and performative sense.

⁹ See TW 5, 56ff. in which Hegel offers the introductory "general partition of the logic" in terms of the self-partition of the *Begriff*. This is, of course, an introductory 'anticipation' of sort because the concept as such emerges thematically only in the second division of the Logic (the Logic of the Concept).

In connection with this latter point, I suggest to loosely model the action staged in Hegel's logic on Aristotle's own view of the *mythos*, i.e., the unitary story produced by the performance at the center of Greek tragedy. Logical thinking's discursivity in its *immanent* and progressive unfolding is the *performance* of the action that, in the end, is gathered together in the unity of the logic's overarching story (Nuzzo 2018, ch. 2). Such a conclusive unity is the locus of the fully developed logical truth—"self-knowing truth" that is also, conclusively, "all truth (*alle Wahrheit*)" (TW 6, 549). Now, since the action of the logic produces, in its conclusion, the notion of the "absolute idea" that, being the unity and identity of theoretical and practical ideas (TW 6, 548; or of the Idea of Truth and the Idea of the Good), is "absolute method," a further specification needs to be made with regard to the type of action capable of yielding such a result. My claim is that the absolute method stands to the logical movement that precedes it and produces it as the unitary completed plot or action stands to the sequence of actions and events that constitutes it. At stake here is a type of 'action' that lies at the intersection of theory, praxis, and the performative activity whose mimesis (for Aristotle) occupies tragedy providing a famous definition of it. Staging the activity of pure thinking in its immanent unfolding process, Hegel's logic presents thinking as pure performative action. This action, in turn, is meaningful and has truth (and is properly "all truth," i.e., ultimately, is action or practice that is also theoretically validated: TW 6, 549) only to the extent that it conclusively and retrospectively leads to the complex unity of sense of the plot staged by the entire development of the logic. While such final unity is as such necessary, along the way Hegel's dialectic integrates practical contingency within its development. This is, indeed, a crucial feature of thinking's logical performance.

Thus, to sum up the points made so far: I propose viewing Hegel's dialectic-speculative logic as a logic of action—where "action" is the original discursive *Handlung*, *Tathandlung*, and pure *Tätigkeit*, the instituting *facere-agere* that thinking itself properly is. Such action is immediately one with theory. It is, most properly, the poietic making whereby thinking creates its own reality and itself as the whole of actuality. In this regard, Hegel's logic is indeed *Ars Logica*.

4. Truth and Freedom: Actuality and the Practical Dimension of Logical Truth

In briefly discussing the relation that Kant institutes between the theoretical sphere (and specifically, transcendental logic) and the sphere of the moral-practical, I have claimed that

there is a deep practical ground—or, rather, “interest”—that leads him to set limits to the cognitive realm of logic *cum* aesthetic, i.e., to human knowledge and the truth available to it. For, such limitation is the condition of possibility of (transcendental) freedom (hence of morality). By contrast, the model of thinking proper to the intuitive understanding (which lays entirely beyond the purview of Kant's transcendental philosophy as such) erases the separation between the theoretical and the practical sphere, the sensible and the supersensible, necessity and contingency, the possible and the actual, hence knows properly no freedom in the strictly moral sense proposed by Kant (no separation of *Sein* and *Sollen* and no moral obligation). And yet, I have suggested that embracing this model implies neither a necessary sliding into sheer determinism nor the elimination of freedom *tout court* (i.e., ultimately, the proposal of a form of Spinozism). It may, in fact, mean only that as the bounds of Kant's transcendentalism are overcome once and for all an utterly different idea of freedom needs to be advanced—namely, for one thing, a non-moralized and non-moralistic notion of freedom and, for another, an idea of freedom that does not require the separation of the world of experience and nature from the noumenal world. This, I submit, is precisely the case of Hegel's dialectic-speculative philosophy and, in particular, even before getting to the concept of spirit (and the philosophy of spirit), this is the case of his logic.

Freedom is the concept's and reason's movement of self-actualization within the actual world; it is the very movement responsible for the constitution of the world in its actuality (Enz. §6, Remark). On this view, practical freedom converges with—and is rooted in—logical truth. At the meta-philosophical level, then, one can claim that while for Kant there is an original practical interest that leads him to restrict the claim of knowledge in order to make freedom (and “faith”) possible, there is for Hegel a fundamental practical motivation that leads him to make logic into a practical discipline. First, the realm of freedom must be broadened beyond its strictly moral significance (i.e., the Kantian significance); but second, it must also be broadened in such a way as to encompass both *praxis* and *poiesis*. Finally, freedom must be rooted within the actual world (not in an alleged ideality beyond it). Now, to enlarge the sphere of freedom according to these three conditions, is precisely the task of the logic as the first and foundational sphere of Hegel's philosophical system as a whole. If freedom is the progressive action of self-determination through self-actualization, freedom is not strictly moral (and moralistic), that is, its modality cannot be a mere *Sollen* and its reality cannot be merely noumenal. Freedom's realm is much broader than (strict) morality as it ultimately encompasses all (self-) actualizing

