

# Comprehending Sociality: Hegel Beyond his Appropriation in Contemporary Philosophy of Recognition

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## Abstract

Contemporary philosophy of recognition represents probably the most prominent direction that presently claims to introduce an updated version of classical German idealism into ongoing debates, including the debate on the nature of sociality. In particular, studies of Axel Honneth offer triggering contributions in Frankfurt School fashion while at the same time rejuvenating Hegel's philosophy in terms of a philosophy of recognition. According to Honneth, this attempt at a rejuvenation also involves substantial modification of Hegelian doctrines. It is shown that Honneth underestimates the implications of Hegel's thoughts about the theme, method and systematic form of philosophy. As a consequence, Honneth's social philosophy is, on the one hand, in need of a plausible foundation. This leads, on the other hand, to a different construction of the social within philosophy than Honneth offers.

## I. The dawn of a new paradigm

Contemporary philosophy of recognition represents probably the most prominent direction that presently claims to introduce an updated version of classical German idealism into ongoing debates, including the debate on the nature of sociality or social ontology.<sup>1</sup> In particular studies by Axel Honneth, for instance *Suffering from Indeterminacy: An Attempt at a Reactualization of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (2000) and *Freedom's Right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life* (2014), offer triggering contributions in Frankfurt School fashion, while at the same time rejuvenating Hegel's philosophy in terms of a philosophy of recognition. Philosophy profiled as a philosophy of recognition seems to come up with innovative and far-reaching opportunities for comprehending the human world.

Although it appears somewhat excessive to characterize the theory of recognition as a 'well-established and mature research paradigm in philosophy' (Zurn 2010: 1), it cannot be denied that for the past couple of decades, there has

been intense debate about recognition which has commanded ever greater attention. This debate began with topics in practical philosophy, especially political and social philosophy. As it has developed, however, recognition has achieved such broad significance thematically and historically that a new philosophical paradigm does indeed seem to be in the making. Recognition appears to be a fundamental concept, relevant not only for understanding political issues but for our human world as a whole. As a result, the concept of recognition now includes such notions as subjectivity, objectivity, rationality, knowledge, personality, sociality, identity, otherness, nature, logic, etc. The protagonists in this debate seek to make German idealism fruitful for contemporary problems. Whereas neo-Kantians a century ago sought to update German idealism by focusing on ‘Kant as the philosopher of modern culture’,<sup>2</sup> contemporary theorists of recognition intend to rejuvenate Hegel’s philosophy (see, e.g., Honneth 2001, Siep 2010a and Cobben 2009b).

This attempt to return to Hegel exhibits rather divergent interpretations of his philosophy, and a remarkable turning away from Hegel’s mature system, as outlined in the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* of 1830.<sup>3</sup> Hegel’s philosophical project of developing self-knowledge of the idea through the three elements of pure thought, nature and spirit appears to his critics just as unconvincing as, for example, his non-dialogical, monological, concept of rationality and normativity. In contrast, I shall argue that Hegel as a systematic philosopher confronts the contemporary paradigm of recognition with difficult and far-reaching questions concerning its own foundation, both methodologically and thematically. Consider first the following background considerations.

## II. Contested essentials of Hegel’s philosophy

According to the protagonists of recognition (e.g., Siep 1979), the principle of recognition is central to Hegel’s practical philosophy in his Jena period, especially in his unpublished “Geistphilosophie” (1805/6) and *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). However, it can hardly be said that in these texts Hegel develops a comprehensive theory of recognition. Therefore, it is little surprise to find detailed, though independent, attempts to interpret, for example, the *Phenomenology* as the core of Hegel’s theory of recognition.<sup>4</sup> Hegel’s later philosophy, as published in his *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1830) and the *Philosophy of Right* (1821), does not seem to pay much attention to the principle of recognition (let alone the principle of mutual recognition). This is subordinated to other, more embracing principles. Hegel’s later works are characterized by a relation to logic very different to his early works. This reflects a further important contrast. In his early works, Hegel, inspired by Kant,

elaborated on something like ‘practical philosophy’.<sup>5</sup> However, in the course of his intellectual development, Hegel criticized Kant’s moral philosophy and philosophy of religion ever more radically. Hegel’s mature views present a philosophy of *spirit* which seeks to overcome the opposition between theoretical and practical philosophy, or, more precisely, from the start it *has already overcome* that opposition. Unlike Hegel, however, the protagonists of recognition conceive Hegel’s philosophy of spirit as ‘practical’ philosophy; and ‘Hegel’s practical philosophy’ indeed functions, in various permutations, as a popular book title; see, e.g., Siep (2010a), Pippin (2008) and Rózsa (2005). In contrast, Hegel’s *Encyclopaedia* conceives philosophy as philosophy of the *idea*, and conceives of spirit in its objective dimension not as practical but as *free* spirit, embedding the distinction between theoretical and practical in a new, more fundamental constellation of philosophy of spirit. It is essential to Hegel’s mature philosophy (both in the *Logic* and in his philosophy of spirit) to overcome the traditional, pervasive and influential distinction between theoretical and practical philosophy, and between the theoretical and the practical.

Hence, it is unsurprising that many theorists of recognition favour Hegel’s early philosophy. They regard his mature philosophy either as insufficient for a philosophy of recognition, which must instead be developed, for example, from the *Phenomenology*,<sup>6</sup> or as requiring considerable modification to become relevant to contemporary philosophy. The first strategy can at best conclude that, from a systematic point of view, there is a continuity concerning the theme of recognition in Hegel’s development. In order to determine this continuity, however, certain perspectives of the younger Hegel must guide the interpretation of Hegel’s mature philosophy. This results in the view that Hegel’s later philosophy is retrograde with respect to the *Phenomenology* (see, e.g., Cobben 2009b).<sup>7</sup> On the second strategy, Hegel’s view that philosophy and its disciplines should be determined within the framework of a ‘system’ of philosophy, granting the *Logic* a foundational and guiding role for a contemporary philosophy of recognition, is dismissed as ‘metaphysical’ (see, e.g., Honneth 1994, 2001).<sup>8</sup> Hegel is said to hold implausibly speculative, metaphysical premises, together with a corresponding teleological concept of history and a Euro- and Christocentrism that simply fail in the face of today’s multicultural society (see Siep 1979, 2010c).

To get a grip on dealing with the problem of social ontology within a Hegelian setting, it seems opportune to specify these general considerations further in two respects. The first is Hegel’s concept of philosophy as a science of the absolute idea and its non-metaphysical character (III). This concerns the programmatic profile of Hegel’s philosophy. It provides the basis for the second respect: showing that Hegel’s philosophy is not practical philosophy (IV). Consequently, an alternative, more Hegelian approach to dealing with sociality needs to be introduced (V).

### III. Metaphysics, logic and the system of philosophy

Let me now consider critically from a Hegelian perspective one very important presupposition of the present recognition debate. This presupposition concerns the relation between metaphysics, logic and the system of philosophy. Another influential presupposition, which I will only touch on, concerns the place of the *Phenomenology* in Hegel's philosophical system.

