

Hegel: A Dialetheist? Truth and Contradiction in Hegel's Logic

Michela Bordignon

Abstract

The article aims to show that Priest wrongly associates Hegel's dialectic with his dialetheism. Even if Priest correctly argues that the notion of contradiction in Hegel's logic is a logical one and that contradiction is meant to be true, Hegel goes a long way beyond Priest's dialetheism insofar as he is not committed to a dialetheist conception of a three truth-values logic. I start my analysis with a brief introductory overview of the dialetheist's thesis of the truth of contradiction. Then, in the first part of the article, I show that Hegel's notion of contradiction can be equated with a logical contradiction and that Hegel argues that some contradictions are true. In the second part of the paper I show that Hegel's thesis of the truth of contradiction is different from Priest's, because Hegel endorses a developmental conception of truth which allows him to account for complex and dynamic properties of reality in a way that Priest's does not allow.

One of the most scandalous aspects of Hegel's *Science of Logic* is the way he thinks of contradiction. In a Remark in the Doctrine of Essence Hegel claims: 'Everything is inherently contradictory, and in the sense that this law in contrast to the others expresses rather the truth and the essential nature of things' (*WL II*: 286; *SL*: 439).¹ Such a proposition could be read as evidence of the absolute inconsistency of Hegel's discourse. A widespread solution to this problem is that of Robert Brandom, according to which 'far from rejecting the law of noncontradiction ... Hegel radicalizes it, and places it at the very centre of his thought' (Brandom 2002: 179). In Brandom's account, contradiction is basically the relation between two incompatible commitments, one of which needs to be dismissed.

Brandom's reading has the advantage of making Hegel's thought more 'palatable' for a contemporary philosophical sensibility, by getting rid of inconsistency. Moreover, I think that Brandom's account provides a good explanation of some passages of Hegel's texts. Nevertheless, such an account does not cover some crucial passages of the *Science of Logic*. I am in agreement

with Rolf-Peter Horstmann when he claims that: ‘Hegel thinks of his new logic as being in part incompatible with traditional logic’ (Horstmann 1999: 280). Yet this does not mean that Hegel’s logic cannot have any relevant implications for the current debate on logic and, more specifically, on the logical structure of contradiction. One paradigmatic example is research on paraconsistent logical systems and especially on dialetheism.²

Research on paraconsistent logical systems started in the 1950s. It was born as an effort to clarify the status of dialectical logic and to face the problem of logical systems containing true contradictions. Paraconsistent systems reject the principle *ex falso quodlibet* (from falsehood, anything). Dialetheism is the view that there are true contradictions.³ Graham Priest is the most important advocate of the dialetheist thesis and, even if his work cannot be considered an interpretation of Hegel’s notion of contradiction, it refers to Hegel’s thought as one of the most important antecedents of dialetheism in the history of philosophy. In the manifesto of dialetheism, *In Contradiction*, that Priest published in 1987, he is quite explicit about this: ‘It is the main claim of this book that Hegel was right: our concepts, or some of them anyway, are inconsistent’ (Priest 2006: 4). Furthermore, in *Dialectic and Dialetheic* Priest explores the relation between dialectic and dialetheism and he explicitly claims that ‘Hegel’s and Marx’s dialectic is based on dialetheism’ and that ‘it is very necessary in a contemporary context to argue that dialectic is dialetheic’ (Priest 1989: 388–89).

This article is aimed at showing that Priest wrongly associates Hegel with his theory. Whilst Priest has good reasons for claiming that ‘the *central* theoretical notion of contradiction in ... Hegel is precisely the logical one’ (Priest 1989: 391) and that this kind of contradiction is meant to be true, Hegel goes a long way beyond Priest’s dialetheism because he is committed not to a dialetheist conception of truth, but to what I will call a developmental conception of truth, which allows him to account for complex and dynamic properties of reality in a way different from how Priest does so.

I will start my analysis with a brief introductory overview of the dialetheist’s thesis of the truth of contradiction. Then, in the first part of the article, I will show that Hegel’s notion of contradiction can actually be equated with what a dialetheist would call ‘a contradiction’—namely a logical contradiction—and that Hegel actually argues for the truth of contradiction. In the second part of the article I will show that this equation is only a necessary but not a sufficient condition for affirming that Hegel was a dialetheist. The sufficient condition for this would be his endorsement of a conception of truth as exhaustive, but not exclusive, which cannot be ascribed to Hegel because of his theory of determinate negation.

In this analysis, I will not focus my attention on the determination of contradiction in the doctrine of essence. Rather, I will consider the systematic

role that contradiction assumes throughout the logic, insofar as the logical dynamic of some determinations of Hegel's logic ends up being self-contradictorily structured.

