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TOTALITY IN *THE SCIENCE OF LOGIC* AS AN INDISPENSABLE PRESUPPOSITION OF HEGEL'S *PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT*

Abstract

In the opening pages of *The Philosophy of Right*, Hegel marks that what was previously expounded in *The Science of Logic* is presupposed in this book. This paper elaborates on what this presupposition entails. To explore this, it concentrates on one specific concept, namely, totality. It will be argued that the development in different moments of *The Philosophy of Right*, would not be possible without the anterior development of the metacategory of totality in *The Science of Logic*. Although a myriad of works has been published on each of these books, the scholarly works on Hegel misses an elaboration on this presupposition, more so on the role totality plays in the exposition of *The Philosophy of Right* in relationship with the exposition in *The Science of Logic*. After giving a general overview of each of these books, this paper traces such a relationship in five specific moments in *The Philosophy of Right*, namely, Will, Morality, Ethical Life, Civil Society, and State.

Keywords: actual; category; meta-category; rational; totality

DIE TOTALITÄT IN DER *WISSENSCHAFT DER LOGIK* ALS UNABDINGBARE VORAUSSETZUNG FÜR HEGELS *PHILOSOPHIE DES RECHTS*

Zusammenfassung

Auf den ersten Seiten der *Philosophie des Rechts* stellt Hegel fest, dass das, was zuvor in der *Wissenschaft der Logik* dargelegt wurde, hier nun vorausgesetzt wird. Der vorliegende Beitrag erläutert, was diese Voraussetzung bedeutet. Um das zu untersuchen, ist der Fokus auf einen bestimmten Begriff, nämlich den der Totalität gelegt. Es wird argumentiert, dass die Entwicklung in den verschiedenen Momenten der *Philosophie des Rechts* nicht möglich wäre ohne die vorausgehende Entwicklung der Metakategorie der Totalität in der *Wissenschaft der Logik*. Obwohl es zu jedem dieser beiden Bücher eine Vielzahl von Veröffentlichungen gibt, fehlt in diesen wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten über Hegel eine Ausarbeitung gerade dieser Voraussetzung, nämlich insbesondere die Rolle, welche die Totalität in der Darstellung der *Rechtsphilosophie* im Verhältnis zu der Darstellung in der *Wissenschaft der Logik* spielt. Nachdem ein allgemeiner Überblick über jedes dieser Bücher gegeben wurde, wird in diesem Aufsatz eine solche Beziehung in fünf spezifischen Momenten der *Rechtsphilosophie* nachgezeichnet, nämlich: Wille, Moral, ethisches Leben, bürgerliche Gesellschaft und Staat.

Schlüsselwörter: Aktuell; Kategorie; Metakategorie; Wirklich; Totalität

Introduction

In §2, in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* we read: 'What constitutes scientific procedure in philosophy is expounded in philosophical logic and is here *presupposed*.' (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 19) He repeats the same idea farther in the book, in § 31: 'The method whereby, in philosophical science, the concept develops itself out of itself is expounded *in logic and is here likewise presupposed*.' (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 48. Emphases added) The current paper elaborates on this presupposition with reference to the concept of the meta-category¹ of totality presented in *The Science of Logic*. It will be argued that without the methodical development of totality in this book, the elaboration on the different strata of social life as presented in the *Philosophy of Right* would be impossible. This book, according to this reading, adds to the discussion in *The Science of Logic* a level of contingency that stems from

¹ The introduction of the term 'metacategory' in contradistinction with categories may be found in Boveiri 2024.

the socialization of totality. It will be shown that this socialization-historization is the sine qua non condition that renders possible the application of this enriched and externalized concept of totality to a large number of extremely diverse social forms, from family (§32), possession (§54) and personality (§70) to ethical system (§141) and marriage (§161) – all absent in *The Science of Logic*.