Metaphysics can be conceived of as fundamental knowledge transcending nature, or our experience of nature, insofar as metaphysics is about the basic, systematic structure of our concepts and their interconnections, which we presuppose in thinking about objects, and the ontology implicit in our conceptual scheme, which makes possible our thought of objects. This influential conception of metaphysics, however, is insufficient for understanding metaphysics within German idealism: German idealism is guided by a more determinate concept of metaphysics, based upon the distinction between a *metaphysica generalis* and a *metaphysica specialis*. Moreover, for Kant as for Hegel, metaphysics has both a *thematic*<sup>9</sup> and a *methodical* determination,<sup>10</sup> according to which metaphysics is dogmatic insofar as it fails to reflect critically upon its own foundations. Due to Kant's critical analysis of metaphysics, and from the perspective of the history of philosophy, Hegel brands metaphysics 'former metaphysics' (*E* §27). Although Hegel seeks to surpass Kant's transcendental philosophy through his speculative idealism, he does not restore metaphysics against Kant's intentions.<sup>11</sup>

Instead of reviving pre-Kantian metaphysics, in Hegel's speculative idealism the science of logic supersedes pre-Kantian but now superfluous metaphysics (*I* 46 with *E* §24). By conceiving of logic as the 'genuine' metaphysics (*I* 5), Hegel gives metaphysics a thematic and methodical significance very different to its pre-Kantian predecessors.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, Hegel deviates from Kant's transcendental concepts of general and special metaphysics. For Hegel, metaphysics should not take its determinations as determinations of 'substrates', gathered from 'representation'; instead, it considers the 'nature' of the determinations of thought and their 'value' as such (*an und für sich*) (*I* 46f.). In this context, Hegel states what is methodologically essential: that in philosophical knowledge the 'nature of the content' itself 'moves'. Hence, the content itself 'posits' and 'generates' its determination (*I* 6).<sup>13</sup> Such a logic in no way constitutes a pre-Kantian metaphysics but rather a logic of the (absolute) idea, namely a logic that evolves itself through an immanent process of determination, beginning with thought as the indeterminate immediate ('being', *Sein*) and completing this evolution by comprehending its own evolution ('absolute idea'). This self-movement of the 'concept', and with that the

development of the relations between the determinations of thought (*Gedankenbestimmungen*), must of course be a justified movement: the self-movement occurs in the ‘form of necessity’ (*E* §9). This already suggests that, according to Hegel, philosophy has only one content and object: the idea, more precisely, the absolute idea (*II* 484), i.e., the ‘concept which comprehends itself’ (*sich begreifende Begriff*) (*II* 504), the ‘absolute truth and all truth’ (*E* §236; see also *II* 484). Therefore, the idea is not a being (*Seiendes*). Instead, the absolute idea proves itself to be the method, i.e., the processuality proper to the determinations of pure thought, treated in the *Logic*, together with the system of these determinations of thought. So conceived, philosophy does not plague itself with substrates of representations, or any other ‘pre-given’; the absolute idea contains all determinacy within itself (*II* 484).

Containing all determinacy in itself, the idea is not exhausted merely as a logical idea. Taking the whole of philosophy into account, the absolute idea is addressed by Hegel in three perspectives of determination: within pure thought, within nature, and within spirit.<sup>14</sup> Hence, Hegel’s philosophical program includes nature and spirit, i.e., the realms of reality; his philosophy includes them in the way of an immanent development of the idea which acknowledges ‘experience’.<sup>15</sup> Here, the logic functions as the ‘foundation’ of any natural or spiritual determination (*II* 224; *TWZ* 8: §24A1).<sup>16</sup> Because of its radical foundational role, Hegel qualified the logic as both the ‘first’ and the ‘last’ science of the system of philosophy (*II* 437). This implies, *inter alia*, that each and every determination—whether empirical determinations or philosophical determinations of nature and spirit constituting the foundations of the empirical—has its basis in logic, while at the same time the logic is retained in the other realms of the philosophical system as their foundation. Finally, at the end of the system, the logic becomes a logic that *comprehends itself* as a logic that is the unity of nature and spirit, and, therefore, is the grounding principle of reality. By reaching this insight, philosophy—a figure (*Gestalt*) of the absolute spirit—comprehends itself as truly a science of foundations, or conversely, as truly a science of totality.<sup>17</sup>

Such a comprehension apparently can only be accomplished within a system of philosophy. For Hegel, philosophy without a system cannot be scientific knowledge. Actually, the truth is the whole, ‘concrete’ only as internally developing itself while at the same time functioning as the principle of unity: philosophy is ‘essentially’ a system (*E* §§14ff.; *PbG* 19f.; *TWZ* 4: 411). This holds for the whole of philosophy as well as for its parts: we are always dealing with ‘circles rounded and complete in themselves’. The whole of philosophy, then, forms a ‘circle of circles’ in which each circle functions as a ‘necessary moment’ (*E* §15; *II* 504).

Although Hegel is time and again criticized for neglecting ‘experience’, a closer look shows that the opposite is the case: Hegel integrates experience. He acknowledges what in terms of neo-Kantianism could be called the ‘fact of culture’, namely a set of actualized validity claims, as a starting point for philosophical reflection. Hegel’s conceptual arsenal not only results from an intense struggle with the history of philosophy. The recourse to something available is necessary from a genetic-methodological point of view too. Hegel’s *Logic* can be understood as a philosophical ‘reconstruction’ of principles or meanings that have been brought to light in the history of philosophy: it preserves ‘former logic and metaphysics’ and transforms them (*E* §9), hence bearing upon the history of philosophy as its material.<sup>18</sup> The philosophy of nature has nature as its topic and therefore the idea in ‘the form of otherness’ (*E* §§247; see also §18). The development of its concept follows the procedure determined within the logic: its fashion is posing the presupposed, making the implicit explicit, hence, determining what is initially indeterminate. Whereas the logic underlies the condition of, so to speak, utter presuppositionlessness, the philosophy of reality needs to start with presuppositions of contents that have to be made explicit in the course of the process of conceptual determination. Hegel’s philosophy of reality makes up a complex of logical development and ‘outward presentation’ (*Darstellung*).<sup>19</sup>

The presuppositions of content that play a role at the beginning(s) of the philosophy of reality concern the initial (opening) concept, namely the concept with which a philosophy of a particular sphere has to start. The initial concept of the philosophy of nature itself is supplied in a scientifically justified way by the logic. Similarly, the initial concept of the philosophy of spirit itself is supplied in a scientifically justified way by the philosophy of nature. Both philosophies of reality start with a given concept (given, of course, within a systematic setting, hence not ‘merely’ given) that ‘realizes’ itself in a methodologically regulated way: the ‘logical’ and the ‘existing’ dimension of the concept merge in the idea (as the concept that corresponds with itself in its objectivity). The presuppositions of content at the beginning of the philosophy of nature and of spirit are to be understood as an ‘exposition’: as a preliminary determination respectively of nature and spirit *as such*. This preliminary determination characterizes the particular sphere of objectivity to be dealt with in the philosophy of reality (nature, spirit).

What does this inclusion of material mean for determining reality philosophically? The initial concept of a sphere of reality includes on the one hand the *logical* dimension. In this respect, nature is determined as ‘the idea in the form of otherness’ (*E* §247); spirit again has nature ‘as its presupposition’ (*E* §381). On the other hand, the dimension of *existence* (*Dasein*) of the concept is included in the speculative consideration of philosophy (the way in which the

idea gives itself existence). As a consequence, the specific *content* of the philosophy of reality comes into the conceptual contemplation of philosophy, that is the ‘point of view of the concept’ (*Betrachtungsweise des Begriffs*) (E §245) or the ‘comprehending consideration’ (*begreifende Betrachtung*) (E §246).