I. Dialetheism: a brief overview

Graham Priest defines dialetheism as the thesis according to which there are true contradictions. Dialetheism needs to be distinguished from trivialism: for a trivialist all contradictions are true, while for a dialetheist only some are. Moreover, dialetheism needs to be defined in relation to other paraconsistent logical systems. Paraconsistent logics endorse a non-explosive conception of entailment, so that contradiction does not entail everything (*ex falso quodlibet* is rejected). There are different kinds of paraconsistent logics, one of which is dialetheism. Dialetheism needs to be based on a paraconsistent logic in order to avoid the explosion of the system implied by the truth of contradiction, but not all paraconsistent logics embrace the thesis that there are true contradictions. We can talk of weak or strong paraconsistency depending on whether or not the paraconsistent system admits the thesis that there are true contradictions.

There are different kinds of motivations used by dialetheists for arguing for the truth of contradiction. The most important one is the analysis of the paradoxes of self-reference. Rather than looking for a solution for the paradoxes, the dialetheist's strategy is to show that the paradoxes are sound arguments: their self-contradictory conclusions are used as evidence for the thesis that some contradictions are true. Other motivations for endorsing dialetheism are the account of borderline cases of vague predicates, of predicates with conflicting criteria of application, of some legal situations where the body of laws is inconsistent, and of transitional states, such as the movement and the instant of change, which are explicitly reminiscent of Hegel's account of becoming, change and movement.⁴

Priest has defined true contradictions as *dialetheia*. More specifically, a *dialetheia* is 'any true statement of the form: *a* and it is not the case that *a*' (Priest 2006: 4). He therefore refers to the standard syntactic definition of contradiction, according to which a contradiction is a conjunction of two propositions, each one being the negation of the other. Then the question is the following: how can Priest account for the truth of propositions of this kind?

In Priest's account, saying that a statement of the form '*a* and it is not the case that *a*' is true means that *a* is both true and false. In fact, Priest works with a negation which is classically understood as a sentential function that turns a true sentence into a false one, and vice versa. Hence, saying that '*a* and not-*a*' is true means that both conjuncts are true, but also that if *a* is true then *not-a* is false,

and if *not-a* is true then *a* is false. Therefore *a* and *not-a* are both true and false. In effect, Priest's dialethic logical theory involves three truth values. The first two are, of course, truth and falsity; the third truth value is 'to be both true and false', which is the truth value Priest uses in order to explain the possibility of a contradiction being true. Priest, together with Richard Routley, named true contradictions *di-aletheia* precisely because true contradictions have this 'double truth value', or, as he says, they face both truth and falsity (Priest, Routley and Norman 1989).

In Priest's account truth and falsity are thus exhaustive but not exclusive, there are no truth gaps, but there are truth gluts, that is to say, there are some cases in which truth and falsity overlap, and these cases correspond precisely to *dialetheia*.⁵

II. Hegel's notion of contradiction

In this part of the paper I will show that Hegel's notion of contradiction can be partly traced back to what a dialetheist would call 'a contradiction', namely a logical contradiction (a proposition of the form '*a* and it is not the case that *a*').

More specifically, I will follow Michael Wolff's lead and show that Hegel's use of the notion of contradiction in the *Science of Logic* is not a homonym of the syntactic definition of contradiction. Rather, Hegel's notion of contradiction and the standard syntactic conception of this logical structure are paronyms (cf. Wolff 1981: 35–36). This means that Hegel and Priest do not use the same word—'contradiction'—to denote two completely different things. Their conceptions of contradiction are similar, and I would say also inherently related to one another, but they are not identical.

Contradictions in Hegel's logic are inherently related to Priest's '*dialetheia*'—'true statements of the form: *a* and it is not the case that *a*'—because, even if the primary value of contradictions in Hegel's logic is not linguistic but ontological, they can be expressed at the linguistic level only by means of a syntactic contradiction. What is contradictory in Hegel's logic are not primarily sentences, but the thought determinations that are pure forms of both thought and being. Logical determinations are the pure forms of being, since they are the dynamics and the structures through which reality is articulated, such as becoming and finitude, cause and effect, living processes, etc.⁶ At the same time, they are also pure forms of thought, since the dynamics and the structures of reality need to be conceptually articulated by a thought that critically analyses them in order to overcome the contingency and the subjective character of their single instantiations in external reality. The task of thought is to capture and to make explicit what the dynamics and structures of pure being are *in their truth*. When thought does that, it is one with being, subjectivity is one with objectivity, and we have what Hegel calls objective thought. My thesis is that the

structure of some determinations is contradictorily articulated, and that it requires syntactic contradiction in order to be expressed at the linguistic level. To show this, I will analyse two examples of contradictions in Hegel's logic, namely the dialectic of the logical determinations of becoming and of the finite and infinity.

