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The Problem of 'Ultimate Grounding' in the Perspective of Hegel's Logic

Abstract

What corresponds to the present-day 'transcendental-pragmatic' concept of *ultimate grounding* in Hegel is his *claim to absoluteness of the logic.* Hegel's fundamental intuition is that of a 'backward going grounding' obtaining the initially unproved presuppositions, thereby 'wrapping itself into a circle' – the project of the self-grounding of logic, understood as the *self-explication of logic by logical means*. Yet this is not about one of the multiple 'logics' which as formal constructs cannot claim absoluteness. It is rather a *fundamental logic* that only makes logical textures possible at all and so owns *transcendental* character. The non-contradiction-principle is an example for this. Essential is that it is 'under-cover-effcient' as soon as meaningful concepts are used. Self-explication of the fundamental logic then means *explicating* its *implicit* under-cover validity, in fact by means of the fundamental logic itself. As is shown this is the affair of *dialectic* which thereby is to be understood as *ultimate grounding of the fundamental logic*. This is analyzed in detail using the example of the being/non-being-dialectic. As is demonstrated each explication step generates a new implicit issue and therewith a new *explication-discrepancy* inducing an *antinomical structure* that anew forwards the explication procedure. So this is entirely *determined by itself*. Decisive for the ultimate grounding argumentation is that thereby an *objectively verifyable procedure* is found, which is apparently possible only in a Hegelian framework. In contrast the *immediate evidence* of a speech act claimed by the transcendental-pragmatic position has only *private* character, which is grounding-theoretically irrelevant.

Zusammenfassung

Dem heutigen 'transzendental-pragmatischen' Begriff der *Letztbegründung* korrespondiert bei Hegel der *Absolutheitsanspruch* der Logik. Hegels Grundintuition ist die eines 'rückwärtsgehenden Begründens', das seine eigenen Voraussetzungen einholt und sich damit 'in einen Kreis schlingt' – das Projekt einer Selbstbegründung der Logik, verstanden als *Selbstexplikation der Logik mit logischen Mitteln.* Dabei handelt es sich nicht um eine der vielen 'Logiken', die als formale Konstrukte keine Absolutheit beanspruchen können, sondern um eine *fundamentale Logik*, die logische Gefüge überhaupt erst ermöglicht und damit *transzendentalen* Charakter besitzt. Das Widerspruchsprinzip ist dafür ein Exempel. Wesentlich ist, dass es sich 'untergründig' Geltung verschafft, sobald überhaupt sinnvolle Begriffe verwendet werden. Selbstexplikation der Fundamentallogik bedeutet dann, deren untergründige, *implizite* Geltung zu *explizieren*, und zwar mit den Mitteln eben dieser Logik selbst. Wie gezeigt wird, ist dies Sache der *Dialektik*, die so als *Letztbegründung der Fundamentallogik* zu verstehen ist. Am Beispiel der Sein-Nichtsein-Dialektik wird das hier ausführlich analysiert. Es wird gezeigt, dass jeder Explikationsschritt einen neuen impliziten Sachverhalt generiert und die so entstandene neue *Explikations-Diskrepanz* eine *antinomische Struktur* erzeugt, die das Explikationsverfahren erneut weiterleitet. Dieses ist dadurch ganz *aus sich heraus bestimmt.* Entscheidend ist, dass für die Letzbegründungs-Argumentation damit ein *objektiv ausweisbares Verfahren* gefunden ist, das offenbar nur in einem Hegelschen Rahmen möglich ist. Demgegenüber hat die von der Transzendental-Pragmatik beanspruchte *unmittelbare Evidenz* eines Sprechakts lediglich *privaten* Charakter, der begründungstheoretisch irrelevant ist.

Keywords: ultimate grounding, Letztbegründung, Hegel, dialectics, Dialektik, antinomy, Antinomie, antinomical structure, antinomical contradiction, dialectical contradiction, dialektischer Widerspruch, fundamental logic, Fundamentallogik, non-contradiction principle, Widerspruchsprinzip, transcendental, being, explication, absoluteness, absolute knowledge, Transzendentalpragmatik, fallibilism

1. Introduction

Ultimate grounding is not a Hegelian concept. It originates from the current controversy concerning the soundness of philosophical thinking. In Germany it emanated in the seventies with publications of Karl-Otto Apel on the one side and counter positions of Hans Albert. As a matter of fact thereby the sokratic anti-skepticistic argument was rediscovered: 'Truth is impossible' presupposes, as a sentence, itself truth. Thus it contains a *pragmatic contradiction* and so disproves itself. Which this simple consideration means for the foundation of philosophy is meanwhile the subject of a widely ramified discussion which, however, is predominantly not historically oriented.

The explosiveness of the topic is already clearly recognized in Plato, particularly for the refutation of the Plato-contemporary sophistic, quasi 'post-modern' relativism. In the *Theaitetos* dialogue Sokrates reflects – casually, in order probably not to thwart the continuation of the dialogue by Plato's own position – that, if we ask for the possibility of cognition, we are already cognizing and thus cannot meaningfully doubt its possibility at all (Tht. 196 d-197 a). And at the end of the dialogue a most precarious dilemma is shown, albeit cautiously, in the form a 'dream of the Sokrates' (Tht. 201 d ff): If only that can be considered as cognition, for which a reason is assignable, and for this reason again a reason and so on, then there cannot be a *last* cognition, because that itself would have no reason and thus could not be a *cognition* – although it were to be understood paradoxically as the ultimate 'ground' of all cognitions grounding on it.