At the beginning of the philosophy of nature, Hegel accordingly addresses not only humans’ ‘practical’ and ‘theoretical’ behaviour regarding nature but also states explicitly that empirical physics is presupposed for the emergence and development of philosophy. It is, however, presupposed only from a genetic-methodological perspective, as the foundation of philosophy cannot consist in ‘appealing to experience’: it consists in the ‘necessity of the concept’ (E §§245f., esp. §246R). Philosophy does not leave the empirical content (and our empirical knowledge of it) aside but acknowledges and uses it (E §9R). The ‘emergence of philosophy’ has ‘experience’ as a ‘starting point’; thought lifts itself above the ‘natural, sensuous, and clever argumentative consciousness’ into the ‘sheer element of itself’. Likewise the ‘empirical sciences’ are in need of a philosophical foundation, picking up their content, yet elevating it into ‘necessity’ (E §12); and metaphysics too is included by Hegel (E §§246, 378). They all supply material for a philosophical construction.<sup>20</sup>

In conclusion, regarding Hegel’s programmatic conception of philosophy, I see no reason to side with theorists of recognition who, in making Hegel’s philosophy of right relevant today, argue that for ‘methodological’ reasons, Hegel’s argumentation fails because it rests on his logic, which purportedly is fully unintelligible to us due to its ‘ontological’ concept of spirit (Honneth 2001: 12ff.). However, a vague reference to the ‘theoretical and normative conditions of the present age’ (Honneth 2001: 13f.) hardly suffices to support such a far-reaching estimation of Hegel’s logic. On the contrary, any interpretation of Hegel’s concept of objective spirit that neglects its relation to Hegel’s system of philosophy, neglects essential determinations of Hegel’s concept of philosophy. Hegel himself understands his *Philosophy of Right* as an elaboration of his philosophy of objective spirit (E §487R, and see §§483–552). Accordingly, he also notes that the *Philosophy of Right* borrows its method from the *Logic* (PR §§2R with §31).<sup>21</sup> The *Logic* plays a fundamental role for the *Philosophy of Right*, both as such and concerning its specific content. The elaboration of the *Philosophy of Right* follows the developmental process of self-knowledge of the absolute idea as absolute spirit.<sup>22</sup> In accordance with the logic of a speculative development of concepts, the beginning of the philosophy of objective spirit must concern a concept of spirit that is maximally extrinsic to the concept attained by subjective spirit: ‘right’ (*Recht, ius*, justice).<sup>23</sup> Hegel overcomes the outwardness of the idea within objective spirit by realizing (*realisieren*) this concept of right: by making explicit the abstract generality of that concept as the beginning of a series of meanings (cf. II 488ff. with 241).<sup>24</sup>

The philosophical system outlined by the mature Hegel, oriented towards self-knowledge of the idea, also entails the demotion of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as a paradigm of philosophy. This demotion not only concerns the introductory function of the *Phenomenology*,<sup>25</sup> but also the (partial) integration of this work into the *Encyclopaedia*. This is a relevant issue, as in contemporary recognition discourse the *Phenomenology* plays a dominating role in rejuvenating Hegel's thought.

When the *Phenomenology* appeared, for Hegel it had the function of an introduction within the system of science, especially in its foundational discipline, the logic (*I* 7f.). Whereas Hegel first conceived of the *Phenomenology* as the first part of the system, later the *Phenomenology* no longer functioned as an introduction to, or the first part of, the system.<sup>26</sup> Hegel even excludes the *Phenomenology* from the order of the system, insofar he integrates essential parts of the *Phenomenology* into the philosophy of subjective spirit in the *Encyclopaedia*. In addition, the *Encyclopaedia* obtains a new introduction (*E* §§1–18), and the logic of the *Encyclopaedia* even obtains an introduction of its own (*E* §§19–83). The 'Phenomenology' within the system outlined by the *Encyclopaedia* certainly does not have the task of introducing us into philosophy. Hegel sometimes writes of the *Phenomenology* as a superfluous introduction into his logic,<sup>27</sup> though he never fully gave up the introductory role of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (he retains it even in the second edition of his *Logic of Being* of 1832).<sup>28</sup> Non-philosophical consciousness (*natürliches Bewußtsein*), undoubtedly, retains its right to be led to the standpoint of speculative philosophy.

Furthermore, the *Logic* is capable of justifying itself: the 'concept of science' results from the *Logic* itself (*I* 29). On top of that, the determination of the method of philosophy is *part* of the *Logic*, whereas the *Phenomenology* transpires only to be an 'example' of this method (*I* 35). Although the *Phenomenology* might serve as a possible route to the *Logic*, it is not constitutive for the *Logic* in the sense of being a necessary condition for its standpoint. The section 'With What Must Science Begin?' (*I* 51–65) makes it clear that the *Phenomenology* cannot serve as the beginning of the *Logic*. The opposition between consciousness and object—as well as that between thematized ('for it') and thematizing ('for us') consciousness—which is constitutive for the *Phenomenology* as an introduction, contains too many presuppositions. Science must begin with (pure) 'being' (*Sein*), regardless of whether one reaches the *Logic* by the *Phenomenology* or by what Hegel calls a 'decision' or 'resolution' (*Entschluß*) (*I* 52–54).

A closer look at the 'Phenomenology' within the *Encyclopaedia* (*E* §§413–39) would show significant differences from the *Phenomenology* of 1807, substantiating the thesis that Hegel has downgraded the *Phenomenology*. For my argument, however, it is sufficient to reveal the different embedding and focus of the development.



The *Phenomenology* of 1807 aims to examine appearances of true knowledge in order that subsequent forms of its appearance introduce natural consciousness into a scientific philosophy as pure, comprehending knowledge.<sup>29</sup> This introduction departs from the basic opposition of Hegel's time: the opposition between subjectivity on the one hand and that which restricts this subjectivity on the other, the *subject–object dualism*. The paradigmatic figure of this opposition, both for common sense and for philosophy, is *consciousness*.<sup>30</sup> At the end of the history of its education or cultivation (*Bildung*), in 'absolute knowledge' (*PbG* 422–33), consciousness has overcome subject–object dualism. Appearing knowledge becomes actual, that is to say, it becomes philosophical knowledge. This knowledge, then, is developed in the system of philosophy; the *Phenomenology* concludes with only an immediate knowledge of the absolute. In the system of philosophy, this absolute proves itself to be the *absolute idea*. For Hegel, the absolute idea is the only theme of philosophy. Hence, philosophy is 'presentation of the idea' (*E* §18). The *Phenomenology*, however, only concerns consciousness, that is, a specific aspect of the idea, as a case of application of the philosophical method. In his *Encyclopaedia*, Hegel treats consciousness in this narrow sense. Consciousness is part of the philosophy of the idea and obtains its specific profile within that philosophy. Not in the *Encyclopaedia* phenomenology but in psychology, hence, in the philosophy of the properly subjective dimension of spirit,<sup>31</sup> we comprehend what knowledge is: an endeavour of the free spirit, both theoretical and practical (*E* §§440ff.).

#### IV. Hegel's philosophy of spirit is not practical philosophy

For Kant (1983: B 860), the concepts of science and of system are closely related. Architectural unity constitutes the scientific character of our knowledge, within philosophy too. Kant develops his philosophy accordingly, following Aristotle's influential division of philosophy into theoretical and practical philosophy or into the realms of nature and of freedom. The original unity of these two branches, however, was a major challenge to German idealists, not least to Hegel. Nevertheless, theoreticians of recognition, such as Siep or Honneth, according to their own self-understanding, elaborate a practical philosophy,<sup>32</sup> purportedly Hegel's practical philosophy.

