

THE ACTION OF THE ABSOLUTE IDEA. ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THOUGHT AND REALITY IN HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHY*

A AÇÃO DA IDEIA ABSOLUTA. SOBRE A RELAÇÃO ENTRE PENSAMENTO E REALIDADE NA
FILOSOFIA DE HEGEL

Luca Illetterati**

ABSTRACT: The action in which the absolute idea is realised is the conceptual node that, in Hegel's systematic horizon, brings into play the relationship between logic – as the science of pure thought – and (natural and spiritual) reality – considered as a dimension characterised, albeit in different forms and degrees, by a sphere of exteriority vis-à-vis the purity of thought. In this sense, the action in which the absolute idea is realised is a place that is as decisive as problematic, because it is a matter of the problem that runs through the whole of modern philosophy and reaches its climax with Kant's transcendental philosophy, namely the forms of the relationship between mind and world, between epistemology and ontology, between thinking and being. The peculiarity of this action, meant as the locus of the questioning of the separation between thought and reality typical of modern thought, is the focus of this contribution. In the action that separates and unites logic from real philosophy, it is a matter both of deconstructing a dualistic view that sees thinking on the one side and reality on the other, with all the problems associated with the forms of relationship between two spheres assumed to be heterogeneous, and of the possibility of giving an account of the intelligibility of the world, that is, of giving an account of the power of thinking to manifest the reality of the world

KEYWORDS: logic, idea, externality, nature, spirit, action.

RESUMO: A ação na qual a ideia absoluta é efetivada é o nó conceitual que, no horizonte sistemático de Hegel, põe em jogo a relação entre lógica – enquanto ciência do pensamento puro – e realidade (natural e espiritual) – considerada enquanto uma dimensão caracterizada, embora em diferentes formas e graus, por uma esfera de exterioridade vis-à-vis à pureza do pensamento. Neste sentido, a ação na qual a ideia absoluta é efetivada é um lugar que é tão decisivo quanto problemático, pois se trata de uma questão do problema que atravessa a totalidade da filosofia moderna e alcança seu clímax com a filosofia transcendental de Kant, a saber, as formas da relação entre mente e mundo, entre epistemologia e ontologia, entre pensamento e ser. A peculiaridade desta ação, entendida como o lócus do questionamento da separação entre pensamento e realidade típica do pensamento moderno, é o foco desta contribuição. Na ação que separa e une a lógica da filosofia real, se trata de uma questão tanto de desconstruir uma visão dualista que vê o pensamento de um lado e a realidade de outro, com todos os problemas associados com as formas de relação entre duas esferas assumidas por serem heterogêneas, quanto da possibilidade de dar uma explicação da inteligibilidade do mundo, isto é, de dar uma explicação acerca da capacidade do pensar de manifestar a realidade do mundo.

KEYWORDS: lógica, ideia, externalidade, natureza, espírito, ação.

* Artigo convidado.

** Luca Illetterati is professor at the University of Padua (UNIPD) – FISPPA (*Dipartimento di Filosofia, Sociologia, Pedagogia e Psicologia Applicata*) (luca.illetterati@unipd.it). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4740-9634>. This article was translated by Adriano Carvalheiro (adriano.carvalheiro1@gmail.com) and Paulo Fernando Silva Amaral (paulo.fernando.amaral@usp.br), both PhD candidates at the Department of Philosophy of the University of São Paulo (USP).



1. Introduction

The itinerary of the *Science of Logic* is concluded with an action. And the terms that Hegel employs to describe this action are terms that find their specific systematic place within the philosophy of spirit, that is, where a free will is in question. The absolute idea, which constitutes the determination of thought in which the entire itinerary of logic reaches its full self-understanding, is indeed completed in an act that occurs – and it couldn't be otherwise in the realm of the absolute idea, which implies the disappearance of any condition that might be external to it – under the sign of freedom. At the summit of its unfolding, at the point where the idea manifests itself in its most complete mode of being as an idea which has itself as its own object and which, therefore, encompasses within itself the entire movement of the determinations of thought of logic, the absolute idea does in fact *resolves* (*Entschluss* is the term Hegel uses in the *Science of Logic*, and *sich entschliessen* is the term he uses in encyclopaedic logic) to freely discharge (*aus sich frei entlassen*) its own determinacy in the form of externality and otherness.¹

Due to this *decision*, which, as we shall see, must be understood in the form of a self-determination of the idea, and the peculiar action that follows from it, the absolute idea reveals itself as the place of conclusion of the *Science of Logic* and, at the same time, as the place of the beginning of another science, the philosophy of nature, and with it, more generally, of what has been called the *Realphilosophie*, which includes, besides the philosophy of nature, also the philosophy of the spirit. Philosophy of nature and philosophy of spirit thus find their place in the system from that act which results out of the free self-determination of the idea; an act which is, simultaneously, the *locus* of the maximum explicitness of the manner of being of the idea and the *locus* of its alienation, of its liberation from itself.²

¹ *WdL* (Bd. 12), p. 253 (**The Science of Logic: The Doctrine of the Concept**: p. 753). In the following references, the citation of the original german edition is followed by the citation of its English translation, when available, in parentheses.

² On this, see JOVIĆEVIĆ, B. Thinking Free Release in Hegel's System. In: Simoniti, J.; Kroupa, G. (Eds.). **Ideas and Idealism in Philosophy**. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022, p. 111-126; OSWALD, G. **Das freie Sich-Entlassen der logischen Idee in die Natur in Hegels „Wissenschaft der Logik“**. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 2020; PLEVRAKIS, E. Übergang von der Logik in die Natur aus ‚absoluter Freiheit‘? Eine argumentanalytische Rekonstruktion des letzten Satzes der enzyklopädischen *Logik* Hegels. **Hegel-Studien**, n. 52, 2018, p. 103-138; FERNÁNDEZ, J.E. La libertad en la lógica de Hegel. **Pensamiento Político**, n. 5, 2014, p. 77-90. See also: BORMANN, M. Der Übergang der Logik in die Natur. In: Bormann, M. (Ed.). **Der Begriff der Natur. Eine Untersuchung zu Hegels Naturbegriff und dessen Rezeption**. Centaurus Verlag & Media: Herbolzheim 2000;

The present contribution will focus on this absolute action, seeking to bring to light the connection that this passage has with some fundamental determinations of the philosophy of spirit and, consequently, the implications that derive from it, especially in relation to the very peculiar way in which, in Hegel's philosophy, the relationship between the dimension of pure thought and the dimension of reality is articulated. The action in which the absolute idea culminates is in fact the conceptual knot that, in Hegel's systematic horizon, bring forward the relationship between logic – understood as the science of thought *as* thought – and reality (natural and spiritual) understood as a dimension characterised, albeit in different forms and degrees, by a dimension of externality in relation to the purity of thought.

In this sense, that action in which the absolute idea is realised is a site that is both decisive and problematic, since what is at stake in it is the problem implied in the entire modern philosophy, reaching its climax with Kant's transcendental philosophy: this problem refers to the forms of relationship between mind and world, between epistemology and ontology, or in even more general terms, between thought and being. In Hegel's view, this action consequently leads to a questioning of the typical modern philosophy' separation between thought and reality. In the action that separates and unites logic and *Realphilosophie*, are involved both the deconstruction of a dualistic vision (that sees thought on one side and reality on the other, with all the problems connected to the forms of relationship between two spheres taken as heterogeneous), and the possibility of providing a rationale for the intelligibility of the world, of giving a reason for thought's capacity to manifest the reality of the world.³

WANDSCHNEIDER, D., HÖSLE, V. Die Entäusserung der Idee zur Natur und ihre zeitliche Entfaltung als Geist bei Hegel. *Hegel-Studien*, n. 18, 1983, p. 173-199. SCHNEIDER, H. **Sich in Freiheit entlassen. Natur und Idee bei Hegel**. Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2004; VOLKMANN-SCHLUCK, K-H. Die Entäusserung der Idee zur Natur. *Hegel-Studien*, Beiheft 1, 1965, p. 45-54; BRAUN, H. Zur Interpretation der Hegelschen Wendung: frei entlassen. In: *Hegel. L'esprit objectif, l'unité de l'histoire*, Lille: Giard 1970, p. 51-64; WEISSHAUPT, K. Der Übergang von der Idee zur Natur. *Hegel-Jahrbuch*, 1976, p. 53-60; MEYER, R.W. Natur in der Logik?. *Hegel-Jahrbuch*, 1976, p. 61-68; WANDSCHNEIDER, D. Die Absolutheit des Logischen und das Sein der Natur. Systematische Überlegungen zum absolut-idealistischen Ansatz Hegels. *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, n. 39, 1985, p. 331-351; ID. Die Stellung der Natur im Gesamtentwurf der Hegelschen Philosophie. In: Petry M.J. (Ed.). **Hegel und die Naturwissenschaften**. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann Verlag 1987, p. 33-58; ID. Das Problem der Entäusserung der Idee Natur bei Hegel. In: Kimmerle, H., Lefèvre, W., Meyer, R.W. (Eds.). **Natur und Geist**, zweiter Teil. *Hegel-Jahrbuch*, 1990, p. 25-33; FLEISCHHACKER, L. Gibt es etwas außer der Ausserlichkeit? Über die Bedeutung der Veräußerlichung der Idee. *Hegel-Jahrbuch*, 1990, p. 35-41; HORSTMANN, R-P. Zur Hegel Kritik des späten Schelling. In: Horstmann, R-P. (Ed.). **Die Grenzen der Vernunft. Eine Untersuchung zu Zielen und Motiven des Deutschen Idealismus**, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann 1991, p. 245-268; GANS, M. Entlassen zur Sache. Die transzendentalphilosophische Struktur des Übergangs der absoluten Idee zur Natur in Hegels „Wissenschaft der Logik“. In: Grün, K.J., Jung, M. (Eds.). **Idee, Natur und Geschichte**. Hildesheim: Olms 1991, p. 11-39; CHIAREGHIN, F. La Naturphilosophie di Hegel tra classicità e modernità. In: Sánchez Sorondo, M. (Ed.). **Physica, Cosmologia, Naturphilosophie. Nuovi approcci**, Roma: Herder-Pontificia Università Lateranense 1993, p. 171-192.

³ It is in this sense that one should understand Hegel's philosophy as a radicalisation of Kantian transcendentalism.

In the resolution to allow its own alterity to emerge from itself, the idea relinquishes its *purely* logical dimension and exposes itself to a beyond the *purely* logical. One might even say that it is in the shattering of the purely logical that nature, in its very character of externality, is embodied. Indeed, writes Hegel, nature:

[...] has presented itself as the Idea in the form of *otherness*. Since therefore the Idea is the negative of itself, or is *external to itself*, Nature is not merely external in relation to this Idea (and to its subjective existence Spirit); the truth is rather that *externality* constitutes the specific character in which Nature, as Nature, exists.⁴

For Hegel, externality thus constitutes nature itself. In nature, ‘the determinations of the Notion have the show of an indifferent subsistence and isolation (*Verenzelung*) in regard to each other’,⁵ causing conceptual articulations to appear as separate and isolated from each other, lacking the peculiar fluidity that such articulations manifest at the logical level. In nature, conceptual determinations appear, to use common expressions in the philosophical reflection of the time, as petrified and frozen.⁶ This is why, Hegel continues, ‘Nature exhibits no freedom in its existence, but only necessity and contingency’.⁷

To say that externality constitutes the determination in which the idea *is as nature* means – and this results from the peculiar action with which the *Science of Logic* concludes – that nature is, at the same time, idea and negation of the idea's mode of being. Therefore, nature as externality is precisely the place of splitting and fragmentation – and thus of negation – of that unitary structure of the idea, but at the same time it is, even in this fragmented and split form, a manifestation of it. If indeed the idea is, for Hegel, ‘absolute unity of the concept and objectivity’⁸ (the absolute unity of the concept and of the object) – and therefore, to express this unity with terms used by Hegel for explanatory purposes, *the subject-object, as the unity of the*

John McDowell, for example, has shown that if, on the one hand, the Kantian position effectively exposes itself to the risk that the categorical requirements assume in the transcendentalist philosophy the aspect of a simple subjective position, on the other hand, the Hegelian position appears to be a radicalisation of Kant, not insofar as Hegelian philosophy is the manifestation of a tendency to ‘reconstruct objective reality as the precipitate of totally spontaneous movements of the mind’, but precisely insofar as, starting from Kant, it tends to avoid the subjectivism implied in this philosophy. On this, see MCDOWELL, J., *Hegel's Idealism as Radicalization of Kant*, **International Yearbook of German Idealism**, ed. by K. Ameriks & J. Stolzenberg, 5/2007, pp. 157-175.