And then there is Hegel's philosophical claim for absoluteness – if I for once leave aside everything that lies between him and Plato. Nevertheless at first Hegel has played no role in the ultimate grounding discussion and is only later brought in, too, by Vittorio Hösle (e.g. 1984, 1987a, 1987b, 1990) and others, also by me (e.g. 1985, 1994, 1995, 1996). Here I will first expound, in which sense can be spoken of ultimate grounding in Hegel, and then, in loose tying to Hegel, develop the view of *dialectic as* the *ultimate grounding of logic*. The consequence from this is that only such a Hegel-oriented project will be capable to redeem the claim of ultimate grounding in principle.

2. Hegel's Claim for Absoluteness

The completing chapter of the *Phenomenology* has the title 'The Absolute Knowledge'. In the text, however, absolute knowledge appears rather casually only in three places (Hegel 3.582[1] f, 591). 'Absolute' here concerns the completion of spirit as spirit, and not logical ultimate grounding, which is the subject in the following.

In contrast Hegels *logic* is the large-scale, if not gigantic enterprise of a philosophical 'ultimate grounding' of logic, of the structures of nature and spirit. The *logical*, the system of the logic on the whole, or in Hegel's diction the *absolute idea* (8.388 f), is thereafter the absolute, the last ground not only of philosophical argumentation, but also of all being. The well-known dictum at the end of the enzyklopedic *Logic* gives lapidary expression to that: „*All* that which is real … is the idea and has its truth alone through and by means of the idea" (8.368), because the idea is „what is true *in and for itself*" (8.367). But how is this claim for absoluteness justified?

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[1] Citations of this type always refer to G.W.F. Hegel, Werke in 20 Bänden, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, Frankfurt/M. 1969 ff, here e.g. to vol. 3, p. 582.

An explicit 'ultimate grounding argument' is not found in Hegel's *logic*. Nevertheless Hegel is far from maintaining absoluteness simply arbitrarily. According to Hegel rather the system of logic *on the whole* is to be understood as its reason, which, as mentioned, is identified with the *absolute idea* (8.388 f). Completing itself and so embracing the entire logic, it is at the same time, so Hegel, a „*backward approach*" to the beginning, obtaining the initially unproved presuppositions through a „*backward going justifying*" and including them into the logical grounding relationship. As the logic thereby „wraps itself into a circle" (6.570), it is, like the Jena Hegel already expresses it, a grounding structure, „which is a whole carried and completed in itself, having no grounding external to itself, but is grounded by itself in its beginning, middle and its end" (2.46), thus a totality quasi completed in itself. It is the intuition of a *cyclic* and in this sense *self-justifying* grounding-structure, of an autonomous totality of determination, determining itself as unconditioned, just of an absolute being. Hegel's repetitive reminder, that only the completed system could be accepted as the final justification of which, goes with this.

In contrast a non-cyclic structure would have a beginning and in such a way a condition not dependent on itself (e.g. presupposed axioms as in mathematics), and thus it could not be un--conditioned; or it would lose itself in the uncertainty of an infinite regress. Not accidentally the circle form has fascinated the philosophical thinking time and again.

But isn't an ultimate grounding in the sense of a *self-grounding* highly suspicious to be nothing else than a windy petitio principii? Would logic not rather require a grounding in a ground external to it? That the demand of such a 'grounding' is absurd becomes directly clear therein that 'grounding' is a logical operation and thus already presupposes the logic. Indeed a grounding circle in arguments is to be absolutely avoided, but in the special case of the grounding of logic itself it is inevitable. Grounding does not leave the logic, so that, with the quoted Hegelian sentence, it has „no grounding external to itself, but is grounded by itself in its beginning, middle and its end" (2.46). Therefore it cannot be a grounding in the usual sense. Grounding of the *logic* can only mean to make visible its structures and that naturally by using logical means. So the alleged petitio principii of a self-grounding rather proves to be a *self-explication of the logic by logical means*. This, for the record, is to be retained as the proper sense of the Hegelian circle metaphor.

For us at first arises the question, of which logic we are talking about in view of a multiplicity of existing 'logics'. These, however, are formal systems, calculi, for which certain *axioms* are the basis, thus *constructions*, which as such contain *conventional elements*. Hence to such systems which are based on stipulations cannot at all be awarded absoluteness.

But is logic invariably based on conventions? A simple consideration shows that this is not the case. For instance think of the principle, that the contradiction is excluded (principle of non-contradiction), which cannot be accepted or not at will:[2] As is well known, permitting the contradiction in formal contexts would entail that *just anyone sentence becomes derivable*.[3] Thereby logical arguing would become an idle, senseless venture. If both statements: 'R is red' and 'R is not red' would be equally permitted, then the predicates 'red' and 'not red' would be no longer distinct, and likewise in all other cases: 'heavy'/'not heavy', 'true'/'not true' and so on. This would level the difference of position and negation and thus eliminate the possibility of demarcation and determination (see Aristoteles, Metaphysik Γ, 3–6), because all determining, following Spinoza, is a negating.[4] Thus there could also be no concepts with determinate meaning, and so the possibility of meaning would be eliminated at all. Determinateness and meaning is only possible if there is negation, and for this it is obligatory that the contradiction remains exluded. In other words: The non-contradiction principle is a condition of the possibility of argumentation at all and thereby has *tran-*

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[2] Certainly there are also attempts to develop so-called 'para-cionsistent logics', i.e. systems of logic for which the non-contradiction principle does not obtain. But in order not to become *trivial*, certain special rules must be introduced, hence arbitrary conventions, which simply forbid certain operations. By such constructs the non-contradiction principle is only masked (see e.g. Costa 1974).

[3] If we accept as true the contradictory conjunction $A \land \neg A$, then from that follows the validity of A and the invalidity of $\neg A$, and consequently the validity of the implication (*) $\neg A \rightarrow X$ for any proposition X. On the other hand the validity of $\neg A$ also follows from the admitted contradictory conjunction and in such a way, together with the implication (*), the arbitrary proposition X.