One corollary of this paper is that regarding the totality of social life, the apparent identical relation between rationality and actuality, once put in the framework of Hegel's other works, is erroneous. Ironically, while this interpretation seems to be quite an acceptable one, once the reader limits itself to *The Philosophy of Right*, put into a larger framework, one would find not only the need for the rational to become actual and the actual the rational, but even more than that an explicit normative language is found in Hegel's works to the effect that what is rational *must be* actual. Thus, enriched with sociality, the totality presupposed in *The Philosophy of Right* bears a rationality to be attained, to be actualized, not a rationality that is already achieved. The question, however, arises as the way Hegel thinks this rationality may be actualized.²

To set the background, in the following section, I first give a brief overview of Hegel's discussion of totality in *The Science of Logic*. Then, in the second section, after a short outline of the general characteristics of totality in *The Philosophy of Right*, I explore this in detail in five specific moments in the book, namely, Will, Morality, Ethical Life, Civil Society, and State.

1. Totality in *The Science of Logic*

Hegel's conception of totality is a response to the Kantian conception of totality. Totality as exposed in *The Critique of Pure Reason* is in the group of the categories of quantity: allness or totality. It follows unity and plurality, and according to him it is plurality taken as unity (KANT, 1968, B111, p. 154). Notwithstanding this apparent dynamism, totality has, like all other categories, a fixed and certain place in the Kantian table of categories. This is one first point on which Hegel's and Kant's standpoints diverge. More importantly, as it is argued elsewhere³, as far as Hegel is concerned, totality may be better termed as metacategory. The point is that while there are categories throughout *The Science of Logic*, there are also concepts, which

² On this, see Kervégan 2018, particularly the preface, pp. XV ff.

³ Boveiri 2024, chapter 2, 2.4.

although they are not in the categorial development are quasi-omnipresent in the book. Other examples of metacategories, according to this reading, are determination and negation.

Although Hegel's reference to whole and part and their relationship is numerous in *The Science of Logic*, he assigns a particular part of the Doctrine of Essence to this discussion (HEGEL, 1969b, pp. 166-172). For him, this is the first moment of essential relationship, where both sides simultaneously and mutually condition and presuppose each other. This first moment is followed by the second moment of the essential relationship – that is, force and its externalization – then by the third moment of the internal and external relationship. The reflected independence is here brought about through the reflection of the unmediated independence in itself. Each is a moment posited by the other and in negative unity with it.

Part and whole are both here existing, reflecting, and in immediate independence, but with their being posited in isolation merely as a moment of their negative unity. The whole makes the independence of the plurality of the parts, and the parts are the actualisation or put in other words the instantiation of the whole, since they are merely the means of the manifestation of the whole. Their independent reflected totality is in fact relative, and this relativity is the result of the mediation of each in the other.⁴ Through this negation, the parts are the same as the whole, but only insofar as they are parts of that whole; similarly, the whole is the same as the parts merely as parts of the whole. For Hegel, the parts are the same as the whole considered 'as partitioned whole [als geteiltem Ganze]' (HEGEL, 1969b, p. 169). A generalization of this standpoint seems legitimate to the effect that the whole is the same as the parts considered as the 'wholified' parts [als geganzte Teile]. The primary negative unity, in which the immediacy of each side is mediated through the other, is in this way developed into reflective identity [Reflexionsidentität], or 'reflected unity [reflektierte Einheit]' (HEGEL, 1969b, p. 170).

The Absolute Idea at the end of *Science of Logic* – that is, the Idea absolutized or the Absolute idealized – is the actualisation or the concretion of totality. It is the exposition of the system of totality (HEGEL, 1969b, p. 569) that is to overcome the 'night of totality' introduced in Hegel's Jena Writings (HEGEL, 1986, p. 30). The concept, unfree in the previous moments, finds its absolute liberation at this moment. One may say that here (HEGEL, 1969b, p. 573) the double transition put forward previously

⁴ This is already highlighted by Stephen Houlgate (HOULGATE, 2006, pp. 4ff.).