Becoming, which is analysed by Hegel at the very beginning of the *Science of Logic*, is the result of the dialectical development of the determinations 'being' and 'nothing':

The result of considering being and nothing, as expressed in the statement: being and nothing are one and the same, is incomplete. ... To help express the speculative truth, the deficiency is made good in the first place by adding the contrary proposition: being and nothing are not the same (*WL I*: 77–78; *SL*: 90–91).

The same can be said with respect to the finite and infinity. The structure is investigated in the first part of Hegel's *Logic*, at the end of the section on determinate being:

The assertion is made: the finite and infinite are a single unity; this false assertion must be corrected by the opposite: they are absolutely different and opposed to each other; this must be corrected again by declaring that they are inseparable, that the determination of each lies in the other, by the assertion of their unity, and so on to infinity (*WL I*: 138; *SL*: 151).

In the two quotations, Hegel is claiming that in order for speculative truth to be linguistically expressed, a syntactic contradiction is necessarily needed. The necessity of a syntactic contradiction basically depends on the structure of judgement, which is unable to express the structure of speculative truth.

The truth of a determination consists in the dynamic through which this determination realizes what it really is, or, put differently, it consists in the full deployment of its true nature. In determinations such as becoming and infinity, the content develops itself according to a self-referential negative dynamic. By making explicit this self-referential negative dynamic, the determination is driven to deny itself and to realize itself in its own opposite.⁷ Therefore, the dynamic that leads a determination such as being or the finite to realize what it is involves both its being itself and its being its other, that is, it involves its identity with itself and the equally necessary difference from itself. The structure of judgement expresses only the first aspect, not the second one. Hegel claims:

[T]he proposition in the form of a judgment is not suited to express speculative truths. ... Judgment is an identical relation

between subject and predicate; in it we abstract from the fact that the subject has a number of determinatenesses other than that of the predicate, and also that the predicate is more extensive than the subject. Now if the content is speculative, the non-identical aspect of subject and predicate is also an essential moment, but in the judgment this is not expressed. (*WL I*: 78; *SL*: 90–91)

As regards the first example I mentioned, we just need to consider how the content of being is completely indeterminate and loses any kind of consistency precisely because of its indeterminacy. In this sense, being denies itself and turns into nothing. The truth of being is its vanishing and passing over into its opposite. This truth is fully articulated in the logical dynamic of becoming. This dynamic, this truth, cannot be expressed by the single affirmative judgement ‘being and nothing are one and the same’—because being and nothing are not simply two different words for the same thing. In the moment of the passing over into one another they actually are identical, but only as two opposites whose difference is not cancelled by this identity. Without this difference, there could not be any vanishing, but just the fixed subsistence of the same thing assuming different names.

Hence, the truth of being and nothing in Hegel’s Logic cannot be expressed simply by the single negative judgement either. This judgement—being and nothing are not the same—expresses their difference as a relationship between two entities that are distinct and fixed. They actually are two distinct logical contents, but they are necessarily led to pass over into each other by their own nature. Their truth is this very passing over within which they are different and identical at the same time and in the same sense.⁸ This is why in Hegel’s view both the identity and difference of being and nothing are, if individually considered, only necessary but not sufficient conditions for being and nothing to realize their truth. Only together the identity and difference of the opposite determinations turn out to develop the concrete articulation of these determinations, their vanishing into one another, that is to say, their truth.

Correspondingly, the affirmative and the negative judgement ‘being and nothing are the same’ and ‘being and nothing are not the same’, individually considered, can express only one side of the truth of the determinations of being and nothing. Hegel claims:

The commonest injustice done to a speculative content is to make it one-sided, that is, to give prominence only to one of the propositions into which it can be resolved. It cannot then be denied that this proposition is asserted; *but the statement is just as false (falsch) as it is correct (richtig)*, for once one of the

propositions is taken out of the speculative content, the other must at least be equally considered and stated. (*WL I*: 78; *SL*: 91)

In these lines Hegel claims that both propositions are necessary but not sufficient conditions for speculative truth to be expressed. In this sense, if each proposition is meant in this way, it is correct (*richtig*) insofar as it expresses part of the truth of becoming, but this does not mean that it expresses the *Wahrheit*, the whole truth, of becoming. It is also worth noticing how, according to Hegel, each proposition can be said to be false, and this is the case if it is supposed to be both a necessary and sufficient condition in order for speculative truth to be expressed, that is to say, when it is supposed to express the whole truth of becoming. Nevertheless, this does not imply that the proposition is false *per se*. It is false only if its *Richtigkeit* is taken to be the *Wahrheit* of becoming, namely, if it is taken as a linguistic expression which represents in an exhaustive way the content of becoming.