This practical impetus of contemporary theory of recognition is unsurprising, as the discourse about recognition was (and is) largely motivated by politics, human rights, democracy, globalization, economization and multiculturalism, hence, by socio-political matters. In that connection, though, one rather would have expected, at least programmatically, a turn to Kant's presently much debated, and highly vaunted, practical philosophy, especially his *Critique of*

*Practical Reason* and his *Metaphysics of Morals*. Yet, to many theorists of recognition, Kant's views appear inferior to Hegel's. They raise the standard arguments against Kant's practical philosophy. Hence, the individualistic and contractual account of his theory of justice seems inadequate for understanding social relations. Furthermore, Kant's empty ethical formalism should be overcome by a Hegelian idea of substantial ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*), just as Kant's atomistic and monological concept of reason is said to lead to a deficient concept of subjectivity because the subject is essentially social.

This farewell to Kant would require a study of its own, far beyond the scope of the present article.<sup>33</sup> Hegel, without doubt, engaged seriously with Kant's architecture of reason. To develop his concept of philosophy as a speculative doctrine of the *absolute* idea, Hegel needed not only to sublimate the restrictions both of theoretical knowledge within the idea of the truth and of practical knowledge within the idea of the good (*II* 429ff.); he also had to sublimate the opposition between the theoretical and the practical operations of the spirit into a doctrine of free spirit (*E* §§445ff.). The terminus of Hegel's philosophy of subjective spirit, and starting point of his philosophy of objective spirit, is indeed *free* spirit as a unity of theoretical *and* practical spirit. Whoever treats Hegel's philosophy of objective spirit as a practical philosophy, should explain what then Hegel's theoretical philosophy is: Is it the logic, the philosophy of absolute spirit, the philosophy of subjective theoretical spirit? Is it parts of these or a combination?<sup>34</sup> Should not, in contrast, the philosophy of objective spirit be primarily understood from Hegel's concept of spirit, hence, considering the concept of the practical as determined within the context of the concept of spirit? Whoever seeks to understand it in another way, or who reads, for example, the philosophy of spirit as 'ethics', should make explicit *his or her own* understanding of what 'practical' and 'ethical' mean—most likely taken from the history of philosophy—and justify *this* understanding in the context of *Hegel's* philosophy, before characterizing Hegel's philosophy by such concepts. Hegel's philosophy of spirit certainly offers formal and substantive points of contact for practical philosophy and for ethics beyond Hegel's own views, but Hegel's philosophy of spirit is neither of these.

A closer examination of the idea, widespread in the recognition discourse, that Hegel has a 'practical' philosophy would make clear that and why Hegel does not have one, and indeed that it would be a real challenge for the protagonists of recognition to show how a genuine practical philosophy is possible within the framework of Hegel's speculative system (see Krijnen 2014b: 109ff.). Instead of pursuing practical philosophy, Hegel intends to overcome the opposition between theoretical and practical philosophy from within and to sublimate it in a higher, more original unity.<sup>35</sup> For Hegel, 'practical' philosophy is a deficient form of knowledge, inadequate to his concept of philosophy. Consequently, it is not a

basis of any of the disciplines of his philosophy of reality (*Realphilosophie*). On the contrary, Hegel replaces it with a structure that, as absolute idea, is the truly scientific perspective of knowledge and, as free spirit, provides a conception of the subject that is able to actualize its purpose—freedom—within an externally found objectivity. Hegel's philosophy of reality is developed on the level of the absolute idea. Accordingly, the idea of knowledge in the philosophy of spirit is from the start construed in terms of the absolute idea. To grant parts of the philosophy of spirit an independent status, for instance (self-)consciousness, practical spirit, or objective spirit, neglects the idea that within Hegel's philosophy of spirit—unlike in his philosophy of nature—the stages of conceptual development do not exist for themselves: spirit's determinations and stages are 'essentially only moments, conditions, determinations of the higher stages of the development' (*E* §380), which are organized according to the absolute idea.

Consequently, the claims of the theoretical and the practical as such, and hence also those of this influential traditional division itself, lead to more fundamental, more encompassing concepts such as those of the absolute idea and the free spirit. As early as in his early writings, Hegel sought to overcome the opposition between freedom, subjectively understood, and nature, understood as an instrument of or obstacle to freedom, through a concept of freedom designed to reconcile what is divided. Nature too must be conceived of as a manifestation of the idea. Thus, nature is conceived of as something determined by principles that subsume and subordinate the theoretical and practical conceptions of nature, by conceptualizing nature itself as freedom in Hegel's sense: as being with oneself in one's other. Furthermore, freedom is the basis of theoretical and practical spirit and of their relation, whereas they remain conceived dualistically within the contexts of the ideas of truth and of the good. Their dualism is superseded by Hegel through the transition from the logical idea of knowledge to the absolute idea, and it does not recur in the development of subjective spirit. Hegel's system of philosophy (strictly speaking, his *Phenomenology of Spirit* too, in which stages of consciousness as appearing knowledge lead to the *Logic*) addresses theoretical and practical knowledge, including their objects, though not from *their own* perspectives. Correspondingly, Hegel's system of philosophy provides neither practical knowledge nor theoretical knowledge; instead, it comprehends these types of knowledge speculatively within his system of philosophy.

It would be a real challenge to the contemporary paradigm of recognition to figure out what, then, practical philosophy can be within the framework of Hegel's mature philosophy. Kant's project of practical philosophy—namely a philosophy from the perspective of the practical, not from the absolute idea—is, in view of the practical-societal concerns of contemporary recognition theory, too important to dismiss, even if one is dissatisfied with Kant's execution. Is such a practical philosophy possible within Hegel's mature philosophical

system? If so, where, and how would it look? Would it be able to develop its genuine practical impetus within speculative philosophy? What roles would Hegel's doctrines of the logical idea and of subjective spirit play? Truly intriguing questions!

## V. Updating idealism: methodological considerations for approaching social ontology

Instead of elaborating on future philosophies of recognition—it would certainly be fascinating to develop a tenable one—another idealist approach for updating German idealism regarding social ontology needs to be introduced. Recognition, though in a different version, should keep playing an important role too, as one of the historical movements social ontology needs to deal with consists of South-West Neo-Kantianism. This branch of philosophy, together with the Marburg School dominating the academic philosophical discourse in the last decades of the nineteenth and the first of the twentieth century, is famous for, among others, transforming the concept of recognition into a paradigm of philosophy, while also reshaping the idea of a system of philosophy against the backdrop of criticisms of Hegel, current until today (see also Krijnen 2001, 2008, 2014a, 2014b). Concerning the problem of social ontology, South-West Neo-Kantianism and its aftermath are relevant if we want to understand sociality in Hegel. Why is this so?

To answer this question in general,<sup>36</sup> several aspects should be taken into consideration. In the first instance, these aspects circle around the original determinacy or objectivity of the social and its philosophy, social philosophy, itself—at least, if we take German idealism as a standard for the foundational effort that a truly scientific philosophy has to undertake. Honneth, who claims to actualize Hegel's philosophy of right, may serve as a typical case again.

Drawing on the tradition of social philosophy, Honneth comes to the conclusion that social philosophy is essentially about determining and discussing negative developments and dysfunctions in society, that is to say, 'social pathologies' (Honneth 1994, 2001, 2008). However, constructing the task of social philosophy in conformity with the idea of social pathologies apparently presupposes the concept of the social in its original determinacy and validity. Moreover, the history of social philosophy itself can only be addressed as a history of addressing social pathologies if the idea that social philosophy is a philosophy of social pathologies is itself a well-founded idea. A sufficient foundation of sociality and social philosophy, however, can only be established on the basis of the concept of philosophy itself.