[4] „Determinatio negatio est" (vgl. Hösle 1987a, 195).

scendental character, i.e. it represents an unabolishable condition of meaningful arguing.

These considerations refer to a *fundamental logic*, which is not based on arbitrary conditions, but is presupposed for those multiple 'logics' making them only possible at all. In this situation the existence of a *comprehensive system* of that fundamental logic is for the time being a hypothesis. At the same time it is this the whole anticipating look-ahead, which motivates philosophical cognizing at all to further proceed to the recognition of the absolute, firstly in the flat sense of logical conditions of argumentation.

In this sense Hegel's logic is to be understood as fundamental logic. In addition only for such a logic arises the question of self-grounding in the sense of a self-explication, because due to its fundamental character there cannot be any other logical instance, from which it for its part could be grounded. The logical means for the purpose of its self-explication are only found in itself.

3. 'Under-Cover-Validity' of the Fundamental Logic

But thus immediately a new problem arises:[5] Which are the logical means of such a self-explication of logic? As long as this explication is not performed, the means for this may not be available, too, because they belong just to that logic, which is only to be explicated. However, can be argued without having available the argumentation logic necessary for it? That which is to be recognized must obviously already be presupposed here for its recognition.

In the introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel 3.69) Hegel refers to this problem typically arising as soon as recognizing starts in order to recognize transcendental conditions of its recognizing itself (see also Platon, Theaitetos, 196 d–e). This being referred-back of the recognition to itself is characteristic for the problem of ultimate grounding. Can philosophy deal with that?[6] Hegel claims that cognition cannot step out of itself, in order to justify itself, as it were, from the outside, nor that this is required because it has „its measure in itself" (Hegel 3.76).

These statements are formulated in a very general way. In order to have a *concrete example*, let us regard once more the scepticistic truth verdict 'truth is impossible'. As already mentioned, this statement proves itself as self-contradicting in the sense that what it denies it must claim just for this denying itself: a performative contradiction, which proves such a position as untenable[7] – according to the non-contradiction principle. So also just this principle ranks among those logical means, which, as said, are to be provided for a self-explication of the fundamental logic.

However, the non-contradiction principle for its part is not already *explicitly proven* as a principle of argumentation. Hence it has not explicitly been engaged, and nevertheless the cogency of the non-contradiction principle is evident – why? Simply, because the argumentation operates with determinate concepts. If the contradiction would be permitted, as stated above, there could not be determinate concepts. So, *are* there determinate concepts, the contradiction cannot have been permitted, and that means, that the non-contradiction principle obtains. Who uses reasonable, meaning-

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[5] In detail see Wandschneider 2000.

[6] My considerations here are partially based on Wandschneider 2005.

[7] Admittedly this holds only if the 'third' is excluded, i.e. if also the principle of *tertium non datur* holds here. But this does not seem to be as self-evident just as the non-contradiction principle. Think for instance of the foundational discussion of mathematics according to which the non-contradiction principle is indispensible, but not the principle of tertium non datur alike (see Thiel 1972, 110 f). Moreover, this principle appears obsolete in view of the existence of *polyvalent* logics in which 'the third' is no longer excluded. An example is the *reflexion logic* with six truth-values developed by *Ulrich Blau*; this was developed to deal with logical indeterminacy and paradoxes (cf. Blau 1985). – Generally it is being discovered that such polyvalent logics are constructs in which certain validity-possibilities are *settled by convention*. It is essential that even such constructs presume fundamental logical means on the *meta-level* – namely, for their introduction and functional determination. At this level, however, at least the logic operating on each highest meta-level is *bivalent*. Since here (and I adopt this argument from a personal conversation with Blau) there is again only the alternative 'true' and 'false', perhaps with respect to the question as to *whether* or *not* a third truth value *accords* to a proposition in the scope of a tri-valent logic: since again there cannot be a third term. But the 'highest' meta-level – in the founding theoretical perspective relevant here – is the *transcendental* logical level. The fact that it is plainly irreducible means, in the sense of these considerations, that its logic is *bivalent* and therein the *principle of the excluded third* holds. In terms of transcendental logic, therefore, this principle is just as inviolable as the non-contradiction principle and the principle of the non-equivalence of affirmation and negation. The recourse to the principle of the excluded middle in the preceding considerations is thus legitimated transcendentally, too.

ful concepts, thereby already *has* the contradiction *implicitly* excluded, without this had to be *explicitly formulated* as an argumentation principle. The non-contradiction principle thus is implicitly operative in arguing; it is in a way 'under-cover-efficient' – which is simply a consequence of its *transcendental* status.

Question: Can this issue stated for the non-contradiction principle be *generalized*; is the fundamental logic on the whole under-cover-efficient? This question seems to be unanswerable, insofar it concerns the fundamental logic in its whole, still unknown extent. Nevertheless: If the logic would not be already *altogether* efficient, arguing would be *impossible*; because therefore not only the non-contradiction principle is needed, but – in principle – the *entire* fundamental logic. However, can the possibility of arguing be doubted, in principle? If, so Hegels well-known answer in the *Phenomenology*, „the anxiety, to get into error, sets a distrust into the science, which without such precariousnesses gets to work and really recognizes, then it is not to see why not in turn a distrust into this distrust shall be set and worried that this fear to err is already the error itself. Indeed it presupposes somewhat, and in fact a lot, as truth and relies on it its precariousnesses and consequences" (Hegel 3.69). For otherwise not even could be doubted. Also who doubts must argue, must use meaningful concepts etc. In the sense of such a general transcendental argument for the time being it is wholesale to act on the assumption that argumentation is possible and therefore – in principle – the entire fundamental logic is already involved and implicitly 'efficient'.

