

## The restlessness of the real. Hegel's notion of real contradictions

### Introduction

#### Three common positions to dialetheism

- i. *simple* dialetheism, true contradictions exist
- ii. *absolute* dialetheism, the absolute is a true contradiction
- iii. *non-dialetheism*, true contradictions don't exist
  - merely a *heuristic function* for subjectivity

#### 'Real contradictions' (RCs)?

- i. RCs are phenomena like space, motion or life<sup>1</sup>
- ii. non-dialetheic positions haven't paid a lot of attention to RCs
  - challenges their understanding of contradictions as something *merely subjective*
- iii. dialetheic positions haven't paid a lot of attention to RCs
  - RCs are a *specific type* of logical contradictions (LCs)
  - they differ from LCs by an 'additive' trait

#### Thesis: challenging the 'type assumption'

- i. confusion of the logical and the real if one takes RCs as specific types of LCs
- ii. understanding RCs requires acknowledging *general difference* between the logical and the real
  - RCs are *not* specific types of LCs
  - but different *in kind*
- iii. positive outcome: combination of non-dialetheism and dialetheism
  - non-dialetheism regarding LCs
  - dialetheism regarding RCs

### Structure

1. sketch out the essential features of a non-dialetheic understanding of LCs
2. general distinction between the logical and the real as different forms
  - the logical as a [*discrete manifold*] of pure thoughts
  - the real as a [*continuous manifold*] or space-time-*continuum*
3. characterize peculiar features of RCs
  - RCs are hybrids consisting of a *logical* and a *real* part.
  - RCs are *about* something real which is *inherently restless* in such a way that it is *aptly* described by a contradictory sequence of judgments
  - without it in itself 'consisting' out of two contradictory judgments.

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<sup>1</sup> For space, cf. GW 20, §298 A; for motion, cf. GW 24.1, 544 & GW 11, 287; for life, cf. GW 12, 188.

## 1. Logical contradictions

### Thought

- i. thoughts are not *forceless* entities that exist in some ‘third realm’
- ii. they arise thanks to a *self-determined activity* called *thinking*<sup>2</sup>
- iii. since LCs are specific arrangements of pure thoughts, they are also products of thinking

### LCs are sequential

- i. LCs are not a conjunctive pair of contradicting judgements
  - $p \wedge \neg p$  is not an appropriate notation
- ii. judgments are developed in conceptual *sequences*
  - notation of the result of any subsequence has the form of a biconditional  $p \leftrightarrow \neg p$

### LCs are not true

- i. validity (*Richtigkeit*) := propositional truth
  - judgments that externally conjunct subject and predicate by reference to representations as their ‘truth maker’ (mostly empirical)  
→ LCs are speculative and thus don’t establish external relations
  - truth (*Wahrheit*) := material truth
  - objects that match their conceptual norm, e.g. a good friend, a real artwork, ...  
→ LCs are not materially true because they are insufficient ‘Definitions of the Absolute’  
(maybe LCs match their conceptual norm ‘more or less’?)
- II. the only *logical instance* of material truth is the logical idea<sup>3</sup>
  - logical idea is not a contradiction

[Q1] ’Die höchste Wahrheit, die Wahrheit als solche, ist die Auflösung des höchsten Gegensatzes und Widerspruchs. In ihr hat der Gegensatz von Freiheit und Notwendigkeit, von Geist und Natur, von Wissen und Gegenstand, Gesetz und Trieb, der Gegensatz und Widerspruch überhaupt, welche Form er auch annehmen möge, als Gegensatz und Widerspruch keine Geltung und Macht mehr.’ (TWA 13, 137f.).

## 2. The logical and the real

### The philosophy of the real

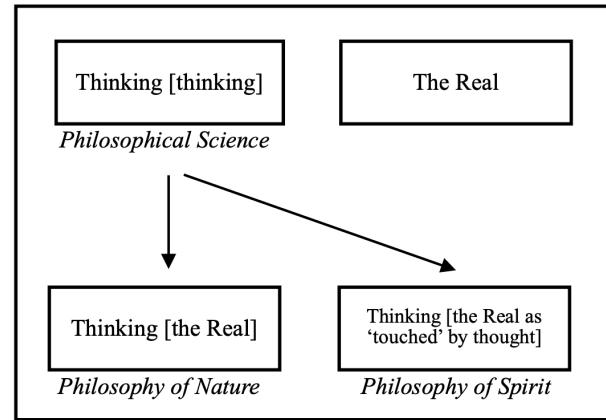
- i. philosophy deals with ‘the idea’
  - idea is a *plurale tantum*  
→ appears in different shapes
- ii. logical idea is subject to philosophical logic
  - pure thought
- iii. other shapes are subject to the philosophy of the real (POR)
  - philosophy of nature (PON) and philosophy of spirit (POS)
- iv. idea of nature as negative to the logical idea
  - PON deals with the real as such (as the negative of the logical)
- v. spirit as that what is ‘coming back from nature’
  - POS deals with real as it is ‘transformed’ by and ‘coming back’ to thought

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<sup>2</sup> GW 20, §§20 et seq.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. GW 12, 263.