Nevertheless, Honneth, among many others, abandons the idea of a radical foundation based on the ‘concept’. He is one of many who criticize the idea of a *radical foundation* (*Letztbegründung*). It seems, however, that, notwithstanding this ubiquitous criticism, the idea of a radical philosophical foundation contains contents that are insufficiently taken into consideration by its antagonists. Particularly significant for a radical foundation is that science organizes itself ‘only through the proper life of the concept’ (*PbG* 38). And it is likewise significant that *thought* in its determinacy as a principle is comprehended as the basis for thought in its concrete shape—hence, that thought is in itself the principle of any objectivity, making objective meaning possible.<sup>37</sup> Philosophy is the science par excellence of foundations: the science that gets to the bottom of any claim to objectivity, including its own claim: philosophy is universal and radical self-reflection.

An accompanying effect of abandoning the idea of a radical foundation is the abandonment of the idea of a *philosophical system*: of the thought that human self-understanding and human understanding of the world that humans live in can only be developed scientifically within a system of philosophy, hence, within a whole of determinations that is organized by grounds and consequences. Like the idea of a radical foundation, the idea of a philosophical system also dominated modern philosophy for a long time, especially, and in a sublimated form, the tradition of German idealism. Hegel’s philosophy may count as the most extreme model of the idea of a philosophical system, both regarding its form and its content. It says much that Honneth—expressly trying to re-actualize Hegel’s social philosophy and convinced that the contemporary relevance of Hegel’s philosophy of right is under-estimated—sticks to a ‘methodological’ objection against Hegel’s philosophy of right: Honneth, as indicated, dislikes Hegel’s argumentation being tied to his *Logic*. For this reason, Honneth writes, Hegel’s argumentation fails ‘methodologically’: Hegel’s *Logic* purportedly is fully unintelligible to us due to its ‘ontological’ concept of spirit (Honneth 2001: 12). However, the underdetermined reference to something as vague as the ‘theoretical and normative conditions of the present age’ (Honneth 2001: 13f.) is certainly not sufficient to substantiate Honneth’s far-reaching estimation of Hegel’s *Logic*. Nevertheless, Honneth (2001: 12ff.) is convinced that for productively appropriating Hegel’s philosophy of right for contemporary issues, Hegel’s methodological orientation towards the *Logic* and its ontological concept of spirit should be abandoned. Concerning the ‘proper substance’ of Hegel’s philosophy of right, it is extremely important to Honneth that Hegel’s concept of objective spirit can be interpreted *without* relating it to his system of philosophy (Honneth 2001: 14f.).

The foregoing eventually encumbers us with a task: *to take the idea of a philosophical foundation itself as the standard for determining the foundations of sociality.*

Fulfilling this task indeed requires a re-orientation towards the tradition of German idealism: German idealism offers the topical, methodical and systematic paradigm for determining the social.<sup>38</sup>

Without doubt, in some respects the commitment to German idealism for establishing the social seems plausible, especially when we take into account, for instance, Kant's practical philosophy or Hegel's philosophy of right. A closer look, however, shows that linking German idealism and sociality is highly problematic—the concept of the social, as we know it as the subject-matter of the social sciences, is a phantom here. That is to say, the concept of the social traditionally belongs to the domain of 'practical philosophy', particularly political philosophy, including philosophy of law and the state, and moral (ethical) philosophy.<sup>39</sup> *Socialitas* is a basic concept in the rationalist tradition of natural law; the social also has a practical connotation in social contract theory (for instance Rousseau's *contrat social*) and in the context of moral philosophy (for example 'social virtues' in British empiricism). The social as a genuine, independent, specific realm of meaning only became a concept for theoretical determination in the course of the nineteenth century. The traditional link between the social and the practical became detached. Along with the development of the social sciences, the following question arose: What is the specific objectivity of the social, that is, of the subject matter of the social sciences? At the end of the nineteenth century, debate about the concept of the social was in full swing. Stammler, Lehmann, Dilthey, Spranger, Scheler, Durkheim and Weber were some of its important contributors, coming up with important theoretical determinations of the social. These determinations were, however, highly contested and marked by a significant degree of heterogeneity. Nevertheless, this historical constellation indicates that the concept of the social, as the basic social-ontological concept of the social sciences, cannot just be picked up from the philosophies of German idealism. On the contrary, it must be constructed on the basis of German idealist conceptions of philosophy.

This is also true for the more general notion of a social philosophy, irrespective of whether the beginnings of social philosophy are located in the German reception of French socialism, or whether the decisive moment of its early history is positioned at the end of the nineteenth century with Stammler, Simmel and Stein. Both variants also result in highly contested determinations and, again, are marked by a significant degree of heterogeneity. Recent work has not succeeded in overcoming this confusion. There are numerous conceptions of what social philosophy is or should be. Hence, it is not only social reality that has been neglected in the history of philosophy, being treated at best within the context of studies of politics, law, or morality; social philosophy also comes into being in the course of the nineteenth century. Regarding German philosophy, social philosophy more and more received the role of a 'residual discipline'

(Honneth), sometimes operating as a parent organization of practical philosophy, sometimes profiled as a normative addition to empirical sociology, then again as a diagnosis of present times. Anglo-Saxon philosophy, influenced by utilitarianism, comes to an understanding of social philosophy that is approximately equal to what is called in German philosophy ‘political philosophy’; it shrinks here to one of its subdivisions, which focuses in particular on normative questions concerning the role of the state for the maintenance of a civil society (property, punishment, medical care, etc.).<sup>40</sup> In French philosophy, by contrast, it is unusual to name a subdivision, or even a whole discipline of philosophy, *philosophie sociale*: in French philosophy the issues dealt with in Germany under the cloaking title *Sozialphilosophie* are mostly addressed under *philosophie morale* or *philosophie politique*.

In conclusion, what social philosophy is, its subject matter, its method, remain obscure. Given the diversity of the meaning and the fact that its use is taken for granted, we cannot but undertake the effort to give the mere name ‘social’ (or ‘social philosophy’) a real, objective validity. This involves considering how concepts should be introduced at all in philosophy.

Seen from the perspective of a history of the problems of philosophy (*Problemgeschichte*), the social—and social philosophy—is younger than the philosophy of German idealism. This is why the concept of the social needs to be constructed, hence, *justified* in its basic meaning. For us, the problem arises of how to construct the social from the philosophy of German idealism. Thus, the linkage between the pursued project of establishing sociality philosophically and German idealism can only have a *methodological* character.

The appeal to German idealism becomes even more complicated because in this philosophy socio-philosophical topics are discussed within the context of what is called *practical philosophy*. In this respect too, the social is not addressed as an independent realm of meaning. Kant, for instance, models his philosophy following the old distinction between theoretical and practical reason. He consistently divides philosophy into theoretical and practical parts, and divides their respective domains into those of nature and freedom. Fichte problematizes this architectonic of the system of transcendental philosophy, and it is Hegel who sees very clearly that the division ‘theoretical–practical’ is deficient: it is based on more original constellations. Accordingly, Hegel divides the system of philosophy into logic and philosophy of reality (nature, spirit), conceiving of practical phenomena as phenomena of the spirit. Social reality is a reality of the spirit. Hence, unlike in Kant’s philosophy, Hegel determines social phenomena not primarily in the context of relationships of law and virtue. Nevertheless, Hegel too conceptualizes the realm of spirit that most scholars take to be central for Hegel’s ‘social philosophy’—the realm of objective spirit—as a realm of right, although right in an all-embracing sense. The concept of the will is a fundamental

concept here. Hegel addresses self-determination primarily in terms of the will and discusses the objectification of the free will in terms of right *qua* existence (*Dasein*) of freedom.