⁴ **Enz. C**, § 247. In what follows, the work will be cited with the abbreviation (**Enz. A**; **Enz. C**), followed by the paragraph number and the abbreviation *An.* in the case of a citation from the *Annotation* that follows the paragraph.

⁵ **Enz. C**, § 248.

⁶ See STONE, A. **Petrified Intelligence: Nature in Hegel's Philosophy**. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005.

⁷ **Enz. C**, § 248.

⁸ *Ibid.*, § 213.

*ideal and the real, of the finite and the infinite, of the soul and the body,*⁹ – then its articulation in the form of externality itself implies that the sides that are united in the idea are presented here as separate. In other words, to say that nature is idea in the form of externality means that nature is characterised in its most proper and peculiar element by the inadequacy of objectivity regarding the concept, i.e., the incapacity and impossibility of singular determinations that characterise the concrete mode of being of nature in its externality to fully embody its conceptual structure.

However, despite the existence of nature in the form of externality, of non-freedom, of inadequacy in relation to the concept itself – by which, writes Hegel, ‘in Nature, not only is the play of forms a prey to boundless and unchecked contingency, but each separate entity is without the Notion of itself’,¹⁰ finding consequently its specific determination in words like *being-other, indifferent subsistence, singularization, necessity and accidentality*, to the point where it can be represented, and evidently not without reason, according to Hegel, as the *Negative, the non-ens, the fall of the idea* – nature is nevertheless, in its specific element, an exposition of the idea (*Darstellung der Idee*). Precisely here lies the origin of what Hegel calls the ‘unresolved contradiction’¹¹ of the idea of nature: it is, at the same time, idea and negation of the idea. It is an idea that is external to itself, being presented thus in the form of its disaggregation and alienation. Nature is this insolvable contradiction, as long as in its determined mode of being (in the mode of being that is peculiar to it as nature), it does not correspond to what it is in itself, in its idea.

Nonetheless, it is important to emphasise that externality is not only the key word for the mode of being of nature, but is also the element within which spirit moves, albeit in a way that is certainly different from the natural realm. If the philosophy of spirit is, according to Hegel, the science of the idea ‘returning back to itself from its otherness’,¹² this implies not only that the spirit has as a presupposition that form of radical alienation of the idea (where the genitive is evidently both subjective and objective), which is nature, but also that this – the return to oneself from the other – is a movement that can only happen *within* otherness.

This also means that the spirit is not already the realm that has finally and decisively removed the externality in which nature is immersed. Indeed, spirit is the process of removing

⁹ Ibid., § 214.

¹⁰ Ibid., § 248 (*An.*).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., §18.

the externality of nature, that is, the process of recomposing the idea which is found in nature in its maximum exteriorization and therefore its maximum dispersion. In order to actually be this *process* of removing externality, however, spirit *must* act within that externality from which spirit itself is the elimination. Spirit, says Hegel, is the truth of nature and in this truth nature dissipates itself as *pure* nature. To say that spirit is the truth of nature means that the idea, which in nature is only an internal element (something that never fully achieves its existence in externality), in spirit achieves its manifestation as an idea. In other words, it means that spirit is a dimension in which there is no longer that split, characteristic of nature, between thing and concept, but the thing reflects in itself the conceptual structure and the concept recognizes itself in its external dimension.

And yet, at the same time, this does not mean that in the spirit lies a perfect adherence between thing and concept. Spirit is the movement towards this adherence. A movement that, however, acquires its own meaning from that dimension of externality and inadequacy in relation to the concept that the real always implies. This is what Hegel means by his famous expression that spirit is a ‘return out of Nature’ (*Zurückkommen aus der Natur*).¹³ Insofar as spirit is determined as the *Zurückkommen*, however, it is not something that is beyond exteriority, nor is it a condition in which the concept transparently corresponds to the thing. To be this *Zurückkommen* means for spirit to be, in its very essence, an *activity*, a *movement*, a *process* that unfolds within externality. For Hegel, spirit is therefore not the simple and immediate unity of concept and existence, but rather – and this marks a decisive difference – the activity of gestation of this unity, or in other words, the process of its becoming. Thinking the spirit as the process of its own realisation means thinking it as that restless and never static aspect that is realised through a continuous struggle against externality, which is therefore a constitutive element of its way of being, even if negatively, in the form of ‘what needs to be sublated [*aufgehoben*].’ Precisely because it is this process and not the simple unity of concept and existence, spirit is in its very essence *development*, *unfolding*, *activity*, and hence *history*.

In this sense, the reality of nature and the reality of spirit are not, in the Hegelian systematic architecture, two separate realities, one characterised by externality and the other free of it. The reality addressed by philosophy of nature and the philosophy of spirit is always necessarily immersed in externality. What produces the difference between nature and spirit is

¹³ Ibid., §381.

the distinct relationship that each has with that very externality, which nevertheless constitutes both nature and spirit.

The reality of nature and the reality of spirit therefore find their specific articulation from a difference concerning the dimension of the absolute idea, that is, that absolute identity of the subjective element and the objective element that the absolute idea embodies. At the same time, however, this difference finds its reason in the absolute idea itself, in its exposure to externality, that is, in the idea's decision to determine itself in the form of another being. This marks both the connection and the difference between the purely logical level, which is addressed by the *Science of Logic*, and the level of external reality, which occurs outside of logical purity, and is addressed by the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of spirit.

In an attempt to explain this knot, after having elucidated the characteristic forms of the passage from logic to real philosophy (2), the present contribution focuses on some paradigmatic criticisms directed towards this systematic *locus* by Feuerbach (3), Marx (4), Trendelenburg (5) and Schelling (6). After taking into consideration these criticisms, we will look at the operation of resemanticization, implicit in the Hegelian philosophy, of the concepts of thought and reality (7), as well as the notion of the absolute idea (8) and thus some of the most controversial expressions that mark the end of logic and the beginning of the *Realphilosophie*, namely the notion of *Persönlichkeit* (9), that of *Entschluss* (10) and that of *Entlassung* (11). Based on this analysis, an attempt will be made to understand the meaning of the expression 'science of the idea' – which for Hegel characterises logic, philosophy of nature, as well as philosophy of spirit – and in what sense it implies an overcoming of both an idealist and a realist conception of philosophy (12). The concluding section (13) will finally attempt to show in what sense the end of the *Science of Logic* and the free determination of the idea in nature can reveal something about the Hegelian concept of freedom.

2. *A passage that is not a passage*

The problematic feature of what here occurs, in the action marking the passage from the science of logic to the philosophy of nature, seems to be condensed in the very language that Hegel uses in this context. Already from the fact that this passage, according to Hegel, is not a passage at all. The determining of the idea in the form of externality is not, Hegel writes, '*ein*

Gewordensein und Übergang'.¹⁴ By underlining the irreducibility of this action to the dimension of *becoming* and *passage*, Hegel evidently wants to emphasise the fact that the determination of the absolute idea in the other of itself has nothing in common with the passages that characterised the proceeding of the determinations of thought within the *Science of Logic*. In fact, once the absolute idea has been reached, no passage can be produced if it has to be understood – as it is understood inside the logic – as an ulterior determination of thought reaching a further development towards a greater truth and freedom in comparison to the previous ones.

If the idea is really absolute, it is absolute truth and freedom, and at this point there is no ulterior path to walk through. If there were to be an *Übergehen* of the absolute idea beyond itself, this would necessarily imply that the idea that is said to be absolute would not actually be absolute. The notion of *Übergang* appears no less than five times in the index of the *Science of Logic*:

1. in the final moment of the *Endlichkeit* section, entitled *Übergang des Endlichen in das Unendliche*;
2. within the section dedicated to infinitude, where it indicates the overcoming of both finitude and the infinitude opposed to it;
3. as the conclusion of the entire doctrine of being, entitled *Übergang in das Wesen*;
4. as the *Übergang* of mechanism in chemism (*Übergang des Mechanismus*);
5. pointing to the *Übergang* from chemism into teleology (*Übergang des Chemismus*).

In all of these cases, the notion of *Übergang* denotes the passage from one sphere of logical development to a successive one in which the previous ones find their truth. That is., the passage to a conceptual articulation in which the limits of a specific determination of thought are overcome and developed into a further determination characterised by a greater degree of concreteness, and therefore greater truth, in relation to the previous ones. This type of passage, as we have said, cannot happen within the absolute idea, because if it could, the absolute would immediately reveal itself as non-absolute. So what is this passage that is not a passage at all? These are the words Hegel uses to describe it:

Das Übergehen ist also hier vielmehr so zu fassen, daß die Idee sich selbst *frei entläßt*, ihrer absolut sicher und in sich ruhend. Um dieser Freiheit willen ist

¹⁴ **WdL** (Bd. 12), p. 253 (p. 752).

die *Form ihrer Bestimmtheit* ebenso schlechthin frei, – die absolut für sich selbst ohne Subjektivität seiende *Äußerlichkeit des Raums und der Zeit*.¹⁵

This passage which is not a passage thus reveals itself in the form of a movement and an action that are determined as *freie Entlassung*. The peculiar expression employed by Hegel obviously has the function of drawing attention to the specificity of this action, of this passage that is not a passage. This particularity lies in the fact that the action of the idea does not arise, as it did in the passages internal to the logic, out of a deficiency, a deprivation or a lack that moves it towards an overcoming of negativity. The action through which the absolute idea determines itself in its externality and alienation is an action that arises from the very completeness of the absolute idea, and it is an action that takes place under the sign of freedom (*freie*).

But what exactly is this action that is determined as *freie Entlassung*? What does the fact that the relationship between logic and *Realphilosophie* take place under the sign of a *freie Entlassung* imply for the relationship between them? To understand this, it is important to have a closer look at the various expressions used by Hegel in this context. With the aim of articulation this analysis, we will start with some particularly significant and influential critiques that have been directed towards Hegel's philosophy and which, not by mere coincidence, focused their attention precisely on the final words of the *Science of Logic*, namely those that describe the action through which the absolute idea frees itself from itself.

These are the critiques of Feuerbach, Marx, Trendelenburg and finally Schelling. These critical positions are emblematic and decisively reflected in the contemporary discussion about the status of Hegelian philosophy. This can be seen particularly with regard to the relationship established by Hegel between the activity of thought and reality and, consequently, in the way in which the relationship between *a priori* and *a posteriori*¹⁶ is emphasised in the horizon of Hegelian speculative thought. After going through these criticisms, albeit briefly, we return to the Hegelian text and examine the key terms involved in this decisive and problematic place.

¹⁵ **WdL** (Bd. 12), p. 253 (p. 753).

¹⁶ On this issue Cf. ORSINI, F. Hegel's A Priori and the Critique of Three Aprioristic Readings of the Science of Logic. **Hegel-Bulletin**, n. 43 (1), 2022, p. 47-68. Orsini distinguishes four interpretations of the a priori status or its negation within the science of logic: (1) A priori in the sense of a radicalisation of transcendental logic; (2) A priori in the sense of pre-Kantian rationalist metaphysics; (3) A posteriori as a reconstruction of the categories of history of metaphysics; (4) neither a priori nor a posteriori, these categories being connected to a project (Kantian transcendental philosophy) that differs from the Hegelian speculative project.