(HEGEL, 1969a, p. 384) is accomplished: each category is both determined by the one preceding it and also by the one following it.⁵

While this admittedly very short overview leaves undiscussed nuances present in *The Science of Logic* regarding totality, it is sufficient to see how the presupposition of this metacategory makes the transition from a universal discussion to a particular one possible.

2. Totality in *The Philosophy of Right*

In this section, in what follows, I first reiterate the general outline of *The Philosophy of Right*. Then I show in detail how Hegel discusses totality and try to relate this to his standpoint on totality in the *Science of Logic*. Although a myriad of scholarly works exists on *The Science of Logic*, *The Philosophy of Right*, and the relation between these two, the presupposition hinted at in the Introduction is left undiscussed, much less so the role totality plays in this respect.

As is known, the first section of *The Philosophy of Right*, Abstract Right, affirms the rights of individuals as free legal subjects, including the freedom to own personal property and to engage in free exchanges with other free subjects. The second, Morality, affirms the rights of individuals as free moral subjects, including rights to freedom of conscience. Individual freedom as legal persons and as moral subjects is reaffirmed in the third and final part (Ethical Life), where Hegel discusses the forms of freedom that individuals as individuals cannot possess. They can possess those forms of freedom only as individuals engaged in social practices with others. Hence, we witness a move from the right of the individual, to right between individuals, and from there to right between states.

With this introduction, we go into details of different moments of the book, while demonstrating the role totality plays in each case. The following pages trace in more details such a relation in five moments in this book, Will, Morality, Ethical Life, Civil Society, and State.⁶

Right in the Introduction, Hegel presents a necessary attribute to the *will*: ‘The will has to resolve on something otherwise it will not renounce the totality it yearns.’ (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 37) This is indispensable for the will to overcome its abstractness: the in itself determinations are just in

⁵ Boveiri 2024, chapter 2. In what precedes the discussion of that chapter is iterated in this section.

⁶ In what follows, these moments are in bold.

this case developed into totalities. The self-acclaiming ‘free I’ has to oppose another to overcome its indeterminacy and immediacy.

Through overcoming its indeterminacy and immediacy, ‘the will sublates [sursumes⁷] itself to an individual will, a person.’ (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 53) This sursumption through externalization is concomitant with externalization of individual’s relations to the totality of the individual’s being. This is equally the externalization of another totality, namely force ‘which is the totality of its manifestation, substance of its accidents, the universal of its particulars.’ (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 79) Taking force as totality, once unfolded and once, so to speak folded, reminds us of Hegel’s discussion on Force in the Chapter named Consciousness in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*:

Force is also the whole, i.e. it remains what it is according to its Notion [Concept]; that is to say, these differences remain pure forms, superficial vanishing moments. At the same time there would be no difference at all between Force proper which has been driven back into itself, and Force unfolded into independent ‘matters’, if they had no enduring being, or, there would be no Force if it did not exist in these opposite ways. (Hegel 1977, p. 82.)

In *The Philosophy of Right*, Hegel relates the force to another totality, that is life, in the following words: ‘The comprehensive totality of external activity, namely life, is not external to personality which is itself immediate and a *this*.’ (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 82). In relating force to personality, we witness an instance of socialisation of this category.

In his discussion of life, Hegel seems to be adopting an organicist conception of totality. It is noteworthy that in an organicist conception of totality, the whole hypostasizes over the parts. Based on this conception of totality, the proto-parts change into parts through the mediation of the whole. Along the same lines, while each part presupposes the existence of other parts and all of them, the existence of the parts hinges upon the existence of the whole: beyond presupposing any other part, each part, in consequence, presupposes the existence of the hypostatized whole.⁸ Now let’s see how Hegel may be thought to be a follower of this conception of totality in his discussion on life. As is well-known, Hegel discusses in length

⁷ The introduction of the term Sursume, and Sursumption for *aufheben* and *Aufhebung* in English is introduced and argued for in Boveiri 2024 (Appendix III), following a similar introduction in French by late Yvon Gauthier (See Gauthier 2010). Boveiri builds on Gauthier’s suggestion and uses other derivations of this term.