However, if in this sense logic implicitly exerts itself, then can be stringently argued without the entire equipment of the fundamental logic had to be explicitly available – as for example it is also possible to prove by bare counting that one plus one is two, without to have explicitly to refer to the Peano axioms (which for the counting are of course implicitly drawn on). This is an important circumstance, because it means, that recognizing, although it has not the entire fundamental logic explicitly available, can nevertheless *progress* to new recognition. Recognition is not limited to a factual state of knowledge – for instance in the form of innate or empirical knowledge –, but in a way can draw on an under-cover potential, which does not only lend stringency to its arguing, but above all qualifies it to *proceed*.

The posed question concerning the cognition of the fundamental logic itself, and this means of gaining absolute, *ultimate grounded* knowledge, can thereby be answered in such a way: That which is only to be recognized here, must and can be already implicitly exerted for this recognizing. Thereby it becomes possible to extend our limited knowledge of the fundamental logic. This extension of knowledge is to be understood, as explained, that what in such arguing is *implicitly* efficient is *further explicated*. The recognition of fundamental-logical structures is to be understood as their explication with fundamental-logical means and so in a way as a *self-explication* of the fundamental logic (see Wandschneider 1995 and 2000). Recognizing has thereby, as it were, only 'releasing' – explicating – function: to obtain and explicate that, whereby it implicitly is already led and determined – a genuine Hegelian perspective.[8]

4. Dialectic as Self-Generating Explication of the Fundamental Logic

Now, which was called 'fundamental logic' here, surely is no chaotic aggregation, but, according its logical status, essentially *system*. The structure and contents of which are widely not explicitly known and available for us. Nevertheless according to the developed view of the implicit efficiency of the fundamental logic, hope is not unfounded that also the *system* of the fundamental logic is accessible to recognition and this being progressively extendable in principle. The project, which is delt thereby is nothing less than an enterprise of the type of the Hegelian *Logic*. In this connection the first question arising is, how an access to the assumed system of the fundamental logic can be found at all, or in Hegel's words: „With which must the beginning of science be made?" (Hegel 5.65).

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[8] Karen Gloy sees "Hegel's specific achievement" in "having established a model by his theory that allows to think together ... the absolute and the finite". Parallelizing here the absolute with rationality, as "the holding of the system ground", on the one hand, and and the finite with understanding, as "the ability of systematic explication", on the other hand, she sees in Hegel's philosophy the possibility "to suppose the coincidence of the system ground and the explicit system" – an idea that wins confirmation in the following (Gloy 1981, 135).

As a characteristic of the beginning usually *conditionlessness* is named. However, according to the argument developed this is misleading: Because for all arguing the entire fundamental logic is implicitly already *presupposed* as a transcendental condition of the possibility of argumentation. So the question of the beginning is rather to be understood as the question of the beginning concerning the *explication* of the fundamental logic: So, what should be supposed as the first step of the explication?

The question arises: What at all is 'explication'? Obviously an expressing of what is implicitly the case – whereby already a first feature is expressed, namely that explicating is *always* targeted on expressing something which *is the case* or briefly: that something *is*. The category of *being* in this predicative sense must be regarded as elementary. Without the predicate 'is' nothing can be explicated. This explication that 'being' – in the sense of 'being the case' – is the condition of possible explication at all thus acts as the beginning of the explication.

In Hegel's *Logic* the category of being is also the first category. The argument for this given by Hegel is that of the *indeterminateness* of the meaning of 'pure being', i.e. according to Hegel, 'being' plainly contains no determinateness whatsoever and thereby is to be regarded as the beginning of the determining procedure (Hegel 5.82). The argument given here basically amounts to the same: For 'is' is also still void of determinateness, but is only the *possibility* of determining in the sense of the statement that something is the case. The statement 'The rose is red' determines the rose as red, in fact by means of the 'is', which itself has no determinateness at all and therefore can be applied to everything, provided 'is' has the meaning of 'being the case'. Thus the category of being is to be understood as the elementary condition of possible determining whatsoever and thereby as the beginning of the explication of the fundamental logic. Explication is determination.

With the explication of being, the meaning of which is complete indeterminateness, now, just by this act of explication, something explicit, and that means something determinate, is generated: „However, this *indeterminateness*", so Hegel, „is just that, which constitutes the *determinateness* (italics D.W.) of the same" (Hegel 5.103 f). 'Being' is determinate as *indeterminate*, i.e. 'being' is the category with the meaning of indeterminate being, but as such it is a well-determined category. As a determinate category, however, it is related to its *opposite-determinate* category, and that is 'non-being'. In other words: The explicit introduction of the category 'being' directly forces also the explicit introduction of the opposite category 'non-being'. In fact, 'being' means something indeterminate, but with this meaning definition it is something determinate, which as determinate is at the same time opposed to its determinate opposite, which thereby is *presupposed* by that.

With the now given duplicity of the categories 'being' and 'non-being' a *new constellation* of explicit determinations has evolved, which now raises the question concerning the *relation* between the two categories. At first it is to be stated that each is the negation of its correlated other. That means that the category 'being' *is not* the category 'non-being'. In the twinkling of an eye the category 'being' itself turns out to be a *case of 'non-being'*. In fact it *means* 'being', but just thereby it is infected by 'non-being' because it *is not* the category 'non-being'. So in a way it has the *property* of non-being and to that extent it is 'non-being-like'. However, *being* 'non-being-like' it has again the property of *being*; it is 'being-like'. This again *is not* non-being-like so that just thereby again the property of non-being is given, and so on. In this way the category of being alternately shows the property of being and that of non-being: The property 'being-like' overturns into 'non-being-like', and 'non-being-like' overturns into 'being-like'. The relation of the category 'being' and the category 'non-being' thus reveals a weird *ambiguity concerning its properties*: In a way it *oscillates* between 'being-like' and 'non-being-like'.[9]

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[9] So, with 'B' for 'being' and 'N' for 'non-being', we have the following scheme:

(1) ‹B› $\neq$ ‹N›

hence

(2) ‹B› *is* ‹N›-corresponding.   [continued on the following page!]