3. *The impotentia generandi of logic (Feuerbach)*

In a text from 1827-1828, contained in the *Fragmente zur Charakteristik meines philosophischen curriculum vitae* published in 1846, Ludwig Feuerbach highlights, in a mostly interrogative way, all the difficulty and problematicity of the passage from logic to the philosophy of nature, and of what is necessarily connected to this passage. Feuerbach writes:

What is the relation between thought and being, between logic and nature? Is the passage from the first to the second term justified? Where is the necessity, where is the principle of this passage?¹⁷

Certainly, admits Feuerbach – whose critique of Hegel, as is known, is entirely carried out around the claim that the system is the embodiment of a self-sufficiency of thought capable of positing reality, in the same way that the God of theological doctrine creates nature – the entire logic is a continuous passing and proceeding from one determination to another. And yet ‘how can the idea, the totality that encompasses all these determinations, be posited in the same category with its finite determinations?’. The necessity that rules the various passages within logic, Feuerbach correctly maintains, is evidently the *Negativität* structurally inherent to every logical determination; but how can such a negativity be thought in relation to that structure which is ‘the absolute and perfect idea’? The limit of this idea, and thus the immanent negativity that can push it to a passage beyond itself, Feuerbach suggests, is perhaps ‘The fact that it is only in the element of thinking?’. As much as this may indeed be a coherent explanation, according to Feuerbach one cannot avoid asking: ‘on which basis could one discover that there

¹⁷ FEUERBACH, L. **Fragmente zur Charakteristik meines philosophischen curriculum vitae**. In: Schuffenhauer, W. (Ed.). *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 10, *Kleinere Schriften III* (1846-1850). Berlin: De Gruyter 1971, p. 151-179, here p. 155-156 (**Frammenti per caratterizzare il mio curriculum vitae filosofico**. In: Cesa, C. (Ed.). *Opere*. Trans. C. Cesa. Bari: Laterza 1965, p. 341-374, here p. 348) The next citations of Feuerbach are extracted from the same pages of this work. The critique of Feuerbach is not limited just to this point. In *For a critique of the Hegelian philosophy* he tends in fact to show more broadly how Hegel’s philosophy – a philosophy historically determined and thus particular, as any other philosophical conception – cannot be presented as an absolute or definitive philosophy. For Feuerbach, indeed, being any philosophy a determinate manifestation of an epoch, it receives from that epoch a presupposition that makes this philosophy one of its particular manifestations. FEUERBACH, L. **Zür Kritik der Hegelschen Philosophie**. In: Jodl, F. (Ed.). *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. 2, *Philosophische Kritiken und Grundsätze*. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann Verlag 1989, p. 158-204, here p. 165 (**Per una critica della filosofia hegeliana**. In: Cesa, C. (Ed.). *Opere*. Trans. C. Cesa. Bari: Laterza 1965, p. 107-154, here p. 155): ‘she naturally thinks itself as devoid of presupposition; and is so, if confronted with the previous systems: but the successive epoch becomes aware that she also has a presupposition, and I mean a particular and contingent presupposition, that cannot be mistaken with those necessary and rational presuppositions that one cannot avoid without falling in absolute absurdity’. Particular interesting on this issue Isahia Berlin: see: BERLIN, I. Feuerbach’s Supposed Objection to Hegel: Reply to Orsini. **Journal of the History of Ideas**, vol. 30, n. 1, 1969, p. 91-95. The text is a reply to an article of G.N.B. Orsini that reviews a translation of Orsini himself of a book of Croce. The article of Giordano Orsini replied by Berlin is: ORSINI, G.N.B. Feuerbach’s Supposed Objection to Hegel. **Journal of the History of Ideas**, vol. 30, n. 1, 1969, p. 85-90.

is another element?'. Of course, not from logic itself, Feuerbach insists, 'because logic, from itself, knows nothing but itself, i.e., thinking'. What presents itself as *other* than logic, he concludes, cannot be deduced from logic and can only be introduced through a *non-logical* passage.

This would therefore be the internal *vulnus* of the Hegelian system: logic passes through nature 'only because the thinking subject finds, outside of logic, a ready and immediate existence, a nature, and is constrained to admit it by virtue of its own viewpoint, that it is immediate, i.e., nature'. It's only because nature *already exists*, just as the subject already *exists*, that logic can pass into nature: 'if there were no nature logic, an immaculate virgin, would never, by any chance, be capable of generating one'.

The claim to reach nature through logic or by starting from it is a claim that logic itself, precisely because it is the science of thought as such, is not capable of sustaining, according to Feuerbach. The passage to nature is only possible through a sensible intuition, which, however, in Hegel's philosophy, would be both unknowable and uncritically assumed. For Feuerbach, reality – and here we can see precisely how the topic constitutes the central theme around which the entire post-Kantian debate takes place – reveals itself first and foremost to sensibility. As a result, thought can never reveal, as Hegel would have intended, the *truly existent*; it is possible to think, imagine or represent something, says Feuerbach following Kant, but this never makes that thing something truly existent. For something to be revealed in its real existence, this something must first of all impose itself sensitively, in other words, as something that exists independently of the subject that experiences it.

That which Feuerbach's critique reveals would be an aporia connected to the apriorism of the Hegelian systematic construction, for which it would be impossible to derive an existence from the logical *a priori*, which, in Kantian terms, is only given *a posteriori*.

4. *Abstraction and reality (Marx)*

Following Feuerbach, also for Marx the passage from idea to nature does not appear as an automatically logical passage. This does not mean, however, that for Marx the passage from the absolute idea to nature is deprived of necessity in the systematic context. On the contrary, it is taken in the Marxian interpretation as a kind of obligatory passage that highlights the abstraction proper to the whole of Hegelian logic. The problematic passage from logic to reality, and therefore, from the absolute idea to nature, would in this sense reveal, according to Marx,

the fragility of the philosophical foundation of Hegel's logic, i.e. its being, *actually*, the abstract hypostatisation of real entities.

The absolute idea – Marx says – precisely because it is absolute, cannot overcome, as happens in various passages internal to logic, itself in something other than itself. The only path available to it, therefore, is ‘if it does not want to perform once more from the beginning the whole act of abstraction, and to satisfy itself with being a totality of abstractions or the self-comprehending abstraction’, of cancelling and sublating itself anew. In other words, the idea ‘it must abandon itself (abandon abstraction)’ and thus become ‘at an entity which is its exact opposite – at *nature*’.¹⁸

The passage to nature – ‘this whole idea which behaves in such a strange and bizarre way, and which has given the Hegelians such terrible headaches’¹⁹ – constitutes for Marx an accomplishment of logic. An accomplishment that, however, would demonstrate:

1. The decisively ideological character of the Hegelian operation – the proof, in other words, that abstract thought, logic, is nothing in itself, that the absolute idea is nothing to itself, and that only *nature* is something;²⁰
2. The necessity of inverting the relationship, thought by Hegel, between ideal and real, so that it is reality that produces logic and not vice versa.

In the passage from logic to the philosophy of nature and, therefore, to the absolute idea of nature, logic shows, in Marx's perspective, its true face, its being a mere abstraction. In this culminating moment of logic, even though ‘under various (false and themselves still abstract) conditions’,²¹ logic decides ‘*abandon itself* and to replace its self-absorption, nothingness, generality and indeterminateness by its other-being, the particular, and the determinate; resolves to let *nature*, which it held hidden in itself only as an abstraction, as a thought-entity, *go forth freely from itself*: that is to say, this idea resolves to forsake abstraction and to have a look at nature *free* of abstraction’.²²

¹⁸ MARX, K. **Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844**. In: **K Marx/F. Engels Werke**, Bd. 40 Ergänzungsband, Erster Teil, Berlin: Dietz Verlag 1968, p. 565-588, here p. 585 (**Economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844**). Translated by Martin Milligan. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977, p. 153-154).

¹⁹ Ibid., (p. 154).

²⁰ Ibid., (p. 154).

²¹ Ibid., p. 586 (p. 154).

²² Ibid., (p. 154).

In what the idea leaves itself towards nature, Marx therefore glimpses, *within* the Hegelian philosophy, the unveiling, albeit in the form of a simulacrum, of philosophy's speculative illusion which conceives reality as the *result* of a self-moving thought that is not determined by anything other than itself.²³

5. *Logical incoherence (Trendelenburg)*

Trendelenburg begins with positions certainly different from those of Feuerbach and Marx. Nevertheless, in *Logische Untersuchungen*, he too – in a context that aims above all to demolish the logical coherence of the dialectical process – explicitly draws attention to the concluding moment of logic and the passage to the philosophy of nature. This moment, in fact, shows, in a way that Trendelenburg considers to be decisively emblematic and symptomatic, how the Hegelian pretension of a thought that moves itself without any assumption is really just a pretension, which does not really find any confirmation in its own systematic development²⁴. What could prompt the absolute idea, in itself complete and self-sufficient, Trendelenburg asks, to go outside itself, to fall from itself into external nature, and start again from the very beginning the hard work it has just carried out?²⁵

In this passage, according to Trendelenburg, a powerful contradiction comes to light, manifesting not so much a local error, but rather a difficulty immanent to Hegel's entire speculative project. On the one hand, Hegel wants the logical idea to be a concrete idea. On the other hand, since it has developed only in the abstract element of thought, the idea must pass into nature. From this, however, it would follow that 'the idea, already posited as concrete, approaches a second concreteness'.²⁶ The structure of the concept, which has been exalted as

²³ While, in fact, for Hegel, in the Marxian interpretation 'the process of thinking, which he even transforms into an independent subject, under the name of 'the Idea', is the creator of the real world, and the real world is only the external appearance of the idea', for Marx 'the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms of thought.', MARX, K. **Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie**. K. Marx / F. Engels Werke, Bd. 23, Berlin: Dietz Verlag 1968, p. 27 (**Capital: a Critique of Political Economy**. Volume One. Translated by Ben Fowkes. England: Penguin Books, 1976, p. 102).

²⁴ Trendelenburg's critique of Hegel, although developing itself on a plane that is certainly different from the Marxian critique, was taken up by the young Marx insofar as it reveals how the progress of the process does not depend exclusively on internal elements of the process itself, but how it actually takes place through an interpolation, unrecognised by Hegel, of elements that come from experience. On Trendelenburg's criticism of the configuration of Hegelian logic, Cf. SCHMIDT, J. **Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik und ihre Kritik durch Adolf Trendelenburg**. München: Berchmans 1977.

²⁵ See TRENDELENBURG, A. **Logische Untersuchungen**. Hildesheim: Olms 1964, p. 75 (**Il metodo dialettico**. Trans. (Cap. III) M. Morselli, Bologna: Il Mulino 1990, p. 55-56).

²⁶ Ibid, p. 75 (p. 56).

the truly concrete because of its ability to hold opposites together, ‘must therefore realise that it is only abstractly concrete and should also become, through a self-positing, concretely concrete’.

However, even admitting such a necessity, one cannot, according to Trendelenburg, refrain from asking: what allows the concept developed in the absolute idea to feel the need for a concreteness *more concrete* than that which it already possesses? The only answer, according to Trendelenburg – and once again, as in all criticism seen so far, a Kantian background emerges – is that this need for a new concreteness comes ‘only through that intuition that he (Hegel) despises as empiricism’.²⁷ In fact – since logic in its progression is not indebted to anything outside its own immanent unfolding – if it were not because of the intuition of a true and real nature, it ‘would have to end peacefully in the idea, the eternal unity of the subjective and the objective’.

According to Trendelenburg, the dialectical method thus demonstrates that it already knows a different world in comparison to that realm of shadows that is the Logic, but it knows this world not as a pure thought, but as intuition that precedes it. Thought, Trendelenburg argues, echoing precisely the distinction made by Kant between sensible intuition and the categories of understanding, ‘is born blind and has no eyes to the outside.’²⁸ In this sense, concludes Trendelenburg, ‘in the gap open up between logic and philosophy of nature, the immanent connection sinks’.²⁹ And this is the case since the world, that should be opened up by logic (and therefore by an *a priori* dimension), in its manifestation is actually a world that logic cannot avoid presupposing.

6. *The logical indeducibility of existence (Schelling)*

Although it's not important here to attribute paternity or direct descentence between the considerations of these authors, we cannot ignore the fact that all these criticisms seem to find their common origin in Schelling's interpretation of Hegel's philosophy. This interpretation has some of its most significant moments in (i) the *Vorrede einer philosophischen Schrift des Herrn Victor Cousin* – a text which, according to Bruno Bauer, had become the ‘flag’ of the authors of the *spätidealismus* that took a polemical stance against the Hegelian school – (ii) in the so-

²⁷ Ibid., (ibid.).

²⁸ Ibid., p. 92 (p. 79).

²⁹ Ibid., p. 75 (p. 56).

called *Münchener Vorlesungen* of the history of modern philosophy, and (iii) in the *Philosophie der Offenbarung*.³⁰

Schelling's critique of Hegel is highly articulated, traversing the various passages of the system, especially the Logic, and is therefore not reducible to a single element.³¹ However, the fact that Schelling, on all occasions in which he is confronted with Hegel's philosophy, focused his critical gaze on the *passage* from the science of logic to the philosophy of nature indicates that the difficulty Schelling sees at this point is the revelation of the essential limits of Hegel's philosophy understood in its complexity. It is, in other words, what demonstrates its falseness: not, therefore, a trivial error in the systematic development, but *the* error that would be constitutive of the fundamental idea governing the entire Hegelian systematic construction. This limit and this error would consist fundamentally in the Hegelian pretension to be not only a *negative philosophy* – a philosophy that is purely *rational*, that has withdrawn itself into pure thought, a philosophy that is logically self-sufficient and closed within its own logic – but much more radically, to be a philosophy that thinks it can go from concept to reality, or better, a philosophy that aims to systematically lead from the logical realm to the real one.³²

The problematicity of the transition from science of logic to the philosophy of nature – a problematicity that emerges clearly in considering the *linguistic form* in which Hegel tries to express it – is therefore for Schelling the proof, it may be said, of the Hegelian attempt to make

³⁰ The continuous confrontation with Hegel constitutes, as we know, one of the central elements around which Schelling's philosophical position is built and constantly modified, especially from the 20s onwards. On the one hand, this centrality of the confrontation with Hegel finds its explanations in the need, felt by Schelling's, of paving a genuinely and authentically alternative road to that of Hegel's, which was for Schelling unfruitful. On the other hand, this confrontation finds its centrality in the fact that, in settling accounts with Hegel, he seems in many ways also to be settling accounts with his own previous positions, particularly those connected to the system of identity, and with the need to overcome them. On this, see HOULGATE, S. Schelling's Critique of Hegel's *Science of Logic*. **The Review of Metaphysics**, n. 53 (1), 1999, p. 99-128.