At first sight, Hegel's focus on the will might feed the impression that Hegel too is *ethicizing* the philosophy of spirit. After all, he determines free intelligence, which is the point of departure of the philosophy of objective spirit, not only as (free) 'will' but also as 'right' (*E* §§483ff.)—a figure which typically belongs to 'practical' philosophy and which Hegel even bases on a concept, the will, that since Kant has been the basic concept of moral philosophy. Hence, the objective reality of reason seems to have a 'mere' practical profile, instead of making up an encompassing concept of reason in its objective existence, an encompassing concept that, as for instance in neo-Kantianism and the like, might even be specified in terms of a plurality of 'cultural realms'. Hegel's philosophy of objective spirit is certainly conceptualized as 'philosophy of right', the existence of the free will generally determined as 'right' (*E* §486). Even at the start of this philosophy, Hegel notes that a rational (*vernünftig*) will is given in the subjective will as mores (*Sitte*) (*E* §485), and he soon starts talking about 'rights' and 'duties' (*E* §486), and discusses 'property', as well as other themes that traditionally belong to the philosophy of right and of the state, though on a modified and radically new kind of foundation. In short, at first sight we are dealing with a specific dimension of human self-formation, even identifying the objectification of freedom with relations of right.

On a second view, however, a different, more complex picture arises, as the relations within Hegel's system of philosophy have to be taken into account, in particular the role that the logic plays. This concerns the logic of the advancement of a speculative development of concepts as well as its relevance for the philosophy of reality. This constellation also concerns the concept of right as an encompassing concept for actualizing freedom, hence, the determinacy of right as a functional moment of the self-knowledge of the idea. Instead of dealing with these issues here, it suffices to acknowledge that Hegel's philosophy of spirit, especially his philosophy of objective spirit, destroys the common division 'theoretical–practical' and offers a new structure for comprehending reality philosophically. Kant, despite a number of initial approaches, does not develop an encompassing concept of freedom that is able to function as the unity, hence as the basis, of theoretical and practical reason (respectively nature and freedom)—freedom continuously prevails as practical freedom. Hegel, by contrast, develops a concept of freedom that establishes a pervasive concept of freedom which underlies any of its specifications, regardless of whether it is the freedom of the will, freedom of action, logical freedom, esthetical freedom, etc. In Hegel, we find a broad concept of freedom as self-determination. In addition, Hegel extensively criticizes the distinction (opposition) between theoretical and practical



reason and supplies us with an innovative alternative doctrine of the realization of spirit in its objectivity. Hegel's philosophy of spirit encompasses the realms of theoretical and practical philosophy, and hence, relativizes Kant's architectonic of philosophy. Freedom even encompasses all of Hegel's system of philosophy: it belongs to Hegel's conception of the speculative concept. Here we are dealing with a truly all-embracing and fundamental concept of freedom.

Such an all-embracing concept of freedom indeed looks promising if we want to comprehend the foundations of social reality. Therefore, it is not surprising that Hegel scholars have tried to elaborate on *Hegel's Social Philosophy* (Hardimon 1994), *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory* (Neuhouser 2000), or have undertaken an *Attempt at a Reactualization of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (Honneth 2001) as a social philosophy.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, for several reasons such efforts are more problematic than they initially seem. The need to render a conceptual account of the social emerges in the course of the nineteenth century. As the social sciences come into being and develop, the problem of determining the specific objectivity of these sciences becomes urgent. Before then, what was later called 'social philosophy' was primarily treated within the context of practical philosophy. Whoever refers to Hegel's social philosophy or theory is obliged to *justify* philosophically the concept of the social. Notwithstanding this, the protagonists of Hegel's social philosophy or theory take the concept of the social for granted. Nevertheless, despite the fact that Hegel inspired several social ontological investigations,<sup>42</sup> the fact, no less important, that not even the word 'social' occurs in Hegel's work, should give rise to caution and suspicion.<sup>43</sup>

This caution and suspicion boil down to the task of constructing the social (and its philosophy) from the principles of Hegel's philosophy. Although Hegel, for good reasons, does not declare his project of the logic and the philosophy of reality to be an 'ontology', the contemporary debate on the foundations of the social takes place under the title 'social ontology'. Hence, in contemporary terms, the intended construction of the social is to be understood as a contribution to *social ontology*: that is to say, to an ontology of the social sphere, a philosophical theory of the objectivity of the social (*Sachlebre, Gegenstandslebre*). The idealist social ontology to be developed concerns a construction of the meaning of the social from thought as the principle of objectivity. Accomplishing this effort implies that fundamental questions have to be posed. These questions concern philosophy itself and its thematic, methodical and systematic profile. It is indispensable for getting a grip on the social in Hegel's philosophy to answer them adequately.

Honneth's famous attempt at a re-actualization of Hegel's philosophy of right, for instance, unfortunately suffers from surpassing instead of mastering such questions. The intrinsic methodological relation between logic and the

philosophy of reality, as well as the embeddedness of the philosophy of reality in the system of philosophy, are of particular far-reaching relevance. What Honneth calls the ‘proper substance’ of Hegel’s philosophy of right certainly cannot be grasped without reference to the system.<sup>44</sup>

Therefore, the legitimacy status of ‘social pathologies’ in Honneth’s conception become highly problematic (2001: 16f., 49ff.; 1994) The idea of a philosophical foundation which they express does not fit into Hegel’s conception of founding phenomena of reality. Seen methodologically, Hegel does not show the specific legitimacy of a certain sphere of the objective spirit by demonstrating its ‘social damages’, its ‘pathological effects’ for the validity for the self-relation of subjects if such a sphere is made absolute while it only contains an incomplete concept of freedom—for Honneth an ‘empirical’ indicator for transcending the legitimate area of validity of a specific sphere (2001: 41). On the contrary, Hegel’s claim to justify any determination ‘from the concept’ thwarts Honneth’s ‘indirect, time diagnostic scheme of justification’ (Honneth 2001: 41f., 51f.),<sup>45</sup> as the systematic relations, from ‘being’ in the logic up to the ‘absolute spirit’ in the philosophy of reality, show. Although Hegel’s justificatory claim too contains a specific ‘empirical relation to experience’, under the title ‘suffering from indeterminacy’ Honneth lifts the empirical constellation of social pathologies to the rank of an *empirem*: social pathologies function as a basis for validity, while suffering, here, ‘indicates’ a violation of the borders of a legitimate sphere. For Honneth (2001: 142, also 15, 51ff.), Hegel is only able to proceed in this way because this first ‘background conviction’ of empirical knowledge is joined by an even more important second background conviction: social reality is not ‘indifferent’ regarding the application of insufficient determinations of human existence—a ‘practical breach’ of reason leads to social dislocations. With this view, Honneth (2001: 13) restitutes, despite himself, the ‘ontological concept of spirit’ he criticized so harshly and aimed to abandon. Despite Honneth’s philosophical pretensions, the knowledge that incorrect interpretations eventuate in damages of social reality, that a one-sided self-understanding practically leads to a ‘suffering from indeterminacy’, is empirical knowledge. Hence, Honneth offers a kind of *ontic*. To put it drastically, Honneth comes up with ‘former’ *metaphysics*—with Hegel criticism, no reactualization of Hegel’s philosophy of right.<sup>46</sup>

What do the foregoing elaborations on the programmatic setting of Hegel’s philosophy mean for the construction of the social within this philosophy? In the first instance, they mean that the social does not have its determinacy beyond the process of self-determination of the idea as the one and only object and content of philosophy. The social only has its determinacy as a moment in this process. It is therefore not just any determination taken from elsewhere, and hence, merely presupposed as the social, but determined in terms of the place it has in the system of philosophy, and, by implication, accounted for in the mode of

necessity. With this said, the question arises: What is the place of the social in Hegel's system of philosophy—and why? This question cannot be answered without taking into account the fact that the social sciences emerged in the course of the nineteenth century. Social philosophy's primary task is to determine the specific objectivity of the social. Hence, we are referred to post-Hegelian history: it supplies the material for us when we aim to construct the social in Hegel's philosophy. The construction, then, consists in 'translating' this material (more precisely, all relevant meanings of sociality in philosophy, the sciences and ordinary life) into the 'concept'.