However, the incidental 'is' now indicates that, with respect to the category ‹B›, something is the case (namely that ‹B› inheres the quality '‹N›-corresponding'), that ‹B› thus possesses the quality of being and therewith the very same quality through which ‹B› itself is defined,

(3) ‹B› *is* ‹B›-corresponding

This is the characteristic of an *antinomical relationship*. Here is not the place for a scrutinized analysis of antinomical structures.[10] As I have shown elsewhere (Wandschneider 1993), this oscillating of the category 'being' on the *property level* has also consequences for the *meaning* of 'being': It appears that this likewise has an *antinomical* character, and that means that the category 'being' is not only opposed to the category 'non-being' but that it is also *equivalent* to it – equivalent in the sense that with the meaning 'being' always the meaning 'non-being' is involved. So 'being' reveals itself as *inseparably connected* with 'non-being' and vice versa.

It can be asserted that this result agrees with that of Hegel – the identity of 'being' and 'nothing' –, although an argumentation strategy deviating from that of Hegel[11] was pursued: Hegel claims that 'pure being' – due to its complete *indeterminateness* – is equivalent to 'nothing'. Here, on the contrary, at the beginning we had the determinate *opposition* of 'being' and 'non-being', which then was proven to be antinomical and thus also to include the equivalence of their meanings. Yet Hegel himself already points out that the *expression* of the result obtained is imperfect if only the *identity* of 'being' and 'nothing' is stated (5.92). Such an identity predication contradicts „itself per se and dissolves itself" (5.93), because in it 'being' and 'nothing' are *different*. Hence, so Hegel, it is necessary, that also the opposite sentence is added, that 'being' and 'nothing' are *not the same*. Thereby the statement receives the form of an *antinomy* (5.94). So already in Hegel evidence is found concerning the relevance of *antinomical structures* in the context of dialectical logic.

As already mentioned the antinomical structure of the relationship of 'being' and 'non-being' entails the *inseparable connectedness* of both. Semantically this leads leads to a *new category* which is to be understood as the *synthesis* of 'being' and 'non-being'. In Hegel this is '*becoming*', whereas I think from good reasons, as I have explained elsewhere,[12] the category '*determinateness*' to be more adequate: So, the being of something determinate is at the same time non-being, but of another determinate being. The being of the chair is at the same time the non-being of the table. Thus determinateness is a *being*, that *at the same time is non-being*, but in another respect – a *synthetic* structure, which Plato hit upon in the dialogue *Sophistes* (e.g. Soph. 256 d ff): Parmenides' central thought that being never could be non-being, thereby has become obsolete for Plato (see also Düsing 1997); in this sense he speaks of a 'patricide' of Parmenides (Soph. 241 d).

The fact that the developed argument makes use of an antinomical contradiction[13] at first must appear weird, if not suspect. Here, however, it has become visible, that the opposite propositions formed by opposite concepts and apparently contradicting to each other, belong to *different reflection levels*, and thus are 'innocent' anyhow concerning the possibility of arguing.[14] So, in dialecticis, as Hegel asserts and as is widely affirmed, in a certain sense the contradiction is indeed permitted. But the dialectical contradiction, as has been shown, has an *antinomical* structure and so is en-

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or

     (4) ‹B› *is not* ‹N›-corresponding

and therefore a *contrary* proposition to (2). As before, what results on the grounds of the again-recurring 'is not' is the proposition

     (5) ‹B› *is* ‹N›-corresponding

and so forth. The predicate continuously overturns into its opposite: that, however, is the mark of an *antinomical structure*.

[10] Thomas Kesselring (1984) has emphasized the relevance of antinomical structures for dialectics. Hegel himself has alluded to the antinomical character of the being/non-being dialectic (Hegel 5.94). I have undertaken a scrutinized analysis of antinomical structures and of their consequences for dialectics in Wandschneider 1993.

[11] For an analysis of Hegel's argument see e.g. Rinaldi 1998, 76 ff.

[12] Wandschneider 1995, ch. 3.3.

[13] Here by the way the relation to Hösle's usage of the concept 'dialectical contradiction' becomes clear. By this he generally understands a pragmatic-contradictory predication, i.e. such one the explicit proposition of which is contrary to its implicit conditions. He calls it 'dialectical' if it is *not* dependend on *contingent conditions* (situations, persons etc.) – what is obviously fulfilled in the present case. Otherwise he calls it a mere 'pragmatic contradiction' (1990, 176 f). Apart from such terminological details a difference between Hösle's usage und that which is explained here consists rather in a *procedural* respect: Hösle generally uses the concept of the 'dialectical contradiction' in the context of the problem of ultimate grounding, whereas here the usage is tied to the *procedure* of the dialectical development of concepts, i.e. to the evidence of antinomical-dialectical structures in the relationship of opposite predicates.

[14] In detail see Wandschneider 1995, ch. 4.2.

tirely different from the ordinary contradiction. With this clarification I think an objection raised by Giacomo Rinaldi to be settled, who argues that in the developed argument the contradiction has "the totally inadequate form of the *void* Aristotelian contradiction":[15] It is *not at all* the Aristotelian contradiction and so it is not void but, on the contrary, due to its antinomical character constitutes the *inseparable connectedness* of the opposites *demanding for a new synthetic category* – a thoroughly substantial concern! And by the way, if the dialectical contradiction would be an ordinary contradiction the permission of which would be desastrous for argumentation (see chapter 2) whereas in this respect the dialectical contradiction as shown does no harm.