⁸ Boveiri 2024, chapter 3. Here Boveiri gives a nuance to the classification originally introduced by Kosík in Kosík 1976.

why an individual, not being the master of his own life, cannot take his life. Nonetheless he continues: ‘An individual person is certainly something subordinate, and as such he *must* dedicate himself to the ethical whole. Hence if the state claims life, the individual *must surrender it* [his life]’ (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 83. Emphasis mine.). A different conception of totality emphasizes the co-constitution of the whole and the parts.⁹ With this we turn to the second part of the book namely morality.

It is only in *morality*, where the opposition is inherent from the start, that ‘the will has in itself the different moments of individuality and universality, and this gives it its determinate character.’ (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 53) In this part, Hegel refers once more to the life of the same individual, to evaluate certain misdemeanors. For an individual, ‘life as the totality of ends has a right against abstract rights.’ (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 125) Hence, Jean Valjean, the character of Hugo’s *Les Misérables*, for instance, had certain right to steal bread. On the contrary ‘To refuse to allow [people like Jean Valjean] in jeopardy of his life to take such steps for self-preservation would be to regard him as being without rights, and since he would be deprived of his life, his freedom would be annulled altogether.’ (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 125)) Hence the repetition of the principle: ‘no one shall be sacrificed altogether on the altar of right.’ (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 125)¹⁰ Here in contradistinction with what we witnessed in his discussion of life, Hegel adopts a dialectical conception of totality, in which neither the whole nor the parts but their co-constitution is its essential characteristic.

Although this externalization of the individual in a contract between two subjects bears always double consent, this intersubjective relation of the subjects may be limited to the *formal* contract between two wills or it can be *reel*: it is *formal* when one has alienation of a property and the other its appropriation: if you give a gift to your sister for her birthday, you no more possess the object. For a contract to be *reel* ‘each of the two contracting wills is the totality of these mediating moments and therefore in such a contract becomes a property owner and remains so. This is a contract of exchange’ (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 86). This can be the case if I gave you a gift as an exchange for your question after the talk I gave on the earlier version of this

⁹ Boveiri 2024, chapter 3.

¹⁰ This may remind the reader of the following phrase: “an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.” Marx, Engels, 2010, p. 506.

paper.¹¹ In this case, you and I have both surrendered and acquired something. This is a prelude to the following moment, namely, *ethical life*.

'*The ethical life*', according to Hegel, 'is the concept of freedom developed into the existing world and the nature of self-consciousness' (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 154). This may be called externalization of totality. In the first moment of the first section of the Third Part, under the subsection of Marriage, Hegel introduces marriage as an essentially ethical relationship. Marriage is 'A substantial relationship in which the life involved in it is life in its totality, i.e., as the actuality of the species and its life-process.' (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 178) Any reduction that does not see marriage in its totality, misses its full comprehension. Hegel introduces three cases here: the standpoints that see marriage only as a sexual relationship, only as a civil contract or only a love relationship, all miss the totality marriage bears. That's why according to Hegel it is 'our subjective determination and so our ethical duty ... to enter the married state.' (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 164) The rationality of marriage, nonetheless, manifests itself through an actualisation that is processual, and is not an already attained given.

Marriage however is only the unity of inwardness or disposition; one may say in itself; it can only exist for itself objectively in the children. Given that the education of children is to be actualized in the external world, marriage dissolves itself for the benefit of the existence of the love of parents' own substance. Given that this education cannot be actualized in the family, the dissolution of marriage leads to the introduction of *civil society*, the following moment.