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### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview, see Schmidt am Busch and Zurn (eds.) (2010); concerning philosophy of recognition and social ontology, see Ikäheimo and Laitinen (2011); on its appropriation of German idealism, see Krijnen (ed.) (2014). The following paragraphs draw on Krijnen (2014b) and Krijnen (2011).

<sup>2</sup> Heinrich Rickert (1924) published a book with this telling title. The title, of course, suppresses how much of Hegel is effective in neo-Kantianism. See Krijnen (2008) on Hegel and neo-Kantianism.

<sup>3</sup> Abbreviations of Hegel's works:

*I* = *Wissenschaft der Logik: Erster Teil* (Leipzig: Meiner, 1951).

*II* = *Wissenschaft der Logik: Zweiter Teil* (Leipzig: Meiner, 1951).

*E* = *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830)*, 8th edn. (Hamburg: Meiner, 1991).

*PbG* = *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, in *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1968ff).

*PR* = *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1955).

*TWA* = *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971), cited by volume.

*V* = *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1993), cited by volume.

*GW* = *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1968ff).

All translations from foreign (especially German) texts into English are mine, although I have benefited from consulting current translations.

<sup>4</sup> See for instance Cobben (2009b), who, to hold his thesis, is forced to press the *Phenomenology* into a different programmatic corset and to ascribe to this work a different place in Hegel's system.

<sup>5</sup> See, on the Kantianism of the young Hegel, for instance, Bondeli (1997), Fulda (2003: part I), Henrich (1971: 41–72), Siep (2010a: 24–62).

<sup>6</sup> Halbig et al. (2004: 10) too concur that in the contemporary debate about Hegel's heritage, the *Phenomenology* is particularly central to efforts to revitalize Hegel's views for contemporary philosophy.

<sup>7</sup> Brandom is also fascinated by Hegel's *Phenomenology*. Most notably he appreciates the tight connection between normativity and sociality, which according to him Hegel conceives in terms of mutual recognition; Brandom gives Hegel's philosophy a neo-pragmatist coating (see, e.g., Brandom 1999, 2002, 2005, 2006). Accordingly, he reads Hegel's text through (social-) subjectivist glasses, which do not seem to fit Hegel's objectivist orientation. Brandom too must restrict the role of the *Logic* in the system of philosophy and modify Hegel's method of philosophical knowledge.

<sup>8</sup> In addition, Quante (2011: ch. 3) is very critical of Hegel's system.

<sup>9</sup> For instance that metaphysics is about 'supersensible' (*übersinnliche*) objects, capturing conceptually objects 'in themselves' (*an sich*), the 'essence' (*Wesen*) of things.

<sup>10</sup> This is so irrespective of whether metaphysics is described as a type of knowledge, lacking 'critique' (*Kritik*), as Kant puts it (see the prefaces and introduction to his *Critique of Pure Reason*), or, as Hegel puts it, as an 'attitude of thought towards objectivity' that merely consists in the 'perspective of understanding towards objects of reason' (*Verstandes-Ansicht der Vernunft-Gegenstände: E §27*), which in a 'naïve way' (*E §26*) supposedly obtains knowledge of its objects but, in fact, only sells 'the determinations of thought as the fundamental determinations of things' (*E §28; I 46f.*).

<sup>11</sup> Fulda (1988, 1999, 2003, 2004) has shown this in detail.

<sup>12</sup> For Stekeler-Weithofer (2005: 155), Hegel makes an 'ontological turn,' leading from the 'critique of knowledge' (i.e., Kant) to a 'critical ontology of meaning' (Stekeler-Weithofer 2005: 153). Such ontological readings of Hegel pave the way for ontological misinterpretations of Hegel: as a critical ontology of meaning, ontology is no longer what it used to be as an ontology. Quante (2011: 23f, 29, 31f, 84) too reads Hegel's theory of rationality, including the logic, as an ontology. Honneth (2001) certainly considers Hegel's *Logic* to represent a fine example of bad metaphysics.

<sup>13</sup> This also entails a different conception of critique from Kant's conception of critique as a foundation of (a transcendentalized) metaphysics. See Krijnen (2015a).

<sup>14</sup> See, for this and what follows, Krijnen (2008: ch. 4.2.1.2.).

<sup>15</sup> Immanent development is meant here as a methodological qualification. As far as the content is concerned, speculative idealism, according to its self-understanding, is committed to the 'fruitful bathos of experience' (Kant). Hegel leaves neither the empirical dimension nor the history of philosophy aside: he acknowledges empirical and philosophical knowledge as material, but he (trans)forms this material to conform with the knowledge claim of his speculative philosophy and the methodology belonging to it. See Krijnen (2008: 190ff.).

<sup>16</sup> Hegel also denotes the logic the 'pure figure' (*reine Gestalt*) of the 'intellectual view of the universe' (*I 31*) as well as 'inner figurator' (*inneren Bildner*) and 'pre-figurator' (*Vorbildner: II 231*) of his philosophy of reality (*Realphilosophie*).

<sup>17</sup> See, for the logic as the last science, Krijnen (2008: ch. 4.2.3, esp. 228ff.). The absolute spirit is, however, not just ‘the spirit which *knows* that it has to appear in the finite life that Hegel conceives of as *world history*’ (Kok 2013: ch. 6.8.3). This type of ‘transcendental openness’ does not cover Hegel’s mature concept of absolute spirit. Absolute spirit entails a specific closure of spirit too; Hegel thinks openness and closure together in such a way that this unity is not only a ‘unity of spirit and nature’ but a unity of the idea, nature and spirit. From the perspective of the history of philosophy, philosophy is a particular (*jeweilige*) knowledge of totality (Krijnen 2008: chap. 4; 2010).

<sup>18</sup> See also Hegel’s conception of the history of philosophy (Krijnen 2008: 252ff.).

<sup>19</sup> By contrast, the ‘realization’ of the logic as consideration ‘in-and-for-itself’ of thought takes place in the ‘same’, i.e., the logical, sphere (*II* 505).

<sup>20</sup> This reveals another problem of Honneth’s approach: How does his idea of an indirect re-actualization of Hegel fit to Hegel’s philosophy of the history of philosophy? After all, Hegel (*V* 6: 43–53) is very critical of attempts to re-actualize former philosophies. However, as Honneth eschews Hegel’s idea of foundation as well as of a system of philosophy, at least according to Hegel’s standards, Honneth’s re-actualization can hardly be labelled a re-actualization of Hegel’s philosophy.

<sup>21</sup> Generally, Hegel’s two philosophies of reality regard their object as necessarily conforming to the ‘self-determination of the concept’ (*E* §246).

<sup>22</sup> Hence, as a spirit that has *not* been reached within the philosophy of objective spirit. Objective spirit is a *finite* spirit, that is to say, not a cognitive *self*-relation. Only in absolute spirit is a figure of knowledge reached ‘in which knowing reason [is] free for itself’ (*E* §552). The concept of spirit, and hence, also the concept of the absolute idea, is actualized only with the concept of absolute spirit.