In short: On the basis of the before explicated categories 'being' and 'non-being' a new category *determinateness* has been explicated which is characterized as the *synthesis* of both. At the same time the explication procedure leading to the category of determinateness has made visible a double-sense of 'determinateness', namely something 'thus-determinate' on the one hand and something 'other-determinate' on the other hand. Thereby a *new pair* of opposite categories is induced which, as seen, can be named as 'thus-determinateness' and 'other-determinateness'. With the appearence of this new duality anew the question of the interrelation of the two categories arises. The consequence is – what here cannot be detailed[16] – that again an antinomical structure occurs whereby, as before, again the necessity of a synthetic connection of the opposite categories arises, and so forth.[17]

Thus a *procedure of a progressive explication* of fundamental-logical categories is outlined. This has a *dialectical character* in the sense that it again and again leads to opposite categories which reveal antinomic structures requiring a new synthetic category which anew 'dissociates' into new opposite categories, and so on. This procedure thus follows up the form of dialectical argumentation presented in Hegel's *Science of Logic*. An essential and for the outlined procedure central difference to that of Hegel is to be seen in the systematic evidence of *antinomical structures* from which only a grounding and justification of the synthesis-formation is attained, as I have shown elsewhere (Wandschneider 1995, Kap. 2 und 3).

These considerations are not to be continued here. Decisive is that thereby – in principle – a *procedure* is found which permits to explicate the initially implicit system of the fundamental logic. I think this is an important result concerning the question of the possibility of absolute, ultimate grounded cognition: Because, as shown, on the one hand only fundamental-logical relations can claim absolute validity; on the other hand the system of the fundamental logic is not yet available. Now, the dialectical procedure, as has been shown, opens the possibility of tackling the *systematic explication* of the fundamental logic. Thereby it is to be understood as the genuine method for the aquisition of absolute, ultimate grounded knowledge.

5. Methodological Questions

Certainly thereby also the question arises to what extent this conception can claim *stringency*. Indeed a philosophical view can hardly be designated, which was more controversially judged than just dialectic. So an assessment of the dialectical argumentation is inevitable. For this in the following some more is to be said.

Wolfgang Wieland (1978) and Vittorio Hösle (1987a) pointed out that dialectic progressing is based substantially on a *discrepancy* between the meaning of a concept and its conceptual properties. Wieland for instance claims, „that the category of being is something else than it designates ... The evidence of such a discrepancy suffices ... to force the progression" (Wieland 1978, 201), namely „by the insight developed in another way on each level ..., that the respective category does not yet give the adequate representation of the absolute" (Wieland 1978, 203). Hösle following up this view argues that the development of the categories is at last targeted to a category „*which ex-*

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[15] Rinaldi 2009, 52.

[16] In detail in Wandschneider 1995.

[17] It has been asserted that the principle of the excluded third is no longer strictly valid in the framework of *dialectics*. Indeed this is to be seen under the aspect of the *stage structure* which is essential here: So, by the *synthesis* of the opposite predicates obviously a new semantical level has been attained which leaves the preceding opposition behind and thereby is a third compared with those opposites excluding each other – however not on the same level.

plicitly asserts what it implicitly presupposes" (Hösle 1987a, 201)[18]. Only then the completion of the dialectical movement would be achieved, in Hegel's *Logic* hence in the 'absolute idea'. Every step of the procedure thus leads to the next step, so that „which was in itself or for us already [implicitly, D.W.] existed, ... in the new category, at least partially, is explicated". If all that is explicated which is implicitly contained in the concept of being, the absolute idea is achieved" (Hösle 1987a, 203).

Thereafter the progression is „motivated by the systematic final goal of the logic". Now, does this mean that one must know this goal beforehand, in order to arrive there? Wieland answers this in the negative: That goal, he says, „is nowhere explicitly presupposed in the course of the Logic; it does not go down into the conceptual operations as an element" (Wieland 1978, 202). Nevertheless (as already quoted), the progression shall „be forced by the insight developed in another way on each level ..., that the respective category does not yet give the adequate representation of the absolute" (Wieland 1978, 203) – which then also is again relativized by Wieland: „One must note in these cases that it concerns only an aid to understanding here" (Wieland 1978, 205).

Hösle meanwhile adheres to the view, „that following Hegel philosophy is the *science of the absolute*" and „that a qualification of the absolute proving itself as incomplete ... is self-contradictory. Indeed it is of extreme importance to impute a pretense for completeness to the individual categories; only then in many cases the contradiction emerges" (Hösle 1987a, 201) – 'contradiction' in the sense of a discrepancy of something explicitly expressed and the implicit pretense to express the absolute. Hence, does the dialectical philosopher have to consider permanently the absolute, which he sure enough yet does not know?

Let us see about the considerations developed here under this aspect again. A problem resulted first concerning the beginning: The explicating can always fall back only on *that* which is already explicitly available. In fact the argumentation makes always use also of other, at first implicit elements of the fundamental logic, but in order to be *provable* the procedure must adhere to what is ecplicitly available. Now, the beginning is characterized by the fact that still nothing at all is explicated. How can the procedure begin then at all? The answer given here resulted from the explication of the possibility of explication itself: What is explicated at any rate must 'be the case' or briefly: It must, whatsoever, 'be'. Thus the category of being thereby claimed is to be understood as the first explicit element of the fundamental logic. However, with this first explication step the second is already initiated: As this *determinate* category, which categorizes 'being', it is just *not* the categorization of 'non-being' – whereby the category of *non-being* is immediately set. The explication of 'being' inevitably entails that of 'non-being'. At the same time therewith a *new constellation* of explicit elements has emerged: Since now *two* explicit instances are available the question about its *relationship* arises. As seen this leads to a complex structure which, considered more closely, reveals *antinomical* character. Thereby the next step is presaged: The antinomical structure of the relationship of 'being' and 'non-being' implies that both inseparably belong together and thus force the introduction of a *synthetic* category thus connecting the meaning of 'being' with that of 'non-being'. This turns out to be a new meaning of 'being' which is linguistically conceptualized as 'determinateness', i.e. as a being, which as a being of something thus-determined is at the same time the non-being of something other-determined. 'Being' in the sense of 'determinateness' thus further necessitates the introduction of a new pair of opposite categories, 'being-thus' and 'being-other', which on their part, as can be shown (Wandschneider 1995, chapter 3,5), again brings out antinomic structures, which again necessitate a synthesis, and so forth. The procedure of dialectical concept explication in this way provides a sequence of categories in the sense of a progressive explication of fundamental concepts.[19]