- Philosophy of the real and the real as such
- i. philosophical logic / POR  $\leftrightarrow$  logical / real
  - ii. philosophical logic grasps its concept of a philosophical science *as such*
    - PON/POS are specific types of philosophical sciences
  - iii. the real is *not* a specific type of the logical  
 → would confuse the logical with the real



The real is not a specific type of the logical

- i. ideas mark spheres of *internal relations* between form and content
  - form marks a way of unity
  - content is that what gets unified  
 → ideas express peculiar form-content unities
- ii. the 'sameness' of ideas can't be guaranteed by the idea of nature being a specific type of the logical idea
  - nature would share its formal properties with the logical as its *genus*
  - would be specified merely by *further* material properties as its *differentia specifca*  
 → no internal relation between form and content  
 ⊥ *external* relation
  - would even mean that nature is a *further thought*
- iii. their unity is granted by the fact that they are in principle intelligible to thought
  - possible subject to philosophical science

From the logical to the real

- i. general difference between the logical and the real is a contrastive opposition<sup>4</sup>
  - *firstly* characterize the general form of the logical
  - *secondly* characterize a contrastive form
- ii. the logical is an intensive totality [*'intensive Totalität'*]<sup>5</sup> & in-each-other [*'Ineinander'*]
  - *manifold* of thought-determinations
  - countable
  - product of self-determined activity—thinking
  - internal relations established by judgments and inferences
  - the logical culminates in self-knowledge as its focal point  
 → *discrete, self-determined and self-transparent* manifold
- iii. contrastive structure: *continuous* manifold that is neither self-determined nor self-transparent
  - does not consist out of discrete entities
  - uncountable
  - not product of self-determination
  - continuous unity
  - not self-transparent
  - still in principle intelligible

<sup>4</sup> Surely, Hegel thinks of this transition from the *Science of Logic* to his *Philosophy of Nature* as a proof [*'Beweis'*], that nature must exist and thus that nature's existence is not contingent, cf. GW 24.1, 476.

<sup>5</sup> GW 12, 173.

### 3. Real Contradictions and the Restlessness of the Real

[Q2] Es bewegt sich etwas nur, nicht indem es in diesem Itzt hier ist, und in einem andern Itzt dort, sondern indem es in einem und demselben Itzt hier und nicht hier, indem es in diesem Hier zugleich ist und nicht ist. Man muß den alten Dialektikern die Widersprüche zugeben, die sie in der Bewegung aufzeigen, aber daraus folgt nicht, daß darum die Bewegung nicht ist, sondern vielmehr daß die Bewegung der daseyende Widerspruch selbst ist. (GW 11, 287)

#### Direct reading

- i. an object in motion *is* a contradiction
  - an object in motion *is here* and *is not-here*, hence present at two points at the same time
- ii. conceives real continuity as an infinite dense set of points
  - makes the general difference between the logical and the real unintelligible  
→ any set of points is a discrete manifold and owes its existence to thought
- iii. Hegel does not conceive real continuity as a set of points

[Q3] 'Von Raumpunkten zu sprechen, als ob sie das positive Element des Raums ausmachten, ist unstatthaft, da er um seiner Unterschiedslosigkeit willen nur die Möglichkeit, nicht das Gesetzteyn des Außereinanderseyns und Negativen, daher schlechthin continuirlich ist; der Punkt, das Fürsichseyn, ist deswegen vielmehr die und zwar in ihm gesetzte Negation des Raums.' (GW 20, 244).

#### Hegel's notion of 'real continuity'

- i. Hegel's concept of real continuity is geometrical rather than arithmetical
  - continuity as the property of a *real size*, a length, for instance
  - Aristotle: 'such things [are] continuous whose edges form a unit'<sup>6</sup>.
- ii. a continuum does *not consist* out of a certain number of parts or points
- iii. but rather hangs together in such a way that *we may introduce* infinite many parts or points

#### Restlessness of the real

- i. objects in motion are occupying space-time in such a way that we can only make sense of that state by partitioning space-time
  - (1) in judging 'X is here' we establish a part or point
  - (2) in judging 'X is not here' we clarify that X is not *merely* here (standing still) but also already not here and thus in motion

#### Real contradictions

- i. RCs are neither *merely* contradictions in thought nor *identical* to something real
- ii. RCs are hybrids that contain a logical and a real part
  - the logical part is a contradictory judgement that internally refers to the real part
  - the peculiar *restlessness of the real* that takes its origin in the general form or way of unity that nature has as a *continuous* manifold

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<sup>6</sup> Aristoteles, *Physics VI*