³¹ On the complexity of the Schellingian critique, read as the success of the counterposition of two different theoretical models in response to the general problem of post-Kantian thought, See BRINKMANN, K., Schellings Hegel-Kritik. In: Hartmann, K. (Ed.). **Die ontologische Option**. Berlin-New York: De Gruyter 1976, p. 117-210.

³² It is in this sense that Schelling's position can be read in many aspects as the original nucleus on which the above-mentioned criticisms also develop, as they all find their essential starting point in the relationship between logical-ideal and existent-real: Cf. FRANK, M. **Der unendliche Mangel an Sein: Schellings Hegelkritik und die Anfänge der Marxistischen Dialektik**. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag 1992. The dependence of the positions outlined above on the Schellingian one is in fact a controversial point on which critics have expressed different opinions. For a reading that interprets Schelling's position as the prototype for all successive criticisms, see also LÖWITH, K. **Von Hegel zu Nietzsche**. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag. All this can be affirmed, despite the polemic note made by an Engels attendee of Schellings classes: 'our task will be to follow the thread of his (Schelling's) reasoning and defend the grave of the great master from insults'. ENGELS, F. **Schelling zu Hegel**, K. Marx/F. Engels Gesamtausgabe, Erste Abteilung, Bd. 3, Berlin: Dietz Verlag 1985, p. 256-263, here p. 262 (Schelling su Hegel. In: Fiorani, E. (Ed.). **Anti-Schelling**, Bari: Laterza 1972, p. 41-51, here p. 50). The dependence of the criticisms of Trendelenburg, Feuerbach and Marx on the Schellingian position is discussed in ROSSI, M. **Da Hegel a Marx**, vol. III, **La scuola hegeliana. Il giovane Marx**. Milano: Feltrinelli 1974, p. 53-54.

the impossible possible, i.e. the derivation of the existent (the *positive*) from the idea, to reduce the *a posteriori* to the *a priori*. Under this background, Schelling's intention is to show that in Hegel, between the logical sphere – *purely* logical – and the real sphere – the reality that *exists* – there is a fracture that the system can in any way overcome, no matter its efforts made through an unsustainable linguistic-conceptual development.

Schelling's critique – which also aims, more generally, to show how Hegel's position can be read as a new, distorted and in many ways marginal development of his own philosophy – is grounded in the essential distinction that characterises Schelling's later speculative position between *negative philosophy*, understood as *rational* philosophy and whose task is to grasp the *possible*, the *essence* of beings, but not their actual and concrete being; and *positive philosophy*, understood as that philosophy which, recognising the limits of reason enclosed in itself and thus the irreducibility of the existing to the concept, moves beyond the realm of pure thought to open itself to the being in its actuality, or rather to its existence and thus to history.

As much as Hegel's thought amounts, in the Schellingian reconstruction, nothing more than ‘an episode in the history of modern philosophy’ which ‘does not serve to develop it further’, it still reveals, precisely in its inability to say in conceptually adequate terms, the transition from the logical idea to nature, something decisive. In fact, the experience of this impossibility would represent, in various ways, the starting point of the positive philosophy, arising precisely from the awareness ‘that it is impossible with purely rational reason to achieve actual reality (Wirklichkeit)’.³³

From this perspective, therefore, at the very moment Hegel declares that his logic is that science in which the divine idea is completed in the form of pure thought, that is, precisely insofar as thought in this science is also the totality of reality, one should expect, Schelling argues, ‘that at this point philosophy would be concluded’. If thought is *also* reality, then the actualisation of thought in the absolute idea could only also be the actualisation of reality: upon this achievement, philosophy should be concluded. Or rather, if it wished to progress *further*, ‘the progress could only be in a wholly different science, in which it is no longer just a question of the Idea, as it is in the first Science’.³⁴

³³ SCHELLING, F.W.J. **Vorrede zu einer philosophischen Schrift des Herrn Victor Cousin (1834)**. In: Schröter, M. Schellings Werke, Vierter Ergänzungsband. München: Beck 1971, p. 445-468, here p. 457 [VzS].]

³⁴ Id. **Zur Geschichte der neuen Philosophie. Münchener Vorlesungen**. In: Sämtliche Werke, Bd. 10, Stuttgart/Ausburg: Cotta 1856-1861, p. 146 (**Lezioni monachesi**. Trans. G. Durante. Torino: 1981, p. 173) [GnP]. (**On the History of Modern Philosophy**. Translated by Andrew Bowie. Cambridge Press, 1994, p. 149).

On the contrary, not only is the philosophy of nature, for Hegel, the *science of the idea in its being-other* (as the philosophy of spirit is the *science of the idea that returns to itself from its being-other*), but philosophy of nature is also the idea itself that, having reached its logical conclusion, must effectively complete itself and operate this passage into its other. Thus, what could be the merit of Hegel's philosophy – the elaboration of a *negative* philosophy, understood as a philosophy of pure thought, a negative philosophy that would have prepared and provoked the passage to a *positive* philosophy, capable, going beyond the limits of the purely logical dimension, of *actually facing reality and existence* in their indeducibility – turned to be its essential limit in the pretention of passing from itself within the *positive* plane. Schelling writes:

[...] this all derives from the One mistake of converting true relationships which were true *in themselves*, namely when taken merely *logically*, into real relationships.³⁵

In pretending to move from idea to nature, and thus from logic to reality, without recognizing the split that separates these two spheres, Hegel therefore *absolutizes* his negative philosophy, transforming what is only a theory about the *thought* of reality into a theory, instead, of reality *tout court*. It is because of this impossible pretension that Hegel's philosophy cannot even fulfil the function of negative philosophy: 'i cannot bestow on it such an honour' – says Schelling in *Einleitung in der Philosophie der Offenbarung*. And he continues:

[...] i cannot affirm that it is negative, its fundamental error lies in the fact that it wants actually to be positive [...]. The philosophy that Hegel presents is negative philosophy pushed beyond its limits; it does not exclude the positive, but contains this positive, so it thinks, within itself, as something subjected to it.³⁶

Hegel's philosophy would thus reveal its intrinsic and insurmountable limit at this point of transition from the logical to the natural and spiritual sphere. In fact, what, according to Schelling, is missing in the passage of the logical idea into nature, in the way in which it is described by Hegel, is that which would seem to be most dear to Hegel, namely its *necessity*, its intrinsic logicity, and thus its foundation:

[...] But in the Idea there is no necessity *at all* for any kind of movement. The Idea could not, for instance, progress further in itself (for that is impossible,

³⁵ Ibid., p. 161 (p. 160).

³⁶ Id. **Philosophie der Offenbarung**, Erster Teil. In: Schröter, M. (Ed.). Schellings Werke, Sechster Ergänzungsband. München: Beck 1954, p. 80 (**Filosofia della rivelazione**, vol. I. Trans. A. Bausola. Bologna: Zanichelli 1972, p. 170) [PdO].

because it is already complete), but would rather have completely to break away from itself.³⁷

Insofar as the idea is for Hegel a unity of subject and object, Schelling continues, in other words, it is both the *Ideal* and the *Real*, it ‘has no need any more to become more real and real in another way than it already is’.³⁸ From Schelling's perspective, then, since the passage of the absolute idea to nature would not occur from an intrinsic necessity grounded in logic itself, it doesn't have therefore any justification within the idea itself as the completion of the logic's entire itinerary. Such a passage would, consequently, be a *logically* groundedless passage that would find its justification outside the idea, in something extra-logical, that is, in the mere consideration – which has nothing to do with logical necessity – that nature *exists*.

In order to explain this logically indeductible fact of *existence*, Hegel, claiming to take logic beyond itself, thus constructs a passage in the idea itself, which, however, immediately is revealed as precisely the projection of his own *demand*, demand of the philosopher's own subjectivity, which ‘has to wish that the Idea is party to this externalisation in order that he should be given the chance to explain nature and the world of mind, the world of history’.³⁹

The arbitrariness and groundlessness of such a passage, which reveals, according to Schelling, nothing more than ‘a horrific and immense abyss’⁴⁰ would be particularly evident in the linguistic expressions that Hegel is compelled to use here; expressions – Schelling argues – for which ‘there is no category in a purely rational system whatsoever’.⁴¹ Not being able to treat that passage as the other ones of logic – this passage is in fact no longer a dialectical passage, but a passage of a *different kind*, as Schelling had already emphasised in the *Preface to Cousin*. Consequently, being the absolute idea the realisation of logic that admits no further development in logic itself, it is expressed in the form of a *decision* of the absolute idea to liberate from itself (*sich entlassen*) – ‘astonishing category’⁴² Schelling sarcastically emphasises – the idea as nature:

³⁷ **GnP**, p. 152 (p. 179-180). (**On the History of Modern Philosophy**. Translated by Andrew Bowie. Cambridge Press, 1994, p. 154).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 152 (p. 154).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 153 (p. 154). It's evident that the lack of basis in the passage from idea to nature has, according to Schelling, serious consequences for the philosophy of nature, which is destined to be, in Hegel, an comprehension of nature crushed by logic and enclosed within pure conceptual determinations. In this sense, Hegel would be responsible, in Schelling's eyes, for the logicisation of nature. On this, see HORSTMANN, Zur Hegel-Kritik, p. 251-252.

⁴⁰ **GnP**, p. 154 (**On the History of Modern Philosophy**. Translated by Andrew Bowie. Cambridge Press, 1994, 155).

⁴¹ **VzS**, p. 457.

⁴² **PdO**, p. 122 (p. 211).

This expression *sich entlassen* [...] is one of the strangest, most ambiguous and thus also timid expressions behind which this philosophy retreats at difficult points.⁴³

7. *Thought and reality*

All the critical positions here briefly summarised therefore consider the transition made by the absolute idea, from the logical dimension towards the dimension of exteriority – that is, *in primis* to nature and therefore to spirit – the reflection of a structural problem in the Hegelian philosophy. The intrinsic difficulty in this culminating moment of the *Science of Logic* – its accountability in expressions that appear to its critics as both inadequate and emblematic in relation to what logic should explain, i.e. the idea *in itself and for itself*, the idea as it is considered in the abstract element of thought – would in any case be the symptom of an impossibility that Hegel would claim possible: the deduction of reality from thought, the deduction of existence from the purely logical element.

Seeking now, on the basis of these criticisms, to enter Hegel's text itself, it is necessary to clarify the *terms* of the question, in the belief that by clarifying them, there may emerge at this difficult systematic point the various semantics through which the key concepts are thought.

The Hegelian critique of the way in which modern philosophy thinks the relationship between thought and reality (or rather, the Hegelian attempt to dissolve the dualistic form in which these notions are articulated within modern philosophy), in fact occurs precisely through a re-semanticisation of the concepts of thought and reality. In even more schematic and anticipatory terms, it could be said that what Hegel seeks to dismantle is:

1. the conviction that thought is a notion totally closed within the dimension of subjectivity, as if thought were precisely a *property* of the thinking subject;
2. the conviction that reality is merely what is in front of and in opposition to the thinking subject, i.e., that it is the *other* of thought.

In developing a *non-subjectivist conception of thought*, Hegel aims to show that thought is not the instrument through which the subject attempts to capture the world, it is not the mental net that the subject throws over reality, catching out what that net allows him to bring to the

⁴³ **GnP**, p. 153 (p. 155) Schelling also draws attention to the problematic nature of this expression in the fifth lesson of the introduction to the philosophy of revelation, which is entirely dedicated to the relationship between negative and positive philosophy. See **PdO**, p. 74-93.

surface. Thought is rather something that, even though immanent to him, still transcends the dimension of the subject. Similarly, in developing a *non-objectivist conception of reality*, Hegel articulates an idea of reality in which it is not simply the other of thought, something that exists in opposition to and in front of thought, but is rather a reality permeated by thought, which is the condition of possibility for its intelligibility. What the entire Hegelian systematic project aims to demonstrate is that thought is what constitutes reality itself, in other words, something that is, of course, in the subject (in the one who thinks), but which is not, however, simply subjective;⁴⁴ in this sense, reality, far from being what takes shape *in front* of subject's gaze, is rather the terrain within which both the world and the subject exist, that is, it is the space within which gain sense both the world's mode of being, in which the subject acts, and the very subject's mode of being.