An adequate expression of the speculative truth of becoming requires the conjunction of the two contradictory judgements, because only this conjunction can express the identity and difference of being and nothing within becoming, which is the structure underlying the vanishing of each determination into the other. The same dynamic occurs—at the level of Hegel's treatment of determinate being—in the relationship between the finite and infinity.

On the one hand, the finite is a determinate being which is inherently driven to deny itself in order to be what it really is. It fully articulates its identity only through its own self-negation: the finite is itself only insofar as it ends and it stops being itself, or, it realizes itself in the very moment in which it passes over into its non-being, which is the infinite. Hence, the finite is identical to infinity because it realizes its identity only in passing over into it. At the same time, the finite is different from infinity: if this difference did not subsist, the finite itself could never pass over into its other and it could never realize its own finitude.

On the other hand, according to Hegel, the infinite is nothing but the endless passing over of the finite, and therefore it necessarily involves this very passing over and the self-negation of the finite within itself. In this sense, infinity is itself only insofar as it is this passing over, this overcoming of the finite, where it is both identical to and different from the finite. It is identical to the finite because it is built on the passing over of the finite. It is different from the finite because without this difference there could not be this passing over and this overcoming of the finite, and infinity would not have any chance to arise.

In this sense, each one of the two determinations—the finite and infinity—is both identical to and different from its opposite.⁹ Their truth can be expressed only by a linguistic formulation where there is room for this identity and for this difference. The finite and infinity are both 'a single unity' and 'absolutely different

and opposed to each other' (*WL I*: 138; *SL*: 151); namely they are the same and they are not the same. Therefore, the dialectic of being and nothing as well as that of the finite and infinity necessarily requires a syntactic contradiction in order to be expressed, because only the conjunction of a positive and a negative judgement can express the identity and difference between the opposite determinations.

Hence, the structure of Hegel's notion of contradiction in his *Science of Logic* is inherently related to Priest's *dialetheia*, because contradiction in Hegel's Logic is the structure of logical–ontological dynamics and processes that can be expressed at the linguistic level only by a syntactic contradiction, which is meant to be true. Yet two further considerations are needed.

Firstly, in giving voice to the self-referential negative dynamic of logical determinations, in Hegel's dialectic there is not simply a contradiction formed by two statements in which two incompatible properties are assigned to the same subject. What we really have is a self-contradiction of one and the same logical content.¹⁰ Being, insofar as it is being, is nothing, and vice versa. The finite, insofar as it is finite, is infinite, and vice versa. Being and nothing, but also the finite and infinity, are not two distinct logical contents that turn out to be identical. Rather, in each case, there is a single logical content that is itself only by going through a constitutive process of self-differentiation.

Secondly, my claim that in Hegel's Logic there are statements that have the form of *dialetheia*—namely '*a* and it is not the case that *a*'—does not imply that the syntactic definition of contradiction is the most relevant meaning that the notion of contradiction assumes in Hegel's logical system. This can be said of Priest's account, where the primary bearers of contradiction are sentences. In fact, even when Priest talks of ontological contradiction, he does that in a derivative sense. In *In Contradiction*, he writes:

Of course, the world as such is not the *kind* of thing that can be consistent or inconsistent. Consistency is a property of sentences (statements, or, whatever), not tables, chairs, stars, and people. However, it might be suggested, to say that the world is consistent is to say that any true purely descriptive sentence about the world is consistent. (Priest 2006: 159)

Therefore, the same can be said of inconsistency: to say that the world is inconsistent, that is, to say that there are true contradictions in the world, is to say that there are true purely descriptive sentences about the world that are inconsistent. This means that the world verifies the inconsistencies of these sentences. Let's consider Priest's example of someone walking out of a room: 'for an instant, I am symmetrically poised, one foot in, one foot out, my center of gravity lying on the vertical plane containing the center of gravity of the door. ...

I am neither in nor not in, then I am not (in) and not (not in). By the law of double negation, I am both in and not in' (Priest 1998: 415). Hence, this kind of transitional state of affairs verifies the contradictory claim 'I am in the room and I am not in the room'.