Civil society, in turn, is the [stage of] difference which intervenes between the family and the state. The concrete person, who as a particular person is his own end, is, as a whole [Ganz] of needs and a mixture of caprice and natural necessity, one principle of civil society. But the particular person is essentially so related to other particular persons that each asserts himself and finds satisfaction by means of the others. The fact that 'In civil society, the Idea is lost in particularity and has fallen asunder with the separation of inward and outward' (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 214) makes it necessary to guarantee the right of the individual as person in its particularity. This is

¹¹ The author would like to take this occasion to thank the organisers and participants of 7th International Conference of the Spanish Society For Hegelian Studies on October 13-15, when an earlier version of this paper was presented via Zoom.

actualized by the public authority and corporation¹² which actualize ‘the unity as a limited but concrete totality’ (Hegel 2008 [1952], pp. 214 – 215). On the other hand, “[T]he development of civil society [entails] the form of universality involved in education, the form of thought whereby spirit is objective [objektiv] and actual to itself as an *organic* totality [organische Totalität] in laws and institutions which are its will as thought.” (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 228) Hence the sphere of civil society passes over into the *state*.

The *state* is actual because it actualizes the totality of the particular aims. In the State, Church, Science and Knowledge each claim ‘the domain of spirit as its property.... Each builds itself into a totality with a distinctive principle of its own’ (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 249). The religion’s [or church’s] wish to assert its totality as state results in the overturn of the organization of the state what is no more than fanaticism. Hence religion cannot be the governor of a state with the division of powers. “The principle of the division of powers, in turn, contains the essential moment of difference” (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 257) This is the rationality that is actualized to form a harmonious totality, between the part and the whole. But when the abstract understanding, in contradistinction with rationality, aims at handling this rationalisation, it results into “the false doctrine of the absolute self-subsistence of each of the powers against the others, and then one-sidedly interprets their relation to each other as negative, as a mutual restriction.” (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 257)

This necessitates the elaboration of the constitution and its rationality in state. “The constitution [Verfassung] is rational [vernünftig] insofar as the state inwardly differentiates and determines its activity in accordance with *the nature of the concept*. The result of this is that each of these powers is in itself *the totality* [Totalität], because each contains the other moments and has them effective [wirksam] in itself, and because the moments, being

¹² “Polizei, translated ‘police’ here, has a wider sense than that conveyed by ‘police’ in English. Hence in what follows it is generally translated ‘public authority’. The justification for this is that Hegel himself sometimes (e.g. in PR § 235) uses öffentliche Macht as a synonym for Polizei; but the disadvantage of this rendering is that it is less specific than Hegel’s word. The corporation actualizes the unity as a limited but concrete totality.—‘Corporation’ [Korporation] is a term which originates with the workmen’s corporations in ancient Rome. Hegel is of course not thinking of what we know as trade unions, since his Korporationen are societies of which both employers and employed are members. Indeed, he is thinking not only of economic organizations but also of religious bodies, learned societies, and sometimes of town councils.” Note by Stephen Houlgate, Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 354

expressions of the differentiation of the concept, remain utterly within its ideality and constitute nothing but a single individual whole.” (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 256) Our desire for a state must hence be limited to its being “an expression of rationality.” It is therefore necessary to “venerate the state as an earthly divinity [Irdisch-Göttliches]” (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 258) in and for itself with each of components to be *für sich*.

One important feature of *The Philosophy of Right* is noteworthy. In the attribution of totality in this particular science, we witness some unharmonious moments, or so to speak, some noises not found in the more architectonic *The Science of Logic*. Here is an example: Hegel tells us that of the three powers, the legislative corresponds to universality and the executive to particularity. The reader familiar with the exposition of *The Science of Logic* would expect that the third option to be the moment of the individuality. Yet this is not the case. “The judiciary”, Hegel writes, “is not the third moment of the concept, since the individuality of the judiciary lies outside the above spheres.” (Hegel 2008 [1952], pp. 256 – 259)

To the question of the best form of government, composed of these three powers, Hegel underlines the importance of the sustainment of ‘the principle of free subjectivity and know how to correspond with a developed rationality.’ (Hegel 2008 [1952], pp. 262 – 263) He goes on: “If the ‘people’ is represented neither as a patriarchal clan, nor as living under the undeveloped conditions which make democracy or aristocracy possible as forms of government, nor as living under some other unorganized and haphazard conditions, but instead as an inwardly developed, genuinely organic, totality, then sovereignty is there as the personality of the whole, and this personality is there, in the actuality adequate to its concept, as the person of the monarch.” (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 269)