<sup>23</sup> More precisely, abstract right as the *existence (Dasein) of freedom* in the form of possession. According to Hegel’s concept of right, the concept of right, as existence of the free will that has freedom as its ‘inner determination and goal’, must be actualized in an ‘external pre-given objectivity’ so that the concept is perfected as ‘idea’ (*E* §§483f.). At the beginning of this process, the subjectivity of free spirit does not manifest itself in a free spirit but in an external matter (*äußerlichen Sache*) in which ‘I’ put my ‘will’ (*E* §§488f.). See Krijnen (2012).

<sup>24</sup> Against this background of Hegel’s conception of philosophical justification, the justificatory status of ‘social pathologies’, extremely important to Honneth (2001: 16f., 49ff.; 2008), is just as problematic as Honneth’s conception of the philosophical foundations of reality.

<sup>25</sup> On which, see Krijnen (2008: 59ff. with 90ff.; 2014b: 106ff.).

<sup>26</sup> See, e.g., Bonsiepen (1988: Lff.) and Jaeschke (2003: 180) on the place of the *Phenomenology* in Hegel’s intellectual development. Cobben (2009b: 137, cf. 143) is surprised that regarding absolute spirit there is considerable difference between Hegel’s *Phenomenology* and his *Philosophy of Right*: in the latter, absolute spirit plays no role on the level of social institutions. This absence of the absolute spirit, however, fits well with Hegel’s program of philosophy as self-knowledge of the absolute idea as absolute spirit: it results from the function that absolute spirit has within Hegel’s system of philosophy.

<sup>27</sup> According to Hegel (*E* §78R), an introduction via the route of a self-completing scepticism—the route of the *Phenomenology*—is ‘unpleasant’ and ‘superfluous’.

<sup>28</sup> See also *GW* 21: 9R, *I* 29ff. and 53, and the note to the second edition of the *Phenomenology* (*PbG* 448).

<sup>29</sup> Hegel presents the program of the *Phenomenology* mainly in the Introduction (*PbG* 53–62). For recent literature, see, e.g., Fulda (2003, 2008).

<sup>30</sup> Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, therefore, is shaped as a ‘science of consciousness’ (*PbG* 61) that is a science of ‘knowing as it appears’ (*PbG* 434).

<sup>31</sup> Hegel occasionally characterized his psychology as the ‘genuine doctrine of the spirit’ (*II* 437).

<sup>32</sup> As indicated, Honneth (2001: 17f., 41, 44) characterizes Hegel’s philosophy of objective spirit as practical philosophy, understands the philosophy of objective spirit as ethics, moral philosophy, philosophy of right or ethical theory of legal right (Honneth 2001: 20f., 31f., 53), and takes the free will to be a moral principle. Siep (2010a) dealt in many studies with Hegel’s ‘practical philosophy’; recently, he tried to sound out its ‘limits and actuality’. In the terminology of Hegel’s mature works, he means by practical philosophy Hegel’s philosophy of ‘objective spirit’ (Siep 2010b: 14). Quante (2011) too interprets Hegel’s philosophy of objective spirit in terms of practical philosophy. Also, beyond the discourse of recognition, it is common to talk about Hegel’s practical philosophy or ethics: compare, for example, Peperzak (1991), Stederoth (2001: 387), Düsing (1984, 2002), and Schnädelbach (2000: 289ff., 1999: 120ff.). Recently, Buchwalter (2010) and Vieweg (2012) have published on Hegel’s ‘practical philosophy’. And, unfortunately, the standard translation of Hegel’s *Sittlichkeit* is ‘ethical life’.

<sup>33</sup> Loose (2014) addresses some elements concerning Honneth.

<sup>34</sup> Halbig et al. (2004: 14f.) use the opposition ‘theoretical—practical’ without hesitation to assess Hegel’s relevance. Accordingly, they do not consider what Hegel’s theoretical philosophy would be.

<sup>35</sup> See on Hegel’s Frankfurt period, for instance, Siep (2000: 29f.) and on the *Phenomenology* Cobben (2009a).

<sup>36</sup> For detailed analysis see Krijnen (2015b: chs. 2–3).

<sup>37</sup> See Flach (1994) for a contemporary version of the idea of a radical foundation as well as for criticism of that idea.

<sup>38</sup> See Krijnen (2015b) for elaboration of this thesis in discussion with Kantian transcendental philosophy and Hegel.

<sup>39</sup> See, for instance, Röttgers (2002: 25ff.) for a history of ‘social’ and ‘social philosophy’.

<sup>40</sup> See Honneth (2008: 1234) and Horster (2005).

<sup>41</sup> Because of its focus on theory of action, Honneth (2001: 55, cf. 66) reads Hegel’s philosophy of right as the outline of a social ontology. An updated version is Honneth (2010).

<sup>42</sup> Mayer-Moreau (1910) gave an early impulse for interpreting Hegel as a social philosopher. Hegel does indeed distinguish in his philosophy of right between the state and the civil society. With this distinction, he offers conceptual means to think something like social philosophy. However, this view identifies civil society with sociality, and on top of that detaches the so-called social philosophy from its functional position within Hegel’s philosophy of right. Although Röttgers (2002: 34f.) sees this, he too does not justify the concept of the social in Hegel’s philosophy; actually, he only stipulates that the social is teleologically oriented

towards the political (state) and civil society absorbed by the economic—therewith, Röttgers presupposes a determinate concept of the social beyond Hegel's philosophy. Hegel's philosophy of spirit has also inspired early social ontological studies such as Freyer (1923) and Hartmann (1933).

<sup>43</sup> The word only pops up when Hegel is citing Rousseau's *Du Contrat social*. Hardimon (1994: 16, incl. remark 16) notes that the phrase 'social world' cannot be found in Hegel's work. He uses the phrase for Hegel's sphere of mores ('ethical world,' in the common, yet misleading, English translation of *Sittlichkeit*), hence, the figures (*Gestalten*) of family, civil society, state; he also uses the term 'society' as distinct from all kinds of social/societal subspheres. In general, the social world for Hardimon means 'society'. Neuhouser (2000: 5) too knows that 'social freedom' is not a Hegelian term. He means the type of freedom relevant for Hegel's sphere of mores ('ethical life'). For him, Hegel's social theory turns out to be Hegel's social philosophy, which essentially concerns the doctrine of *Sittlichkeit*. A philosophical justification, in particular a defence within Hegel's philosophy of right, of why and how sociality has to be introduced into philosophy, is lacking both in Hardimon and Neuhouser. Honneth (2001: 17ff.) too speaks without any hesitation about Hegel's realm of mores as of the social realm: more precisely, he addresses the whole realm of objective spirit as a social sphere because this realm makes up the social conditions of actualizing individual freedom (2001: 20, 22, 29, 31ff.).

<sup>44</sup> Why, for instance, should the realm of *Sittlichkeit* be the 'proper core' of the philosophy of right? (Honneth 2001: 39) Should we not conceive of this core, if that makes sense at all, as the processuality that characterizes the development, instead as of a stage within that development? Cores as stages do not seem to express the conceptual structure of Hegel's system of philosophy. Not even the absolute idea is, taken as a stage, its core; it would only be that core as the 'only object of philosophy', yet, in this case, 'core' would be an inadequate metaphor.

<sup>45</sup> Honneth's dealing with Hegel stems from the tradition of neo-Marxism as advanced by Adorno and Habermas. Habermas's idea that 'critical theory' should be conducted as addressing social pathologies especially guides Honneth's approach.

<sup>46</sup> For Hegel (*E* §163A2), the concept is the 'genuine first, and things are what they are through the activity of the concept, immanent in them, and revealing itself in them'; 'thought and (more exactly) the concept' functions as the 'infinite form, or the free creative activity, which can realize itself without the help of a matter that exists outside it'. And all of this in the mode of necessity (*E* §9).

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