and (self-) productive action as such. In its 'pure' or indeed *logical* sense, freedom is the action of self-actualization *as such* (or "in and for itself"). It is self-actualizing action that is not dependent on the nature of the agent (human persons, juridical entities, intersubjective institutions, political states)—it is the same self-actualizing action proper to pure logical thinking as such. Now actuality or *Wirklichkeit* is the criterion of freedom. But actuality or *Wirklichkeit* is the criterion of truth as well. Indeed, Hegel declares conceptual truth (and this alone) to be "*wirkliche Wahrheit*" (TW 6, 408). This means, minimally, that freedom that is not 'real' in the sense of actual—freedom that cannot *Wirken* or be efficacious, rife of effects, able to create and shape reality in the manifold of its rational forms and figures—is simply not freedom (it is, rather, un-freedom, illusion and delusion, arbitrary whim or *Willkür*, mere ineffectual striving, and the like: TW 6, 549). Just as truth that is not real in the same sense of actual, i.e., able to *Wirken*, is not truth (it is, rather, error, illusion, apparent truth, opinion, and the like: TW 6, 549).¹⁰

Hegel opens the Subjective Logic announcing that in the structures of the *Begriff* (the thematic object of the conclusive division of the logic), we finally enter the "realm of freedom (*Reich der Freiheit*)" that now begins to be disclosed in its full extension. As "*das Freie*" (TW 6, 251), the concept embodies Hegel's dialectic-speculative logic of freedom. Pointing to the convergence of truth and freedom, Hegel claims that freedom is the "truth" of necessity just as the concept is the truth of substance (TW 6, 246). This transition now yields "the substance that is liberated to concept (*die zum Begriffe befreite Substanz*)" (TW 6, 252). Freedom is no longer to be understood in terms of causality (as for Kant in the notion of "causality through freedom": KrV B566ff./A538ff.; as the causality thematized in the sphere of Essence) and is no longer to be understood as inhering in substance (even as its acting power or spontaneous force). Freedom describes instead the immanent movement of the concept as the fundamental structure of action that defines pure logical subjectivity. Now, in short, the movement of the concept's determination is its actualization or *Verwirklichung* to idea. For, true freedom is self-actualization not only through (logical) subjectivity but also within the structures of (logical) objectivity.

In the opening of the chapter on "The Idea" of the Subjective Logic, Hegel famously addresses Kant's use of the term to express the concept of reason or *Vernunftbegriff* in its transcendence with regard to the reality of experience (i.e., appearances) within which all other

¹⁰ Notice that the same passage embraces both cases of freedom and truth (TW 6, 549).

“concepts” (i.e., the understanding’s concepts) apply and produce truth. Hegel insists that the “idea” as the “adequate concept” is instead “the objective *true* or the *true as such*” (TW 6, 462). To deny truth to the idea, as Kant does, goes hand in hand with denying actuality to the idea, i.e., ultimately, “to take ideas for something only *Unwirkliches*” (TW 6, 463), i.e., something that “ought to” be or become real but is not and cannot be. Now to claim that ideas are something *Unwirkliches* means to conceive of them as not just unreal but also ineffectual and even impotent, i.e., incapable of having effects and efficacy as something itself actual. This is, to be sure, the negative flip side of the famous pronouncement in the preface to the *Philosophy of Right* regarding the actuality of the rational and the rationality of the actual (R Preface, TW 7, 24f.). The idea, for Hegel, is that which is *wirklich* in the highest sense of truth. Responding to Kant, who denies truth, i.e., “objective validity,” to reason’s ideas, Hegel claims that ideas being the objective *Verwirklichung* of the concept not only do not lack actuality but display the most authentic form of actuality which is the necessity of truth. The idea is the concept that has passed the test of truth (or *has proven* itself true) by going through the process of its actualization and by *proving itself* fully real and necessarily productive in the movement of *Verwirklichung*. Actuality is proof of truth. Actuality is the practical-pragmatic criterion of logical proven and demonstrated truth. It is the concept’s capacity of proving itself capable of becoming efficacious in reality. Now in this regard truth is the same self-actualizing action as freedom. It follows that “everything that is actual (*alles Wirkliche*) is actual only to the extent that it *is*” in the sense of “having the idea in itself and being an expression of the idea” (TW 6, 464). Ultimately, this is precisely the measure of the efficacy of thinking: *Wirklichkeit* is the self-productive and proven actuality of truth. *Verum est factum*. Actuality is the action whereby truth proves itself for what it is, namely, the acting and active power of the idea, the power of the “rational”—the idea is “*das Vernünftige*” (and not merely *Vernunftbegriff*: TW 6, 463).