That this procedure is *not arbitrary* – otherwise it would be without explanational value – is to be seen in the fact that reflecting onto itself it is solely orientated at what was explicated in the preceding step of the procedure. Let us regard once more the initial category 'being' under this aspect: Its *meaning* is that of indeterminate being. As the *categorization* of this meaning, however, it

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[18] The whimsical identity of Wieland's and Hösle's page numbers is correct!

[19] The question concerning the *termination* of this explication procedure must remain open within the current bounds. In this regard see e.g. Gloy 1981, 166 ff, 174 ff, and Hösle 1987a, 196 f.

has at the same time the *property* of determinateness. As a *determinate* category it thereupon calls on the corresponding opposite *determinate* category 'non-being'. Now, with this opposition of 'being' and 'non-being' a *new implicit issue* has occurred, namely that the category 'being' *is not* the category 'non-being' and thereby – albeit its *meaning* 'being' – on its part has the *property* of non-being. The meaning 'being' is explicit, whereas the property 'non-being-like', connected with it, is still implicit. Each step of explication thus generates a new implicit state of affairs which as such confronts with the *next explication task* and thereby motivates a new step of explication, and so on. With other words: Each explicational step induces an always new *discrepancy* between that which was just explicated and the new implicite constellation thereby evolved which necessitates a new explicational step leading to a new synthesis, here to that of 'being' and 'non-being', and so forth. This respective incongruity of that which is explicated and that which thereby is implicitly generated leads the explication procedure; I would like to designate it briefly as *explication-discrepancy*.

In this way the explication procedure is determined *by itself* and thus – in principle – all arbitrariness is removed. Each explication step is determined by the preceding one. Hence that which is explicated is not *any* implicit content but respectively just that which was only *generated* by the preceding procedural step. Thereby it is concretely seizable and forwards the procedure by the *explication-discrepancy* thus evolved.[20]

In this way I finally understand the addressed considerations of Wieland and Hösle concerning the role of the *absolute* in dialectical arguing: Dialectics is not subject to the – moreover unrealizable – condition always to make use of the absolute as explicit procedural criterion. Decisive is the self-referential fallback of the procedure to the respectively preceding procedural step in order to seize the specific explication-discrepancy respectively originating on each explication level and to sublate it by another explication act. In fact one could characterize this as an act of reflexive self-assessment regarding the *completeness* of the cognition *on the respective reflection level*. Yet, why should completeness be the goal of cognition? Obviously, because underhand the absolute exerts itself, thereby indeed revealing itself as the stealthy motive of cognition. The logic – in the sense of the fundamental logic –, as has been seen, implicitly exerts itself. Thinking we have already mandated us to its absolute validity. All deceit of cognizing in order to usurp the absolute would be idle and in vain, so Hegel's well-known dictum in the *Phenomenology*, „if it were not already and were not willing to be next to us in and for itself" (Hegel 3,69).

6. Absolute Knowledge?

The initially stated reference to the current discussion concerning ultimate grounding can now be further concretized under a assessment aspect: Essential for the dialectical procedure is, as has been shown, the reflection on that implicit issue which was generated by the preceding explication step and thus can be understood as transcendental condition of the following procedural step. This turning back of the thinking to itself can also be designated – with a term introduced by Wolfgang Kuhlmann in the transcendental-pragmatical context – as an act of '*strict reflection*'.[21] Kuhlmann

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[20] Robert B. Brandom has in detail shown that the function of logical terms is to make *explicit* what is implicitly presupposed in performing the discourse: "In this enquiry the logical vocabulary has been characterized as making *explicit* constitutive features of the practice of discourse in the form of something that can be *asserted*, features which were *implicitly* contained in that which was *done*, before the introduction of that vocabulary". This is achieved by terms "which qualify themselves as logical due to their explicating role". According to Brandom that which is explicated in this way are "implicit inferential determinations" of concepts (Brandom 2000, 737): Who understands the term 'dog' thereby has also understood that 'dog' allows for the inference on 'mammal'. "Hence a theory of *expression* explains how that which is *explicit* arises from that which is *implicit*" (Brandom 2000, 136). Brandom himself recognizes here a *Hegelian* perspective (e.g. Brandom 2000, 156 f; see also Brandom 2001). – Nevertheless: The difference with respect to the considerations developed here also cannot be overlooked: Brandom is not committed to the problem of a *systematic development* of that which is implicit and shall be explicated, whereby in the present context its *procedural generation* is the essential point. Accordingly (see above) just that implicit content is explicated which was *generated* by the respective procedural step, thus being concretely comprehensible and forwarding the procedure by the *explication-discrepancy* thus evolved. In contrast Brandom's concern is the inferential potential implicitly contained in (empirical) concepts and, as he supposes, socially constituted. The systematic development of the (fundamental) logic is not his topic.