Hegel takes the organicity of Estates, to be the case once their mediating function is actualized. Only in that case, they are organic, that is, “taken up into the totality” (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 290). One related aspect of the account given in *The Philosophy of Right* in general and in the case of the discussion on state in particular is the necessity of a harmony between the parts and the whole. This undoubtedly reminds the reader, once more, of what is found in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

With this, we already have before us the Notion of *Spirit*. What still lies ahead for consciousness is the experience of what Spirit is—this absolute substance which is the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which, in

their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: 'I' that is 'We' and 'We' that is 'I'. (Hegel 1977, § 177, 110)

In *The Philosophy of right*, he reiterates this in his discussion of the necessary harmony between the parts and the whole. This harmony is attainable, according to Hegel with the rule of philosophy and monarchy, a standpoint with some similarity to Plato's. According to Hegel: 'The creation of civil society is the achievement of the modern world which has for the first time given all determinations of the Idea their due.' (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 181)

If we may equate this society with system, the absolute Totality, two comments may be added to Hegel's reading. Firstly, notwithstanding the shortcomings recognized by Hegel in this totality (of which the poverty referred to previously was just an example) Hegel does not see this totality as an alienated actuality. And this, once more, notwithstanding the fact that Hegel does see unsmooth movement of the discussion in *The Philosophy of Right* with noises different from smoother, so to speak, categorial movement in *The Science of Logic*. Secondly, and related to this is the fact that for Hegel what we referred to as Absolute Totality is the System of Needs not a system dominated by capital.

While it is rightly put by an interpreter that "[W]orld history' is the totality of all states, of states, furthermore, within which art, religion and philosophy have played a role in determining the character of the states themselves"¹³, this domination of capital, may nuance Hegel's conception of totality once transposed to our world. This is admittedly owing to the fact that Hegel's philosophical discussion of totality in *The Philosophy of Right* may be thought to be affected by the sociopolitical and economic world he lived in and bears its historical restrictions. Given the less interdependent total world he lived in, he writes: 'in civil society individuals are reciprocally interdependent in the most numerous respects, while independent states are principally wholes which achieve satisfaction internally.' (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 312) Hegel would have probably given a different account of totality if he was obliged like all of us to have a cellphone in his pocket, with its component (coltan) coming from the Democratic Republic of Congo, with his T-Shirt from Bangladesh and his coffee from Columbia. In the era of globalization, the states are less internally satisfied as purported by Hegel.

¹³ Maletz 1983, p. 221

Conclusion

What we witness in the *Philosophy of Right*, is the passing-over of particularity into totality [Totalität] in a particular science. This passing-over is but an exemplification of general passing-over developed in *The Science of Logic* and presupposed here. This externalization of the freedom of the will is also the externalization, concretisation of totality.

We know that in *The Science of Logic* totality is barely discussed in the Doctrine of Being. In the *Philosophy of Right*, one may attribute the few references and discussion of totality in the second part, namely morality, to its being relatively short. But I think the reason is related to the particular type of presence that we witness in this part: the distinction between the two moments of the Idea [knowing and consciousness] is, as Hegel puts it ‘present in such a way that now each of these moments is for itself [not just by itself] the totality of the Idea and has the latter [not only] as its foundation [... but also as its] content.’ (Hegel 2008 [1952], p. 154)

Two remarks before concluding the discussion. The fact that this paper limits itself to the moments expounded in the previous section does not entail that the concept of this metacategory may not be traced in other parts of the book. The goal here simply was to back the thesis that the exposition of this concept in this particular science needed a general exposition that precedes it. Moreover, the exposition of this metacategory is not the only presupposition. Further research is needed to confirm or infirm the presupposition of other elements, categories or metacategories, of *The Science of Logic* in *The Philosophy of Right*.

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