It is only within this framework that the completeness of logic and the determination of the absolute idea in the form of its otherness can be understood.⁴⁵

8. *The absoluteness of the idea*

As far as this general perspective is concerned, and in order to clarify the process of resemanticisation structurally implied in the Hegelian philosophical project, the first conceptual plexus to which we should direct our attention is precisely the *absolute idea*.

The transition from science of logic to the philosophy of nature is protagonised by the idea in its absoluteness, and it is precisely because the subject at stake here is the absolute idea that the passage from the sphere of logic to the philosophy of nature is a passage which is not really a passage at all, as has been said and as is made explicit by all the critics taken into account. The fact that this passage can only occur in the form of the *frei entlassen* and not in the form of a sublation (*Aufhebung*) in which the idea would find its negation and its truth in the other of itself finds its reason exactly in the fact that the idea that completes this passage is the idea that has reached its absoluteness.

The absolute idea constitutes the summit of the process which completes the science of logic known as the Doctrine of the Concept, which in turn is articulated in: (1) *Subjective Concept*, (2) *Objectivity*, and, finally, (3) *Idea*.

⁴⁴ See SORESI, S. **Il soggetto del pensiero. Modi e articolazioni della nozione di pensiero in Hegel**. Trento: Verifiche 2012.

⁴⁵ In this sense, see PLEVRAKIS. *Übergang*.

Precisely insofar as it is the truth of the *Subjective Concept* and *Objectivity*, the Idea analysed by Hegel in the *Science of Logic* must be understood neither as something purely subjective, as a product of the mind and therefore as something posited by the subject; nor in the form of an objective model that would exist outside the subject and to which the world, and therefore things and thoughts, should somehow correspond. In defining the idea as ‘*the absolute unity of the concept and objectivity*’⁴⁶ – and then further specifying this unity by defining it as *subject-object* (i.e. the subject that is also the object and the object that is also the subject) or, furthermore, ‘the unity of the ideal and the real; of the finite and the infinite; of the soul and the body’⁴⁷ – Hegel makes the idea a structure that has two sides that are both different and inseparable: one is that which is properly conceptual – Hegel defines it as its *ideal* content – and the other properly real, which is the exposition (*Darstellung*) of this content – Hegel names it its *real* content.⁴⁸

The development of the idea and the first appearance of itself as such, that is, its realisation as an absolute idea, is a development of increasing unification between the ideal content – the conceptual dimension – and the real content – the dimension of the exposition of this content. In the opening lines of the chapter dedicated to the absolute idea, Hegel shows in a detailed manner how the idea is developed in the form of an identity of the theoretical idea and the practical idea, or, to put it another way, as the identity of the idea of knowing and the idea of good. The idea of knowing and the idea of good certainly have the structure of the idea – that is, they are a unity of subject and object in the sense that in both knowing and the good the separation between the purely subjective and the purely objective dimensions is suppressed – but they have this structure in a form that still has the characteristics of one-sidedness. This means that both the idea of knowing and the idea of good, says Hegel, are and at the same time

⁴⁶ *Enz. C.*, § 213.

⁴⁷ *Enz. C.*, § 214.

⁴⁸ This conception of the idea, according to which it is the perfect correspondence between a conceptual dimension and a real dimension, allows Hegel to say that the idea is the truth. *Enz. C.*, § 213: “[...] denn die Wahrheit ist dies, daß die Objektivität dem Begriffe entspricht.” This concept of truth does not imply that objectivity must correspond to the representation of subjectivity. For Hegel, truth does not imply a correspondence between the thing and the representation that the subject has of it, it is not an attempt to conform a reality foreign to the subject to its categories, but something that belongs to the very essence of reality, i.e. the capacity of reality to realise its concept. Truth, for Hegel, in its most radical meaning, is therefore the correspondence of a concept to itself, the adequacy of something to itself, to its concept. And this is precisely why the idea is true, because the idea is the object that is adequate to its concept, an objectivity that expresses its own subjectivity and a subjectivity that is realised in its own objectivity. About this, see STERN, R. Did Hegel hold an identity theory of truth?. *Mind*, n. 102, 1993, p. 645-647; HALBIG, C. **Objektives Denken: Erkenntnistheorie und Philosophy of Mind in Hegels System**. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag 2002; MIOLLI, G. **Il pensiero della cosa: Wahrheit hegeliana e Identity Theory of Truth**. Trento: Verifiche 2016.

are not the idea, in the sense that even though knowing and good are forms of the idea, they nevertheless have the idea ‘as a sought beyond and never reached aim’. The idea of knowing and the idea of good are, in other words, both characterised by a *streben* towards a unity that is simultaneously the witness of their *being* and of their *not being* the idea in its completeness.

The absolute idea is the overcoming of the distance between the tension and its dissipation and is, in a certain way, a return to the dimension of life, which was the immediate form of the idea, the form that preceded the instantiation of the difference between the idea of knowing and the idea of good. The absolute idea is a return to the unity of life without however the immediacy that characterised this first form of the idea. It is now the unity that ‘harbours the most extreme opposition within’ (*den höchsten Gegensatz*).⁴⁹ In the absolute idea, Hegel continues, the concept is not a *soul*, it is not, in other words, a whole that can be distinguished from an externality: ‘[it is] a free subjective concept that exists for itself and therefore has *personality* (*Persönlichkeit*)’.⁵⁰

The absolute idea is the unity of the idea of knowing and the idea of good without having the immediacy of the idea of life, and all this is made explicit in the notion of *personality*. This concept seems hardly relatable to a purely logical dimension, as it refers to the dimension of a free will, which is characteristic of the spirit. Why, then, does Hegel appeal to this concept?

9. *The personality*

The concept of *Persönlichkeit* is discussed by Hegel in §35 of the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. In this paragraph, Hegel shows how the universality of free will, insofar as it is a simple, formal and self-conscious reference to itself, makes the subject in its own individuality a *person*. Personality thus lies, according to Hegel, in this: that the subject, although always determined and finite and as a pure reference to itself, recognises itself, in this determinacy and finitude, as *infinite, universal and free*.

Personality is this self-consciousness of always being a determined subject (this I, with these desires, these drives, these limits connected to the externality in which one is immersed) and at the same time, in this self-consciousness of oneself (in this acknowledgment of oneself as determined and finite), the negation of that finitude and of that exterior determination.

⁴⁹ **WdL** (Bd. 12), p. 236 (p. 735).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

In the realm of personality, the self is considered as an object of thought, or in other words, says Hegel, as an object ‘purely identical with itself’.⁵¹ In a certain way, it could be said that recognising the personality of something means recognising its self-reflexive and self-cognitive dimension, from which follows the personality's capacity to be, in its determinacy, also the negation of that determinacy. In this sense, infinitude, universality and freedom are the essential determinations of personality.

For no other reason is the concept of personality linked, in §39 of the *Elements*, exactly as in the final lines of the *Science of Logic*, to the structure of *decision*. The object of §39 is ‘the resolving and *immediate* individuality of the person (Die beschließende und *unmittelbare* Einzelheit der Person)’.⁵² Such individuality, says Hegel, is faced with a nature which it encounters before it (*eine vorgefundene Natur*), a reality, an external mode, that this individuality experiences as something given, as something simply found. Free will finds itself facing the word as something subjective opposed to something objective. But being something subjective opposed to a given objectivity is precisely what contradicts the concept of personality understood as the recognition of infinity in the finite, in other words, as recognising oneself as universal in singularity. In this sense – and this is a crucial point for understanding the final lines of the *Science of Logic* – Hegel says: personality is that which acts to overcome this limitation and to give itself reality – or, which amounts to the same thing, to posit that existence as its own’.⁵³ The personality that decides is the personality that abandons its own determinacy and opens itself to the other in order to give itself reality, recognising itself in the other of itself.

In this sense, to say that the absolute idea has personality means to say that the absolute idea is this capacity to recognise in its determinacy its infinitude, its universality, and thus its being essentially, freedom. Not only that: this recognition of the absolute idea in its infinitude, in its universality and therefore in its freedom implies that it is the movement that realises the recognition of itself in the other, the activity through which it recognises the other as itself.⁵⁴

⁵¹ PhR, § 35 (An.).

⁵² Ibid., § 39.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ On the other hand, it is precisely in this sense that the concept of personality first appeared in the *Science of Logic*. Perhaps the most interesting point in this regard is the discussion that takes place in the doctrine of essence about the notion of the absolute, which, at this point in the scientific journey of logic, Hegel identifies with Spinoza's substance. Spinoza's substance, says Hegel, is the absolute unity of thought and being, but in it thought has the same structure as extension, in other words, it is not the movement that starts from itself, it is not a determining and forming, but it is something already given and already set in substance. This is why, according to Hegel, Spinozian substance lacks the principle of *personality*. To say that substance lacks the principle of personality means that substance lacks the principle of movement, of opposition, of splitting up and regaining itself as unity precisely from the split that movement itself has produced. **WdL** (Bd. 11), p. 337 (The Science of

The overcoming of the purely logical sphere and the opening of the space of externality, and thus of reality as nature and spirit, is not, in Hegelian philosophy, as Schelling probably thinks, a leap out of the absolute idea, but rather a movement *within* it and intimately tied to the essential self-reflexive and self-cognitive structure of the absolute idea, which, after having known itself in the form of the purely logical, is nevertheless not exhausted in this determination. Thus, precisely due to that self-cognitive movement that characterises it, it can now open itself to those non-pure, but not for this reason non-logical and non-conceptual realms, which are the realms of nature and spirit. The absolute idea *does not create* nature and spirit. Likewise, the absolute idea does not become something other than itself. In all of the criticisms mentioned above, it seems that what they all emphasise has not been taken seriously, namely that what appears as the passage of the absolute idea into nature is not in fact a passage.

The idea does not pass into an Other, but rather, having reached its absoluteness, it recognises itself in the other, it finds itself in the other. In this sense, nature and spirit are not simply deduced from the idea, as Hegel's critics seem to understand. Instead, the absolute idea, precisely because it is endowed with personality, precisely because it is absolute, acknowledges its own limit as an idea that is *only* logical, acknowledges its own determinacy of being an idea *only* in the logical form, and due to this capacity it can now look at itself in its externality, in what appears as other of itself. The absolute idea actualizes its opening, not (as the classical criticism thinks) in order to become something completely other than itself, but rather precisely in order to be, as a personality, what it is in its most intimate and essential structure, i.e. the *activity* of knowing itself and realising itself. When Hegel says that the absolute idea now has a personality, he is referring to the fact that the absolute idea is the movement of its own production, that its being is its production, thought as the activity through which it, containing difference and negation in itself, produces its identity within itself.

In this sense, the absolute idea is absolute precisely insofar as it is able to recognise the limits of the form within which it has determined itself in the *Science of logic*, precisely insofar

Logic: the Doctrine of Essence, p. 473): “Spinoza makes the sublime demand on thought that *it consider everything under the form of eternity, sub specie aeterni*, that is, as it is in the absolute. But in an absolute which is only unmoved identity, the attribute, like the mode, is only as *disappearing*, not as *becoming*, so that this disappearing also makes its positive beginning only from without’. The movement of difference – what distinguishes thought and extension, but also substance, attributes and modes – is, according to Hegel, in the Spinozian substance a movement that occurs outside the absolute. The Spinozian absolute is therefore an absolute deprived of *personality*, because the identity it expresses is simply posited, it is not the result of a process that implies difference and negation. Difference and negation are the fruit of an external reflection, which leaves the absolute intact.”

as it is able to see the delimitation of its purely logical configuration and therefore posits in this consciousness the condition for moving on to another sphere and science. This other sphere and science are not – it should be noted – *non*-logical or the *non*-conceptual, but rather *non-purely* logical, i.e. are ones in which the logical combines itself with the concrete structures of reality and recognises itself in them in the form of the idea as nature and the idea as spirit.

The progression of thought *beyond* logic, as is found in the *Science of Logic*, is not, therefore, a progression towards a realm that is no longer logical. If that were the case, philosophy would end – as Schelling consistently sees it – with the *Science of Logic*. What is specific to the Hegelian attempt is the determination to consider the realm that lies *beyond the Science of Logic* as a realm that, even though no longer situated in the *Science of Logic*, does not thereby state the end of logical thought. This means that the place in which the sphere of the *purely logical* is completed, i.e. the sphere in which determinations are considered just as forms for pure logical thought, is for Hegel the beginning of another sphere not because thought will now be applied to something other than itself, but because in it *thought*, no longer considered in its purely logical determination, is recognised and understood in relation to other conditions and determinations.