[21] Kuhlmann 1985, see e.g. 76 ff, 119.

understands this as the reflection back to the immediately *self*-performed speech act (in this sense 'strict') and the knowledge of the *own* action implicitly accompanying it ('hereby I assert ...', 'hereby I presume ...' etc). A similar reflection back occurs in the developed context, however not on presuppositions of subjective speech acts but on the respective semantical-logical constellation generated by the dialectical procedure, and that means the logical issue generated in the immediately preceding explication step by the procedure itself. Each procedural step produces, as it were, a logical potential by reflecting on that thereby providing new substantial content and at the same time forwarding the procedure – quasi a *methodically regulated strict reflection.*

However, for Kuhlmann not the question of the procedure but that of *certainty* has priority: Whenever I assert something there can be no doubt for me, that I have accomplished an act of assertion, for that is my intention connected with that. If I talk meaningfully I must know what I mean by that. To this extent the 'action knowledge' connected with speech acts is indeed of *immediate certainty*, namely for the speaker itself. But this is a *private* certainty. In fact in the sense of the 'private speech argument' there cannot be a private language in the strict sense, but which is intentionally ment is *immediately certain* only for me – who is intentionally meaning it. The addressee of my talk can only indirectly infer its meaning and to that extent there can only be *hypothetical* certainty. Hence for the grounding of philosophy the aspect of private evidence is not relevant. Decisive is the *stringency* of the argument, and that is exclusively a question of *logic*.

With this reservation the principle of strict reflection has validity in the sense of the considerations developed: Thereafter each explication step is only possible in recourse to the preceding one, to the new constellation of explicit elements thereby generated and their implicit structure. Thus the dialectical procedure has indeed the character of strict reflection which *here* in fact is not to be understood as recourse to a *private accomplished* (and moreover contingent) speech act, but as an objective procedural principle: The *logic* efficient in all argumentation here takes the place of the only private accessible action knowledge of a speech act. However, in this way immediate knowledge and immediate evidence is not possible so that the *possibility to err* cannot be excluded in principle.

Thereby the difference of the transcendental-pragmatic position and the view developed here in a Hegelian perspective concerning the *fallability* of knowledge cannot be overlooked: Not that the intentions which accompany my speech acts are immediately accessible and evident for myself, can be claimed as a criterion of knowledge, but alone the objectively comprehensible logical verification that is accessible to all and which in fact is also *prone to error*. Hegel mentions that Plato has rewritten the *Politeia* seven times; for an undertaking in the dimension of the Hegelian *Logic*, Hegel reflects, it would have been desirable that „the free leisure would have been granted to work it over seventyseven times" (Hegel 5.33).

'Ultimate grounded, absolute knowledge' indeed is not tantamount to 'ultimate, absolute certainty': It cannot be an 'ultimate' knowledge, since it is, as shown, extendable – specifyable, concretizable – knowledge. And the aspect of absolute subjective certainty is, as seen, objectively irrelevant. To be 'ultimately groundable' rather means to be provable *from logical grounds* as 'absolute', so that negating it would be self-contradictory. However, as to the furnishing logical grounds subjective errors in reasoning cannot be excluded in principle. In fact 'errors cannot be excluded, in principle' is not the same as 'errors are inevitable in principle', or more briefly: 'Errors are possible' is not the same as 'errors are necessary'. The latter is the pragmatical-contradictory and thereby untenable thesis of *fallibilism*[22], hence to be refused.

7. Forecast

According to the developed view in Hegel ultimate grounding has the meaning of a self-grounding of the fundamental logic, understood as its self-explication by fundamental-logical means. This is realized in the way of dialectical argumentation, whereby here – in loose connection to Hegel's more intuitive dialectic – the *procedural* aspect was chiefly clarified. The *ontological claim* that is also essentially connected to the fundamental logic in Hegel had to be disregarded

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[22] Following Karl R. Popper anew dicussed and emphaticly advanced e.g. by Hans Albert (1975).

within the current bounds.[23] „*All* which is real … is the idea and has its truth alone through and by means of the idea" (8.368): This dictum quoted already expresses the *central sense* of the Hegelian objective-idealistic project. As Vittorio Hösle claims that which is un-conditionedly valid must indeed also be ontologically relevant. Otherwise it would have an contingent character, but „a contingent absolute is self-contradicting" (Hösle 1987b, 248 und ff). Devalueing it as '*pure thinking*' immediately leads to the disaster of the Kantian thing-in-itself-problem (Wandschneider 1985). In such issues *ontological-metaphysical consequences* of the project of an ultimate grounded fundamental logic appear.

Hegel's *Science of Logic* is – after proleptic approaches in Plato[24] and Leibniz – certainly the most elaborate framework of such a system up to this day: a gigantic edifice of ideas compelling for adoration, in fact showing also fractures and ruptures[25] and so would have rather to be understood as an still unfinished metaphysical *project*, not yet as the *completed system* of the fundamental logic. That this claim, however, is not yet redeemed – neither in Plato nor in Hegel nor in current studies – does not undermine the project as unrealizable. For the present with the punctual proof of ultimate grounded truth both – sense and feasibleness – can rather be claimed as established. What is missing is the embracing, systematic elaboration of what has been outlined here in a programmatic approach.

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[23] See Hösle 1987a, ch. 3.1.1; 1987b, ch. 2.2.

[24] See e.g. Sophistes 251a ff, Parmenides 135c ff.

[25] See for instance the extension of the Hegelian *Logic* by the category *intersubjectivity* claimed by Vittorio Hösle, which is necessary, as he argues, for an adequate foundation of the philosophy of spirit. Hösle asserts "that the philosophy of that which is real is not completely covered by the *Logic* – objective and absolute spirit open a real-philosophical dimension which is no more pricipiated by the *Logic*... So in the divergency of the Logic and the philosophy of the real seems to exist a proper inconsistency – an inconsistency which may point to an incompleteness of the *Logic*" (Hösle 1987a, 664).

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