In sum, my suggestion has been that the convergence of truth and freedom in the argument of the logic accounts, first, for the original *practical* character of Hegel’s dialectic-speculative logic as a logic of action. But this convergence displays, second, a *foundational* validity with regard to the further development of the concept of spirit through its subjective, objective, and absolute forms. For, all these forms are the successive actualization of spirit’s freedom in the sense laid out for the first time by the logic.¹¹ I want to conclude by hinting at the way in which this suggestion can help us develop a Hegelian argument concerning the

¹¹ See, for a paradigmatic passage, R§1 and Remark.

relation between logic and politics, or, more specifically, truth and actuality within the social and political realm—a problem more than pressing within our own contemporary historical actuality.¹²

In light of my argument so far, I want to connect Hegel's logical thesis of the convergence of truth and freedom to Hannah Arendt's questioning observation in the opening of the 1967 essay "Truth and Politics," the essay with which she responds to the controversy opened by the publication of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963). Significantly, among its many historical references, the philosophical background of this essay is Kant (and a Kantian conception of the morality underlying the duty to truth(fulness) in relation to politics). What interests me herein are the presuppositions that lead her to sharpen the common sense tension (even the paradox) connecting the two terms—truth and politics—insofar as they are both enacted (and have consequences) within the objectivity of the public realm. This I take now to be Hegel's objective world of spirit. So here is Arendt's first, most general, rhetorical question: "Is it of the very essence of truth to be impotent and of the very essence of power to be deceitful? And what kind of reality does truth possess if it is powerless in the public realm [...]?" (Arendt 1977, 223). Of course, one may retort, following Hegel, truth cannot be powerless in the public realm. It all hinges, though, on the notion of truth that is being upheld.¹³ For, Arendt's conclusion is, in fact, that truth is indeed "powerless and always defeated in a head-on clash with the powers that be," although, she adds, truth "possesses a strength of its own," which is the its irreplaceability (Arendt 1977, 254f.). Thus, I want to pause on Arendt's concerns regarding truth, and bring Hegel's position to bear on the answer to be given to that rhetorical question. The essence of truth is precisely to be powerful—*wirklich* and efficacious—within actuality. Conceptual truth is, properly, "*wirkliche Wahrheit*" (TW 6, 408). In fact, if "truth" is impotent, it is simply not truth. Furthermore, truth's power, just as the power of freedom, is constitutive and generative of the world within which truth is revealed (or, alternatively, is suppressed and distorted and denied). And this is spirit's objective and intersubjective (Arendt's public) world to which politics belong. Thus, from the outset, truth and politics belong to the same world. They are both forces that shape the world. Just like Hegel, Arendt reacts against Kant's uncompromising position whereby affirming "*fiat iustitia*" leads to accept the

¹² As mentioned in the opening of the essay, in this conclusive section I am laying out only the contours of a developing inquiry.

¹³ The traditional distinction of rational and factual truth discussed by Arendt does not help her argument much. Hegel's logical notion of truth, I submit, is much more relevant in this connection.

consequence “*pereat mundus*” (R§130; Arendt 1977, 224f.). This is absurd precisely because there is no moral good and no right without and beyond the actuality of the world. On this point, Arendt agrees with Hegel (and with Hegel’s critique of Kant’s moral “formalism”). The implosion of the world means the annihilation of all values and all action as such. Quite simply, justice (just as truth) cannot be upheld without the world. The world is the actual dimension of truth and freedom. And yet, actuality in its rationality is not the only dimension of the world’s reality. Existence, appearances, and mere *Dasein* in its contingency and un-truth are part of the world as well (Enz. §6, Remark; Nuzzo 2021). This is a crucial point. Dialectically, the world is the totality of actuality and existence; the totality of truth and freedom and their opposite. It belongs to the movement of freedom—and it belongs to it *necessarily*—to confront and overcome positions of un-freedom; just as it belongs necessarily to the movement of truth to confront and overcome positions of un-truth.¹⁴

I must leave this discussion at this point. I only want to add, though, that the task of politics at the intersection of truth and freedom resides precisely in the recognition of this dialectical point. As politics is itself an *Ars*—i.e., a way of producing and instituting the world of spirit (the world as the sphere of *Sittlichkeit*)—the confrontation with truth and freedom takes place precisely on the basis of the world (not in the realm of an ideal morality but also not exclusively in the instrumental means-ends calculation). Ultimately, Hegel’s logic as dialectic-speculative *ars logica* and as logic of action is closer to the art of politics as one may think.

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As obras de Hegel, Kant e Aristóteles são citadas de acordo com as seguintes siglas:

Hegel:

TW Hegel, G.W.F., **Werke in zwanzig Bände**, Hrsg. v. E. Moldenhauer, H.M. Michel, Frankfurt a.M., Surhkamp, 1986

Enz **Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences**, in: TW 8-10 (cited according to paragraph number)

¹⁴ Famously, this is the point Hegel makes starting with the 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit* that should be seen precisely as an extended argument in its favor.

Kant:

- KrV **Kritik der reinen Vernunft**, A edition 1781; B edition 1787
- AA **Kants gesammelte Schriften**, Hrsg. v. Der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1910 ff.
- KpV **Kritik der praktischen Vernunft**
- KU **Kritik der Urteilskraft**

Aristóteles:

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