It is only in this sense that one can understand why what appears to be a passage is not in fact a passage: what appears as a *passage of* the idea from its logical purity towards nature, understood as the external form of the idea and, therefore, the passage from the *Science of Logic* – the science of the idea *as* logic – to the *science of nature* – the science of the idea *as* exterior –, is not a passage (like the one which takes place, for example, in the interior of logic) from the subjective concept to the objectivity, or even from the subjective sphere into life. Rather, this is a passage that is entirely internal to the absoluteness of the idea, in virtue of the fact that this idea is personality – since, in its essence, it is the *activity of* knowing and unfolding itself, and which is therefore realised not in the forms of *Aufhebung*, but rather in that of the *decision of* the idea as such to liberate (*sich entlassen*) from itself, *freely*, the moment of its own particularity, understood as the immediate idea as its reflection in nature. From this, it should be emphasised that this act, which Hegel compares to a decision, or better still a *de-liberation*, is nothing other than the realisation and determination of the absolute idea, its being fully and freely itself, and therefore the activity of its knowing and unfolding itself outside of the logical element that constitutes the determinacy in which it is comprehended in the *Science of Logic*.

10. Decision of the idea and theory of action

As many interpreters have emphasised, however, thinking of the idea as the subject of a decision goes not without problems. According to Stephen Houlgate, for example, ‘the move from the Logic to the Philosophy of Nature does not involve any ‘decision’ by thought to turn from the realm of mere conceptual possibilities to the realm of contingent *actuality*’. Of course, writes Houlgate, it is true that Hegel speaks of an *Entschluss* of the pure idea to determine itself as an external idea. However, Houlgate argues, ‘strictly speaking (...) the Idea cannot ‘resolve’ or ‘decide’ to do anything, since it is not yet self-conscious spirit endowed with free will, but is simply rationally self-determining being as such’. For this reason, according to Houlgate, the use of a terminology that refers to the semantics of decision should be understood in this context as merely metaphorical.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, the fact that Hegel uses this term is no coincidence. If one wants to call it a metaphor, I think one should understand it in the sense that the term *Entschluss* and the verb *entschliessen* seem to Hegel to best determine the characteristics of this logical movement that involves the absolute idea. In this sense, it is not a matter of relativising the use of terms that refer to the domain of *sich entschliessen*, but rather of clarifying as best as possible the semantics of these terms as explanatory of the logical movement that Hegel is describing. And if in its etymology the term refers to decision in the sense of resolving oneself, of opening up, of releasing, what must however be emphasised is that in Hegel it always has the connotation of realisation, of becoming real.

In §12 of the *Elements*, for example, Hegel claims that only as deciding subject (*beschliessender*) the will in general is a real will. Then, in the *Anmerkung* to the same paragraph, Hegel observes – and this is another important clarification for the interpretation of the final pages of the absolute idea of the *Science of Logic* – that the German language, in addition to the verb *beschliessen*, also has another expression to indicate decision, namely *sich entscheiden*, to resolve oneself, which indicates that the will ‘contains its determinations and ends within itself, and merely brings them forth from within’.⁵⁶ To decide oneself implies the will's capacity to realise that which it already has within itself, but which, in order to be, must

⁵⁵ See HOULGATE, S. Logic and Nature in Hegel’s Philosophy: A Response to John W. Burbidge. **The Owl of Minerva**, n. 34, 2002, p. 107-125.

⁵⁶ PhR, § 12 (An.).

somehow leave its pure inner being, must abandon the dimension of interiority in order to move towards an otherness, the sole condition within which it can be realised as will.

In this sense, when Hegel speaks of the absolute idea, a notion such as *sich entschliessen* seems, in a way, to incorporate the cardinal elements of his theory of action in the absolute idea. Particularly, the notion that an action is only genuinely so when the intention renounces its subjective dimension (i.e. its remaining enclosed within the uncontaminated purity of subjective interiority), surrendering to the laws of the world (*sich diesem Gesetze preisgeben*), or rather, to the dimension of externality. For Hegel, action is such only insofar as it is the *externalisation* of the will.

Action is thus the movement through which the will, in a certain way, renounces itself, that is, its own subjective side, its own remaining faithful to itself, and at the same time realises itself, translates itself – where the translating movement has nothing mechanical or innocuous about it – into reality, assuming the effective concreteness of its own being.⁵⁷ The freedom of will understood as the freedom of the subject, is thus realised for Hegel only as it negates itself as subjectivity, abandoning the interiority of the subject: ‘For in order to become the latter [will in and for itself], the will must free itself from this second oneness of mere subjectivity’.⁵⁸

Analogously, the idea's decision to determine itself as an external idea, far from being an innocuous passing from the idea into something other than itself, is rather, as is the case with the will that determines itself in action, the process of its realisation. A process that, as occurs precisely in action, implies the abandonment of the purely interior dimension – and therefore, in the case of the absolute idea, of the purely logical dimension – towards an externality in which it realises itself by recognising itself in what is presented as an otherness.

It is no coincidence, from this standpoint, that Hegel says that the absolute idea in the *Science of Logic* is only ‘still logical’, in other words, that here, in logical, ‘it is shut up in pure thought, the science only of the divine concept’.⁵⁹ What is remarkable is the *nur* through which Hegel determines the absolute idea as a logical idea. This *nur* does not have the function of indicating a lack, something that the absolute idea still requires in order to be absolute, but rather the function of indicating the dimension that the absolute idea possesses in its logical

⁵⁷ On the translating dimension of action, Cf. HRNJEZ, S., ILLETTERATI, L. Soggettività e traduzione. Dinamica traduttiva e ontologia del soggetto in Hegel. In: Illetterati, L., Quante, M. (Eds.). **Morale, etica, religione tra filosofia classica tedesca e pensiero contemporaneo: studi in onore di Francesca Menegoni**. Padova: Padova University Press, 2020, p. 787-814.

⁵⁸ PhR, § 107 (Z.).

⁵⁹ WdL (Bd. 12), p. 253 (p. 752).

form in relation to what is the process of its realisation. The absolute idea is the idea that knows itself, it is the thought that knows itself, it is the subject of knowing itself. But in order to realise its being, the knowing itself must abandon its own *nur logisch* dimension, its condition of being only the subject of its knowing, in order to surrender to the laws of externality, the sole laws in which it can realise what it is.

11. *Sich frei entlassen*

This is why what appears as a passage is not in fact a passage: ‘in this freedom, therefore, there is no transition that takes place [...]. The transition is to be grasped, therefore, in the sense that the idea *freely discharges itself* (*sich selbst frei entlässt*), absolutely certain of itself and internally at rest’.⁶⁰ The verb *sich entlassen* also finds a clarification in the philosophy of the spirit. Within Hegel's systematic articulation, this verb doesn't only occur at the end of logic. It is also used in the *Elements* in two extremely significant circumstances.

The first occurrence takes place in §181, which marks the passage from family to civil society. And here again, as in the final pages of the *Science of Logic*, dedicated to the absolute idea, the word *entlassen* is not accidentally connected to the dimension of *Persönlichkeit*. The family, which is the first ethical unit within which the life of individuals acquires meaning, finds its principle of disintegration precisely in the principle of personality. In this principle, those individuals that find their specific determination in family's ethical unity (their own concept), must be launched as autonomous entities in order to constitute families themselves, which, says Hegel, ‘relation to one another is in general that of self-sufficient concrete persons’.⁶¹ Family is thus actualised, one might say, by falling apart, by embracing that principle of difference that erodes its unity. This process of dismantling, i.e., the principle of difference, in fact, implies the disintegration of the ethical unity of the family.

However, this disintegration – and thus the externalisation of its concept, connected to it – is at the same time not the success of an action that affects the family from the outside, but rather a consequence of its own process of realisation: ‘the moments which are bound together in the unity of the family, as the ethical Idea which is still in its concept, must be released from the concept to [attain] self-sufficient reality (*von ihm zur selbstständigen Realität entlassen*

⁶⁰ Ibid. (p. 752-753).

⁶¹ PhR, § 181.

werden)'.⁶² The key point is that this process of family member's determination into autonomous realities is not a meaningless action in relation to the concept of the family, but is precisely its realisation, the accomplishment of family's proper way of being, of what could be defined as its specific *Bestimmung*.

The second occurrence lies in the *Anmerkung* to § 273. In this paragraph Hegel emphasises the divisions of what he calls the political state (*der politische Staat*) is articulated, namely the legislative power, the executive power and the power of the sovereign. In the Annotation Hegel reveals that the improvement of the state into a constitutional monarchy is a specific feature of the modern world, 'in which the substantial Idea has attained infinite form', i.e. the consequent form of self-reflection. However, says Hegel, the modern state is the accomplishment of a historical process, and *history* is precisely the place in which the various moments of the concept of the state are articulated and differentiated. And by this, they bring to fulfilment what in the concept was only in itself: 'The *history* of this immersion of the world spirit in itself or – and this amounts to the same thing – this free development in which the Idea releases its moments (and they are only its moments) from itself as totalities, and in so doing contains them in that ideal unity of the concept in which real rationality consists [*besteht*] – the history of this true formation [*Gestaltung*] of ethical life is the concern [*Sache*] of universal world history'.⁶³

In other words, the universal history of the world, the concrete development of Spirit's freedom has as a condition the *sich entlassen* of the idea, its ability to freely let its moments emerge from itself. And it is only due to this *sich entlassen* – which is always also an exposure of the moments of the idea to accidentality, or even an *abandonment* of them to the laws of the world – that the freedom of the spirit is realised.

When Hegel, therefore, states in the *Science of Logic* that the absolute idea freely discharges itself (*sich selbst frei entläßt*), he is not employing a bizarre expression, as his critics maintain, but rather a technical one, which indicates that peculiar action by which a concept or an idea is realised. This realisation implies a movement that is an abandonment of its own purely logical-conceptual dimension, in order to move towards (to *surrender* to) a form of externality. In this, that concept and that idea assume a form that is no longer just logical, but at the same time is recognisable as such only due to the logical form that is at the origin of that movement.

⁶² Ibid., § 181.

⁶³ Ibid., § 273 (*An.*).

Hence the specific domain of the Hegelian system that can be summarised in the formula 'science of the idea' and distinguished from the inside between different sciences precisely by the way in which the idea is known in each of them.

12. Science of the idea

In its deepest essence, philosophy, for Hegel, is the science of the idea, a science invoked not only to disclose, but also to *realise* through its cognitive activity that identity of being and thought embodied precisely by the idea. The three different sciences in which the system is articulated – the science of logic, the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of the spirit – are in fact all determined as science of the idea; logic is the *science of the idea in itself and for itself* (*an und für sich*); the philosophy of nature is the science of the idea in *its otherness* (*in ihrem Andressein*), and philosophy of spirit is the science of the idea *that returns to itself from its alienation* (*aus ihrem Andressein in sich zurückkehrt*). The expression 'science of the idea' is therefore not exclusive of any of the sciences within which the discourse of philosophy is articulated, but instead is what determines and constitutes philosophical science as such.

The difference between the various philosophical sciences does not lie, therefore, in the object of which they are a science, if we may say so, since it is always the idea, i.e., the unity of concept and reality. What differentiates the various sciences in which the system is articulated is the different 'element' in relation to which that object – the idea – is considered each time. What is specific to logic is being science of the *pure* idea, in other words, as the second part of the proposition that opens the treatment of the first part of the system says, the *science of the idea in the abstract element of thought*. The philosophy of nature is the science of the idea in the element of externality, that is, in the element of the maximum disintegration of the sides of which the idea is the innermost connection. The philosophy of spirit is the science of the idea that returns to itself, that tends towards the unity of its articulations in a movement that develops within the externality itself.

The three elements that compose the three different sciences are, consequently, the pure element of thought in logic, the externality in the philosophy of nature and the movement of emancipation from externality in the philosophy of spirit. But in saying that the three sciences that articulate philosophy are all sciences of the idea, Hegel is also saying – and here we can begin to capture that dimension of resemantisation that was hinted at earlier – that the three sciences are each, albeit in different ways, a *science of thought*. This is not to say that logic, as

the science of the idea in the element of pure thought, has to do with thought, while the philosophy of nature and spirit, by dealing with externality, are not science of thought.