With regard to Hegel's conception of contradiction, what is at stake is not simply the relation between the syntactic structure of sentences and the ontological structure of reality which is expressed by it. Rather, we need to consider the relation between the contradictory structures of reality, which are, at the same time, the structures of objective thought, and the linguistic expression of these contradictions. In Hegel's view, the bearer of contradiction is not primarily language, but objective thought itself, that is, as I pointed out, a thought that is one with being or, differently put, a subjectivity which is one with objectivity. Hegel's logic analyses contradictory forms that are, primarily, logical and ontological dynamics constituting the actual world in which we live. For example, as we saw, becoming is a dynamic where being and nothing are the same and they are not the same. The finite is itself and it is not itself because it realizes its finitude in ceasing to be what it is. The linguistic expression of these logical–ontological dynamics involves syntactic contradictions. These syntactic contradictions are derivative of and mirror these logical–ontological contradictory dynamics. Hegel claims that '*everything is inherently contradictory*', and this law is, first of all, a law that expresses '*the truth and the essential nature of things*', and not just the way our language expresses it (*WL II*: 286; *SL*: 439).

Therefore, in Priest's account ontological contradictions consist in the fact that the world verifies the contradictions of the sentences that are meant to describe it. Instead, Hegel's view is that the linguistic contradictions we meet in the exposition of his logic express constitutive contradictory structures of the actual world—becoming, finitude, cause and effect, mechanism, the living process, etc.—that is to say, they express the contradictory structures of objective thought. These linguistic contradictions, therefore, testify to the existence of contradictions in the actual world itself. The non-standard view Hegel endorses on the relation between language, thought and reality, and the strong ontological value he assigns to contradiction, obviously depend on his conception of objective thought and on the ontological value he ascribes to logical determinations.¹¹

III. Hegel's account of the truth of contradiction

Saying that in Hegel's logic there are syntactic contradictions is not a sufficient condition for claiming, as Priest does, that Hegel is a dialetheist. In order for

Hegel to be a dialetheist, he needs to claim that some contradictions are true. The second part of the article will be focused on two problems:

- a. What does it mean—in Hegel's account—that a contradiction is true?
- b. To what extent is Hegel's way of ascribing truth to contradictions reducible to Priest's notion of the truth of contradiction?

I start with the first question. The first point to be considered is the bearer of truth. On the one hand, in Priest's dialetheism the bearer of truth is of course the same as the bearer of contradictions, that is, language. Priest clearly claims that dialetheism does not commit one to any particular account of truth. The only point to keep in mind is that—in his account—truth is considered as a property of sentences:

The second, and more substantial, preliminary point concerns what sort of thing it is of which truth is predicated. In English, truth is predicated of many different sorts of things: friends, coins, belief, sentences, etc. I shall be concerned with only one of these: sentences. (Priest 2006: 54)

On the other hand, Hegel's discourse, as we have already seen, is not specifically focused on sentences, but on ontological dynamics—such as becoming, finitude, relations of cause and effect, and so on. The structure of these dynamics is articulated in its pure form within conceptual thought and it is of course expressed by language. Their nature, therefore, is not primarily linguistic. In Hegel's logic, the primary bearer of truth is the logical–ontological structure according to which reality is articulated and determined. To be more precise, in Hegel's logical system the notion of truth (*Wahrheit*) has different meanings. I will simplify things and focus only on the two meanings that concern the problem under consideration.

The first one is absolute truth, which corresponds to the complete development of the logical system realized only at the end of the system itself in the absolute idea. Here truth is the complete articulation of the logical–ontological structure of everything there is.¹² The development of this truth goes through different moments that correspond to the different logical determinations, each one having its own truth insofar as each one is a concrete and necessary step of the path that takes thought to the absolute idea.

The truth of each determination as a necessary moment of the process of self-articulation of thought is the second meaning of truth that we need to take into account. In this second sense, truth is the concrete structure of each moment of the logical process, or, put differently, the complete articulation of the content of the logical determination each time in question.¹³ Generally, this truth is articulated as the identity of identity and difference of the

determination with itself, as we saw in the case of becoming, of the finite, and of infinity.

When Hegel says that in the logic there are true contradictions he refers to both these two meanings of truth. With respect to the first meaning we just need to remind ourselves that the truth of the absolute idea, in fact, is self-contradictory insofar as ‘in the absolute truth of itself, [the absolute idea] *resolves to release* freely from itself the moment of its particularity or the first determining and otherness, the *immediate idea*, as its *reflection* [*Widerschein*], itself as *nature*’ (Enz: 231; Enc. 303). In this way, the absolute idea embodies at a more complex level the same self-negating dynamic pointed out in becoming and in finitude and infinity. It turns out to be *nature*, that actually is ‘the Idea in the form of *otherness*’, or, the idea that is ‘the negative of itself’ (Enz: 347; PN: 205).

With respect to the second meaning of truth, the structure of all the determinations of the system through which the absolute idea articulates itself turns out to be, in a more or less explicit way, self-contradictory. When Hegel refers to the truth of contradiction, therefore, he has in mind also the truth of single logical determinations, a truth which is relative to the specific content of the determination in question, but that is also inherently related to the absolute truth of the absolute idea of which it is a constitutive component.

Contradiction can be said to be the truth of a determination when this determination turns out to be itself and not itself. For instance, contradiction is the truth of the finite because the finite is itself, but it is also its passing over into its other, and thus its own self-negation, its non-being:

The finite is thus inwardly self-contradictory; it sublates itself, ceases to be. ... But closer consideration of this result shows that the finite in its ceasing-to-be, in this negation of itself, has attained its being-in-itself, is *united with itself*. ... This *identity with itself*, the negation of the negative, is affirmative being and thus the other of the finite, of the finite which is supposed to have the first negation for its determinateness; this other is the *infinite*. (WL I: 123–24; SL: 136–37).

The truth of the finite is the dynamic of the passing over, its ceasing to be, according to which the finite is itself only insofar as it is not itself anymore, namely only insofar as it ceases to be what it is (it is its self-negation) and passes over into its other, that is the infinite. There is a formal parallelism with the structure of *dialetheia*, but the way in which the truth of this form is conceived in Hegel’s logic is relevantly different from the way Priest conceives of it.

In Priest’s dialetheism the logical space is divided into two sections—truth and falsity—and we can assign each sentence to one of these sections or to both

of them depending on a specific criterion of truth (correspondence, coherence, pragmatic evidence). In this logical context, truth values are properties assigned to sentences on the basis of an external criterion that the sentence has to meet. If this criterion is not met, the sentence is false and the negation of the sentence is thus true. In this sense, negation is like a logical representation of an unbridgeable distance between the sentence in question and the way things actually are, that is to say, between the sentence and truth. In this sense, in Priest's account, as in classical logic, negation is defined in terms of falsity.¹⁴

In Hegel's dialectic, instead, the logical space is not divided between truth and falsity. Strictly speaking, in Hegel's logic there is one single logical space, which is the space of truth, that is the truth of a thought which needs to be progressively determined until it reaches its complete articulation. There is not an external agent that assigns truth to logical determinations on the basis of some external criteria. The matter at hand is not, or not only, the *truth of cognition*, beliefs or sentences, but the *cognition of truth*, which is the self-articulation of thought itself, which is objective thought, namely a thought that is one with being. Thought is the one and only logical space of truth and it gradually develops itself by fully articulating its own content, and thus by fully meeting its own criteria. This means that thought has to get through a gradual development of a truth which is implicitly and indeterminately present already at the beginning of the system—being is the first definition of the absolute—but that needs to be concretely and completely articulated along the whole development of the system itself. If, to quote Hegel, 'the True is the whole' (*PbG*: 19; *PbS*: 11), truth is the absolute truth fully developed in the absolute idea, but it also involves the truth of each moment of its own development and all the dialectical passages through which every moment turns into the following one. The absolute truth of the absolute idea and the truth of each determination are one and the same truth. More precisely, they are the truth of the same logical space seen from different perspectives, which are respectively the complete articulation of the system on the one hand and its work in progress on the other. This could be expressed with a provocative motto like: 'there is nothing wrong in Hegel's logic', or, 'everything is true in Hegel's logic', because every moment of the dialectical process is a moment of the self-determination of the whole truth, which is the truth of thought itself.

This is why true contradictions in Hegel's logic cannot be properly conceived as *di-aletheiai*, because logical determinations that turn out to be contradictorily articulated do not have a double truth value, or, they are not both true and false. Rather, they are simply and radically true. In fact, in Hegel's logic the negation of a determination does not stand for an uncancellable distance between this determination and its truth, or, it cannot be equivalent to the falsity of this determination. Rather, the negation of a determination is nothing but the

further-level articulation of the content of the determination itself. Through its negation a determination develops its own truth. Therefore both the determination in its immediacy and its negation are true, because they both are necessary moments of the concrete realization of the determination in question.

For example, saying that the finite is itself only in its ceasing to be itself, and in not being itself anymore, does not mean that the finite is false, but that the finite realizes its finitude. Or, we could also say, the finite realizes its truth only in the very moment in which it negates itself and passes over into its non-being, that is to say, only insofar as it is its own negation. Determinate negation lies at the core of each dialectical passage in the logic. It is a negation because it implies the turning of each determination into its opposite; it is determinate because the negation of a determination does not imply its being false, but rather its necessary development into this very opposite that has a specific determinateness and whose structure still involves the previous determination.