To say that each one of these sciences is a science of the idea means, for Hegel, that each of them is a science of the unity of thought and reality, although in each one this unity is considered within a specific dimension that determines its particular mode of being. In particular, in *Realphilosophie*, the unity of thought and being is not articulated within a *purely* fluid state, such as that of logic, but must relate to contrasting elements (and thus to elements essentially characterised by externality) that imply a restructuring and rearticulation of the categories as they are manifested in logic. The relationship between logic – the science of the idea in the pure element of thought – and reality – that realm of externality within which both the philosophy of nature and (albeit according to a different dynamic) the philosophy of the spirit operate – assumes a rather peculiar curvature that implies a series of particularities which can be elucidated here.

The first element worth paying attention to is that the difference between the logical and the real, or, to put it better, between the philosophy that considers the idea from a purely logical point of view and the philosophy that considers the idea in its external exposition, is not a difference between the idea and the other of the idea, between thought and the other of thought, and not even a difference between the logical and the other of the logical. Externality – and this is a point that, however absolutely explicit in Hegel, is often relativised by many critical readings – is not the other of thought, but rather a consideration of thought that, precisely because it is external, always implies an element of resistance, of friction that logic – in its being *pure* thought – cannot grasp. This means that the logic of real philosophy is not on the one hand the logic of pure thought, but, on the other hand, it is not the other of logic; it is a logic of externality, in which the forms of thought are redetermined and reconfigured based on degree of externality in which they are recognised. From this, it follows that natural reality and, albeit in a different way, also spiritual reality, are neither merely a mirror that reproduces logic in the world of externality, nor an Other of logic, the absolutely contingent deprived of any rationality.

Likewise, and here is the second element, this implies that the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of spirit cannot be the product of an application of logic in the realm of reality. The very idea of application in fact refers back to an notion according to which, on the one side, there would be thought and, on the other, as a heterogeneous sphere opposed to it, there would

be reality, which must be submitted to or imprisoned within some epistemological scheme that is completely separate from reality itself. In short, the notion of application would once again create that radical separation between epistemology and ontology, which is what Hegelian philosophy aims to radically put into question.

As seen, the concept of idea is, in Hegel's view, neither just an epistemological concept, i.e. something simply connected to a modality through which the thinking subject is related to the world external to thought, nor merely an ontological concept, a kind of substrate of reality that the thinking subject is called upon to detect, making its way through the chaotic webs of reality. Hegel's concept of idea indicates the necessity to go beyond the rigid separation between epistemology and ontology and, in a way, deconstructs it. This deconstruction finds its roots in the conviction present in the entire post-Kantian debate, according to which the whole of modern philosophy is characterised by a series of attempts to make one or other of the two principles prevail. And these attempts tend either to deflagrate ontology in epistemology (i.e. to think that being finds its meaning only from a subjectivity that thinks it) or to deflagrate epistemology in ontology (i.e. to think that the subject is simply an expression of a substrate that determines it).

In a certain sense, what Hegel is trying to show is that the deflagration of ontology in epistemology or epistemology in ontology arises from the very inability to comprehend the ground from which both epistemology and ontology emerge. This guiding intention appears already in the *Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit*. Here, in fact, just after having enunciated what can be considered the most radical theoretical core of his entire philosophy, namely that 'everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as Substance, but equally as Subject',⁶⁴ Hegel shows, in the first place, how this idea implies the overcoming of that substantialism in which 'self-consciousness was only submerged and not preserved' – the reference here is to Spinozism, read by Hegel precisely as a form of absorption without remnants of epistemology (the *right of the subject*) in ontology, i.e. in the heart of a substance without a subject. However, in the second place, it implies also an overcoming of that idealism which, placing all universality in thought, 'is the very same simplicity, is undifferentiated, unmoved substantiality'⁶⁵ – and this would be the limit, according to Hegel, of both empiricism and critical philosophy, which can be read as forms of absorption of ontology (what could be

⁶⁴ PhG, p. 18 (*Phenomenology of Spirit*: p. 10).

⁶⁵ Ibid., (p. 10).

called *the right of the substance*) in epistemology, i.e. in the heart of what is proper to the subject.

Substance and subject, ontology and epistemology, are not founded in Hegel on any kind of *original* unity, but rather on recognition, which takes place only as a result of the very process of knowing: ‘Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a result, that only in the end is it what it truly is; and that precisely in this consists its nature, viz. to be actual, subject, the spontaneous becoming of itself.’⁶⁶ In this sense, the Hegelian position, showing the self-contradictory dimension of both positions and the impossibility for them to be articulated as a discursive form able of thinking something as the truth of reality, is capable of highlighting the one-sidedness of both the idealist-constructivist and objectivist-realist positions.

If, in fact, on one hand the constructivist position tends to reduce what is true to an instance that is totally internal to the subject (there is no truth out there, Rorty would say), on the other hand realism, which stands in opposition to a subjectivist reduction of reality, finds itself, if sustained coherently, thinking about truth in terms ultimately not dissimilar to those through which constructivism thinks. If it is indeed assumed that reality is completely independent of thought, what makes cognitive access to it possible? At this point, isn't any discourse about reality an *interpretation* that the subject makes of it? What else are discourses about the world, insofar as the world is understood as *totally other* in relation to the subject who thinks it, if not the product of conceptual schemes that the subject throws at reality in an attempt to appropriate or tame it? If realism means thinking of reality as completely independent of thought, the result cannot be – Hegel seems to say – other than an ontological realism necessarily accompanied by an epistemological idealism. In other words, a form of constructivism, which makes knowledge, and any discourse about the world, a creation of the subject who cannot have – precisely because of the heterogeneity of the spheres that each one represents – any relation to what is ontologically recognised as other in relation to him.

What fundamentally constitutes Hegelian philosophy is the radical attempt to *save* the world from being reduced to a projection, a simulacrum or to a construction of a subject, without at the same time abandoning it as an otherness that effectively prevents any possibility of discourse about this world. What this means is that the epistemic structures of the subject are not in fact foreign to the intimate structure of reality and, indeed, only this non-strangeness is

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 19 (p. 11).

the condition of possibility for thinking *realistically* the world, and so for explaining the subject's access to the world and therefore for justifying a *true* knowledge of it.

The overcoming of constructivist idealism and realism is thus carried out by discussing the radically dualistic position of the relationship between thought and reality. A position that tends to identify thought with the dimension of the subject and reality with the dimension of what lies outside and is Other in relation to the subject. Subject and reality are instead, according to Hegel, modes of being that articulate in different ways that universal logos in which something like the subject and something like reality make sense. It is precisely this common grounding of the subject and reality in something that simultaneously constitutes and transcends them that allows the subject to think the real and the real to be open to the subject that thinks it.

It is within this complexity that one must understand the Hegelian idea according to which, since the true nature of things is obtained through reflection, and reflection is an activity of the subject, this nature 'is equally the product of my spirit [...] – that is, of my freedom'.⁶⁷ Saying this does not mean, as it might appear from the perspective of a subjectivist idealism, affirming the dissolution of the objectivity of things into their being represented. The true nature of things is a product of my freedom, not because the nature of things is the result of a voluntarist *hybris* that has created or constructed the nature of things, thus attributing to them the characteristics of truth. Rather, the true nature of things is a product of freedom because it is only by freeing oneself from the conditioning in which subjectivity is immersed, it is only by emancipating oneself from the presuppositions in which it has thrown itself, that subjectivity itself can rise to the level of truth. Freedom in this sense is the subject's capacity to free and to be emancipated first and foremost from itself and thus from its being *just* a subject.

13. Conclusion

The concluding words of logic, and the peculiar action of the absolute idea that have been elucidated here, seek to illuminate one of the perhaps most radical connotations that the idea of freedom acquires in Hegel. The act that the idea performs of liberating itself in the form of the *sich entlassen*, that is, the decision of the absolute idea to abandon its solely logical configuration and open itself up to externality, is in fact an act, as has been stated, that comes only under the sign of freedom. In the annotation to §5 of the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia*

⁶⁷ *Enz. C.*, § 23.

of *Philosophical Sciences*, published in Heidelberg in 1817, Hegel states that philosophy can be regarded as the ‘science of freedom’.⁶⁸

In it, Hegel goes on to say, disappear ‘the heterogeneity of objects and with it the finitude of consciousness, and through this movement of negation, disappear in philosophy the ‘dependence (*Abhängigkeit*), nostalgia (*Sehnsucht*) and timorousness (*Furcht*)’,⁶⁹ all those forms of external attachment that obstruct the free unfolding of thought from within itself. By saying that philosophy is the science of freedom, Hegel obviously does not intend to say that philosophy is the science that has freedom as its own object. This would even contrast with the somewhat paradoxical but absolutely decisive way in which Hegel conceives the work of philosophy. Philosophy has no *a priori* that justifies its disciplinary scope, it has no foundation on which it can rest, it presupposes nothing, not even the logical structure of the discourse in which it is developed. And in this sense, it doesn't have freedom as its own object, since if it did, it would be assumed as a presupposition.

The concept of freedom is, as is known, the energetic core from which emerges and around which operates the philosophical discourse that begins with Kant and is developed in an extraordinarily radical way between the end of the 18th century and the first years of the 19th in Germany, and which certainly finds its most complex and problematic achievements in the thought of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel.⁷⁰

In order to comprehend that philosophy is the science of freedom insofar as it is science in the most radical sense of the term, it is necessary to make reference to Kant. For Kant, as we know, the concept of freedom constitutes ‘the keystone of the whole structure of a system of pure reason’.⁷¹ If, however, one wants to find the origin of the theoretical structure of freedom, one should, according to Kant, look at the form of the *starting from itself*.⁷² In starting from itself, the different meanings of freedom that Kant analyses within his work are coagulated: from *negative* freedom, and thus freedom understood as *independence from*, to freedom in the *positive* sense, as *freedom for*, in other words as *autonomy* and *self-determination*, to *freedom of*, that capacity to be the beginning, which is linked to the element of *creativity*.

⁶⁸ **Enz. A**, § 5.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ On this, see CHIEREGHIN, F. Libertà. In: Illetterati, L., Giuspoli, P. (Eds.). **Filosofia classica tedesca. Parole chiave**. Roma: Carocci 2016. Chiereghin emphasises how it is Schelling's thought in particular that makes the concept of freedom both more radical and more aporetic.

⁷¹ KANT, I. **Kritik der praktischen Vernunft**, Akademie Ausgabe, Bd. 5. Berlin-New York: De Gruyter 1971, p. 3 (**Critique of Practical Reason**. Translated by Mary Gregor. Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 3).

⁷² See CHIEREGHIN, F. **Il problema della libertà in Kant**. Trento: Verifiche 1991.

By saying that philosophy is the *science of freedom*, Hegel is first and foremost saying that it is a knowledge that does not suffer from the conditionality present on its dependence of an external element taken as given, that it is a knowledge that does not *depend on* another to act as a foundation for it to proceed.⁷³ Equally, as a radical inquiry of the totality, it cannot leave anything outside itself as a presupposed and given externality, and it is thus a science that is necessarily the beginning of itself, that *begins itself*, as Hegel says, in other words that does not have as its own foundation anything other than itself, on which it would necessarily depend.

Philosophy, precisely because it cannot assume any foundation to base itself, is the *beginning of itself*.⁷⁴ The non-foundationalism that philosophy embodies is the negative side of the self-foundational movement that constitutes the specific trait of philosophy and allows it to still be a possibility of creation and of redetermination, on new bases, of a content that has undergone the critique of its finitude.

The entire third part of the logic, the doctrine of the concept, which culminates with the absolute idea and with the action of it to free itself from itself, is substantially a logic of freedom. For Hegel, the concept is in fact the mode of being of what is free, of what moves and develops from itself. And in the absolute idea, this concept reaches its extreme point, in which the idea, precisely because of its absolute freedom, liberates itself from its own logical absoluteness in order to realise and therefore recognise itself in that externality which appears as the very dissolution of the idea. Just as it happens in the *sich entlassen* of the family, which is realised through its dissolution in the achievement of its member's autonomy and, just as it happens in the spirit of the world which realises its peculiar character of being free through its dispersion in history, the absolute idea realises its freedom by sacrificing itself as a purely logical idea and moving towards its own otherness.

Similarly, just as intention on the theory of action, in order to be realised, must abandon its own inner purity and *thrown* itself to the world and its laws, so the absolute idea is actualised by freeing itself from itself and opening itself up to reality, or to put it differently, it is actualised by pursuing and finding itself in the dimension of externality that constitutes the *proprium* of nature's spirit.

⁷³ See MAKER, W. **Philosophy without Foundations. Rethinking Hegel**. Albany: SUNY Press 1994.

⁷⁴ The relationship between philosophy and freedom is also determined by Hegel according to "exterior determinations". On this point, in the introductory paragraphs of his essay, see particularly BIASUTTI, F. Sulla determinazione logico-sistemica del concetto di libertà. In: Chiereghin, F. (Ed.). **Filosofia e scienze filosofiche nell' "Enciclopedia" hegeliana del 1817**. Trento: Verifiche 1996, p. 147-212, here 151-156.