Therefore, in Hegel's logic two opposite determinations—such as being and nothing, the finite and infinity, identity and difference, etc.—are not conjuncts that are both true and false, as in Priest's *dialetheia*. Rather, they both are true insofar as they both are necessary conditions for the truth of a given logical structure to be developed. Nevertheless, we can say that they are a sufficient condition for this truth only together with the opposite determination. The concrete and complete truth of a determination is only their contradictory unity: being and nothing find their truth only in the contradictory passage that unites them in becoming, and the same happens with the identity that lies in the passage from the finite to infinity which is at the basis of the true conception of infinity, not to mention the identity of identity and difference in the contradictory structure of essence, and so on.

These considerations furthermore show the right way to understand the linguistic formulation of the true contradictions in Hegel's Logic that I have examined in the first part of the article. In the *Science of Logic*, propositions such as 'being and nothing are the same and being and nothing are not the same', or 'the finite and infinite are a single unity and they are absolutely different and opposed to each other' are not to be understood as conjunctions of opposite sentences each one referred to a fixed and given state of affairs and each one to be considered both true and false. With respect to syntactic contradiction expressing the dialectic of the finite and infinity Hegel claims: 'The resolution of this contradiction is not the equal correctness (*Richtigkeit*) and equal incorrectness (*Unrichtigkeit*) of the two assertions (*Behauptungen*) ... but the *ideality* of both, in which as distinct, reciprocal negations, they are only *moments*' (*WL I*: 139; *SL*: 151). Syntactic contradiction is a kind of linguistic reflex of the self-referential negative dynamic constituting the determinations in question, and the two

assertions are the linguistic expression of the two contradictory moments of this dynamic. The conjunction of the first judgement—the positive one, with its opposite, the negative one—corresponds to the negation of the former. Yet, just as the result of the self-negation of a determination is determinate (it is a determinate negation), the result of the negation of the first affirmative judgement is not its falsity, but its expressing—together with the negative judgement—the true dynamic constituting the determination in question.

In this sense, the way Hegel uses syntactic contradictions to express the dynamic structure of logical determinations is meant to linguistically embody what Angelica Nuzzo defines as a ‘developmental theory of truth’ (Nuzzo 2009). Nuzzo clearly shows how Hegel debunks what she characterizes as a numismatic theory of truth and falsity, namely the common sense theory according to which ‘truth and falsity are fixed, thoroughly separated, and unmoved determinations (of things or thought)—the former there to be possessed, the latter to be dismissed’ (Nuzzo 2009: 146). This is the understanding’s theory of truth, which is characterized by ‘its fixation in thing-coin, its unmoved essentialization of value which is consigned to the illusory process of abstract exchange, its appeal to the minting authority for ultimate validity, its radical separation of truth and falsity’ (Nuzzo 2009: 147). Hegel’s use of syntactic contradiction can instead bring to light another conception of truth and another conception of logic, according to which we have ‘to set the logical form in motion, to show its internal movement or the process through which logical form in acquiring its adequate reality becomes the logical form of truth’ (Nuzzo 2009: 132).

Precisely by looking at these last considerations, I think Priest is wrong in associating Hegel’s notion of contradiction with his own theory. Even if Hegel can be read as claiming that some kinds of contradictions are true, he conceives of these contradictions and of their truth in a way which is different from Priest’s notion of *dialetheia*. Most importantly, Hegel assigns to contradiction a conception of truth which I consider to be even more radical than the dialetheist one. In fact, dialetheism remains within a paradigm of rationality which uses truth as a coin. What Priest teaches us is to look at both sides of the coin. Nevertheless, he still uses this coin in order to understand how our thought can interact with the actual world. What Hegel teaches us, instead, is to get rid of the coin as a *medium* between our thought and the world in which we live in order to give our thought the chance to stop just reflecting *on* reality, and to try to *be one with* reality itself.

Michela Bordignon

Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo—Università degli Studi di Padova, Italy

michelabordignon81@yahoo.it

Notes

¹ Abbreviations used:

Enc = Hegel, G. W. F. (2010), *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline, Part I: Science of Logic*, trans. and ed. K. Brinkmann and D. O. Dahlstrom. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Enz = Hegel, G. W. F. (1992), *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* (1830), ed. W. Bonsiepen and H. C. Lucas, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 20. Hamburg: Meiner.

PbG = Hegel, G. W. F. (1980), *Die Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. W. Bonsiepen und R. Heede, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 9. Hamburg: Felix Meiner.

PbS = Hegel, G. W. F. (1977), *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

PN = Hegel, G. W. F. (1970), *Philosophy of Nature*, ed. and trans. M. J. Petry. London: Allen & Unwin.

SL = Hegel, G. W. F. (1998), *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller. New York: Humanity Books.