BIBLIOGRAFIA

- BERLIN, Isaiah. Feuerbach's Supposed Objection to Hegel: Reply to Orsini, **Journal of the History of Ideas**, vol. 30, n. 1, 1969, p. 91-95.
- BIASUTTI, Franco. *Sulla determinazione logico-sistemica del concetto di libertà*. In: Chiereghin, F. (Ed.). **Filosofia e scienze filosofiche nell' 'Enciclopedia' hegeliana del 1817**. Trento: Verifiche 1996, p. 147-212.
- BORMANN, Marc. Der Übergang der Logik in die Natur. In: Bormann, M. (Ed.). **Der Begriff der Natur. Eine Untersuchung zu Hegels Naturbegriff und dessen Rezeption**. Centaurus Verlag & Media: Herbolzheim 2000.
- BRAUN, Hermann. Zur Interpretation der Hegelschen Wendung: frei entlassen. In: **Hegel. L'esprit objectif, l'unité de l'histoire**, Lille: Giard 1970, p. 51-64.
- BRINKMANN, Klaus. Schellings Hegel-Kritik. In: Hartmann, K. (Ed.). **Die ontologische Option**. Berlin-New York: De Gruyter 1976, p. 117-210.
- CHIEREGHIN, Franco. **Il problema della libertà in Kant**. Trento: Verifiche, 1991.
- _____. La Naturphilosophie di Hegel tra classicità e modernità. In: Sánchez Sorondo, M. (Ed.). **Physica, Cosmologia, Naturphilosophie. Nuovi approcci**, Roma: Herder-Pontificia Università Lateranense 1993, p. 171-192.
- _____. Libertà. In: Illetterati, L., Giuspoli, P. (Eds.). **Filosofia classica tedesca. Parole chiave**. Roma: Carocci 2016.
- ENGELS, Friedrich. **Schelling zu Hegel**. K. Marx/F. Engels Gesamtausgabe, Erste Abteilung, Bd. 3, Berlin: Dietz Verlag 1985, p. 256-263 (Schelling su Hegel. In: Fiorani, E. (Ed.). **Anti-Schelling**, Bari: Laterza 1972, p. 41-51).
- FERNÁNDEZ, Jorge Eduardo. La libertad en la lógica de Hegel, **Pensamiento Político**, n. 5, 2014, p. 77-90.
- FEUERBACH, Ludwig. **Fragmente zur Charakteristik meines philosophischen curriculum vitae**. In: Schuffenhauer, W. (Ed.). *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 10, Kleinere Schriften III (1846-1850). Berlin: De Gruyter 1971, p. 151-179 (**Frammenti per caratterizzare il mio curriculum vitae filosofico**. In: Cesa, C. (Ed.) *Opere*. Trans. C. Cesa. Bari: Laterza 1965, p. 341-374).
- _____. **Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Philosophie**. In: Jodl, F. (Ed.). *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. 2, Philosophische Kritiken und Grundsätze. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann Verlag 1989, p. 158-204.
- FLEISCHHACKER, Louk. Gibt es etwas außer der Ausserlichkeit? Über die Bedeutung der Veräußerlichung der Idee. **Hegel-Jahrbuch**, 1990, p. 35-41.
- FRANK, Manfred. **Der unendliche Mangel an Sein: Schellings Hegelkritik und die Anfänge der Matxschen Dialektik**. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag 1992.

- GANS, Michael. Entlassen zur Sache. Die transzendentalphilosophische Struktur des Übergangs der absoluten Idee zur Natur in Hegels „Wissenschaft der Logik“. In: Grün, K.J., Jung, M. (Eds.). **Idee, Natur und Geschichte**. Hildesheim: Olms 1991, p. 11-39.
- HALBIG, Christoph. **Objektives Denken: Erkenntnistheorie und Philosophy of Mind in Hegels System**. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag 2002.
- HEGEL, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. **(PhG) Phänomenologie des Geistes**. In: Bonsiepen, W., Heede, R. (Eds.). *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 9. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 1980; **(Phenomenology of Spirit**. Translated by A. V. Miller with Analysis of the Text and Foreword by J. N. Findlay. Oxford Press, 1977).
- _____. **(WdL) Wissenschaft der Logik**. In: Hogemann, F., Jaeschke, W. (Eds.). *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 11, 12, 21. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 1978-1985; **(The Science of Logic**. Translated by George di Giovanni. Cambridge Press, 2010).
- _____. **(PhR) Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts**. In: Grotzsch, K., Weisser-Lohmann, E. *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 14,1. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 2009; **(Elements of the Philosophy of Right**. Translated by H. B. Nisbet and edited by Allen W. Wood. Cambridge Press, 2003).
- _____. **(Enz. A) Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse** (1817). In: Bonsiepen, W., Grotzsch, K. (Eds.). *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 13. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 2000; **(Enciclopedia delle scienze filosofiche in compendio** (1817). Trans. F. Biasutti, F. Bignami, F. Chiereghin, G.F. Frigo, F. Granello, F. Menegoni, A. Moretto. Trento: Verifiche 1987).
- _____. **(Enz. C) Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse** (1830). In: Bonsiepen, W., Lucas, H.-C., u. mit. v. Rameil, U. (Eds.). *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 20. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 1992; **(Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline Part I: Science of Logic**. Translated and edited by Klaus Brinkmann and Daniel O. Dahlstrom. Cambridge University Press, 2010). **(Hegel's Philosophy of Nature: being part two of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)**. Translated from Nicolin and Pöggeler's Edition and from the *Zusätze* in Michetet's text (1847). Oxford Clarendon Press, 2004; **Hegel's Philosophy of Mind**. Translated from the 1830 Edition, together with the *Zusätze* by W. Wallace and A. V. Miller. Clarendon Press: 2007).
- HORSTMANN, Rolf-Peter. Zur Hegel Kritik des späten Schelling. In: Horstmann, R-P. (Ed.). **Die Grenzen der Vernunft. Eine Untersuchung zu Zielen und Motiven des Deutschen Idealismus**, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann 1991, p. 245-268.
- HOULGATE, Stephen. Schelling's Critique of Hegel's *Science of Logic*. **The Review of Metaphysics**, n. 53 (1), 1999, p. 99-128.
- _____. Logic and Nature in Hegel's Philosophy: A Response to John W. Burbidge. **The Owl of Minerva**, n. 34, 2002, p. 107-125.
- HRNJEZ, Saša, ILLETTERATI, Luca. Soggettività e traduzione. Dinamica traduttiva e ontologia del soggetto in Hegel. In: Illetterati, L., Quante, M. (Eds.). **Morale, etica, religione tra filosofia classica tedesca e pensiero contemporaneo: studi in onore di Francesca Menegoni**. Padova: Padova University Press, 2020, p. 787-814.

- JOVIĆEVIĆ, Bojana. Thinking Free Release in Hegel's System. In: Simoniti, J.; Kroupa, G. (Eds.). **Ideas and Idealism in Philosophy**. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022, p. 111-126.
- KANT, Immanuel. **Kritik der praktischen Vernunft**, Akademie Ausgabe, Bd. 5. Berlin-New York: De Gruyter 1971 (**Critique of Practical Reason**. Translated by Mary Gregor and introduction by Andrews Reath. Cambridge Press, 2015).
- LÖWITH, Karl. **Von Hegel zu Nietzsche**. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag (**Da Hegel a Nietzsche**. Trans. G. Colli. Torino: Einaudi 1949).
- MAKER, William. **Philosophy without Foundations. Rethinking Hegel**. Albany: SUNY Press 1994.
- MARX, Karl. **Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844**. In: K Marx/F. Engels Werke, Bd. 40 Ergänzungsband, Erster Teil. Berlin: Dietz Verlag 1968, p. 565-588 (**Economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844**. Translated by Martin Milligan. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977, p. 153-154).
- _____. **Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie**. K. Marx / F. Engels Werke, Bd. 23. Berlin: Dietz Verlag 1968 (**Capital: a critique of political economy**. Volume One. Translated by Ben Fowkes. England: Penguin Books, 1976).
- MCDOWELL, Hegel's Idealism as Radicalization of Kant, **International Yearbook of German Idealism**, ed. by K. Ameriks & J. Stolzenberg, 5/2007, pp. 157-175
- MEYER, Rudolf Walter. Natur in der Logik?. **Hegel-Jahrbuch**, 1976, p. 61-68.
- MIOLLI, Giovanna. **Il pensiero della cosa: Wahrheit hegeliana e Identity Theory of Truth**. Trento: Verifiche 2016.
- ORSINI, Federico. Hegel's A Priori and the Critique of Three Aprioristic Readings of the Science of Logic, **Hegel-Bulletin**, n. 43 (1), 2022, p. 47-68.
- ORSINI, Giordano N.B. Feuerbach's Supposed Objection to Hegel, **Journal of the History of Ideas**, vol. 30, n. 1, 1969, p. 85-90.
- OSWALD, Georg. **Das freie Sich-Entlassen der logischen Idee in die Natur in Hegels „Wissenschaft der Logik“**. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 2020.
- PLEVRAKIS, Ermylos. Übergang von der Logik in die Natur aus ‚absoluter Freiheit‘? Eine argumentanalytische Rekonstruktion des letzten Satzes der enzyklopädischen *Logik* Hegels. **Hegel-Studien**, n. 52, 2018, p. 103-138.
- ROSSI, Mario. **Da Hegel a Marx**, vol. III, **La scuola hegeliana. Il giovane Marx**. Milano: Feltrinelli 1974, p. 53-54.
- SCHELLING, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. **Vorrede zu einer philosophischen Schrift des Herrn Victor Cousin** (1834). In: Schröter, M. Schellings Werke, Vierter Ergänzungsband. München: Beck 1971, p. 445-468.
- _____. **Zur Geschichte der neuen Philosophie. Münchener Vorlesungen**. In: Sämtliche Werke, Bd. 10. Stuttgart/Ausburg: Cotta 1856-1861 (**On the History of Modern Philosophy**. Translated by Andrew Bowie. Cambridge Press, 1994).
- _____. **Philosophie der Offenbarung**, Erster Teil. In: Schröter, M. (Ed.). Schellings Werke, Sechster Ergänzungsband. München: Beck 1954 (**Filosofia della rivelazione**, vol. I. Trans. A. Bausola. Bologna: Zanichelli 1972).

- SCHMIDT, Josef. **Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik und ihre Kritik durch Adolf Trendelenburg**. München: Berchmans 1977.
- SCHNEIDER, Helmut. **Sich in Freiheit entlassen. Natur und Idee bei Hegel**, Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2004.
- SORESI, Sergio. **Il soggetto del pensiero. Modi e articolazioni della nozione di pensiero in Hegel**. Trento: Verifiche 2012.
- STERN, Robert. Did Hegel hold an identity theory of truth?. **Mind**, n. 102, 1993, p. 645-647.
- STONE, Alison. **Petrified Intelligence: Nature in Hegel's Philosophy**. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005.
- TRENDELENBURG, Adolf. **Logische Untersuchungen**. Hildesheim: Olms 1964 (**Il metodo dialettico**. Trans. (Cap. III) M. Morselli, Bologna: Il Mulino 1990).
- VOLKMANN-SCHLUCK, Karl-Heinz. Die Entäusserung der Idee zur Natur. **Hegel-Studien**, Beiheft 1, 1965, p. 45-54.
- WANDSCHNEIDER, Dieter, HÖSLE, Vittorio. Die Entäusserung der Idee zur Natur und ihre zeitliche Entfaltung als Geist bei Hegel. **Hegel-Studien**, n. 18, 1983, p. 173-199.
- WANDSCHNEIDER, Dieter. Die Absolutheit des Logischen und das Sein der Natur. Systematische Überlegungen zum absolut-idealistischen Ansatz Hegels. **Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung**, n. 39, 1985, p. 331-351.
- _____. Die Stellung der Natur im Gesamtentwurf *der* Hegelschen Philosophie. In: Petry M.J. (Ed.). **Hegel und die Naturwissenschaften**. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann Verlag 1987, p. 33-58; ID. Das Problem der Entäusserung der Idee Natur bei Hegel. In: Kimmerle, H., Lefèvre, W., Meyer, R.W. (Eds.). **Natur und Geist**, zweiter Teil. Hegel-Jahrbuch, 1990, p. 25-33.
- WEISSHAUPT, Kurt. Der Übergang von der Idee zur Natur. **Hegel-Jahrbuch**, 1976, p. 53-60.