WL I = Hegel, G. W. F. (1984), *Wissenschaft der Logik. Erster Teil: Die Objektive Logik. Erster Band: Die Lehre vom Sein* (1832), ed. F. Hogemann and W. Jaeschke, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 21. Hamburg: Meiner.

WL II = Hegel, G. W. F. (1978), *Wissenschaft der Logik. Erster Band: Die Objektive Logik* (1812/1813), ed. F. Hogemann and W. Jaeschke, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 11. Hamburg: Meiner.

WL III = Hegel, G. W. F. (1981), *Wissenschaft der Logik. Zweiter Band: Die Subjektive Logik* (1816), ed. F. Hogemann and W. Jaeschke, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12. Hamburg: Meiner Verlag.

² For an introductory overview of the current debate on contradiction and the validity of the law on non-contradiction see Priest, Beall and Armour-Garb 2004; Berto 2007.

³ Dialetheism is 'the view that the LNC fails, that some contradictions are true' (Priest 1998: 416).

⁴ See the section on the application of dialetheism in Priest (2006: 125–204).

⁵ 'The conditions of application of a sentence may well overlap those of the application of its negation, especially if the world arranges itself in an unkind fashion. At such spots in the weft and warp of language, we have dialetheias' (Priest, Routley and Norman 1989: 67).

⁶ In Hegel's Logic other determinations that do not seem to have a dynamical nature, like identity and difference, ground, universality, particularity and singularity, and so on, turn out to have a processual nature, such as the self-identification or self-differentiation, self-foundation, and the process through which something initially characterized as an abstract and indeterminate universal particularizes itself for reaching its proper singularity.

⁷ It is precisely this negative self-referential dynamics that gives rise to the self-contradictory structure of thought determinations in Hegel's logic. Priest himself claims that 'no one before this century tried harder than Hegel to think through the consequences of thought thinking about itself, or of categories applying to themselves' (Priest 1989: 388). For a detailed account of the notion of self-negation in Hegel's dialectic and of its paradoxical structure and

implications see Henrich (1976: 208–30); Koch (1999: 1–29); Koch (2002: 27–49); Bordignon (2015).

⁸ ‘Being and nothing are utterly different from one another but collapse logically into one another because of the indeterminate immediacy of their difference. Since each one collapses into the *other*, however, each proves, as I noted above, to be ineliminable and irreducible. Yet each one proves to be irreducible precisely *as* vanishing into the other’ (Houlgate 2006: 265).

⁹ ‘Infinite being thus turns out to be just as contradictory as finite being. On the one hand, infinite being is simply what finite being is in truth, and so is all that there truly is. On the other hand, infinite being itself requires that there also be finite being from which it can clearly and explicitly differentiate itself The finite thus cannot simply disappear into infinite being, as we first thought, but must remain as that which is other than the infinite’ (Houlgate 2006: 404).

¹⁰ ‘By no means does Hegel claim, I would contend, that the positive and the negative—or any other opposites—contradict *one another*. Hegel would certainly agree that mutually exclusive concepts give rise to a contradiction if they are simultaneously attributed to the same thing. But the Logic is not concerned with the attribution of concepts to things. Hegel’s point is rather that both the positive and the negative, *qua* concepts, contradict *themselves*’ (De Boer 2010: 363).

¹¹ ‘Für Hegels Wahrheitstheorie ist in diesem Zusammenhang entscheidend, daß die “Aufnahme” auch hier nicht ein passives Rezipieren möglichst vieler Eindrücke in die *tabula rasa* des wahrnehmenden Subjekts meint, sondern die aktive Explizierung der begrifflichen Strukturen der Wirklichkeit, die zunächst noch “in Objekte versenkt” sind’ (‘for Hegel’s theory of truth, it is decisive in this regard that “reception” here does not mean a passive receiving of as many impressions as possible into the *tabula rasa* of the perceiving subject, but rather the active explication of the conceptual structures of actuality, which at first are still “sunk in objects”’) (Halbig 2002: 211). On Hegel’s conception of objective thought see also Illetterati (2007).

¹² ‘The absolute idea alone is *being*, imperishable *life*, *self-knowing truth*, and is *all truth*’ (WL III: 236; SL: 824).

¹³ At the end of the logic Hegel outlines the main features of the dialectical method that underlies the dialectic of each determination in the logic and, with respect to the result of this dialectic, he claims: ‘the *third* is the immediate, but the immediate *resulting from sublation of mediation*, the simple resulting from *sublation of difference*, the positive resulting from sublation of the negative ... The *result* is therefore the *truth*’ (WL III: 248; SL: 837).

¹⁴ ‘It would seem that falsity and negation can be defined in terms of each other, but neither can be defined without the other’ (Priest 2006: 64).

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